

Economic Justice in the Final Fantasy XVI

Yaşar ALKAN¹ 

Final Fantasy XVI'da İktisadi Adalet	Economic Justice in the Final Fantasy XVI
<p>Öz</p> <p>Bu çalışma, <i>Final Fantasy XVI</i> evreninde iktisadi adaletin temsillerini, sınıf ilişkilerini ve siyasal iktidarla kurduğu bağı incelemektedir. Kristallerin üretim ve dağıtım süreci, aristokrat sınıfın ekonomik gücü ve bu sayede halk üzerinde elde ettiği tahakkümün adaletin nasıl ihlal ettiği analiz edilmektedir. Karakter odaklı analizlerle - Clive, Joshua, Jill, Cidolfus ve Ultima- bireysel yolculukların iktisadi düzen üzerindeki etkilerini değerlendirmektedir. Oyun, toplumsal eşitsizlikleri kavramsallaştırmak ve iktisadi adaletin çok boyutlu doğasını irdelemek için zengin bir örnek sunmaktadır.</p>	<p>Abstract</p> <p>This study examines the representations of economic justice, class relations, and its connection to political power in the <i>Final Fantasy XVI</i>. The process of crystal production and distribution, the economic power of the aristocratic class, and the resulting dominance over the people, are analyzed, revealing how justice is violated. Character-focused analyses -Clive, Joshua, Jill, Cidolfus, and Ultima- assess the impact of individual journeys on the economic order. The game offers a rich example for conceptualizing social inequalities and exploring the multidimensional nature of economic justice.</p>
<p>Anahtar Kelimeler: İktisadi Adalet, Final Fantasy XVI, Kristallerin Ekonomi-Politiği, Sınıf Mücadelesi, Kaynak Dağılımı</p>	<p>Keywords: Economic Justice, Final Fantasy XVI, Political Economy of Crystals, Class Struggle, Resource Distribution</p>
<p>JEL Kodları: B14, D63, P48</p>	<p>JEL Codes: B14, D63, P48</p>

Statement of Research and Publication Ethics	This study has been prepared in accordance with the principles of scientific research and publication ethics
Conflict of Interest Statement	The entire study was prepared by the author.
Conflict of Interest Statement	There is no conflict of interest arising from this study for the author or any third parties.

¹ Assoc. Prof., Manisa Celal Bayar University, Kula Vocational School, Department of Management and Organization, yasar.alkan@cbu.edu.tr

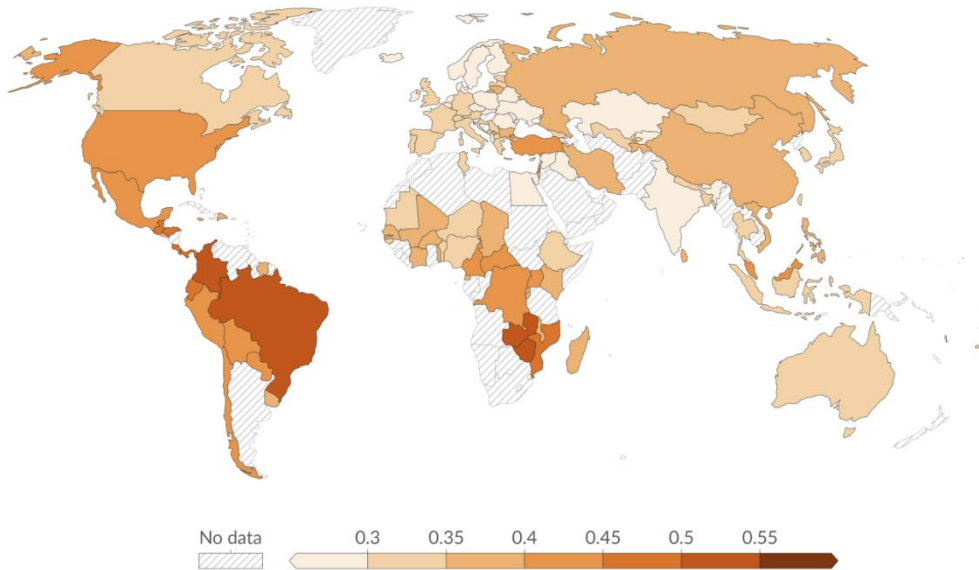
e-ISSN: 1306-6293/© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Eskişehir Osmangazi University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Final Fantasy XVI presents a fictional universe in which social, political, legal, military, and economic relations are deeply intertwined. Set in the land of Valisthea, the narrative unfolds around the Mothercrystals-colossal sources of aether that sustain production, daily life, and political authority. For generations, societies have clustered around these crystals, relying on their energy to simplify labor, enhance productivity, and secure material well-being. Over time, however, the control of Mothercrystals has given rise to rigid political structures, territorial fragmentation, and a fragile balance of power among regional authorities. Although this order appears stable on the surface, it is increasingly undermined by the spreading Blight, which disrupts production, weakens institutional control, and exposes the vulnerability of a social system built upon finite and unevenly distributed resources (Square Enix).

Beyond its narrative setting, *Final Fantasy XVI* resonates with contemporary global concerns that define current debates in political economy. Widening income inequality, the erosion of institutional trust, and intensifying ecological crises have become defining features of the global economic order. These interrelated challenges reveal that economic justice is no longer a purely normative aspiration but a structural problem embedded in systems of production, distribution, and governance.

Figure 1: Income Inequality: Gini Coefficient², 2024

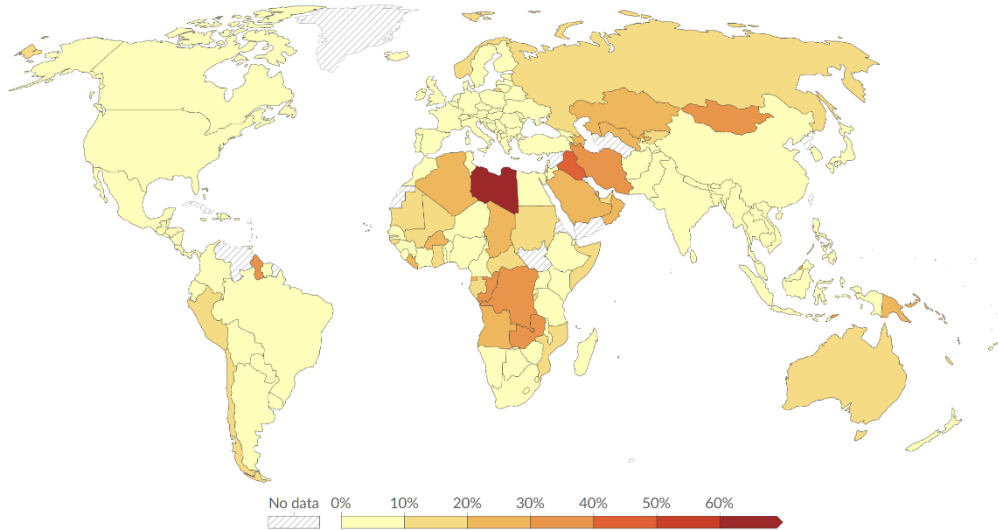


Source: World Bank Poverty and Inequality Platform (2025)

Resource dependency, in particular, has emerged as a central fault line, as societies organized around strategic assets often experience concentrated power, distributive asymmetries, and institutional fragility.

² The Gini coefficient measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1. Higher values indicate higher inequality (Our World in Data, 2025).

Figure 2: Total Natural Resource Rents, 2021



Source: The Changing Wealth of Nations (2025)

In this respect, fictional universes such as Valisthea offer an analytically productive space in which the moral and political consequences of resource-based economies can be examined without the constraints of empirical case specificity, while still reflecting real-world dynamics (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Irony and paradox play a central role in articulating these tensions within the game's narrative structure. Although the title *Final Fantasy XVI* evokes expectations of resolution and closure, the story unfolds through persistent conflict, violence, and moral ambiguity. The protagonist, Clive Rosfield, embodies this irony most clearly. His pursuit of revenge is driven by the promise of peace, yet it gradually draws him into deeper forms of loss and alienation. Similarly, the territorial division of Valisthea, designed to preserve order and prevent war, ultimately becomes a catalyst for sustained conflict. Rather than ensuring stability, political fragmentation intensifies competition over resources and accelerates systemic breakdown, demonstrating how institutional arrangements intended to secure justice may instead reproduce injustice (Wibowo et al., 2024, p. 107).

Within this narrative framework, economic justice constitutes the primary analytical lens of the present study. Economic justice lies at the core of enduring debates concerning the sustainability of social order, the protection of individual freedoms, and the equitable distribution of material resources. From this perspective, *Final Fantasy XVI* can be approached not merely as a video game, but as a fictional arena in which the construction, legitimation, and violation of economic justice are rendered visible. The game's social order invites political-economic interpretation through its portrayal of class relations, resource allocation mechanisms, and the institutionalization of power.

