Conversations on Rethinking Human Development

A global dialogue on human development in today's world

International Science Council

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FOREWORD ISC

The human development approach that changed the way decision-makers around the world think about human progress was developed through the work of prominent economists like Amartya Sen and Mahbub Ul Haq. Over the last 30 years the Human Development Reports have provided us with an important perspective on human well-being and have inspired us to ask what matters, what has worked and where we should renew our efforts to improve lives. Current social, environmental, economic, technological and health transformations call upon us to take stock and strengthen our collective resolve to meet common goals towards an equitable, sustainable and meaningful life for all. Today, in the light of all we have learned about human well-being in a rapidly changing world, the scientific community is called upon to help guide the further development of this concept.

Rethinking a multi-dimensional concept such as human development calls for an inclusive, multi-disciplinary and truly global conversation. The ISC, with its members around the world representing both the social and natural sciences, is uniquely positioned to advance this dialogue. In this publication you will find interviews and commentaries of experts representing a range of scientific backgrounds, from philosophers and cultural theorists to ecologists and astronomers. These diverse lenses on the question of human well-being challenge us to develop a new and more comprehensive view of key issues and possible ways forward.

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right of everyone *to share in scientific advancement and its benefits*. This means that science must reflect diverse human experiences and, in turn, contribute to the well-being of all people and of the complex, interconnected social and natural systems upon which we depend.

The international scientific community stands ready to be a key partner in the development and implementation of policies to promote human development, and to do this effectively, we must continue to push for more diversity and inclusivity in science itself. The opportunities and freedoms at the heart of the human development approach are central to promoting a vibrant and diverse scientific community and a scientific enterprise that is open, engaged and trusted.

This publication is the result of a rewarding partnership with the UNDP based on the idea that strengthened science-policy engagement is critical in responding to the unprecedented challenges and opportunities the world faces today. We would like to thank all those who provided their valuable insights through this ongoing collaboration. We also take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to the project Steering Group for their contributing their sizable expertise and enthusiasm towards guiding this effort.

The inspiring conversation that has been triggered by this project has only just begun. It is an important first step towards fostering a new understanding of what we as a global society consider valuable and worth striving for.

Heide Hackmann
CEO
ISC

FOREWORD UNDP

Thirty years ago, when the first Human Development Report was released, the world was a very different place. The Cold War had just ended, the World Wide Web had just begun, and few had even heard of climate change. It comes as no surprise that a development approach, framed by the world of 1990, needs reassessment in order to ensure its continued relevance.

COVID-19, with its likely origins in human pressures on the environment and its unequal impact on people around the world, shows all too clearly how challenges – both old and emerging – are compounding and threatening hard-won progress. These are, indeed, extraordinary times. But these times also give us an opportunity to remember the importance of greater human freedom and choice in the development process and look at how thinking might need to shift in order to tackle the great challenges we face today.

And this is why the Human Development Report Office at UNDP and the ISC came together to help 'Rethink Human Development'. We wanted to provide an opportunity for inputs from the scientific community, in the natural and social sciences and the humanities, to feed into reimagining conceptual frameworks to guide analysis, measurement and decision-making through a human development lens.

The contributions have come out of both expert contributions and responses to a global call for new perspectives.

The central premise of the human development paradigm – that progress should be seen as a process of enlarging people's choices and wellbeing – remains just as true today as it was when the framework was first put in place 30 years ago by Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen.

However, while that premise might be true, its application has had to evolve, just as the development landscape and expectations have evolved, as has our understanding on how to address deeply interconnected challenges. Understanding the state of the art in all forms of science and humanities is critical and getting that fuller picture has been greatly helped by the combined wealth of knowledge from across the ISC. And what started as a time-bound process with a clear deliverable evolved into an ongoing platform to continuously seek inputs into the reimagination of the human development narrative. This report, therefore, marks not the end but the beginning of a journey.

As we collectively try to overcome one of the biggest development crises of our lifetimes, we must not simply focus on the here and now without looking to the future. A rearticulated human development framework can provide a navigation system which we can use to chart a future that is more sustainable, inclusive and resilient for everyone.

Pedro Conceição
Director
Human Development Report Office
United Nations Development Programme

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1 Introduction

Thirty years since the first Human Development Report (HDR) was published in 1990, our world has changed considerably. Current and impending crises in ecological, health, political and economic systems have become increasingly evident.

While societies and economies at large have become interlinked in new and more intimate ways, at the same time, many individuals experience disconnection and isolation. Fundamental shifts are taking place in how we understand ourselves and our connections to local and global societies in the light of new technologies, socio-political realities and deep environmental changes.

Since its introduction, the report has been influential in broadening the scope of the concept of development by pointing decision-makers to the multidimensional nature of development. Progress could no longer be defined in terms of economic growth according to aggregated economic data, but should instead serve the broader objective of well-being. These conceptual underpinnings of human development, which were originally driven by Mahbub ul Haq and anchored on the notion of human capabilities – that is, people's real opportunities to do and be what they have reason to value – have considerably expanded over these past 30 years.

Subsequent editions of the HDR have explored dimensions of and complementarities with human security, inequality, human rights, capabilities, gender, peace, environmental challenges and many other issues. In addition, Human Development expanded the statistical accounting of development, adding dimensions of development beyond gross domestic product (GDP), and providing a single-number proxy in the form of the Human Development Index. The transition from the Millennium to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in part reflects the recognition of the increased complexity and interconnections of socio-technical and socio-environmental issues. Yet while the SDGs provide a set of objectives to guide development progress, they do not specify pathways or approaches to achieve the goals.

The human development approach as a broader lens could be well suited to provide perspectives and a common understanding to help address the broad and integrated concerns encapsulated in the SDGs. There is, however, a need to re-examine human development in the present context. This includes attention to the fact that both economic and social development is now globalized yet uneven, with pockets of pervasive underdevelopment in advanced economies. While many have been moved out of abject poverty, many remain. It is clearer than ever that economic dimensions alone do not adequately define the human condition, and that multiple, intersecting inequalities and vulnerabilities are pervasive.

Furthermore, the present context requires attention to the huge role of technology, in particular to the transformative capabilities of digitally enabled social and economic innovations. Lastly,

the inevitability of an ecological crisis and the urgency of climate change are also key factors for the rethinking of human development, as they force us to move towards long-term sustainability alongside the need for short-term just and equitable societal transformations.

In short, the present context calls for a systems perspective. With this background in mind, we need to ask the question 'what does human-centred development mean today?'

This juncture provides an opportunity for critical review and rearticulation of the human development paradigm to reflect the evolving landscape and expectations. This landscape is globalized, technology enabled, and hugely compromised by growing inequalities, fractured and fracturing societies, and environmental changes. This is also an opportunity to provide a conceptual framework to guide analysis, measurement and decision-making to support the achievement of the SDGs.

The International Science Council (ISC), in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), started a global discussion, 'Rethinking Human Development', which gathered voices from across the world to answer some of the following questions:

1. How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development?
2. What are the major emerging challenges to human-centred development in the world today?
3. How can the human development approach inform public debates and decision-makers about current and future challenges?
4. What would be a meaningful and useful definition of human development for our changing world?

Background to the project

A Steering Group guided this initiative, providing advice regarding project design and deliberating upon the ideas mobilized through this effort (see the list of Steering Group members below). Asuncion Lera St. Clair served as a Senior Project Advisor in addition to being a member of the Steering Group and conducted several of the interviews contained in this publication.

In July 2020, an extended Steering Group workshop was held to reflect on the inputs gathered through this project. The outcome of this workshop was the synthesis essay presented in Section 2 of this volume which presents an initial framing towards a rethinking of human development, through a set of nine interconnected directions that draw on the contributions received.

ISC Patron Ismail Serageldin authored a think piece laying out his views on some of the key questions and parameters for the discussion on rethinking the human-centred development paradigm. This piece triggered the discussion, and an excerpt is presented in Section 3 along with responses from Steering Group members Peter Gluckman and Elisa Reis. Section 3 also contains a list of six emerging dimensions of human development drawn up by the project Steering Group based on initial deliberations to guide the discussion.

Between March and June 2020, the ISC collected views and insights from a range of experts from diverse disciplinary and geographical backgrounds. Simultaneously, an open global call for input was shared on the ISC website, and received several high-quality contributions from the broader community. The interviews and written commentaries gathered through this effort are presented in Section 4 of this volume. These submissions have been organized under four sub-sections: Epistemologies and contexts (including contextual knowledge, conceptual and philosophical outlooks); Environmental sustainability; Individual and society (including questions of inequality, social cohesion and identity, among other issues); and Governance and institutions (including concerns regarding democracy, inclusive decision-making and institutional issues). These four headings are broad and provided for the convenience of the reader; the submissions are, however, overlapping and interconnected, as are the issues they raise.

Meet the Steering Group:

Pedro Conceição
Director, Human Development Report Office at UNDP

Peter Gluckman
President-elect, ISC and Chair of the ISC Committee for Science Planning, INGSA Chair

Dirk Messner
President, German Environment Agency, Former Director, UNU-EHS

Elisa Reis
Vice President, ISC and Chair, Interdisciplinary Research Network for the Study of Social Inequality

Heide Hackmann
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2 Synthesis of the discussion

Rethinking Human Development: a journey with multiple and shifting narratives

This essay by the project Steering Group synthesizes the interviews and commentaries gathered through the ISC-UNDP project on rethinking human development. It presents an initial framing towards a rethinking of human development, through a set of nine interconnected directions drawing on the contributions received.

1. Thirty years hence

The Human Development Report (HDR) has turned 30. Since the release of the first HDR in 1990, the authors of the reports and a broad range of intellectuals and agencies have worked hard to put people at the centre of economic development and to argue that 'people are the true wealth of nations'. During these three decades, the concept of human development has evolved and matured, influencing academic debate, policy and practice, how development organizations measure their impact and how countries assess their progress. The concept has also created ripple effects in questioning such categories as 'developed' and 'developing' countries, Global North and Global South, as the widespread use of the Human Development Index (HDI) enabled us to question the overarching

importance of GDP growth as the single measure of economic development. This opened the door to the wider and more universal conception and application of development that emerged in 2015 with the 2030 Agenda, encompassing the ecological, social and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

The story of these past 30 years is, however, one of uneven development. Substantial improvements in life expectancy, access to livelihoods and enhanced well-being across the world coexist with pervasive poverty, disempowerment, unconscionable inequalities, major environmental degradation and democracy and governance crises. In addition, development achievements have been driven by fossil-fuelled economies, industrial agriculture, deforestation and displacement of indigenous populations, creating a climate emergency, eroding ecosystems or provoking mass extinctions that have already led to losses in human development achievements. It has also been a story of uneven uptake of the full meaning of human development as envisioned by its founders, Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen.

The last three decades have also brought major advances in science and technology, enabling rapid change along with the emergence of new ideas about the meaning of human flourishing and the scales that make up the different dimensions of human development – the individual and the social, cultural, political, environmental and socio-economic circumstances of individual lives.

It is also clear now that any development approach must consider the life course of the individual from conception to adulthood and then death, the central role of intergenerational influences, and the many diverse identities we forge over time. We must also recognize the immense variation in how these influences are expressed across cultures and the psychological harm when cultural identity is lost. Socio-political elements, such as democracy, institutions and social cohesion, and ecological and technical dimensions are fundamental in providing the enabling environment for our humanity.

New insights on individual development and mental well-being and social and biological evolutionary perspectives on human health and disease all lead to new understandings of our own humanity, on how the human brain works and the ways human behaviour may change. This knowledge leads us to a richer understanding of the characteristics that make us human and has influenced the rapid emergence of intelligent technologies.

New forms of connectivity and communication are reworking human societies, and the ways their meanings and values are constituted and expressed, altering configurations of power

and voice. Albeit their many benefits, these technologies have also enabled misinformation and the manipulation of facts, contributing to power imbalances and societal polarization. There is growing evidence that these technologies can have impacts in uneven ways on mental health, on brain development and on social relationships. Yet the push for democracy and people's empowerment remains unabated if not realized, with inclusive political and economic decision-making remaining elusive for many. Advances in rights and justice, and the ending of discrimination around gender, race, belief or place are piecemeal and often accompanied by pushback. Environmental consciousness has reached the boardrooms of major companies, and the technologies and impetus for renewable energies and a carbon-neutral future are stronger than ever. Yet negative climate and environmental changes continue. Highlighting these profound contradictions, an accelerating number and range of protests around the world – from youth climate strikes to marches against gender and racial injustice – call for change. 2030 will be a critical moment to assess whether the world is on a pathway to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including a sustainable and equitable trajectory to stabilize the climate while meeting the needs of current and future generations.

The 30th anniversary of the Human Development Report thus coincides with a time of both profound challenges and immense opportunities. It is, without doubt, time to review the concept critically. As articulated in the initial project framing piece produced by the project Steering Group, it is a moment to reflect on the evolving landscape and expectations – a landscape that is globalized, technology enabled, and hugely compromised by growing and multiple inequalities, fiscal measures that threaten meeting basic needs, fractured and fracturing societies, and environmental changes – and to provide a conceptual framework to guide analysis, measurement and decision-making to support the achievement of the SDGs.

This discussion paper synthesizes the contributions to this project by a wide variety of actors and articulates a rethinking of our own initial ideas. It does not aim to provide a summary of the rich views we have collected, and we encourage readers to engage with each individual contribution. Rethinking human development cannot be solely a one-off academic exercise. It is a process requiring dialogue, a journey towards new understandings that hears a wide diversity of voices from practitioners and wider publics. What we hope to achieve in this paper are a basis for guiding that process by articulating key directions of thinking, key ideas to inform the development of a common understanding of the notion of human development – and, potentially, a common basis for deciding how to progress and measure it. We are aware that the insights collected through this project represent a limited set of views coming primarily from scientists and researchers, and that the rethinking of

human development must include many other voices. The most fundamental insight that has emerged from the process is that *there is no single narrative of human development but rather multiple narratives that shift over time*. Like hikers following signposts for directions, we have weaved ideas emerging from our conversations into points of connection providing direction for our journey.

2. Nine interconnected directions for rethinking human development

We propose nine interconnected directions for guiding the process of rethinking human development. These nine aspects address in an interconnected and systems-based way the economic, societal, cultural, institutional, technological, ecological and political dimensions of the proposed journey to rethinking human development. Special care is given to unpacking the characteristics of being human from the psychological, medical and evolutionary biology perspectives, devoting attention to people's life courses, minds, and bodies, but also to the central role of many different forms of identity and culture, norms, values and beliefs. We know that the framing presented here and the directions we have chosen will change and evolve as the world seeks meaning and direction towards a sustainable future for all. We recognize that these general directions will carry diverse, specific meanings for different people and groups – thus they are anchors for dialogue as much as definitive statements. We hope they serve as a basis for eliciting further insights beyond the challenges of today and illuminate the unforeseen challenges of tomorrow.

