

Global Justice as a Framework for Eliminating Poverty

A Preliminary Review of Issues and Debates

Discussion document for the UNESCO / ISSC expert meeting held in Paris on 28-29 April 2014

Prepared by the UNESCO Division of Social Transformations and Intercultural Dialogue

Introduction

The expert meeting has several complementary objectives, with quite different timeframes and institutional dynamics. It is designed to support UNESCO's input to the post-2015 development agenda, through both formal UN processes and broader public debate. It is also designed to contribute to the preparatory processes for the ISSC's 2015 World Social Science Forum (WSSF) and 2016 World Social Science Report (WSSR). The present discussion document focuses primarily on the post-2015 development agenda, although the substantive points raised may also be relevant in due course to the WSSF and WSSR. Finally, the expert meeting is relevant to UNESCO's broader concern to act through its programmes to favour poverty eradication, in particular through technical support for national policies. Global justice constitutes a potential framing for such action, which considerably exceeds coordinated action at the UN level. Establishing an adequate basis for action at the national level raises a number of important issues that are enlightened by consideration of global justice but are not reducible to it. The connections between global justice and the diverse manifestations of social justice, including issues of social inclusion, inequality and poverty eradication at the various levels at which they arise, will be the subject of a separate discussion document.

The post-2015 development agenda is gaining momentum. Arrangements to replace the current goal and target-based framework – the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs – with the so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) shifted gears in March 2014, as the process advanced from stocktaking to negotiation.¹ A first official draft of the new SDG framework will be presented in September 2014 to the General Assembly of the United Nations. One year later, in September 2015, a UN Summit of world leaders is expected to officially adopt the SDG goals.²

¹ The 9th meeting of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals, held from 3 to 5 March 2014, formally started the negotiation phase. The OWG encompasses 30 representatives from the five UN regional groups, nominated by UN Member States. The main task of the OWG is to submit a negotiated report to the 68th session of the Assembly, in September 2014.

² The movement from MDGs to SDGs entails a new attempt to integrate sustainability concerns within the global development agenda, consistently with the outcomes of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). Such integration points to a range of issues that it is not intended to discuss in the present expert meeting. Reference is however made in this regard to the 2013 World Social Science Report, which considers the implications of changing global environments both for social science and for social transformations.

Poverty eradication has been retained as the highest strategic priority of the post-2015 development agenda. It is assumed as an indispensable requirement of sustainable development and as “*a matter of basic justice and human rights*”.³ Accordingly, social justice and equality are terms incorporated in the discourse of the post-2015 agenda. They are, however, barely reflected in key texts intended to inform the process of negotiation. The word “justice” is only mentioned once in the document “Focus Areas of the SDG”.⁴

The question of how social justice would be effectively incorporated into any type of renewed international partnership for development is, at this point, one of the main conceptual, analytical and programmatic gaps of the post-2015 process and deserves urgent attention. In general terms, poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities and justice are closely connected, both technically (notions of absolute poverty derive directly from considerations of justice; notions of relative poverty inherently embody considerations of inequality) and structurally (inequalities derive from and shape the social dynamics within which poverty becomes entrenched). In this sense, far from being one possible (and arguably narrow) framing of the question of global justice, poverty can justifiably be regarded as its core and its most distinctive manifestation. Regarded as a dynamic structural process and not simply as a static condition, poverty – its extent, its forms and its implications – encapsulates the essence of inequality and injustice.

Yet, with specific reference to ongoing international processes, global poverty is high on the political agenda while global justice is hardly mentioned. It is recognized in numerous UN statements that inequalities and poverty are connected, but the structural connections remain unexplored, even rhetorically. Thus, the post-2015 public discourse encompasses many issues which are significant for global justice, such as poverty eradication, equality, social rights, institutions, and global partnerships. However, two apparent paradoxes immediately emerge:

- There is a lack of “*public conversation about global justice*”⁵, even though issues relevant to global justice such as the flagrant exploitation of child labor by global corporations are regularly reflected in the media; and
- The few post-2015 discourses that address global justice seem disconnected from current theorizing of global justice.