Central to this analysis is the role of crystals as the foundation of production relations. The organization of labor, consumption, and warfare around crystal-based energy systems reveals how material production structures shape social hierarchies and distributive outcomes. Access to crystals is monopolized by aristocratic elites, while the broader population remains

dependent on limited and controlled allocations. This asymmetry exposes the inherently political character of economic justice, demonstrating that justice is not an abstract moral principle but a practice embedded in material relations of production. Rather than operating through an egalitarian social contract, the economic order of Valisthea is structured by inherited privilege and coercive power relations anchored in resource control.

Accordingly, the social formation depicted in Final Fantasy XVI can be interpreted as a hybrid of feudal, mercantilist, and early capitalist modes of production. The strict aristocratic regulation of crystal distribution obstructs the free functioning of market mechanisms and transforms economic justice into a principle administered by centralized authority. Through the population's enforced dependence on crystals, ruling elites reproduce their dominance by defining the boundaries of production, survival, and social participation. Economic justice, under such conditions, becomes contingent upon power rather than fairness, highlighting the structural tensions between resource dependency, institutional authority, and social equity.

In light of these dynamics, the main purpose of this article is to examine how economic justice is represented in Final Fantasy XVI, the institutional and social practices through which it operates, and the conflicts it generates. By situating the game's narrative within broader theoretical discussions of political economy and justice, the study aims to demonstrate how fictional worlds can illuminate the contradictions of real-world economic systems. Thus, this article does not offer a simple game analysis, but an interdisciplinary inquiry into the theoretical richness of economic justice as articulated through a contemporary cultural text.

2. The Political-Economic Role of Crystals

Final Fantasy XVI shows that crystals are not merely mystical artifacts embedded in a fantasy setting; they function as strategic resources that structure the entire social and economic order of Valisthea. Their significance extends beyond symbolism, shaping production processes, distributive mechanisms, and the legitimacy of political authority. In this respect, crystals can be analytically compared to non-renewable natural resources such as oil or natural gas in contemporary political economy, where control over strategic assets determines economic sustainability, social stratification, and the reproduction of power (Sachs & Warner, 1995). The continuity of production, the maintenance of social welfare, and the stability of political rule in Valisthea are all directly contingent upon access to and control over these resources (Square Enix).

From a political-economic perspective, the role of crystals can be examined along interrelated dimensions. Their integration into production and labor relations, their function within distribution and justice mechanisms, and their contribution to the legitimation of class hierarchies and political domination. Considered together, these dimensions reveal that crystals operate simultaneously as an energy source and as a hegemonic instrument that structures social order.

The position of crystals within production relations manifests through the monopolization of the means of production by aristocratic elites within their respective territories. Crystal-derived aether permeates agriculture, craftsmanship, military technology, and everyday life, rendering productive activity impossible without access to this resource. Direct control over crystals is concentrated in the hands of ruling classes, while the broader population is granted access only to limited and strictly regulated crystal fragments. This asymmetric arrangement constitutes a process of appropriation through which productive power is systematically

extracted from the populace. By restricting access to the primary means of production, the aristocracy diminishes the productive autonomy of labor and reproduces economic inequality through resource control.

The distributive structure of the crystal-based economy reveals a profound violation of economic justice. Rather than alleviating deprivation or improving the living conditions of lower-income groups, the allocation of crystals entrenches a cycle of dependency and exclusion. The population's reliance on aristocratically controlled resources severely constrains their capacity to act independently, develop productive capabilities, or improve their social position. Individuals are rendered incapable of sustaining life or labor without access to crystals, transforming economic dependence into a mechanism of social discipline. Under such conditions, economic justice is not merely compromised but structurally negated, as distributive outcomes are determined by power rather than by principles of equity or social benefit.

This concentration of resource control closely mirrors Thomas Piketty's analysis of wealth concentration under capitalism. As he argues, modern economic systems tend toward the accumulation of productive assets in the hands of a narrow elite, a process that undermines equality, participation, and long-term social stability (Piketty, 2014, p. 412). The monopolization of crystals by the aristocracy in *Final Fantasy XVI* offers a fictional yet analytically precise illustration of this dynamic. Crystal concentration not only secures material dominance but also reinforces political authority, allowing ruling elites to shape both economic outcomes and institutional structures.

Crystals play a central role in legitimizing political power and sustaining class hierarchies. Control over crystals is framed not merely as an economic necessity but as a natural and divinely sanctioned order, reinforcing the moral authority of ruling institutions. This process aligns with broader historical patterns in which economic domination is naturalized through ideology and tradition (Polanyi, 1944/2001; Mann, 1986). By presenting resource control as an unquestionable foundation of social order, the aristocracy transforms economic inequality into a normalized and enduring condition. As a result, justice becomes redefined as obedience to an existing hierarchy rather than as a principle grounded in fairness or human development.

Taken together, these dynamics suggest that the social order depicted in *Final Fantasy XVI* represents a hybrid formation combining elements of feudalism, mercantilism, and early capitalism. The rigid aristocratic regulation of crystal distribution obstructs the free functioning of market mechanisms and situates economic justice within the domain of centralized authority. Rather than emerging from reciprocal exchange or institutional accountability, justice is imposed from above and conditioned by resource dependency. Through this system, the ruling elites continuously reproduce their power by determining the limits of production, survival, and social participation.

Ultimately, the political-economic role of crystals reveals that economic justice in Valisthea is inseparable from material production relations. Crystals function not only as sources of energy but as instruments through which inequality is institutionalized and resistance is constrained. By foregrounding resource dependency as the foundation of social order, *Final Fantasy XVI* exposes the structural tensions between power, production, and justice, offering a critical allegory of extractive economies and their enduring moral and institutional consequences.

3. Classes and Socio-Economic Hierarchy in Society

Final Fantasy XVI presents a stratified social order in which economic injustice is produced and reproduced through rigid class hierarchies and asymmetric access to productive resources. The game's political economy is structured around control over the means of production (most notably crystals) which function as the primary source of energy, wealth, and authority. Consistent with the tradition of historical materialism, the mode of production depicted in the game shapes class relations, while these relations, in turn, determine institutional and political arrangements (Marx, 1990; Square Enix). The persistence of feudal characteristics, combined with extractive resource dependency, forms the structural basis of economic injustice in Valisthea.

At the apex of this hierarchy stand the aristocratic classes, whose power derives from lineage, political authority, and monopolistic control over crystals. Unlike agrarian feudal systems grounded in land ownership, aristocratic dominance in *Final Fantasy XVI* is sustained through control of an energy resource that substitutes for land-based production. This monopoly generates a continuous flow of wealth while simultaneously enforcing the dependency of the broader population. Crucially, aristocratic power is not limited to economic coercion; it also operates symbolically. By constructing crystals as sacred and indispensable to social survival, the ruling elite legitimizes its dominance and suppresses challenges to distributive justice at the cultural level. Economic power thus converges with symbolic power, producing a hegemonic order that naturalizes inequality.

The popular classes (comprising peasants, artisans, and day laborers) occupy a structurally subordinate position within this system. Although they actively contribute labor to production processes, they lack autonomous access to crystals and therefore to the material conditions necessary for self-sustaining economic activity. While their situation resembles Marx's concept of the proletariat, it does not correspond to an industrial working class. Instead, the mode of production reflects a hybrid structure combining feudal dependency with mercantilist extraction. The defining feature of this class is not unemployment but dispossession. Labor is expended without fair access to its material outcomes.

This condition can be further illuminated through Marx's concept of alienation. When workers lack control over both the means and the products of production, they become estranged not only from economic output but from their own productive capacities (Marx, 1844/1964, p. 111). In *Final Fantasy XVI*, exclusion from crystal access alienates the people from production itself, reducing labor to a means of survival rather than self-realization. Economic injustice thus assumes psychological and cultural dimensions, extending beyond material deprivation to the erosion of agency and dignity.

A distinctive feature of the game's class structure is the presence of Dominants—individuals endowed with the power of Eikons. Their social position cannot be explained solely through economic class and is more accurately conceptualized using Weber's notion of 'status groups,' defined by honor, prestige, and socially recognized distinction (Weber, 1978, p. 932). Dominants occupy an ambivalent position. Their extraordinary power grants them relative privilege, yet this same power subjects them to political instrumentalization and social suspicion. As a result, they are simultaneously elevated and constrained within the hierarchy.

This intermediary status reveals that economic justice is inseparable from status equality. Access to material resources alone does not guarantee justice if social recognition and

autonomy remain unevenly distributed. Dominants illustrate how privilege can coexist with oppression, complicating binary class distinctions and demonstrating that injustice operates across multiple social dimensions.

