

**Are there any Global Imaginaries  
of Equality and Democracy  
in Discussions about Inequality?**

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## **DFG Research Center (SFB) “From Heterogeneities to Inequalities”**

Whether fat or thin, male or female, young or old – people are different. Alongside their physical features, they also differ in terms of nationality and ethnicity; in their cultural preferences, lifestyles, attitudes, orientations, and philosophies; in their competencies, qualifications, and traits; and in their professions. But how do such heterogeneities lead to social inequalities? What are the social mechanisms that underlie this process? These are the questions pursued by the DFG Research Center (Sonderforschungsbereich (SFB)) “From Heterogeneities to Inequalities” at Bielefeld University, which was approved by the German Research Foundation (DFG) as “SFB 882” on May 25, 2011.

In the social sciences, research on inequality is dispersed across different research fields such as education, the labor market, equality, migration, health, or gender. One goal of the SFB is to integrate these fields, searching for common mechanisms in the emergence of inequality that can be compiled into a typology. More than fifty senior and junior researchers and the Bielefeld University Library are involved in the SFB. Along with sociologists, it brings together scholars from the Bielefeld University faculties of Business Administration and Economics, Educational Science, Health Science, and Law, as well as from the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) in Berlin and the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. In addition to carrying out research, the SFB is concerned to nurture new academic talent, and therefore provides doctoral training in its own integrated Research Training Group. A data infrastructure project has also been launched to archive, prepare, and disseminate the data gathered.

## **Research Project C5 “Conceptions of Global Inequality in World Society”**

This project deals with the emergence of a global semantics of inequality within world society. Through three comparative case studies it traces how ideas about global social inequality that draw on various aspects of heterogeneity have developed in international organizations, both programmatically and on the policy level. In addition, the project is particularly interested in the question of whether it is specific global discourses, e.g. on issues of justice, the climate, environmental protection, security etc., that serve as the main vehicles for the emergence of such a global semantics of inequality.

The main project goal is to describe shifts in semantics of inequality in world society and to map this shift in a detailed fashion in the context of the case studies. In particular, these case studies focus on reports, statistics, and policy statements of three international organizations (World Bank, UNDP, OECD). Changes in notions of inequality, which are reflected in semantics have effects on how ‘progress’ in development is quantified, and it has a tangible effect on the projects and measures of international organizations. These semantics emerge within a cycle of communication between national and international, public and private actors concerning problems in economic and social development.

The text corpus to be analyzed includes development-related reports, statistics, and policy statements of international organizations. These are supplemented by reports, policy proposals, and working papers (“nonpapers”) written by administrative units within the organizations. Negotiation protocols will be analyzed in order to determine how specific ideas have gained entry to and shaped the semantics of inequality. In this process, the project will seek to identify more directly the different actors involved in the formation of particular notions of inequality, most particularly organizational staff, representatives of member states, representatives of other governmental and nongovernmental organizations, or experts from the academic community. These groups of actors do not only participate in the formation of certain ideas on inequality, but to some extent are also addressees of specific measures or proposals, e.g. member states which benefit from a programme and who then possibly also adopt these notions of inequality within their own programs and policy formulations. Such an approach is also able to account for the influence of NGOs on the forms of observation and the subsequent policy formulations by international organizations.

## **The Author**

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## **Are there any Global Imaginaries of Equality and Democracy in Discussions about Inequality?**

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### **Abstract**

With reference to a global (democratic) imaginary, the paper studies how the issue of inequalities is discussed in empirical global and international inequality debates. While the established social inequality literature assumes a positive relationship between national democracy and equality, this relation cannot easily be transferred to the global realm. That makes a study about global inequality interesting for the idea of a global democratic imaginary. In order to show how (or if at all) questions of democracy have entered inequality analyses the paper explores the ideas put forward in experts' accounts and global development programmes. The concepts raised there include definitions of what constitutes inequalities, the specifics of a global context, the strategies envisioned to overcome inequalities and, at least implicitly, the normative framework that allows for a definition of inequality as a relevant object of international politics.

**Key Words:** Social inequalities; social imaginary; global debates; democracy

## 1) Introduction

Not least until the publication of Thomas Piketty's influential volume 'Capital in the Twenty-First Century', which raises the issue of massive wealth disparities in modern societies, inequalities have experienced renewed public interest. Even the IMF has acknowledged that inequality has become one of the most pressing concerns of our time (IMF 2007). Political activism of groups like "Occupy Wall Street", (other) globalisation antagonists or the Spanish "Indignados" has drawn further attention to the problems attributed to the enormous ridge between rich and poor, symbolised by the richest 1% and the remaining group of "we are the 99 percent". While not always made explicit, underlying criticism and fear of the repercussions for democracy also arose from the variety of protests that did not remain limited to some countries, but further spread to many regions of the world. Yet, how can we make sense of the complexity implied in the identification of wealth and income inequalities as societal problems? And, since the issue seems to be relatable for a growing number of people worldwide, what is their global dimension?

On a global scale, inequalities have often been addressed in regards to income distribution and in the context of poverty. The problem of various forms of inequalities has, moreover, been identified as a key issue of global development policies, at least with respect to future considerations as the post-2015 process, for which recommendations of the High Level Panel include an inequality agenda (HLP Report 2013).<sup>1</sup> In fact, the idea of 'global inequality' has been an item of lively discussions for more than two decades, often in the context of global development agencies. But what does that entail? What makes inequalities a global concern? Or, in other words, how are inequalities embedded in global imaginaries? The answer to these questions includes a definition of what constitutes inequalities, the specifics of a global context, the strategies envisioned to overcome inequalities and, at least implicitly, the normative framework that allows for a definition of inequality as a relevant object of international politics. With regard to these latter normative concerns, the relevance of inequality for ideas about (global) democracy could be construed – intrinsically, there is no direct link between global inequality and democracy. Yet, against the background of theoretical and political debates about global justice, global governance or (cosmopolitan) democracy ideas the issue of inequality could be seen as an ingredient, counterpart or normative point of reference.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In several interviews conducted with members of UNDP, UN-DESA and other UN agencies, the importance of inequality debates for the new round of global development goals was underlined by all interviewees (interviews conducted in New York in April 2014).

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of normative approaches towards „global egalitarianism“ see Kaya/Kebea 2011.

