ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

SOCIAL JUSTICE:

CONCEPTS, PRINCIPLES, TOOLS AND CHALLENGES

Mona Khechen

New York, 2013

13-3045

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social justice is a normative concept centred on the notion of fairness and the principles of equality, equity, rights and participation. This paper sheds light on some of the underlying theories and fundamental elements of social justice. Specifically, it focuses on the principle of participation given its centrality to a number of tools that are conducive to the implementation of a social justice agenda. Tools covered include: (a) social policy and social protection and taxation systems; (b) inclusive economic growth; (c) participatory spatial planning; (d) socially responsible corporate behaviour; and (e) communitarian ethics and civic engagement. Moreover, the paper underlines certain key challenges faced in achieving social justice in Arab countries, particularly the challenges of integrating the social and economic dimensions of development and implementing governance reforms.

I. CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

There is no generally accepted definition of social justice. The contemporary understanding of this normative concept has its roots in political philosophy, but different disciplines – including sociology, social psychology, law and jurisprudence, and human geography, among others – have contributed to its theoretical underpinnings and to defining its fundamental elements. This section does not offer an extensive review of the different paradigms and conceptions of justice. Rather, it focuses on the writings of some key theorists whose work is deemed relevant to informing the debate on inclusive development and social justice in the Arab region.

A. THE DISTRIBUTIVE PARADIGM

Mainly influenced by the writings of John Rawls, one of the most important political philosophers in the second half of the twentieth century, the notion of social justice, today, is often linked with the idea of distribution. Yet, prevalent conceptions of distributive justice are divided between theories that limit distributive issues to such material goods as income and resources and theories that explicitly expand them to include such material and non-material goods as rights, opportunities, power and self-respect.

Rawls' theory of social justice mainly stems from the concern to achieve a socially just distribution of "primary social goods". As he describes them, social goods are "things that every rational man is presumed to want". These, according to his broad categorization, are rights, liberties, opportunities, income, wealth and self-respect. In his book, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls associates justice with fairness ("justice as fairness") and defines the "primary subject of justice [to be] the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation".[1] By major institutions, Rawls means "the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements".

To this end, he advances the ideas of "procedural justice" and "distributive justice", with the former being a prerequisite to the latter and the latter an essential requirement to achieve social justice. More specifically, Rawls' conception of distributive justice is based on the concern to compensate individuals for their misfortunes and "alter the distribution of goods and evils" in society, something that he treats as a collective social responsibility.[2] This is very much linked to his idea of "the public culture of a democratic society". Rawls stresses that justice as fairness in society involves "a fair system of cooperation between free and equal persons". To him, this is the most basic and intuitive idea implicit in the political thought of democratic societies.[3]

Likewise, other major contemporary political and moral theorists, including David Miller, Walter Garrison Runciman and William Galston, have conceptually associated social justice with the idea of distribution. Broadly speaking, their concerns cover what needs to be distributed and the patterns of distribution. David Miller links social justice to "the manner in which benefits and burdens are distributed among persons, where such qualities and relationships can be investigated".[4] Ruciman considers the problem of social justice to be that "of arriving at an ethical criterion by reference to which the distribution in societies may be assessed".[5] A more elaborate definition is provided by William Galston, who defines social justice as follows:[6]

---

[1] Rawls, 1971.

[2] Arneson, 2007.

[3] Rawls, 1985.

[4] Miller, 1976, p. 19.

[5] Runciman, 1978, p. 37.

[6] Galston, 1980, p. 5.

"[…]the appropriate assignment of entities to individuals; appropriateness encompasses both the relation between some feature of entities and individuals under consideration and the relation between those entities and possible modes of assignment. The domain of entities may include objects, qualities, positions within a system, or even human beings."

Theorists of the distributive paradigm also seem to agree that "the pattern of distribution" is an ethical issue that requires moral judgment on the types of claims that individuals can stake to social goods. According to Rawls and other theorists, claims fall under one of the following criteria: (a) inherent equality; (b) valuation of services in terms of supply and demand; (c) need; (d) inherited rights; (e) merit; (f) contribution to common good; (g) actual productive contribution; and (h) efforts and sacrifices.[7] There is no consensus on how to rank these eight criteria according to their importance. For instance, Runciman considers need as the most important, followed by common good, then merit. However, the ranking of these criteria rests on ethical arguments and, therefore, remains subject to discussion.

B. BEYOND THE DISTRIBUTIVE PARADIGM

While certainly vital, some contemporary theorists of social justice believe that the distributive paradigm, regardless if seen to expand beyond material goods or not, is insufficient on its own as a framework of justice. For instance, Iris Young, one of the prominent voices who wrote about social justice from political theory and feminist social theory perspectives, asserts that there are other important aspects of justice than distribution. With scenes of the popular riots that took place in many cities in the United States in the 1980s and such slogans as "peace, jobs and justice" in mind, she forcefully argues that "social justice means the elimination of institutionalized domination and oppression".[8] Her categories of oppression are "exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence".[9] Specifically, she focuses on the oppression of women and particular racial and social groups such as the Indian Americans, for instance.

As Young further explains, it is the existing social structure and institutional context that often determine how material goods, including resources, income, wealth and social positions, especially jobs, are allocated. In recognition that such non-material goods as power and opportunities are not static objects but rather the outcome of social relations and procedures, she agrees to limit the notion of distribution to material goods. Interestingly, however, she shifts the discussion of justice from distribution to the decision-making power and institutional and social relations that govern the distribution of material goods. Hence, she argues that "[j]ustice should refer not only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation".[10]

Eventually, the political riots that took place in American and some European cities in the 1980s gave rise to a paradigm shift in political theory from (re)distribution to recognition, with the latter paradigm mainly focusing on the politics of cultural difference and such notions as multiculturalism and group identity.[11] As a result, claims for social justice got divided along two broad lines, namely, "claims for the redistribution of resources and claims for the recognition of cultural difference".[12] Nancy Fraser, another prominent contemporary critical theorist, argues that these two approaches to social justice have been falsely "polarized against one another". To her, both are necessary and insufficient alone as they complement one

---

[7]   Harvey, 1973, p. 100.

[8]   Young, 1990, p. 15.

[9]   Ibid., p. 40.

[10]   Ibid., p. 39.

[11]   Appiah et al., 2004/2005.

[12]   Fraser, 1998.

another. Hence, her thesis focuses on how to integrate these two paradigms in one comprehensive framework.