The interaction between aristocrats, popular classes, and Dominants generates persistent conflict. As emphasized by Marx and Engels, class struggle constitutes the driving force of historical transformation (Marx & Engels, 1848/1998, p. 9). In *Final Fantasy XVI*, monopolization of crystals intensifies inter-class tensions, producing conflict not only at the economic level but also within cultural and ideological domains. Consent is manufactured through narratives of necessity and survival, discouraging collective claims to justice. The resulting socio-economic hierarchy stands as a central obstacle to economic justice, revealing how entrenched class structures undermine both distributive fairness and human agency within the game's universe.

4. Forms of Production, Labor, and Relations of Exploitation

Understanding economic justice in *Final Fantasy XVI* requires close attention to the forms of production, the organization of labor, and the relations of exploitation embedded within them. The game's social order is structured not merely by political authority or narrative conflict, but by the material conditions under which production takes place. These conditions determine how labor is mobilized, how surplus is appropriated, and how inequality is reproduced across society.

The dominant form of production in *Final Fantasy XVI* is an agrarian economy shaped by feudal relations. Most of the population resides in rural areas and engages in agricultural labor on land controlled by aristocratic elites. Peasants contribute their labor to the land but lack effective control over both the means and outcomes of production. In Marx's analysis of feudal production, exploitation occurs through land ownership rather than wage relations, as surplus is extracted directly from the peasantry (Marx, 1990, p. 340). This dynamic is clearly reflected in the game's rural economy, where labor obligations and material dependency bind peasants to aristocratic authority.

What distinguishes this feudal structure from its historical counterparts is the central role of crystals as a technological and energetic input. Agricultural productivity depends on crystal-derived energy, yet access to this resource is strictly regulated by aristocrats. As a result, exploitation operates on two levels. Peasants are deprived of the products of their labor and simultaneously excluded from autonomous control over the technical conditions of production. Crystals thus function as instruments that deepen dependency and stabilize existing hierarchies, transforming energy access into a mechanism of economic domination.

Alongside agrarian production, *Final Fantasy XVI* depicts forms of urban craftsmanship organized through guild-like structures. Artisans engage in labor-intensive production processes that combine skilled work with crystal energy. Despite their relative autonomy compared to peasants, artisans remain economically subordinate. A significant portion of their output is appropriated by aristocratic authorities, who control trade routes and crystal distribution. This arrangement bears strong similarities to mercantilist systems in which political power regulates trade in order to secure elite accumulation (Heckscher, 1931). The restricted autonomy of artisans prevents fair price formation and wage determination, reinforcing relations of exploitation despite the absence of fully capitalist labor markets.

Marx's theory of alienation provides a useful framework for interpreting these labor relations. Alienation manifests when workers are separated from the products of their labor,

the labor process itself, their own human potential, and their social relations (Marx, 1844/1964, p. 113). In *Final Fantasy XVI*, both peasants and artisans experience these dimensions of alienation. The lack of control over production processes erodes workers' sense of agency, while deepening inequality undermines social solidarity. Labor becomes a means of survival rather than a source of self-realization, revealing the ethical dimensions of economic injustice.

Although the game does not depict a fully capitalist economy, mechanisms resembling surplus value extraction operate through the monopolization of crystals. Aristocrats control access to energy, enabling them to appropriate the excess value generated by labor while returning only what is necessary for subsistence. This hybrid structure combines feudal extraction with proto-capitalist surplus appropriation. From Ricardo's labor theory of value, the gap between the value produced by labor and the compensation received by workers represents a measurable indicator of injustice (Ricardo, 1817/2004, p. 137). Crystal monopolies widen this gap, intensifying exploitation without formal wage relations.

Modes of production also shape political authority. Aristocratic dominance over crystals translates directly into political power, confirming Moore's argument that economic structures underpin political regimes (Moore, 1966, p. 29). Because material dependency restricts political participation, economic inequality is mirrored by political exclusion. Institutions thus function to preserve existing production relations rather than correct their injustices.

Evaluated through Rawls's difference principle, these production arrangements fail to improve the position of the least advantaged (Rawls, 1971, p. 83). From Sen's capabilities perspective, labor processes systematically constrain individuals' opportunities to develop and exercise their capacities (Sen, 2009, p. 254). Foucault's concept of biopolitics further illuminates how crystals operate as technologies of control, regulating life, labor, and survival simultaneously (Foucault, 1978, pp. 95, 139-140). The forms of production in *Final Fantasy XVI* reveal a multilayered structure of exploitation in which economic, political, and biopolitical mechanisms converge, explaining why economic justice remains unattainable within the game's universe.

5. Resource Distribution, Trade, and Regional Inequalities

Economic justice is profoundly shaped by the spatial distribution of resources and the trade relations that emerge from this distribution in *Final Fantasy XVI*. Control over crystals constitutes the primary axis around which production patterns, political authority, and regional hierarchies are organized. Unequal access to this strategic resource generates asymmetric development trajectories across regions, transforming geography into a decisive determinant of economic and political power.

Resource asymmetries between regions are stark. Certain territories possess abundant crystal deposits, while others are almost entirely deprived of them. This imbalance is further intensified by the spread of the Blight, which renders large areas uninhabitable and agriculturally unproductive. These conditions create a geography of inequality in which resource-rich regions consolidate power while resource-poor regions become structurally dependent. This dynamic recalls arguments in geographical determinism, where environmental advantages historically shaped economic and institutional development (Diamond, 1997, pp. 109-112). In *Final Fantasy XVI*, the uneven geography of crystals produces similar outcomes, anchoring economic injustice in spatial structures rather than individual failure.

Regional dependency manifests most clearly through trade. Because crystals are indispensable for energy, production, and survival, regions lacking access must rely on trade routes controlled by aristocratic elites. Trade in this context does not operate according to principles of open exchange but within a tightly regulated and militarized framework. Dangerous terrain, hostile forces, and ecological instability render trade routes sites of coercion, legitimizing aristocratic and military oversight. As a result, trade functions within a mercantilist logic, where political authority controls circulation to secure elite accumulation (Magnusson, 1994, p. 65). Although trade could theoretically mitigate regional disparities, aristocratic monopolization of routes and volumes instead reinforces inequality, violating principles of economic justice.

The consequences of this structure are visible in the socio-economic divergence between regions. Crystal-rich territories exhibit relatively higher productivity, military strength, and institutional stability, while deprived regions experience poverty, food insecurity, and political marginalization. This configuration closely parallels Wallerstein's center-periphery model, in which core regions dominate production and exchange while peripheral regions remain dependent and underdeveloped (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 350). In the game's universe, crystal-abundant regions function as centers, extracting value and power, whereas peripheral regions supply labor, compliance, and dependency. Economic justice cannot be realized under such conditions, as inequality is structurally embedded within the spatial organization of the economy.

Resource distribution also determines political power. Regions controlling crystals possess not only economic leverage but also military and diplomatic superiority. Political authority is therefore grounded in material control rather than popular consent. As Mann argues, political power derives from the capacity to organize and manage material resources across society (Mann, 1986, p. 23). Aristocratic dominance over crystals constitutes precisely this form of infrastructural power, enabling elites to impose authority across regions in *Final Fantasy XVI*. Consequently, inequalities in resource distribution translate directly into violations of political justice, further entrenching economic injustice.

Regional inequalities have direct implications for everyday life. In crystal-deprived regions, low productivity, energy scarcity, and deteriorating health conditions undermine basic living standards. These pressures generate migration toward resource-rich centers, producing demographic imbalances and intensifying social tensions. Migration thus becomes both a symptom and a driver of injustice, destabilizing regional cohesion and threatening social peace. Importantly, however, resource abundance does not guarantee long-term prosperity. Economic literature on resource dependency demonstrates that reliance on a single strategic resource often inhibits diversified development and institutional resilience (Auty, 1993, p. 12). In the game, regions heavily dependent on crystals neglect alternative modes of production, locking themselves into an unsustainable development path.

This paradox reveals a crucial insight. While resource-rich regions appear advantaged in the short term, their economic structures ultimately serve the interests of aristocratic elites rather than the broader population. Development remains narrow, extractive, and exclusionary. As a result, economic justice is undermined not only in peripheral regions but across the entire system. *Final Fantasy XVI* thus presents regional inequality as a systemic failure rooted in resource monopolization, demonstrating that economic justice cannot emerge from an order defined by spatially concentrated power and extractive trade relations.

