Globalizing Recognition:
Global Justice and the Dialectic of Recognition

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Abstract. The question I want to answer is if and how the recognition approach, taken from the works of Axel Honneth, could be an adequate framework for addressing the problems of global justice and poverty. My thesis is that such a globalization of the recognition approach rests on the dialectic of relative and absolute elements of recognition. (1) First, I will discuss the relativism of the recognition approach, that it understands recognition as being relative to a certain society or a set of institutions. The same is true for various forms of disrespect such as denigration or exclusion. The recognition approach is a form of internal reconstructive critique, which does not want to refer to absolute or ahistorical standards. (2) Second, I show that this relative understanding of recognition and disrespect rests on an absolute core of recognition, which transcends any given society. In short, this core is the possibility of undistorted self-realization, which is the main and universal element of a good life. Such an absolute core is necessary for distinguishing between justified and unjustified claims of relative recognition. It also serves as the normative benchmark for any society. (3) Finally, I will discuss the relation of these relative and absolute elements of recognition against the background of global justice. Claims of recognition can refer to this absolute core and demand that intersubjective conditions and social relations should change in order to make undistorted self-realization possible. This is the main point of reference for a recognition-based concept of global justice.

Key words: recognition, global justice, poverty.

Global poverty and injustice are some of the most pressing problems of our times. In recent years, academic philosophy has finally started taking them seriously and has produced a broad range of answers and theories (Boylan 2011; Mack et al. 2009; Pogge and Moellendorf 2008). Although there are many controversies about the content, form and range of global ethics and global justice, there is now more or less a consensus that the prevalence and severity of global poverty is morally wrong and that no one should live under such conditions. Still, there is dispute about the best or most viable means to accomplish the goal of alleviating this. If someone shifts away from the philosophical literature to social-scientific poverty research, unfortunately, the picture is not getting clearer. Different approaches and measures – from the World Bank to the United Nations, from social exclusion to absolute poverty, from participatory to monetary approaches – are producing different kinds of knowledge and data about poverty and the poor (Norton 2001; O'Connor 2001; Spicker, Alvarez Leguizamón, and Gordon 2007). The spectrum of possible and actual political interventions and strategies is equally patchy.

Surprisingly the recognition approach, which has become influential in recent years, especially in social and political philosophy, has been quiet about global justice or poverty and there are only very few attempts to change this. What is called here the recognition approach is not a fully elaborated theory but based on the works of Axel Honneth and its discussion and further development by other scholars within the last twenty years (Fraser

and Honneth 2003; Honneth 1996b; Petherbridge 2011a). That the issues of global poverty and global justice have not been extensively debated within this approach is a particularly conspicuous research gap as the recognition approach views and presents itself as a form of Critical Theory, which aims to uncover relations of injustice and to criticize capitalistic societies. I think that such a critical approach towards social and political philosophy – rooted in the broad traditions of Hegelian-Marxist thought – should not only deal with the topics of global justice, but should put them at the centre of its attention. Volker Heins, one of the very few who tried to link recognition and global justice, has argued that such a globalization of Axel Honneth is necessary, but it is only possible if the national context of this theory is transcended (Heins 2008). The perspective has to shift from fully developed capitalistic societies to underdeveloped societies, where the struggles for recognition have completely different forms:

> Thus what is missing is the realization that the analysis of domestic conflicts that can be understood in the context of already institutionalized forms of recognition must be supplemented by the study of struggles over the very establishment (or indeed the undermining) of these forms of recognition. (Heins 2008, 149)

In this paper I want to take another route and think about the relation of global justice and recgnition from a different perspective. My thesis is that such a globalization of recognition has to start by unfolding the global or universal claims of the recognition approach itself. I will call this the absolute core of recognition, following the wording of Amartya Sen, who wrote about such an absolute core of poverty in his discussion of the relative approach to poverty of Peter Townsend (Sen 1983; Townsend 1979). Similar to this discussion, I perceive a dialectic concerning a relative and absolute understanding of recognition. Likewise poverty is always relative and absolute, or to put it differently, as absolute poverty is relative to certain conditions, and relative poverty carries an absolute core, I think of recognition as the connection of relative and absolute elements. The normative benchmark of the recognition approach is the universal value of undistorted self-realization, which can only be realized in contingent historical, social or otherwise relative forms. Nonetheless, it can serve as the point of reference for the critique of global poverty.

