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Paper for Discussion
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Reflections on Constructing a Human-Centered Development Paradigm

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A note for discussion¹

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I. Introduction:

Human beings are social animals. They cannot live in isolation. Indeed, we consider solitary confinement to be the harshest punishment that we can impose on a person. The high regard that we hold for individual autonomy such as freedom of thought and freedom of expression, the right of access and the right of participation are practiced by an individual but are meaningless if not exercised in a society in interaction with other human beings.

So the starting point is to think in terms of what would be the attributes of a society that nurtured the physical and emotional well-being of its citizens, promoted inclusive policies, and protects social cohesion and that hewed to a development path that was broadly sustainable. I submit that this is what we are trying to capture by studying a Human-centered Development Paradigm². So

¹ This note was written to illicit comments and discussions from various individuals. This version has benefitted from the detailed comments of Peter Gluckman and comments by Elisa Reis, Dirk Messner, Pedro Conceicao, Binyam Sisay Mendisu, and Melissa Leach. Many of these comments were gratefully incorporated in this second edition of the paper.

² Peter Gluckman pointed out to me the relevance of the initiative he is leading, namely The International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) project to many aspects of this discussion. See Peter Gluckman, et al., *The International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) project*; January 2020. This fascinating initiative will try to mobilize multi-dimensional and evidence-informed systems mapping to

let me start by addressing the attributes of such a society and its development path, without getting into the methodology and metrics of measurement at this stage.

Indeed the path that any society today should adhere to will have to take into account global challenges that transcend any nations political boundaries like the risks of climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental problems, the tectonic shifts in the international political order, and a technological revolution that will probably affect every aspect of our lives.

One may say that the SDGs represent the consensus of what this desirable society should achieve, and the sustainable path we should adhere to in order to get there. Yet, the 17 SDGs and their very large number of indicators³, while eminently desirable, do not seem to be articulated into a coherent framework that would help set priorities to allocate scarce resources between competing deserving claims. There have been several attempts to address this breadth by grouping the SDGs into packages where the upcoming transformations are expected to occur. One of the most interesting suggested groupings was given in a paper by Jeff Sachs, et al., in which they provide “Six Transformations” that collectively cover the path to the 17 development goals in easily comprehensible terms⁴. Indeed, in looking at the proposed transformations from a technical point of view they are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. But from a Social perspective, there is likely to be a response to these types of transformations, and how they come about, that would impact on the emerging society’s cohesion and resilience. However, for our purposes it is transformations (1) dealing with education and gender inequality; and (2) dealing with health and wellbeing⁵ that are most relevant. But each of these transformations implies – nay, requires – a major change in societal structure (economic, political, technological and social).

But From a Human Development standpoint, I would consider going back further to some of the earlier work (prior to the adoption of the formal SDGs in 2015).

assist decision makers to make locally relevant decisions that would also help to sustain social cohesion and enhance social resilience.

³ Actually, the total number of individual indicators in the SDG list is 232. (see https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202019%20refinement_En_g.pdf)

⁴ See Jeffrey D. Sachs, Guido Schmidt-Traub, Mariana Mazzucato, Dirk Messner, Nebojsa Nakicenovic and Johan Rockström; “Six Transformations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”; in *Nature Sustainability* (2019) *Perspective*; (see <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0352-9>)

⁵ Recognizing the importance of the well-being of all citizens is part of the bedrock of a Human-centered Development Paradigm. See Gluckman and Allen; *Understanding wellbeing in the context of rapid digital and associated transformations* <https://www.ingsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INGSA-Digital-Wellbeing-Sept18.pdf> (see specifically the appendix which is especially relevant)—an important document brought to my attention by Peter Gluckman in private communication (January first, 2020).

II. Early Efforts & Sustainability as Opportunity

On this occasion, I would like to resurrect some early efforts at developing an approach to measure a sustainable growth path, which I participated in when I was at the World Bank in the nineties, acting as the first VP of the World Bank devoted to the promotion of Environmentally Sustainable Development (ESD).

Few concepts have been as widely accepted as the concept of sustainable development. It inherently appeals to the public at large, and conveys a sense of continuity and concern for the environment and for our children, without implying the need for stagnation or reduction in standards of living. Defining it precisely is another matter. There have been many definitions of sustainable development but the generally accepted definition of sustainability is that given by the Brundtland Commission, which is:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

This definition is philosophically attractive but raises difficult operational questions. The meaning of “needs” is fairly clear for the poor and the starving, but what does it mean for a family that already has two cars, three televisions, and two VCRs? And yet it is precisely this latter type of family that is going to consume more than 80 percent of the world’s income this year.

So, right after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, as an incoming first ever Vice-President for Environmentally Sustainable Development at the World Bank, I preferred to think of “sustainability as opportunity” or in the more conventional language of the economic profession, as “expanding the capital stock”. It would define sustainability as:

Sustainability is to leave future generations as many opportunities as, if not more than, we have had ourselves.

How does one measure opportunity? In economic terms, one could use the concept of capital. Capital, and the growth of capital, is the means to provide future generations with as many if not more opportunities as we have had, provided that we define it as per capita capital. This takes into account the need to meet the needs of a growing population that is likely to add several billion more people on the planet before the global population stabilizes. But what kind of Capital are we discussing here?

III. Four Kinds of Capital:

To get to the heart of the concept of sustainability, we must expand our understanding of capital to include more than man-made capital (produced assets) as conventionally defined and accepted in the economic literature, to include other forms of capital that are every bit as important to our individual and collective well-being as man-made capital. There are at least four kinds of capital: Man-made (the one usually considered in financial and economic accounts), Natural capital (as discussed in many works of environmental economics), Human capital (investments in education, health and nutrition of individuals) and Social capital (the institutional and cultural basis for a society to function).