Furthermore, approaches to poverty eradication – assumed as the top priority of the development agenda – could be markedly dissimilar depending on diverse interpretations of global justice. The development rhetoric of post-2015 goal-setting is entrenched in an “aid” paradigm, notwithstanding recurrent disclaimers, in which justice reflects an ethical imperative of assisting “others” independently of any consideration of whether the distressed situation of “others” is caused by global processes. The connection between global poverty and global structures is either weakly established or not made at all. Much less it is questioned whether that global structure might be unjust. This “*deflects from the question of how closely poverty in one part of the world and wealth in other parts of the world are related*”⁶ and thus has practical policy implications, which are apparent in the vagueness of references to “global partnerships”, “enabling environments” or “means of implementation”.

³ UN General Assembly. “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”. Report of the Secretary General. 68th session. Doc. A/68/202. 26 July 2013.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/A%20Life%20of%20Dignity%20for%20All.pdf>

⁴ OWG. “Focus Areas of the SDG”. 21 February 2014.

<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/3276focusareas.pdf>

⁵ Valentin Beck and Julian Culp. “On The Role of Political Theorists Regarding Global Injustice”. Interview of Katrin Flikschuh, Rainer Forst and Darrel Moellendorf. *Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric*. Issue 6, 2013. pp. 40-53

http://www.theglobaljusticenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/GJN6_03_BECKCULP_FINAL.pdf

⁶ View expressed by Rainer Forst in Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op.cit.

The main documents of the post-2015 process highlight the crucial role of rights. The new sustainable development agenda is envisioned as “rights-based, with particular emphasis on women, young people and marginalized groups”⁷, and sustainable development and poverty eradication is expected to comprise “benefits and empowerment for all and respect for all human rights”.⁸ However, discourses on human rights are ambivalent “depending on whether they are used in the global aid rhetoric or in global justice rhetoric”.⁹ Keeping the focus merely on helping other nations to realize rights essentially corresponds to an aid perspective. In contrast, if the realization of human rights is understood as part of the response to injustices arising from structures of power and domination at the global level, within the longstanding logic of article 28 of the UDHR, then rights are conceived as a matter of global justice.

In line with the recommendation made by the 37th General Conference of UNESCO (November 2013) “that the important role of the social and human sciences in addressing the complexity of social transformations and the challenges of inclusive social development be fully reflected in the post-2015 development agenda”, UNESCO and ISSC are coordinating a series of joint initiatives aimed at mobilizing the social and human sciences with the purpose of contributing to elucidate the numerous connections between global justice and the theory and implementation of development, as well as to improve the conceptual consistency of discussions about the post-2015 development agenda.

The possibility of advancing the notion that global justice could become a central normative concept for the post-2015 development agenda requires, at least, reflection on the following issues:

- The current level and directions of the theorization about global justice, including the relation between the normative and the empirical, and the connection between global justice theorizing and other disciplines in order to provide a robust framework to poverty eradication;
- The relationship between normative ideas on global justice and development discourses; and
- Aspects relevant to global justice which should be incorporated or reinforced in the post-2015 development agenda, including the critical assessment of current modalities of development cooperation that may contribute to exacerbate global injustices.

Current theorization on global justice and its relevance for poverty eradication

Accounts on the current state of theorizing global justice indicate a trend towards increased differentiation of theories, a drive to better connect theory with an empirical analysis of the relations of global injustice, a related interest in enhanced interdisciplinary exchange, and a concern with the contextual challenges of universalizing the arguments of global justice.¹⁰

The emergence of what is being labeled as “the third wave” of theorizing global justice, which is not a unified approach but an assortment of diverse ideas, points toward a more nuanced and varied process of theorization of global justice.¹¹ The very notion of the existence of “the third wave” is

⁷ UN General Assembly. “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”. Op. cit.

⁸ UN General Assembly. “The future we want”. Resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 27 July 2012. Doc. A/RES/66/288.

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/PDF/N1147610.pdf?OpenElement>

⁹ View expressed by Rainer Forst in Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op.cit.

¹⁰ An interesting discussion on the issue is presented in Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op.cit.