Fraser argues that misrecognition is "morally wrong" since it denies some people the opportunity of participating in "social interaction" and "economic relations" on a par with others due to "institutionalized patterns of cultural value" and existing "economic structures" that "impede parity participation in social life".[13] Based on this understanding of the notion of recognition, she advances the idea of "participatory parity" as a normative concept that "appeals to a conception [of] justice that can be accepted by people with divergent views of the good life, provided that they agree to abide by fair terms of interaction under conditions of value pluralism".[14] More specifically, she contends that parity participation can be satisfied on the basis of two complementary conditions. The first pertains to distributive justice, specifically the need to distribute material resources in ways that "ensure participants' independence and "voice"". The second pertains to "institutionalized cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation", which, she argues, need to "express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem".[15]

Nobel-prize-winning economist Amartya Sen is another major contributor to the contemporary conception of social justice. Although he agrees with Rawls to see "justice as fairness", he considers Rawls' overconcentration on how to establish "just institutions" to be inadequate. Thus, in his book, *The Idea of Justice*, Sen does not focuses on just institutions as such but on the instrumental role that institutions play "in terms of the lives and freedoms of people".[16] Sen's major contribution to the theory of justice is often attributed to the linkage he makes between social justice and human capacity-building. His book, *Development as Freedom*, best elaborates on the idea of capabilities as fundamental entitlements. In shifting the discourse from "exclusive concentration on income poverty to the more inclusive idea of capability deprivation", Sen is believed to have added a new dimension to the social justice theory, one that deserves further development and exploration.[17]

C. SOCIAL JUSTICE FROM A HUMAN GEOGRAPHY PERSPECTIVE

Inspired by Young's work, David Smith's conception of social justice also "goes beyond patterns of distribution" and beyond concern with "attributes which have immediate bearing on people's well-being or the quality of their lives". More specifically, Smith's notion of social justice encapsulates "both fairness and equity in the distribution of a range of attributes", which he, unlike Young, does not confine to material attributes or goods. Like Young, however, he is mainly interested in understanding how social injustice came about in the first place. As a human geographer, Smith tightly links social justice with the legal systems and issues of human rights, ethics and morality. At the same time, he questions existing social and institutional structures and their role in promoting a just or unjust society.

More importantly, Smith underscores the geographical or spatial dimension of social justice. He argues that the question of membership in certain human communities is "deeply geographical". An obvious example that he refers to is citizenship rights and the exclusion of certain immigrants from attaining these rights. Other relevant considerations that he mentions include property rights, which have the capacity, if restricted or franchised, to deepen social exclusion. Equally vital is Smith's emphasis that "[g]eographic space is deeply implicated in social exclusion".[18] This, for example, applies to involuntary ethnic and/or racial segregation in residential spaces. His argument here is that "the process of uneven development has

---

[13]   Ibid.

[14]   Ibid.

[15]   Ibid.

[16]   Sen, 2009.

[17]   Nussbaum, 2003.

[18]   Smith, 1994, p. 45.

opened up […] enormous disparities at the international scale […]. The plight of the poor [within] cities has become a moral issue rather than being accepted as part of some natural order".[19]

Like David Smith, David Harvey focuses on the "territoriality" of justice. His basic concept of social justice derives from his belief in "a just distribution justly arrived at of whatever we are distributing".[20] Yet, mainly through a human geography lens, he focuses on the need to discuss the notion of distribution not only among individuals but also "among groups, organization, territories, and so on".

Following Runciman, Harvey considers need to be the most important criterion in territorial distributive justice, followed by contribution to common good, then merit. Within the first criterion, he lists different kinds of need that remain fairly stable over time, namely: food, housing, medical care, education, social and environmental service, consumer goods, recreational opportunities, neighbourhood amenities and transport facilities. Regarding the second criterion, he focuses on "how an allocation of resources to one territory affects conditions in another". As for the third criterion, he translates it "into a geographical concept" which he associates with environmental difficulties that may arise in the particular physical settings (for instance, following incidents of flood, draught and earthquake) and "pose extra difficulty to human activity".[21]

Based on this understanding of need, common good and merit, Harvey concludes that territorial social justice is based on the following requirements:[22]

(a) The distribution of income should be such that (i) the needs of the population within each territory are met; (ii) resources are allocated to maximize interterritorial multiplier effects; and (iii) extra resources are allocated to help overcome special difficulties stemming from the physical and social environment;

(b) Institutional, organizational, political and economic mechanisms should be such that the prospects of the least advantaged territory are as great as possible.

II. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

While there is no consensus on the meaning and scope of the term, social justice is commonly associated with the creation of a just society, with the underlying assumption that justice implies human welfare through equal rights and share of benefits, fair treatment, recognition of cultural differences, and equitable access to resources and opportunities. Likewise, there is no clear definition of the key principles of the social concept, but Rawls' two principles of justice remain central to any discussion on the topic. These are as follows:[23]

Principle 1. Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which is compatible with a similar scheme for all.

Principle 2. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society.

---

[19] Ibid.

[20] Harvey, 1973, p. 98.

[21] Ibid., pp. 100-106.

[22] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

[23] Rawls, 1985, p. 227.

This section focuses on three key terms inherent to Rawls' two principles of justice, namely, equality, equity and rights. In addition, and given the importance attached by most theorists of social justice to the principle of participation and "participatory parity" (mainly Fraser) and "the public culture of a democratic society" (Rawls), it includes participation as a fourth key value of social justice.

A. EQUALITY

Fair access to goods and services is a fundamental principle of social justice. Based on the belief that all human beings are equal before God and the law, the notion of "fairness" as related to access is often linked with the notion of "equality" to imply that all people, regardless of their gender, race, age, class, language, religion and occupation, are entitled to benefit from public goods and resources. These include access to livelihood, capacities, education, information, health services, employment and job opportunities. In democratic societies, the concept of equality also extends to include the political sphere, with effective decision-making processes in place to ensure an equal voice for all citizens.

B. EQUITY

The principle of equity derives from the recognition that the concept of fairness as equal or uniform distribution is not always possible or implementable, particularly in view of existing injustices that have prevented or reduced the ability of certain individuals or groups to gain equal access to public goods, resources and opportunities in the first place. With this in mind, equitable treatment implies that people would get a "deserved" treatment, meaning what is right for them. Hence, a just society that works towards fairness and opportunities for all its members would also strive to remove or overcome the barriers that hinder certain individuals and groups (for instance, people with disabilities and the poor) from fulfilling their potential by way of maximizing their opportunities.

C. RIGHTS

Rights as a key principle of social justice can be divided into the following two sub-groups: (a) legal rights, which include inherited rights, and other lawful rights such as the right to receive payment for one's jobs according to agreed terms; and (b) moral rights, which include people's basic human rights, liberties and such entitlements as the right of "giving people a say in affairs that concern them"[24] and the right of certain groups to particular geographic territories.[25] In socially just societies, moral rights, even in the absence of legal guarantees, are protected by adequate procedures, norms and rules, some of which are universally accepted, as is the case with human rights, for instance.

D. PARTICIPATION

Participation in the context of social justice means involving people in decisions that govern their lives. This includes not only engaging them in deciding on the kind of public services needed in their areas but also ensuring their full participation in political and cultural life. More specifically, the rationale for public participation is twofold and includes: (a) achieving better distributive outcomes; and (b) strengthening democracy. As to the second point, the notion of participation is linked to power, and participation is believed to shift existing power relationships as it strengthens the position of traditionally weak and marginalized groups and individuals *vis-à-vis* other such actors as public and social institutions.

---

[24] Smith, 1994, p. 38.

[25] Lee and Smith, 2004.

III. TOOLS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

A. EQUITABLE OUTCOMES: SOCIAL PROTECTION, SUBSIDIES AND TAXATION SYSTEMS

Social policy is the most powerful tool to diffuse the values and attributes of social justice and ensure equity in the distribution of material and non-material goods in society. It greatly affects the well-being of individuals and communities with its set courses of actions, regulatory measures, funding priorities, taxing systems and decisions on how social benefits are accessed and distributed. More specifically, "as public action designed to expand choices and opportunities for people", public policy "simultaneously addresses aspects of social production, reproduction, protection and redistribution, as well as issues of equity, inclusion and rights".[26] In many countries, social policies emphasize certain key social justice principles outlined earlier, which is reflected in the due consideration they pay to fundamental human rights, equality of opportunity, equity in access to resources, developing human capacities and improving living standards for all. However, in their design, however, policies often fall short of addressing such goals.

