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8 The Interdependence of Domestic and Global Justice

Abstract: This article focuses on the challenge of determining the relative weight of domestic and global justice demands. This problem concerns a variety of views that differ on the metric, function, scope, grounds and fundamental interpretation of justice norms. I argue that domestic and global economic justice are irreducibly interdependent. In order to address their exact relation, I discuss and compare three theoretical models: (i) the bottom-up-approach, which prioritizes domestic justice; (ii) the top-down-approach, which prioritizes global justice; and (iii) the horizontal framework, according to which both domestic and global principles pose equally stringent demands that are to be implemented horizontally, without attributing a simple priority to one over the other. I argue that the third model represents the best overall framework, although more complex normative criteria need to be elaborated on the basis of this approach, affecting issues such as justice in climate change mitigation and adaptation, development cooperation, trade, finance, taxation and immigration.

1 Introduction

Over the last few decades, inequality in income and wealth has seen a staggering increase within many countries and has remained very high in the global context.¹ At the low end of the economic divide, extreme poverty has decreased, but remains widespread and persistent,² belying the early promises of globalization's advocates. In 2015, one quarter of the world's population was living on less than

¹ For detailed empirical studies on economic inequalities within and between states as well as in the global context, see Branko Milanovic, *The Haves and the Have-Nots: A Brief and Idiosyncratic History of Global Inequality*, New York: Basic Books 2011; Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press 2014 [2013]; and Branko Milanovic, *Global Inequality: A New Approach for the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge/MA and London: Belknap Press 2016.

² See World Bank, *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle*, Washington/DC: World Bank 2018.

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US\$ 3.20 a day, while close to half was living on less than US\$ 5.50 per day.³ At the other end of the spectrum, wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the global super-rich.⁴ In 2017, the richest 1 percent of the global population received 82 percent of all newly created wealth, while the bottom 50 percent saw no increase in their share.⁵ Next to such boundless affluence, the prevalent hardship and lack of access to the most elementary goods that many people suffer is morally unacceptable for humanitarian reasons. Significant economic inequalities within and across states are also justifiably regarded as morally wrong for reasons of justice. It is more controversial, however, to determine why and in what sense such inequalities constitute injustices, and who is required to respond to them. This question not only needs to be addressed in practice; I will argue in this article that it remains unsettled in theory, too.

In the last 50 years, philosophers and political theorists have turned to the task of theorizing economic inequalities beyond the state level. While their treatment was rather tentative at the start, it now constitutes a major current within their disciplines.⁶ As this body of literature is voluminous, I cannot give a full inventory here, but will constrain myself to a brief overview. I will then turn to a central challenge that remains largely unsolved within the contemporary debate, namely that of determining the relative weight of those justice demands that apply within countries and those that apply globally. The goal is to show that there is currently a shortage of theoretical tools for the comprehensive evaluation of economic inequalities across states. What is perhaps most remarkable about this diagnosis is that these theoretical difficulties do not simply mirror familiar normative differences between competing conceptions of justice, such as the differences between more and less egalitarian views on how to shape social and political institutions. Rather, the challenge of relating different distributional contexts cuts across established ideological and normative divisions. Furthermore, it concerns not only the theoretical debate on global justice, but also the debate on social justice within states, whose basic concepts and normative fault lines are more consolidated.

³ World Bank (2018), p. 67. For a debate on the methodologies involved in the World Bank's global poverty measures, see the contributions in: Sudhir Anand, Paul Segal, Joseph Stiglitz (Eds.), *Debates on the Measurement of Global Poverty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010.

⁴ See e.g. Piketty (2014 [2013]), Ch. 12.

⁵ See Oxfam, *Reward Work, Not Wealth*, Oxfam Briefing Paper 2018, p. 8.

⁶ For an early monograph, see Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1979. For a more comprehensive literature review, see Charles Beitz, "Fifty Years of Global Justice: Five Theses", *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2018.

My treatment will be ecumenical. That is to say, I will mostly avoid taking a position on more familiar normative controversies as I elaborate on the main challenge of relating different contexts of justice. I will at first outline four normative controversies, which are by now more familiar, and which illuminate the current state of the philosophical debate on social and economic justice within, between and across the world's states (see 2). I will then detail the challenges of adequately relating different contexts of justice (see 3.). In the final step, I will discuss three theoretical models that are responses to this challenge, two of which turn out to be unsatisfactory. A third approach is more promising, but requires contextual application and elaboration (see 4.).