With reference to the question of (global) democracy, the paper will try to show whether and how ideas of (in)equality serve as vehicles for the emergence of a global imaginary. The relation to democracy, for now, is a fictitious one: while democracy literature postulates that equality is a necessary condition for democracy (of votes, for instance, e.g. Lipset 1959) and the established social inequality literature assumes a positive relationship between national democracy and social equality (Esping-Andersen 1990), this relation cannot easily be transferred to the global realm. Nor has it been a main or even explicated concern for the majority of inequality experts. Coming from inequality studies, this makes a study about the idea of a global democratic imaginary an interesting endeavour.

In order to approach the idea of a global imaginary from the perspective of global/international inequality studies (if such a field exists beyond an analytical appropriation) this paper deals with ideas of inequality experts, which are briefly introduced in order to map the terrain of possible normative claims, and with documents issued by development organisations, particularly by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which exemplify a policy-oriented source of a global inequality discourse. Since the main interest of this paper is to focus on empirical contributions to (in)equality debates, the material is illustrative of different strands of a larger discourse. While slightly over-determined in terms of analysis, the semantics of global inequalities deserve further attention in the context of a possible imaginary of global democracy. The sources for this enquiry include almost exclusively empirical inequality studies instead of contributions from equality or democracy theory and philosophy.

In one regard, semantics produced by global development agencies can be conceived of as major influences in the (re)production of world society – in that they help to define the global sphere as a "single sociopolitical space on a planetary scale" by taking into account social inequalities (Bartelson 2010: 219). Putting certain issues on the agenda and offering solutions that can only be delivered by them and on a global scale, international organisations have regulated the discourse of specific problems and purported the imaginary of a world community concerned by these problems. Most explicitly debates about inequality and global democracy could be traced by looking for normative claims, e.g. about equality, participation, etc. But how are ideas of equal subjects and subjectivities within global governance structures and processes, i.e. as preconditions of global democracy, reconciled with the actual semantics of global inequality? How can we even account for the equality imaginary on an all-encompassing global scale – and is this truly being done? For the sake of this paper (at its



early stage), I will concentrate on imaginaries of equality, which might at least loosely relate to ideas about global democracy and serve here as proxies of a certain kind of semantics.

## **2) World Society and Global Imaginaries**

Globalisation theories, debates about the global (political) economy and particularly global governance paradigms build on a global imaginary. A global imaginary, in this understanding, can be seen as one of various social imaginaries that constitute and are constituted by (social) subjectivities and societies (Glynos/Howarth 2007). Most generally, social imaginaries – which are only briefly introduced here – are commonly held assumptions that help people to make sense of complexity. Going beyond cognitive processes, imaginaries can be metanarratives of modern society in that they reconcile great varieties of information to a more or less consistent perspective. “Our social imaginary at any given time is complex. It incorporates a sense of the normal expectations that we have of each other; the kind of common understanding which enables us to carry out the collective practices which make up our social life. This incorporates some sense of how we all fit together in carrying out the common practice” (Taylor 2007:172)

In dealing with great ideas such as “liberalism” or “democracy”, social imaginaries serve to make them relatable and to find shared meaning. In terms of global relations, imaginaries can help to bridge abstract notions of globality to convey some sense of community, in whatever form it may exist. Going beyond the functional realm of global politics, the debate(s) about global inequalities – in all their variants – are at their core also concerned with the broader question of a global imaginary of equality. This will be the more abstract focus of the paper. While seldom spelled out or even deliberated explicitly, some equality ideal is implied in all accounts of global inequality – we learn about them either through contra-factual reasoning or by contextualising inequality debates within conceptual or even philosophical traditions they refer to.

The reason for getting interested in the equality imaginaries inferred by inequality accounts is that they constitute another way of getting a differentiated picture of the semantics of global inequalities. Here, a potential equality imaginary serves as an analytical dimension to distinguish between different perspectives on inequalities. While in their extremes philosophically determined, ideas about achieving equality can be grounded in more practical matters, too. Whether equality should be achieved in terms of equal outcomes (e.g. as

household or individual income) or in terms of life chances for individuals can be very basic questions of where to allocate resources and who to focus on in development strategies.

The production of an image (or *imaginary*) that allows for making sense of complexities caused by and enacted in global processes is based on a close relation between semantics and the structuration of social affairs. As a concept of the Global, world society refers to "(...) the worldwide fields of interaction whose smallest units are its individual members. It is, therefore, more comprehensive than the concepts of an international or intergovernmental system (...)" (Heintz 1982: 12). World society, could be argued, can be seen as both a factual description of global affairs and the way subjects try to make sense of various changes produced in and through global processes. As Peter Heintz holds: "This shift emphasises the idea that world society is a fact of life, i.e. people live with this fact, and in order to do so they produce or simply adopt an image of world society as a means of orientation" (Heintz 1982:11).

According to World Society theories, semantics are constitutive for enabling action; they contribute to the transformation of communication into action in offering structures of meaning that pre-structure action (Stäheli 1998:323). Semantics of global inequalities, to rephrase the argument, express certain understandings of world society and at the same time shape a certain form of reproducing inequalities. Thus, the imagery itself helps to sustain world society in that it creates a cognitive framework for systematising information. Against the background of this function, the paper aims to deepen our understanding of these semantics of global inequality and of the specific premises and presuppositions that are incorporated in them.

Images of a world society can be formed, for example, on the basis of communications by global agencies, such as international organisations, often taking the form of standardised information like statistics, reports etc. (e.g. Heintz 1982: 18). Similarly, world society emerges from a global process of modernisation and rationalisation that co-emerges with the universal availability of so-called "world cultural models": "[...] models, organised in scientific, professional, and legal analyses of the proper functioning of states, societies, and individuals, are more cognitive and instrumental than expressive" (Meyer and Boli and Thomas et al. 1997: 149). Accordingly, there is the notion of processes within the global realm that can (and need to) be described within a framework of societal relations, both by analogies derived from sociological research and in general societal terms. As an object for social science, global inequalities can be seen as a distinct phenomenon, reproduced in a distinctive debate, both mirroring and deviating from what we know as research and

experiences with social inequalities in the nation-state container. Income or, more broadly speaking, economic disparities, as several academic studies have demonstrated, evolved in the course of the late eighteenth through nineteenth century (Clark 2007; Firebaugh 2003). Colonialism and imperialism caused or at least accelerated disparities between states (and people) of the world. Again, with regard to their global character, "macro-determination" is most likely the cause of global inequalities in the sense that disparities between the states and people of the world are considerably larger than between subjects of one state, due to unequal (e.g. exploitative) relations between global subjects. Finally, with regard to the idea of global social imaginaries, it could follow that conceiving of the world in terms of global inequalities presupposes to some extent imagining a world society (as a referent object for conceiving of the world), i.e. as a "social whole" (Albert/Buzan 2013), because it would make little sense to talk about them otherwise. Here we find the link to the general idea of global imaginaries, including ideas of global democracy or equality. Following the trail of a close interrelation between semantics and imaginaries, some insights might be gained about the normative underpinnings of a global debate about inequalities.