Sustainability as opportunity therefore translates into providing future generations as much if not more total capital per capita than we have had ourselves. But here we are speaking of four kinds of capital that are partially substitutes and partially complements. We accept that the composition of the capital we leave the next generation will be different (in terms of its four constituent parts) than the capital we have used in our generation. Yet we must recognize the limits of substitution, because it is impossible to conceive any type of activity if any of the four kinds of capital is driven to zero.

Questions:

Can one measure each of the four kinds of capital?

Two exercises were done by the World Bank for many countries, where efforts at measuring (i) man-made wealth, (ii) Natural Capital and (iii) combined Human capital and social capital, and the hope was to try to calculate the human capital part and treat social capital initially as a residual. Regretfully, When I left the World Bank, the work on the real wealth of nations was stopped.

Can one develop a clear notion of the “exchange rates” between different kinds of capital? How do these change over time? But most relevant for the discussion about creating a Human-centered Development Paradigm would be to think of quantification for both Human Capital and Social Capital.

In addition, others believe that the notions of mental health in a societal or community context remain extremely important and are unlikely to be captured in the Social Capital conceptual approach mentioned above. Furthermore, Gluckman considers that the absence of a life course approach is a major deficit in much human development work coming from the traditional economic-development studies perspective. And that therefore, if we are to reflect on a

Human Centered Development Paradigm, we should include such concerns, which hold in both developed and developing country contexts.⁶ More generally, others have pointed out the importance of early childhood development as an essential part of Human Capital development.⁷

IV. Social Capital

Going back to the introductory paragraph of this note, it is clear that we need to look at the individual and at the society with which this individual interacts. Thus two of the four kinds of capital used in the discussion of sustainability as opportunity are intended to address Human Development.⁸

Human capital (health, education, nutrition) is embedded in the person. When persons migrate, they each take their human capital with him or her.

Social capital is an attribute of a society as a whole. It is based on the relations that humans forge among themselves to live together as social animals. It is the “glue” that holds a society in place and allows the development of norms, values, rules, regulations and laws, as well as the formation of institutions and produces living evolving cultures.

However, although this general description is intuitively understandable, it does raise many technical questions. First among these is whether we should continue to call it “Social Capital”. For some of the most distinguished thinkers of our time (Kenneth Arrow⁹, Bob Solow¹⁰) we should not. They were concerned about the use of the word “capital” since we do not have a clear understanding of the processes of accumulation and depletion as well as the notion of spending some now in order to get a higher return and higher accumulation in the future. Arrow and Solow both questioned the use of the term “Capital” in “Social Capital” although they fully understood the importance of what we – who are grappling with the concept – are trying to do.

⁶ Gluckman and other argue that mental health should not be seen as a strictly psychiatric issue. In fact a life course approach is needed to properly understand human development from early childhood and maternal and family conditions to later life issues. He pointed to a study of youth suicide to illustrate this important point. See eg Potter, Gluckman et al; <https://www.pmcsa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/17-07-26-Youth-suicide-in-New-Zealand-a-Discussion-Paper.pdf>

⁷ Thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this paper, included Binyam Sisay Mendisu’s flagging the importance of the early years and their lasting influence on human development. And this also raised questions about how to integrate the importance of the foundational and lasting influence of the early years in human development.

⁸ In general, some other colleagues, including Peter Gluckman, feel that there is a need for introducing an evolutionary and anthropological perspective into these reflections, such as the work of Harvey Whitehouse.

⁹ See Kenneth Arrow, “Observations on Social Capital”, in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds) *Social Capital*, The World Bank, Washington DC, 2000, pp. 3-5

¹⁰ See Robert Solow, “Notes on Social Capital and Economic Performance” in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds) *Social Capital*, The World Bank, Washington DC, 2000, pp. 6-10

Fukuyama tried to reduce it to a measure of “Trust”¹¹, but it is much more diversified and complex than that. Others have looked to many other attributes... One of the most influential approaches to social capital was that advanced by Robert Putnam, one of the pioneers of ideas related to social capital¹², who conceived of social capital as being based on "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them." And according to Putnam and his colleagues, social capital, so defined, is an essential element to building and maintaining democracy¹³.

But others disagree. They consider that the kind of networks that Putnam advocated for, e.g. friendship ties, voluntary associations, horizontal organizational structures, and density of such structures, are basically neutral. They would not necessarily produce effective mechanisms for achieving intended effects. Indeed some critics argue that such networks can be harmful and undesirable. They can see the negative attributes of some forms of social capital, such as the cohesion and solidarity that functions in the loyalty shown in some criminal organizations, or the “us vs. them” of extremist groups. Such critics argue that a meaningful definition of social capital must go beyond these attributes and include a normative or goal-oriented dimension¹⁴.

Gluckman and others point to an alternative literature emerging to better understand how people work in groups, including how and why altruism manifests itself, and how groups deal with cheats and the problem of the commons (free-loading) recognizing that today people belong to many different groups simultaneously, and the new social media and extended communications also add a virtual dimension in addition to the physical and facilitates the further polarization in many contexts.¹⁵

¹¹ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and The Creation of Prosperity*, the free Press 1996

¹² See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster; 1st edition (2001), and the more optimistic outlook he gave on how individuals could weave communities together in his follow-up work, see: Robert D. Putnam and Lewis Feldstein, with Donald J. Cohen, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, Simon & Schuster; 1st edition (2004)

¹³ See Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton University Press; first edition (1994).