2 Areas of Normative Disaccord in the Debate on Justice Within and Across States

The younger debate on global justice has adopted parts of its terminology from the debate on social justice within the state. It has also inherited a range of normative controversies from its older sibling. Taken together, these can be grouped into four main areas.

First, there is controversy about which *principles of justice* apply to states and to the world at large. The *metric* and *function* can be distinguished as two core components of a principle of justice. The *metric* tells us which material or immaterial goods are to be counted, or in other words, how human wellbeing is to be measured in a given context. Social, political and environmental rights, primary goods, resources, opportunities for welfare, and different sets of capabilities are among the various proposed elements that may constitute the metric.⁷ The *function* determines how the chosen units of measurement ought to be distributed via institutional arrangements in order to achieve (more) justice. Theorists have defended a variety of different functions including threshold standards and comparative standards (and combinations thereof), which can

7 For the primary goods metric, see e.g. John Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, ed. by Erin Kelly, Cambridge/MA: Belknap Press 2001. For a defense of the capability metric, see e.g. Amartya Sen, "Human Rights and Capabilities", *Journal of Human Development*, vol. 6, 2005, pp. 151–166, and Martha Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities*, Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press 2011. For a normative perspective on the attribution of emission rights in the light of climate change, see e.g. Simon Caney, "Just Emissions", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 40, 2012, pp. 255–300.

be applied to social relations within states, but also to the world at large.⁸ Threshold standards require that every member of a given social context enjoys access to some minimum level of goods or wellbeing.⁹ Comparative standards determine to what extent social and economic inequalities between different members of a social context are compatible with justice.¹⁰ Regardless of the particular view that is expressed by a principle of justice, the choice of both the metric and the function is required for its precise formulation.

A *second* controversy concerns the *scope* of justice demands. In its early phase, the global justice debate was structured around the opposition of statist and cosmopolitan positions, which sometimes led to simplified portrayals suggesting only two alternatives: that we either limit the scope of principles of justice to the boundaries of the state, or that we apply strong egalitarian principles, such as those advocated by Rawls for liberal states, to the world as a whole. Meanwhile, the debate on the scope of justice demands has become more fine-grained. Most theorists – even the majority of thinkers who identify as cosmopolitans – assume that state institutions are an appropriate context of social justice. Most also assume that economic globalization provides a ground for additional principles of economic justice that transcend the boundaries of the nation state.¹¹

A *third* area of disagreement concerns the *grounds* of justice within and across states.¹² Relational (or “practice-dependent”) positions assert that different states and their citizens stand in “practice-mediated”¹³ relationships on which demands of global justice are founded. Non-relational (or “practice-independent”) positions, on the other hand, hold that norms of justice have global scope regardless of the exact shape of such relationships.¹⁴ So-called pluralist internationalist positions

8 For the defense of a global difference principle, see Beitz (1979), and Thomas Pogge, *Realizing Rawls*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1989.

9 For a paradigmatic defense of sufficientarianism, see Harry Frankfurt, “Equality and Respect”, *Social Research*, vol. 64, 1997, pp. 3–15.

10 John Rawls’ principles of justice fall in this category, since they call for equal liberties, equality of opportunity and for the maximization of the position of the least advantaged (see e.g. Rawls [2001]), but so does the large family of desert-based views, for example, which includes egalitarian as well as hierarchical views.

11 For a canonical exception, see: Thomas Nagel, “The Problem of Global Justice”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 33, 2005, pp. 113–147. For a critical reply, see Joshua Cohen and Charles Sabel, “Extra Rempublicam Nulla Justitia?”, *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 34, 2006, pp. 147–175.

12 For this terminology and the distinction of relational and non-relational grounds, see Mathias Risse, *On Global Justice*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2012.