### **3) Grasping inequality**

Inequality research has had a long tradition, mainly in sociology, and sociologists have long accepted the idea that identifying inequalities has less to do with normative judgments than analytical observation. Accordingly, whether subjects recognise inequality, to phrase it differently, is not decisive. Yet, agreeing on what counts as an inequality is the result of various discursive processes in society. Preparing the ground for fighting inequalities is almost invariably the consequence of identifying them; in that regard, even the analysis of inequality is a matter of justice. In sociological terms, in the times, for instance, before women were regarded just as able and entitled to work (and get paid) as men, gender inequality existed, but was not addressed as such – it was simply not seen as an issue relevant for justice deliberations. And even when it became that, the political issue to overcome inequality was not easily solved.

Recalling the question of *global* inequalities and their relation to democracy, we have to remind ourselves how difficult it has been to attempt overcoming unequal relations even within the confine of states and how difficult it is to make specific inequalities political issues. If unequal conditions of, for example, access to education, between men and women, rich and poor, and so on remain firmly rooted in domestic spheres, how can we even expect to translate the question of inequality to the global realm? What do we need to assess

equality/justice in the global sphere? And how would a horizon of equality be addressed if inequality is already so difficult to identify?

Relating to these issues, a classical question in accounts of global inequality is: inequality between whom? Between states? Nations? People? People within states (e.g. Sen 1992)? And if so, how are they related to the global? These questions can be posed similarly with regard to the democratic (i.e. equality) imaginary within the sphere of the global. Accordingly, in the tradition of thinkers that have dealt with the utopian thought of global democracy/equality there are also those who have tried to conceptualise and normatively deal with global inequality. The perspectives differ in many regards, particularly in their inexplicit assumptions about equality. There is no easy heuristic that accounts for the causal relationship between equality/inequality and democracy, much less even on a global scale. Democracy theory has spelled out expectations of various forms of implied and necessary equalities, e.g. equality of votes, participation, access to institutions etc. (e.g. Lipset 1959). Inequality research, often anchored in the belief in the benefits of the welfare state, assumes a positive link between democracy and reducing inequalities (Esping-Andersen 1990). Summarising these two assertions very shortly, one would hold that democracy needs equality, while inequality has the potential to harm democracy and the other would hold that democracy can be one factor in reducing inequality, mainly via redistribution.<sup>3</sup> Which way causality runs and how democracy can become an independent variable in this equation has been hard to prove, though (Gradstein/Milanovic/Ying 2001).

As stated above, this is even less simple in the global realm. Proponents of global justice, global democracy or cosmopolitanism see several (in)equality dimensions, including participation (i.e. representation), equal access to global institutions etc. as relevant (Nussbaum 2004), but conversely, discussions of global inequality have hardly been concerned with democracy. More even, they have not been concerned much with equality, either. Where they have, these considerations often raise larger societal implications, both domestically and internationally, sometimes even globally. However, while it is clear that observations of inequality on a global scale must by logical deduction be similarly or even more pronounced than within the nation-state, we know that even within the assumed best case of a liberal democratic welfare state, ideas of overcoming inequality and achieving justice are problematic. Even thinking about equality seems to start making sense only when and after certain markers (such as gender, race, class etc.) are explicitly conceptualised as

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<sup>3</sup> However, recent discussions about the relationship between democracy, capitalism and (in)equality suggest a much more complex relation (Milanovic 2013; Economist 2014).

categories that describe heterogeneity but are not necessarily rationales for implementing or even justifying unequal politics in the global realm. Defining inequalities as such is thus a political act – and one that necessitates the will to address these inequalities through political action.

In the context of development and inequality, the concepts introduced by Branko Milanović or Francois Bourguignon and others have been highly influential, particularly when equating inequalities with income inequalities as measurable quantities that allow for cross-country as well as within-country comparisons and assessments. However, while sometimes defined as “global,” inequality is often seen as “international,” i.e. mean-income comparisons between countries. Today we find a close inter-linkage of inequality with poverty issues, both as outcomes of unequal relations and reasons for continued inequalities (Greig et al. 2007). In that regard, we can already see the complex nature of clearly defining inequalities, which can be seen as outcomes, as pointing to exclusion mechanisms within (world) society or to structural conditions within states. What makes them global is either the composition of empirical samples (e.g. household data) or (depending on that) the attempt to generalise comparisons as broadly as possible. In order to learn what some of the major works on inequality tell us about their ideas in this context, we will now look at a (rather eclectic) collection of different publications from well-known authors. Since they are often read, we can count them here as potentially part of the overall semantics of inequality, although not systematically concerned with their global dimension.<sup>4</sup>

While not overly concentrated on the political dimension of inequalities, bestselling author Thomas Piketty gives at least some hints as to the consequences of lasting inequality: “Under such conditions, it is almost inevitable that inherited wealth will dominate wealth amassed from a lifetime’s labor by a wide margin, and the concentration of capital will attain extremely high levels – levels potentially incompatible with the meritocratic values and principles of social justice fundamental to modern democratic societies” (26). Pointing to wealth rather than income inequalities, Piketty connects the ideas of *meritocracy*, i.e. the importance of (unequal) individual performance, and social justice, i.e. a state of social peace based on high levels of perceived justice, to the functioning of modern democracies. Here, causality runs from the danger of inequalities to the foundations of democracy, supplemented by the idea of liberal competition between people within democracies, which is hindered by growing wealth inequality.

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<sup>4</sup> The selection of these texts is rather preliminary and only for the sake of this paper, i.e. not representative but illustrative.