2.1. A fresh start for rethinking the meaning of development

We want to start with some reflections on the term *development*. A recurrent theme across insights received from many participants in the discussion resulting from the ISC-UNDP project on Rethinking Human Development, is that the term *development* is loaded with history, values, politics and orthodoxies. This, as highlighted by many of the participants on this consultation, prevents creative and disruptive thinking, making it necessary to reform how the term is understood. The term is not only loaded with a history of subjugation of the so-called Global South by the Global North through processes of imperialism, colonialism and their modern guises. It has also become entrenched with ideas and ideologies that obscure important elements, such as the value of people's inner lives or the role of power relations in perpetuating poverty and vulnerability. These have also spilled over into the Global North, leading to complex relations across and within nations and peoples. Dominant economistic narratives and aggregated metrics associated

with the mainstream concept of *development* hide important aspects of the experiences and aspirations of individuals and societies and the conditions that enable or hinder our humanity to thrive. These characteristics are often transmitted to the very different idea of human development. Perhaps a first pointer emerging from the insights received is to reflect on the scope of rethinking needed to create space to debate the meaning of human development in the current context, and avoid being caught in the histories of development in the context of *development aid*.

Several interviewees highlighted how a fresh start for rethinking development requires avoiding the loaded and narrow history of the term and complementing its other meanings, possibly leading to an alternative term free from its historical baggage. Some contributors pointed to seeking alternative histories of the term, emerging from evolutionary biology and social psychology. Others pointed to its distinctive meaning in medicine and the human sciences, where the consideration is one of the passages from conception to birth to childhood to adulthood to old age and death. It is clear that a range of factors can act on the individual, particularly early in the life course, to affect their biological, psychological and behavioural development with long-term consequences for their health, their relationships, and their ability to make economic contributions. But those factors can also be direct, such as trauma or malnutrition – or indirect, and through the family, society, environment and economy. In a sense the individual can be visualized at the centre of an expanding 'onion ring' of family, extended family, community, society, nation, region, world – all directly or indirectly affecting the individual. And the factors operating may be human, social, technological or environmental.

Other contributors use of 'development' simply reminded us of its connotation as a change process. Anything that may be said to be developing is changing from one state to another. Like the chrysalis that nurtures the monarch butterfly, a process of change can result in something beautiful. But it can also be a bad development, as the term is used in common language to describe, for example, a bad turn of events. In both cases development means change, and that change can be incremental, transformative, linear, complex, positive or negative, entangled with power and producing winners and losers.

In social psychology, development means a change towards some form of maturity – an ontological evolution. When applied together with the noun 'human', the history of human development is as long as the millennia of evolution of the human race, changing and evolving, creating and depending on the self-created conditions of human existence.

Development is also about mindsets and beliefs, both the driver and the target of change and evolving views. And it has moral, cultural, spiritual and religious connotations,

captured well by the originators of human development in the context of the UNDP, as the next section describes. It is never value-neutral, but rather underpinned by values and principles to be upheld and to guide and nourish change processes. This sense of spiritual and value-driven advancement, we are reminded by the contributors, has often been associated with the recognition of the other, the decentring of the self and the including of others, including non-human nature and all living beings in our quest for well-being and progress. Ultimately development is about both empathy and altruism – that is having the cooperative sense of caring for all persons and things that are not us but are entangled in our own change processes.

Enriching our view of development with centuries old meanings of change processes in the natural and the social worlds, a long journey filled with differing terrains, can help shake away the problematic connotations of the term, and move towards a more 'decolonized' vision. Indeed, narrow, aid-focused connotations have accumulated in a comparably very short period and thus are arguably thus less evolved and less meaningful – though they are wrapped in major global institutions and power relations that can make them hard to shake. Tracking, interrogating and challenging these power relations is an important part of making the space for richer dialogues and new directions.

2.2. Visionary rethinking of our humanity

The original overarching goal of the concept of human development was to put humans at the centre of development and to dethrone the evaluation of people and countries by a single metric meant to measure economic production. The depth of the idea and the true value of the concept was to create a movement based on visionary thinking. Human development was about enlarging human freedoms, enabling people *to live the lives they have reasons to value*. Most of the definitions of human development from contributors revolve around this idea, perhaps expressed with different words, many focused on defining parameters for our well-being, by pointing out that our well-being must be responsible to others or cognizant of planetary boundaries. But at the core, the ultimate meaning of human development is freedom: *development as freedom* was the original meaning of human development 30 years ago.

We express this original meaning of human development in the past tense to convey that it may have simply been lost. Many contributors point out the need not only to revitalize the original human focus of the HDRs and the visionary intellectual traditions from which the concept of human development emerged in the late 1980s – but also to deepen such

human centredness and ensure that it is properly translated into policy and decision-making rather than being exclusively seen as simplified and aggregated into measures or targets.

Keeping this vision alive and its rich intellectual underpinnings, matured over time by the capability approach's theorists, is a major element in our journey of rethinking human development.

However, our changing world also demands expanding the rethinking of development to rethinking our humanity. We must move beyond the aspiration to dethrone thinking of economic production as well-being to a deep dive into the conditions that make us humans. We do that by enriching the concept of human development with everything we have learned in the past decades about our biology and psychology, the inner lives of human beings, the sources of our resilience, the way the brain or emotions affect our sense of self-worth, the way social relations with family, friends and others create (or destruct) our humanness and how solidarity makes us better and happier.

It is also fundamental to recognize how our humanity is co-defined through our interconnections with non-human nature and our place in the universe organically embracing the natural environment. In our conversations we have repeatedly heard that rethinking our humanity includes recognizing the connectedness, for our individual and collective well-being, with the natural environment and all living things surrounding us, the planet, the universe. Connectedness to one another across societies in multicultural settings, and the connectedness created by transnational webs leading to a global community of humans are fundamental elements of human development in the 21st century.

Rethinking our humanity from this relational perspective also has operational dimensions. Relationality was a key element already pointed out by our initial framing. Without a more relational conception of the individual or without social and indeed socio-ecological cohesion, we cannot solve the problems that threaten us. Humans evolved as social animals dependent on cooperation within the individual's identified group. Rules, beliefs, mores and customs evolved to sustain this cooperation. Our resilience depends on the resilience of others, and healthy individuals and societies depend on healthy ecologies and a healthy planet. This means that rethinking our development journey is about making it less individually human-centred, more relational and more system-centred. The individual self – the mind, body and spirit – is a fundamental element of any healthy society, but our nature as social beings means we must avoid the pitfalls of exclusive individualism.

This rethinking of our humanity directs our journey to develop further our notion of what it is to be human in a time of a looming climate catastrophe, but also a time when technology

may undermine our humanity affecting our autonomy and agency. Technology is already having an impact in many societies on how individuals behave, how they form their emotional relationships and social networks, how they work, and how they understand the world and form their opinions and actions – and it is subject to much manipulation.

Technology has expanded our connectedness. But in doing so, some physical relationships are replaced with virtual connectedness in ways that affect people's perceptions of the world. In this changing world, there are more and more confused identities, and a massive decrease in mental well-being. That is a function of the confused identities that we have now, and that we did not have in more simple and physically connected communities.

Studies of the global burden of disease highlight the growing importance of mental well-being and the rapid rise of mental illness in all societies. Mental well-being and human development are closely linked. Mental well-being is something more than simply the absence of a diagnosable mental illness. It is a state where one's thought and emotional processes allow one to meet one's optimal potential. Many factors play into the increasing prevalence of a loss of mental well-being, including loss of social cohesion, loss of trust in societal institutions, demographic and economic change, conflict, shifting expectations in a very complex world, rapid change and the emergence of the digital environment.

Medical and psychological research is showing the importance of a life course approach to understanding the emergence of psychological resilience in the face of rapid change. Such resilience is critical to sustained mental well-being. The foundations emerge in the first few years of life and are reinforced in the school years. While much is known of what conditions are most likely to assist its development, these remain sadly deficient for many children. If people do not have psychological resilience, mental well-being and a sense of self-worth, then human development is not being achieved for them.

Are we really protecting our humanity when models of development and conceptions of progress destroy the sustenance of our lives, the natural environment we depend on, or other living beings? Does the widespread use of technologies, especially digital technologies, risk transforming our personalities and transforming the way we relate to one another into distant, controlled and technology-mediated relations? Are we leveraging all the potential positive ways we can use technologies to enhance our freedoms and capabilities in an open, transparent and safe environment? On the one hand, we need to change behaviour. On the other, we need to reassert a human logic upon the potentially increasingly dominant logic of machines. The logic of artificial intelligence or big data is a logic of quantification that may further deepen the aggregation, quantification and

datafication that for many has drowned the concept of human development into a single metric, such as the HDI. A technology-facilitated humanity may throw away all those traits that are not quantifiable such as human emotion, feelings, mindsets, religious principles or ethical values. We need all of those traits to reassert our humanity and recognize the humanity of others.

2.3. Strengthening institutions and accountability

The inner dimensions of human development have always been a core characteristic, and for many they should form the kernel of the concept, but we should avoid confusing the importance of the internal dimensions of our humanity with their policing. It was highlighted by a few contributors that to be effective and implementable in policy frameworks, the journey into rethinking human development must avoid the categorical mistake of implying that the inner dimensions of human beings are of public scope.

As clearly elaborated by the work of Amartya Sen and perhaps much more clearly in the work of Martha Nussbaum, the task of institutions is to craft the social structures that facilitate the expansion of people's capabilities. Institutions are needed to provide accountability for ensuring the conditions that enable people's lives to flourish. Tackling fragilities and tapping potentialities in human nature can only be fully appreciated from an ethical perspective. Institutions and accountability mechanisms ought to uphold and facilitate humanity's struggles for autonomy, agency, self-consciousness, empathy, cooperation and solidarity. This is the true sense of development as freedom.

Institutions and accountability are also central for operationalizing human development as freedom, for promoting the common good, solving complex global challenges, protecting and defending the vulnerable and giving voice to the marginalized and discriminated as well as to the rights of future generations. Institutions must work for humanity. But the world may also need new ones to protect all those non-human elements that make humanity possible – functioning socio-ecological systems including climate and biodiversity – and to address the challenges of rapid technological change. Moreover, the measures needed to adapt to unavoidable climate change impacts and to roll out the needed mitigation strategies to prevent catastrophic tipping points would be possible only with accountable institutions that create the needed incentives. These incentives require international, transnational and global institutions that take the world towards collective action, countering aggressive nationalism and revitalizing multilateralism, and ensuring that global responsibilities are assumed in addressing global challenges.

What we do or fail to do now has irreversible consequences for future generations. After all, no vision of humanity is possible unless it is balanced with the planetary life support processes that underpin human capabilities and flourishing. There is a need for institutions that support three major moral and organizational revolutions: the responsibility to stabilize the climate and restore the health of the planet; global justice to ensure a fair transition that leaves no one behind; and shifts in mental maps and normative frameworks that guide us to the moral imperative encapsulated in human development.

2.4. Human development is possible only within planetary boundaries

Development as freedom is impossible without considering our planetary life support systems, now often conceptualized as planetary boundaries. This message was repeated in diverse formulations by most contributors. There were the many obvious pointers to why current ideas of progress and development threaten the stability of the planet and thus our own well-being. The pervasive dominance of a logic of extraction, consumerism, materialistic conceptions of the good life and the discounting of the future common to several economic approaches appear to be the most fundamental reasons. The exclusive logic of the market in production, consumption and finance not only creates disincentives for alternatives to flourish, it also prevents the appropriate accounting and measurement of the real costs of production and consumption and hides the costs of social and environmental needs. Environmental damage and social care remain outside business decisions.

Several criticisms of the shortcomings of the current HDI relate to its inability to measure the ecological impact of the production and consumption of goods and services, and of the policies and behaviours that harm our planet. In failing to account for ecological damages, the HDI does not directly account for these costs, creating blind spots as if human development could be decoupled from the natural environment. It is the same logic that hides the value and the cost of social care. In balancing human development with planetary boudaries, advanced economies bear unique historical and ethical responsibilities.

We face a dilemma. On the one hand, the material and non-material value of non-human nature and ecologies is at the core of alternative views of progress and development associated with several indigenous knowledge systems and traditional lifestyles, which often are lifestyles that are ecologically balanced. On the other hand, while many environmental movements emerge from vulnerable populations, the concerns are often depicted as being of those who already have their human needs covered, the concerns of accommodated and educated elites. We must keep human needs at the centre of human development but

integrate the needs of ecological systems and planetary life support processes. We can no longer consider human needs and the natural environment as different issues.

The tendency to pit economic development against the environment has led the world to a dead end. It is time to interweave them, just as our humanity is interwoven with the health of non-human nature and ultimately the planet. Responsible well-being demands being cognizant of the implications of consumption, accountability, and ways to factor in the interests of future generations. Responsible well-being for people and planet is about internalizing environmental and social costs in the true value of goods and services. It is about conceptualizing the systems underpinning humanity as socio-ecological or socio-natural systems, and development as positive change in those systems.

This also underlines the importance of a universal conception of development that extends to all societies. The object of studying development has often been the Global South, or sometimes poor sections of high-income countries. If we wish to celebrate another 30 years of human development, our attention must be extended to all societies and the behaviour of citizens who have already achieved high levels of human development under traditional measures. Human development can no longer be about becoming like the high-income countries in GDP growth and in health and education achievements.

This is the real challenge. Rethinking human development requires facing head on the huge difficulties, but also opportunities, that high-income, older-industrialized economies have in becoming more sustainable – by changing their extractive economies and tackling tax avoidance and environmentally destructive cultures. Rolling away from high environmental impact path dependencies and reducing emissions to be in line with the Paris Agreement, biodiversity goals, and with all the SDGs is the real challenge for the sustainability of human development. A further pointer in our multiple journeys is that these path dependencies are created and reinforced by a lack of social cohesion and gross inequalities, perpetuated by entrenched power dynamics.

2.5. Mitigation of inequality and promotion of social cohesion are enablers – not merely prerequisites – for human development

Without a doubt, our journeys must give a central role to a challenge highlighted by almost all contributors. Current levels of inequality and the lack of social cohesion within and across countries are a major challenge for operationalizing the concept of human development and for implementing the needed measures. The absence of social cohesion – understood as not only solidarity but preventing marginalization, discrimination, racism,

xenophobia and high levels of inequality – hinders operationalizing a more humane, more environmentally conscious and responsible version of human progress that emerges from the first pointers in our journey (elaborated in previous sections). Misinformation and disinformation empowered by technology can enhance polarization and undermine cohesion. Gross inequalities in wealth, power, voice and representation discourage open debate on the meaning of progress and development, pollute institutions, prevent accountability and generate self-justifying narratives for the never-ending logic of extraction and exploitation of people and planet. Rethinking human development requires that addressing inequalities is brought centre stage, recognizing multiple inequalities – not only economic but also social, cultural, political, spatial, environmental and knowledge – and how they intersect with each other.