13 Risse (2012), p. 8.

14 Implicitly non-relational arguments have for example been defended by: Allen Buchanan, *Justice, Legitimacy, and Self-Determination: Moral Foundations for International Law*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004; Stefan Gosepath, “The Global Scope of Justice”, *Metaphilosophy*,

have bridged the gap between these two camps by proposing that there are plural grounds of justice, of relational and non-relational kinds, giving rise to contextually different principles of justice, some of which solely apply to states whilst others apply across boundaries.¹⁵

A *fourth* controversy is situated on a meta-level, as it concerns the way we should fundamentally think about social justice and the value of equality. A number of influential thinkers have criticized a fixation with the idea of distribution in the Anglo-American debate on justice and equality. This criticism figures in Iris Marion Young's early critique of a "distributive paradigm"¹⁶ as well as in Rainer Forst's critique of a wrong "picture" of justice seen at work in certain contemporary views.¹⁷ It also figures in the defense of the idea of "social equality" (or "relational equality"), which has recently gained traction since being expressed in the writings of Elizabeth Anderson, Samuel Scheffler and Tim Scanlon, among others.¹⁸ According to these thinkers, the demand of equal treatment does not simply require equal *distributions* of whatever metric is justified in a given context. Rather, it requires the realization of egalitarian *social relationships* on a more fundamental level (which, however, comes with various contextual implications on the distributional level).

Having provided a brief overview of the current terms and controversies in the debate on social justice within and across states, I now offer a preliminary assessment. We need to consider both the practical importance of these controversies as well as what guidance different views on social justice may give to real world agents. These are no easy questions. However, it should be noted that there is ample potential for pragmatic agreement despite fundamental disaccord

vol. 32, 2001, pp. 135–159, or Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, and Species Membership*, Cambridge/MA: Belknap Press 2006, Ch. 5.

¹⁵ See e.g. Risse (2012). See also David Miller, *National Responsibility and Global Justice*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, for an earlier view that postulates different substantial principles of justice for different contexts, including the global sphere.

¹⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1990.

¹⁷ Rainer Forst, *Justification and Critique: Towards a Critical Theory of Politics*, Cambridge and Malden/MA: Polity Press 2013, pp. 17–37.

¹⁸ See, e.g. Elizabeth Anderson, "What Is the Point of Equality?", *Ethics*, vol. 109, 1999, pp. 287–337; Scheffler, "What Is Egalitarianism?", *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 31, 2003, pp. 5–39; T. M. Scanlon, *The Difficulty of Tolerance: Essays in Political Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 207. See also the contributions in: Carina Fourie, Fabian Schuppert, Ivo Wallimann-Helmer (Eds.), *Social Equality: On What It Means to be Equals*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015 and George Hull (Ed.), *The Equal Society: Essays in Theory and Practice*, Lanham: Lexington 2015.

in the above-mentioned areas. First, there is a broad consensus that schemes of social institutions, as opposed to individual interactions, should be the main object of principles of social justice, both within and across countries.¹⁹ And while philosophical disagreement about the grounds of justice will likely persist to some extent, pragmatic agreement concerning the metric, function and scope of principles of distributive justice is well within reach. Statists such as Thomas Nagel aside, proponents of comparative egalitarian as well as of sufficientarian standards of justice can both subscribe to a set of basic human rights as minimal standards of global justice, but for different reasons. Despite their different views on what is ultimately required by justice, they can agree that securing basic human rights in the global context represents a step towards greater justice, compared with the status quo. There is room for pragmatic agreement even concerning the fourth controversy. According to social egalitarianism, questions of distribution should be taken as neither absolute nor fundamental when thinking about how to reduce injustice. Instead, we ought to focus on how to render social relations more egalitarian. This insight does not render it futile, however, to focus on how to achieve more equal distributions in practical terms. Social egalitarians, too, will agree that the distribution of diverse benefits, burdens, rights and opportunities remains important – although these are only partial aspects within a more complex set of normative requirements that ultimately ought to track egalitarian social relations. What is more, as social and economic relations do not stop at state boundaries, social egalitarianism, too, must consider what justice requires within as well as across states. A more pragmatic conclusion is that, as long as social progress can be measured with pragmatically warranted, minimal standards of economic justice on which there is broad agreement, political agents can be pressured to comply with these, whilst the philosophical debate on what is fundamentally required by justice continues.