6. Worker Resistance, Rebellions, and the Search for Justice

Across historical and fictional contexts alike, the pursuit of economic justice has rarely emerged from institutional benevolence alone; rather, it has been shaped by resistance from subordinated classes confronting exploitation and exclusion. In *Final Fantasy XVI*, asymmetrical resource distribution, aristocratic monopolization of trade, and coercive labor regimes entrap large segments of the population in cycles of dependency. The working class (comprising crystal miners, agricultural laborers, and forced workers along trade routes) constitutes the material foundation of production while remaining systematically excluded from its benefits. The persistence of the aristocratic order depends on the continuous extraction of surplus from these groups, rendering labor not only an economic category but also a central political and cultural actor.

Aristocratic authority in the game seeks to neutralize labor resistance by preventing collective organization and deploying ideological narratives that naturalize exploitation. Crystals are framed as sacred and indispensable, encouraging workers to interpret deprivation as inevitable rather than unjust. Yet, as historical experience suggests, no economic order is immune to contestation. Resistance in *Final Fantasy XVI* does not manifest solely through overt rebellion but unfolds across multiple registers, revealing the fragility of the existing order.

While mass uprisings represent the most visible form of resistance, they are neither the most common nor the most enduring. Drawing on James C. Scott's concept of 'hidden transcripts,' resistance among subordinated groups often takes the form of everyday practices that undermine domination without directly confronting it (Scott, 1985, p. 32). In the game's universe, labor slowdowns in crystal mines, peasants' covert evasion of tax obligations, and disruptions along trade routes exemplify these subtle strategies. Such acts may appear minor in isolation, yet collectively they signal labor's capacity to withdraw cooperation from exploitative systems. The demand for economic justice thus emerges not only through confrontation but through the erosion of the routines that sustain aristocratic power.

Moments of systemic rupture (such as wars between ruling factions, economic crises, or ecological collapse) create openings for resistance to escalate. Under these conditions, workers' struggles extend beyond immediate material grievances and intersect with broader political transformation. Resistance becomes a means of rearticulating social relations, challenging both economic exploitation and the legitimacy of the institutions that uphold it. In this sense, labor movements in *Final Fantasy XVI* reflect a historical pattern in which crises expose the contingent nature of dominant orders and create space for alternative claims to justice.

An equally significant dimension of resistance lies in the formation of collective identity. Shared experiences of exploitation foster solidarity among workers, transforming individual grievances into collective demands. This process is sustained through cultural practices (songs, stories, and rituals) that preserve memories of injustice and articulate alternative moral frameworks. Cultural resistance serves as a repository of dissent, ensuring that even when rebellions are suppressed militarily or ideologically, the aspiration for justice persists. The aristocratic classes may dismantle organized movements, but they cannot fully extinguish the cultural memory of resistance embedded within the working population.

The game's narrative foregrounds these dynamics through character interactions that link structural injustice to individual experience. Encounters between rulers and the ruled, as well

as the trajectories of figures such as Clive Rosfield, Jill Warrick, and Cidolfus Telamon, illuminate how resistance operates at both systemic and personal levels. Through these interactions, *Final Fantasy XVI* portrays economic justice as a contested process shaped by labor, resistance, and the enduring struggle to reclaim agency within an exploitative order.

7. Clive Rosfield, His Struggle, and Influences

Final Fantasy XVI foregrounds the role of individual agency in processes of economic transformation without detaching such agency from broader structural conditions. Within this framework, Clive Rosfield is not merely the protagonist of a personal tragedy but a figure through whom the contradictions of the existing economic order become visible and contestable. His trajectory illustrates how individual action can destabilize entrenched systems of domination while simultaneously revealing the limits of personal intervention in the absence of institutional reconstruction. Clive's struggle is therefore inseparable from the political economy of Valisthea and its crisis of economic justice.

Clive's initial position within the aristocratic hierarchy is crucial for understanding his later transformation. Born as the first son of the Archduke of Rosaria, he is expected to inherit both political authority and the Eikon of Fire, Phoenix. His perceived failure to do so (when this power manifests in his younger brother Joshua) results in a symbolic displacement from privilege (Square Enix). This early experience of loss and marginalization within an elite structure enables Clive to perceive the fragility and arbitrariness of aristocratic legitimacy. Rather than reinforcing loyalty to the existing order, his exclusion exposes the contingent foundations of privilege and power.

The catastrophe at Phoenix Gate, culminating in the destruction of Rosaria and Clive's unwitting role as the *Dominant of Ifrit*, marks a decisive rupture. What begins as a personal narrative of guilt and vengeance gradually evolves into a broader political awakening. Clive's confrontation with the devastation wrought by the struggle over *Eikonic* power mirrors the systemic violence generated by the crystal-based economy itself. Personal tragedy thus becomes the entry point through which structural injustice is apprehended. His journey ceases to be exclusively individual and increasingly aligns with the collective suffering of the working classes subjected to exploitation and dispossession.

At the core of Clive's political significance lies his confrontation with the Mothercrystals, which function as the material and symbolic foundation of aristocratic power. Crystals regulate energy production, magic, and labor, rendering them the primary means of production in Valisthea. By targeting and ultimately destroying these structures, Clive challenges the monopolization of productive power by centralized elites. This act can be interpreted as a metaphorical and material intervention into exploitative relations, disrupting the conditions that enable surplus extraction and social domination. In this sense, Clive's struggle offers not merely a moral critique but a practical intervention aligned with redistributive principles of economic justice.

The broader social impact of Clive's actions extends beyond the immediate dismantling of aristocratic power. His journey generates symbolic momentum that encourages collective resistance. Drawing on Hirschman's framework of 'exit, voice, and loyalty,' Clive's actions shift popular responses away from resignation or passive compliance toward protest (Hirschman, 1970, p. 76). By demonstrating that the foundations of domination are neither natural nor invulnerable, he legitimizes dissent and strengthens the moral confidence of the working

classes. The sequential destruction of the Mothercrystals signifies the possibility of reclaiming productive capacity for the broader population.

Despite his aristocratic origins, Clive's immersion in the lived experiences of workers is central to his political role. Through sustained interaction with peasants, forced laborers, and marginalized communities, he acquires an experiential understanding of exploitation. This enables him to function as a mediating figure between classes, transferring the cultural and symbolic capital of aristocratic status into a collective struggle for justice. His relationships, grounded in empathy and trust, illustrate that class boundaries (while structurally real) are not impermeable. Individual actors can traverse these boundaries, facilitating alliances that challenge hierarchical divisions and expand the scope of collective action.

Clive's significance also operates at the level of cultural representation. His association with Cidolfus Telamon and his eventual adoption of the name 'Cid' after the latter's death transforms him into a symbol of resistance and justice within popular memory. This symbolic continuity fosters a shared identity that transcends regional and class divisions, materializing most visibly in the Hideaway as a space of collective imagination and organization. Economic justice, in this sense, is not constructed solely through structural change but through narratives and symbols that sustain belief in the possibility of a different order.

Nevertheless, *Final Fantasy XVI* does not present Clive's actions as sufficient for the realization of lasting economic justice. The destruction of the Mothercrystals dismantles the foundations of the existing order but simultaneously generates uncertainty regarding the organization of production and distribution. This tension resonates with Polanyi's argument that while the dissolution of monopolistic structures may enable social liberation, it also risks instability if not accompanied by new institutional arrangements (Polanyi, 1944/2001, p. 148). Clive's intervention thus represents a moment of revolutionary rupture rather than a complete solution.

The long-term establishment of economic justice, as the narrative suggests, depends on collective institutional reconstruction beyond the scope of individual heroism. Clive's role is therefore best understood as catalytic rather than comprehensive. He initiates a process that exposes injustice, dismantles exploitative mechanisms, and reactivates collective agency, but the consolidation of justice requires sustained social transformation. In this regard, Clive Rosfield functions as a dramatic allegory of economic justice itself. His journey demonstrates how individual agency can intersect with structural conditions to challenge domination, while simultaneously underscoring the necessity of institutionalizing justice beyond singular acts. By situating personal struggle within a broader political-economic crisis, *Final Fantasy XVI* presents economic justice as a contested and unfinished project -one that begins with resistance but must ultimately be secured through collective and institutional effort.

8. The Phoenix and the Economic Allegory of Rebirth in the Clive-Joshua Dilemma

The Phoenix symbol in the *Final Fantasy XVI* universe, besides being a mythological creature or a source of magical power, is a powerful allegory representing the rebirth of the economic, social, and cultural order. The Phoenix's cycle of rebirth points to the possibility of building an egalitarian and just system after the collapse of an exploitative economic order. In this context, the Phoenix's economic meaning can be considered both a metaphor for hope and a theoretical model of the post-destruction reconstruction process.