I will unfold this thesis in three steps. (1) First, I will discuss the understanding of recognition as relative to a certain society or a set of institutions. The internal critique of social relations such as maldistribution, unemployment or poverty does not want to refer to absolute or ahistorical standards. (2) Second, I show that this relative understanding of recognition and disrespect rests on an absolute core of recognition, which transcends any given society. Such an absolute core is necessary to distinguish between justified and unjustified claims of relative recognition. (3) Finally, I argue that claims of recognition can refer to this absolute core and demand that intersubjective conditions and social relations should change in order to make undistorted self-realization possible. This is the main point of reference for a recognition-based concept of global justice.

I. RECOGNITION AND INTERNAL CRITIQUE

Honneth and others have described the recognition approach as a form of internal or immanent critique (Honneth 1996a, Honneth2003, Honneth 2010; Kauppinen 2002). This means that it does not want to refer to external standards, but instead grounds its critique of social phenomena, relations or processes, that are deemed as unjust or otherwise harmful, in immanent norms and values:

> Unlike external criticism, an immanent form of criticism presupposes that we can find a standard which constitutes a justified, rational claim within the criticized relations themselves. (Honneth 2010, 229)

Obviously such an approach rests on the assumption that such norms or values can really be found or reconstructed within the given social figuration. It also implies a form of historic process and unfolding of such values. In short, internal critique means that the given social relations are recognition loaded, as recognition is the underlying concept of such norms and values that can serve as a viable basis for social critique. Recognition is of such high value because it relates to three basic needs that all humans share: the need for personal relationships, the need for cognitive respect, and finally, the need for social esteem. These tripartite needs are mirrored by three basic forms of recognition: love or friendship, equal rights, and solidarity. In addition to their value in themselves, these three forms of recognition are also the necessary intersubjective conditions for the undistorted development of the self:

> Taken together, the three forms of recognition – love, rights, and esteem – constitute the social conditions under which human subjects can develop a positive attitude towards themselves. For it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem – provided, one after another, by the experience of those three forms of recognition – that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally, as both an autonomous and an individuated being and to identify with his or her goals and desires. (Honneth 1996b, 169)

Because of this normative significance, Honneth thinks of the three forms of recognition as the normative elements or dimensions of social justice. A society is socially just if and when it enables and fosters such conditions that these three forms recognition are possible for all its members. As Renante Pilapil states, the goal of social justice is to secure equal chances of self-realization:

> What comprises a good and just society is its ability to guarantee the social conditions through which autonomous individuals are given the chance to realize their personality. Justice requires establishing and maintaining enabling social conditions for the formation of intact personal identity for *all* members of society. In this sense, social equality is tied to being given an equal chance for an adequate self-realization. (2011, 85)

Likewise, a society is socially unjust if such relations of recognition are hindered, distorted or withheld from groups of its members. Honneth calls such active forms

of withholding of recognition, or the denial of claims of recognition, disrespect or misrecognition. Disrespect can be differentiated in three basic ways: physical abuse and harm, the denial of rights and exclusion, and denigration. They are all morally harmful and serve as the negative starting point for internal critique. Such social phenomena that are disrespectful or experienced as harmful by those affected are to be criticized. In this regard, the recognition approach stays connected with its roots in the Critical Theory, which positioned itself alongside the social struggles of the oppressed:

> To undertake an effective critique of society one must start by taking into account instances of injustice or violations of standards of justice. In contrast to its positive counterpart, the experience of injustice possesses greater normative bite. As such, for Honneth, no experience of injustice must be ignored even if its public expression is fraught with danger and difficulty. This approach to social justice and normativity is typical of the Frankfurt School, which grounds the motivation for social resistance and liberation movements not on grand theories of intellectuals but on people's everyday experience. (Pilapil 2011, 81)

