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# GLOBAL SOCIAL JUSTICE

Edited by Heather Widdows  
and Nicola J. Smith

RETHINKING  
*Globalizations*



# Global Social Justice

*Global Social Justice* provides a distinctive contribution to the growing debate about global justice and global ethics. It brings a multi-disciplinary voice – which spans philosophical, political and social disciplines – and emphasises the social element of global justice in both theory and practice.

Bringing together a number of internationally renowned scholars, the book explicitly addresses debates about the scope and hierarchies of justice and considers how different approaches and conceptions of justice inter relate. It explores a diversity of themes relating to global social justice including globalization, human rights, ecological justice, gender and sexuality, migration and trafficking, global health challenges, post-conflict resolution and torture.

*Global Social Justice* will be vital reading for anyone interested in the political/philosophical theories and practical issues surrounding global social justice, including students and scholars of Political Science, International Relations, Philosophy, Global Ethics, Environmental Studies, Development Studies, Human Rights Law and Global Studies.

**Heather Widdows** is Professor of Global Ethics at the University of Birmingham, UK. She is Lead Editor of the *Journal of Global Ethics* and author of *Global Ethics: An Introduction* (Acumen, 2011). She has also published widely on issues of global justice and global ethics.

**Nicola J. Smith** is Senior Lecturer in Political Science at the University of Birmingham, UK. She has published a variety of articles on globalization and social justice and is the author of *Showcasing Globalisation: The Political Economy of the Irish Republic* (Manchester University Press, 2005).

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# **Global Social Justice**

**Edited by Heather Widdows  
and Nicola J. Smith**

# For Clara & Tom

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# 1 Global social justice

## An introduction

*Heather Widdows and Nicola J. Smith*

This volume aims to provide a distinctive contribution to the growing debate about global justice and global ethics. The global justice debate is one of the key contemporary ethical debates. It is important not only in academia where it is increasingly dominant in moral and political theory as well as gaining prominence in law, sociology and public policy, but also in practical debates in the ‘real world’ in determining global policy and practice. Accordingly this book brings a multi-disciplinary voice – which spans philosophical, political and social disciplines – and emphasizes the social element of global justice in both theory and practice. Contributors to this volume come from a variety of disciplines, such as Political Science, Philosophy, Sociology and Law, in an attempt to ensure that the book does not just speak to some issues in the global justice debate (although it certainly does this), but also has something to say to the wider debates about how global justice should be conceived. In order to do this it explores a diversity of themes relating to global social justice including globalization, human rights, ecological justice, gender and sexuality, migration and trafficking, global health challenges and torture. In all chapters contributors have attempted to speak beyond their disciplines and to be accessible and relevant. The hope is that the sum of these chapters will be significantly more than their parts as they draw connections between themes and issues as well as across disciplines. The resulting volume is intended to map global social justice at its broadest and to move the academic debate forward as well as to help develop policies and practices which result in global social justice.

The global justice debate has become increasingly prominent in academic, policy and activist circles. In academia this is, perhaps, most notable in the increasing emergence of global ethics as a discipline (Widdows 2005, 2008). Perhaps the most fundamental concern of global ethics is global justice. Core global ethics questions are; ‘what is justice?’, ‘can duties of justice be global?’, and ‘how can we practically move towards a more just world?’.

There has been increasing emphasis on justice in recent decades – in political philosophy traceable to Rawls’ influential 1971 work, *A Theory of Justice*. This work moved justice up the agenda in political philosophy. In parallel, in moral philosophy, a revival of applied ethics was under way and the last few decades have seen a phenomenal expansion of all areas of applied ethics, including bioethics, climate ethics, corporate social responsibility and business ethics. The

combination of these two developments in political and moral theory has resulted in global ethics – which dissolves the traditional divide between ‘justice’ and ‘ethics’ and connects individual duties with institutional responsibilities. The result has been a renewed interest in global ethics and in its primary concern for global justice. Key global ethics thinkers who have been at the forefront of this debate include Gillian Brock, Simon Caney, Nigel Dower, Darrel Moellendorf and Thomas Pogge (Brock 2009; Caney 2005; Dower 2007; Moellendorf 2002; Pogge 2008).

Global ethics draws on many disciplines, theoretically most heavily upon moral and political theory (although legal and social theories are also highly influential). It is a response to the dilemmas of globalization and the need to address injustices that span national jurisdictions and spheres of influence. Globalization, understood broadly as the increasing interdependence of global society economically, socially, culturally and politically, has created global dilemmas that require global solutions: dilemmas that cannot be addressed within individual nation-states or single jurisdictions. Into this set of global issues one can place many contemporary political and ethical dilemmas, including the ‘war on terror’, rogue states, child labour, torture, scarce resources, trafficking, migration, climate change, global trade, medical tourism, global pandemics and humanitarian intervention. In addition, just as global dilemmas transcend categories and borders – for example, environmental concerns connect with those of development and economics, which in turn impact on political concerns for migration and citizenship – global ethics offers a framework that spans and connects these areas of ethical concern. Three distinctive features of global ethics are emerging: first, it adopts the globe as the proper sphere of all ethics; second, it is fundamentally multidisciplinary; and third it is committed to combining theory with policy and practice.