The failure of social policies to achieve social justice goals in many countries is often attributed to a number of interlinked concerns, namely, the disconnection between economic and social policies, the successive liberalization of services in the aftermath of the neoliberal turn and the subsequent "projectizing" approach to social protection. The access to services has become of greater concern than the question of equitable opportunity and outcomes.

Moreover, in the wake of successive economic, political, energy and environmental crises, scholars and policymakers began rethinking social protection and social assistance schemes as part of a more comprehensive approach to social policymaking. This included short, medium and long-term social protection interventions that aimed to cushion vulnerable individuals in times of crisis, serve as macroeconomic stabilizers and provide opportunities to move out of chronic poverty and social exclusion. Many of the proposed interventions were meant to protect vulnerable individuals and families, prevent their fall into poverty and socioeconomic marginalization and/or promote their economic independence by enhancing income and access to economic opportunities, and include the following: (a) social insurance schemes that cushion risks associated with unemployment, poor health, disability, work injury and old age; (b) social assistance services for such vulnerable population groups as female headed households, the elderly and persons with disabilities, among others, which include conditional or unconditional cash transfers; and (c) subsidies, including food, housing and energy. With the aim to assist specific communities and the informal sector, other schemes, including active labour market policies, agricultural subsidies, social funds, public employment and community development programmes, are also being implemented in some countries. Transformative measures that strive to address the root causes of social and economic inequity and vulnerability, through emphasis on minority rights, social funds, tax instruments of redistribution, improved access to land and other assets, and others, have yet to be considered.

Broadly speaking, taxation systems are considered the most basic instrument to achieve social justice from a redistributional perspective.[27] Typically, governments levy a mix of taxes, including personal and corporate income taxes, property taxes and wealth transfer taxes, and can excise or impose higher, or lower, taxes on certain goods. Thus, it is difficult to talk about tax fairness, as fairness depends on the purpose behind the tax, the good on which it is imposed, and the income bracket on which the burden of the tax falls. In Mexico, for instance, ample attention is given to reform the tax system in ways that address spatial variations in living standards and household income between rural and urban areas.[28] In other countries including the United Kingdom and the United States, progressive taxes are imposed on the income and

---

[26] ESCWA, 2009.

[27] Duff, 2008.

[28] Duclos, 2009.

certain goods, whereby the tax rate increases proportionally with the individual's ability to pay. Essentially, progressive taxation systems aim at reducing income inequality. Existing research on the topic demonstrates that progressive taxation is positively associated with the well-being of nations when these funds are redirected into providing such public services as public transportation and public education.[29]

Other than redistributing national income through tax reforms, the commitment of governments to the principles of social justice is often translated into national social protection systems. However, many of these systems have been designed to alleviate poverty and manage risk for poor and vulnerable communities, rather than to empower individuals and address the root causes of their vulnerability. Typically, social protection provisions take the form of social assistance programmes, primary health-care services, housing subsidies, social pensions, conditional and unconditional cash transfers to needy families, disability benefits, financial support to the education and development of talented youth, and so forth. More specifically, these systems aim at creating social protection floors and safety nets for citizens in the face of hunger, poverty, unemployment, disability, illness and/or death. Based on the definition of the International Labour Organization (ILO), social protection floors are "sets of basic social security guarantees that should ensure, as a minimum, that, over the life cycle, all in need have access to essential health care and to basic income security which together secure effective access to goods and services defined as necessary at the national level". They can be extended to individuals, institutions and/or businesses (see box 1).

Box 1. Subsidies

Subsidies are one form of social assistance that some governments extend to individuals, businesses, institutions and/or a certain economic sector, for instance, the industrial, agricultural or housing sector. The most common form of subsidies is that targeting the consumer of a certain good or the provider/producer of that good, as is the case, for instance, with fuel, construction materials, wheat and others. Subsidies can be financial (direct) or in kind (indirect). Examples of direct subsidies include cash grants and interest-free loans. Examples of indirect subsidies include tax breaks, rent rebates and low-interest loans.

Social protection floors can be "hard and minimal or well-endowed and enabling".[30] For example, many European countries provide their residents with many basic rights, including rights to health services, education, unemployment support, shelter, food security and pensions. In the United States, a new universal health insurance scheme has been recently introduced to enhance the social protection floor. India has guaranteed its citizens the right to information as a basic human right and is about to provide them with universal access to education.[31]

Whether social provisioning programmes are "universal" or "targeted" is a policy choice that depends on government resources. Universalism implies that social benefits are treated as a basic right that the entire population enjoys. Targeting, however, implies that only selected groups, typically the "truly deserving", are eligible to social benefits.[32] The application of targeting or universalism as the right approach varies from one place to another and depends on the type of service provided. Box 2 elaborates on this issue with reference to fuel subsidies in Thailand.

In many countries, social policy regimes are neither purely universal nor purely targeted, but a mixture of both.[33] For instance, in addition to ensuring a universal access to housing, several countries, including

---

[29] Oishi et al., 2011.

[30] UNESCO, 2011.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Mkandawire, 2005.

[33] Ibid.

Singapore, the United Kingdom and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), implement various social assistance schemes that target poor and vulnerable citizens. Generally speaking, however, the social policies of most countries have, since the 1980s, tilted towards targeting as a result of the rise of the market and the decline of the role of the State in the provision of social benefits and services. Indeed, in many countries, the private sector plays a strong role in the provisioning of social services, albeit, often at a high price and higher consumer out-of-pocket payment.

Box 2. Fuel subsidies in Thailand

In Thailand, universal subsidies on diesel resulted in a disproportionate flow of benefits in favour of higher-income earners who consume fuel. It is anticipated that the decision to align the prices of energy (fuel and electricity) with the cost of supply, which is taken as part of reforms to deregulate the fuel market, will have further consequences on people as it will significantly underestimate subsidies. It is for this reason that the Thai Government is at present considering subsidy reforms that benefit the poor. Alternative means of supporting the poor to access energy are also being considered in case the Government decides to withdraw fuel subsidies. With a concern for the impact of alternative forms of energy on the environment, one option considered by the Government is imposing a tax on dirty fuels rather than subsidizing clean fuels. Such option is also believed "to be more effective at helping the poor and stimulating the economy than energy subsidies" as it enhances government revenues and decreases their expenditures. Noting that subsidizing clean fuel does not solve the problem of the poor, the option of targeting subsidies through introducing a fuel credit card scheme aimed at assisting the poor is also being considered.

_____

Source: IISD, 2013.