¹⁴ See, inter alia, "Beyond social capital: Spatial dynamics of collective efficacy for children", Sampson et al. (1999) cited in Wikipedia Article on Social Capital.

¹⁵ Peter Gluckman in a private communication to the author (January 1st, 2020) wrote: “This literature is key to making progress. It is briefly covered in Gluckman and Hanson 2019 (see above) but extensively by David Sloan Wilson Does Altruism exist: culture, genes and the welfare of others 2005 and much that followed from David and others on multilevel selection. This is at the heart of understanding how groups of people work – what to do about free-loaders/cheaters etc. The issue which now emerges and is highlighted in discussions on intersectionality is that people now belong to multiple groups of different stickiness and identities are now very much more fluid and confused than before and this in itself is destabilizing to the kinds of society we evolved to live in. Social media move groups from being real to virtual with other polarizing consequences (eg see the EU’s Joint Research Center report “Understanding our political nature”- 2019”.

Questions:

Can we have an operational definition of Social Capital that would allow us to develop some robust metrics that could be used to measure the amount of social capital in a given society? In a given Community? Would such measures be both decomposable and additive? Would they have both a positive and negative connotation?

V. Positive and Negative Contributions of Social Capital:

The world is recently witnessing a rise of rabid forms of exclusionary nationalism, built on the politics of fear and hate, which Timothy Garton Ash referred to as “illiberal democracies”¹⁶ and these may be positively appealing to and nurturing a sense of national pride and greater solidarity between members of a group, but that is usually accompanied by discrimination against the other.

But more insidiously than the outright criminal or extremist terrorist groups, there is another negative aspect to Social Capital in terms of networks, trust and reciprocity. Such networks exist in all societies and tend to protect and perpetuate the privileges of the elites. Indeed they tend to exacerbate inequality and make the attainment of real human development for the bottom half of society extremely difficult.

Since the elites (the famous top 1%) rely on the returns on their (vast) assets and such returns tend to be higher than the growth rate of the economy as a whole, and they are not exceptionally taxed, the result is a growing gap. So, wealth inequality doesn't only reinforce itself within the same cohort – it can multiply to appalling levels from one generation to the next. In the UK, a recent study found that “between 2006-8 and 2012-14, the richest fifth of households gained almost 200 times as much in absolute wealth terms compared to the poorest fifth”.¹⁷ This suggests to some that we should also consider the possibility of “tipping points” in social cohesion.¹⁸

¹⁶ Timothy Garton Ash defended his choice of that term in the edition of the New York review of Books, where in the 19 January 2017 issue he said: “Müller rejects the term “illiberal democracy,” arguing that it allows people like Viktor Orbán to claim that Hungary just has another kind of democracy, authentically democratic in a different way. What Orbán has done, for example in his takeover of the media, undermines democracy itself. Yet I think we do need a term to describe what happens when a government that emerges from a free and fair election is demolishing the foundations of a liberal democracy but has not yet erected an outright dictatorship—and may not even necessarily intend to. Words like “neoliberalism,” “globalization,” and “populism” are themselves imperfect shorthand for phenomena with significant national, regional, and cultural variations. “Hybrid regime” feels too unspecific, so unless and until someone comes up with a better term, I shall continue to use “illiberal democracy.”

¹⁷ Rob Macquarie, “What’s the difference between wealth inequality and income inequality, and why does it matter?” (October 19, 2017) at <https://positivemoney.org/2017/10/wealth-inequality/> (Accessed 28 12 2019)

¹⁸ This point, raised by Dirk Mesner, opens a whole range special scenarios and metrics, which are not discussed here, but as mentioned by Pedro Conceicao, the *2019 UN Human Development Report* also looks at the impact

Thus sociological definitions such as networks, and voluntary participation, are not enough, and need to be expanded for the kind of values that would enhance appreciation for more equality, especially gender equality, and encourage civic mindedness, civility in public discourse and acceptance of diversity and pluralism. I would submit that such attributes in the desired social structure would also produce a better (conventional) economic performance.¹⁹

Questions:

Can such qualities derived of common societal values co-exist with the notion of social capital? They must, or else our concept of social capital, necessary to go beyond an individual approach to the idea of a “Human Development Paradigm” would be severely damaged. But are they inherent in the definition and construction of the metrics? Or are they better treated as something separate and potentially additive (or not) but not embedded in the efforts to measure social capital per se.

VI. Pluralism, Solidarity, and Inclusion:

The ideas of racially pure, ethnically unique or homogeneous religious societies are now things that have been rejected by the overwhelming majority of humanity. Those who promoted that by genocide and ethnic cleansing have been defeated. But the corollary, the acceptance of pluralism, is not easy to implement. Diverse communities may indeed be enriching the mosaic of a multi-cultural society, but it also generates a sense of unease among the population. We have witnessed disasters in the Balkans and Rwanda, and dissolution of the state in Yugoslavia and Sudan... All reminders that pluralism is difficult to implement, even in the democratic societies of Europe, without verging into separation. Czechoslovakia underwent a peaceful separation between Czechs and Slovaks.

For many, the “melting pot” approach of the United States remains attractive. But it involves a negation of cultural pluralism, even as it exalts the uniformity of the national values and the diversity of the ethnic and religious mix of the

of inequality and its corrosive effect on society and analyzes the causes of inequality and lack of social mobility and justice issues, but also advances some thoughts on the policy implications. See: The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century*; (Human Development Report 2019), Published by the United Nations Development Programme, 1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017 USA.