The Phoenix figure frequently appears in ancient mythologies as a symbol of rebirth after destruction, that is, life after death. From an economic perspective, the Phoenix, representing the processes of reconstruction following crises, finds its counterpart in Joseph Schumpeter's concept of 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter, 1942/2008, p. 83). The collapse of a system allows for the emergence of a new order of production and distribution. In the Final Fantasy XVI universe, the Phoenix represents the possibility of economic justice reborn after the collapse of the exploitative system created by the crystals, symbolizing a new society rising from the ashes of an unjust system. The Phoenix's cycle of rebirth can also be used to explain the transformative role of economic crises. A crisis emerges when productive forces erode existing relations of production, while destruction paves the way for a new social order emerging from this. In the game, the crisis triggered by the destruction of the crystals can also collapse the existing aristocratic order and provide workers with the opportunity to establish an egalitarian and relatively more just order. The Phoenix is the guardian of stability and prosperity in times of peace, a symbol of the just order that can emerge after an economic crisis. Therefore, it reminds of the constructive, not the destructive, role of crises.

The Phoenix also symbolizes the transformation of relations of production and the redistribution of resources. Indeed, as depicted at the end of the play, the children who dramatize the battle between Ifrit and Phoenix, the Eikons that have become stories of the past, embody the representation of a family living in peace and security. This reveals that the society rising from the ashes of the Phoenix holds the possibility of establishing a system where opportunities are more equally distributed, replacing the inequalities previously created by crystal monopolies. The Phoenix represents the redistribution of resources from the aristocratic class to the wider society. Its existence is an image of a new economic order in which workers are liberated from exploitation and control over the means of production is socialized. Thus, the Phoenix is a myth that shapes collective memory. As can be explained by Maurice Halbwachs's concept of collective memory, societies remember and reconstruct their past experiences through symbolic narratives (Halbwachs, 1950/1992, p. 44). The Phoenix's story becomes a narrative that evokes the people's resistance to exploitation and the hope for rebirth.

The Phoenix's allegory of rebirth also carries significance at the institutional level. Following the collapse of an existing order, the construction of new institutions is essential for the institutionalization of economic justice. As Douglass North notes, institutions are the fundamental structures that determine economic performance (North, 1990, p. 3). In this context, the Phoenix symbolizes the inevitability of establishing new institutions, indicating the necessity of establishing an order within the Final Fantasy XVI universe that does not remain in a vacuum after the collapse of aristocratic monopolies, but rather is supported by new and just institutions. The Phoenix's cycle reminds us that economic justice cannot be considered a temporary condition and must exist within an institutional continuum.

Throughout the story, Clive and Joshua's compulsion to feel the presence of the Phoenix within themselves, as brothers, demonstrates the privileges and obligations that society's adopted identities impose on individuals. Two individuals, both of whom, given the choice, would have preferred not to undertake such a burden, are, so to speak, spending their lives

under the responsibility of duties that are justified within them by their birth and fulfillment. Ultimately, both have given their lives for this cause.³

9. The Role of Eikon Dominants and Class Relations

One of the most decisive elements in the political economy of *Final Fantasy XVI* is the position of *Eikon Dominants* within the social and economic hierarchy. Dominants possess extraordinary powers that exceed ordinary productive or military capacity, granting them a form of ‘supernatural privilege’ that profoundly reshapes class relations. This privilege, however, does not place Dominants outside the class structure; rather, it inserts them into it in contradictory ways. They function simultaneously as instruments of aristocratic domination and as potential agents of economic transformation. As such, Dominants occupy a structurally ambivalent position at the center of debates on economic justice.

The game’s formal language, naming conventions, and performative style contribute to the elevation of Dominants above ordinary social categories. Character names and linguistic registers are deliberately archaic and ceremonial, reinforcing associations with authority, destiny, and honor. This formalism constructs characters as embodiments of duty rather than autonomous individuals (Wibowo et al., 2024, p. 110). Clive Rosfield’s restrained demeanor, ritualized speech, and disciplined bodily presentation exemplify how Dominants are socially encoded as bearers of responsibility. This symbolic elevation, however, also distances them from common people, reinforcing hierarchical separation even before economic or political power is exercised.

Within this symbolic framework, each Dominant represents a distinct modality of power embedded in the economic order. Clive Rosfield, as the Dominant of Ifrit, embodies destructive transformation. Ifrit’s fire symbolizes the violent rupture necessary to dismantle an exploitative system grounded in monopolized resources (Square Enix). Clive’s capacity to annihilate Mothercrystals positions him as a force that directly undermines aristocratic control over the means of production. His power thus aligns with revolutionary destruction rather than institutional regulation, highlighting the necessity (and danger) of radical intervention in unjust economic systems.

Joshua Rosfield, as the Phoenix Dominant, represents a contrasting logic. Phoenix symbolizes healing, restoration, and rebirth, pointing toward post-destruction reconstruction (Square Enix). In economic terms, this metaphor corresponds to reparative mechanisms such as social protection, redistribution, and reintegration of marginalized populations. Joshua’s role emphasizes that economic justice cannot be achieved solely through dismantling power structures; it also requires rebuilding social bonds and restoring productive capacity in ways that protect the vulnerable.

Jill Warrick’s association with Shiva introduces a logic of balance and restraint. Shiva’s symbolism of ice and composure reflects principles of sustainability, moderation, and long-term equilibrium (Square Enix). Jill’s character suggests that economic justice involves limiting overconsumption and preventing the reckless exploitation of resources. Unlike Ifrit’s destructive force, Shiva’s power implies that justice can also emerge through ethical self-limitation and care, foregrounding ecological and intergenerational dimensions of economic order.

³ The final scene of the play depicts Clive Rosfield dying on a beach. While it’s generally accepted that Clive is dead, there are also analyses to the contrary.

Cidolfus Telamon, as the Dominant of Ramuh, embodies institutional rationality and normative regulation. Ramuh's lightning is associated with wisdom, law, and deliberation (Square Enix). Cid's role highlights the importance of legal frameworks, norms, and governance structures in stabilizing markets and preventing arbitrary power. His opposition to crystal monopolies is not merely revolutionary but institutional, emphasizing that economic justice requires enforceable rules rather than reliance on individual virtue alone.

Benedikta Harman's Garuda represents volatility and unregulated power. Garuda's storm imagery symbolizes chaos, unpredictability, and domination by force (Square Enix). Benedikta's political maneuvering and manipulation mirror economic systems characterized by deregulation and opportunism. Her role illustrates how unrestrained power (whether military or economic) amplifies inequality and allows dominant actors to engulf weaker ones, undermining justice through instability.

Barnabas Tharmr, as Odin's Dominant, represents authoritarian consolidation. Odin's symbolism of war and command reflects the concentration of resources and coercive control under autocratic rule (Square Enix). Barnabas's regime demonstrates how economic justice collapses when power is centralized and dissent is eliminated. Here, Dominant power serves as an extension of state violence, reinforcing hierarchical domination rather than challenging it.

Hugo Kupka, as the Titan Dominant, exemplifies resource-based domination. Titan's association with land, mining, and physical endurance highlights the centrality of material ownership in economic power (Square Enix). Hugo's wealth and influence derive from direct control over natural resources, demonstrating that economic justice is most threatened when resource ownership is concentrated. Titan thus represents the structural foundations of exploitation rather than its ideological justification.

Dion Lesage, as the Bahamut Dominant, introduces an ethical dimension to power. Bahamut's celestial symbolism evokes higher norms, responsibility, and moral order (Square Enix). Dion's sense of duty toward society as a whole suggests that economic systems must be grounded in ethical principles rather than mere efficiency or domination. His character illustrates the possibility (though not the guarantee) of aligning power with justice.

These figures demonstrate that Dominants are narrative devices and allegorical representations of competing economic logics: destruction, repair, regulation, sustainability, chaos, authoritarianism, extraction, and ethics. Their extraordinary capacities allow them to shape production, trade, and warfare in ways that directly affect class relations. A single Dominant can secure trade routes, protect production, or devastate entire regions, making their role in economic justice decisive. Yet Dominants are rarely autonomous. Most are embedded within aristocratic structures that seek to appropriate their power for political legitimacy and economic control. Their supernatural authority reinforces elite dominance, transforming inequality into something seemingly natural or inevitable. Dion's instrumentalization by Emperor Sylvestre Lesage illustrates how Dominant power is subordinated to dynastic interests. At the same time, Dominants are not free from constraint. Their powers are exercised under social, political, and existential pressure, limiting their own economic freedom. This dual condition (privileged yet instrumentalized) positions Dominants as both beneficiaries and victims of the system. Their class affiliation is therefore not fixed but contingent, shaped by historical context and personal alignment.