In Mozambique, for example, , social security systems consist of three tiers, involving basic social security (food subsidy), an obligatory social security system associated with formal employment and complementary social security administered through the private sector.[34] Labour laws in Mozambique have been designed without considering informal workers, most of whom have little or no access to social protection and receive little or no support from the Government and their employers. It is for this reason that significant national efforts are currently dedicated to the creation and quality of jobs as well as to ensuring that social protection covers both the formal and the informal sectors.[35]

Important to note here is that, while social policy is the purview of the State, State actions almost always interact with the actions of non-State institutions, mainly those related to the market, the civil society and the family. For example, access to affordable housing in many countries is primarily determined by financial institutions and housing associations. This, in many cases, has negative consequences on poor and vulnerable groups who fail to meet the conditions of these financial institutions and associations. Yet, there are many success stories that involve the effective collaboration of the government as well as private and civil society organizations. Indeed, as international experience with social protection systems shows, the attainment of social justice is strongly reliant not only on State institutions but also on the participation and effective collaboration of a wide range of State and non-State actors in the design and implementation of social security systems that meet the people's most urgent demands and needs.

The Proyecto Capital programme in Latin America and the Caribbean is one successful case that shows how collaboration between State and non-State agencies can be complementary (see box 3).

---

[34]   UNICEF, 2011.

[35]   ILO, 2009.

| Box 3. Proyecto Capital: opportunities for financial inclusion in Latin America and the Caribbean |

Seventeen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have developed targeted conditional cash transfer programmes that deliver cash subsidies to disadvantages families. Access to these programmes is conditional upon compliance with such requirements assending children to school and taking them for periodic health checkups, as well as prenatal checkups for pregnant women. Around 27 million families (111 million people), which is approximately 21 per cent the region's population, benefit from such programmes.

The Proyecto Capital initiative was developed by the Capital Foundation and the Peruvian Studies Institute as a complement to conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes in the region. The objective of the Proyecto Capital is to support interested Latin American and Caribbean countries in developing and implementing public policies that link social protection with financial inclusion. Initiative activities include the design and implementation of projects that encourage formal financial savings, and the creation of knowledge and promotion of discussion through research and studies in such thematic areas as financial inclusion, gender and empowerment, financial education and mobile banking.

Thanks to this intervention, and through different pilot projects, the institutions and organizations involved in CCT have made the commitment to use savings accounts as an instrument of inclusion. More than 125,105 people in the region are now benefiting from this initiative.

The long-term goal of the Proyecto Capital programme is to promote equitable development and the inclusion of citizens in social protection based on equality. It aims to strengthen the human, social, financial and physical capacities of poor families and improve their efficacy (governance) and efficiency, all of which will positively influence economic growth and market dynamics.

_____

Sources: UNDP, 2012, p.46; and http://www.proyectocapital.org.

B. INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Economic planning can also play a central role in promoting social justice when approached in an inclusive way, meaning a way that recognizes the developmental needs of each geographic territory and allocates national resources equitably among the different regions with a view to maximize, on the one hand, opportunities and positive interterritorial multiplier effects; and reduce, on the other hand, the weaknesses stemming from the particular physical and social settings of each territory.[36]

The objective of attaining inclusive national growth would necessarily require the collaboration of the different tiers of government. Likewise, it requires the inclusion and effective participation of private actors, civil society groups and local actors in the taking, implementation and management of investment decisions targeting their localities. Box 4 further clarifies what is meant by inclusive growth.

| Box 4. Inclusive growth |

"Inclusive growth is both an outcome and a process. On the one hand, it ensures that everyone can participate in the growth process, both in terms of decision-making for organizing the growth progression as well as in participating in the growth itself. On the other hand, it makes sure that everyone shares equitably the benefits of growth. Inclusive growth implies participation and benefit-sharing. Participation without benefit-sharing will make growth unjust and sharing benefits without participation will make it a welfare outcome."

_____

Source: UNDP, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), available from: http://www.ipc-undp.org/growth.do.

_____

[36] Harvey, 1973.

Many countries have successfully adopted inclusive economic development models and regional development policies that combine economic concerns (for instance, global or regional competiveness), social concerns (achieving social justice, reducing unemployment, promoting regional cohesion, and others) and spatial planning concerns (for instance, urban sprawl management, road infrastructure upgrading and land use regulations). Their experiences are important to learn from.

1. *Lessons from East Asian countries*

East Asian countries started to develop national strategies for inclusive economic growth as early as the 1960s and 1970s. Their experiences are recognized today to have succeeded in "developing mechanisms for effective dialogue in their societies and setting priorities for public actions to foster inclusive growth".[37] Some observers of the East Asian experience believe that the success of development planning in such countries as Indonesia, Japan and Malaysia is linked to several factors, mainly, guiding visions, a participatory policymaking process and the mobilization of all concerned actors toward the realization of agreed-upon developmental goals, which often focus on balancing economic growth with social development, as was the case with Japan's third to sixth five-year economic plans.

The economic recovery of Japan following World War II is particularly informative knowing that, in only seven years, the national economic plan, dubbed as the Income Doubling Plan of 1960, succeeded in prompting Japan to the status of a developed country and to the world's second largest economy in the 1970s. The importance of this Plan is mainly attributed to the following: (a) its ability to serve as a guiding vision for both public and private actors; (b) its strong focus on the development of human resources and on education, training and technology; (c) its approaches to correct exiting income gaps, productivity differential and socioeconomic gaps in other fields; and (d) its emphasis on combating poverty through strengthening social security and social welfare measures. Most importantly, the success of this Plan provides lessons on the need of linking economic planning objectives with social development objectives in order to simultaneously achieve economic growth and social security, with social security being one of the main tools to achieving social justice.[38]

Until today, the Japanese experience in economic planning continues to be informative. While in many countries across the world, including Arab countries, the visions and objectives, especially socially motivated ones, articulated in development plans are not followed by real action, Japanese plans are implemented effectively. This is attributed to the participation of the implementing ministries in the planning process, which raises their responsibility and binds them to implementing the contents of the plan.[39]

2. *Lessons from Western Europe*

In addition to national development policies, Western European countries have introduced regional development policies and "integrated regional development plans and strategies, designed and delivered by partnerships of regional and local actors".[40] The prime objective of these plans is to promote the balanced development of all territories across national boundaries. More specifically, the rationale for introducing such plans is a combination of economic, social, political and spatial factors. For instance, the motivation of Scotland and Nordic countries to introduce a regional policy was always explicitly linked with such objectives as reducing unemployment, achieving social justice, promoting regional cohesion, and guiding settlement structures and the spatial distribution of the population.

---

[37]   Sakamoto, 2013.

[38]   Ibid.

[39]   Ibid.

[40]   Bachtler and Yuill, 2001, p. 13.

The current Norwegian regional policy still adheres to the above-stated objectives and pays due consideration to peripheral communities and to maintaining their settlement patterns and ensuring equal living conditions in all parts of the country. Moreover, Norwegian public services and generous welfare benefits are extended to all parts of the country in an effort to reduce out-migration from peripheral regions. Accordingly, a series of measures have been implemented in recent years to particularly limit the out-migration of women and young people. These measures involve revisions to the income tax system and special programmes that encourage the involvement of women and youth in community life and local activities. In fact, this social focus is now considered the third pillar of Norwegian regional policy alongside its "broad" and "narrow" economic concerns.[41]

Regional policies definitely constitute an important aspect of Norway's planning toward social justice. Equally important is the Government's Sovereign Wealth Fund that reinvests dividends from oil in human development and the provision of quality services.

