



Sustainable development: for whom?

A critical vision
for coherence of Italian and
European policies

INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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A critical vision for coherence
of Italian and European policies

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prepared by Gcap Italia
in connection with the
“Make Europe Sustainable for All” project

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This monitoring report on the implementation of the sustainable development goals has been implemented by GCAP Italy, the Italian Coalition against Poverty, which is part of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty coalition, and has been edited by Andrea Stocchiero of ENGIM Internazionale / FOCSIV .

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Introduction and executive summary

Prepared by Stefano Prato (SID), Massimo Pallottino (Caritas Italiana) and Andrea Stocchiero (FOCSIV)

Four fundamental elements for a truly transformative Agenda

It has only been three years since the new agenda for sustainable development was approved, and the international community is already behind schedule to reach its ambitious goals. All of the hype that went along with Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) produced a type of collective hypnosis, as if the mere fact of declaring a series of goals were enough to ensure that they would be reached, generating a smokescreen that obscured the continuation, and in some cases the acceleration, of the processes of accumulation and concentration of wealth based on a predatory development model that is the antithesis of sustainable development and represents the main obstacle to changing the deep-rooted economic policies that result from it.

After a difficult economic period following the 2018 financial crisis, the recovery of the global economy, although modest and not universal, was promptly followed by an increase in the number of people suffering from hunger in a situation of increased vulnerability and a rise in greenhouse gas emissions. The economy generates crises when it is in recession and worsens chronic structural problems as soon as it begins to recover. This is all against a backdrop of geopolitical instability and increasing conflict and social tensions at various levels, not to mention the concrete risk of celebrating the tenth anniversary of the fall of the *Lehman Brothers* with a new financial crisis, which many believe is already under way, although not yet evident. And with the increasing frequency of extreme weather events, we are reminded, despite denials by the powerful few, of the fragility of the human condition and the existential risk facing future generations.

In the midst of this confusion, the goals of the 2030 Agenda have been hailed by completely opposing currents of thought, by proponents of further advancing the dynamics of liberalisation and privatisation of public spaces and property as well as those who defend the role of the State, despite its history of frequent failures. Therefore there is a clear lack of a shared strategy as to how development goals should be pursued, and it appears increasingly evident that interpretive guidelines are needed to create a regulatory compass to point the way forward.

The starting point and benchmark for the drafting of this report can be none other than the regulatory framework for human rights, since it defines the public space, identifies the right-holders and their organisations, and defines the meaning and role of the State. This means rejecting mere empty references to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and rather reaffirming the centrality and indivisibility of human rights as the cornerstone of modern constitutionalism. The lack of explicit reference to the relevant rights in many of the SDGs could indeed contribute to their reformulation in terms of deliverable market needs, completing the commodification process that has characterised the past few years and promoting the erosion of public space, increased confusion between holders of rights and interests, the illusion of a false correspondence between public and private interests and the progressive shift of *governance* towards multi-actor platforms with pervasive private sector involvement, which deprive the corresponding national and inter-governmental decision-making spaces of meaning. Therefore it is essential that we refocus the sustainable development policies and strategies on the human rights agenda, in contrast with the increasing reductionism that equates rights with a mere security and safety net for the excluded, reaffirming their role as an equalising algorithm on which to base the operating procedures of the economy, society, and politics. In this sense, the process begun by the United Nations Human Rights Council to develop a legally binding international instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights is fundamentally important (Box 1.1), as discussed in the section on value chains.

In-Depth Discussion

The Binding Treaty on corporations and human rights: a necessary step to strengthen the SDGs