Many contributors pointed to how inequalities prevent the interests of ordinary people and the common good, including those of future generations, being given the weight they deserve. The lack of social cohesion inhibits stepping beyond the individual self and embracing the happiness, joys and fears, or the sufferings of others. For those who understand development as freedom to be about love, inequalities make us all, in effect, unloving beings, also unable to value the health of the planet that sustains us. We cannot achieve the needed consensus to account for the true value of the well-being of the planet when societies are fragmented, when the social fabric is torn apart and when social connections are broken by greed, envy, fear, distrust and anger.

A key problem is that the narratives of justifications for inequalities, marginalization and discrimination involve financial and economic power, and in many cases corruption and violence. They then become tools in themselves to manipulate public debates, budget allocations and service provisions to sustain and perpetuate current inequalities. The concentration of economic, political and social power in the hands of a few sustains and legitimizes inequalities, since the powerful elites and patriarchal powers have little incentive to challenge the status quo. The failure of solidarity translates into a failure to make the necessary social arrangements for human development priorities.

Instead, we want inequalities to be reduced and social cohesion to be nurtured and enabled. Without both, human development is not really possible. Many of the insights we received on rethinking human development have pointed to the health and socio-economic crises of the COVID-19 pandemic as having laid bare inequalities; it affects everyone but not at all equally. The pandemic also offers a clear example of the interlinkages between inequalities and the absence of social and individual resilience.

Why do we know this is an important role for a strong and cohesive society? Precisely because the world offers many examples where communities unite to work together to solve problems and improve livelihoods, support the weak and vulnerable and organize from bottom up to fill the gap left by policy failures and individualism of the market. Indeed, many community and neighbourhood groups have done so for COVID-19. We know that equity and social cohesion are prerequisites for human development because the fight against marginalization and discrimination is unifying. And when multilateralism is well articulated, it creates the basis for collaboration and cooperation. Businesses and investors know that, in a complex and interconnected world, equitable transactions and collaborations are good for long-term sustainability. From happier workers to better educated peers and equal trading partners, healthy societies are those where equality of opportunity exists, where solidarity thrives, where social cohesion overcomes difficult trade-offs and choices.

Any reconceptualization of human development that addresses cohesion across society, relations between countries or across generations, or relations with non-human nature and ecologies is threatened by a grossly unequal world and the narratives and processes that perpetuate such inequalities. Enhancing social cohesion, mitigating inequalities and restoring the value of social relations is a journey that requires the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives. It requires that we attend seriously to the structural conditions and violence creating and perpetuating inequalities – and that the experiences and priorities of those most marginalized are heard and included.

Rethinking human development must thus be an open journey for all, beyond governments and agencies, beyond experts and academics. This leads to the imperative for democratic deliberation.

2.6. Democratic deliberation is needed for resilient socio-ecological systems

Precisely because we frame our journey as acknowledging and appreciating multiple and shifting narratives, rethinking human development needs to be an open-ended and multidimensional process towards new social contracts based on renewed human development thinking. Many contributors have pointed to the importance of envisioning this journey not as a task for experts alone, even if the range of expertise brought to the table is much broader than has traditionally been the case. Citizens, including those living in conditions of vulnerability, marginalization and poverty in all countries, must be consulted and must have the opportunity to participate. The journey must reflect the voices of young people from across the planet, as visions of the good life have changed substantively. Although we know cities have been hubs of attraction and the destination chosen by many

in the past as means to enhance their human flourishing, the young or future generations may soon have other types of aspirations, options opened by technology, options where place becomes less meaningful. Maybe, just maybe, the good life may become about making other planets habitable. Maybe the good life is about upholding indigenous traditions and culture as the ticket to trade for a better and more meaningful life. Progress can be about living more closely with nature and with one another.

Defining meaning, value and life satisfaction once basic needs are met is difficult, as this is a vast terrain full of diverse choices. The truth is we do not know whose good life is better than our own, whoever 'we' may be. That knowledge is not a certainty we need for rethinking the meaning of human development. What is needed in this journey is to listen to all voices, to acknowledge our own values and positions with humility, and equally important, to prevent dominant definitions or views from framing or setting the terms of the debate or, worse still, from closing the debate. If development is freedom, democratic deliberation (local, national and transnational) is the channel to get us there. This does not always and necessarily mean 'democracy' as defined according to particular formal representative institutions and practices, or political and historical traditions. While some lament a crisis of democracy in the conventional Western liberal sense, there are also many informal, participatory democratic processes emerging across the world, where citizens are claiming inclusion in the decisions that affect their lives.

Listening to all voices is key also for the eventual effectiveness of specific policies and measures. As highlighted by many contributors, human development happens not by observing but by participating. Buy-in, uptake, trust in government, overcoming the doubts and fears of the other – all are possible when people feel part of the journey, not the objects for whom a journey is predefined. This listening can be done with available participatory methodologies which have advanced substantively since the landmark *Voices of the Poor* report was published by the World Bank more than 25 years ago. Digital technologies open new possibilities for engaging with people. They provide platforms for new coalitions to emerge, and for more impactful results to spread quickly across the world.

There is a deeper meaning for the role of deliberative democracy going forward. Democratic deliberation is also crucial to prevent the further undermining of people's freedom by authoritarianism. Democratic societies require individuals to have free will and autonomy, values and rights that take precedence. Authoritarianism of all kinds threatens the non-negotiable basic human rights of all. Misinformation and disinformation, both of which are made much easier in a technological world, also impede and undermine deliberative democratic processes.

Some parts of the world are already suffering violent and brutal authoritarianism. In other parts, narrow economic interests and the concentration of economic and political power drive forms of authoritarianism, tearing apart the social fabric of countries, often fuelled by racism and hate. Many may have thought that Western democracies were stable and relatively resilient against authoritarianism and nationalism, which today threaten former liberal, welfare state-oriented societies, even in Northern Europe. We need to better understand the drivers of this new wave of authoritarianism and nationalism to develop pathways into a more sustainable future.

Here we clearly see how digital technologies are double-edged swords that can be thrust to make the world worse rather than better. Understanding and responding to the powerful opportunities and challenges that the digital revolution poses to both science and society is imperative, especially in an age of disruption and disinformation.

Moreover, the broad rethinking of our humanity by and for all members of humanity in legitimate democratic processes is the key for generating the consensus and the institutions capable of doing the very difficult work of moving the planet towards a stable socio-ecological system. Measures for a resilient socio-ecological future and for positive socio-ecological transformations that assure human development can be envisioned and successfully implemented only with a broad and legitimate consensus enabled by well-functioning democratic institutions and practices at all scales. The connectedness between people and planet and between societies – and the growing importance of many other global interdependencies that have emerged in the past three decades – require cultures of global cooperation and global governance structures enabling transnational democratic deliberation.

2.7. Making the digital age work for human development

Democratizing digital technologies to innovate for public purposes and to serve our humanity is a requirement for human development. The dominance of a few private companies in the digital sphere, driven by competitive short-term market gains, continues in a governance vacuum, in the absence of appropriate public and private regulation. These companies own methods and tools, are able to afford high-performance computing, own data storage facilities and can buy the talent. Moreover, this handful of private companies, through our naive use of the web including social media, own profiles of our current and future behaviour. Big data has become the new oil. And like fossil fuels, it has led to great advances and great harm, and like fossil fuels, there is a need to address these matters in a way that transcends national boundaries.

The threat of automation to middle- and low-skill tasks is already a reality. Tasks undertaken by administrators, lawyers, accountants or salesmen are as threatened as those of factory or farm workers. In earlier periods of technological transformation, the pace of change was unevenly followed by governance and regulatory adjustments. Today, technology innovation is way ahead of governance innovation. Many contributors to rethinking human development pointed out how many countries already face the challenge of having a large number of educated young people unable to find their place in society. Increasing numbers of individuals are redundant to a global economy fuelled by a skewed notion of value that accounts only for profits and not the well-being of people and planet. Uncontrolled deployment of digital technologies by a few large corporations with assets larger than entire countries risks making millions of people redundant and subjugated in new ways. Not only do these technologies have a huge impact on the powers of governments, giving them an unprecedented potential for surveillance and control, they also fuel the increased social polarization and the promotion of false news to undermine science and to increase consumerism. On the other hand, digital technologies offer unique capabilities to move the world in the opposite direction: better democracy, transnational cooperation, improved climate protection, better evidence for decision-making, or more collective intelligence among others. Digital technologies need to be regulated, legislated and subjugated to human rights and to ethical principles, with their owners and users made accountable, their potential harnessed for the common good. This is the challenge – to harness innovation and use technologies to serve human development.

The unprecedented transparency provided by digital technologies can lead us to understand complex supply chains and to a full accounting of the social and environmental costs of products and services. Digital technologies can be used, not for surveillance and control, but to nudge and reward solidarity and environmentally sustainable behaviour. We can measure the energy and water we consume. We can deploy robotics and use machine learning to optimize agricultural production and minimize pollution and the depletion of soils. The huge amounts of data we already have can be a source of value to reinvent communities and to ensure that benefits are shared. When appropriately regulated, digital technologies can lead to new job opportunities, new sources of value, and new conditions for enhanced well-being.

However, we need to work towards fair and sustainable value chains for the components of technologies. And we need to address the huge technical and knowledge gaps. For many, even access to the internet is a challenge, and digital technologies and the capabilities to

create, use and deploy them are still limited. But investments and innovation driven by a new conception of value can put technologies to work for human development.

2.8. Value: a new narrative

At the heart of human development are a core set of contextually moulded values, basic ethical principles that prompt and direct the journey. The originators of the idea of human development knew well the key role of contextually accepted ethics and values in processes of change. Human development has always been a normative concept. The normative core remains: in whatever formulation we have received from the contributors – the capabilities approach, development as freedom, physical and mental well-being, basic human needs or others – there is an ethical core, an embedded notion of value underpinning their conception of human development. Values are also central to moving beyond the individual self to the needs of the collective and the necessity to value the future and the natural environment and other living beings. Social cohesion and the culture of cooperation and joint problem-solving emerge from shared values.

When GDP growth and macroeconomic stability are considered the key signposts of development, they are often presented as value-free concepts, desirable because of their efficiency in bringing about other positive outcomes. Yet GDP is used as a proxy for anything valuable while being presented as a measurement devoid of any normative context. This contradiction is a true sleight of hand. In fact, many contributors claimed that our economies and public policy solutions are skewed against human development precisely because of the way we tend to understand 'value', giving GDP growth a central role, discounting the future and any social and environmental harm. This misguided view of value, which considers activities harmful to people and to the environment as creating value, also fails to account for the true value of social services, social protection mechanisms or public goods.

From a business perspective, the failure to price social and environmental destruction prevents sustainability from being profitable. In addition, it leads to a narrowly defined perspective on innovation, one that values only market driven innovation leading to private profit while discarding public and social innovation. This skewed view of value is made even more powerful by the use of digital tools that enable the datafication of everything. The aggregation, quantification and datafication of all aspects of human life hide the true value of human well-being, and of the public goods and public services that nurture well-being, and the value for future generations. This skewed view also hides our inner dimensions,

our psychology and emotions, and the suffering of the poor and marginalized. It ranks the cognitive values of efficiency and effectiveness above the ethical values of justice, fairness and equity.

A journey of multiple and shifting narratives requires new meanings, and carefully negotiated discourse on what is or is not valuable. This does not mean we all need to agree on a single ethic, and nor does it eliminate diversity and plurality – the recognition of development as freedom to pursue lives that people have reason to value, whoever they are, appreciating that these might differ. Yet above diverse, positioned and located values must be the recognition of our shared humanity, our shared goals and our shared ownership of the elements that enable our humanity to flourish. This recognition of the normative core of human development is also about the humility that emerges from looking at the stars and the world around us. It is also about the pride that emerges from seeking a better future guided by solidarity.

A new narrative for value is possible thanks to huge advances in science and technology, which make the scalability of innovative ways to meet our basic needs within planetary boundaries not only more possible, but also cheaper than 30 years ago. We just need to put technology to work for the common good, and we need the science underpinning it.

2.9. The role of scientific knowledge

Science, in relation to human development, must be conceptualized broadly to include not just natural, health and technical sciences, but also knowledge from the social sciences, arts and humanities. To make a renewed global development project work, we need to learn to readjust and rebalance the interactions between the three major systems that shape our civilization: human systems, the earth system, and technological and infrastructure systems. Science is not well prepared. We still cooperate far too little between the natural and the social sciences, between the humanities and the medical sciences, and none of those sciences interact properly with the fields of technology and engineering. To make the gap more complex, institutional barriers and the different logics of public and private research and innovation become barriers to progressing in such badly needed dialogue.