C. PARTICIPATORY SPATIAL PLANNING

Many countries have adopted, with varying degrees of success, participatory tools and methods and participatory decision-making processes to promote social inclusion and social justice. Specifically, the inclusion and participation of poor and traditionally excluded groups in decisions related to the allocation of public resources has been promoted for two reasons: (a) to ensure that the often limited public resources address local priorities and build on existing local knowledge; and (b) to build local commitment to positive change since people are more likely to buy in and adhere to a proposed development plan if they take an active role in its elaboration and implementation.

This section will look at two successful methods, namely, participatory enumerations and participatory budgeting, and how they contribute to the objective of promoting social justice.

1. *Participatory enumerations*

Spatial planning requires reliable data and information on the physical, social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions of the area in question. Data is, however, not always readily available. Actually, in many areas of the developing world, especially rural and informally developed urban areas, such reliable data is insufficient or does not exist at all.

Some countries, including Ghana, Kenya, India, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda and Zimbabwe, use participatory enumerations, which typically involve partnerships between local people, planners and local authorities, as a strategy to collect reliable data and information on the physical, social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions of local areas. Rather than relying on external experts, local people themselves are entrusted with the enumeration task. This includes conducting household and livelihood surveys, area profiling, area mapping and the identification of areas prone to risk, among other issues. Following the data collection process, local people, together with planners, analyse the collected data and identify and articulate development options and strategies aimed at improving their living conditions.

It is believed that the participatory nature of this approach can potentially contribute to inclusive and socially just interventions that respond to the needs and desires of people. Typically applied in the upgrading of informal settlements, participatory enumerations provide vital information on people and housing that may be affected by settlement development or regularization plans. The data collection process strengthens people's position as they become more aware of the implications of development decisions. Hence, it enables them to negotiate area upgrading and development decisions more effectively amongst themselves and with

---

[41] Bachtler and Yuill, 2001, p. 13.

concerned local authorities and other decision-makers. Another advantage of this approach is that it adds transparency to the planning process, thereby increasing its acceptance by targeted groups.

In Zimbabwe, for instance, community-led settlement mapping and enumeration was successfully carried out in Magada, a large informal settlement on the periphery of Harare. Supported by members of the Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation, teams that also included local residents worked on mapping and numbering all the plots in the settlement. It is believed that this participatory enumeration process has brought major positive changes to the settlement. Specifically, it resulted in an agreement between residents and their community organizations to work closely with local and national government officials on devising solutions to improve the settlement conditions, including road layout and water and sanitation systems. This was the first time that a local government in Zimbabwe agreed to support upgrading an informal settlement. The upgrading plans developed for Magada are also the first in the country to stem from a truly participatory process that involved residents in articulating their priorities and in influencing the upgrading plans for the settlement.[42]

2. *Participatory budgeting*

Participatory budgeting (PB) is one of the most progressive participatory methods to engage citizens in development decisions related to their neighbourhood. This method is applied in Brazil, particularly in Porto Alegre, where it emerged in 1989, as well as in numerous cities in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin and North America.

PB is a democratic decision-making process and a type of participatory democracy in which ordinary citizens, through such legitimate civil society organizations as neighbourhood associations, identify, prioritize and decide on how to spend a part of the municipal budget allocated for their area. In Porto Alegre, for instance, both small improvements and big-scale public investments are decided by means of PB processes.

Generally speaking, the PB process consists of three stages: (a) a first general popular assembly during which the municipality presents its investment plan for the year to interested residents, who all have the right to attend, and during which citizen representatives from all regions are elected; (b) the delegates then decide on spending priorities and develop specific proposals on the basis of focused discussions and unofficial meetings with area residents; and (c) a second general popular assembly during which delegates vote on the proposals to be funded. Proposals that receive the highest numbers of votes are implemented.[43]

As to the contribution of PB to social justice, Brazil's PB experience shows that public spending is prone to be more equitable when people are involved in the decision-making regarding local public investments. The transparency of the process typically leads to mutual trust between government authorities and citizens, who are both believed to gain greatly from the process. By giving citizens more control over budgeting decisions that are traditionally considered a privilege of municipal deputies and local governments, participatory planning also renders governments more accountable and empowers social society at large.[44]

D. SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE CORPORATE BEHAVIOUR

In a world dominated by the market logic and faced with increased global competition, private enterprises play a large role in building a just/unjust society. In the pursuit of profit, many corporations act socially irresponsibly by, for instance, exploiting their employees and cheating their customers and the

---

[42] For more information, see: http://www.iied.org/why-enumeration-counts-documenting-undocumented.

[43] de Souza, 1999.

[44] Ibid.

government, whereas others are more socially conscious. They engage in profitable investments and simultaneously contribute to public good through, for instance, donating to charities and supporting community activities, and to the attainment of social justice through socially responsible behaviour, by treating their workers and customers with respect and dignity, providing them with decent living wages, paying taxes and abiding by laws, among others.

It is believed that the engagement of corporations in social justice has positive direct impacts on national economic growth and development. Particularly, Scandinavian countries rank high in terms of their corporate behaviour. In 2003, the World Economic Forum placed Denmark, Finland and Sweden very highly in terms of the ethical behaviour of their national corporations, and at the same time ranked them among the most competitive economies in the world.[45]

According to Campbell, the tendency toward socially responsible corporate behaviour varies from one country to another. Generally speaking, however, corporations with relatively weak financial performance and those operating under unhealthy and non-profitable economic conditions, including environments that are very highly competitive as well as those which are not competitive at all, are less likely to be socially responsible in their actions. Corporations are likely to act in a socially responsible manner if (a) their actions are governed by strong and effective regulations that are developed and enacted through a negotiation process that involves government institutions, corporations and the other concerned actors; (b) they belong to trade or employer associations that foster socially responsible behaviour; (c) they engaged in institutionalized dialogue with a such actors as trade unions, employees, community groups, and investors; and (d) they operate in contexts where socially responsible behaviour is institutionalized, for instance, in business school curricula, business publications and conferences in which corporate managers participate.

This implies that the involvement of both State and non-State actors is important to ensure that the behaviour of corporations does not contradict or threaten the State's commitment toward socially responsible action. More specifically, socially responsible corporate behaviour depends on the presence of institutions beyond the market, including independent organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social movements, and the press, that could monitor the actions of corporations and ensure that their behaviour is "responsive to the interests of social actors beside themselves" and get active to change this behaviour when necessary.[46]

The new labour policies in Mozambique, for instance, are intended, in part, "to promote social justice by reducing the impact of unacceptable working conditions on the welfare of workers and their families".[47]

E. COMMUNITARIAN ETHICS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The notion of public or common good is central to the social justice theory. Yet, investment in the common good can only be realized through the promotion of common visions and values that prompt each individual in society to work and act for the well-being of all. Such shared perceptions and values can only be cultured and sustained through concerted national efforts to promote communitarian ethics and civic engagement in political and social issues of common concern.

Communal values and social standards and traditions that prevail in a certain society are pivotal to communitarian ethical thought. Communitarian ethics specifically emphasize the strong connection between people and encourage their collaborative action for the greater good of society which could sometimes surpass the particular needs or interests of the individual or of one particular social group or organization. Hence, it focuses less on the individual and individual rights and more on communal responsibilities,

---

[45] Campbell, 2007.

[46] Ibid.