Human rights can be threatened by the economic activities of corporations around the world. Corporations act according to economic interests that can conflict with the fundamental rights of other interest holders, such as the right to decent work, health, freedom of expression and organisation and freedom of participation and movement, to name only a few. The debate over the need to define a binding framework for corporations, finally eliminating the voluntary approach, has recently been rekindled thanks to the work of certain Governments: Ecuador, South Africa, and Bolivia. In 2014, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted resolution 26/9 establishing a legally binding international instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights, thus launching an ambitious intergovernmental negotiating process. The initiative, which has been enthusiastically backed by international civil society, indigenous communities and social movements, immediately encountered obstacles from governments, in particular those in Europe and the northern hemisphere. According to those who systematically suffer violations caused by uncontrolled economic activities, a legally binding instrument of this magnitude is essential to bring an end to the impunity of businesses and regulate the enormous power of transnational corporations. The Intergovernmental Working Group tasked with conducting the negotiations will hold its fourth annual session in 2018, during which an initial draft of the legally binding mechanism will be at the centre of negotiations, after previously being released for open consultation. The way forward is strewn with obstacles and all governments promoting the 2030 Agenda must provide their unconditional support for this initiative as a concrete demonstration of their willingness to give substance to the commitments undertaken with the SDGs. Taking such a clear position would restore the role of politics as being at the service of the common good and would eliminate suspicions that the much-lauded public/private partnership in global governance processes was merely a way to increase the power imbalance in favour of corporations, to the detriment of local communities and the States themselves.

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<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/WGTransCorp/Pages/IGWGOntNC.aspx>

Treaty alliance

<http://www.treatymovement.com/>

Global Interparliamentary Network in Support of the Binding Treaty

<https://bindingtreaty.org/it/>

The second regulatory reference emerges when we set aside the logic of focusing exclusively on poverty in favour of adopting a conceptual framework of inequality.¹ This approach provides powerful descriptive, analytical and regulatory instruments capable of profoundly transforming the direction of development policies. From the descriptive point of view, it is now accepted that such a conceptual framework would demystify the use of averages as key parameters for the representation of income and wellbeing and expose the profound inequity in the distribution of the results of decades of economic growth. However it is multidimensional analysis, which combines the economic dimension with the social, political, and ecological dimensions and explores horizontal disparity across different social, generational, and geographical groups, that highlights how it is always the same groups that are discriminated against by various types of inequality, revealing the existence of deep-rooted power structures. In this respect, the issue of gender is a striking example that reveals the pervasiveness of discrimination and the violence of men against women, with deep, marginalising cultural roots, as discussed in the relevant section. The descriptive power of the multidimensional method provides an opportunity for an analytical approach that is capable correlating prosperity and marginalisation, exposing the close relationship between the two and the often extractive model of development that has progressively shifted profits away from economic activity and towards returns on labour.

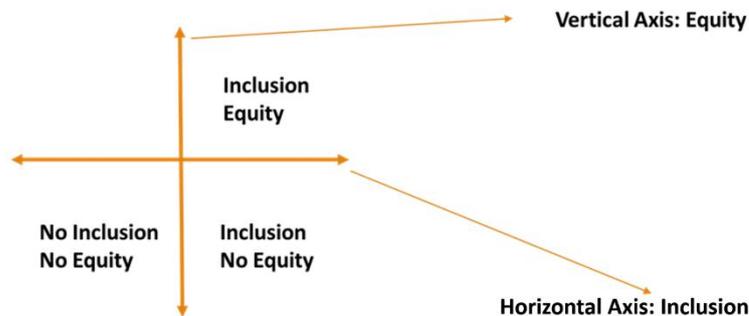
In fact, the focus on poverty – although essential in view of the urgency involved and as an expression of the values of sharing and solidarity – has often made us blind to the dynamics of wealth accumulation and concentration, which is increasingly removed from the real economy, in which families and workers struggle through their day to day problems, and is increasingly tied to the virtual and immaterial world of finance and information.

¹Prato, S. (2014), The Struggle for Equity: Rights, food sovereignty and the rethinking of modernity, Development, Volume 57, Issue 3-4

And it is the analysis of inequalities and the underlying power structures that allows us to correlate the coexistence, seemingly inexplicable according to the canons of traditional economic theory, of three current phenomena, namely the combination of a structural deficit in aggregate demand, the enormous subsidisation of the global economy obtained through the sexual division of labour² and a disproportionate excess of financial liquidity. The descriptive and analytical power of the conceptual inequality framework allows us a deep understanding of gender discrimination and the ramifications of the patriarchy, while intergenerational analysis demonstrates how the topics of poverty and environmental unsustainability are merely two sides of the same coin.