The dialogue is also broader than among the traditional sciences and fields of knowledge taught in universities. Rethinking human development must include respect for indigenous and tacit knowledge, for the importance of practical or non-technical knowledge and experience, and respect for the relevance of knowledge outside scientific organizations (from civil society, communities, workers, farmers or local and indigenous groups). Finding

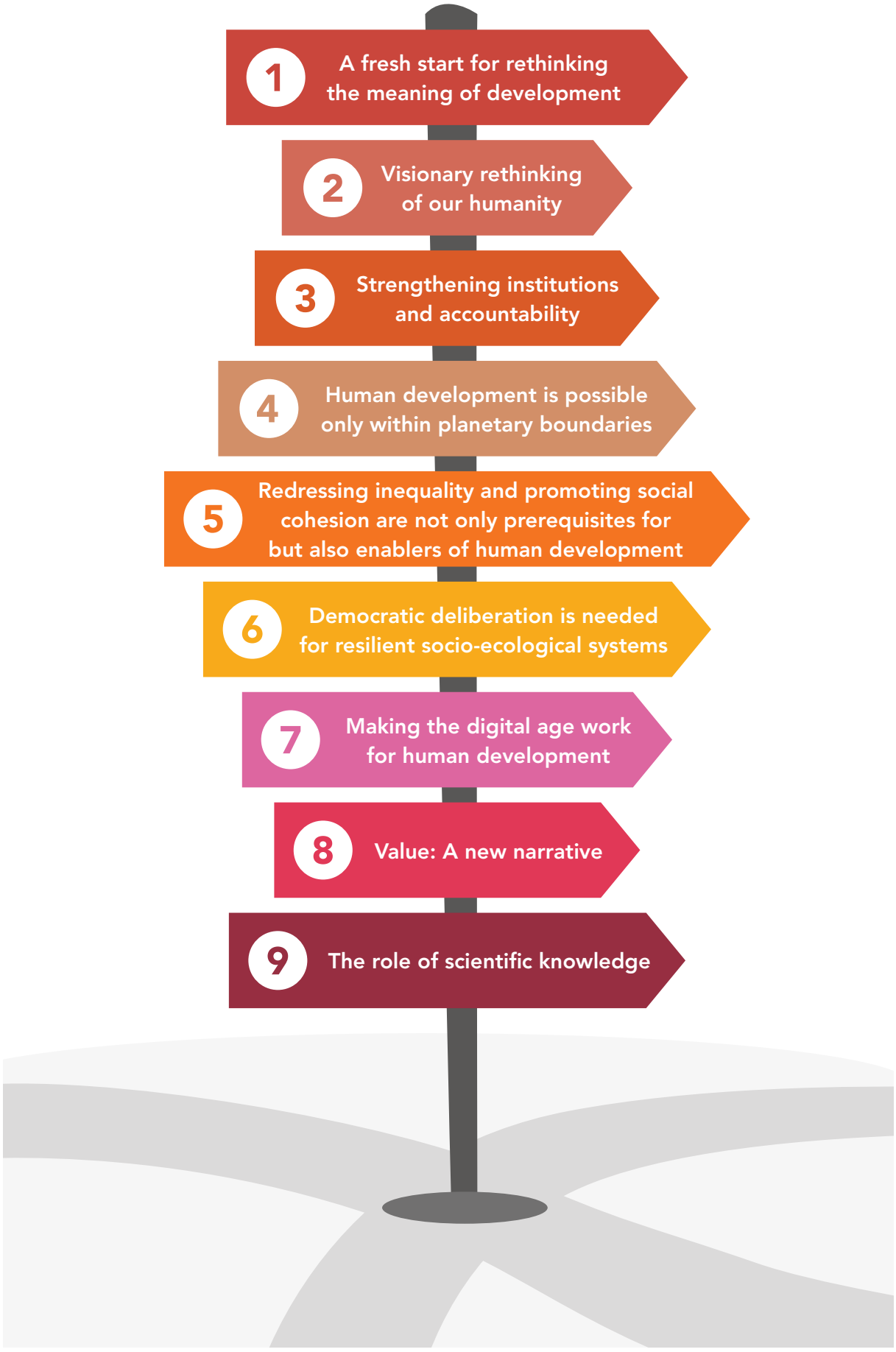
the right balance and means to embrace and include a whole variety of *knowledges*, in plural, remains a priority in the journey to rethink human development. After all, framing multiple and shifting narratives about human development requires cognitive flexibility.

The opportunities are there. Robotics, sensors, the 'internet of things', global interconnectivity, high-performance computing, and advances in software and artificial intelligence methods provide us with a knowledge base of huge potential. We already have an abundance of data about the earth and social systems and the tools to integrate this data for unique insights about the present and the future. We can simulate the functioning of the climate system and have already created a digital twin of the human heart; we can even try to simulate potential human development pathways. But these fields need to mature and advance taking their social and human dimensions into consideration, and data scientists must work in teams with philosophers and sociologists. Without these scientific perspectives, we cannot understand the drivers of a healthy planet or the ways to stop an epidemic.

We also must put order in the large amounts of data the world already has, ensure access to such data, identify the gaps, and use data in accord with the values that direct human development. There may be large amounts of data about human behaviour, but too often this information is owned by a few private actors, which are already investing in behaviour futures, as a stock market currency. Clearly this abundance of data is fuel for collective intelligence if put to work for the public good. Our journey can be enlightened and can be better directed if we are able to protect the independence of science, create effective science advice systems, and ensure that science is a public good and that data becomes a common resource.

But as with any other normative goal, discovering the meaning of human development needs us to be humble in the face of choices that are the territory of neither science nor politics. Our journey must respect the privacy of our inner lives as much as it creates the enabling conditions for our self-sufficiency. Scientific knowledge also needs to recognize the critical insights from actors outside academia, the practical knowledge accumulated by industry or by communities of action such as those emerging from transforming agricultural practices to adapt to new climate realities. All these different sources of knowledge, methods, tools and engineering achievements are, however, often disconnected, like ships passing in the night. Interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity are central, yet they remain elusive.

Making sure our journey is science driven requires more and better science. It requires bridging the huge knowledge divides and knowledge inequalities that still characterize the world. We need to invest first and foremost in the most important source of a country's wealth, its people.


1
A fresh start for rethinking the meaning of development
2
Visionary rethinking of our humanity
3
Strengthening institutions and accountability
4
Human development is possible only within planetary boundaries
5
Redressing inequality and promoting social cohesion are not only prerequisites for but also enablers of human development
6
Democratic deliberation is needed for resilient socio-ecological systems
7
Making the digital age work for human development
8
Value: A new narrative
9
The role of scientific knowledge

3. Concluding remarks

In this framing text, the term *journey* conveys how this project has listened to some voices in their own rethinking of human development. We have also characterized one of the most important findings as a journey in itself. Rethinking human development needs to be an open-ended, inclusive journey of seeking multiple and shifting narratives. But for us, this journey of exploration and discovery does not end now.

This phase of the ISC-UNDP project has kicked off a very rich discussion that will continue through various platforms. Future activities under this ongoing partnership will aim to elicit additional narratives and perspectives, installing processes for a continued open and inclusive dialogue and exploring the future of human development measurements based on the conceptual learnings gleaned from this discussion.

3 Starting the discussion

Mapping emerging dimensions of human development: a proposal for discussion

The project Steering Group draws up a list of six emerging dimensions of human development in this essay based on initial discussions.

The central premise of the human development paradigm has been that conventional measures of progress focused on income are not sufficient to promote and to measure human well-being. Instead, progress should be seen as a process of enlarging people's choices and well-being, as well as enhancing their capabilities.

This broadening of the lens has been accompanied by the Human Development Index, which has provided a simple proxy for measuring what is inherently multidimensional for policy-makers, activists and academics in assessing trends, evaluating and comparing current situations and making decisions and recommendations for improvement. The concept of human development has, however, always been much more complex than this index.

Human Development Reports have focused on some key dimensions of human development over the years, including linking and comparing with other normative frameworks such as human security or human rights. As the world around us evolves, and new insights are offered by various disciplines (within and outside academia) – by

technology, by innovators and by new social actors – there is a need to review the human development paradigm to better account for the inherent complexities in socio-ecological and socio-technical systems and their impact on development pathways. Furthermore, goals of development must primarily focus on individuals and their contexts.

The challenge today is to adopt a systems approach that acknowledges the interdependencies and the interconnetions between human systems, the Earth systems and technological systems, while recognizing contextualized specificities and experiences.

Ultimately, our capacity to do so will determine the very sustainability of these systems we humans depend upon. This ISC-UNDP project looks at integrating these elements into the concept of human development itself. Interlinked elements that merit consideration include the following.

1. Environmental changes and sustainability

In the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the last Climate Action Summit (New York, September 2019): 'We are knowingly destroying the very support systems keeping us alive'. Climate change, the depletion of natural resources, biodiversity loss, and pollution of air, soil and water resources are some of the key issues of our time. They highlight the necessity of healthy ecological systems for human well-being.

We now understand humanity's ecological footprint expands with economic progress and expanding populations. At the same time, the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss are perhaps among the biggest threats to human development achievements. Environmental degradation and climate change impacts also deepen existing social and political inequalities and limit prospects for the well-being of those most vulnerable and for future generations. It is therefore important to explore a concept of human-centred development that integrates environmental sustainability as a central criterion, and is able to see humans as ecologically embedded beings.

2. Collective and relational dimensions

Humans are social beings; their well-being is dependent on social institutions that allow them to flourish. Social cohesion and social sustainability are critical for optimal human-centred development, while conflict and violence remain fundamental threats to human well-being. In recent times, social unrest driven by various dimensions of

inequality have taken centre stage in several countries across the globe. Mass protests in 2019, sparked by different issues but all demanding a redressal of glaring social and economic inequities, highlighted that current levels of inequality have become a threat to social cohesion.

The most recent Human Development Report (2019) puts a spotlight on inequalities, providing a framework to look at inequalities 'beyond income, beyond averages and beyond today', i.e. covering various aspects of human development, beyond summary measurements of inequality that focus on a single dimension, and taking a long-term view of inequalities in human development beyond the 21st century.

It is important to pay attention to what holds societies together: collective identities, social relationships, inclusive and fair institutions, and levels of cooperation and trust – all key factors for enhancing individual and collective resilience. Without compromising the principle that human beings are entitled to rights or are endowed with individual choice and capabilities, human development needs to capture the key role that collective relationships, norms and identities, and institutions have in achieving human development. Insights from a variety of disciplines including anthropology, social psychology, evolutionary biology and other social and natural sciences about how human societies evolve, develop and operate could be useful in this discussion.

3. Human well-being and personal development

Human development is impacted by the activity of each individual composing human societies. Indeed, global challenges as identified in the Sustainable Development Goals take multiple forms in different contexts and affect people in their daily lives. Mental and psychological well-being is the primary determinant of how individuals feel about their lives, and this perception has implications for human-centred development.

One important aspect of this is early years human development and its lasting influence. Evidence shows that a person's early years present a unique opportunity and stage for the development of the human brain and psychological resilience for life, and that it is difficult to compensate for a lack of development at a later stage. Furthermore, the notion of resilience as the 'capacity of a system, be it an individual, a forest, a city or an economy, to deal with change and continue to develop' (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2011) invites us to look at differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities to cope and respond to shocks at the individual and household levels.

4. The digital transformation

The socio-ecological, collective and relational nature of contemporary societies is today centrally mediated by technological change, and in particular by the digital transformation. Technological change is accelerating at a rate often difficult for humans to grasp. Robotics, high-performance computing, 3D printing, huge amounts of data, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and global connectivity or telecommunications, have made societies technology enabled and technology facilitated. Digital technologies, in particular, have been fundamentally transforming the way we produce and consume, design business models and relate to our employers, neighbours and government officials with an unprecedented speed and pervasiveness.

This technology-led empowerment brings new opportunities but also risks and dangers. How will the ongoing and emerging digital transformation shape our lives, and how will the gains from this transformation be distributed among individuals, communities and generations of varying capacities in order to harness these opportunities? What is the impact of these technologies on individual well-being, on social well-being and on the institutions of society?

Leveraging technologies for human development, to serve the goals of social and environmental sustainability, is a major challenge. The impacts of major innovative changes need to be actively managed, and investments need to be redirected through policy and institutions. These investments include stronger antitrust policies, and laws and industry standards to create incentives, govern the ethical use of data and artificial intelligence and prevent the spread of misinformation.

Digitalization and artificial intelligence are also linked to questions of identity through the creation of new virtual spaces, networks and digital communities, new digital subjects and agents, and greater human capacities. This calls us to rethink what it is to be ‘human’ in the present context.

5. Local specificities

Human societies are grounded in spatiotemporal histories, with contextual and historical details playing a part in economic and social development trajectories. There has been widespread recognition since the 1990s that any understanding of development and social transformation needs to take into account local (or national and regional) specificities.

Aspirations and definitions of 'well-being' can also vary by context. Global concepts and indicators thus need to include space for recognition of these factors and consideration of locally relevant responses.

Similarly, historical injustice and privilege shape current socio-political and economic structures and impact how development gains and opportunities are distributed. How might we take considerations such as those related to colonialism, slavery and other such intergenerational dimensions into account as we try to enrich our understanding of human-centred development?

Understanding the human development concept therefore calls for a clear articulation between global issues (poverty, inequalities, mobility) and local implications and practices.

6. Global interdependencies

Global interdependencies have been gaining importance over the last two to three decades. Poverty has declined in many world regions, as a result of globally connected economic activities. In parallel, global interdependencies have resulted in challenging global risks and transnational crises: 9/11 and international terrorism at the beginning of the 21st century; the SARS epidemic in Asia in 2002-2004, the Ebola crisis in Africa in 2014-2016; the global financial crisis in 2008-2009; Syrian refugees and African citizens moving towards Europe in 2015-2016; the climate crisis and other dynamics of global environmental change as a threat to human civilization; and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Many people and movements articulate concerns about governments losing control within these global interdependency dynamics. Trust in governments is eroding; social cohesion is under stress. These trends are being translated in many countries into authoritarian movements, challenging democracy, the idea of multilateralism and the concept of the 'human community' (or *Weltgemeinschaft* – a term invented by the philosopher Immanuel Kant). 'Human development' can only be brought forward if solutions for the described trends are developed.

So, how can international cooperation and multinational organizational arrangements be revitalized both to better manage global risks and crisis, and most importantly to foster human development?

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Reflections on constructing a human-centred development paradigm

This is an edited excerpt of a think piece authored by **Ismail Serageldin** as a statement for discussion. The full piece can be found on the ISC website.

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. We hold individual autonomy in high regard, such as freedom of thought and freedom of expression, the right of access and the right of participation; these are practised by an individual but are meaningless if not exercised in a society in interaction with other human beings.

The starting point is therefore to consider the attributes of a society that nurtures the physical and emotional well-being of its citizens, promotes inclusive policies, protects social cohesion and follows a development path that is broadly sustainable. I submit that this is what we are trying to capture by studying a human-centred development paradigm. So 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 contemporary society should adhere to must take into account global challenges that transcend any nation's political boundaries, such as the risks of climate change,

biodiversity loss and other environmental problems, 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 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the consensus for 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 indicators[1], 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 in which the upcoming transformations are expected to occur. Jeff Sachs et al. (2019) wrote a paper with one of the most interesting suggested groupings, 'Six Transformations', which collectively cover the path to the 17 development goals in easily comprehensible terms. 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 have an impact on the emerging society's cohesion and resilience. However, in my opinion, the most relevant transformations are those (1) dealing with education and gender inequality, and (2) dealing with health and well-being[2]. But each of these transformations implies – or rather, requires – a major change in societal structure (economic, political, technological and social).

However, from a human development standpoint, I would consider going back further to some of the earlier work, prior to the formal adoption of the SDGs in 2015.

II. Early efforts and sustainability as opportunity

I would like to resurrect some early efforts at developing an approach to measuring a sustainable growth path, which I participated in during the 1990s, in my role as the first Vice-President of the World Bank devoted to the promotion of Environmentally Sustainable Development.

1 There are 232 individual indicators in the SDG list. See the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on Work of the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/71/313), 2017. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202019%20refinement_Eng.pdf (Accessed 16 October 2020).

2 Recognizing the importance of the well-being of all citizens is part of the bedrock of a human-centred development paradigm. See Gluckman, P. and Allen, K. 2018. *Understanding wellbeing in the context of rapid digital and associated transformations.* International Network for Government Science Advice. https://www.ingsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/INGSA-Digital-Wellbeing-Sept18.pdf (Accessed 16 October 2020). See specifically the appendix, which is especially relevant.