¹¹ Some representative authors are Laura Valentini, Matthias Risse, Richard Miller, Aaron James, Pablo Gilabert, Nicole Hassoun and Lea Ypi. See Gabriel Wollner. *The Third Wave of Theorizing Global Justice. A Review Essay*”.

contested but it could be worth exploring is the relevance that it might have for the customary lines of theorization of global justice (cosmopolitanism and statism / nationalism) previously developed to a large extent following the “Rawlsian lead”.¹² Another important issue is the manner in which conceptualizations such as “coercion framework”,¹³ “structural equity”,¹⁴ “pluralist internationalism” and “common ownership of earth”¹⁵ could be broadening the theorization of global justice.

The recent discussions on a renewed development framework have been concurrent with a set of global crises of vast proportions and long-lasting impacts. The realization that global problems require global solutions, including effective responses to poverty and to the challenges related to global justice, tends to make more prominent the relation between theory and practice, at least in principle. It brings to the forefront the question of how theorizing global justice needs to be informed by empirical analysis of the relations of actually existing global injustice, of which concrete, diverse and situation social movements are a manifestation.¹⁶ Global justice theorizing has already incorporated global power relations but in order to attain a better understanding of injustices at the global level further empirical work is required, including a critical assessment of the sources and type of data, as well as a detailed response to the question of why, how and for whom the power relations under examination are unjust.¹⁷

Conversely, normative principles play a crucial function in the conception of what should be considered as an empirical problem. The challenges for empirical analysis of global poverty are considerable and research decisions will express a normative choice. If that choice is framed by global justice, then political economy, especially as regards global power relations, will be prioritized for empirical analysis in a way that is lacking in the prevailing “aid” paradigm of the post-2015 process. A case in point would be the reform of the institutional architecture of global trade and finances. Changing that institutional order should be informed by normative criteria. Should those institutions be modified because they are ineffective or because they are unjust, or both?¹⁸ Addressing this question requires a further level of normative consideration, which is the extent to which the norms mobilized are already internal to the system – albeit insufficiently recognized or institutionalized – or external to it.

The UN-led process of preparation of the post-2015 development agenda has stimulated numerous debates and produced a large body of literature, within and outside the UN system. Notwithstanding the fact that only a fraction of that intellectual production has found its way into the official texts, the process has offered opportunities for interdisciplinary exchanges. Of particular relevance has been the potential impact of a better understanding of complex global problems on normative

Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric. Issue 6, 2013. pp. 21-39.
http://www.theglobaljusticenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/GJN6_02_WOLLNER_FINAL.pdf

¹² Katrin Flikschuh. In Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op.cit.

¹³ Laura Valentini, *Justice in a Globalized World: A Normative Framework*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹⁴ Aaron James, *Fairness in Practice: A Social Contract for a Global Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

¹⁵ Mathias Risse, *On Global Justice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012.

¹⁶ The work of Thomas Pogge, among others, reflects the relevance of that linkage. See, Thomas Pogge and Niccole Rippin, “Universal Agenda on the Multiple Dimensions of Poverty”. Background Research Paper. Submitted to the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. May 2013.
http://www.post2015hlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Pogge-Rippin_Universal-Agenda-on-the-Multiple-Dimensions-of-Poverty.pdf

¹⁷ View expressed by Rainer Forst in Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op. cit.

¹⁸ Alternatives could be quite diverse, from the Davos style of proposals to Pogge’s response based on the notion that central international institutions “are designed so that they systematically contribute to the persistence of severe poverty”. See Thomas Pogge. “Recognized and Violated by International Law: The Human Rights of the Global Poor”.
http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/poverty/expert/docs/Thomas_Pogge_new.pdf

thinking. From the diverse spectrum of intellectual contributions produced as part of the process, several lines of work seem particularly valuable for assisting in reframing poverty eradication from the perspective of global justice:

- Research projects focused on participatory exploration of what poverty means to poor people themselves, such as the project to construct a Gender-sensitive Deprivation Measure (GDM), that is “*individualized, gender-sensitive, scalar and genuinely participatory*”¹⁹
- Research projects on the empirical effects of development agendas on policy priorities and on the normative content of development discourses, with emphasis on a “people-centered vision” of development, such as the project “*The Power of Numbers: A critical review of MDGs targets and indicators from the perspective of human development and human rights*”²⁰;
- Projects focused on identifying the governance requirements posed by global challenges, in particular through the framework of Global Public Goods;²¹
- Projects providing high quality evidence that contributes to effective policies for the poor through the systematic review of policy effects in international development;²²
- Research programmes led by international organizations and UN research units such as ILO’s projects on social justice for a fair globalization²³; and UNRISD’s 2010-2014 Research Agenda “*framed around two themes: Social Policies for Inclusive and Sustainable Development; and Political and Institutional Dynamics of Social Development*”.²⁴