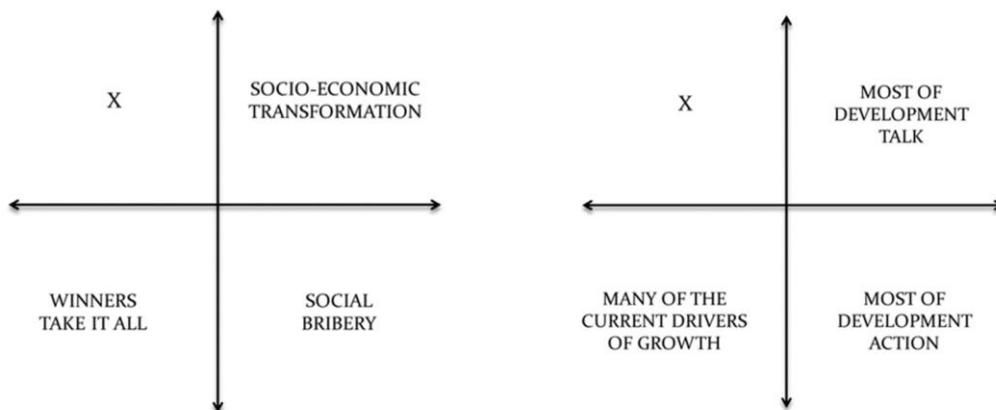
However, what concerns us the most in this context is the role that the reduction of inequality may play in shaping regulations when it comes to revising development policies, to the point of being considered a sort of lodestar that provides an indisputable direction and a type of litmus test for the assessment of laws, policies, and programmes. Nevertheless, it is necessary to problematise the indiscriminate use of the concept of inclusion as the positive response to inequality. As indicated in the simple diagram below (figure 1), inclusion without adequate consideration of the terms in which this inclusion occurs cannot help but contribute to continued economic, social and political marginalisation.

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework to explore the relationship between inclusion and equity



The main forces at work continue to promote a type of growth that benefits the few and continues to exclude the many, destroying the ecological basis on which life in all of its forms is based on this small planet. As shown in the diagram below (figure 2), too often the actions taken by the State and civil society at their various levels are concentrated exclusively on inclusion, which, although a fundamental step in the transformation process, is insufficient to modify the dynamics at play and generate real change.

Fig. 2 Scenarios (left) and reality (right) of the relationship between inclusion and equity



² Subsidisation through the sexual division of labor refers to the economic contribution of all unremunerated work by women for their care services, while highlighting the limitations of measuring such contributions solely in monetary/economic terms.

Therefore it is impossible to truly approach the topic of inequality without advocating for profound socio-economic transformation. At the micro level, it is obvious that we need a Copernican revolution of the production model in order to close the gap between what is legally possible and what is consistent with sustainable development: workers' rights and fair wages, social security, corrective actions to change the relative cost of production factors to incentivise work and disincentivise the use of scarce natural resources, regulation of marketing and aggressive advertising, redirecting incentives towards virtuous production models like agroecology and circular economies, and strengthening rules to prevent the concentration of market power, mega-mergers, and the abuse of dominant positions. In addition, the consumer must be reaffirmed as a citizen with rights rather than an economic subject with purchasing power and a passive repeater of consumption models acquired through osmosis. At the meso level, the transformation entails a rebalancing of the economy's centre of gravity towards the local economy, particularly but not exclusively when it comes to food systems, and a renewable and sustainable energy base. However, these transformations of the production model encounter substantial structural obstacles in the financial and monetary system and the entire framework of trade and investment agreements (Box 1.2), as highlighted in the relevant section of the report.

In-Depth Discussion

Can trade treaties promote sustainable development?

A few authoritative sources, such as the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, argue that it is possible to promote sustainable development and in particular to improve the protection of workers' rights by including specific sections on labour in trade treaties, starting with those of the European Union (EU). A group of important European non-governmental organizations, including ATTAC, *Transnational Institute*, *Power Shift*, the *Seattle to Brussels* network, and in Italy, *Fairwatch*, have published a joint report entitled "*Legitimising an Unsustainable Approach to Trade*," in which they discuss this hypothesis. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the EU also acknowledge that the liberalisation of trade has contributed to or encouraged job losses and environmental damage. Thus if the structure of treaties is not radically changed, the incorporation of non-binding aspirations for the promotion of labour or the environment, as we see today, risks legitimising these approaches without correcting them. The organisations' proposal is that adherence to the International Labour Organisation's key Conventions and the major conventions on human rights and the environment be made prerequisites without which parties may not even sit down at the same table to discuss trade. And that any violations of these conventions be made sanctionable by trade measures as forms of unfair competition. This decision is fully justified, given that, according to the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, the right to freedom of association, for example, is "a prerequisite not only for a legitimate democracy but also for a just society."