This book speaks to all these key areas of this global ethics and justice debate. It addresses the scope of justice – options considered, explored and critiqued include distributive justice (Chapters 3 and 4); rights frameworks (Chapters 2, 5 and 8); cosmopolitan political approaches (Chapters 3, 4 and 9) as well as considering whether it is sufficient to consider justice only in the political and social context or if personal issues of identity, such as those arising from gender and sexuality should be included (Chapters 10 and 11). In addition to considering the scope of justice, primary dilemmas of global justice are addressed, including torture (Chapter 7); the right to health (Chapter 8); the environmental crisis (Chapters 5 and 6); and trafficking (Chapter 9). This broad approach does not begin with a disciplinary-limited or issue-limited definition of global social justice, but rather follows the issues and the concerns where they lead. Accordingly it maps the actual contours of global social justice in order to move the theoretical debate on and to provide a more realistic account of global social justice. In addition and more importantly, it hopes by taking this broad approach, to show the connections between areas of injustice and the ways the injustice is entrenched and experienced, in the hope that it also speaks to policy and practice.

## The book ahead

A prominent theme in debates about global social justice is whether globalization mitigates against, or creates new possibilities for, the pursuit of social justice. In 'The globalization of human rights', Leslie Sklair addresses this complex issue by distinguishing between 'generic' and 'capitalist' globalization. Generic globalization, he argues, encompasses a range of intersecting 'moments' (electronic, postcolonial, spatial and cosmopolitan), all of which have opened up unparalleled opportunities to promote universal civil, political, social and economic rights. For example, the electronic revolution has dramatically widened and deepened people's access to a variety of different and new forms of communication media from radio and television to mobile phones and the internet. Such developments have, in turn, both made it more difficult for governments to hide human rights abuses from their own populations and from the rest of the world, and made it easier for political opposition against such abuses to be mobilized. Yet, as Sklair notes, there are also tensions and paradoxes at work, for the historic dominance of capitalist globalization also serves to undermine such opportunities. In particular, capitalist globalization not only subordinates human rights to the culture-ideology of consumerism – i.e. whereby our identities and values are increasingly bound up with what we buy – but also restricts human rights to the civil and political spheres – i.e. by conceiving of such rights principally in terms of freedom from state interference.

In contrast, Sklair advocates a two-fold alternative. First, he emphasizes the need for the nurturing of a culture-ideology of universal human rights in which universally agreed rights and responsibilities – rather than consumerism – become the foundation for the way in which people live their lives. Second, Sklair urges that such rights and responsibilities should no longer be bracketed off from the economic and social sphere but, quite the contrary, explicitly should incorporate issues such as people's access to adequate shelter, healthcare, education and employment. By shifting the basis of our values from the attainment of possessions to the advancement of comprehensive human rights and responsibilities, Sklair contends, we can begin to address two central crises – those of class polarization and ecological unsustainability – both of which will have, and are having, profoundly damaging consequences for human rights across the world.

Kostas Koukouzelis also considers the status of socio-economic rights and duties with respect to global justice in his chapter on 'Liberal internationalism and global social justice'. As he notes, theories of global justice have tended to shift in focus from issues surrounding crimes against humanity and war crimes towards a concern with distributive justice – or, as Malm (1991: 187) puts it, from 'negative' duties not to *cause* harm to 'positive' duties to *prevent* harm. Such theoretical developments, Koukouzelis suggests, have occurred in response to a variety of real-world changes that, crucially, have highlighted the need for global solutions to global problems. These range from environmental pollution and sustainability to massive increases in poverty and inequality on a world-wide scale. For Koukouzelis, the social and economic inequalities associated with the expansion

of global markets pose particular challenges for liberal internationalist theories of distributive justice. Engaging with John Rawls' *The Law of Peoples* (1999b) and Thomas Nagel's *Storrs Lectures* (2005) in particular, Koukouvelis argues that liberal theories tend to share a commitment to distributive justice as applying *only* within the confines of the nation-state. Thus, whereas 'negative' duties are deemed universal, 'positive' duties are deemed to apply only within national borders. This, however, rests upon the essentially arbitrary application of distributive justice – that is, one's access to distributive justice relies solely upon whether one has been fortunate enough to have been born in a wealthy rather than poor country. For Koukouvelis, this represents 'domination without interference, a form of tyranny that crosses state boundaries and makes people dependent on the arbitrary choices of others through the influence of non-individuated effects'.