The recognition on the need for more cooperation between philosophy and the social sciences is also related to the important question concerning how normative arguments on global justice arise from particular cultural contexts and how they are universalized. One particular theme of debate is the question of the assumed dominance of the Western tradition of theorizing and the perception that “*the academic discourse about global justice is not a global discourse. It is dominated by certain views, and it would be good to globalize this discourse*”.²⁵ The analysis of contextualization is directly connected to the practical political issue of how diverse social movements criticizing global injustice in different parts of the world could agree to endorse a common vision of global justice that would unite people from very different contexts.

The relationship between normative ideas on global justice and development discourses

One of the main challenges of embedding the notion of global justice in development discourses, both mainstream and alternative, consists in providing a well-articulated normative account of what justice means beyond the state. It is a challenge that operates at least at two differentiated though related levels. First, the way in which the wider development discourses, such as those led by the UN

¹⁹ Project coordinated by Thomas Pogge, involving field work at 18 impoverished sites in six countries: Angola, Fiji, Indonesia, Malawi, Mozambique, and the Philippines. See <http://www.genderpovertymeasure.org/>

²⁰ The project, coordinated by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (The New School, New York) and Alicia Eli Yamin (Harvard School of Public Health) involved 17 experts and included 11 case studies. <http://fxb.harvard.edu/working-paper-series/>

²¹ Inge Kaul. Global Public Goods. A Concept for Framing the Post-2015 Agenda? German Development Institute. Discussion Paper 2/2013 http://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/DP_2.2013.pdf

²² International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) <http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/>

²³ International Labor Organization (ILO). “Employment policies for social justice and a fair globalization”. Report VI. 2010, Geneva.

²⁴ UNRISD. “Social Development in an Uncertain World”. UNRISD 2010-2014 Research Agenda, [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B42004CCC77/\(httpInfoFiles\)/43BFA3387807E7E680257920004253C7/\\$file/ResA_ge10-14a.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B42004CCC77/(httpInfoFiles)/43BFA3387807E7E680257920004253C7/$file/ResA_ge10-14a.pdf)

²⁵ View expressed by Rainer Forst in Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op. cit.

and the World Bank, which essentially reflect official state views that are processed through technocratic lenses, could be interested in incorporating normative ideas on global justice produced by academia, not necessarily to endorse it but to reinterpret them.²⁶ Secondly, the processes that could transform normative ideas into alternative discourses which are attractive enough to gather organized public support for global justice and its attendant impact on development discourses.²⁷

The first problem is related to the larger issue of how academic literature could have an impact on policy-relevant narratives, a theme that is important to UNESCO's Management of Social Transformation Programme (MOST) which focuses on the "social science-policy-society" nexus.

The nexus between academia and development discourse on matters of global justice encompasses diverse factors such as academic institutional contexts (including cultural biases, inter-disciplinary collaboration, systems of professional incentives, and degree of institutional reflexivity, among other); issues of power asymmetries in the constellation of entities that shape development discourses; and the dilemmas related to perceived trade-offs between rhetoric and the quality of the arguments on global justice.

That last issue is the important question of how academic ideas, especially normative ones concerning global justice, could be and should be communicated to wider audiences. It reflects concerns about the tensions between rhetoric and reason and it revolves around how the utilization of rhetoric, which has proved to be effective in building support to the global justice movement²⁸, could "*obstruct the clear presentation of the issues at stake, and may result in our policies being determined by where the sympathies of the best rhetoricians lie, and not by who has the better arguments*".²⁹ It could also be interpreted as a moral issue relevant to scholars of global justice. Global inequality destroys lives every day. Is it morally right to renounce tools capable of making a difference, such as rhetoric, on the grounds that the message is not rigorous enough? Furthermore, could it be reasonable to assume that dispassionate styles of presentation of moral arguments have any chance of influencing development discourse? It would be interesting to contrast that problem with the discursive preeminence of "markets" in development narratives, something that in a strict sense is more a rhetorical outcome than the result of a rigorous argument.³⁰