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OECD, Better Policy Series: Fixing Globalisation - Time to make it work for all (Paris, 2017) p. 10-11

European Commission, Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation (Brussels, May 2017), p 9

"What are the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association?" Available at:

<http://freeassembly.net/about/freedoms/>

All of these systems, or non-systems in the case of the monetary system, contribute to preserving the current power structure in its current state, which, at the macro level, means that the major global economies exert undemocratic control over the global economy, including through economic institutions that they control, thereby perpetuating the international division of labour and restricting the regulatory and tax spaces of developing countries.³ The democratisation of economic governance therefore represents a mandatory starting point to overcome the systemic obstacles that currently limit the real possibilities for structural change in the production model and the development of the domestic economy in the impoverished nations of the southern hemisphere.

Above all, a new democratic and inclusive institution should be created within the United Nations for the negotiation of an international convention on taxation to combat illicit financial flows that drain large quantities of resources from the coffers of countries in the southern hemisphere, depriving them of the tax space necessary to advance their development agenda. This should be in addition to a resolution mechanism for the urgent debt crisis that establishes a multilateral framework within the United Nations to pursue adequate debt restructuring, laying the groundwork for a new system of

³Prato, S. (2017), Financing for Development: The Progress Money Cannot Buy, *Development*, Volume 59, Issue 4.

alternatives to the unhealthy combination of bail-outs and austerity programmes that have dominated and continue to dominate the orthodox prescriptions of the international financial institutions. And there is obviously a need for a new multilateral framework for fair trade that is capable of releasing those countries that are currently trapped in exporting primary products and which can trigger sustainable industrialisation processes.

However, democratisation of governance cannot only be limited to participation of developing countries in financial institutions and the strengthening of the United Nations' role. It is necessary to address the widening gap between the local and the global spheres and guarantee real and substantial avenues for participation by right-holders and the respective communities primarily affected by development issues in the decisions that affect them. This is why we need to problematise the data revolution invoked by the 2030 Agenda. Not because data and indicators are not important, but due to their potential conflict with this imperative of participation in political decisions. The increasing emphasis on everything that we do not know actually represents a form of negation of the deep experiential knowledge that exists in local communities. And the assumed need for more accurate data to define policies that are truly evidence-based could provide a sophisticated system of new justifications for continued political inaction. Not only is the magnitude of many socio-economic issues so broad as to not require complex levels of statistical accuracy, but the central problem is the shifting of attention from the centrality of experience and subjective knowledge, deeply rooted in the communities facing the challenges of development, to the pretext of objective information obtained from statistical investigations.

After decades spent attempting to build a new paradigm based on the direct participation of development stakeholders, this shift of emphasis towards indicators is certainly a cause for concern. Clearly, direct participation can only be enhanced by adequate indicators of progress and process, but it is essential to devise a navigation system that can ensure that we stay on course using certain intuitive and understandable parameters that enable clear policy evaluation. For example, replacing average income and the Gini coefficient with median income distribution and the Palma ratio⁴ respectively would represent a small step for statistics but a giant leap for democracy.

In conclusion, the regulatory compass built around the four fundamental elements proposed herein (human rights, the fight against inequality, socioeconomic transformation and participation) demonstrates how poverty, discrimination, environmental challenges and climate change are merely different faces of the same problem: a profound democratic deficit at all decision-making levels. And thus the real challenge of the 2030 Agenda is not financial in nature, as some would have us believe in order to feed the financialisation process that deprives our institutions of their decision-making power, but rather a profound political challenge that can only be won by demanding real democratisation of institutions at the local, national, regional and global level. This is a challenge that requires a much higher degree of policy consistency by overcoming the conceptual silos between sectors that are mistakenly believed to be separate and fully acknowledging how the internal agenda of each country is inextricably intertwined with the external agenda. The United Nations Global Compact for Migration (Box 1.3) represents an interesting step in this direction, as discussed in the section of the report on migration.

⁴ The Palma ratio expresses the ratio between the share of gross national income of the richest 10% of the population and the share of the poorest 40%.