When Dominants serve aristocratic interests, they function as extensions of ruling-class power. When they align with the working classes, they become catalysts for transformation. This fluidity underscores a central argument of *Final Fantasy XVI*. Economic justice is not determined solely by structural position but by how power is deployed. Dominants embody the tension between reproduction and transformation of inequality, making them pivotal actors in the struggle over economic justice.

10. Joshua Rosfield and His Impact in the Context of Phoenix

Joshua Rosfield occupies a distinctive position in debates on economic justice within the *Final Fantasy XVI* universe, not merely as the second son of the Duke of Rosaria but as the Dominant of Phoenix, a figure symbolically associated with rebirth, healing, and continuity (Square Enix). From the outset, Joshua is framed by the ruling elite (most notably his mother, Anabella Rosfield) as a providential figure destined to restore Rosaria's political authority and economic prosperity. This expectation situates him at the intersection of dynastic power and collective hope, transforming his personal narrative into a broader allegory of social and economic renewal.

The Phoenix, as embodied by Joshua, functions as a metaphor for post-crisis reconstruction. Its healing power directly relates to the restoration of labor capacity, which is a foundational element of economic continuity. The curing of disease, the healing of war-related injuries, and the preservation of human life ensure the reproduction of labor power and, by extension, the sustainability of production. His symbolic role extends beyond moral leadership. Joshua represents a stabilizing force within an economy repeatedly disrupted by war, plague, and resource depletion. Even at the level of collective perception, his existence serves as a guarantee of economic survival, reinforcing the belief that recovery is possible despite systemic collapse.

Although Joshua is born into Rosaria's aristocratic order, his lived experience distances him from the material and ideological certainties of that class. The feudal structure of Rosaria (grounded in land ownership and the control of strategic trade routes) rests on inherited privilege and exclusion. Joshua's traumatic encounters with violence, loss, and displacement gradually erode his alignment with aristocratic interests. Rather than acting as a passive instrument of elite power, he becomes a figure who questions the moral legitimacy of feudal domination and exhibits sensitivity to the conditions of subordinate classes. This transformation positions him as a mediating actor capable of easing class antagonisms by fostering solidarity across social divisions.

Joshua's loss and eventual recovery of Phoenix's power can be read as a narrative reflection of cyclical economic breakdown and renewal. This dynamic resonates with Fernand Braudel's emphasis on long-term historical rhythms of crisis and reconstruction, in which periods of devastation are followed by gradual processes of recovery (Braudel, 1949/1992, p. 124). Joshua's personal suffering thus transcends individual tragedy, symbolizing the broader social costs of economic collapse. His rebirth signals the re-emergence of collective hope for a more just and stable economic order.

The contrast between Joshua and his brother Clive Rosfield further clarifies his economic significance. While Clive embodies rupture, confrontation, and the violent dismantling of exploitative structures, Joshua represents the complementary logic of repair, balance, and reintegration. Economic justice in this universe is through a sequential process in which

reconstruction becomes indispensable. Joshua's healing practices allow workers to return to production, mitigate the long-term effects of war and epidemic, and sustain communal life under conditions of scarcity.

Joshua Rosfield functions as both a symbolic and practical agent of economic justice. His contribution lies not in institutional redesign but in safeguarding the human foundations upon which any just economic order must rest. By strengthening solidarity and enabling recovery, he emerges as a central reference point for political and economic reconstruction in the *Final Fantasy XVI* universe.

11. Jill Warrick and Her Influences

Jill Warrick occupies a distinctive position in discussions of economic justice in the *Final Fantasy XVI* universe, as her narrative directly exposes structural themes of slavery, coerced labor, militarized production, and social solidarity. Raised alongside Clive and Joshua Rosfield in Rosaria, Jill's later subjugation as a Dominant under Waloeed's authoritarian regime marks a decisive rupture in her life trajectory (Square Enix). This rupture transforms her character into a critical lens through which the economic consequences of domination and exploitation are made visible.

Jill's prolonged captivity as an enslaved Dominant constitutes one of the clearest representations of unfree labor in the game's political economy. Forced to deploy her powers under extreme conditions and deprived of autonomy, she is reduced to a functional instrument of military and economic production. This denial of agency aligns closely with classical forms of slave labor, in which human beings are stripped of subjectivity and integrated into production solely as expendable resources. Under Waloeed's rule, the systematic control of Dominants facilitates the militarization of the economy, diverting productive capacity away from social welfare and toward coercive power. Jill's trauma thus reflects the broader devastation of an economic order founded on violence and extraction.

The northern regions from which Jill originates are characterized by harsh climatic conditions, limited agricultural capacity, and a war-oriented economic structure. In such an environment, the mobilization of resources for military survival becomes normalized, and enslavement emerges as a rationalized economic strategy. Jill embodies both the victim of this structure and a potential agent of its transformation. Her eventual liberation undermines the legitimacy of militarized accumulation and signals the possibility of reallocating resources toward collective needs. In this sense, her story illustrates how economic systems shaped by scarcity and conflict reproduce injustice unless fundamentally challenged.

Jill's rescue and subsequent integration into the *Hideaway* established by Cid mark a transition from coerced labor to free participation in social production. This shift has implications that extend beyond individual emancipation. As a free agent, Jill contributes to the reconstruction of economic relations grounded in cooperation rather than domination. Her role as Shiva's Dominant further reinforces this transformation. While her ice-based powers possess military significance, they also carry broader economic implications, including the regulation of climate conditions, protection of water resources, and stabilization of agricultural productivity. Through these functions, Jill's power becomes associated with sustainable resource management rather than destructive accumulation.

Jill's influence also highlights the gendered dimensions of labor and economic justice. Her visibility challenges the marginalization of women's labor within hierarchical systems and

affirms its centrality to social reproduction. By participating actively in rebuilding communities and fostering solidarity across regions, Jill strengthens the social foundations necessary for equitable economic arrangements. Her actions contribute to mitigating class conflict and reinforcing collective resilience, particularly in contexts marked by displacement and trauma.

The partnership between Jill and Clive further underscores that economic justice in *Final Fantasy XVI* is inherently collective. While Clive embodies rupture and structural dismantling, Jill represents continuity, healing, and moral reconstruction. Together, they reveal that the pursuit of justice requires the destruction of oppressive systems and the cultivation of solidarity and care. Jill Warrick's journey thus demonstrates that economic justice is a matter of institutional change, and a social and ethical process rooted in the restoration of human dignity.

12. Cidolfus Telamon and His Social Impact

Cidolfus Telamon, a key figure in the reconstruction of economic justice in the Final Fantasy XVI universe, is portrayed as a former soldier, a dominant protector in the context of Clive and Jill, and a person dedicated to freeing enslaved people and establishing them within a new social organization (Square Enix). In this respect, Cid represents both a practical and ideological opposition to economic inequalities in the universe. His struggle demonstrates that economic justice can be built through individual resistance and social organization, which are the catalysts for structural transformations.

Cid's history begins as a central figure in the economic and political order. His long service to the imperial order makes him a witness to the workings of the dominant economic structure. It can be said that he was initially an actor loyal to rational-legal authority, but over time, his observation of the exploitative nature of the system led him to break with the existing order and turn to the pursuit of economic justice. His long-term acquaintance with Benedikta, Dominant of Garuda, and the years he spent under the patronage of King Barnabas, Dominant of Odin, shaped his path to becoming a representative of authority. Later, his realization that this authority reproduced not only oppression but also economic exploitation led him to organize a community alternative to the existing order.

The Hideaway, founded under the leadership of Cid, functions as an alternative economic space in the Final Fantasy XVI universe. Here, Dominants and other people freed from slavery live freely, participate in production, and thus build a new order based on social solidarity. Economic activities within the hideaway are organized on the basis of solidarity and shared needs rather than the market. Commercial activities continue, and production is not only undertaken to generate economic value but also to ensure the continuity of the community. This situation offers an example of an alternative economic order to capitalist market rationality. Cid's leadership demonstrates that economic organization can be built on ethical foundations. The community established under his leadership embraces collective responsibility compatible with individual freedoms. Economic activities carried out in the Sanctuary are organized by sharing according to individuals' abilities, and Telamon's leadership provides a practical example of this approach.

Cid's struggle to free the dominants and other people from slavery is both a humanitarian act and an economic transformation. Slave labor is one of the fundamental sources of production for the dominant order in the universe. His effort to break this chain leads to the unsustainability of the slave-based economic order. In this context, Telamon's journey, signifying the rejection of the commodification and exploitation of labor, is seen as a critical

step in establishing economic justice. Another prominent aspect of Cid is his ability to use technology for social benefit. The repurposing of technologies based on ancient knowledge and magic is a key component of his economic vision. He repurposes technology for freedom and collective production, countering the existing order's use of technology as a tool of oppression and exploitation. Indeed, this demonstrates that technology can be a transformative force for economic justice. The tools Cid develops produce military power when necessary, while at other times, they generate efficiency in production processes and mechanisms for sharing within the community. It is noteworthy that his adopted daughter, Midadol 'Mid' Telamon, takes over the production of technology in the bunker after Cid's death, in keeping with her role as an engineer.