¹⁹ See Partha Dasgupta in his masterful “Overview” of these issues : “Economic Progress and the idea of Social Capital” in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds) *Social Capital*, The World Bank, Washington DC , 2000, pp. 325-401 plus the references (pp. 401-424). Also Partha Dasgupta’s “Social Capital” in Steven N. Durlauf and Lawrence E. Blume, ed. (2008). *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*, 2nd Edition.

citizens. It also ignores the historical baggage that gives elites their power and continues to obstruct others in their efforts at social mobility²⁰.

What used to be called “cosmopolitanism” in great cities such as Istanbul and Alexandria has been lost. Recapturing the spirit of that cosmopolitanism today is proving illusive. For cosmopolitanism involved diverse communities with very distinct identities rubbing shoulders and interacting every day. In Alexandria, from the 19th to the early 20th century, communities of Greeks, Syrians, Italians, French, British, Armenians, Turks and Arabs co-existed, and all were considered Egyptians. Christians, Muslims and Jews intermingled. They would lunch together at the Syrian club and dine together in the Greek club. They had a multiplicity of newspapers and produced novels, plays and films in multiple languages. The mosaic of diverse cultures was overlain by social networks that criss-crossed many political movements and parties.

Today, Co-existing pluralistic communities find recapturing that cosmopolitanism elusive without slipping into exclusion and hostility²¹. But youth and technology are coming to our rescue.

The internet culture created by youth and predominantly pioneered by youth has been able to dissolve boundaries of politics and geography, to help create networks of like-minded people who can communicate, share experiences and reinforce each other on common causes in ways that were unthinkable a generation ago. Youth have also led the way in the formation of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. They bear witness through YouTube and Flickr. In so doing, they have not only created their own special means of communications, they have also revolutionized the notion of how societies interact. Thus cohesion and social interaction in the virtual world are becoming as important as that practiced in the physical world of daily contacts, and many young people spend hours every day in such virtual connections.

Yet, the presence of these additional multiple overlays, as one is part of many networks, may enrich life, but it leads to two other problems. Where friendships based on physical contacts are few and deep, those nurtured by the web are broader but shallower. They may constitute a complement, even a support for, the traditional friendships that have existed from time immemorial, but will not replace them. That is not necessarily a problem, but it becomes so if it takes too

²⁰ Binyam Sisay Mendisu flags the difficulty of accounting for past historical injustices and/or events, which may have put a group of people at a disadvantage. Surely this must be taken into account in the design of contemporary policies. For example, in the USA, the average white family has ten times the average wealth of the average black family. Without question, that affects the prospects of mobility and inclusion, and should be taken into account when we design policies and programs to promote human centred development.

²¹ Jacques Derrida, among others, asks some tough but important questions based on recent history. See Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (Thinking in Action series) Routledge 1st Edition (2001)

many hours away from the activities in the real world and the real society. It could even be a real positive force for strengthening social cohesion if it is used wisely.

The second problem is more difficult. Where the old media usually tried to expose people to a variety of opinions, the enormous explosions of outlets that the new media has created allows people to gravitate towards the specific outlets that support their point of view. They get reinforced in their prejudices. That in turn leads to more polarization in debate, even as it caters to a wider variety of opinions and removes the barriers to expressing such opinions. Also the emergence of cyberbullying, deep fakes and false news and robotic manipulation of information on the internet is very worrying. So is the emergence of the deep web and crypto-currencies. All of which is the other side of the coin of the enormous benefits that the Internet has brought to our lives.

On balance, however, I have unlimited confidence in youth. They will craft a world in their own image: idealistic, dynamic and imaginative. However, it will be a different world than that which we have known. We are on the cusp of a major global revolution.

That global revolution is often referred to as the coming of the Information Age or the Knowledge-based Society. Yet to address the issues of social justice, pluralism, freedom, equality or participation we need much more than information or even knowledge. We need wisdom. Data when organized becomes information, and information when explained becomes knowledge, but wisdom is something else. It requires combining knowledge with prescience, judgment and the patina of experience.

Questions:

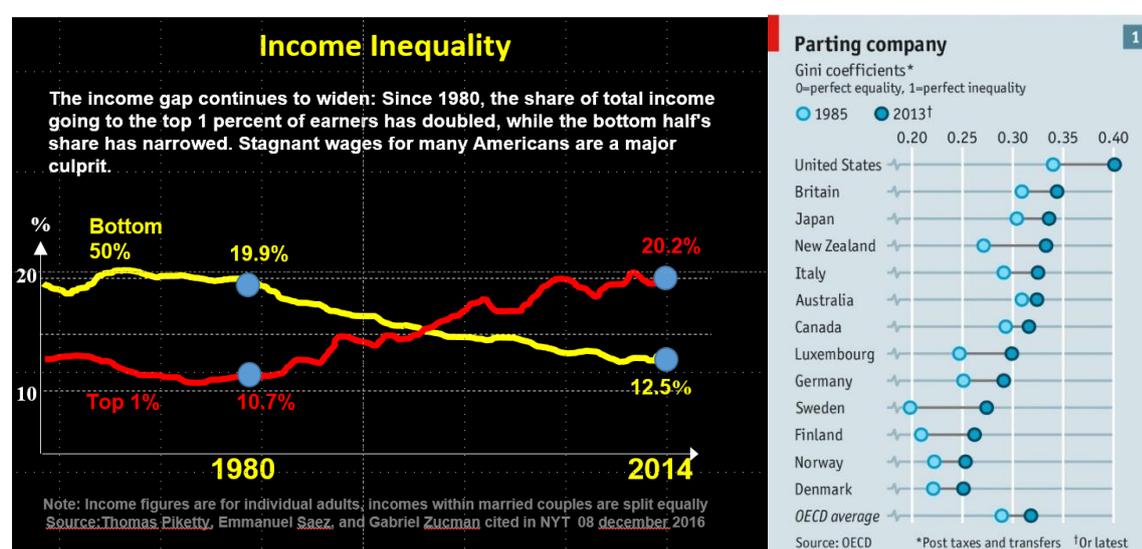
So, on balance, where does that leave us? Should the report address the impact of the social media both on the creation of communities and/or the polarization of communities? Should a concern for the political development of democratic societies be looked at as part of the governance structure of the Human-centered Development Paradigm?