In-Depth Discussion

The United Nations Global Compact for Migration

The United Nations began negotiating the Global Compact on Migration and Refugees in 2018 with a view to promoting international governance of migration flows based on shared principles and strategies. The Global Compact for Migration is based on 22 objectives that go beyond the framework of the SDGs, adding topics and possible commitments from the States at both the domestic and international level. These objectives follow the migration cycle: it begins with the need to respond to the causes of migration, i.e. the structural factors, particularly in the countries of origin, providing adequate information on opportunities for emigration and restrictions on access to the destination countries, identification documents, flexible routes for regular migration with ethical and fair recruitment measures for dignified employment; it then moves on to a second group of objectives that includes the need to address irregular migration, first and foremost through rescue operations and therefore combating smuggling and human trafficking, providing safe management of borders in a coordinated way, strengthening the procedures for determination of migrant status with detention measures being used only as a last resort, with a preference for non-coercive alternatives while ensuring consular protection. A third group of objectives concerns the admission and integration policies that must promote access to fundamental social services, emancipate migrants for full inclusion and social cohesion, eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote narratives on migration based on data and facts, and acknowledge and invest in the skills of migrants. The fourth group of objectives concern the relationship with the countries of origin and therefore the role that the diaspora can play in contributing to their development, the promotion of secure, fast, and inexpensive remittances with the financial inclusion of migrants, cooperation with respect to the return, readmission, and reintegration of migrants in their countries of origin, and finally the establishment of mechanisms for the portability of social and pension contributions.

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Global Compact for Migration in <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>

Hence the need to redefine the institutional spaces to develop *ex-ante* a truly integrated and cross-disciplinary approach that transcends the sector-specific silos and combines external policy with external policy rather than continuing to pursue often artificial attempts to claim *ex-post* coherence after different policies and programmes have been developed in their respective spheres of action. This is what this report strives to achieve by proposing an integrated vision of the SDGs in all of their internal and external dimensions. In particular, the sections on fair transition and an economy of peace highlight the urgent need for an integrated and profoundly coherent transformation. An ambitious challenge, considering the strong sector-specific vision of many of our institutions, which can only be achieved when we allow ourselves to be guided by our humanity rather than by points of entry that are often artificially limited.

Towards which monitoring models for sustainable development?

The challenges for change laid down by the 2030 Agenda therefore require that we urgently and concretely adopt a truly “transformative” perspective, without which we risk making the issue of sustainable development a *passpartout* reference framework that incorporates global political correctness without managing to guarantee any real driver towards change. This is a complex challenge, and its problematic nature is reflected, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the difficulty of defining representative and truly effective monitoring systems. Even in countries with stronger and more sophisticated statistical systems, we are still a long way from being able to consistently represent the progress of the 2030 Agenda based on the proposed system of indicators, causing the High Level Policy Forum (HLPF) serious concern at its 2017 opening panel: “...as a result of these gaps, progress reporting based on indicators is currently incomplete. More importantly, the reporting can also be unbalanced, particularly leaving out many of the most innovative elements of the 2030 agenda that depart from past paradigms of development⁵.”

To overcome these gaps, the monitoring system for the sustainable development plans of each country, as well as ways of thinking at the global level, must be clearly redefined. In addition to an examination of the individual aspects that comprise the 2030 Agenda and the individual objectives through which the elements are put into practice (albeit falteringly), it is essential to highlight the importance of taking a global look, which, consistent with the fundamental principle of the uniqueness

⁵ Fukuda-Parr, S. (2017). Statement for the Opening Panel of the High Level Political Forum. New York, in https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24969hlpf_presentation_july_2017_clean.pdf (translation by the author)

and integrality of the 2030 Agenda, will help us to grasp its internal tensions and interactions⁶. Moreover, the same authoritative voices who are currently supporting the global process have warned against reliance on the “power of numbers”: “...a simple list of numerical targets cannot articulate an agenda for a complex process, such as sustainable, inclusive development. [...] By attempting to elaborate an entire international agenda through numerical targeting, the simplification, reification and abstraction of quantification created perverse effects, [...] a transformative future development agenda requires a qualitative statement of objectives, visionary norms and priority action [...] including legal, policy and global institutional considerations.”⁷