For these reasons it may be tempting to consider the contemporary debate on social justice with complacency, emphasizing the progress that has been made in terms of conceptual refinement as well as the potential for pragmatic normative agreement. Some might even be tempted to conclude that the debate has reached something like a natural end-point, with sufficient conceptual clarity and familiar normative disagreements on substantive questions. After all, such disaccord is found not only in philosophical debates, but also in the value pluralism within and across societies. I would argue, however, that the debate has not reached its end. The fault in such a diagnosis lies in the assumption that the remaining challenges stem from value disagreements rather than from

¹⁹ See e.g. Rawls (2001), Ch. 2, for the importance of the basic structure as subject of justice.

blind spots in the conceptual framework. However, as should become clear in the following, in order to justify judgments about who owes what to whom as a matter of social and economic justice, more conceptual work must be done.

3 The Problem of Relating Different Contexts of Justice

A theory of social and economic justice should be able to provide broad guidance for political agents. This must include guidance on how principles of justice that apply to one context (for example a single state) are related to principles that apply to other contexts (such as other states or the world at large), for example by providing rules for how agents should proceed in the case of a conflict. Closer inspection reveals that this is a complex requirement, and that theories of global justice have so far failed to provide sufficiently clear guidelines in this respect.

Economic and political events are highly interdependent in today's world. The implementation of policies and institutional reforms in the state context – including agricultural subsidies, monetary policy or energy policy, for example – can have profound and often highly problematic external effects. Political representatives are generally aware of such interdependencies, which go both ways. On the one hand, governments must take the externality of other states' policies into account if they want their own policies and reforms to succeed, as their effectiveness will often depend on external factors beyond their immediate control. For example, certain tax reforms may be effective in the counterfactual scenario of self-sufficient and insular nations, but not when property and income are mobile and tax evasion is rife. On the other hand, governments can and should take into account the external effects of their own decisions and actions. This applies to the financial, economic, and environmental dimensions of their actions. For example, governments should problematize legislation and policies that appear internally beneficial in the short run, but will result in a rise (or an insufficiently rapid decline) of greenhouse gas emissions, thereby contributing to dangerous climate change.

In a world as interconnected as ours, political agents cannot afford to ignore such externalities even if they are only concerned with furthering their own narrowly conceived interests. If governments are willing to constrain their actions in accordance with demands of justice (as they should!), then externalities represent a particular kind of challenge. This is because some measures may be conducive to internal social justice, e.g. raising the level of welfare or reducing economic inequalities, but have foreseeable negative effects and

repercussions in external contexts. Such a conflict between internal and external justice demands is not inevitable, however. There will always be some leeway for taking externalities into account in the realization of any chosen principle or set of principles of justice in a given social context. This is true for a wide array of principles, including threshold and comparative standards. Let's say a government of a country aims to equalize a set of capabilities for its citizens. There may be a way of achieving this goal through public policies that result in detrimental externalities for citizens of other states, such as in the case of policies that are environmentally harmful to outsiders. But it might at the same time be possible to achieve the same goal without causing such negative effects, or even in a way that has a clear positive effect on outsiders. The same is true for the realization of all other kinds of principles, as there are always multiple options for furthering justice through governmental policies. This means that there is no easy answer to the question of whether one specific means of realizing a principle of justice in a given context can really be justified as preferable to another policy that would achieve the same goal. Different contexts need to be systematically weighed and related to each other in order to make such judgements. This is a challenge for a broad spectrum of theories. In order to avoid a proxy discussion, I will not respond to this challenge from the perspective of any one theory of justice, but justify an approach that is applicable to and relevant for a larger number of theories.

4 Three Approaches: Bottom-Up, Top-Down, and Horizontal

In the following, I will lay out and discuss three competing approaches for relating and weighing different contexts of justice. In the process, I will criticize two models and argue for the adoption of a more plausible third one. My focus will be on the implications of these approaches for justice demands on *state governments* who are to be regarded as primary agents of justice, at least within the current state-centered international order.²⁰

According to the first model, the *bottom-up-approach*, social justice in the state context takes priority, and any external justice demands are subordinated. This prioritization is not a complete denial of the global scope of justice

²⁰ For such a view, see Onora O'Neill, "Agents of Justice", *Metaphilosophy*, vol. 32, 2001, pp. 180–195.

