IDOS German Institute of Development and Sustainability

THE CURRENT COLUMN 28 September 2026

Beyond 2030 – Rethinking Growth and Advancing Global Development

Socio-ecological transitions and the future of global sustainable development

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Bonn, 28 September 2026. ***The post-2030 debate is only just beginning. Two recent reports, the Global Justice Report and the Roadmap Beyond Growth, offer relevant contributions for this discussion.***

The debate about what should succeed the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is only just beginning. Formal discussions at the UN on a post-2030 Agenda will begin at the 2027 SDG Summit. This comes at a difficult time: the SDGs are badly off track, while geopolitical rivalry, wars, and economic instability are weakening international cooperation. Traditional donor governments increasingly prioritise narrowly defined national interests, cut development budgets and chase short-term growth at the expense of global solidarity and climate action.

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Is it indeed the right moment to negotiate a new global framework for sustainable development? Yes. If done right, it can offer an alternative to current trends, protect international cooperation, equality and wellbeing, as well as respecting planetary boundaries.

Two recent landmark reports offer relevant contributions to this debate: the Global Justice Report, by the World Inequality Lab under Thomas Piketty and colleagues, and the Roadmap for Eradicating Poverty Beyond Growth, which was developed under former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter through a broad-based international participatory process.

Changing the Rules of the Global Economy

Both reports share a fundamental diagnosis: the current global development trajectory is failing to improve well-being while remaining within planetary boundaries. Both call for transitions towards economies centred on well-being, poverty eradication and equality (beyond monetary metrics), which respect planetary boundaries. The reports also explore and question economic growth as a central objective of development.

"There is the need to move beyond a growth-centred development model, but not beyond development".

The *Global Justice Report* identifies three essential shifts: rapid decarbonisation; greater sufficiency (reduction in labour hours and material footprint, especially in richer countries, and large changes in consumption patterns); and a substantial reduction in inequalities of income, wealth and power both between and within countries. It provides a quantitative framework for these transitions.

The *Roadmap* reaches a similar conclusion, providing a broad toolkit of concrete policies to tackle poverty and inequality, which are not reliant on economic growth. In contrast to the usual redistribution through "grow, tax and transfer", it emphasises *predistribution,* meaning changing the rules governing economic power and opportunities in the first place.

Although the political feasibility of the recommendations set out in the reports is subject to some controversy, their proposals are by no means isolated: these proposals build on existing initiatives, including Barbados' Bridgetown Initiative on monetary reform, climate finance and global wealth taxation; the Sevilla Commitment on development finance; the UN Tax Convention process; and G20 initiatives led by Brazil and South Africa especially on global inequality.

What can we learn for the post-2030 Agenda?

A sustainable and equitable global economy requires international cooperation and political will. The reports provide empirical evidence as well as concrete policy options for such a global change and therewith, challenge dominant narratives on growth and power. The post-2030 discussions should carry these ideas forward and provide space for broader societal and political debate to foster consensus and support.

Moving beyond a growth-centred development model, but not beyond development. For many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), growth remains important for poverty reduction, employment and fiscal capacity. The question is not whether growth is "good" or "bad", rather what kind of growth contributes to well-being within national and global planetary boundaries. All countries, especially LMICs, need space to define their own development pathways, reflecting different needs and priorities.

New partnerships for making global inequalities central. We need to ask who benefits from growth, who bears its environmental costs, and how resources and opportunities are distributed. Redistribution, international taxation, finance, debt and access to technology should therefore be central to international cooperation. The geopolitical situation may create opportunities for new coalitions to jointly put it on the global agenda: The newly established South-North Commission should make inequality its key mandate. The proposed International Panel on Inequality (IPI) aims at establishing a permanent body similar to the IPCC, to assess, track, and tackle global inequality.

Strengthening the socio-ecological dimension of development. Climate change, biodiversity loss and resource constraints increasingly determine development prospects. Climate, social protection, poverty reduction and economic transformation should be addressed together. Climate finance and international transfers can support this transition, but volumes and frameworks need to improve. The negotiations at the Triple COPs this year are critical.

There is no time to waste until 2030. We need to build on ongoing initiatives, evidence and coalitions now. The key challenge is moving beyond the growth-centred development paradigm while building coalitions for ambitious socio-ecological transitions.

But we believe the outlook of the digital disruption is positive – if we prepare well: There are substantial gains in terms of efficiency and transparency to be made.

Recommended citation: Kuhnt, J. / Malerba, D. / Rosenthal, B. (2026). 18BSocio-ecological transitions and the future of global sustainable development (The Current Column 28 September 2026). Bonn: IDOS
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