Sociologist Zygmunt Baumann refers to various dimensions of inequality, mainly those that lead to growing exclusion from society, including those that Piketty raises: “(...) to a steadily growing extent, the task of gaining existential security – obtaining and retaining a legitimate and dignified place in human society and avoiding the menace of exclusion – is now left to the skills and resources of each individual on his or her own; and that means carrying the enormous risks, and suffering the harrowing uncertainty which such tasks inevitably entail. The fear which democracy and its offspring, the social state, promised to uproot has returned with a vengeance. Most of us, from the bottom to the top, nowadays fear the threat, however unspecified and vague, of being excluded, proved inadequate to the challenge, snubbed, refused dignity and humiliated...” (2011: 18). Here, social peace, cohesion, inclusion are – by logical presupposition – seen as properties of democracy, which come under threat when inequalities grow. Also, what Baumann alludes to is the problem of individual struggle (e.g. ‘carrying the enormous risk...’ etc.) versus the assumed collective responsibility within democracies (similarly Young 2001).

Turning to the famous ex-World Bank economist Joseph Stiglitz, we find one of the main linkages between inequalities and democracy by looking at the overall economic logics that produce inequalities in the first place and their consequences for states that fail to implement them. Stiglitz cites the examples of over-indebted countries (current cases include debt-ridden Greece and Italy) that are almost turned over to the power of the International Monetary Fund and undermine their democratic regimes by adhering to IMF proposals.<sup>5</sup> Massive cuts in the health sector, for instance, which the IMF had demanded, did not serve public interest and damaged the welfare system of Greece, thus also weakening domestic control and democracy (2012). Another aspect relevant in this context is the reproductive self-generation of inequalities, supported by the spread of market liberalism. Giving the example of the IMF that tried (successfully) to prevent the election of later president Lula, Stiglitz criticises the involvement of global agencies in domestic policies – for reasons of upholding a global dominance of (neo)liberal market logics against the redistribution goals Lula envisioned for Brazil. Thus moving to the international/domestic nexus of inequalities and democracy, he ties in with both democracy debates and debates of global inequality.

Lastly, Stiglitz stresses how the dominance of some actors in world politics has already shifted the global balance, while failing to implement what they preach, so that it is difficult to see the benefits of following the example of leading Western democracies anymore: “The

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<sup>5</sup> Milanovic similarly talks about the downside of ‘technocracy’ that may ‘appear benign, led by people of unimpeachable integrity, but it nevertheless arises as a counterpoint to democracy’ (2014).

management of globalization requires global agreements, in trade, finance, investment, the environment, health, and the management of knowledge. In the past the United States had enormous influence in shaping these agreements. We have not always used that influence well; we have often used it to advance some of our special interests, aiding and abetting the rent-seeking activities that play such a large role in the creation of inequalities. Although in the early days of modern globalization, that was not fully grasped, today it is. There is a demand for a change in the governance of the global economic institutions and arrangements, and, combined with the new balance of global economic power, changes are inevitable. Even then, our influence is likely to remain large, almost surely disproportionate to our population or our economy. But the extent to which the global economy and polity can be shaped in accord with our values and interests will depend, to a large extent, on how well our economic and political system is performing for most citizens. As democracies have grown in many other parts of the world, an economic and political system that leaves most citizens behind – as ours has been doing – will not be seen as a system to be emulated, and the rules of the game that such a country advocates will be approached with jaundiced eyes” (2012: 180-181). This reversal of perspectives from global to domestic to global shows that a close relationship exists between the two spheres that goes both ways.

In Stiglitz’ account perhaps the most insightful statement about the relation between democracy and global (in)equality is how global relations are organised – namely unequally (e.g. as lacking “balance of global economic power”), undermining attempts at global governance and spreading democracy. Importantly, Stiglitz underlines how the global polity (potentially democratic in the future), which is modelled on domestic forms of democracy that currently fail to deliver what they promise, is weakened by these failures. The mixture of normative and factual arguments, I would hold, characterises most accounts of the detrimental effects of inequality on democracy.

Other recent discussions feature similar questions, mainly stressing the detrimental effects of (rising) wealth and income inequalities on the substance of democracies (Acemoglu et al. 2014), i.e. “the distribution of de jure power in society, policy outcomes and inequality”. Income inequality experts like Branko Milanović have long stressed the importance of the middle class in these equations, claiming the mediating effects middle classes have as voters, for instance, on the tax system (holding that the richer prefer low taxes and the poorer want high taxes because of redistribution effects), but pointing to the decrease of middle class influence due to rising inequality that benefits the rich disproportionately (2013). Various other contributions to the debate about inequalities and democracy raise similar issues.



Whilst it would be difficult to extract a clear heuristic from the claims raised by various inequality experts, I will try to generate some assumptions about the potential linkages between (in)equality and democracy. One, we can assume a vital role of the middle class as a mediating group that has the potential to shift politics to either support the richer or – more likely – the poorer members of society. Two, inequalities are not least produced by the globally pervasive (neo)liberal market logic that undermines democracy and reproduces itself through a global discourse that favours compliance with the dominant logic over domestic concerns about democracy. Three, inequality hollows out the promises of the democratic state, e.g. inclusion, social justice, even voter equality (if, for instance, states like the US impose no limits on individual donations to parties). These assumptions also imply reverse causality, i.e. causal influences of democracy on (in)equality; at least normatively, it is presupposed that democracy can mitigate inequality (even though empirical findings are somewhat ambiguous).

All in all, the often economic framing limits the potential systematic linkages of in/equality and democracy. Yet, beyond the functional concerns about inequality harming the mode of operation in democracies some normative concerns can also be discerned, particularly with regard to individuals' chances of societal inclusion and meritocratic rewards. If we revisit the ideal of a world societal social whole, we could assume that a global imaginary should allow for connecting equality concerns to democracy concerns to analytical ideas about inequality, but in various causal relations – not dissimilar from what we find in this cursory study of the inequality literature. If we slightly modify the perspective now to look at accounts not from economics but the broader social sciences, does the picture change?

#### **4) Setting the Agenda – global inequality//global equality**

The question of global inequalities has been raised by various approaches towards global relations. Global politics and international law, so far, have mainly stressed the formal dimension of sovereign equality, which builds on codified equal relations between legal subjects, i.e. states, and ignores differences in capabilities such as populations, resources, size of territories etc.. Ngairé Woods (1999), therefore, calls it: *foundational equality* because it can be embedded in the history of decolonisation and be seen as an achievement of colonial states to gain a formally equal status in international politics. The idea of equality, thus, is limited to the level of states and their legal interactions. More substantial equality, however, would concern the economic ability of a state to guarantee the survival or even well-being of its citizens. This idea mattered, for instance, in World System theory, which is firmly rooted



in Marxist critique and explicitly concerned with asymmetries in the economic (and political) affairs of the states of the world (Wallerstein 1974), pointing to exploitative relations between them.