Given this general setting, what can be seen as a genuine form of recognition? How are these three basic forms of love, rights, and solidarity realized in a given society? The recognition approach has no final answer to these questions as, adopting the perspective of this approach, recognition is an open concept which has to be filled by the unlimited possibilities of human modes of relations and social interactions. Recognition is historically and socially relative. Claims of recognition are likewise relative as they refer to such forms of recognition that can be found in a given social context or society. A few examples can make this point clear. Hugging can be an expression of love, as can be the institution of marriage. Work and employment, or the level of income, are important forms of social esteem in most modern societies. Political as well as social rights are taken for granted in many welfare states. People are likely to claim these forms of recognition and view them as important for their own lives. With a few exceptions, self-realization in Austria, Germany or Japan is bound up with having a well-remunerated job for which one is recognized as a valuable member of society. Honneth has explicitly linked his approach to the various functions of work and employment for the individual and the society alike (Creed and Macintyre 2007; Honneth 2007; Jahoda 1982):

> A mere glance at studies of the psychological effects of unemployment makes it clear that the experience of labor must be assigned a central position in the model emerging here. The acquisition of that form or recognition that I have called social esteem continues to be bound up with the opportunity to pursue an economically rewarding and thus socially regulated occupation. (Honneth 2007, 75)

The relativism of recognition is also true for misrecognition and disrespect. Only in a "working society" which values employment and market success, will unemployment be perceived as denigrating. Likewise if no one is granted a public financed pension, the denial of it will not be experienced as an injustice in comparison with others, although it could be criticized for being unjust in itself. As a last example, if asking a father for his

daughter's hand is not common in society, then not asking is unlikely to be perceived as rude or impolite. So, when the recognition approach aims to uncover injustice and moral harm in social relations, it does so by reflecting on the structure of these relations, and the ideas and values incorporated in them. This is internal critique. In his response to Nancy Fraser, Honneth writes:

> I always introduce the conflicts and struggles of capitalist social formations with reference to those principles of mutual recognition that are considered legitimate by the members of society themselves. What motivates individuals or social groups to call the prevailing social order into question and to engage in practical resistance is the moral conviction that, with respect to their own situations or particularities, the recognition principles considered legitimate are incorrectly or inadequately applied. (2003, 157)

Such an internal approach to social critique avoids the fallacies that necessarily come with the proposal for a universal foundation for moral norms and values. Rather than seeking such universal values and an ahistorical truth, it serves as a critical mirror for a society and shows that it fails its own standards and goals. This makes the critique more convincing than the application of mere external standards. Furthermore, internal critique is closely aligned to the critique brought forward by social groups, movements or individuals. Their claims for recognition, such as for equality, a living wage or for the possibilities of a registered partnership, can refer to the basics of a liberal and democratic society. It is important to stress that – as I have pointed out before – recognition can come in all different shapes and is not just about identity politics but also includes material and social forms such as income, housing or political participation. Although the recognition approach has a strong connection to social psychology, this does not impair its capacity for dealing with material claims and questions of redistribution. Crucial topics of poverty such as income, living wage, material deprivation, housing, education, health or unemployment are not outside its range, but can rather be reconstructed as materializations of recognition, which are embedded in social, economic and political institutions. Recognition-based social scientific research, especially within the sociology of work and labour, has proven this (Voswinkel 2012; Wagner 2012).

Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch has convincingly reconstructed this internal critique in Honneth's work in respect of his treatment of neo-liberalism (Schmidt am Busch 2010). Neo-liberalism fails its own promises to secure and apply what can be called the "achievement principle" and only benefits a small elite (Honneth 2003; Hartmann and Honneth 2006):

> From the methodological perspective, Honneth claims to present a critique of neoliberalism that is "internal" insofar as its measure lies in relations of recognition that are constitutive for bourgeois-capitalist societies. Honneth illustrates this model of critique by referring to conflicts over distribution. According to him, such social conflicts are essentially struggles for recognition that are—or may be—carried out by reference to the principles of legal respect and/or of social esteem. In such cases, demands for the redistribution of economic goods may meet with society's

approval if they are based on proof that redistribution will remedy an infringement of claims that is identified as being based on these principles. In this context, the task of the Critical Theorist consists in furnishing this proof and making the connections explicit. Because he or she must rely on principles that are constitutive of bourgeois-capitalist society, the Critical Theorist can be said to engage in an "internal" critique in the above-mentioned sense. (Schmidt am Busch 2010, 260)

To sum up, the recognition approach wants to be an immanent form of social critique, which is situated rather within the criticized social relations than claiming a god's eye view. Now, this form of internal critique has not gone uncontested, and although it is a major pillar of the recognition approach, it is not the whole story. Therefore, I want to turn to the critique on internal critique and to the absolute core of recognition.