This awareness, however, does not appear to extend as far as discussing the motivation to create systems to evaluate the progress of SDGs that are purely based on the measurement of individual objectives, albeit based on the incomplete information available, and at the risk that this incomplete information will ultimately provide a statistically approximate representation that is substantially off-target. The creation of monitoring systems for the 2030 Agenda seems to be converging (perhaps inescapably) towards this type of interpretation, according to an approach segmented by objectives and without any global vision capable of providing an overall sense of direction, with the result that instead of grasping the integrative dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, we resort to distinguishing the “internal” dimension from the “external” dimension of sustainable development as if they were separate topics (a classification that threatens to negate the very reasons for the entire construction!). The minimum that appears necessary to supplement the current approaches is a more transverse tension that will help us, through a qualitative and methodological/systematic assessment of the various levels of overlap and interaction, to understand if real progress has been made towards more sustainable development and in what areas we must be attentive and proactive in supporting change. This element of “coherence” is already at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and requires that we look at the “whole” before the individual parts, driving us to bring together the challenges posed by the principles with the requirements for detailed measurement. In developing this initiative it is naturally important to overcome a restrictive vision in which coherence is understood as the mere absence of conflict between development policies and other “external” policies: understanding the needs of the planet, of humanity and of present and future generations clearly shows us that there is no “internal” or “external” dimension that is separate from the general principles of change. At the heart of the very idea of sustainable development we find those aspects that we have posited as central to the transformational challenge (human rights, the fight against inequality, socio-economic transformation and participation), critical areas for comparison in which are found (or which risk becoming watered down...) deep integration between the elements of economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The themes of coherence, convergence, synergy and overlap emerge, from this perspective, in various forms: in the analysis of possible contradictions between the targets of the same objective; in a lack of focus on certain critical issues (missing or unassessable targets); in the identification of possible trade-offs between various objectives; in the existence of possible inconsistencies that emerge at the local/national and global level; in the observation of the manner in which decisions are made and issues are confronted, through convoluted and sometimes contradictory processes conducted at different levels that do not communicate with one another, and in contexts in which power is distributed with extreme asymmetry. All of these questions seem to define a working direction that is concentrated less on the identification of synthetic indicators articulated around individual objectives (and the aggregation of these objectives in a “synthetic superindex of sustainability”) and more on the definition of qualitative benchmarks designed to highlight the elements through which each country can contribute to a global perspective of sustainable development and clearly show the areas in which change is necessary and urgent. This type of sensitivity must emerge as a series of indicators on different areas for attention, trends and connections. The synthetic view of these indicators, like the instrument panel of an aeroplane, must offer an overall framework capable of immediately and clearly referring to what has been highlighted regarding individual issues to the extent relevant to their contribution to an overall outcome and based on a perspective that must be deeply anchored in local (national and sub-national) conditions under which development can be considered more or less “sustainable”... The report aims

⁶ In this respect, see the analysis of interactions between the SDGs by the International Council for Science (ICSU), 2017. *A Guide to SDG Interactions: from Science to Implementation* [D.J. Griggs, M. Nilsson, A. Stevance, D. McCollum (eds)]. International Council for Science, Paris.

⁷ Fukuda-Parr, S., & Yamin, A. E. (2013). *The Power of Numbers: A critical review of MDG targets for human development and human rights*. *Development*, 56(1), 58–65. doi:10.1057/dev.2013.8 (translation by the author)

to explore a perspective that includes indications based on various aspects of sustainability: case studies that are capable of making these interconnections concrete and highlighting the critical aspects of policies that rather seem to be rooted in a limited and academic view of sustainability. Based on these concrete case studies, we must reflect on the implications of the monitoring process for sustainable development at the global level. But first and foremost we must reflect in particular on the methods that we intend to adopt in our own country (and in all countries) to draft and monitor the national plan for sustainable development.

Summary of the contents

In connection with the considerations explored in the introduction, the report focuses on the analysis of certain topics and cases in which the connections between the SDGs are evident: the interdependencies between the local and global spheres, between the internal and external dimension, seeking to apply a systematic interpretation and identifying dilemmas and contradictions that limit the pursuit of sustainable development. On the basis of this analysis we put forward proposals for the Italian government and Europe, and more generally to give civil society a stronger role not only in the “implementation of the 2030 Agenda” but also in its interpretation and development in a transformational sense.