In many recent publications a very powerful dimension of global inequalities is income (Gilbert and Vines 2000; Subramanian 2008). In the context of global income inequality the concepts introduced by Milanović (particularly his three measures of inequality, e.g. Milanović 2005, 2011) and others have been highly influential. Income inequalities are introduced as measurable quantities that allow for cross-country as well as within-country comparisons and assessments. Beyond income, many other goods – human rights, political freedom, participation in global institutions, access to basic infrastructures (health care, education, housing etc.), and inclusion into welfare systems – are also distributed very unevenly between and within nation states, and can therefore be regarded as varying the opportunities and capabilities of human beings (Sen 1999, 2005; Sen and Manna 2002; Robeyns 2005).

How individuals are affected by environmental degradation or diseases, and how they gain access to education, health care, and other infrastructures for their well-being, depends – mainly – on the conditions within states (for a systematic illustration: McGillivray and Markova 2010; Crow and Lodha 2011). Yet, individual situations depend on structural conditions, which vary across states, so global comparisons are usually made between individuals in their respective contexts, focusing on the inequality of opportunities. For instance, the introduction to the 2006 World Development Report compares the lives of children in different geographical (and social) contexts to demonstrate how their futures will be affected by where they grow up (World Bank 2006). Statistically at least there is a sense of the socio-spatial disparities between individuals, making sense of inequality by drawing on global comparisons. Generally, inequalities in a global framework can refer to different issues and different subjects, broadly distinguishable as either inequality of outcomes or opportunities (also see UNDP 2014: Ch. 1). Depending on their objects, the referent subjects vary, thus also affecting what global equality imaginary is envisioned.

In order to understand the reasons for talking about inequality as a global issue it is important to address the historical context of these inequalities and its retelling in the academic literature. As a semantically broad concept, ‘global inequality’ is also defined as ‘international and inter-class inequality’ (Sutcliffe 2007: 69) or as ‘spatial disparities’ (Kanbur and Venables 2007: 204). Pertaining to global institutional settings and power disparities (Pogge 2007) as well as justice (Fraser 2007), global inequalities are mostly defined in terms of

income, but sometimes, more broadly, also in terms of well-being (Decancq 2011). Identifying economic or development inequality with reference to the global is a historically rather recent phenomenon. As the main categories addressed in accounts of these inequalities usually relate to wealth and general levels of economic development on the country level (i.e. the individual state), they mostly describe unequal distribution in highly abstract terms. The goods concerned are not individually owned but collective goods (for example national wealth), referring to various kinds of resources and, in consequence, to the life and health of populations. The common findings of these studies indicate that economic inequality between states began to arise in the mid- to late eighteenth century, declined in between, and has been on the rise again since the 1980s (Firebaugh 2003; Clark 2007). This story, in a way, builds on comparing zones of wealth and their subjects and relates inequality broadly to location within the world.

Another finding in this regard asserts that economic development in some of the contemporarily more negatively affected regions of the world (China, Africa, etc.) was a motor of global economic growth before imperialism and colonialism reversed the roles (Martell 2010). Critics of contemporary inequality studies have complained that major political interventions such as imperialism and colonialism are often ignored in historical accounts of world inequalities, even though they contributed systematically to creating and sustaining these inequalities (Williamson 1997). Notably, global inequality has been defined in terms of differences in economic development for a long time. Particularly in the post-World War II era, 'development' became a metanarrative of divisions in the world (Crow et al. 2009). 'Rich' vs. 'poor', 'developed' vs. 'underdeveloped' (nowadays mostly reconceptualised as 'developing') became categories and frames of reference for observing the world of nation-states (Seligson and Passé-Smith 2008). Going beyond the idea of development in purely economic terms, however, the order of developed vs. less (or not at all) developed states of the world also implicitly creates hierarchical relations that would be mitigated through the support of development policies.

In the world of the 1950s and 1960s, the underlying idea of modernisation beyond the confines of the nation state, as a guiding paradigm for overcoming different levels of development (Rostow 1960) also served to divide the world into socio-spatial zones – the First, Second and Third 'worlds'; the included and excluded; the givers and the receivers, etc. More implicitly, the idea of 'development', still valid until today in the realm of global governance and international organisations, has also dealt with inequalities on a global scale. As the logics of 'development' and 'modernisation' spread, particularly when the colonial

empires dissolved (e.g. Wimmer/Feinstein 2010), Western ideas about good social order were transported to the rest of the world. Even though decolonisation enabled the common myth of sovereign equality, its end marked the beginning of an era dominated by the same states as before and their international organisations. In this context, it is important that official understandings of national sovereignty had tightly been coupled to ideas of development already in the context of the League of Nations (Anghie 2002), making sovereignty a precondition for substantial development.

Conversely, the new formal equality of all nations as subjects of international law found expression in development thinking. Future “material” equality between developed and developing nations was expected to complement the already existing formal equality as sovereign nation states. In this way, present inequalities were to a higher degree perceived as contingent and changeable. They were now seen as a random product of unequal speeds of development paths. Over the course of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, this contingency of inequalities increased rather than decreased, since not only development was seen as a possible path, but also the relative decline of states to lower level of development. Examples of this trend were seen in the cases of Latin American and Eastern European states in the 1980s and 1990s.

We thus observe a convergence of global and international inequality ideas with concepts of modern class structures in that they both conceptualise upward and downward mobility of individuals or groups. They describe inequality as mere inequalities of characteristics of their units, but not as the social relations between them. With the process of decolonisation and foundation of many new nation states, development and modernisation became master concepts for describing global relations. Unequal development statuses started to matter, thus making levels of modernisation and welfare structural models of world society. For instance, extreme divergences in national wealth between formally equal nation states were discussed and regarded with great concern in the UN, since they potentially constituted a source of world political conflict (Stokke 2009). These semantics are again present in global accounts of extreme international wealth/income disparities (Melamed 2012). Even though global equality remains mostly tied to the formality of international law, some more substantive ideas have mostly addressed economic disparities in spite of political (i.e. formal) equality.

In the logic of different levels of economic development around the globe, the most pertinent inequality dimensions are limited to resource inequalities, rarely extending the focus of comparison from its units (states) to individuals and their life chances. The identification of inequalities in that regard seems to simply derive from a comparison that seeks a complete sample of all states around the globe and can be strongly driven by the availability of data.