In contrast, Koukouvelis draws from modern republican political theory to advance a notion of distributive justice based on 'non-domination'. This is based upon the explicit recognition that human beings do not experience conditions of relative freedom/unfreedom and power/powerlessness in isolation from the wider political and economic system in which they are situated. Quite the contrary: global relations are 'far from voluntary', thus highlighting the need for a cosmopolitan approach to social justice that acknowledges the membership of all people to a global, rather than simply national, community. Consequently, Koukouvelis emphasizes the need for normative interdependence entailing a commitment to the eradication of inequalities across the world, regardless of their origin.

Luis Cabrera, too, addresses questions of normative interconnectedness from a cosmopolitan perspective. Like Koukouvelis, his principal concern is with the need for a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across national borders, with the lives of individual human beings – rather than the interests of states – treated as morally primary. As Cabrera notes, this raises a key issue for cosmopolitan political theorists, which is that of moral motivation: that is, how can we both recognize and discharge our moral duties towards those 'distant others' who live beyond our local, national or indeed regional communities? This problem of 'moral distance', Cabrera argues, raises both theoretical and practical issues. In theoretical terms, the central question is whether or not we owe strong duties to people who are geographically or relationally distant from us (such as non-citizens). In practical terms, the key question is how we might then go about overcoming the barriers preventing us from discharging such duties – and not just logistical ones (such as transportation) but also psychological ones. For example, abject individuals (the homeless, unauthorized immigrants, and so on) might be physically proximate to us and yet are treated as relationally distant.

Global social justice has been dominated by philosophers with abstract arguments and perspectives on the tension between ethical issues and these human rights issues in practice. Methodological concerns about how to undertake empirical research have thus rarely taken centre-stage in normative debates about global justice. Significantly, Cabrera's theoretical discussion of moral distance leads him to address head-on the question of methodology. In particular, he argues that

qualitative research methods can represent valuable tools for addressing issues of perceived moral distance by helping to make ‘more vivid’ the lives and humanity of excluded others. Simply put, qualitative research can help to render visible those who are otherwise invisible and, in so doing, can make it much more difficult to ignore and dismiss their humanity, status and concerns. More specifically, Cabrera considers the ways in which an ‘archaeology of borders’ approach – involving the random collection of everyday artefacts – can offer a means to document the humanity of actually existing human beings who are otherwise anonymous and excluded. Drawing on his extensive fieldwork at migrant pick-up sites in southern Arizona, Cabrera offers an illustration of such research through discussion of the assorted artefacts – bottles of cologne, personal documents, letters and so on – that have been dropped by migrants told to abandon such items by their guides. Combined with in-depth interviews with migrants themselves, Cabrera argues that ‘[p]resenting the life circumstances of those others, and giving them voice with which to share their own perspectives, can make it more difficult to blithely dismiss their claims for forms of inclusion’.

Having addressed some of the core theoretical issues of the scope of justice we now move to some of the key issues within global social justice. Arguably the most significant challenge to our contemporary world is that of the environmental crisis. While the environmental challenge affects everyone, those who are likely to disproportionately suffer are the already poor and marginalized: for instance, underdeveloped countries without the infrastructure and technologies to mitigate the effects of environmental catastrophes. Unjustly those who largely created the economic crisis and benefited from oil-fuelled economies are likely to suffer less than those who did not benefit and have largely suffered from a lack of development. This important ethical dilemma is addressed in the [Chapters 5 and 6](#).

In [Chapter 5](#) Simon Caney emphasizes the need for an equitable approach to duty and justice with respect to environmental concerns. Focusing on the pressing issue of greenhouse gas emissions, Caney contends that the continued high levels of emissions are not only having a disastrous impact on the planet’s climate but also are creating serious and long-term consequences for our basic human rights. These include the human rights to health and to subsistence but also – more fundamentally – the human right to life itself. Caney, therefore, contends that there is a clear moral imperative to prevent dangerous climate change from taking place, which in turn raises questions about how to limit greenhouse gas emissions in a way that is fair and equitable. For, as Caney notes, the right to produce emissions cannot be divorced from the burden of responsibility to limit the production of such emissions, so that all relevant actors must bear their ‘fair share’. And, as he observes, it is the developed – and not the developing – countries that historically have been responsible for by far the greatest proportion of energy-related carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Indeed, although the greatest increases in emissions are coming from developing countries, their emissions on a per capita basis are still comparatively low. As such, it is not just the rights to *create* emissions but also the duties to *prevent* such emissions that should be distributed as fairly as possible,