demands, as is characteristic of statism, for example. The bottom-up-approach, in contrast, acknowledges but subordinates demands of economic justice that transcend state boundaries. It postulates that acting in accordance with principles applicable to the state context should take priority over acting in accordance with any principles of international and global justice. It is not difficult to imagine cases in which this priority relation is implicitly or explicitly affirmed. Governments could regard themselves as justified in supporting their weapons industry by allowing exports to dictatorial regimes, if they believed this would contribute to furthering “justice” at home, perhaps by stimulating growth and job creation. According to the bottom-up approach, they could do this in full and conscious neglect of any harmful externalities. Or, to give a second example, powerful states could use their clout in negotiations on international trade agreements in order to prioritize certain goals related to domestic justice, even if this would be detrimental to poorer and less powerful countries. Or imagine a government that stops contributing to a successful global health initiative because it prefers to attribute these funds to its domestic health sector. Other such examples could be provided, but it should be clear how the bottom-up model would work in practice. Those institutional arrangements and policies that are most conducive to domestic social justice would take priority, judged from the perspective of state representatives. Demands of transnational and global justice would be binding only if they did not stand in conflict with the pursuit of domestic justice.

The superficial appeal of this model is easily detectable, but so are its flaws. The categorical prioritization of the domestic sphere allows for comparatively straightforward diagnoses as to whether a government acts in accordance with the demands of justice. However, it should be evident that this model is not an innocent grass-roots approach to global justice. It would perhaps be more plausible if states were more or less self-sufficient, offering mutual help and support to one another, but generating the benefits and burdens of social cooperation mainly through their own institutions, laws and policies. But such a scenario is clearly counterfactual.²¹ The bottom-up approach fails to take into account potent economic and environmental interdependencies as well as power asymmetries in the international arena. Giving categorical priority to the pursuit of national self-interest over global principles of economic justice would mean turning a blind eye to these negative externalities, and would affirm present power inequalities

²¹ It is characteristic for Rawls’s toothless theory of international justice that it fundamentally relies on this counterfactual assumption. See John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press 2001.

between states. Furthermore, the bottom-up approach will not guarantee collective self-determination for the citizens of states, because states' ability to fulfil their goals will continue to be significantly impacted by the decisions made by other states.

The *top-down-approach* represents a second model, and is in fact the exact opposite to the bottom-up-approach. According to this model, demands of global economic justice take priority in the case of a conflict. The sphere of the state is now subordinated, and social justice within this sphere may be pursued only if it does not interfere with implementing principles of global justice. As with the first model, the top-down approach may be combined with a variety of different principles of justice for both the national and the global context. It could for example be combined with a global difference principle, demanding that the position of the worst-off is to be maximized globally, but also with a sufficientarian standard, e.g. one that calls for the fulfillment of basic social and political rights across state boundaries. The implications would be radical even in this latter case – at least under current circumstances, in which a large part of the global population still lives below a threshold of welfare that might be considered sufficient. This is because according to the specific priority-relation that is affirmed by the top-down-approach, state representatives would not only have to arrange *international* institutions and treaties in a way that enhances the implementation of the global standard. They would also be obliged to arrange *all* domestic social institutions, laws and policies in a way that raises not only their citizens, but every human being, above the threshold. Meanwhile, the pursuit of politically or culturally more confined goals would have to be subordinated, which means that they could not be pursued to the extent that they threatened to interfere with the goal of realizing the global standard of justice.

It should be more or less obvious that the top-down-approach overshoots the mark. It does so in combination with any set of principles of economic justice for the global context. It is hard to imagine a model that would provide a starker contrast to the present state of political decision-making. In the absence of a highly centralized world government – as the political design that would provide the best fit with the top-down-approach – it is inconceivable that the governments of single countries would honor the requirement to subordinate *all* their political decisions to the demands of global justice (regardless of which concrete standard were used). One may say that being unrealistic in this sense does not suffice as a criterion for exclusion. However, most would add that this model is not based on an attractive political ideal either, as the almost complete loss of political autonomy for states and lower political units would be normatively undesirable.

The preceding criticisms of two models for relating justice demands within different social contexts have not only yielded a negative result. They also point to a

more convincing third model, which provides an appealing middle ground between the two extremes marked by the bottom-up and the top-down approaches. I will call it the *horizontal approach*, as this model is characterized by a non-hierarchical way of accommodating and relating justice demands that are attributable to different contexts. This approach would allow for significant external justice constraints on the structures of political decision-making in smaller political units. At the same time, it can accommodate legitimate demands for political autonomy in these units, although the ideal of collective self-determination can at best be partially realized in a world as economically and ecologically interdependent as ours. State governments must be seen as bound by norms of global justice without being entirely dominated by them. On the basis of the horizontal approach, they must be asked to enhance justice within the domestic and global contexts simultaneously, without attributing a simple priority to one over the other.