II. THE ABSOLUTE CORE OF RECOGNITION

One main objection against internal critique is that a critical philosophy has to be able to distinguish unjustified from justified claims for recognition and that this task cannot be shouldered by the reference to a given set of institutions, values or norms. In the same manner, Christopher Zurn, along with Nancy Fraser, has advocated that the recognition approach cannot rest on subjective experiences of disrespect alone but that it needs some objective and also non-relative criteria. Some forms of disrespect and misrecognition are not only tolerable but necessary:

> Thus, for example, a critical theory should be able to dismiss, on principled grounds, claims for expanded recognition put forth by racist hate groups. It should also be able to demonstrate that cultural stereotypes of feminine sexuality may subordinate women through legal definitions of rape – even when these definitions are not generally detected as harmful by women. In other words, a critical theory of recognition must be able to deal with what we could call the problems of the malevolent claimant and of false consciousness. (Zurn 2003, 532)

As I want to put it, internal critique always needs a linkage to an external, ahistoric and non-relative standard of recognition. Honneth himself recognized this problem and the necessity of presenting something like a universal benchmark for the evaluation of social relations or experiences of recognition and disrespect alike. He calls this the idea of a just society, which can serve as a point of reference for social critique:

> The shift to the normative becomes necessary as soon as we are no longer discussing the question of how the social struggles of the present are to be theoretically analyzed, but instead turn to the question of their moral evaluation. Of course, it is obvious that we cannot endorse every political revolt as such – that we cannot consider every demand for recognition as morally legitimate or acceptable. Instead, we generally only judge the objectives of such struggles positively when they point in the direction of social development that we can understand as approximating our ideas of a good or just society. (Honneth 2003, 171–72)

This leads back to the recognition-based concept of justice. Whilst internal critique is mainly concerned with the relative and particular forms and modes of recognition, they again have to be judged against the general idea of recognition as the intersubjective condition of a good life. This is where the absolute core of recognition lies: undistorted self-realization. Michael Hardimon has rightly noticed in his review of Honneth's seminal book, *The struggle for recognition*, that most of the normative weight of his theory rests on this concept of self-realization (Hardimon 1997). The possibility of undistorted and authentic self-realization is the key element of a good life, both at the individual and the social level. Honneth himself calls it a "formal concept of a good life" (*formales konzept der sittlichkeit*), which goes back to Hegel's idea of a successful integration – in his terms *Aufhebung* – of morality, rights and social norms in an individual life. To give this formal concept more substance, Honneth again refers back to the three basic forms recognition. A good life is, so to speak, one that is filled with experiences of love, respect, and social esteem for who we are, what goals we achieve and what makes us particular:

> On the one hand, the three patterns of recognition – which now can count as just as many preconditions for successful self-realization – are defined in a sufficiently abstract, formal manner to avoid raising the suspicion that they embody particular visions of the good life. On the other hand, from the perspective of their content, the explication of these three conditions is detailed enough to say more about the general structures of a successful life than is entailed by general references to individual self-determination. The forms of recognition associated with love, rights, and solidarity provide the intersubjective protection that safeguards the conditions for external and internal freedom, upon which the process of articulating and realizing individual life-goals without coercion depends. Moreover, since they do not represent established institutional structures but only general patterns of behaviour, they can be distilled, as structural elements, from the concrete totality of all particular forms of life. (Honneth 1996b, 174)

This means that the task of social critique requires the evaluation of certain claims of recognition, social phenomena, relations or processes, against the idea of a widening and deepening of the possibilities of self-realization and the experiences of recognition for all members of society. This again is only possible if the notions of recognition and self-realization are "thick" enough to provide such standards. But the recognition approach argues this only as a "formal concept" and does not aim to fill it out with more substantial claims as, for example, Martha Nussbaum does with her prominent list. Danielle Petherbridge has recently called this a form/content divide as love, rights, and social esteem are the only universal forms that do not determine their content:

> Honneth has therefore more recently acknowledged that the anthropological structures of social recognition alone cannot adequately provide justification for grounding a critical social theory. He now more strenuously attempts to maintain a form/content distinction, suggesting that only the form of moral expectations of recognition represents an invariant anthropological feature whereas their content depends on the different ways in which they become institutionalised and differentiated within in any given society. (2011b, 20)

This just seems to reproduce the problem with internal critique on another level. There is an absolute core of recognition, but it might be too vague and broad to serve as a real benchmark. It is still unclear how justified and unjustified claims for recognition are distinguished from each other, and how to judge social relations. This problem becomes eminently clear when we turn to the question of how seemingly legitimate claims of recognition can be valued against one another. Social reality is full of such clashes or tensions between different forms of recognition; for example, should we privilege someone we are friends with or the one who is the best person for the task. Similar conflicts can also found in David Miller's approach to social justice, which also distinguishes three dimensions or principles akin to Honneth's three forms of recognition (Miller 1999; Honneth 2003). It appears as though there is no simple solution to this problem, which does not either undermine the absolute core of recognition or the strengths of a historic-relative internal critique. The context-sensitivity of the recognition approach necessarily comes with this vagueness. This also implies that the historic process of inclusion and the development of social justice are still going on. Honneth uses the old idea of the dialectic of the general and the particular to describe this:

> For each of the three recognition spheres is distinguished by normative principles which provide their own internal standards of what counts as "just" or "unjust." In my view, the only way forward here is the idea, outlined above, that each principle of recognition has a specific surplus of validity whose normative significance is expressed by the constant struggle over its appropriate application and interpretation. Within each sphere, it is always possible to set a moral dialectic of the general and the particular in motion: claims are made for a particular perspective (need, life-situation, contribution) that has not yet found appropriate consideration by appeal to a general recognition principle love, law, achievement). In order to be up to the task of critique, the theory of justice outlined here can wield the recognition principles' surplus validity against the facticity of their social interpretation. (2003, 186)

III. GLOBALIZING RECOGNITION

I now want to turn to the questions of global justice and a recognition-based critique of global poverty. These two are not congruent, but a convincing critique of global poverty appears to be one major task for a theory of global justice. From the perspective of internal critique, poverty or any other injustice is morally wrong if it violates any implicit or explicit values or norms within society or the social relations of those affected. This kind of critique is especially powerful in societies that are already highly developed and understand themselves as welfare states. The idea that at least a basic social security is needed for civil rights and duties to be assumed can be mobilized for a critique of poverty in such liberal and democratic societies. Henry Shue is one who has made this point explicit:

> No one can, if at all, enjoy any right that is supposedly protected by society if he or she lacks the essentials for a reasonable healthy and active life. Deficiencies in the means of subsistence can be just as fatal, incapacitating, or painful as violations of

physical security. The resulting damage or death can at least as decisively prevent the enjoyment of any right as can the effects of security violations. (1996, 24–25)

Honneth's critique of neo-liberalism points in the same direction and it can be further developed into a detailed internal critique of poverty, social exclusion and the unjust distribution of wealth, opportunities and education in bourgeois-capitalistic societies. But when it comes to the problem of global poverty, this critique is obviously limited. As Heins argued, there are many societies which are far from being "modern", democratic or welfare societies (Heins 2008). There are no adequate internal and immanent standards which could be used to criticize poverty. Also, the social reality of many poor people is dominated by unjust ideologies and beliefs. Sen has often argued for absolute criteria of poverty because many poor people do not perceive their poverty as harmful, or might even be happy with their situation. In such situation an internal critique is nearly impossible:

> Consider a very deprived person who is poor, exploited, overworked and ill, but who has been made satisfied with his lot by social conditioning (through, say, religion, political propaganda, or cultural pressure). Can we possibly believe that he is doing well just because he is happy and satisfied? Can the living standard of a person be high if the life that he or she leads is full of deprivation? The standard of life cannot be so detached from the nature of the life the person leads. (Sen 1987, 7–8)