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*' (Brundtland, 1987). 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 air conditioners? And yet it is precisely this latter type of family that is going to consume more than 80% of the world's income this year.

So, right after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, as incoming 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'. This approach would define sustainability as follows:

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 as if not more opportunities than we have had, provided that we define it as per capita capital. This takes into account the necessity of meeting the needs of a growing global population, one that is likely to add several billion more people on the planet before stabilizing. But what kinds 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 manufactured 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. There are at least four kinds of capital: manufactured capital (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 with 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 pass to the next generation will be different (in terms of its four constituent parts) from the capital we have used in our generation. Yet we must recognize the limits of substitution, because it is impossible to conceive of any type of activity if any of the four kinds of capital are driven to zero.

Questions:

- Can one measure each of the four kinds of capital?

  The World Bank carried out two exercises covering many countries in an effort to measure (1) manufactured wealth, (2) natural capital and (3) combined human capital and social capital. The hope was to try to calculate the human capital part and treat social capital initially as a residual. Regrettably, when I left the World Bank, the work on the real wealth of nations was not continued.

- 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-centred development paradigm would be to think of quantification for both human capital and social capital.

  In addition, others believe that mental health in a societal or community context remains extremely important and is unlikely to be captured in the social capital conceptual approach mentioned above. Furthermore, Gluckman et al. (2017) consider 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. Therefore, according to Gluckman et al., if we are to reflect on a human-centred development paradigm, we should include such concerns, which hold in both low- and high-income country contexts. More generally, others have pointed out the importance of early childhood development as an essential part of human capital development[3].

IV. Social capital

Going back to the introductory paragraph of this think piece, it is clear that we need to look at the individual and at the society with which this individual interacts. Thus two of the

3 Thoughtful comments on an earlier draft of this paper have been received from Binyam Sisay Mendisu, who highlighted the importance of the early years and their lasting influence on human development. This also raised questions about how to integrate the importance of the foundational and lasting influence of the early years in human development.

four kinds of capital used in the discussion of sustainability as opportunity are intended to address human development[4]: human and social capital.

Human capital (health, education, nutrition) is embedded in the person. When individuals migrate, they each take their human capital with them.

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 for 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'. Some of the most distinguished thinkers of our time (Arrow, 2000; Solow, 2000) maintain that we should not. They are concerned about the use of the word 'capital', since we do not have a clear understanding of the processes of accumulation and depletion, nor of the notion of spending 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 (those of us who are grappling with the concept) are trying to do.

Fukuyama (1996) tried to reduce social capital to a measure of 'trust', but it is far more diversified and complex than that. Others have looked to many other attributes. Robert Putnam (2001, 2004), one of the pioneers of ideas related to social capital[5], advanced one of the most influential approaches to social capital. Putnam conceived of social capital as being based on 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them'. According to Putnam and his colleagues (1994), social capital, so defined, is an essential element to building and maintaining democracy.

Yet others disagree. They consider that the kinds of networks that Putnam advocated, such as friendship ties, voluntary associations, horizontal organizational structures, and the density of such structures, are basically neutral. These structures would not necessarily produce effective mechanisms for achieving intended effects. Indeed, some critics argue

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

5 See Robert D. Putnam. 2001. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster, 1st edition, 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. 2004. *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, Simon & Schuster, 1st edition.

that such networks can be harmful and undesirable. They can see 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 dimension[6].

Gluckman and others point to an emerging alternative literature in order 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). They recognize that today people belong to many different groups simultaneously, and that new social media and extended communications also add a virtual dimension, in addition to the physical, and facilitate further polarization in many contexts[7].

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 or 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 has recently witnessed a rise of rabid forms of exclusionary nationalism, built on the politics of fear and hate, leading Timothy Garton Ash to coin the term 'illiberal democracies'[8]. Such politics may positively appeal to and nurture a sense of national pride

6 See, inter alia, Sampson et al. (1999). 'Beyond social capital: Spatial dynamics of collective efficacy for children'.

7 See, for example, Sloan Wilson, D. 2015. *Does Altruism Exist: Culture, Genes and the Welfare of Others*, Yale University Press, 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 freeloaders/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 moves groups from being real to virtual with other polarizing consequences. For example, see the EU's Joint Research Centre report: Mair, D., Smillie, L., La Placa, G., Schwendinger, F., Raykovska, M., Pasztor, Z. and Van Bavel, R. 2019. *Understanding our Political Nature: How to put knowledge and reason at the heart of political decision-making*. EUR 29783 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. doi:10.2760/374191.

8 Timothy Garton Ash defended his choice of that term in 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

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. As such, wealth inequality not only reinforces 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 2006/08 and 2012/14, the richest fifth of households gained almost 200 times as much in absolute wealth terms compared to the poorest fifth' (Macquarie, 2017). This leads some to suggest that we should also consider the possibility of 'tipping points' in social cohesion[9].

Thus sociological definitions of networks and voluntary participation are not enough. These definitions need to be expanded to encompass the kinds 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 (Dasgupta, 2000; 2008).

Questions:

- Can such qualities derived from common societal values coexist 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

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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'.'

9 The *2019 UN Human Development Report* looks at the impact of inequality and its corrosive effect on society and analyses the causes of inequality and lack of social mobility and justice issues, but also advances some thoughts on the policy implications. See: The UNDP. 2019. *Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in human development in the 21st century*.

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 have now been rejected by the overwhelming majority of humanity. Several individuals who promoted the creation of such societies by genocide and ethnic cleansing have been defeated in our recent history. But the corollary, the acceptance of pluralism, is not easy to implement. Diverse communities may indeed enrich the mosaic of a multicultural society, but may also generate 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. These are all reminders that pluralism is difficult to implement, even in the democratic societies of Europe, without verging on separation.

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 national values and the diversity of the ethnic and religious mix of the citizens. It also ignores the historical baggage that gives elites their power and continues to obstruct others in their efforts at social mobility.

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 elusive. 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 coexisted, 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, coexisting pluralistic communities find recapturing that cosmopolitanism elusive without slipping into exclusion and hostility[10]. But youth and technology are coming to our rescue.

The internet culture predominantly pioneered by youth has been able to dissolve boundaries of politics and geography. It creates networks of like-minded people who can communicate, share experiences and reinforce each other on common causes in ways

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

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 Instagram. 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 practised 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 many hours away from activities in the real world and society. Yet online connections could be a real positive force for strengthening social cohesion if used wisely.

The second problem is more difficult. Where the old media usually tried to expose people to a variety of opinions, the enormous explosion of outlets that the new media has created allows people to gravitate towards the specific outlets that support their point of view. Their prejudices are reinforced. That, in turn, leads to more polarization in debate, even as new media caters to a wider variety of opinions and removes the barriers to expressing such opinions. In addition, the emergence of cyberbullying, deep fakes, false news and the robotic manipulation of information on the internet is very worrying. So too is the emergence of the deep web and cryptocurrencies. All of which contrasts with 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 from the one that 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 is the combination of knowledge with prescience, judgement and the patina of experience.

Questions:

- Where does that leave us? Should the report address the impact of social media on both the creation of communities and 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-centred development paradigm?

VII. Equality, justice and fairness

John Rawls gave his famous definition of 'justice as fairness' within a trilogy of outstanding works that have provided a solid philosophical framework for liberal political thought[11]. But others, such as Amartya Sen (2011), have advanced other, more nuanced approaches to equality (based on rights and capabilities) and justice.

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 for the dismal showing of the 40 years following the rise of the Reagan – Thatcher ideology and Chicago school economics. This period saw income inequalities expand in every country, with the top 1% of US society capturing twice as much of the national income as the bottom 50%.

Furthermore, we see even greater differences in the distribution of wealth than of income. Thus Thomas Piketty (2017) tells us 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).

Countries' Gini coefficients[12] for both income inequality and wealth inequality invariably show that wealth distribution is considerably more unequal than income distribution. 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[13].

11 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 his much shorter article published in 1993; and also see *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement,* 2nd edition (2001) by John Rawls (Author), Erin I. Kelly (Editor).

12 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).

13 See *World Inequality Report 2018*, available at: https://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-full-report-english.pdf. See also the World Economic Forum's, *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, along with other indicators.

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

A human-centred development paradigm must confront the corrosive effects of inequality[14]. Extreme inequality is especially corrosive. It hardens the attitudes of the rich and powerful towards the poor and lowly. It builds acceptance of the incongruity of wealth amid misery and

14 This paragraph is taken from my Mandela lecture delivered in Johannesburg in 2011, which developed these themes; themes that are still important for South African societies. Today, most analysts will agree that discussions of inequality in the context of sustainability are crucial. See also, inter alia, Leach, M., Reyers, B., Bai, X. et al. 2018. Equity and sustainability in the Anthropocene: A social-ecological systems perspective on their intertwined futures. *Global Sustainability*, Vol. 1, E13. doi:10.1017/sus.2018.12 ,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), Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and UNESCO. 2016. *World Social Science Report 2016, Challenging Inequalities: Pathways to a Just World*. UNESCO Publishing, Paris.

exclusion, undermines the very notions of social justice and social cohesion, makes a mockery of fairness and may lead 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.'
>
> Goldsmith, 1770

Indeed, recent studies have confirmed our suspicions that far from being a necessary corollary to compensate the talented and inventive – forces that may propel society forward – excessive inequality is inefficient in supporting development and is associated with a variety of social ills[15]. The International Monetary Fund has provided empirical evidence to this end, stating:

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 growth via a number of interrelated economic, social, and political channels (Dabla-Norris et. al, 2015).

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 positive attributes of social cohesion, solidarity and mutual respect are being effectively pursued. While abolishing poverty and hunger remain a central concern (see, inter alia, Sachs, 2006; Collier, 2008). social scientists today look to the whole range of SDGs, and the interconnections between different goals, in order to consider a broader manifesto for social progress (Fleurbaey et al., 2018).

Questions:

- Should we look to inequalities in wealth as well as income? I believe we should. Should a human development approach therefore advocate for something like wealth taxes? Redistribution of farmland to peasants and landless farm labourers in poor countries (land reform)? Other measures? Or should we just be descriptive, bearing witness to the conditions that are being reported?

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

VIII. Good governance and democracy and corruption

I submit that in the absence of 'good governance' there will be only very limited returns on investments for development in any society. Note that the word 'governance' was explicitly adopted by the World Bank in the Africa Long Term Perspective Study (LTPS) published in 1990[16].

Good governance (see, inter alia, Serageldin and Landell-Mills, 1991) is defined in terms of five major attributes:

- Transparency
- Accountability
- 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. Moreover, good governance is the best defence against the spread of corruption in a country. Emphasizing 'good governance' is therefore desirable, regardless of the specific form of government (monarchy, republic, parliamentary or presidential, types of elections, etc.).

Good governance is not to be equated with democracy (in the Western sense of representative democracy). One could argue that Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew had good governance. But that is somewhat different from what is understood to be democracy, at least as defined by Robert Dahl in his well-known work *Democracy and its Critics*[17].

16 The late Dunstan Wai, Pierre Landell-Mills, 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.

17 Robert A. Dahl, in *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

Simply stated, although there are many varieties of democratic systems[18], all true democratic systems are based on the belief that an informed citizenry makes up its own mind and expresses it to guide 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 the correct belief that without such continuous access to correct information, the democratic system will simply not work. Regrettably, fake news, which is simply lies, has polluted the information available today and thus threatens our very understanding of how a democratic political process should work.

Questions:

- What should we say about governance and democracy in the effort to construct a human-centred development paradigm? Should we limit ourselves to discussions of governance? Of competitiveness? Or should we look to democracy and address head-on the challenges of fake news and new social media with its deep fakes and robotic interventions? How do we approach the quantification of attributes such as governance?

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 a system of laws that are widely respected and effectively enforced. The institutions we are discussing here include the formal government-backed institutions, academic institutions, political and professional organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Stiglitz, 2000). The institutions create a large part of the social capital, as discussed above.

However, 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 between the breakdown of Yugoslavia and the peaceful split of Czechoslovakia. Thus there is implicitly an expectation

legitimate stake within the political process'.

18 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 Dahl, R. A. 2015. *On Democracy*, 2nd edn. New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, with a new preface by Ian Shapiro. For the more general perspective on the varieties of democratic experiences, see, inter alia, Lijphart, A. 2012. *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries, 2nd edn. New Haven, CT, Yale University Press*. And then there is the V-Dem project, which provides the most extensive database on democracy in the largest number of countries. It can be found at https://www.v-dem.net/.

that desirable institutions will promote a national coalescence in light of enormous global and national transformations. This adds a desirable integrative dimension to our efforts to understand social capital (see, inter alia, Serageldin and Grootaert, 2000).

Questions:

- As we move from the individual to a broader societal discussion of a human-centred 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 weight do we give to each of the components that make such things possible?

X. Local, national, regional and global perspectives

To what extent can we look at a local situation while ignoring the context in which it exists? 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 what will these local, national and regional advances mean to the aggregate global perspective? It is now clear that a very large part of the global achievement in the reduction of poverty from 2000 to 2015 was due to the enormous success of China. Yet despite that overall improvement, some regions were retrogressing. Poverty in sub-Saharan Africa remains a problem[19].

This is more a presentation problem of aggregation that should not mask important aspects of the complex reality we are trying to present. It is therefore essential that any analysis includes statements covering each of the scales and highlights the distinctions between case studies, and that this be reflected in the overall narrative of the study.

XI. Adaptation and resilience

If we are to address the challenge of climate change 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

19 *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 (Accessed 16 October 2020).

resilience need to be included in the attributes of the society we are seeking to describe in this search for a human-centred 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 on a constructive and more cohesive society.

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 requires a society in which there is solidarity and shared knowledge. It requires robust organizations with the ability to take prompt action.

Questions:

- What kind of society would be adaptive and resilient? And how can we assess 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.

Measuring resilience is more complex. It involves the degree to which a society is well-integrated and feels mutual empathy and solidarity, as people will have to cooperate to help each other out in the face of disasters or even forced migration and displacement. Indeed, many involuntary displacements, whether they lead to people being considered refugees or internally displaced persons, result in significant uprooting and impoverishment (Cernea and Maldonado, 2018).

XII. Knowledge, learning societies and science, technology, innovation (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 be considered 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.

Although some of the applications of that knowledge – and some of the technology made possible by science – have been destructive, on the whole knowledge has been responsible for almost every aspect of our well-being, from food and nutrition to health, to education and 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 the 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 US have adopted a position supportive of 'Open Science' (US NAS, 2018) and the ISC and a number of African institutions are supporting the African Open Science Platform.

Questions:

- Thus, in this discussion, a human-centred development paradigm cannot ignore knowledge. How can we value 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 their citizens?

