The organizers of this workshop offer a list of several possible normative standards by which we might evaluate the governance of international institutions – accountability, legitimacy, fairness, democracy, justice, Pareto optimality, and harm causing.

Before turning to the main body of my remarks on democracy and justice, I would like to note two additional norms that I hope we discuss in the course of the workshop: order and security. By “order” I mean a rule of law – a recognized framework of rules and dispositions to follow them that make events somewhat predictable, to which agents can appeal to criticize or sanction other agents’ actions. By “security” I mean a settled expectation of physical safety, reasonable freedom from fear of violent actions of other people, and from the effects of natural and human made disasters. Adherence to both these norms is an important condition for enacting others. Yet it is not at all clear that the major powers accept that these norms should govern international relations. I hope that in the course of the workshop that we talk about the rule of law and security.

For my own remarks, however, I will focus on two values on the list that Beitz, Keohane and Milner supply that I think cover the others, namely, democracy and justice. I will define these concepts and say something about their connection. I will then address the question of whether these concepts have a specific meaning when used in the context of global governance. Finally, I will briefly discuss what it means to apply these concepts in empirical research relevant to assessing global governance.

I. The meaning of democracy

Democracy of course refers to many things. I here treat it as a method of decision making. Democracy requires that all those whose basic interests are affected by policy decisions are able to participate in the process of making them. For my purposes here, basic interests refers to interests in the conditions for self-development and self-determination. Of course, in mass societies where so many decisions affect millions of people simultaneously, people are not usually and cannot usually be directly involved in the decision making, nor do they usually want to be. But a decision making process is more or less democratic insofar as people affected by it in their basic interests reasonably believe that they have a genuine opportunity to influence the decision. So thinking about what form that opportunity should take is an important matter for democracy.
of representation, accountability, processes of agenda setting, freedom of association and
dissent, meaningful public discussion of alternative proposals and of the actions of
leaders and those who implement decisions. Democracy is not on-off, it is more or less,
and we can and should develop criteria for evaluating more or less.

I think that democracy is primarily instrumental in its value: The primary reason that
we care about democracy is because we care about justice. Ideally speaking, processes of
inclusive, public deliberative decision making have the best chance of arriving at wise
and just decisions. Why? Because public discussion tries to work through problems in
the most intelligent way. Discussion and decision making procedures need to be
inclusive, however, which for me means at least this: that all major interests, opinions
and social perspectives are represented. A major problem with democracy as we
experience it is that it is not inclusive in this sense: to a significant degree, interests,
opinions, and social perspectives that are more powerful socially and economically also
dominate the political process. Thus, under conditions of social and economic inequality,
democratic processes that aim to be inclusive need to take special measures to secure the
representation of the interests, opinions and social perspectives of less powerful social
segments. Such representation can and should occur by means of voting procedures for
decision making offices. But it must also involve active vehicles of accountability for
those holding offices, and allow a significant role for political associations of persons
representing less powerful social segments.²

Let me explain particularly what I man by “social perspective” and how it is
represented. Many of what we consider important and less powerful social groups in
modern democracies – for example, women, people with disabilities, African
Americans or Native Americans in the United States, Maori in New Zealand, industrial,
retail and service workers, sexual minorities, etc. – are best not thought of as “identity”
groups, at least from the point of view of the issues of injustice that they face. They are
best ought of as structural social groups. What brings them together as groups in not
common self-conceptions or beliefs, but rather the similar position they occupy in the
larger social structures, and the implications this positioning has on their life options.

An argument for special measures for representing members of relatively
disadvantaged structural social groups appeals not to a desire for “recognition,” of their
“identities,” but rather to the fact that people located in these structural positions tend to
have similar perspectives on what is happening in the society and why, and similar
understandings of what are the likely consequences of political proposals as they might
affect them. By speaking from their perspectives people thus potentially offer unique
knowledge and insight for public discussion. When such knowledge is pooled from a
variety of social perspectives, this contributes to more wise and more just decisions.

II. The meaning of justice

² For a fuller account of these points, see Iris Marion Young, Inclusion and Democracy (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2000), especially Chapters 3, 4, and 5.
According to many political philosophers, justice is the first virtue of institutions. Its meaning and conditions are highly contested, of course. I will avoid these thickets of debate, and simply assert a general definition of social justice (as distinct from legal justice, justice in individual behavior, and even from justice in particular state policy).