[47] ILO, 2009, p. 27.

community being "anything from the nuclear or extended family to the political state or nation".[48] In addition to the ideal of common good, another basic principle of communitarian ethics is equal access and participation of all citizens in the power structure of society.

Likewise, the concept of civic engagement emphasizes the notion of participation and the well-being of all. According to Thomas Ehrlich, "[c]ivic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes."[49] More specifically, civic engagement is used in reference to both individual and collective actions that address issues of public good and concern. On another level, the principle of civic engagement is tightly linked to the principle of democratic governance and the right of people to decide on how public and communal resources are allocated and to have a say in the articulation and implementation of policies that best serve the public good and include, among others, education reform, tax reform and labour market reform.

Governments, educational institutions, the media, and civil society have a central role to play in strengthening communal moral bonds, nurturing shared social values and promoting collective action and responsibility towards the equitable protection of society's public goods. The "Building Movement Project", an initiative based in the United States that works towards social justice through nurturing common values and empowering civic action, is one good example to learn from (see box 5).

Box 5. Building Movement Project, United States

For over a decade, the "Building Movement Project" has been advancing the potential for non-profit organizations to have an impact on building movements for progressive social change. Specifically, the Project aims to build a strong social justice ethos into the non-profit sector, strengthen the role of non-profit organizations in the United States as sites of democratic practice, and promote non-profit groups as partners in building a movement for progressive social change.

To this end, the Project develops research tools, training materials and opportunities for partnership that bolster the ability of non-profit organizations to support the voice and power of the people they serve. It brings people together, sharing best practices and building bridges that lead to policies and approaches that support equity, fairness and sustainability.

With its practical resources, the Project helps organizations align their social justice principles with their operating practices, innovate to meet the needs of the communities they serve and face the challenges of the external environment. On another level, the Project offers a space for organizations and their allies to rethink how to engage their constituents and create more impact with their work. It also provides alternatives to the current assumptions and expectations of how non-profit organizations should be run.

Specifically, the Building Movement Project has worked with individual networks "to promote civic engagement as a way to enhance services, create strong communities, and promote progressive social change". Core strategies adopted by the Project include: (a) identifying and working with social service organizations as sites for social change; (b) supporting young leaders who bring new ideas and energy to social change work; and (c) listening to and engaging people who work in social change organizations, especially grassroot and community-based groups, to strengthen their ability to shape the policies that affect their work and the communities they serve.

It is believed that through the efforts of the Project, many thousands of constituents across the nation are engaging with their communities in new ways, and an increasing number of service providers continue to ask how to incorporate meaningful social change into their organizations.

_____

Source: www.buildingmovement.org (extracted with adaptations).

---

[48]   REGIS University, n.d.

[49]   Ehrlich, 2000.

A. SOCIAL INJUSTICE AND EXCLUSION AS A KEY PROBLEM
FACING ARAB COUNTRIES

The social contract that most Arab countries adopted in their post-independence period was essentially a "rent-based" contract, namely, "one where the population exchanged political freedom in return for the provision of certain services, such as state employment, access to public healthcare and education and exemption from or low taxation".[50] This, however, came to a gradual end in the 1980s, when, motivated by the Structural Adjustment Policies of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Arab countries, like many other countries in the world, moved towards a new development paradigm that gave primacy to economic liberalization and market-oriented policies. This new path implied a major change in the welfare role of the State and in public expenditures. In many countries, State-owned enterprises were sold, subsidies cut, taxes increased, and employment guarantees removed. By and large, no alternatives were provided.[51]

Many observers of the current situation in Arab countries agree that the growing popular demand for transformative change in the region has fundamentally been a reaction to "systematic exclusion" of the greater part of the Arab population "from the benefits of economic growth and from decisions which affect their lives".[52] Indeed, a closer look at Tunisia's "Jasmine Revolution", and the similar popular uprisings that it instigated in other Arab countries, reveals social injustices and inequalities as a root cause behind the region's recent revolutionary protests and political instability.[53]

As well-known by now, the "Arab Spring" came as a reaction to a host of factors, including high unemployment rates (particularly amongst women and the youth); huge income inequalities; widening regional disparities; inadequate social services; strained infrastructure; institutional corruption; and repressive political regimes. Public discontent and sense of social exclusion has been particularly fuelled by the biased allocation of resources, lack of transparency in governance systems, unfair competition for jobs, and the concentration of crucial national assets in the hands of the political and economic elites, with the majority of citizens denied their right to benefit from the dividends of economic growth.

The UNDP Arab Human Development Report of 2009 and Arab Development Challenge Report of 2011 present alarming data on the human development conditions in the Arab region. While trends vary across countries, depending on their particular historical and political circumstances, indicators show that access to the labour market and to the health and education sectors have been acutely critical in most countries. In view of growing inflation and rising prices, access to food and basic services has also been critical for those whose income falls below national poverty lines.[54] In addition, access to adequate housing, infrastructure and services has been a challenge in many countries, especially middle-income countries with high urbanization rates.[55]

Existing social protection systems have neither been able to response to people's needs nor adapt to emerging circumstances. For instance, despite the fact that some Arab countries, namely, Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia, have introduced some sort of social assistance compensation for their unemployed nationals, such benefits are mostly insufficient. On the whole, unemployment benefits in the

---

[50] UNDP, 2011.

[51] ESCWA, 2013.

[52] UNDP, 2011.

[53] Hamann, 2011, p. 1.

[54] ESCWA, 2013.

[55] ESCWA, 2011.

Arab region are the lowest in the world.[56] The segmentation of the labour market has meant that those who are not employed in the formal sector are not covered by national pension schemes. The low participation of women in the labour force has also led to their low coverage in national pension schemes.[57]

Despite regional variations in scale and intensity of social problems, analysts believe that all Arab countries need to rethink their social contracts, economic growth models, governance systems, and legislative and regulatory frameworks in more inclusive and socially just ways[58] This section builds on these views And, specifically, argues that safeguarding social justice values would require: (a) integrating the social and economic dimensions of development; and (b) implementing governance reforms.

B. INTEGRATING THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

Many Arab governments are quite eloquent in expressing their commitment to the principles of social justice in their social policies, economic visions and development strategies and plans. For instance, the "Economic Vision 2030" for Bahrain recognizes the linkage between economic success and a thriving just society where "[e]very individual can make a worth-while contribution to society given the means and presented with the opportunity". Specifically, it identifies justice with fairness which it associates with: (a) free and fair competition and transparency in all actions of both public and private sectors whether these actions involve "employment, land for public auction or the outcome of a tender"; and (b) ensuring that laws that combat corruption are justly enforced.

No doubt such objectives and principles as the ones promoted by Bahrain are very pertinent. Yet, they cannot be effectively realized if economic and social policies continue to be addressed separately, as is the case in many countries. The attainment of social justice is highly dependent on the policy frameworks and institutional set-ups and coordination mechanisms put in place to ensure that the goals of social justice are met.

The role of the welfare State that certain Arab governments, particularly the oil-rich Gulf countries, are still playing is not enough on its own to attain social justice. Social justice requires more than providing poor and vulnerable groups with basic services, housing subsidies, land grants, basic education, and health care, and the like. It requires the development and adoption of comprehensive national development visions that can promote economic activity and simultaneously safeguard social justice values by: (a) ensuring the fair redistribution of society's public goods and resources; and (b) acknowledging and recognizing people's most basic needs and rights, including the right to decent work, the right to adequate shelter and well-being, the right to basic health, and the right to participate in social and political life. The Japanese Income Doubling Plan presented earlier in this paper is a good example to learn from.