One possible solution to the limitations of an internal critique of global poverty could be to expand the understanding of internal from a closed society or nation state to the whole world. However, such a simple globalization faces at least two major problems. First, no comparable and consistent standards can be found within most societies which are organized as nation states. This begs the question, what standards should be followed? Those of Western societies? Second, the third form of recognition – social esteem – is explicitly conceptualized as being bound to a shared "value horizon" (Honneth 1996b). Social esteem is the recognition of such features or achievements that are judged as valuable by the shared community. There are not many such generally accepted values in societies, which consist of millions of members, but it seems to be unrealistic to identify even a few that are shared throughout a world, especially as such values are themselves contingent and depend on the historic development and formation of the society. The capitalistic "achievement principle" might be shared by many, maybe by even most members of such societies, but it is unknown or not so highly valued in many other countries. Jonathan Seglow has criticized Honneth in this regard:

> Social movements' battles to get their esteem-worthy achievements on the public agenda evinces their belief in the normative power of a community of esteem. But again, contemporary globalized politics problematizes this picture. Areas marked by circular migration, guestworkers, refugee inflows and other movements of people may lack the settled population necessary for an ethos of esteem to develop through argument and advocacy. How far is the population numerically stable, and if it is stable how clustered is the constellation of esteem judgements which binds them? Other states are characterized by ethnic or religious groups subject to more

or less permanent subaltern status; they may be beyond the settled constituency of recognition, their attitudes discounted. (2009, 68)

One possible way to avoid this limitation of a globalization of recognition is to emphasize the dialectic of the three forms of recognition – love, respect, social esteem – itself and show that this can in fact serve as framework for global justice and for the critique of poverty and injustice. I have stated that a simple globalization of internal critique is not possible, but the further development and differentiation through the various struggles for recognition might lead to a globalization of at least basic rights. Rights are granted not for being a member of a specific society, nor are they bound to any form of achievement or merit (Honneth 1996b). They reflect the universal respect we owe every human for being an autonomous person. Honneth himself has suggested that the legal sphere is of utmost important, although it does not cover the whole of justice:

> Rather, we must always reflexively examine the boundaries that have been established between the domains of the different recognition principles, since we can never rule out the suspicion that the existing division of labor between the moral spheres impairs the opportunities for individual identity-formation. And not infrequently, such questioning will lead to the conclusion that an expansion of individual rights is required, since the conditions for respect and autonomy are not adequately guaranteed under the normative principle of 'love' or 'achievement.' (2003, 189)

If the recognition approach does not want to limit itself to the globalization of rights, maybe on the basis of human rights it has to go in another direction, which transcends internal critique. This leads to the third option for a recognition-based concept of global justice. It draws on the absolute core of recognition and the idea of undistorted self-realization as the universal element of a good life. Can it serve a viable benchmark? Poverty is morally wrong according to this perspective if it is connected with severe forms of disrespect or the lack of any possibilities of undistorted self-realization. The conditions of absolute poverty can be adequately described with the terminology of disrespect: physical and psychological harm, no room for the development of relations of care and trust, the lack of basic rights, exclusion, denigration and degradation (Kaufmann et al. 2011). Or, to use a different category, which brings forward another core aspect of poverty: invisibility (Honneth 2001). In other words, poverty is wrong because it is harmful for the poor and violates their justified claim to live a good life. Instead, most of the poor of this world have to live their lives under conditions in which they lack basic commodities and capabilities (WHO and UNICEF 2010; World Bank 2011). I want to quote Amartya Sen again, who described these conditions of poverty, which are deeply wrong under any circumstances:

> One element of that absolutist core is obvious enough, though the modern literature on the subject often does its best to ignore it. If there is starvation and hunger, then – no matter what the relative picture looks like – there clearly is poverty. In this sense the relative picture – if relevant – has to take a back seat behind the possibly dominating absolutist consideration. While it might be thought that this type of poverty –

involving malnutrition or hunger – is simply irrelevant to the richer countries, that is empirically far from clear, even though the frequency of this type of deprivation is certainly much less in these countries. Even when we shift our attention from hunger and look at other aspects of living standard, the absolutist aspect of poverty does not disappear. The fact that some people have a lower standard of living than others is certainly proof of inequality, but by itself it cannot be a proof of poverty unless we know something more about the standard of living that these people do in fact enjoy. (1983, 159)