Another important issue related to translating normative ideas of global justice into development discourses is the issue of "feasibility skepticism". If the perception that "*realizing the goals of global justice is so wildly unrealistic in practice that, at best, such models must remain as theorists' wishes about how the world should be*"³¹ proves to be accurate, then global justice would have no chance of being integrated into development narratives.³²

²⁶ Analysis on how the UN system has addressed social justice in general and global justice in particular –in the context of the post-2015 process- have been produced over the last few years. See, Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), "*A Matter of Justice. Securing human rights in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda*". 2013. The issue of Global Public Goods is one example of how the World Bank seems interested in incorporating themes related to global justice in its development discourse. See <http://go.worldbank.org/KQ0LRF5W00>.

²⁷ Julia Skorupska, "Rhetoric and Global Justice". *Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric*. Issue 1, 2008. pp. 27-37. http://www.theglobaljusticenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/3_skorupska.pdf

²⁸ The 'Make Poverty History' campaign organized around the 2005 meeting of The Group of Eight (G8) illustrates the effective utilization of rhetoric for the cause of global justice.

²⁹ Julia Skorupska, op.cit.

³⁰ Manfred B. Steger, "*Political Ideologies and Social Imaginaries in the Global Age*", *Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric*. Issue 2, 2009. pp. 1-17. http://www.theglobaljusticenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/1gin_2e_steger.pdf

³¹ Gillian Brock *Global Justice: A Cosmopolitan Account*

³² Holly Lawford-Smith, "Cosmopolitan Global Justice: Brock v. the Feasibility Sceptic". *Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric*. Issue 4, 2011. pp. 1-12. <http://www.theglobaljusticenetwork.org/wp->

This theme is relevant not only for the production of development discourses but also for political mobilization. The problem of how normative ideas could be transformed into alternative discourses which are attractive enough to gather organized public support for global justice is crucial. Global justice is a theme that cannot be avoided in political theory debates but that it is not sufficiently reflected in society and much less adequately incorporated into the grand schemes of the “international community”. One of the lessons of the current post-2015 debates is that key relevant themes for global justice are mainly kept alive in policy debates thanks to the activism of movements and agents committed to carry forward projects of global justice. Contrasting with a UN-led goal-setting exercise in which neither global justice or social justice are mentioned,³³ organized civil society is the leading voice demanding that “*a post-2015 framework anchored in human rights [move] from a model of charity to one of justice, based on the inherent dignity of people as human rights-holders, domestic governments as primary duty-bearers, and all development actors sharing common but differentiated responsibilities*”.³⁴

The exploration of the limits of the academia in shaping public opinion, the question of how to move from reasoned criticism of global injustice to a politically influential discourse on global justice, and the weight of “the local” in shaping public notions of “the global”, are key issues for the connection between normative ideas and public activism on global justice.

Generalized public perceptions, particularly the type of consciousness which might lead to political activism, are usually more dependent on factors such as economic and social change, ideology, and political rhetoric, than on academic arguments on global justice.³⁵ However, within that relatively restrictive framework, it is rather common that academic institutions commit themselves to outreach to decision makers, organized civil society, and the public in general. A variety of institutional projects focused on outreaching related to global justice issues have emerged both in well-established academic centers and new collaborative networks.³⁶

Although not comparable to the highest point reached by political mobilization for global justice around the turn of the century, with large citizen protests and alternative summits, an important aspect that should be retained is that organizations of civil society committed to global justice do much more than talking about it. Visibly, their interest in well-articulated narratives is a function of political mobilization. Some of their actions have been successful, like the campaign for debt cancellation, but the fact is that global justice has not attained widespread use in ordinary discourse. “*It hasn’t grabbed the public imagination*”.³⁷ The question whether that state of affairs corresponds to “*some down period of a cycle that is likely to rise again or whether or not there is just a general predisposition in the public to not think in terms of global justice*”³⁸ is a topic of debate.

In that regard, at least two factors needs to be considered:

content/uploads/1.GJN4_LAWFORDSMITH.pdf; and Thomas Nagel, ‘The Problem of Global Justice’, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33/2 (2005) 113-47.