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

XIII. Reflections on identity, culture and values

Autonomy and individualism are fundamental to 'personhood' in all social and cultural contexts. However, these contexts also enable the person to belong to a multiplicity of groups (gender, political, ethnic, religious, professional, etc.) and the resulting tensions between these groups have to be balanced.

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 Sen (2007), Amin Maalouf (1998) and Kwame Anthony Appiah (2007) have all addressed these issues of ethics, identities and violence.

More recently, this debate has become more urgent (Appiah, 2019a, 2019b). 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 West (Serageldin, 2011).

Questions:

- Should our search for a human-centred 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 membership of 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 just scratch the surface of a very complex reality, and are intended merely to raise some questions to assist those who are about to launch a very important effort. I have, however, one last observation that is pertinent to the problems at hand. How far should UNDP go in the search for a single number (e.g. the Human Development Index) that can be used to rank all the countries of the world? I believe that, despite the technical problems, the index is going to remain absolutely necessary for media impact and to grab the attention of decision-makers in various countries. I just hope that the rest of the broader discussion addresses the issues that have been discussed in this think piece.

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Reflections on human potential and resilience: a response by Peter Gluckman

Peter Gluckman provides a commentary on Ismail Serageldin's essay 'Reflections on constructing a human-centred development paradigm'.

I will focus my brief comments on a few aspects of Ismail's valuable contribution, noting that I have already had the opportunity to comment on an earlier draft. I have spent much of my career in developmental medical sciences focusing on individual health and well-being. But more recently my work has been at the interface between evidence and public policy with an extensive focus on issues of societal well-being. When human development is looked at through the lenses of these experiences, one develops a somewhat different view of what human-centred development might represent. I will highlight that perspective, but of course, a holistic approach must consider multiple views simultaneously. I know Ismail wrote his piece as a provocation and equally my short contribution is intended not to debate, but rather to complement and add to our overall understandings.

Human-centred development must evolve from the earlier human development paradigm that has dominated for the last 40 years. That paradigm was very much influenced by an overriding political focus on enhancing governance and improving economic development through classical free market approaches and, in some countries, development assistance. These components remain critical to the global agenda, but that earlier and more narrow framing underestimates the need to give greater focus to 'human', 'centred' and 'development'. Lifted out of the de facto economic paradigm, the phrase 'human development' takes on the additional meanings that it has always held for medical practitioners, teachers, social and aid workers and related practitioners.

The addition of 'centred' is critically important in assisting this elevation in meaning. It highlights a shift in the starting point of conceptualization, putting the individual and their human network as the centre of focus rather than projecting them as a capital to be invested in. Indeed, recent lessons from converting economic theory to practice show the folly of reducing everything to a conceptual rationality – when the reality is that the many aspects that make us, as a species of upright apes, what we are, with emotions, beliefs, culture and values, are critical to understanding human-centred development. Indeed, to discuss human capital (a term I am most uncomfortable with) without a broader understanding of the meanings inherent in those two words is limiting.

The problem with the 'human capital' term

The whole concept of interchangeability between four capitals makes me uneasy in the extreme, even if it is only being claimed to be used as a heuristic. First, the relative value of each 'capital' (if these could even be valued) is not constant as the contexts in which they might be evaluated change and evolve. The concept further implies the clearly flawed presupposition that humans are valued strictly for their economic productivity and that their value can be determined primarily from estimating investment in their health, education and nutrition. The many highly contested debates that have gone on in different policy and actuarial settings as to how one values a human life show how limited a concept this is in practice. The argument for investing in education, for example, is not primarily based in an econometric analysis. But intrinsic cultural and moral values and the imperatives of education are seldom considered in the theoretical models that classical economists love.

By contrast, governments have realities to address, for which the present COVID-19 crisis provides a compelling illustration. They have to make decisions that address the economic, political and social costs of shutdown on the one hand, and the realities of the many real

human tragedies that the pandemic has created and might yet create, on the other. Urgent decisions must be made with very imperfect knowledge to inform them.

What some might term human capital is effectively a function of the investment in, and the development of, what I would reframe as a more meaningful concept: *the potential* of each individual. Furthermore, by focusing on human-centred development and on optimizing human potential, we are compelled to more immediate action, whereas the sustainability agenda too often is perceived over a longer timeframe. Indeed, as Ismail states: 'Sustainability as opportunity therefore translates into providing future generations with as much if not more total capital per capita than we have had ourselves.'

Certainly, we want every generation to be better off than the last, but a focus on human potential as opposed to humans as capital allows a greater focus on the current generation, which is critical and urgent. And as both the natural and social sciences teach us, human factors in any one generation have major effects through biological, social and environmental processes on the development of the next. Indeed, there is a significant body of interdisciplinary research devoted to studies of intergenerational effects on human potential and whether these are the developmental origins of physical and mental health and disease[20] and intergenerational patterns of poverty and social dysfunction.

Reframing the question 'How can we measure human capital?' as 'How can we promote human potential?'

It is important to have a definition of human potential that can be generally accepted, as the term can be appropriated by individual disciplines (e.g. medicine or education). I would define human potential as a holistic term that reflects the ability of every individual to grow up with minimal disadvantage due to developmental, environmental and structural[21] factors, such that as an adult they reach their fullest potential as a member of society.

Of course, 'fullest potential' is always going to be a somewhat contested term, but it can be seen as the integration of concepts encapsulated in traditional formulations of human capital with those encapsulated within the idea of well-being. But the question is, how do we create the circumstances in which individuals can reach their fullest potential?

20 This field is generally labelled in the biomedical community as the developmental origins of health and disease (DOHAD) and is a very vibrant area of research.

21 Environmental factors include family context, nutrition, stress, infection and violence. Structural factors include racism, sexism, ageism, xenophobia and homophobia – outlooks that might be implicitly baked into laws and institutions and that have the potential to stop individuals reaching their potential; for example, girls not being allowed to attend school.

The answer to this question can be informed, at least in part, by the definition of optimal human potential as the state that can be achieved by an individual when they pass from one developmental stage to the next with no adverse experiences in prior stages that have detrimental consequences in subsequent phases of life. The developmental stages to usefully think about span generations and include pregnancy[22], the neonatal phase and infancy, childhood, puberty and adolescence, young adulthood and parenthood (18–35 years), mid-adulthood (35–55 years), late adulthood and old age.

Any evaluation of optimal human potential must consider multiple components, among which are:

- Health: a maximum healthy life span.
- Mental health and emotional and behavioural elements: such that the individual can have stable and valued relationships, displays eusocial behaviour and is able to engage meaningfully in society.
- Educational opportunities that support individuals in reaching their full capacity.
- Meaningful interpersonal relationships in a social context that supports autonomy and agency and ensures the full range of human rights.

While this analysis focuses on factors affecting developmental stages for individuals, the development process itself is affected by broader structural factors at macro, meso and micro scales. Thus, a human-centred development paradigm needs to consider each level. At the macrolevel (as in OED), economic and political factors are key and Serageldin has addressed these. In turn at the meso level, issues such as housing, sanitation, employment, protection of the family unit and freedom from domestic violence, conflict and abject poverty are critical. And, at the micro level (as in OED) of the individual, their development, education, health, relationships and opportunities are critical.

I would argue that when looked at through the lens of the individual, a developmental life course approach becomes the only realistic way of assessing human potential in a timeframe that can be practically affected by policy and investment.

I would conclude that human-centred development requires evaluation through both senses of the word 'development'. The first form of evaluation is a life course approach, which allows for assessment of those factors positively or negatively affecting human potential and which lead to potential societal costs if less than optimal. These might be reflected in deficient educational achievement, unemployment and low earnings, fragile relationships, interaction with the

22 In the DOHAD field, the preconception phase is generally included as there is an emerging body of research suggesting that the quality of the gametes that will fuse to form the embryo may be affected by parental factors through epigenetic mechanisms.

justice system, poor physical health, alcohol and other addictions, or a shortened productive and healthy life span. Heckman[23] among others has written at length on these issues. The second approach, as Ismail discusses, is the more traditional policy-makers' definition of human development, essentially focusing on the broader contextual dimensions in which an individual lives. Clearly these two perspectives interact, and we should therefore focus on both rather than having development policy settings that focus predominantly on one.

The multidimensional and totally interdependent nature of human potential (and thus human-centred development) means that its measurement is complex. The usual approach has been to use singular measures of a single dimension at a single point of time; for example, of employment, high school graduation rates, youth crime rates, and the welfare burden. This is of limited value because of the interactions, and in some cases interdependence, of key variables such as mental health and family violence. These factors are often poorly measured or are not considered at all.

Some integrated indices have been developed for international comparison – for example the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index and the Human Development Index. But these are not detailed enough for effective monitoring of policy programmes, are nearly always adult based and generally evolve from an economic framing. Thus, they miss a key point – if we want to intervene and proactively affect human-centred development, we need indices for each plastic life stage – birth, school entry, high school entry, high school exit, and status at 25 years. Only then can there be adequate monitoring of programmatic intervention and within a policy-relevant time interval. This is where some new thinking and reframing is needed.

Serageldin discusses at some length the concept of 'social capital'. Again, the economic metaphor has limitations which I will not explore in depth, as Serageldin has included a critique of his own. Many of the issues I raised above have parallels in the use of such terminology. Again, it is clear we must focus on the individual, the family and social networks within their current and evolving context.

Resilience

Later in his piece, Serageldin refers to resilience briefly. Resilience is a word that can have multiple interpretations. A functional definition might be 'resilience relates to the ability of a society or individual to adapt or transform positively in response to significant transitions or

23 See Heckman, J. The Heckman Equation. https://heckmanequation.org/ (Accessed 16 October 2020) for an extensive body of work.

threats to its well-being arising either internally or externally and which may or may not be anticipated.' (Bardsley, 2020)

It is important to recognize that this concept is important at both an individual and a societal level. Every society and every individual faces both endogenous and exogenous influences that can impact on their resilience. Rapid and cumulative change is now the norm affecting demographic, economic, environmental, cultural, social and individual well-being. Technology drives much of this change directly or indirectly, but pandemics and natural hazards have considerable impact too, as we have seen.

Not every individual responds to a stressor in the same way. There is a growing body of evidence relating individual psychological resilience to the individual's developmental path. The building blocks of individual resilience are laid down in early childhood and built on through childhood and adolescence. Mental health issues are rising globally at a rapid rate, and we need to give greater attention to understanding, measuring and intervening to ensure psychological resilience is enhanced. Clearly, many exogenous influences such as poverty, conflict, oppression and family violence compound and interact with internal capacities and the consequences will vary according to the resilience of the individual and their support network. In turn, that support network is defined in part by both proximate and more remote social contexts. The challenge of human-centred development is to find contextually relevant strategies to enhance individual resilience, as confronting change is inevitable.

Many factors impact on the resilience of a society, and as Serageldin eloquently points out in his opening stanza, humans are social animals and the societal structure in which each of us lives is critical to our well-being. But the nature of that social group has changed dramatically in recent decades – it is larger, more diverse, generally somewhat fractured, very different in structure and, for many, partially virtual in nature.

The research centre that I direct, Koi Tū: the Centre for Informed Futures, and the International Network for Government Science Advice, which I chair, are jointly leading a global project exploring the many factors that interact to promote or impede societal resilience[24]. Trust in each other and our institutions is central. Resilience and social cohesion are concepts that are closely dependent on trust in governance and in other members of society, freedom from violence and oppression, greater social justice and less manifest inequality and perceptions of fairness. Other factors point to the challenge of the online world, and its impacts on misinformation, polarization and a decline in civic discourse. And yet, at the same time, technology is, as Serageldin points out, key to our future.

24 See Bardsley, A. 2020. Societal resilience – unpacking the black box. 1 April 2020, Informed Futures, https://informedfutures.org/societal-resilience-unpacking-the-black-box/ (Accessed 16 October 2020).

Final comment

This note is written in the midst of an unprecedented existential threat to all societies: one in which it has become clear that evidence and decision-making need to be more effectively linked both within and between jurisdictions. Trust in government will be sorely tested in this COVID-19 crisis, and societal resilience may be strengthened in some places and reduced in others depending on how the pandemic evolves in each country. Has science and evidence been well used or ignored? Societal resilience will be greatly affected by the answer to this question. But the COVID crisis also highlights many issues confronting us and which are the focus of this essay. Resilience, sustainability and human-centred development are all linked. In the reset that will be part of recovery from this crisis, both global and national institutions should take the opportunity to reflect on this.

Human-centred development, when considered in terms of human potential and individual resilience and well-being, will be tested by other existential threats – those of climate change, achieving sustainability, environmental degradation, poverty and conflict. Self-empowerment and a focus on what affects the individual and their proximate and distal environments across their life course will be key to the societal and individual resilience that we will all need. An economic lens remains critically important, but an integrated approach that puts humans at the centre of the paradigm is essential if we are all to transition to a better place.

Notes and further references

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The key role of institutions for human development: a response by Elisa Reis

Elisa Reis provides a commentary on Ismail Serageldin's essay 'Reflections on constructing a human-centred development paradigm'.

I found the think piece by Ismail Serageldin very inspiring. I strongly support and agree with his initial comments describing the importance of four types of capital: man-made, natural, human and social. This categorization of different forms of capital is very useful for organizing issues within the proposal we are to discuss: how to reframe human development to be more human-centric considering today's challenges. My commentary focuses on the first two forms of capital: environment resources and social cohesion, as these two remain, in my view, under-studied components of human development.

But before I introduce my comments on Ismail Serageldin's piece, I wish to make a short observation on Peter Gluckman's commentary 'Reflections on human potential and resilience', and in particular on his conceptualization of 'human potential'. Gluckman

claims that we should focus on the notion of human potential rather than on the idea of human capital. I would support the adoption of this label, as long as the reasons why such a shift might be relevant are stated as a conceptual clarification. We should not attempt to simply discard the concept of human capital; rather, we should aim to build an integrated understanding of what is at stake in human development, to provide grounding on why alternative framing is more appropriate.

Clearly, *human capital* means something very different to 'capital' as understood in reference to quantified value. Similarly to *cultural capital*, human value cannot be translated into monetary terms as it encompasses intangible goods and existential and symbolic components. Past Human Development Reports have addressed human capital as a multidimensional concept, integrating the aforementioned dimensions. Still, I think this conceptual clarification might be important so as to avoid misconception and misunderstanding for readers.

But, let me get back to my own commentary on two of the forms of capital addressed in Serageldin's piece: environment resources and social cohesion. At this point, it does not seem relevant to discuss specific indicators for these two broad dimensions; however, I would like to stress the importance of adopting a stronger focus on institutions impacting the development of such forms of capital. Why? Because as Max Weber stated, institutions, as modes of regulation for social interactions, are probabilities of specific human actions (Weber, 1978).