How can such compliance with both global and domestic demands be conceptualized more concretely? As discussed above, political representatives generally have significant leeway when it comes to the implementation of principles of justice in a given context (see 3.). Therefore, instead of prioritizing either global or domestic principles, governments can and should be asked to do their best to avoid a conflict in the first place. This is not an unrealistic requirement. Many reforms can contribute to domestic justice without changing the equation on global justice, such as in the case of measures that fight discrimination in the job market or in the educational sector. Other governmental decisions may involve win-win situations, such as renewable energy legislation that simultaneously reduces emissions and creates well-paying jobs, or poverty and inequality reduction in the domestic context that contributes to elevating some parts of the global population over a given threshold. With a horizontal approach, governments have a duty to comply with both kinds of demands whenever possible. The demands themselves must be substantively determined from the perspective of a comprehensive theory. For example, governments could structure social institutions at home so that they provide for egalitarian relationships by ensuring a comprehensive set of capabilities for their population, while complying with sufficientarian demands in the global context. In more general terms, this approach asks governments to ensure that justice at home is not achieved at the expense of external justice demands, nor vice versa. Instead they are required to compare different policy alternatives and to choose a route that would honor both internal and external justice demands simultaneously and horizontally.

There are three respects in which the horizontal approach is not yet a complete theory, however. The first is unproblematic, and has been already pointed out. In order to avoid discussion about the plausibility of different comprehensive views on justice, I have deliberately formulated the horizontal model so

that it applies to a broad spectrum of competing conceptions of social and global justice, which can vary greatly with respect to the four areas of discord sketched above (see 2.). Such methodological pluralism will hopefully not be considered as a deficiency, but rather a virtue, as the challenge to which the horizontal approach responds is indeed relevant for a broad spectrum of views. The second missing piece is more problematic, however. The horizontal approach is still underdetermined, insofar as there is a need for more specific criteria for *how* government agents should simultaneously comply with domestic and global demands of economic justice in cases where conflicts are unavoidable. To give one example: A government might currently be unable to reduce their country's overall greenhouse gas emissions to acceptable levels without a significant increase in injustice between its own citizens, perhaps because the burdens of transition would fall primarily on already-disadvantaged people. In order to determine what level of emissions would constitute a just compromise target, a fully-fledged theory of justice can be used to specify more detailed criteria. A third and related respect is partial compliance theory. The realization of any standard of global economic justice must be conceived of as a cooperative undertaking, which necessitates reform and creation of international institutions, next to efforts and sacrifices within the current institutional set up. Furthermore, international cooperation and institutional reform is required even when it comes to the goal of reducing inequalities and enhancing social justice in smaller political units such as the state. The example of tax policy shows this, as governments have repeatedly been unable to implement effective taxes on the rich in a unilateral manner, due to widespread tax evasion and fraud. Governmental and nongovernmental agents, as well as business agents and individuals, must contribute their fair share in the cooperative undertakings that are required by justice. Determining what different agents (collective and individual) ought to do in this respect will mean developing complex normative criteria that are applicable to different policy areas, such as climate change mitigation and adaptation, trade, finance, taxation and immigration. These criteria must also include considerations about responsibilities in a scenario in which some agents contribute less than their fair share, or even nothing, to the cooperative undertaking.²²

In a recent article, Charles Beitz also used the notion of a “horizontal approach” in reflections on developments in the contemporary debate on global

²² For general conceptual clarifications in this direction, see: David Miller, “Taking Up the Slack? Responsibility and Justice in Situations of Partial Compliance”, in: *Responsibility and Distributive Justice*, ed. by Zofia Stemplowska, Knight, Carl, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, pp. 230–245.