Telamon's struggle reminds that economic justice requires great sacrifices for it to transcend its theoretical ideal and is thus a value that can be achieved in practice at a heavy price. His death, in a sense, demonstrates that the price of economic freedom can be paid by individuals sacrificing their own lives. The Cid's charismatic leadership enables the community to organize and maintain the economic order even after his death. Telamon is thus the founder of a collective legacy, and his individual struggles have economic consequences on a universal scale. The weakening of the labor-based order of the Eikon Dominants disrupts the economic structure of the empires, leading to shifts in the balance of power between regions and the emergence of new economic relations. Indeed, throughout the play, the characters Vivian Ninetales and Harpocrates II Hyperboreos, who periodically explain the political and economic transformations of the universe to Clive, explain these changes and transformations in the safe space -the hideaway- built by the Cid.

Cidolfus Telamon is one of the most powerful representatives of economic justice in the Final Fantasy XVI universe. Cid's story demonstrates that economics is more than just numbers and market mechanisms. Filled with ethical justifications and moral questions, Cid's journey and struggle symbolize the restoration of economic justice based on the preservation of human dignity and the liberation of labor.

13. Ultima and His Impact on the Game Universe

Ultima, a figure representing the most complex and metaphysical dimension of economic justice in the Final Fantasy XVI universe, is the ultimate antagonist. He can be considered an entity that penetrates the depths of the economic, political, and social order (Square Enix). His existence signifies both the origin and ultimate purpose of the social, political, and economic organization of the universe. His desire to concentrate power and his aim for absolute control of resources and labor signify the embodiment of absolute inequality and an authoritarian order in terms of economic justice. In the game system, Ultima symbolizes absolute inequality, domination, and lack of freedom, the opposites of economic justice. Ultima's story reminds of the fragility of economic justice and the difficulty of maintaining it in the face of absolute authority. He demonstrates that justice and economic justice are only possible through collective resistance, the struggle for freedom, and ethical economic organization. Ultima's existence can be interpreted as a theoretical metaphor for absolute domination and inequality in the literature on economic justice.

Ultima's order completely eliminates economic freedoms, transforming individuals into passive instruments of his absolute will. Ultima's existence, which creates total injustice, contradicts all principles of economic justice. He seeks to dominate all living beings, especially humans, as the operational embodiment of the concept of hegemony. Ultima's most

fundamental desire is to transform humanity from being an entity independent of his own will into a single existential order. In this respect, his ideal can be interpreted as establishing 'irresistible authority.' Ultima's project is a comprehensive form of sovereignty that aims to eliminate all individual will. His desire to reshape the world implies the centralized management of production relations, labor processes, and resource distribution. Therefore, Ultima is the metaphysical reflection of an absolute monarchy in economic terms.

One of Ultima's greatest influences on economic justice is his approach to resource control. Crystals and Aether are central to both economic and social life in the Final Fantasy XVI universe. Ultima uses these resources for absolute control and domination. According to Polanyi, the market is not a natural phenomenon, but a structure that emerges from the reorganization of social relations (Polanyi, 1944/2001, p. 93). Ultima's approach to resources, however, goes beyond the market and is a control mechanism that attempts to subordinate all social relations to his will. In this context, his existence, from the perspective of economic justice, points to the distribution of resources not according to social needs, but according to a will constructed within the context of his own desires. Ultima's project completely instrumentalizes human labor. In his eyes, humans and Dominants are valued only as elements serving his own ends. Within the context of this approach, labor in Ultima's system completely ceases to be an individual subject, becoming a mechanical part of an absolute system, and humans are reduced to the level of mere tools.

Clive and his comrades' resistance against Ultima aims to liberate human and labor, ensure a fair distribution of resources, and protect individual freedom. As Ultima nears the end of his project to create Clive, the ultimate embodiment, through a series of moves that gradually shape the universe, he creates a perception among people as a great evil that inspires collective resistance. Clive Rosfield, possessing the power of all the Eikon Dominants he defeated, bravely confronted Ultima in the final battle. In a grand clash that unfolded in stages, he successfully defeated Ultima, the final boss. Feeling that he possessed all the powers within himself, he rejected the potential to become the new Ultima, choosing to overthrow the existing order. This is significant because it offers others the hope they need to rebuild justice and economic fairness.

Ultima's defeat offers an opportunity for the restoration of economic justice, but since this process is not depicted in the game, any analysis beyond speculation cannot be considered rational. In any case, when Ultima's absolute authority collapses, it becomes necessary to establish rational and ethical foundations for the construction of a new social and economic order. This rebuilding process, given the deaths of dominant figures like Clive, Joshua, Cid, and Dion, will likely be under the leadership of Jill Warrick and the solidarity-based assistance offered to communities by the hideaway.

14. Conclusion

Final Fantasy XVI, through its fictional universe, lore, characters, and their interactions, contains metaphors that reveal different dimensions of the concept of economic justice. Within the framework presented by the game, inequalities and unfair situations are largely based on the unbalanced distribution of resources and the regional power differences this distribution creates. Control of crystals and Aether forms the basis of interregional conflicts, and consequently, relations between societies are shaped on a plane determined by economic interests. Resources such as crystals and Aether constitute the most fundamental problem of economic justice, and their unequal distribution leads to political and social conflicts. In this

context, the economic disparities between regions such as Rosaria, Sanbreque, Waloed, and Dhalmekia are the result of inequality in natural resources, as well as the interference of political authority, military power, and ideological tools in economic functioning.

The inequalities between different regions in the Final Fantasy XVI universe bear significant similarities to global economic injustices in today's world. While Sanbreque's imperial structure represents a colonial economic model, combining resource control with political power, Waloed's authoritarian regime exemplifies a system in which economic freedoms are completely suppressed. The most striking consequence of these inequalities is the unequal organization of trade and labor within regional boundaries. While regions like Dhalmekia may appear to have economic advantages due to their abundance of natural resources, they are unable to translate these advantages into sustainable prosperity due to political instability and power struggles. The situation depicted demonstrates that resource abundance is not sufficient for economic justice. The fair management and allocation of resources is fundamental.

The impact of the main characters' journeys on economic justice is crucial in the play. The story of the protagonist, Clive Rosfield, can be considered a symbol of individual freedom and the struggle against the exploitation of labor, due to its long and arduous nature. Clive's struggle can be interpreted as an attempt to regain people's economic and social freedoms. Joshua Rosfield's journey, while more metaphysical, actually offers a healing and reconstructive economic metaphor. Its existence demonstrates that resources can be used not only for consumption or domination, but also for social solidarity and healing. Jill Warrick, on the other hand, highlights dimensions such as liberation and freedom from slavery within the context of economic justice. The story of Cidolfus Telamon demonstrates the possibility of alternative forms of economic organization. By establishing a network that can be described as an 'underground economy' against institutionalized unjust orders, Cid demonstrates that justice can also be established through non-market mechanisms. Ultima, on the other hand, stands in contrast to all these stories as a symbol of absolute injustice. His system is a system in which resources are managed centrally, labor is instrumentalized, and trade is used for control rather than mutual benefit. Ultima can be considered a metaphorical expression of absolute domination in economic justice literature. The struggle against Ultima represents the practical application of theoretical principles of economic justice. The liberation of labor, the redistribution of resources, and the protection of personal freedoms are the ultimate goals of this struggle.

One of the play's most important themes is the exploitation of labor and the restriction of economic freedoms for nearly all members of society, excluding the main characters. The status of *bearers*, who can harness the power of the crystals, constitutes the most striking dimension of economic justice. Despite being the most important productive force in the social order, they are excluded both politically and socially. From this perspective, Clive and Cid's struggles play a critical role in the revalorization and liberation of labor. The liberation of labor is a prerequisite for the restoration of economic justice. The resistance movements undertaken in this context demonstrate the possibility of alternative forms of organization for the reconstruction of economic justice. The network established by Cid can be considered an example of solidarity economies aimed at the redistribution of resources and the liberation of people. The resistance movements, collective solidarity, and alternative organization in the play allow economic justice to transcend a theoretical ideal and become a practical possibility.

One of the most important points revealed by this study is that economic justice is a process that must be constantly reconstructed at the individual and societal levels. From Rawls's theory of justice to Sen's capabilities approach, from Marx's critique of labor to Polanyi's analysis of market society, various justice-based economic theories are revisited through the game's narrative. Thus, the stories told in a fictional universe, combined with theoretical discussions in the social sciences, contribute to a deeper understanding of the concept of economic justice. Indeed, rather than being an absolute goal, economic justice is a process that must be constantly negotiated and reconstructed. In this context, Final Fantasy XVI, with its dynamic social, political, and economic structure that changes over time, can be considered not only a game but also a fertile metaphorical space for reflecting on the economic and social order.