Inequality is measured in terms of differences between states and at times even framing these differences in terms of hierarchy between the developed and underdeveloped. To the point of negating the status differences between industrialised and newly independent states in global politics, development itself is used as the measure for inequality, externalising the reasons for inequality to the (development) efforts of single states. Inequalities are seen as global because the world serves as the conceptual framework for comparisons between states in different stages of economic development.

Some accounts conceptualise the global as a discursive sphere where certain ideas – such as neo-liberalism and/or the market economy – are disseminated and gain convincing power and political relevance (similar to Stiglitz’s criticism, see above). Such accounts depict inequality as a result of processes of globalisation, which are claimed to be in the hands of powerful states that are able to set the agenda. The localisation of inequality, although caused by global processes, is mostly domestic (Nederveen Pieterse and Rehbein 2009). While the causes of increasing inequality are seen in the neo-liberal, technology-based character of globalisation affecting all, the forms of inequality – social, political, spatial – vary across the globe (Ludden 2006: 7). Inequality is portrayed as having multidimensional features that are all to some extent interwoven with global processes, but experienced by individuals in domestic settings.

There is some dispute as to whether poorer countries benefit from integration into a globalising economic order or experience its more detrimental effects (for the latter position: Basu 2005; Jomo 2005; Nederveen Pieterse and Rehbein 2009). Proponents of the first thesis hold that globalisation has fostered economic growth and national welfare (as set out controversially by Dollar and Kraay 2002, befittingly in the *Journal of Economic Growth*; also Dollar 2005, 2007). Critics counter that this can only be accepted under the presumption of the benefits that liberalism and the Washington Consensus have brought – but that this presumption must be profoundly criticised (Firebaugh 2003; Wade 2004, 2007; also Sutcliffe 2007).

More generally, these effects of globalisation can be linked to the question of how global inequalities came about. Both postcolonial authors and proponents of post-Marxist or world-system theoretical approaches have pointed to the involvement of Western, colonial states in the making of conditions that have led, and still lead, to massive inequalities between the states of the world (e.g. Dirlik 1994; Frank 2008; Herkenrath and Bornschier 2008). Critical schools like *dependencia* and world-systems theories also push formulas for understanding global inequality, mainly in terms of centre and (semi-) periphery relations between regions and states of the world (e.g. Wallerstein 1974), putting forward a decidedly global perspective

(also: Kapoor 2008: Ch. 3 and 6). As a rule, according to these accounts, inequalities can be identified in their domestic context; however, they are reproduced in global processes and at times also analysed as a global phenomenon.

Very broadly, two dimensions of (in)equality imaginaries can be derived from these (briefly introduced) accounts.

1. Historical dimension: In most accounts that means colonialism divided world into colonisers and colonised, affecting how resources could be accessed and used, resulting – partly – in today's unequal power and economic relations (e.g. centre-periphery relations). These can be found in states but also between states, for instance in unequal voting rights, seats or participation chances in global organisations. Similarly, representatives of the *dependencia* movement or theorists concerned with global justice claims see an economic world order that created asymmetric interdependence, which in turn is regarded as the main reason for inequality that needs to be overcome. Inequality here is seen as a structural feature of global relations – equality, thus, would mean overcoming massive economic disparities, getting rid of exploitative and asymmetric interdependencies as well as empowering developing states.

2. Globalisation dimension: According to other accounts, globalisation has potentially increased the gap between rich and poor countries as well as the rich and poor population within states. What is more, unequal participation in economic globalisation, unequal participation and political weight in global institutions have been enforced by globalisation. Also, globalisation has challenged the state-centrism of the last centuries, but not replaced states by any other subjectivity that is equally relevant in questions of global equality. Globalisation – in the sense of a (neo)liberal world polity – is seen as a dominant logic that interferes with established domestic processes. Equality imaginaries would envision a strengthening of alternative logics that could be diffused globally, resilient domestic models or the establishment of global institution to counter negative effects of globalisation beyond the realm of inter-state affairs.

Finally, drawing on the global inequality literature that is linked to development policies of strong international organisations, the last chapter will show how empirical claims about inequality/equality play out with regard to global policies.

## 5) Negotiating... Inequality and Equity

For reasons of feasibility, ensuring political support and compatibility with existing profiles international organisations have concentrated on dealing with inequality rather than the trickier and perhaps even more normatively loaded equality. As of the late 1990s, “global inequalities” became an issue within global development discourse (Kanbur and Lustig 1999), mostly due to technical achievements that made the allocation and comparison of household data in an almost global sample possible, thus enabling an idea of “global” inequalities – in their definition as income disparities of the world (Dollar and Kraay 2002; Firebaugh 2003; Wade 2004, 2007).

The dominance of an income- or wealth-based understanding of inequality is inherent in many publications using the label ‘global inequality’, particularly since “(...) the most sensible definition is the same as for a country: line up all the people in the world from the poorest to the richest and calculate a measure of inequality among their incomes” (Dollar 2007: 84; italicisation by authors). With regard to global inequality, one reason for framing inequality in terms of outcomes instead of other dimensions of social life may be the enormous task of overcoming poverty. It is no coincidence that global inequalities are often used interchangeably with income inequalities. While imminently reductionist when seen against the background of various forms of social inequality, outcome inequality is inherently linked to global poverty. While earlier works of international inequalities like Midgley’s (1984) study of Social Security, Inequality, and the Third World have no systematic understanding of inequality as global, later works (Hurrell and Woods 1994; Kaplinsky 2005; Greig, Hulme and Turner 2007; Held and Kaya 2007) reaffirm the closely interrelated nature of inequality beyond the state and its global(isation) dimension. Also, the link to poverty is very strong, stressing the need of global organisations to get involved – i.e. as the link between ‘global governance, poverty and inequality’ (Berry 2010; Clapp and Wilkinson 2010). This strand of inequality conceptions is interested mainly in the inequality of outcomes. Another line of research on inequalities with a background in global development concerns the unequal life chances of people and the uneven distribution of goods all over the world.