The need for an integrated approach is most obvious when it comes to the employment challenge, which is by far the biggest challenge facing the region. UNDP challenges views that attribute the high unemployment rates in the region to poor education and a mismatch between educational outcomes and market demands. Instead, it argues that high unemployment rates, including among educated and skilled workers, are essentially the result of a demand-side problem instigated by "unfavourable macroeconomic conditions that inhibit investment in fixed capital and productivity growth, accompanied by inadequate growth of labour income". Accordingly, the UNDP report contends that the challenge of creating jobs in the region can "only be addressed through policies that carefully manage the demand-side and enhance labour insurance". To this end, it highlights the need "to adopt more accommodating macroeconomic and sectoral

---

[56]   UNDP, 2011.

[57]   ESCWA, 2013.

[58]   Hamann, 2011; UNDP, 2011; ESCWA, 2013; and Sakamoto, 2013.

policies" that "encourage more investment in the productive sectors" and ensure, at the same time, that the potential power of the working-age population results in real growth.[59]

Obviously, there is no standard solution that can be applied to all countries as the needs, capacities, policy choices, and development priorities differ across countries. What is to be generalized and emphasized, however, is that all countries, in addition to rethinking their investment choices and taxation and social protection systems in more inclusive ways, need to integrate their social and economic policies and development strategies.

C. IMPLEMENTING GOVERNANCE REFORMS

Social justice will also be difficult to attain in Arab countries unless current systems of governance are questioned and reformed in ways that ensure effective institutional dialogue and coordination; empower local governments; promote participation; and combat corruption.

1. *Promoting institutional dialogue and coordination*

Although the social and economic policies of many Arab governments do indeed recognize the need for comprehensive and integrated social and economic development, a sectoral top-down approach still characterizes their development planning. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of effective dialogue and coordination between the numerous public and private agencies in charge of the articulation and implementation of development strategies and the lack of transparency regarding decisions made. This is another serious issue that might jeopardize the implementation of the social justice agenda.

In Egypt, for example, the budgets allocated for development are predetermined by the Ministry of Planning prior to drafting economic goals and strategies. This applies to the country's five-year economic plans which are "fully completed inside the Ministry of Planning without official outside contacts".[60] Although these plans are a major development tool at the national scale, they are drafted on the basis of a sectoral approach. Each ministry and relevant organization, sometimes with support from international donors and experts, individually drafts its own plan, on the basis of the budget allocation sheet set by the Ministry of Planning, without an effective dialogue between governmental institutions or between public and private actors. Major stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, labour organizations, and the media, are excluded from the decision-making process on the pretext of efficiency in the production of plans. As a result, the benefits of development go exclusively to privileged private companies while others are excluded (Sakamoto 2013).[61]

Whether in Egypt or elsewhere in the Arab region, social justice cannot be attained if institutional dialogue is absent, knowledge is dispersed and development efforts are fragmented. Particularly, the lack of dialogue will prevent institutions from producing guiding visions that are approved by all. With this in mind, Arab countries need to consider the following issues as a matter of priority:

(a) Establishing institutional coordination bodies and dialogue mechanisms that involve all key actors in the planning and decision-making process and that can promote institutional cooperation and information and experience-sharing;

(b) Investing in the capacity-building of all public institutions and developing the technical and organization capacity of their staff in ways that strengthen their linkages as well as vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms, specifically as related to the overarching goal of promoting social justice.

---

[59] UNDP, 2011.

[60] Sakamoto, 2013.

[61] Ibid.

2. *Empowering local governments and actors*

Almost everywhere in the region, centralized decision-making has left local governments in a weak position and incapable of responding to local needs and demands, being dependent on central governments for funding. At the same time, the skewed allocation of national resources and development priorities, despite the rhetoric of many Arab countries on the need for balanced national growth, has widened regional disparities and denied certain groups access to public services and equal opportunities.

While many Arab countries are keen to rethink their governance structures and give more authority and decision-making power to local governments, the issue of implementing truly decentralized systems of governance is not necessarily among their short-term objectives. Regardless, however, whether the concept of decentralization is accepted by Arab governments in full or not, what needs to be stressed is that social justice cannot be implemented without redistributing and/or dispersing certain government functions and powers from the central to the local level as a precondition for a balanced and equitable geographic development.[62]

More specifically, what Arab countries need to ensure some sort of territorial distributive justice is the following:

(a) Devolving power to the appropriate level of government that can effectively deal with local problems (which, in some countries, is considered to be the metropolitan or the city-region level) while maintaining an active central government capable of creating the necessary enabling conditions for local governments and administrations to operate independently;

(b) Forging collaborative links with promising groups, including private sector corporations, civil society organizations and community-based organizations which can assist in promoting social justice values;

(c) Institutionalizing participation in public policy and public action and establishing suitable institutional set-ups that could effectively engage all citizens in development decisions and social and economic policy decisions. This includes training civil servants and administrators on community participation tools and techniques and methods for establishing communication channels with area residents and ways of promoting meaningful participation which is inclusive of all residents, among others.

3. *An empowering approach to participation*

In view of the weak participatory democracy mechanisms in the region, participatory development processes and mechanisms need to be emphasized as essential to achieving social justice. Indeed, in most Arab countries, public policies and national development visions and plans are elaborated, through technocratic top-down processes, at the central government level without proper participation of local actors. And where participation exists, it is often limited to "sharing" of information and/or to "consultation" of selected groups, mainly technical experts and leading figures from the public and private sectors.

The reasons behind the failure to engage the general public in decision-making are commonly attributed to the difficulty to implement participatory processes. This is certainly true, but there are other, more crucial, reasons, mainly, the absence of real democratic and participatory systems of governance, and "the lack of established communication channels between civil society organizations and local and central governments".[63]

---

[62] Harvey, 1973.

[63] ESCWA, 2011.

Social justice cannot be achieved without an empowering approach to participation. The commitment of Arab governments to social justice cannot be limited to notions of human rights and fairness of distribution of resources and opportunities. The notion of participation also needs to be treated as a key principle of social justice. In this respect, Arab governments need to take serious action toward enacting the following measures:

(a) Participatory mechanisms that ensure that the voices of all people, particularly vulnerable and hitherto marginalized groups are heard (empowerment of people being a precondition for social justice);

(b) New inclusive and transparent approaches to development and planning, particularly systems that combine top-down planning processes with bottom-up approaches;

(c) New regulations and institutional mechanisms that allow people to engage in policy debates and participate directly or indirectly in deciding on basic services delivery and priority projects for public funding, at both national and local levels;

(e) Conflict-resolution mechanisms to manage disagreements that are likely to arise from the involvement of multiple actors in the decision-making process.