We have selected key topics at the heart of the everyday policy debate: society’s increasing discontent towards a system that imposes precarious conditions on both the northern and southern hemispheres, that sets migrants against locals in a war among the poor and that blackmails workers into producing bombs. The topics selected reveal dilemmas and contradictions. The solutions are not simple, but it is only by appreciating the complexity that we can go beyond an abstract rhetorical narrative on the SDGs, exploring the reality with which we are currently faced, which also is made up of conflicts and tensions.

In the selected case studies, the SDGs are presented in a problematic way, for example: employment or health and the environment, where a transition from fossil fuels is needed; employment or peace, as in the case of Domusnovas, due to the production of bombs; receiving migrants or safeguarding the basic rights of the more disadvantaged local communities, such as on the outskirts of major cities; free trade for long value chains or sovereignty for short value chains, and so on.

The report consists of six sections that are summarised here and from which we have extracted the main policy issues and recommendations.

The first section analyses the impact of gender inequality at the global and local levels on achieving effective sustainable development and all of the SDGs. Starting with the example of violence against women, focusing in particular on the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), the close connection between the achievement of gender equality and all 17 of the objectives is examined in general based on data and projections from the latest UN Women report; the complexity of the analysis and policies when confronting a now global phenomenon is explored through the example of FGM. The following aspects are considered priorities:

- supporting research on harmful practices and promoting strategies to prevent them, while providing periodic estimates of the phenomenon and the risk;
- encouraging information, education, and awareness-raising activities regarding gender equality and the prevention of violence, including harmful practices such as forced and/or child marriage and female genital mutilation;
- promoting gender equality through education and combating stereotypes in the educational environment and in communications.

The second section analyses the dark side of the much celebrated Italian-made products in the textile sector - clothing, whose value chain fragmentation strategies produce a race to the bottom when it comes to workers’ rights and wages both in outsourcing destination countries and in reshoring in Italy. The data suggests that the strategies of big corporations supported by incentives and concessions from various competing countries are detrimental to worker rights at the transnational level. Policies must be reformed to ensure that value chains are managed in accordance with workers’ rights and the wellbeing of the various territories involved. Guidelines are provided on three different aspects:

- Businesses must be obliged to respect the human rights and workers’ rights. The approach taken to social responsibility is clearly insufficient, the due diligence of businesses must be reinforced,

but above all the Italian government should uphold the terms of the United Nations binding Treaty on multinational corporations.

- The national policies and government agencies (like Simest, SACE and CDP) that support the internationalisation of corporations must make incentives dependent upon respect for human rights and labour rights and must be transparent with respect to the use of public funds.
- A living wage must be established and concretely applied, and we must stop promoting wage moderation policies and start strengthening measures to ensure respect for labour rights.

The third section addresses international trade policies, which are caught up in structures and rules that benefit the major concentrations of power at the expense of small and medium-sized companies, smallholder agriculture, and territorial communities both in Italy and in the more impoverished countries. Cases involving agreements for the liberalisation of trade, investments and services are addressed, in particular European Union contracts with various partner countries that adopt the principles of sustainable development in a manner that is still limited and insufficient and that continue to give greater priority to the private interests of major corporations and foreign investors to the detriment of local communities and public assets in the north and the south. Therefore we make the following recommendations:

- With reference to the New Global Deal proposed by UNCTAD, we need to incorporate guidelines for fairer and more sustainable trade policies into the national sustainable development strategy and revise and make explicit the Industria 4.0 plan with regard to its social and environmental impact.
- European cooperation must be increased for new trade agreements and investments intended to facilitate trade, provided they respect and do not impair the protection and promotion of human, social, environmental, and labour rights, considering the exclusion of public interest sectors and mechanisms outside the ordinary courts for investors who wish to take recourse against the State, as well as binding adherence to the fundamental international treaties.
- Efforts must be made to overcome the current global impasse on the regulation of trade and investments with a new major agreement that puts human rights and the protection of the planet ahead of special interests.