Within an economic framework but reconceptualising the overall idea of development economics, the ‘capabilities’-approach introduced by Amartya Sen is a seminal one, and it is closely integrated into the politics of UNDP and accordingly the global development discourse. His well-known perspective is based on a formulation of (pre)conditions for a good life, i.e. individual chances for equal opportunities. Sen’s categories of ‘entitlements’, ‘capabilities’ and ‘functionings and freedoms’ indicate the chances for individual success – i.e.

as dignified and good living – under unequal conditions (Sen 1992); inequality is thus defined in terms of unequal opportunities for each human being insofar as individual freedom to live a decent life is threatened by an unacceptable level of inequality, and measures to overcome or at least mitigate these inequalities have been linked to the overall ideas of poverty reduction and human development.

Against the background of UNDP's central concept of 'human development', inequality here refers to the varying degrees to which 'entitlements', 'capabilities', and 'functionings and freedoms' can be realised (Sen 1992; Robeyns 2005). Translated to questions of global scale, Sen's approach has been taken up in various UNDP Human Development Reports and served as a major frame of reference for assessing inequality. A central development measurement tool like the Human Development Index and various gender-related indices, including the Gender Inequality Index (HDI), are based on the notions of inequality developed by Sen (and to some extent Nussbaum, e.g. Nussbaum 2004, who, however, remains critical of some of these concepts), indicating their centrality. The HDI was explicitly intended to reject the sole focus on income in inequality approaches and instead concentrate on what Mahbub al Haq termed 'people-centrism' (Stokke 2009: Ch. 11).

The capabilities approach is not decidedly opposed to a social outcomes perspective, but offers a broader alternative framework for recognising inequalities and pointing to ways of ameliorating them. Furthermore, thinking in terms of Sen's approach shifts the focus from outcome equality to an equality of opportunities perspective concerned with individual life chances rather than national income. Here, we find an equality imaginary that is firmly embedded in liberal traditions of guaranteeing equal chances for everyone, accepting unequal outcomes if starting conditions were equal for everyone. The logic implied is different from concentrating on equalising outcomes, both where actual policies and imaginaries of equality are concerned.

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Sen's approach ties in with ideas of equity in development. As both a normative framework and derivative of liberal theories, equity deals with concepts of equal life chances, equal concern for people's needs and the idea of meritocracy (Jones 2009). As a comprehensive



agenda for improving people's lives under conditions of extreme global poverty, climate change and globalisation, equity has become an alternative framework of conceptualising inequalities and ways to overcome them that is in line with broader ideas of poverty-reduction, economic growth and development. Most generally, the idea of equity entered the World Bank's agenda as one of the larger conceptual points of reference for structuring its fields of employment:

"The World Bank's antipoverty work has spurred it to grapple with the complex notion of equity, which includes human welfare, prosperity, and quality of life as well as income distribution and human rights (though this is rarely mentioned frontally, the issues that underlie human rights concerns are much in discussion within the World Bank). The contemporary World Bank is thus deeply engaged in all three challenges: reconstruction, development, and equity" (Marshall 2008:24).

In contrast to debates about global income inequalities, the idea of equity corresponds to a people-centred view that reconceptualises global inequalities as inequalities between individuals in their respective contexts. The often-used metaphor of "levelling the playing field" is relevant here, in that solutions to inequity need to tackle structural conditions and individuals in order to help them overcome constraints. Equity centrally points to the justice dimension of differences between starting conditions ('level playing field') and outcomes, accepting a certain level of unequal outcomes based on efforts and talents as just if equal opportunity to achieve them could be guaranteed (World Bank 2006). While biased towards creating conditions for some form of (fair) competition, unequal outcomes also play a role in as much as they affect vital inequality, i.e. threaten the minimum level of basic needs (Jones 2009). Taking up some of the discussions in other poverty-related fields within the Bank, such as health, education and gender (e.g. 2004 World Development Report: Making Services Work for Poor People), the 2006 World Development Report (WDR) entitled 'Equity and Development' sets the agenda for an integrated understanding of inequality and the anti-poverty politics it is linked to. The report pays attention to the 'persistence of inequality traps by highlighting the interaction between different forms of inequality' (World Bank 2006). It shows that inequality of opportunity is wasteful and inimical to sustainable development and poverty reduction. It also sets out policy implications on the broad model of 'levelling the playing field', both politically and economically and in both the domestic and the global arenas. In broadening the debate to 'equity' concerns, the report moves away from outcome-based inequality policies and towards a more individual focus. Drawing on ideas by Rawls, Dworkin, Roemer and others, the normative anchor of the ideas put forward in the publication is the well-being of individuals. Still a key point of reference for the World Bank's stance on



inequalities, the 2006 report introduced an understanding of inequality compatible with the overall ideology of the organisation, i.e. linking it to development policies.

However, when discussed with regard to the global arena, equity seems to be a tricky topic as yet; clear definitions and conceptual clarifications, for instance how inequity relates to inequality, are not abundant. More even, focussing on conditions instead of outcomes, unequal outcomes can be accepted if empowered individuals lack the ability to achieve what they should be able to, whereas they can also be condemned on the other hand, namely when the playing field is not level, to stay within this popular metaphor. In the above quote, both income distribution and welfare are included in the definition of equity, making it difficult to distinguish between outcomes and opportunities. Thus, equity still leaves ample room for conceptual interpretation, while at the same time shifting the focus in development policies to the well-being of individuals.

The idea of 'equity' has entered and is now embedded in the debate of global inequalities. Its specific context is also reflected in the 'shared prosperity' paradigm that now guides the World Bank's anti-poverty policies as one of its key goals (World Bank 2013). In the 2006 World Development Report as well as in other publications this concept was added to discussions of global inequality (for discussions of the World Bank Report as well as others of the same year see Cling et al. 2005; Anderson and O'Neil 2006; Jones 2009), indicating both a mainstreaming attempt and perhaps a reflection that shortcomings of earlier approaches needed to be tackled. In a broader sense, we also witness a switch to the individual and the conditions of equity, changing (or extending) the focus from equal outcomes to equal opportunities for each individual. In relation to discussions of global inequalities, this does not result in a general renunciation of previous understandings of inequality as unequal distribution of income or wealth. Instead, we can identify both a mixture of these two motifs in one debate and a different debate altogether.

Thus, the perspectives on global inequalities offered by the latter approaches (capabilities approach, equity, global justice) could serve to identify equality imaginaries in a more explicit way than the more conventional (utilitarian) outcome-based global inequalities concept. While income-distribution approaches are concerned with equal outcomes, other perspectives focus on individuals as subjects of (in)equality, approaching them with clear goals of improving their lives. As alternative perspectives on global inequalities that are not seen as being (solely) based on the distribution of income and wealth, equity and justice approaches point to an imagined global community of people and, apparently, take a more comprehensive outlook on different forms of inequality that can be found even from a global perspective.