4. *Combating corruption*

Last, but not least, none of these changes can take place unless corruption is combated and treated as a top priority. Corruption is among the most alarming problem that the majority of Arab countries suffers from and a main factor behind various social ills, including unfair competition over resources and opportunities, market distortions and unbalanced national growth. According to the Arab Human Development Report of 2004, many Arab citizens believe that corruption is spearheaded by "politicians, businessmen and high-ranking officials" and is also "prevalent among the judiciary and in social relations".[64] While corruption levels are difficult to measure, the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators identify the following six indicators to measure corruption: accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. Based on worldwide comparisons, the World Bank ranks Arab countries amongst the worst, especially when it comes to accountability where they rank last by a wide margin.[65]

If not seriously addressed, corruption will hamper and jeopardize efforts towards achieving social justice. Inspired by international experiences in fighting corruption, mainly the experience of Kosovo,[66] Arab countries will need to consider the following key issues: (a) setting up transparency measures to ensure that development initiatives reach down and benefit the whole population and not only the selected privileged few, for instance, through the creation of national anti-corruption agencies that hold both public and private institutions accountable for their actions; (b) enacting legislative anti-corruption and law enforcement measures; (c) reforming public administration, especially in the fields of public finance and economy; (d) fostering media, civil society and public participation; and (e) human capacity-building mainly through education.

In other words, the responsibility of combating corruption does not exclusively rest on governments and the judiciary sector. Media, educational institutions and civil society organizations also play a crucial role in this regard as well as in building public commitment to social justice and enticing both the profit and non-profit sectors to endorse social justice principles and values.

---

[64] Whitaker, 2009.

[65] Ibid.

[66] OSCE, 2006.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Arab countries cannot meet increasing social inequalities with indifference. Their economic development strategies and growth models need to be regionally balanced and linked to social policies that address people's most basic needs and rights. In addition to human rights and the fair redistribution of resources and opportunities, commitment to social justice requires an empowering approach to participation; that is, an approach that engages local actors in decisions that affect their lives, with power over resources and decisions devolved to the lowest appropriate level.

Social justice is not merely about the distribution and redistribution of government services and material goods. Nor is it the mere purview of social policies and social protections systems. Social justice is a collective social responsibility that needs to be instilled in all government policies and actions at all levels as well as in the actions of the private sector and civil society organizations, the media and educational organizations.

To safeguard social justice values, Arab governments need to take a lead role in regulating national development processes and in guiding the interventions of the private sector and non-profit organizations. At the same time, they need to develop and implement genuine participatory planning and governance mechanisms that ensure that the voices of all citizens, including marginalized and weak groups, are heard. It is only through such mechanisms that new political reforms can exert real and sustainable social change that render the societies of the region more inclusive and more democratic.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Appiah, Kwame Anthony and others (2004/2005). Justice, Governance, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Difference. Distinguished W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.

Arneson, Richard (2007). Rawls, Responsibility, and Distributive Justice.

Bachtler, John and Douglas Yuill (2001). Policies and Strategies for Regional Development: A Shift in Paradgim? Regional and Industrial Policy Research Paper, No. 46. European Policies Research Centre, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

Building Movement Project. Evidence of Change: Exploring Civic Engagement Evaluation. Available from: www.buildingmovement.org.

Campbell, John l. (2007). Why would corporations behave in socially responsible ways? An institutional theory of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 946-967.

de Souza , Marcelo Lopes (1999). Urban planning and management as tools for social justice: Some notes on recent Brazilian experiences. Conference paper presented at Institute of Commonwealth Studies, University of London.

Duclos, Jean-Yves and others (2009). Pro-Poor Tax Reforms, with an Application to Mexico. IZA DP No. 4511 (October).

Duff, David G. (2008). Tax Fairness and the Tax Mix.

Ehrlich, Thomas (ed.) (2000). *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education.* Oryx Press.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (2009). Integrated Social Policy: Visions and Strategies in the ESCWA Region.

ESCWA (2011). Bridging the Urban Divide in the ESCWA the Region: Towards Inclusive Cities.

ESCWA (2013). The Promises of Spring (forthcoming).

Fraser, Nancy (1998). Social justice in the age of identity politics: redistribution, recognition, participation. Discussion paper, Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB).

Galston, William (1980). *Justice and the Human Good.*

Government of Bahrain. From Regional Pioneer to Global Contender: The Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain.

Hamann, Gregor (2011). Towards a New Social Contract: Social Justice in North Africa and Middle East. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (September).

Harvey, David (1973). *Social Justice and the City*. Edward Arnold, London.

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) (2013). A Citizens' Guide to Energy Subsidies in Thailand. IISD's Global Subsidies Initiative.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2009). National Profile of Working Conditions in Mozambique.

Lee, Roger and David M. Smith (eds.) (2004). Moral Geographies of Distribution: Justice, Welfare and Rights. *Geographies and Moralities: International Perspectives on Development, Justice and Place*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Mkandawire, Thandika (2005). Targeting and Universalism in Poverty Reduction. Social Policy and Development Programme Paper No. 23 (December). United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Miller, David (1976). *Social Justice*.

Miller, D. (1999). *Principles of Social Justice.* Harvard University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2003). Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice. *Feminist Economics*, vol. 9, Nos. 2-3, pp. 33-59.

Oishi, Shigehiro and others (2011). Progressive Taxation and the Subjective Well-Being of Nations. *Psychological Science*, vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 86-92.

Organisation for Security and Co-operation (OSCE) (2006). The Anti-Corruption Action Plan: Social and Economic Necessity for Kosovo (October).

Rawls, John (1985). Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 223-251 (summer) (formerly published by Princeton University Press).

Rawls, John (1971). *A Theory of Justice.* Harvard University Press.

REGIS University (n.d.). Ethics at a Glance: Communitarian Ethics. Rueckert-Hartman School for Health Professions.

Ribeiro, Joao Sergio (2006). Distributive Justice through Taxation: European Perspective. *Jurisprudencija*, vol. 2, No. 80, pp. 80-89.

Runciman, Walter G. (1978). *Weber: Selections in Translation*.

Sakamoto, Kei (2013). Efforts to Introduce Inclusive Planning in Egypt. Global Economy and Development Working Paper No. 58 (January).

Sen, Amartya (1999). *Development as Freedom.* Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (2009). *The Idea of Justice.* Harvard University Press.

Smith, David M. (1994). *Geography and Social Justice.* Blackwell, Oxford, UK and Cambridge, MA.

Steen, John (n.d.). Community Participation as Necessary for Social Justice.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2004). *Arab Human Development Report: Towards Freedom in the Arab World.*

UNDP (2009). *Arab Human Development Report: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries.*

UNDP (2011). *Arab Development Challenges Report: Towards the Developmental State in the Arab Region.*

UNDP (2012). Knowledge from the South: Regional Exchange Solutions. *Panamá* (8-10 May).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2011). Social Protection Policy and Research in the Arab States: From Shared Challenges to Coordinated Efforts.

Whitaker, Brian (2009). *What's Really Wrong with the Middle East*. Saqi Books. Young, Iris M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

Websites

Global Land Tool Network (GLTN), available from: www.gltn.net.

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), available from: http://www.iied.org/why-enumeration-counts-documenting-undocumented.

International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), available from: http://www.ipc-undp.org/.

Proyecto Capital, available from: http://www.proyectocapital.org.

Tax World, available from: http://www.taxworld.org/History/TaxHistory.htm.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Mozambique, available from: http://www.unicef.org/mozambique/media_9464.html.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth. Available from : http://www.ipc-undp.org/growth.do.