VII. Equality, Justice and Fairness

John Rawls gave his famous definition of “Justice as fairness” within the framework of his trilogy of outstanding works that provided a solid

philosophical framework for liberal political thought²². But others, such as Amartya Sen have advanced other, more nuanced approaches to equality (based on rights and capabilities) and justice.²³

And more generally, looking at the world today, the desirable society we are discussing should be more egalitarian. Not that there would be perfect equality, but surely there should be some redress of the dismal showing of the last 40 years after the triumph of the Reagan-Thatcher ideology and Chicago school economics, which saw income inequalities expand in every country, and saw the USA having the top 1% of society capture twice as much of the national income as the bottom 50% of the population.



Furthermore we see even more enormous differences in the distribution of wealth than of income. Thus Thomas Picketty tells us²⁴ that the disparities in wealth are presently worse than they were prior to 1914, at the height of the so-called “Gilded Age”. Huge inequalities in wealth generate income inequalities as well. For wealth (a stock) creates income (a flow).

²² See John Rawls: *A Theory of Justice* (1971), *Justice as Fairness* (1985), *Political Liberalism* (1993). Rawls also published *The Law of Peoples* (1999), a major reworking of a much shorter article by the same name published in 1993; and also see *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* 2nd Edition (by John Rawls (Author), Erin I. Kelly (Editor)) (2001).

²³ Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press; Reprint edition (2011)

²⁴ See *Capital in the Twenty-First Century - 2017* by Thomas Piketty (Author), and Arthur Goldhammer (Translator) Belknap Press: An Imprint of Harvard University Press; 2017.

Gini Coefficients²⁵ by countries for both income inequality and wealth inequality invariably show that the wealth distribution is considerably more unequal than the income distribution (remember, the higher the Gini coefficient, the more unequal it is). What is surprising is that this is the case for all countries. Wealth is more unequally distributed than income, even when income is very unequally distributed.²⁶ The following table shows some of these statistics for selected countries.

Country	Net Income Gini Index	Wealth Gini Index	GDP per Capita (USD)	Poverty Rate (%)	Life Expectancy (Years)
Australia	33.20	65.20	55,671	12.80	71.90
Brazil	44.90	83.20	10,826	9.30	65.50
China	51.00	78.90	6,894	12.10	68.50
Denmark	25.30	80.90	60,268	5.50	71.20
Egypt	47.00	91.70	2,724	16.10	62.20
France	29.90	70.20	42,013	8.20	72.60
Germany	29.00	79.10	45,552	9.50	71.30
India	47.90	83.00	1,861	60.40	59.60
Japan	29.90	60.90	47,608	16.10	74.90
Kazakhstan	28.80	92.60	10,57	0.40	63.30
Mexico	45.90	73.20	9,707	11.80	67.40
Netherlands	26.60	73.00	52,111	7.90	72.20
Nigeria	39.00	69.50	2,458	77.60	47.70
Pakistan	36.20	52.60	1,182	39.70	57.80
Poland	32.10	71.70	15,049	0.30	68.70
Singapore	39.80	73.30	52,601	N/A	73.90
Sweden	25.70	83.40	56,319	8.00	72.00
Switzerland	29.30	69.40	75,726	7.80	73.10
Tanzania	42.20	55.20	867	79.00	54.20
Uganda	37.60	68.60	14,071	66.60	54.00
USA	37.80	85.90	52,195	16.80	69.10
Zambia	49.50	81.00	1,622	74.30	53.70

Source: See World Inequality Report 2018, available at: <https://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-full-report-english.pdf> ...

²⁵ A Gini coefficient has values ranging from 0 (or 0%) to 1 (or 100%), with the former representing perfect equality (wealth distributed evenly) and the latter representing perfect inequality (wealth held in few hands).

²⁶ See *World Inequality Report 2018*, available at: <https://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-full-report-english.pdf> ... See also the World Economic Forum (WEF), *the Inclusive Development Index 2018*, a snapshot of the gap between rich and poor, based on data gathered from the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and other sources, and along with other indicators.

A Human-centered Development Paradigm must confront the corrosive effects of inequality²⁷. Extreme inequality is corrosive. It hardens the attitudes of the rich and powerful towards the poor and lowly. It builds acceptance of the incongruity of wealth amidst misery and exclusion, undermines the very notions of social justice and social cohesion²⁸, makes a mockery of fairness and leads to the slippery path of class warfare as the only means of redress.