For example, societies that explicitly commit themselves to adopting well-defined measures and targets to protect nature end up consolidating stable, valued and routine practices that protect the environment. The same argument applies for social cohesion. We know that social cohesion is based on values, beliefs and norms. But can these cultural factors be strengthened by means other than introducing legal enactments and other forms of consolidating practices? Naturally, it is possible to be more concrete: laws to secure minorities' rights, to punish violence against women, to enforce recycling, and to ban polluting products are all signals of expanded concern for human development. Initiatives that set the grounds for institutionalization seem to be crucial to cement human development.

More broadly, institutions are crucial in promoting and consolidating human potential. In the absence of solid political institutions, the promotion and strengthening of human potential is susceptible to discontinuities and setbacks, with great individual and social costs. While this aspect is often taken for granted in societies that have well-established

institutions and political stability, it is important to recall that these two assets are often lacking in other parts of the world. There are societies that continue to experience losses in human development as a consequence of institutional weaknesses or collapse. In fact, institutional weakness can be both a cause and consequence of undermined social resilience. Resilience and social cohesion need institutional support to flourish.

Where I think social capital merges with income and wealth is in respect to inequality. Here it is the *degree* of inequality and not inequality *per se* that is relevant. When horizons of possibilities for advancement and upward mobility become too disparate, the capacity for empathy and solidarity shrinks. The inability to share even minimal components of a world view destroys social cohesion. When societies experience this lack of empathy and perception of shared problems, people tend to seek restricted or individualized ways to reach their goals. Illustrations of such phenomena are, for instance, gated communities, private guards and other forms of individual protection against criminality instead of campaigns 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 in which to grow.

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4 Voices from across the world

This section contains a collection of interviews and commentaries divided into four overlapping themes:

- Epistemologies & contexts
- Environmental sustainability
- Individual & society
- Governance & institutions

The human: an alternative ground for 'development'

Anthony Bogues argues that we need to move beyond focusing on development with all its historical baggage and focus instead on the 'human', which would mean rethinking human life itself and the sustainability of human life on this planet.

Development: a conception rooted in an evolutionary line of thinking

The idea of development emerged in the post-1945 period in the early aftermath of political independence for many colonies. This period marked the formal end of the European system of colonial empires. It is well known that colonialism did not create formally integrated local economies, nor did it create fully resourced human infrastructures that dealt with health, education or even literacy for the colonized. Moreover, the various colonial regimes oftentimes constructed deeply problematic ethnic identities. At the moment of political independence, one of the major issues that faced the new nations was: how would it tackle all the legacies of the European colonial project? From the perspective of many of the formerly colonized, political independence as a real project of decolonization meant designing a possible future that would meet the deepest aspirations of their populations.

On the other hand, within many of the former colonial countries, a discourse emerged with specific claims around development. By the 1950s and early 60s the Cold War was under way, and geopolitics revolved around Soviet communism versus liberal capitalism. It was within this context that W. W. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* became one dominant conceptual frame for thinking about development, which became primarily focused on economic growth, constituted through the workings of a liberal market economy.

Many of us have called this form of economics the 'mirror' method of economic thinking. It ignored the economic and social conditions existing in the newly independent countries and seemed to be more concerned about the geopolitical positions that these former colonies would take. In thinking about development as a historical concept, one needs to briefly recall the historical ground of its emergence and its framed arguments, debates and practices about what constituted 'development'.

Many newly independent nations followed this model of 'mirror development'. However, it quickly became apparent that the structures of economic and social life in many former colonies required rethinking. That this was done by political personalities and thinkers from these newly independent countries has been erased from the historical story. I wish to reference two individuals: the first is Julius Nyerere, whose extensive writings on the relationship between development and freedom have been forgotten. He argued that for Tanzania in the 1960s and 70s the key to creating sustainable economic life was the capacity of the country to feed itself and also to transform the educational system by making all Tanzanians literate. He also made it clear that 'development' was about freedom and being human. The second figure is Michael Manley who, as a political thinker and political personality, often made the point that 'development' was about human equality and freedom. For both Manley and Nyerere a critical dimension of development required changing the world economic order. In this regard they became central figures at the UN, advocating for what became known as the New International Economic Order.

Thus, in the midst of all the debate about what development is, there emerged a set of arguments and concepts from the newly independent countries that argued against a purely mechanistic economic view of society. The dominant view mapped development around the character of a country and an economic model based on the so-called 'advanced' countries. Alternatively, the tradition of thought and practices from some newly independent nations posited notions of equality, freedom and a different geopolitical order. For Nyerere, development already meant 'human development'.

Now, the present is not yesterday, although yesterday influences the contours of the present, so what would a so called 'human-centred development paradigm' look like?

Even though it is clustered around an idea of human capacities or capabilities, I think there are aspects that are missing precisely because this conceptual frame is rooted in a certain evolutionary line of thinking, which goes back to exploring the ways in which economies differ from one another and then positing categories of 'advanced', 'underdeveloped' and 'developing'.

One may ask then: how do we put the emphasis on the 'human' rather than 'development'? To my mind, today this means rethinking human life itself and the sustainability of human life on this planet. In other words, while at the level of policy it is, of course, necessary to have different options, at the conceptual level we are faced today with foundational questions about the forms of human life we have created. Inequality in all its forms ravages the world; we are faced with the potential catastrophic effects of climate change; we are faced with the fragility of human life and now need to think carefully and hard about what we are as humans, and what we have become. The question of human development is not simply about the so-called 'underdeveloped nations', it is about us living as a species on this planet.

In line with this, there is a second group of issues that emerges when we think this way, which relates to the idea that liberal economics brings all sorts of technological advances, which often are accompanied by extraordinary forms of inequality. In my view, even if one detaches the questions of health, which is a human right, or education, another human right, even if one thinks through the lens of human capabilities, there is a need to go beyond these frames and think about what circumstances actually constrain those capabilities in the first place.

Inequalities: interconnectedness and the dynamics of structural differences

It is clear that as human beings, to cite the Caribbean thinker Sylvia Wynter, we are 'narrative beings', which means we live in language. This means that we need to begin to raise critical questions about our various forms of contemporary life, and break away from a narrative of a certain kind of evolutionary process, which is expected to bring us somewhere – somewhere that is not precisely defined.

As such, the key questions are: what is human life in the 21st century, on this planet, about? I have been struck over the past years by protests in which people demand to be treated as human beings and where there is a claim for dignity. We need to ask ourselves,

what do these proclamations mean? What are they telling us? We also need to think about the question of inequality in profound ways because it is an issue that is closely connected to questions of freedom: what does it mean to think about personal freedom? This question does not only rely on a certain attachment to 'capabilities'. Rather, it is about a set of relationships we have – both between ourselves and with the state. So, one should ask: what forms of 'governance' and rules do we need to allow people to participate in decisions that shape their own lives? Doing this means we begin to think about different forms of democracy. In my work, I have been arguing that the heart of politics is not the political right to vote, as important as such a right is, and as much as it needs to be defended: the core of politics at this moment resides with trying new forms of *common association*, which directly link to forms of solidarity. Forms of solidarity are extremely important because they allow us to explore different practices that are not xenophobic, not driven by racial ideas, nor by patriarchal notions but driven by an understanding that somehow, we are all connected and that a society is about these connections. There is a remarkable phrase in the work of Frantz Fanon, an important thinker about human life and possibilities of freedom. Writing in the middle of the 20th century, Fanon asked: 'Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the YOU?' In other words, one issue that faces us is that of building a different set of relationships between us, one that takes account of colonial history, but at the same time seeks to establish a different basis for living. In this regard, I think it is important to think about how elite power works, and the relationship between power, forms of inequality, domination and freedom.

Human development: in what direction?

What I am arguing is that we need to move away from an understanding of human development rooted in a certain kind of economistic understanding of human life that comes in categories with a certain kind of historical investment in all of them. I think it is safe to say that part of the problem that we have in relationship to the biosphere is due to the fact that we think we are masters of the planet, which we can bend to our will. Of course, we can trace this historically to specific ideas within the various European Enlightenments. We also need to map this kind of understanding of mastery over the Earth to the ways in which colonial practices created ideas of property and a crude utilitarian (and quite frankly unscientific) view of science.

Closely connected to this is the question: what do we really mean by progress? Do we mean progress as a certain mastery of the universe, a mastery of technology or do we mean

progress as our capacity to have certain kinds of relationships and solidarities with each other? Do we not need to rethink the meaning of progress?

Over the last few hundred years, our particular conception of what it means to be human has been essentially organized around what some people would call *Homo economicus*: humans as primarily economic animals. This is a framing in which individual competition and self-interest congealed into a social system in which profit ruled over all things. That particular conception, I would argue, has been disastrous for the Earth and human life. The conception has driven us fundamentally, whether we are in the North or in the South. It has also created a certain kind of masculinity. Indeed, the question of gender, and how patriarchy functions, becomes central in thinking through any new conception. Alongside this is how dominant conceptions and practices of human life are also shaped by racial categories. Racism consolidated as a form of hierarchical human classification has been a crucial feature of human life since the colonial moment. What is now important is to begin to have a set of discussions about what it is that we are, not as a question of identity: to have discussions not about some kind of fixed human nature, but rather about what *we might become*, what our collective responsibilities are, and how they are challenged by material provisioning, economic life, technological changes and artificial intelligence.

As much as it is critical to address challenges such as health, education, poverty and political participation, such discussions need to be underpinned by a rethinking of what we are, as humans. Indeed, this reframing allows the raising of other dimensions of critical importance: our relation to the biosphere and other inhabitants of the Earth, as well as our role and place within new technological systems.

What is it to be human?

I would say to be human is to have the capacity to be creative, to be able to recreate oneself, and to do that with a certain amount of freedom, not a freedom that is fixed and frozen but one that constantly emerges from the horizons of those who are unfree. I would also underline that we are not isolated individuals but actually social beings. Therefore, the question of being human is always related to the possibility of creativity and the question of *doing* things, but always in equal relationship to others.

This particular situation in which we now find ourselves due to COVID-19 shows us how much of a challenge it is (apart from the social and economic conditions that make it difficult for a significant number of the world's people) to have social distancing, and to find

ways to cut or minimize contagion. It tells us that on this planet, we are social beings and as such, the question is: how do we construct societies in common association that recognize and acknowledge the decisive need to break away from inequalities, forms of unfreedom and domination, and for us to live in a different way?

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The ability to pursue and realize life goals is at the core of human development

Anne-Greet Keizer reflects on how the concept of self-reliance and the related 'capacity to think' and 'capacity to act' could be useful in our conversation on rearticulating human development.

What do you think is at the core of the human development concept?

I would define it as the ability to pursue and realize life goals. And to do that, you need individual capacities as a human being, but you also need a certain societal context that enables you to pursue and realize these life goals. The interaction between individual capacities and the societal context is really important if you want to rethink the idea of human development.

In some of your most recent work you analyse the concepts of self-reliance and human autonomy. Do you think they should be among the key objectives pursued by human development?

For the last couple of years, self-reliance has been a big issue in the Netherlands. It has been a major objective of the government to have a society with as many self-reliant citizens as possible. A society where everyone participates. In our research we took self-reliance as a starting point. Most people want to be self-reliant. However, the immediate cause for our research was the observation that the ability to be self-reliant is not evenly distributed across a population.

It might be worth mentioning that it is not only the government that promotes self-reliance. It is also something that the broader society demands: you have to be employable, stay healthy and exercise. If you get sick, you have to be an active patient and participate in decisions about your health. You have to keep track of your personal finances and think about your pension.

Our study 'Why knowing what to do is not enough' shows that not everyone is capable of self-reliance under every circumstance. There is a difference between what people are expected to do and what they are actually capable of. It is not just a small group of 'vulnerable' individuals who have trouble living up to such expectations. Even people with a good education and a favourable position in society can end up feeling overwhelmed, certainly when they are going through a difficult time.

To be self-reliant people need to be able to gather and process information and make a plan. But this is not enough: people also need to take action, cope with setbacks and persevere. We all know that we should exercise. But for a lot of people it is very hard to actually get off the couch to go to the gym. Even more so after a hard day at work. And it is even harder to keep going over time. We call this the capacity to act.

Do you think this approach is taken into consideration in policy-making at the moment?

In the Netherlands, our report was quite influential. When the Scientific Council for Government Policy publishes a report with advice to the government, the Dutch government is obliged to write a formal response in the form of a memorandum to parliament. Its response included the commitment to adopt a more realistic perspective of what citizens or people can do. The government also agreed that new policies would be tested, with what we call the 'capacity to act test'. The test consists of a list of questions

that help to check whether the policy or legislation is based on realistic assumptions about people's mental resilience.

Keeping in mind the interface between the capacity to think and capacity to act, do you think the capacity to act approach can be extrapolated to the policy-making sphere itself?

Not only in the Netherlands, but in lots of countries you see that in the last two decades, the behavioural sciences have become more prominent and are more frequently invoked in policy-making. This is in line with what our Council has advised in several publications. We feel that this recent study represents the next step in this line of research. The earlier publications addressed people's limitations in their 'capacity to think': people are limited in their ability to gather and process information, and do not always make rational decisions. In this recent study we introduced the concept of 'capacity to act'. It is the next step because it explains why governments should realize that it is not enough to present people with the right information. Even if they know what to do, people do not always make the right choice, or move towards action; we are not equal in our capacity to cope with setbacks or pursue what we want. I feel this perspective is an interesting addition to the current human development concept that stresses the importance of individual choice. We need to better understand how and when humans are really able to make a choice; thus the psychological perspective is highly relevant.

Which academic disciplines do you think should be further mobilized in this effort?

I feel it is more an issue of how to organize input from different academic disciplines. Although there are good exceptions, one of the major issues now is precisely the way both government and academia are organized: more and more specialized, and in silos. The Council I work for was established in 1972. That was a time when – not only in the Netherlands but also in other European countries – there was this idea that because of more complex challenges we needed to have ways to truly engage the social sciences with government policy. The Council got the specific task of focusing more on the long term, and working on transdisciplinary and intersectoral issues for the cabinet as a whole. The design of the Council fits this task; it has eight members with different disciplinary backgrounds, and has a staff of about 25 people, also from different disciplinary backgrounds. Collaboration and exchange are encouraged in our work and quality procedures. We need to create more spaces for this kind of cooperation, by creating an atmosphere and processes that allow for different perspectives and insights to meet.

Would you say that the question of trust is one of the challenges in the knowledge-to-policy nexus?

Yes, trust but also the methodologies that allow for this kind of collaboration. One of the great things about the human development concept is that it broadens the strictly economic perspective. For the next phase, what we might need are more tools to allow one perspective to really meet the other, or to improve our ability to articulate quantitative and qualitative data in an equal way.

How might the COVID-19 crisis affect our approach to human development?