References

- Auty, R. M. (1993). *Sustaining development in mineral economies: The resource curse thesis*. Routledge.
- Braudel, F. (1949/1992). *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II* (2nd ed., S. Reynolds, Trans.). University of California Press.
- Diamond, J. (1997). *Guns, germs, and steel: The fates of human societies*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality, volume 1: An introduction* (R. Hurley, Trans.). Pantheon Books.
- Halbwachs, M. (1950/1992). *On collective memory* (L. A. Coser, Ed. & Trans.). University of Chicago Press.
- Heckscher, E. F. (1931). *Mercantilism*. George Allen & Unwin.
- Hirschman, A. O. (1970). *Exit, voice, and loyalty: Responses to decline in firms, organizations, and states*. Harvard University Press.
- Magnusson, L. (1994). *Mercantilism: The shaping of an economic language*. Routledge.
- Mann, M. (1986). *The sources of social power. Volume I: A history of power from the beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge University Press.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848/1998). *The communist manifesto* (S. Moore, Trans.). Verso.
- Marx, K. (1990). *Capital: A critique of political Economy, Volume I*. Penguin Books. (Original work published 1867)
- Marx, K. (1844/1964). *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844* (M. Milligan, Trans.). International Publishers.
- Moore, B. (1966). *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: Lord and peasant in the making of the modern world*. Beacon Press.
- North, D. C. (1990). *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Our World in Data. (2025). *Gini index of economic inequality* [Data set]. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/economic-inequality-gini-index>
- Our World in Data. (2025). *Natural resource rents (% of GDP)* [Data set]. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/natural-resource-rents?tab=map>
- Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the twenty-first century*. Harvard University Press.
- Polanyi, K. (1944/2001). *The great transformation: The political and economic origins of our time*. Beacon Press.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Ricardo, D. (1817/2004). *On the principles of political economy and taxation*. Dover Publications.
- Sachs, J. D., & Warner, A. M. (1995). *Natural resource abundance and economic growth* (NBER Working Paper No. 5398). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. Harvard University Press.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1942/2008). *Capitalism, socialism and democracy*. Harper Perennial Modern Thought.
- Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press.
- Square Enix. (t.y.). *Characters - FINAL FANTASY XVI*. Erişim adresi: <https://na.finalfantasyxvi.com/characters>
- Square Enix. (t.y.). *Story - FINAL FANTASY XVI*. Erişim adresi: <https://na.finalfantasyxvi.com/story>
- Wallerstein, I. (1974). *The modern world-system I: Capitalist agriculture and the origins of the European world-economy in the sixteenth century*. Academic Press.

- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology* (G. Roth & C. Wittich, Eds.; E. Fischoff, Trans.). University of California Press.
- Wibowo, A. P., Suyudi, I., Purnomo, S. L. A., Firmawan, H., & Khatib, A. J. (2024). Formalism and power of language: Unravelling the narratology of Final Fantasy XVI. *Langkawi: Journal of The Association for Arabic and English*, 98-114. <https://doi.org/10.31332/lkw.v0i0.6921>

Extended Summary

Economic Justice in the Final Fantasy XVI

Final Fantasy XVI offers a comprehensive interdisciplinary examination of how the fictional world of Valisthea reflects, challenges, and reimagines core debates in political economy, distributive justice, and institutional design. By drawing on a wide range of theoretical frameworks, this work argues that the narrative structure, character development, and world-building of *Final Fantasy XVI* (FFXVI) serve as powerful metaphors for real-world struggles over economic inequality, resource distribution, and the fragile balance between state authority and market forces.

The world of Valisthea is sustained by enormous crystal mountains known as the *Mothercrystals*. These crystalline sources provide aether, which in turn enables the practice of magic that is used for everyday comfort, agriculture, warfare, and industrial development. For centuries, the Mothercrystals have underpinned not only material prosperity but also the political stability of the dominant nations. Each realm has claimed territorial control around a Mothercrystal, forming the economic and military foundation of its sovereignty. Yet, as the so-called *Blight* spreads across the continent -draining lands of fertility and threatening the life-giving properties of the crystals- the very economic system upon which this world depends begins to collapse. Thus, the setting of *Final Fantasy XVI* dramatizes a central dilemma of political economy: the fragility of resource-dependent growth and the crisis that follows when scarcity replaces abundance. Within this framework, the game's central figures -the Dominants, human vessels of godlike Eikons- embody the tensions between individual power and collective welfare, between destructive potential and constructive responsibility. Their journeys illustrate distinct paradigms of economic justice.

Clive Rosfield, Dominant of Ifrit, symbolizes revolutionary rupture. His fiery transformation embodies the need to dismantle entrenched hierarchies of privilege and to burn down exploitative economic systems that perpetuate inequality. Clive's arc highlights the Marxian notion that sometimes justice requires the destruction of old structures to make way for new, more equitable orders. His role can be interpreted as the metaphorical 'force of history' driving towards redistribution and renewal. Joshua Rosfield, Dominant of Phoenix, represents rebirth and healing. While Clive destroys, Joshua restores. Phoenix's regenerative power signifies redistributive welfare policies and the rebuilding of social trust. Jill Warrick, Dominant of Shiva, embodies the principle of balance and sustainability. Her association with ice suggests cool restraint, moderation, and the need to preserve natural resources. Economically, Shiva is a metaphor for sustainable growth and ecological responsibility. Jill's perspective aligns with contemporary debates on climate justice, emphasizing that economic arrangements cannot disregard environmental constraints without compromising long-term survival.

Cidolfus Telamon, Dominant of Ramuh, illustrates the role of law, institutions, and knowledge. Ramuh's thunderous wisdom functions as a reminder that markets require regulation and societies require normative frameworks to ensure justice. Dion Lesage, Dominant of Bahamut, reflects an ethic of responsibility and cosmic order. His celestial power evokes a moral perspective that transcends material gain, symbolizing the ethical foundation upon which any sustainable economic system must rest. By contrast, antagonistic dominants dramatize the darker aspects of economic concentration. Hugo Kupka, Dominant of Titan, embodies resource monopoly. His power over the earth symbolizes the dangers of extractive economies in which natural wealth is hoarded by elites, leading to inequality and instability. Barnabas Tharmr, Dominant of Odin, personifies authoritarian control, representing economic systems governed by coercion, hierarchy, and the suppression of dissent. Finally, the presence of Ultima, as a transcendent and manipulative force, symbolizes the abstraction of economic domination -the tendency of systemic structures (capital, empire, globalization) to subsume human agency and reshape societies according to inhuman logics. Taken together, these character arcs and metaphors weave a coherent narrative about the multiple dimensions of economic justice.

The game explores themes of:

1. Scarcity and distribution: As the Blight spreads, nations vie for dwindling resources, echoing real-world crises of climate change and resource depletion.
2. Institutional legitimacy: The role of rulers, laws, and traditions in mediating economic order is scrutinized, often revealing fragility in the face of corruption or authoritarianism.
3. Agency and resistance: The Dominants' struggles highlight how individuals and movements can resist unjust systems, though at immense personal cost.
4. Restorative vs. revolutionary justice: Through the contrast between Phoenix and Ifrit, the text stages an enduring debate over whether justice is best pursued through gradual healing or radical transformation.
5. Ethics and sustainability: Shiva and Bahamut remind players that economic justice must remain grounded in moral responsibility and long-term ecological viability.

Methodologically, this study employs a close textual analysis of *Final Fantasy XVI* in conversation with economic theory. The game's world-building is treated as a literary and cultural artifact capable of illuminating broader questions of distributive justice. By integrating character narratives with theoretical frameworks, the research demonstrates how popular culture can serve as a medium for critical reflection on real-world economic challenges.

The conclusion of the study emphasizes that *Final Fantasy XVI* is not simply a fantasy tale but a complex allegory of economic justice in an age of global crisis. The game teaches that justice is multifaceted: it requires the dismantling of exploitative structures, the restoration of community, the regulation of power, and the safeguarding of natural and moral foundations. In this way, FFXVI resonates with contemporary debates over inequality, sustainability, and the future of global capitalism.

Ultimately, the research contends that the significance of *Final Fantasy XVI* lies in its ability to dramatize how societies negotiate scarcity, distribute power, and confront the ethical dilemmas of survival. By analyzing characters and *Eikons* through the perspective of political economy, this study uncovers not only the game's narrative depth but also its relevance as a cultural text that reflects and critiques the contradictions of our own world.