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

-- Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, 1770

Indeed, recent studies have confirmed our suspicions that far from being a necessary corollary to compensate the talented and inventive, those forces in society that propel society forward, excessive inequality was inefficient and was associated with a variety of social ills²⁹. We now have no less an authority than the IMF backing that view with empirical evidence. Indeed, the IMF report states:

“Our analysis suggests that the income distribution itself matters for growth as well. Specifically, if the income share of the top 20 percent (the rich) increases, then GDP growth actually declines over the medium term, suggesting that the benefits do not trickle down. In contrast, an increase in the income share of the bottom 20 percent (the poor) is associated with higher GDP growth. The poor and the middle class matter the most for

²⁷ This paragraph is taken from my Mandela lecture delivered in Johannesburg in 2011, which developed on these themes; themes that are still important for South African Societies.. Today, most analysts will agree with Melissa Leach that discussions of inequality in the context of sustainability are crucial. See Inter alia: her co-authored paper on Equity and Sustainability in the Anthropocene: Melissa Leach, Belinda Reyers, Xuemei Bai, and Eduardo S. Brondizio, *Equity and sustainability in the Anthropocene: a social–ecological systems perspective on their intertwined futures*; Published online by Cambridge University Press: 30 November 2018. which has useful insights into the intersectional approach to looking at inequalities. Also, *The 2016 World Social Science Report* looked at intersectionality and social cohesion... See International Social Science Council (ISSC) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and UNESCO (2016), *World Social Science Report 2016, Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World*, UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

²⁸ Elisa Reis (private communication, January 2020) makes a compelling case by citing concrete examples: “Laws to secure minorities rights, to punish violence against women, to enforce recycling, to ban polluting products, etc. signal an expanded societal concern for human development, and help in consolidating positive values, beliefs and norms. Conversely, When no empathy, no perception of shared problems is present, people start to look for restricted or individualized ways to reach goals. Examples of that are gated communities, private guards, and other forms of individual protection against criminality instead of campaigning for better security policies. Social cohesion derives from the identification of shared interests be they material or ideal. In the absence of these wider social solidarity has no soil to grow”.

²⁹ See, inter alia, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, Allen Lane, London, 2009. Drawing on their work, Judt makes an excellent critique of the ills of the political systems in our times. See Tony Judt, *Ill Fares The Land*, The Penguin Press, New York, 2010.

growth via a number of interrelated economic, social, and political channels”³⁰.

While absolute equality is both an unattainable and undesirable goal, some level of equality to provide a minimum complement of access and capabilities to all citizens is and should be a desirable goal for any society where the building up of the positive attributes of social cohesion, solidarity and mutual respect is being effectively pursued. While abolishing poverty and hunger remain a central concern³¹, concerned social scientists today look to the whole range of SDGs and increasingly a whole social manifesto is being pursued³².

Questions:

Should we look to inequalities in wealth as well as income? I believe yes. But then should the report advocate something like wealth taxes? Redistribution of farmland to peasants and landless farm labor in poor countries (land reform)? Other measures? Or should we just be descriptive, bearing witness to the conditions that are being reported?

VIII. Good Governance and Democracy and Corruption:

I submit that in the absence of “Good Governance” there will be only very limited returns to investments for development in any society. Note that the word “governance” was explicitly adopted in the World Bank in the Africa Long Term Perspective Study (LTPS) published in 1990³³.

Good Governance³⁴ is defined in terms of five major attributes:

Transparency
Accountability

³⁰ Era Dabla-Norris, Kalpana Kochhar, Frantisek Ricka, Nujin Suphaphiphat, and Evridiki Tsounta; *Causes and Consequences of Income Inequality: A Global Perspective*; IMF, Washington DC; June 2015; p.4

³¹ See Inter Alia Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*, Penguin Books; Reprint edition, (2006); and Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, Oxford University Press, 2008.

³² Marc Fleurbaey (Author), Olivier Bouin (Contributor), Marie-Laure Salles-Djelic (Contributor), Ravi Kanbur (Contributor), Helga Nowotny (Contributor), Elisa Reis (Contributor) (with a Foreword by Amartya Sen); *A Manifesto for Social Progress: Ideas for a Better Society*; Cambridge University Press (2018)

³³ I recall telling my superiors that nothing is going to happen in Zaire as long as Mobutu is in charge, but being told that we cannot discuss the internal domestic policies of member states. That was when the late Dunstan Wai, Pierre Landell-Mills and myself and others decided to use the term “Good Governance:” and define it in objective ways that side-step whether the system is parliamentary, presidential, multi-party or based on a two party system, etc.

³⁴ See See, inter alia, Ismail Serageldin and Pierre Landell-Mills, “Governance and the External Factor.” *Proceedings of the World Bank Annual Conference on Development Economics* 1991. Washington, DC: World Bank, March, 303-20. And Ismail Serageldin and Pierre Landell-Mills, “Governance and the Development Process,” *Finance & Development*, Sept. 1991, 14-17. (Also in Arabic, French, German, and Spanish.)

Participation
 Flow of information
 Rule of law

Thus advocating for each of these attributes is eminently defensible and does not involve political commentary on the internal domestic politics of a nation. However, good governance is the best defense against the spread of **Corruption** in a country. So emphasizing “Good Governance” is really eminently desirable regardless of the specific form of government (Monarchy, Republic, parliamentary or presidential, types of elections, etc.).

And good governance is not to be equated with democracy (in the western sense of representative democracy). One could argue that Singapore under Lee Kwan Yew had good governance. But that is somewhat different from the attributes of Democracy, at least as defined by Robert Dahl in his well-known work³⁵.

But simply stated, although there are many varieties of democratic systems³⁶, all true democratic systems are based on the belief that an informed citizenry makes up its own mind and expresses it to guide the politicians in the direction of policies that the informed public wants. That process requires access to correct information, and thus free speech has been protected in all democracies and in the media, in a correct belief that without such continuous access to information – correct information – the democratic system would simply not work. Regretfully, today fake news, which is simply lies, has polluted the available information and thus, threatens our very understanding of how a democratic political process should work.