³³ OWG. “Focus Areas of the SDG”. 21 February 2014. Op. cit.

³⁴ A joint statement spearheaded by the Human Rights Post-2015 Civil Society Caucus, which is coordinated by Amnesty International, AWID and CESR was released on 10 December 2013. The statement is endorsed by over 357 organizations from across the world.

<http://www.cesr.org/downloads/HRsforAll.joint.statement.feb27.pdf?preview=1>

³⁵ Katrin Flikschuh. In Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op.cit.; and Julia Skorupska, op. cit.

³⁶ Some examples of academic projects with outreach are The Global Justice Programme at the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University and Academics Stand Against Poverty (ASAP).

³⁷ Darrel Moellendorf. In Valentin Beck and Julian Culp, op.cit.

³⁸ Ibidem.

- The life experiences of people impacted by global injustice unfold at the local or national level. *“One of the reasons there isn’t a lot of awareness or concern about global justice issues amongst the broader public is that people experience institutions of a state, but not institutions beyond the state... Even though international institutions such as the WTO have an effect on domestic policies, many still experience the market first and foremost as a domain of domestic policies”*³⁹
- Having a negative assessment of issues of global injustice, separately or taken together, does not directly result in attaining a constructive proposal for global justice, though documentation and denunciation of global injustice is commonly assumed to be a good place to start thinking about global justice. This is reflected in the debates on the very meaning of “globalization” and “anti-globalization” because supporters of global justice do not necessarily share perceptions about global connectedness, both negative and positive. Some social movements are against this interconnectedness but some have a positive perception of some of its features and try to use it in favor of global justice. There are authors that use “globalization” as *“a signifier that contains both a negative and a positive meaning. The former seeks to capture the distorted market-globalist articulation of the global imaginary... The positive meaning of globalization refers to the possibility of an undistorted translation of the global imaginary in the interest of all humanity, not just for the benefit of a powerful few”*.⁴⁰ Hence the well-known and partly successful campaign to shift the language of mobilization from “anti-globalization” to “alternative globalization” – though the terminological success has also coincided with a general loss of political momentum.

When cultural factors are added, the scale of the challenges that might be involved in building a functional vision of global justice, as a shared project that would unite people from all over the world, appears very starkly.

Global justice and its potential resonance for development rethinking

Current debates on the post-2015 development agenda, including its reinforced accent on sustainability, are perceived by many commentators in the social science literature as more than a dual process of “finishing the job” (attaining all goals promised back in 2000) and substituting the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In fact, the post-2015 debates are frequently envisioned as an opportunity to rethink development and to renew accompanying development narratives – though such renewal may not necessarily be happening.

Sustainable development is one of those areas in which diverse parallel discourses are occurring simultaneously. The *“breadth and vagueness of the concept”* and *“its primarily symbolic use in politics”*⁴¹ might be contributing to project the image that swift advance is possible towards a consensual post-2015 development narrative but what is observed is rather a typical case of competing narratives struggling for discursive hegemony.

A crucial point in common between notions of global justice and sustainability is that in both cases the underlying concepts are conceived of as a normative approach which is part of the larger development discourse. One possible implication is that in the end reflections about global justice should be conducted in a context of conflicting views of development. On one hand, the alleged bias

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ This is the case of Susan George. See Manfred B. Steger, op.cit.

⁴¹ Jobst Conrad, IÖW. “The Discourse on Sustainable Development: How Political and Scientific Codes Go along with Each Other”. http://www.berlinconference.org/2012/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Conrad-The_Discourse_on_Sustainable_Development-228.pdf

of the “international community” in favor of a technocratic (goal-setting) approach to development⁴² which competes with a vision based on “*autonomous local and national political processes of agenda setting, decision making and public action is sharply at odds with an ideology of development based on global target-setting*”.⁴³

How notions of global justice could contribute to establishing the precise connections between local-based solutions and complex global challenges should be part of the necessary debates on what development should be.

⁴² Ziai, A (2013). “The discourse of ‘development’ and why the concept should be abandoned”. *Development in Practice*, 23(1):123-136.

⁴³ James Copestake. “Still a future for development discourse?”. January 2014.

<http://cdsblogs.wordpress.com/2014/01/13/still-a-future-for-development-discourse/>