Social justice consists in the institutional conditions promoting the self-development and self-determination of all a society’s members. Self-development means the ability to learn and use satisfying skills in socially recognized settings, and to play and communicate with others or express one’s feelings and perspectives on social life in contexts where others can listen. The contrary of self-development is oppression, or the socially-based inhibition of the development of one’s capacities. Institutional conditions of self-development thus involve how goods are distributed, both to meet the needs that make a person strong and healthy enough to use skills and express themselves, and to supply material for these activities. Issues of social justice go beyond distribution, however, to involve such issues as the organizations of the division of labor and the ways that institutions and practices do or do not accommodate to people’s differing capacities and modes of expression.

Self-determination means the ability to participate in deciding one’s actions and determine the conditions under which one acts. The contrary of self-determination is domination, that is, being so situated that others are able to determine without reciprocation the conditions of one’s action, either directly or because of the structural consequences of what they do. Freedom as self-determination is broader and deeper than liberty, especially because it concerns not merely being allowed to act on given options, but also involves having some role in the processes that determine the options. Although self-determination thus overlaps with norms and practices of democracy, I think that it is important to define democracy specifically as about how decisions are made, and particularly how public policies are made.

III. Application of the above to issues of global governance

A. Democracy

In principle, democracy and justice mean the same things at the global level as at national and local levels. We do not have a world state, nor do I think that we should. Nevertheless some decisions made in powerful institutions in the world today affect most of the world’s people, or affect large numbers located within many nation-state jurisdictions. Global democracy would mean that all those whose basic interests are affected by such decisions could reasonably believe that they can participate in or have influence over these decision making processes. Clearly, advocates of more global democracy must acknowledge complexity, but we should also recognize that we already

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3 Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, pp. 37-38; *Inclusion and Democracy*, pp. 31-33.
deal with mass democracy at nation-state and local levels. It is not as though there is “direct democracy” in governing Istanbul or Sao Paulo, for example. Processes of global democracy, in my opinion, do not present problems of scale any more intractable than making democracy work in, say, India.

My definition of democracy above focuses on issues of representation for this reason. A decision making process is properly inclusive in principle if the interests, opinions and social perspectives of all those affected by the decisions are represented in the decision making process. In current systems of global level decision making, persons are represented primarily by means of nation-states. We should recognize, however, that nongovernmental organizations such as multinational corporations, trade associations, religious organizations, and others also already serve to represent the interests of some in global level decision making, although this is often in ways that exclude or disadvantage others. Though I do not envision nation-states as fading away, their role as primary representatives of persons in global decision making processes perhaps should be more limited. There are many sub-state peoples, for example, such as indigenous peoples, that seek and are receiving recognition as representatives for their members in global decisions making. Women’s organizations, to take another example, have sought to represent women’s interests and perspectives before United Nations meetings not specifically focused on gender issues. In general, it is a good thing for there to be multiple forms of representation for people, speaking to various aspects of their lives and the way decisions can affect their basic interests. Global governance processes need to take affirmative steps to expand the scope of persons and groups who are represented.

I wish to call attention to two other democratic values: accountability and the quality of public discussion.

I think that accountability as a value is best tied to democratic representation. When we ask whether decision makers and implementers are properly accountable for what they do, we should wonder who they are supposed to be accountable to. The answer should of course be, to everyone affected by their decisions, but this is a rather vague “court of public opinion.” Being accountable has more force and meaning when there are institutional and communicative lines between a specific constituency and decision makers and implementers, and when the decision makers acknowledge these connections.

As many have theorized recently, finally, strong democracy entails public deliberation. This means that how democratic a decision making process is can be measured partly by the quality of its public discussion. Is there a strong public sphere in which many people can speak and be heard, do people behave in it with openness to the expression of the opinions and perspectives of others, and does the communication often involve giving reasons that aim to persuade others of the wisdom and justice of a decision of policy?

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B. Justice

The demands of global justice are the same as for social justice at local or state levels – that institutional conditions for the self-development and self-determination of everyone should be in place. Those to whom justice should be done are individual persons, not groups, states, or peoples. Inasmuch as group membership is usually important to people’s understanding of their ability to express themselves or remain free of domination, however, especially in the context of international relations, groups are important to justice.

The scope of obligations of justice is global insofar as the structural effects of actions and decisions reach beyond nation-state borders. I think that the emergence of issues of global justice shows that an assumption implicitly or explicitly made by many philosophers that obligations of justice arise from people dwelling together in a single polity is incorrect. There is no single global political community; yet there are global obligations of justice arising from social structural processes that are transnational and in some cases truly global in their scope. The scope of obligations of justice corresponds to the social structures that make people vulnerable, and not to any political community. Where there is structural injustice but weak political institutions to respond to it, as there is today in global society, discharging such obligations calls for making stronger political institutions.

IV. Questions for empirical assessment of global injustice and degree of democracy

I close with some words about how the norms I have articulated can inform questions for empirical research in international relations. That is, supposing we want to look at the world and ask where and how it contains injustice or whether its decision making processes are sufficiently democratic, how do we do that?