³⁵ Robert A. Dahl, in his well-known *Democracy and its Critics* (1989), postulated five main aspects for a functioning democracy (which he referred to as a Polyarchy). These were:

1. Effective participation meaning that “Citizens must have adequate and equal opportunities to form their preference and place questions on the public agenda and express reasons for one outcome over the other”.
2. Voting equality at the decisive stage, whereby “Each citizen must be assured his or her judgments will be counted as equal in weights to the judgments of others”.
3. Enlightened understanding “Citizens must enjoy ample and equal opportunities for discovering and affirming what choice would best serve their interests”.
4. Control of the agenda “people must have the opportunity to decide what political matters actually are and what should be brought up for deliberation”.
5. Inclusiveness, meaning that “Equality must extend to all citizens within the state. Everyone has a legitimate stake within the political process”.

³⁶ The classic attributes of Democracy have been argued since the enlightenment, and more recently a powerful statement on that has been by Robert Dahl. See Robert A. Dahl, *On Democracy*, with a new preface by Ian Shapiro; Second Edition, NH: Yale University Press; 2015. And for the more general perspective on the varieties of democratic experiences, see inter alia Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*; NH: Yale University Press; 2 edition, 2012. And then there is the V-Dem project, with its headquarters in Gothenburg Sweden, which provides the most extensive data base on democracy in the largest number of countries. It can be found at <https://www.v-dem.net/>

Questions:

What should we say about Governance and Democracy in the effort to construct a Human-Centered Development Paradigm? Should we limit ourselves to discussions of governance? Of competitiveness? Or should we look to democracy and address head on the issues of the challenges of fake news and the new social media with its deep fakes and robotic interventions? How do we approach the quantification of such attributes?

IX. Robust Institutions and the Rule of Law:

Ultimately, the performance of a country on any set of activities in the short or the long term is strongly related to the adoption of the rule of law and the robustness of the institutions that function under the umbrella of a system of Laws that are widely respected and effectively enforced. The institutions we are discussing here include both the formal government-backed institutions, academic institutions, political and professional organizations and NGOs³⁷. The institutions create a large part of social capital as was discussed in the section on Social Capital above.

But some institutions, advocating the rights of ethnic, cultural or religious groups, can sometimes be at the heart of secession movements that can tear countries apart and/or lead to the promotion of war. Recall the difference to the breakdown of Yugoslavia, vs. the peaceful split of Czechoslovakia. Thus there is implicitly an expectation that such institutions would be promoting building a national coalescence in the light of the enormous global and national transformations. This adds a desirable integrative dimension to our efforts to understand social Capital³⁸.

Questions:

As we move from the individual to a broader societal discussion of a Human-Centered Development Paradigm to what extent can we measure the robustness of institutions? How about the extent of the sovereignty of the rule of law? What relative weights do we give to each of the components that make such things possible?

³⁷ See Joseph Stiglitz, "Formal and informal Institutions" in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds) *Social Capital*, The World Bank, Washington DC , 2000, pp.59-68

³⁸ See inter Alia Serageldin and Grootaert, "defining Social Capital: an Integrating View" in Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (eds.) *Social Capital*, The World Bank, Washington DC , 2000, pp. 40-58

X. Local, National, Regional and Global Perspectives:

To what extent can we look at a local situation ignoring the context within it exists? Thus local institutions may be successful at their minor geographical level, without having a significant impact on the national situation. In turn regional issues may not be effectively addressed by improvements in the national situation. And to what extent will these Local, National, and Regional advances mean to the aggregate Global perspective? Thus it is now clear that a very large part of the global achievement in the reduction of poverty in 2000-2015 was due to the enormous success of China. Under that overall improvement, some regions were retrogressing. Thus poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa remains a problem³⁹.

Questions:

This is more a presentation problem of aggregation that should not mask important aspects of the applications of the complex reality that we are trying to present. But it is essential to have statements to each of the scales at which we look for the distinctions between case studies, “boxes” in text, and the basis of the narrative of a report.

XI. Adaptation and Resilience:

If we are to address the challenge of Climate Change (CC) we will need a three-pronged approach dealing with Mitigation (reduction of emissions), Adaptation (to the negative effects of Climate Change) and Resilience (the ability to withstand external shocks and bounce back with minimal damage). The first (Mitigation) is mostly part of another discussion. But adaptation and resilience need to be included in the attributes of the society we are seeking to describe in this search for a Human-centered Development Paradigm.

Adaptation involves more than reinforcing building standards and building better infrastructure or even changing economic activity to promote decarbonization and recycling. It also involves opening pathways towards geographic and social mobility, including intergenerational mobility. Measurements of mobility in society are numerous and can be adapted to the needs of the current thinking of a constructive and more cohesive society.

³⁹ The Guardian reported that according to a recent Brookings Report , Energy-rich Nigeria overtook India in May 2018 to become the country with the world’s highest number of people – 87 million – living in extreme poverty, in comparison with India’s 73 million people. The Brookings Report says 14 of the 18 countries in the world where the number of people in extreme poverty is rising are in Africa. Source: The Guardian 16 July 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/jul/16/oil-rich-nigeria-outstrips-india-most-people-in-poverty>

Adaptation and resilience imply a willingness to encourage innovation and to adopt the new, in order to improve our conditions over time, and to adapt to changing conditions, due to climate change or other factors. In general, whatever the impetus to promote adaptation, it will result in a more nimble and efficient society.