justice.²³ Beitz associates the “horizontal approach” with a shift from the abstract (“vertical”) to the more concrete (“horizontal”) level within the “third wave” of global justice theories, which have increasingly dealt with topics such as immigration, trade, finance, aid, development, or humanitarian intervention.²⁴ There is an overlap between Beitz’s and my terminology. The horizontal approach, as it is introduced here, implies that social institutions and government action must be evaluated in relation to a broad range of public policy areas. However, my usage is disanalogous to Beitz’s, insofar as the horizontal approach answers to the more specific problem of determining the relative weight of justice demands in different contexts.²⁵ The horizontal approach concerns the way in which governments balance different justice-based responsibilities related to a broad range of issues such as trade, finance, taxation, aid and development, immigration, and climate change mitigation and alleviation. Recall that state governments could also interpret these responsibilities in accordance with the competing bottom-up or the top-down approach – however inadequate these two models have turned out to be.²⁶ The current global justice debate has increasingly focused on various fields of application, which is a much-needed development. However, it comes with the inherent danger that, as specific theories are developed on climate justice, justice in trade or justice in immigration, for example, these will be treated as isolated concerns. The horizontal approach can help remind us of the need for an integrated outlook, as it treats such concerns as ultimately interconnected.²⁷

23 See these 5 in Beitz (2018).

24 On the concept of the “third wave” of theorizing on global Justice, see: Laura Valentini, *Justice in a Globalized World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011, p. 3; and Gabriel Wollner, “The Third Wave of Theorizing Global Justice: A Review Essay”, *Global Justice: Theory, Practice, Rhetoric*, vol. 6, 2013, pp. 21–38.

25 I have first used the term in an earlier German language article on the same topic. See: Valentin Beck, „Über den Zusammenhang von nationaler und globaler Verteilungsgerechtigkeit“, in: *Gerechtigkeit in transkultureller Perspektive*, hrsg. von Sarhan Dhoub, Weilerswist: Velbrück 2016, pp. 287–304.

26 A further difference is that the three approaches introduced here are mutually incompatible, in contrast to Beitz’s distinction between abstract (“vertical”) and more concrete (“horizontal”) levels of theorizing, which are not necessarily opposed, as Beitz himself notes.

27 For an integrationist perspective on climate justice, see Caney (2012). For an integrationist view on trade justice, see Andrew Walton, “Justice and Trade Policy”, in: *Routledge Handbook of Ethics and Public Policy*, ed. by Annabelle Lever, Poama, Andrei, London: Routledge 2019, pp. 202–213.

5 Concluding Remarks

Where do these results leave us when it comes to the question posed at the start, namely how to evaluate worldwide economic inequalities from the perspective of justice? In this article, I have focused on a challenge that is relevant for a wide range of views which otherwise differ on such central elements as the metric, function, grounds and fundamental interpretation of justice. In response, I have argued for the adoption of a horizontal approach, according to which international and global justice norms pose stringent external demands on state governments without subordinating domestic justice.

I would like to conclude with two observations. First, even though the horizontal approach does not represent a full-fledged theory for determining what collective and individual agents owe to each other as a matter of global economic justice, it nevertheless allows for a well-founded critique of existing practices in the international arena. Some governments entirely neglect the validity of global justice norms. Others, while acknowledging external justice demands, nevertheless illegitimately subordinate them to national concerns. Slogans such as “America First” are symptomatic of a widespread willingness to subordinate – if not completely ignore – external justice demands whenever they are perceived to be in conflict with national self-interest. Such behavior should be criticized, as the prioritization of internal concerns is unjustified. The horizontal model thus enables judgments about the injustice of current economic inequalities, even if more must be done to develop concrete guidelines about who needs to do what in order to achieve full compliance with the demands of justice. A second observation concerns the implications of my argument for theories of social justice in the domestic sphere. The fact that we so far lack the theoretical tools to fully determine what states ought to do as a matter of justice not only concerns the debate on global justice, which is still a comparatively young body of theorizing. It equally concerns the philosophy of justice within states, which has a much longer tradition. According to the argument advanced here, domestic and global economic justice are irreducibly interdependent. This has profound consequences for the evaluation of inequalities in smaller political units such as the nation state. This insight is predominantly diagnostic, but may ultimately contribute to more comprehensive reasoning on what collective agents ought to do as a matter of justice, all things considered.²⁸

²⁸ For their very helpful feedback on earlier incarnations of this paper, I'd like to thank the organizers and participants of the conference on “Justice in Transcultural Perspective” in Kassel in 2014 as well as of the “Global Justice” conference in Hangzhou in 2017. In addition, I'm grateful to Elise Hedemann for extremely helpful comments and editing services.

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