No matter what the internal standards within such a society might be, absolute poverty limits the opportunities for self-realization so that they are negligibly small. In contrast, claims of recognition can refer to this absolute core in every society and under all circumstances – in a refugee camp in Africa, in custody pending deportation in Austria or in an automobile plant in the USA – and can demand that the intersubjective conditions and social relations should change in order to make undistorted self-realization possible. The anthropological and universal roots of the recognition transcend the borders of any given society.

To understand poverty with regard to self-realization might also be an important contribution to poverty research in general as it begs questions about the reliance on monetary measures and concepts of poverty. There is an increasing literature about the non-monetary dimension of poverty (Fahey 2010; Nolan and Whelan 2010), and to me it seems, as if most of this points in the direction of what the recognition approach describes as a good life and its social preconditions. These all bring to the fore a core understanding of the importance of being a valued and recognized member of society, and the ability to lead a life as an equal and respected citizen. The importance of belonging and social participation is more and more recognized in poverty research, and inherent in the shift to using concepts of social exclusion to describe poverty (Abrams, Christian, and Gordon 2007; Hills, Le Grand, and Piachaud 2002). Peter Townsend's concept of deprivation is a prominent example for these shifts to multidimensionality:

People are relatively deprived if they cannot obtain, at all or sufficiently, the conditions of life – that is, the diets, amenities, standards and services – which allow them to play the roles, participate in the relationships and follow the customary behaviour which is expected of them by virtue of their membership of society. If they lack or are denied the incomes, or more exactly the resources, including income and assets or goods or services in kind to obtain access to these conditions of life, they can be defined to be in poverty. People may be deprived in any or all of the major spheres of life – at work, where the means largely determining position in other spheres are earned, at home, in neighbourhood and family; in travel; in a range of social and individual activities outside work and home or neighbourhood in performing a variety of roles in fulfillment of social obligations. (1993, 36)

To put it in normative terms: poverty is the absence of the intersubjective conditions of a good life. But turning attention to the absolute core of recognition does not neglect the relative side of recognition or make internal critique irrelevant. As shown in the previous section, there is an internal dialectic of the general forms of recognition and its particular

contents. Also self-realization is a formal concept that has to be fulfilled by the individual, which is often shaped by social, economic, political and technological possibilities. The good life and its social conditions is as relative as is the "bad" life of poverty and social exclusion. The "customary behaviour" to which Townsend points is different from society to society. Also, programmes of poverty alleviation have to take these into account. One example can be the results of participatory work on poverty and well-being by the World Bank:

> Respondents in rural areas placed a strong emphasis on food security in their definitions of poverty, ill-being and vulnerability, as well as lack of work, money and assets. They also emphasized the vulnerability of particular groups within the community: the old, the disabled, female-headed households and those living alone, isolated from social networks. The definitions of those in an urban setting place far more emphasis on the immediate living environment: crowded and unsanitary housing, lack of access to water, dirty and dangerous streets and violence both within and outside the household. (Brock 1999, 9)

This difference in the experience of poverty is the deeper reason for all relative approaches to poverty that conceptualize it as relative to the living standard of the majority (Fahey 2010; Townsend 1979). And I think that this relative approach is also crucial and powerful for global justice. It would certainly have massive negative consequences if we were to aim to just globalize the Western, consumerist and lavish way of living; but the mere existence of societies which grant their members a broad range of social security and rights, in which most people have access to education, housing and food, gives the critique of global poverty a particular severity. It is internal in another way: it reflects our failure to even globalize the minimum standards we set for ourselves and our societies.

Claims for global justice can always refer to the absolute core of recognition and demand that intersubjective conditions and social relations should change in order to make undistorted self-realization possible. This is the main and universal point of reference for a recognition-based concept of global justice. But these claims have to be filled with life and to do so the poor can always point to what the rich concede themselves.

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