The fourth section challenges the migratory policies of containment and apartheid that are supposedly necessary for the security of our local communities, when in fact the fundamental issue is the universalisation of human rights and a life of dignity for all, including the weakest and the most vulnerable in need of protection. The case study used is of course the situation linking Italy to Libya and Europe to Africa. The current policy is absolutely inconsistent with the SDGs and does not sufficiently consider the negotiation of the new Global Compact for Migration. The strategy in place focuses on supposed short-term security without considering sustainable development or prospects for the future. The following strategies are proposed:

- Reform Italian and European policy in the context of the new Global Compact for Migration based on the principle of defending human rights, compliance with international standards and the opening of regular, safe channels for migrants, countering nationalistic tendencies that hinder the necessary international cooperation and that toy with the lives of migrants (for example, the recent debate on European solidarity concerning rescue efforts in the Mediterranean, the closure of the Italian ports and the welcoming of migrants).
- Put an end to the exploitation of public development assistance for the purposes of outsourcing the control of migrants, as well as police and security measures that cause human suffering without granting the right to asylum. In this sense we must continue to strive towards a true European asylum system based on shared responsibility and solidarity among the member countries, which will also require progressive convergence of welfare systems for effective integration.

- Integrate migration policy into the national sustainable development strategy with the aim of universalising the right to social and economic inclusion and fighting inequality with adequate policies and resources, preventing the deplorable war among the poor.

The fifth section addresses the need to weave fair transition into the fabric of economic, social, and environmental policy. In other words, we need to accelerate transformation towards decarbonisation or the efficient and regenerative use of resources, minimising the social impact of these changes, in order to do away with occupational blackmail and the illusory contradiction between jobs and the health of the community. The case studies used are those of energy plants that still use coal: from the experience of the Rhur in Germany to that in Liguria and Sulcis. In the future many other sectors and sites will be involved. The following issues emerge from the analysis.

- A fair Italian transition policy has not yet been made explicit. Therefore, it must be integrated into national energy and climate policies as well as the national sustainable development strategy.
- The definition of this vision must be substantiated through strategic and system-wide planning (from the national government to the local authorities, with the involvement of businesses, unions and local communities), locating funding for the transition (therefore not offsets of polluters), including through the Emission Trading Scheme and a carbon price floor.

The sixth section considers the issue of an “economy of peace” as a condition for truly sustainable development. In a world in which war, fuelled by growth in the arms trade, imperils the lives of thousands of people, we need to reflect on the ethical dilemmas posed by the production of instruments of war that have a positive impact on GDP and employment but create an ethical dilemma, even though such production falls within a formal legal framework (although this is contested). The case study considered is Domusnovas in Sardinia, the production site for the bombs used by Saudi Arabia in Yemen, in a war that has raised concerns in the United Nations and the European Union. Is it possible to convert a war economy into an economy in service of peace, “by transforming swords into ploughshares”? To do so, it is essential for the national sustainable development strategy to incorporate the following guidelines:

- Evaluate the responsibilities and involvement of the military powers, including Italy, in local conflicts, highlighting the blatant contradiction with the principles of sustainable development, using the indications of the Global Peace Index to measure Italy’s contribution to peace, thus complementing and supplementing the provisions of objective 16 in its current form.
- Make better use of the report to Parliament provided for by Law 185/1990 as part of the monitoring framework for the national sustainable development plan.
- Identify concrete measures to address the commitment made by Law 185/1990 regarding gradual production differentiation and the conversion of military production for civil purposes, putting social utility before private interests.

Finally, based on the ideas explored in the introduction and the analysis in the various sections, we can deduce certain shared essential elements for the sustainable development strategy that apply across the various SDGs and to both the external and internal dimensions.

We need to develop a plan for the coherence of sustainable development policies, which should be defined by the CIPE or even better by the Inter-ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development, as proposed by ASVIS. This plan should incorporate new measures and monitoring approaches that are not merely quantitative and should analyse the interconnections between the SDGs and the relationship between the external and internal dimensions, based on the dilemmas and conflicts that already require new structural methods of intervention, beyond the emergency management approach.

A systematic vision must be defined between the local and the global, one that cannot be reduced to the SDG17 as has so far been the case in the national strategy, in order to consider together in a complementary and synergistic way the new international regulations on trade, investments, public assistance for development and migration flows, with awareness of the interdependence between local, national, European and transnational issues.

In this vision, for a concrete and transformative application of the principles of the SDGs, we must give voice to vulnerable local groups and impoverished countries for true, multi-level, bottom-up governance, since up to this point, partnerships have been fragmentary and insufficient and leave out the weaker stakeholders while giving more space to the stronger powers. In this sense, sustainable development will only be truly transformative if it is able to oppose concentrations of power, eliminate structural imbalances and, in a word, change the system.

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