Mainly, we can discern relations to the liberal aspects of democracy as well as social justice concerns, but neither of them explicated or contextualised in regards to democracy in general. Nevertheless, the global social whole, while inclusive of individuals, can also be imagined on the basis of states that can be compared; the HDI, for instance, can be applied to individuals within states, to intra-household income inequalities, and to comparisons between states. To remind us, the main (or perhaps hegemonic) interpretation of the semantics of 'global inequality' is anchored in an understanding of income disparities between countries, but (perhaps increasingly) equity concerns have become part of these discussions. How global inequalities feature in the semantics of the World Bank will be analysed in the next section of the paper.

The most recent flagship publication on global inequality, issued by UNDP, is the 2014 report on 'Humanity Divided: Confronting Inequality in Developing Countries'. In addition to both the 2005 'Aid, Trade and Security in an Unequal World' Human Development Report (HDR) and a more recent issue of the annual HDR (2011) it is concerned with questions of inequality contextualised in the broader framework of development aid and the debate about Human Development. It ties into the global debate on key development issues, providing new measurement tools, innovative analysis, and policy proposals. The global Report's analytical framework and inclusive approach carry over into regional, national, and local Human Development Reports, also supported by UNDP. The 2011 report is one of a number of reports dealing with equity and/or inequalities, introducing the new, inequality-adjusted Human Development Index.

The 2014 report refers to the main debates mentioned above, demanding to go beyond the separation between the two types of inequality, since "inequality cannot be effectively confronted unless the inextricable links between inequality of outcomes and inequality of opportunities are taken into account" (UNDP 2014:4). Observing inequality trends in a global setting, however, it calls for domestic measures, e.g. labour market and tax system reforms, bridging the various levels involved to propose a highly politicised approach. As a consequence of criticising the respective shortcomings of both outcome and opportunity approaches (UNDP 2014: Ch.1), a new convergence of causal understandings and measures is introduced in the report that takes up the challenges issued by the 2006 World Development Report and pushes them even further. Again, we are reminded of the global to domestic arguments that relate both spheres closely, focusing on the latter as grounds for policy changes, while also acknowledging the influence of the former.

With regard to democracy, the report highlights the damaging effects of inequality: “High inequality undermines development by hindering economic progress, weakening democratic life and threatening social cohesion. High and growing inequality is not only intrinsically unfair; it also makes the achievement of widespread human well-being more difficult. This is particularly true if we adopt a multi-dimensional definition of well-being that goes beyond material aspects of life to include relational and subjective well-being. Evidence shows that, beyond a certain threshold, inequality harms growth and poverty reduction, the quality of relations in the public and political spheres of life and individuals’ sense of fulfilment and self-worth” (UNDP 2014:3). Well-being, social cohesion and – in other sections of the report – political participation as well as redistribution are seen as the main goods endangered by high levels of inequality. Yet, all of the mentioned goods are seen as primarily domestic, even though the focus on inequality is based on global comparisons.

In sum, as an alternative perspective on global inequalities that are seen as either based on both the distribution of income and wealth, or on the life chances of individuals, this approach points to an imagined global community of people and takes a rather comprehensive outlook on different forms of inequality.

## **6) Conclusion**

Clearly, democracy could be a bigger issue in global inequality studies – based on what he analysis unearths, it does not seem to be a central issue. Even less so are ideas about global equality or global democracy, perhaps not surprisingly. And yet, some interesting observations can be made that concern the imaginaries transported in the semantics of global inequality. Firstly, what we can learn from the slightly cursory look at the literature, there seem to be rather unclear expectations towards democracy. Those ideas are often intermingled with ideas about social welfare, liberalism (i.e. meritocracy), justice etc. that are not necessarily part of general definitions of democracy but attributed to be benefits of modern democratic states. Following from that, a global imaginary could be built on an extrapolation of both normative and empirical claims, yet isn’t.

Secondly, where one could point to a tendency of not systematically featuring the whole range of material dimensions in global democracy ideas (excepting some equality theorists), one could similarly identify a lack of equality/democracy links in inequality studies, even though they often make normative claims – that are to some extent hidden behind their empirical claims. The main difference – also affecting what equality imaginaries could be derived from

the combination of empirical and normative ideas – is the difference between inequalities between individuals (i.e. equal opportunities, capabilities, equity) and inequalities of outcomes, often rooted in structural inequalities (i.e. “set of reproduced social processes that reinforce one another to enable or constrain individual actions in many ways”, Young 2001: 2), i.e. global power disparities. However, the latter are rarely addressed as relevant in the context of inequality, with the exception of post-colonial and Marxist writers, no global imaginary for structural equality exists. At most, those accounts that take up the negative repercussions of globalisation in the form of economic processes plus the diffusion of world cultural models of liberal market logics (e.g. Stiglitz 2012) are telling with regard to global inequality studies. Even though they do not spell out the idea of a global social whole and remain tied to a nation-state logic, they see close inter-linkages between a global and the domestic polity – which could imply some sort of global imaginary concerned with inequality between its constituents. Although not explicitly concerned with global equality (and even less with global democracy), both debates within inequality studies can be seen as highly topical with regard to a global imaginary (democratic or not). In claiming that credibility on both the domestic and global level is needed (e.g. Stiglitz, Milanovic etc), they establish a common logic for both spheres. Since ideas of domestic justice and global justice are thus related to each other (for instance, via criticising the US for not offering a better role model of democracy and less inequality), they could enable a global imaginary that refers to a common “world culture”, i.e. liberalism, growth etc., which is compatible with the main ideas of World Society studies.

In sum, coming from an overview of empirical inequality literature, the main divergences as concerns the global are material; the imaginaries implied in this literature do not concern global democracy, but (implicitly) more equality, which in turn could ease way towards more democracy-friendly global relations. The empirical material used in this paper does not help to give any conclusive answer to the question of a global democracy imaginary, but if we see equality as an important factor for modern democracies, it can be seen as one step towards an approximation to global democracy semantics. Particularly since the challenge of growing inequalities for the functioning of democracies may become politically influential (e.g. as indicated in Obama’s re-election campaign, the poverty reports in European countries etc.), it could be worth pursuing the question further.

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