Resilience, meaning to enable a society to withstand an external shock and rebound with minimal damage, requires a society where there is solidarity and shared knowledge. It requires robust organizations with ability for prompt action.

Questions:

So what kind of society would be adaptive and resilient? And how could we measure if we are on the right path towards building such a society?

To measure adaptation we would need to develop measures of vulnerability (e.g. How much building in the floodplains?) and measure how well we are overcoming these weaknesses.

To measure resilience we are in a more complex domain, for that involves the degree to which a society is well-integrated, well-bonded, and feeling mutual empathy and solidarity, as they will have to cooperate to help each other out in the face of disasters or even in the face of forced migration and displacement. Indeed, in many involuntary displacement, whether leading to being considered refugees or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), this usually results in significant uprooting and impoverishment⁴⁰.

Questions:

So what kind of a society would be adaptive and resilient? And how could we measure if we are on the right path towards building such a society?

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⁴⁰ See: Michael Cernea and Julie Maldonado (eds.) *Challenging the Prevailing Paradigm of Displacement and Resettlement: Risks, Impoverishment, Legacies, Solutions*, Routledge, NY, 2018 (special Indian Edition – reprint 2019).

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XII. Knowledge, Learning Societies and STI:

Twenty five years ago, when a number of us were developing the concepts of sustainability as opportunity and the four kinds of capital, a colleague asked if “knowledge” should not be considered as a fifth kind of capital. At the time I argued that the accumulation of knowledge was something that humanity had been doing continuously since the dawn of civilization. And indeed, some of the applications of that knowledge, and although the technology that science made possible, had been destructive, but on the whole it has been responsible for almost every aspect of our well-being from food and nutrition, to health, to education and to so many other things. I argued that Knowledge, like technology, should be seen as the evolving function that governed the relative mix between the four kinds of capital, much as it had resulted in shifts between primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy (agriculture, manufacturing and services).

But if global knowledge is growing, the ability of different societies to access and use such knowledge varies enormously. That is one of the reasons why the National Academies in the USA have adopted a position supportive of “Open Science”⁴² and the ISC and African institutions are supporting an African Open Science Platform (AOSP).

Questions:

Thus in this discussion, a Human-Centered Development Paradigm cannot ignore that attribute. What we used to call “learning societies”, the societies that have the capacity to adopt and adapt knowledge – whether generated locally or elsewhere – to serve the well-being of the citizens of that society should be counted as a desirable attribute of society.

So far, this quality has most commonly been looked at in terms of the results: the societies become more competitive. Can we do better in our search for a Human-centered Development Paradigm?

⁴¹ See: Michael Cernea and Julie Maldonado (eds.) *Challenging the Prevailing Paradigm of Displacement and Resettlement: Risks, Impoverishment, Legacies, Solutions*, Routledge, NY, 2018 (special Indian Edition – reprint 2019).

⁴² See US NAS, *Open Science by Design: Realizing a Vision for 21st Century Research* (2018) The National academies, Washington DC, (A Consensus Report on Open Science).

XIII. Reflections on Identity, Culture and Values:

Autonomy and individualism are fundamental to “personhood” in all social and cultural contexts, but these contexts also endow the person with belonging to a multiplicity of groups (gender, political, ethnic, religious, professional, etc.) and balancing the inherent tension between these tendencies.

This part of the discussion has substantial overlap with the discussions of Pluralism and Cosmopolitanism. But in general, this is one of the most difficult issues facing the world today. Great thinkers such as Amartya Sen⁴³, Amin Maalouf⁴⁴ and Kwame Anthony Appiah⁴⁵ have all addressed these issues of ethics, identities and violence.

More recently, this debate has become more urgent⁴⁶. It is clear that such notions are increasingly problematic with the spread of Jihadism despite the defeat of the Islamic State fighters on the ground in the Middle East, as well as the rise of the xenophobic politics of fear and hate in the west⁴⁷.

Questions:

Should our search for a Human-Centered development Paradigm include how to balance the demands of 'individuality' and of belonging to a group? How do people in the end define their identities? – note that I use the plural, for we all have multiple identities. While we must reject extreme understandings of what autonomy requires, we must also beware of the equally powerful urge to “belong” to be part of a group, which can result in deviance from criminal gangs to terrorist groups. How can we consider the relation of personal and group identity to morals and ethics, as we discuss the development of Social cohesion in a community or a society?

XIV. Envoi

Clearly, the preceding paragraphs are just scratching the surface of a very complex reality, just raising some questions to assist those who are about to launch a very important effort. I have however one last observation that is

⁴³ See inter Alia Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Issues of Our Time series) W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition, 2007

⁴⁴ See inter alia Amin Maalouf, *Les identités meurtrières*, (The Murderous Identities)

⁴⁵ See inter alia Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton University Press; First Edition (2007)

⁴⁶ See for example: Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity*, Liveright, W. W. Norton & Company, NY, (2019); and Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*, Picador; Reprint edition, MacMillan NY (2019)

⁴⁷ See inter Alia Ismail Serageldin, *Alexandria's Remembrance of Things Past: Lessons for the Future of Europe and Islam*, The Nexus Icture of 2011, The nexus Institute, the Netherlands, 2011;

pertinent to the problems at hand. How far should UNDP still maintain the search for a single number (e.g. the HDI) that can be used to rank all the countries of the world? I believe that despite the technical problems with building a single index and using it for ranking all the countries of the world it is going to remain absolutely necessary for media impact and grabbing the attention of decision makers in various countries. I just hope that the rest of the report addresses these other and broader issues that have been discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

xxxxxx END xxxxxx