A. Justice

I think that it is pretty easy to get facts about global injustice. To what extent do persons lack conditions of self-development and self-determination on a massive scale? Many economists and philosophers identify absolute poverty in the world as an acute issue of justice, and until such large scale poverty is mitigated we have enough injustice to concern us. The United Nations Development Program offers dozens of measures of people’s situation of poverty and relative inequality across the world.

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I said above, however, that we identify structural injustice not only by noticing people’s situations, but also by arguing that their deprivations have social causes. This is more difficult to do empirically than noticing their situation and comparing it to that of others, but it is important. Many people believe that much of the poverty in the world is traceable not only to local and national processes, but to transnational social processes. We need better empirical accounts of how such processes operate to help produce and reproduce such outcomes. Much empirical discussion of transnational inequality remains dominated by a “development” assumption: that there are so many poor people in some parts of the world compared to others because these societies lag behind in a process of modernization. Their economies did not properly “take off”. Aside from his geography explanation, I think that Jeffrey Sachs’s point of view on the causes of global poverty tend to have this developmentalist assumption. If we accept the developmentalist assumption, then there is little need to investigate how transnational processes and the decisions of powerful actors that affect transnational processes contribute to producing or maintaining poverty and global inequality. In the 1970’s, for example, some economists and sociologists argued that the international division of labor was a significant factor in producing and reproducing global inequality. Today some people make a similar claim, but I have not been able to find much social science research that attempts to support or reject the hypothesis. (If I am looking in the wrong places, I would love to be enlightened!)

B. Democracy

Above I summarized three important normative elements of democracy: representativeness, accountability, and the quality of public discussion. Each of these should be able to inform how empirical researchers study global processes of decision making, whether of interstate entities or of other transnational institutions.

(1) Representativeness – Who is represented and how in given decision processes? This question can be studied in detail for many global processes. The extent to which the proceedings of the World Trade Organization are democratic has been a subject of debate in recent years, for example. To judge the extent to which its proceedings have been democratic one can look at the extent to which some member states have had relatively little influence over them because they lack resources to send large delegations to meetings or because they are subject to coercive pressures from other members. As I said above, however, we should not evaluate the representativeness of decisions only by the inclusion or exclusion of state officials. In recent years other institutions have tried to represent potentially excluded or disadvantaged interests and perspectives in international meetings. Researchers can develop criteria for determining whether and to what extent non-governmental organizations do indeed function as representing particular interests, opinions or perspectives in transnational decision making and apply these for evaluation. Survey research could be conducted with ordinary people in different parts of the world which tries to ascertain whether

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7 Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*
and when they believe themselves represented in international decisions by entities additional to their nation states.

(2) Accountability – I think one studies accountability empirically in several ways. Assessing the transparency of proceedings is one. If during and after the fact other actors cannot trace the process that brings about a decision or set of policies, including a record of the debates about them, those making the decision cannot be held accountable.

We can also study accountability by finding instances of decision makers giving a public accounting. In particular, to whom do they give an accounting? The world at large? Other elites? These are not satisfactory. Issues of accountability should be connected to issues of representation. Empirical research can try to trace lines of connection between decision makers and constituencies to whom arguably they ought to be accountable; more often than not such research will find broken or frayed connections, and doing so helps to assess the degree of democracy of a process. In studying issues of accountability we can also try to find instances where decision makers on global level issues face disruptions or threats of popular sanction for their decisions, and we can try to figure out the extent to which this influences their actions.

(3) Quality of public discussion – Transparency is also connected with publicity. With the term “publicity” I have in mind the presence what Habermas calls a “public sphere” in which important issues of politics and policy are discussed with civil society as well as in official public forums. Here are some criteria that might be applied to observations of discussions of international politics to assess their publicity or lack thereof. How widespread is discussion of the issues among ordinary citizens, and how easily do they have access to media through which they can be heard in public? “In public” means that people constitute together an open field of discussion in which they are aware that millions of strangers may be listening (by this criterion, my opinion, the internet does not usually function itself as a public, though it can be part of a public). When decision makers and implementers speak, to what extent does the form of their speech exhibit an awareness that anyone in the world might be listening, and thus that they must formulate their ideas in ways that anyone can in principle accept? No doubt there are other questions that can be asked to assess the quality of public discussion in of international decision making and governance issues. Among methods that might be used to perform such evaluation might be content analysis of political speeches, major media stories and opinion pieces.

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8 Jurgen Habermas, Between Facts and Norms (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); for one example of the application of the idea of the public sphere to the empirical study of international relations, see Jennifer Mitzen, APSR, 2005.