I think the one thing this current crisis is making clear is that global challenges are not just challenges that are experienced by citizens all over the world, but challenges that are really *global*, in the sense that they have to be dealt with on a global scale. COVID-19 is not something the Netherlands can address on its own, because there will be people travelling to and from our country or because other countries will seek to purchase the same ventilators. This crisis really reveals global connections. Besides the fact that this is of course a health challenge and we first need to deal with that aspect, other challenges will certainly follow, especially with regards to inequalities and societal divides. These are not new issues, but it will be key to see how this crisis, and the way we react to it, affects these aspects.

Do you think this global challenge, which sheds light on our interdependencies and interconnections, resembles other challenges such as climate change?

Yes, climate change is of course the one that immediately comes to mind. It might help us to see that other challenges such as economic issues are more global than we often realize. Our focus at the Council is to advise on Dutch government policy, but we look at countries around us because what happens there affects our country and often, we can learn something from them. Maybe this crisis will help us see that actually they *are* the same issues and that it would help us to look at them more globally.

You have worked on the role of arts and culture in our societies. Could you tell us more about this aspect of your research?

Although the topic is different, it is possible to draw some interesting links between what we address in our report, 'Revaluing culture', and your project: some values are more intrinsic and some are more instrumental, and how to deal with the tension between the intrinsic and instrumental is key. The legitimization for cultural policy by the Dutch government started out with what we call the 'imagining' perspective, which is about the

intrinsic value of culture, values such as creativity, inspiration, beauty, emotion, coming to terms with life. Over time this approach did not offer enough legitimization, so policy-makers therefore looked at other goals and values to legitimize public spending in art and culture. In this context the 'enriching' perspective of culture emerged. It is about the social value of culture, and values such as social cohesion emerged in this context. However, it came with very specific claims, such as culture is 'good for health', or that it 'helps to prevent crime', and most of the time it was very difficult to actually support these claims with data.

The third perspective in 'Revaluing culture' is the economic perspective: what we call 'earning'. There you see that culture is more and more presented as an instrument of economic policy, underlining the positive externalities of culture such as attracting tourists. In response to an overemphasis on the social and economic value of arts and culture (instrumental values), we warned against the danger of losing sight of the intrinsic value. Certain 'goods' such as culture or education have value on their own, and there is a danger if you view a good primarily in support of other goals or goods: you lose sight of how to ensure the intrinsic value of a good.

How do you apply this line of thought to human development? Have we lost sight of the intrinsic values of human development?

The parallel with discussion on human development that I see is the tension between intrinsic values and instrumental values. Should governments strive for personal human development as a value in itself, or is it only a public task because we need it for the economic development of our society? In a way the concept was of course introduced to broaden the economic perspective, reconnecting to the 'human' aspects, but this semantic and epistemic heritage creates the need to constantly argue why the personal perspective alone is already very valuable.

Do you wish to add something that we have not covered so far?

There is maybe one element missing that I do think is important. Looking at the human development issue from the capability perspective, it is key to look at the ability to change something or to be trainable in something. In our report on non-cognitive capacities we concluded that unfortunately we cannot expect too much of the trainability of people's capacity to act. Personal traits that underlie the capacity to act have hereditary components and on top of this, life circumstances influence your ability to apply your non-cognitive capacity. Stress and mental burden do have an effect. One

of our conclusions was that governments need to realize that individuals in a certain population differ in their capacity to act. Once these differences in disposition in capacity to act are acknowledged, we can concentrate on making society fit for people with different profiles, in other words, more inclusive.

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Towards a global, pluralistic view of human *developments*

Conceptualizing and understanding human development requires intercultural dialogue and engagement with other traditions and ways of seeing the world, according to **Johannes M. Waldmüller.**

How should we rethink the concept of human development in the current context?

As the current Director of the Intercultural Laboratory at FLACSO in Ecuador, I believe that one fundamental element for rethinking human development is interculturality. Interculturality refers to the encounter of different forms of knowledge and language. This encounter requires a process of translation that often leads to misunderstandings. A good example is the term 'development'. The word 'development' as it is understood in the context of development aid and cooperation does not exist in some of the indigenous languages we have in Latin America. The perspective of interculturality will direct our attention to explore the consequences of the lack of such language and the appropriateness of an overarching, single meaning of development. It takes us from a

debate on the role of the state or the role of markets in delivering development to an intercultural engagement with other forms of knowledge and ways to perceive well-being.

Finding common ground for effective translations is crucial to truly advance the agenda of human development, both theoretically and practically. Such an approach will play an important role in rethinking key concepts such as the state or questions such as what social or welfare policies are needed in Latin America. Debating the role of the state in delivering welfare without first contextualizing its meaning in an intercultural framework of thinking cannot possibly be relevant for human development as such conversations remain anchored in a single point of view, the Western point of view.

The way forward, in my opinion, is to start by building from within small communities, from within rural spaces and villages, to understand the drivers and the elements conducive to human development in these contexts. Somehow, we should be reversing the process of rethinking human development: we should create a community that engages in this mutual learning with translational processes to start with. Then, more abstract structures like a state, social policies or even the collection of relevant data and statistics could be created, *after* different knowledge systems have interacted with one another.

Without this interculturality, talking about human development is an abstraction that will not have an epistemic resonance in many communities. You are saying that the concept of human development cannot be either conceptualized or understood without this sort of dialogue between different ways of seeing the world?

Yes. This should be a basis for understanding the concept. Martha Nussbaum has worked on the idea of engaging in intercultural dialogue, especially with India. What is really lacking is a theoretical conceptualization of how this dialogue, in a continuous form, should take place. Within the human development approach, we need a proper mechanism and theory about how this engagement and translational process should take place, and whether we could agree on key notions comparing different kinds of cultural traditions or linguistic traditions.

In a sense you are also saying that we should move away from idealizing the concept of human development as a point of departure. That there are many other things that will be the enablers and the keys to reaching human-centred development.

I believe there are several traditions that could be enriching in coming up with a global version of human development, but it is a step further, it is after this engagement with other traditions.

You therefore recommend intercultural debates and dialogues, as part of the process of rearticulating human development?

Exactly, and we could even envisage, even though they are known to be very tricky, talks on human *developments*, plural. Instead of having one approach crystallizing out of this engagement, we could actually talk about several versions of human development according to different places, different historical, cultural backgrounds that have emerged in different contexts.

In addition, one of the key points, in terms of capabilities to be learned, is the capability to learn from others, to be open to others, developing a sense of care towards others.

And in this context, we would have some basic needs that will be more or less the same for all human beings, and then we would have a differentiated layer on top of this intercultural understanding, is this what you are saying?

Yes. Even in ontological terms, it is really part of what it means to be human: we engage all the time in translation processes in a broader sense. This is key if we think of the new challenges like disaster prevention, for example. So much has been written about local resilience, vulnerability, etc. But this requires getting in touch with local communities where there might be different conceptions of what works and what does not, and what might still be lacking. We have to find ways of communicating mutually.

Please tell us more about what will be in your view, potential drivers to get us to this intercultural engagement, to enable this conception of human developments in the plural that you are putting forward? And what are the key challenges?

What would be necessary, for example, is a more thorough engagement with the different philosophical or social traditions, taking into account different linguistics. For example, exploring what the meaning of the 'state' or 'development' would be when translated into Quechua and Kichwa, which are spoken by at least 10 to 15 million people. Quechua is not a small language, and yet there is no word for development. That is something that has been established purposefully as a translation, but it is not necessarily close to the original, ancestral definition or understanding, of 'flourishing' or 'well-being'.

I think that public debates should be opened for these kinds of engagements, talking about different traditions and understandings, and trying to find common terms if possible. This way we could talk about *human developments* that have been agreed upon among many different traditions. This could take place online and/or within an academy and it should

definitely take place within the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA).[1] The next Capability Conference coming up in New Zealand, 'New Horizons: Sustainability and Justice', will be working in that direction, as far as I know, because one of the main organizers actually is a member of an indigenous group.

Moreover, we really have to do more local exercises and local reports, and create a debate locally in order to be more inclusive. It might be citizens' engagement, within communities trying to capture everyday conceptions of human development in different senses, but it could also include, for instance, the staff working at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices in different countries. In my experience, and I have been in touch with many of them in Africa and Latin America, except perhaps local staff, most of them have never learned any indigenous languages, and have very remote knowledge of the signification of different kinds of knowledge. This could be part of the human development agenda.

And what are the remaining challenges to realizing these solutions you mention?

I think in Latin America, the main issue relates to the fact that people do not sufficiently value their own cultural traditions, and still look up to the US, Europe or other regions. They try to 'catch up' on development.

I think human development has been conceptualized, and also taken up by governments in this catching-up sense, looking at the global ranking. For example, Morocco organized a huge national holiday last year because the country moved up 17 positions in the Human Development Index. But this is not the idea behind the ranking. We tried to counter this tendency from the academic side by bringing in other knowledges and by trying to critically interrogate concepts and engage in the amplification of indigenous worldviews. But unfortunately, the dominant form of looking at development is still very much led *by* economists, is *about* economics and is very much looking at the idea of growth.

As I said, if we had, for example, UN or EU offices here in our countries with staff who were bilingual or trilingual, it would be very beneficial. Within UNDP it could be envisioned to have the Human Development Report published in local languages.

1 The Human Development and Capability Association was launched in September 2004 at the Fourth Capability Conference in Pavia, Italy.

Let me pick up on something you have hinted at but not followed through on. You were saying, for example, that the Human Development and Capability Association is already bringing in these discussions on interculturalism with indigenous communities. Do you think that the capability approach, which was the basis of the conceptual understanding of human development 30 years ago, has moved conceptually and intellectually in the direction you support, whereas the human development policy and technocratic sphere has become fixated on the ranking; it is somehow stuck? How could we push forward the intellectual trajectory of the concept?

First, there is a need to better conceptualize certain voids that still exist within the theory as such. What I mean by that is precisely the big issue that we have in all social theory, between more positivistic approaches, and post-positivistic or post-structural approaches. In these big debates, there is this crucial question for human development of how to articulate the individual and the collective dimensions in society. Policy-wise, what we did for a long time was pushing towards the individual dimension, the methodological individualism in statistics and knowledge creation, but within a setting that remained very positivistic. I think one measure to go beyond that would be to engage in this plural opening-up-to approach to other forms of knowledge in the sense of overcoming these positivistic limitations. For example, in New Zealand – or Aotearoa – and also in Australia, there is a very important movement for indigenous data sovereignty. It follows the idea that indigenous communities and nations should create their own statistics, rather than having the state assembling them; I think they have proposed this to the UN several times.

We have to design policies that make sense for different sorts of communities and different sorts of cultural backgrounds and languages. This is something extremely necessary in Latin America where we typically have this one-policy approach, though there are major differences within countries.

I think there is a very interesting body of thought that is extremely rich and has been almost overlooked. Pierre Bourdieu for example, the French sociologist who addressed the question of the interface between the individual and the collective. Starting from the Habitus, talking about the different capitals, this work is extremely rich and it has been under-theorized so far.

I would like to hear something from you regarding 'Buen vivir' as an example of alternative notions of progress.

First, I have to make a distinction that is very important. Now there is a 'Buen vivir' that was enshrined in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, in 2008 and 2009 respectively,

and has been used as a state dogma, and applied for more than 10 years with very contradictory results. But Buen vivir is based on a concept in the indigenous worldview, called 'Sumak kawsay' in Quechua, which means 'living in plenitude'. I think this expresses better the idea because it is not about having a certain standard of living. What it means is that we actually really start to appreciate what we have here locally or anywhere we are, and try to build from that in a very balanced way. The key feature of all the thinking is that we *balance* constantly, in the spiritual sense of the word balance, the different energies in the world: good and bad, female and male, etc. Basically, we balance nature, material well-being, social and policy support, without trying to push one further than the others.

And you are saying that this perspective has been failed by a particular type of politics, and I presume a lot of this balance, and the original concept, has not come through?

Exactly. At the state level this has been captured and it has been translated into a kind of blending with the South Korean development model, with a very strong state funding behind it. This has certainly elevated some people out of poverty and has helped in some sectors, but it has also led to quite authoritarian forms of democracy or limitations to democracy, while indigenous communities continue to promote other concepts. This Buen vivir is a twisted version that has been mixed with other approaches. What is interesting is that the states (Ecuador and Bolivia) have constantly made references to human development, arguing in favour of their version of Buen vivir, while indigenous communities would reject it, calling for Sumak kawsay, this plenitude and balance, which implies limitations. I try in my publications to put it forward, as a different body of knowledge that is there but has not been used.

Maybe to conclude, you could speak about environmental issues and the link to intercultural dialogue?

Certainly, environmental issues from the indigenous communities' point of view is putting ecosystems first and *then* human beings. There are indigenous communities in the Andes who would say the meltdown of glaciers is not caused necessarily by CO_2 or pollution. Rather, it is due to the fact that we humans have stopped talking to the entities; in previous times you would have rituals to honour them, and we would present them with gifts.

You could just discard this, and say it is a very fine spiritualistic way of seeing things. But it exists and presents a different relationship to the environment. It is an idea of not only enjoying the environment; it adds a layer where one actively contributes, talks to, cares

for the environment in a much broader sense. In this view the environment is crucial and it is like another individual. The different ecosystems are other individuals that we have to consider if and when we want to draw up equations of human development or human well-being.

In this approach we need to learn to relate to the environment in different ways, honouring it in a proper way, instead of simply preserving it or thinking of it in very anthropocentric terms. We should preserve life as such. And humans and nature have the same dignity somehow. Both Ecuador and Bolivia have enshrined the rights of nature in their constitutions, in this sense. I think this has inspired many other countries.

Do you wish to try to define human development in your own terms?

Maybe along these lines… If there is a pluralistic, global version of human development, that would be human developments.

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Four suggestions for the rearticulation of human development

Des Gasper looks at the evolution of the human development discourse before and since the initiation of the Human Development Reports in 1990. He makes suggestions for rethinking the concept, such as seeing it as part of a set of interlinked concepts that include human security, and emphasising the need for local- and national-level human development reporting.

First, 'human development' analysis is a perspective on people's lives and living within societies and the biosphere

A capability-based concept of human development emphasizes the aspects of freedom of human purposes. Mahbub ul Haq and his associates did not consider though that the notion of freedoms exhausted the relevant picture of being human. He articulated a bigger picture, in his thinking on human security, human dignity and global cooperation. Haq and his associates drew on long-running streams of discussion and thought marked by an appropriate holism and complexity. The creation of a specific, small Human Development Report Office (HDRO) in the UNDP HQ, separate from other units in the UN system, and having the Human Development Index (HDI) and related indexes as a distinctive task and 'brand', has over time perhaps had limiting impacts

in relation to that holism and complexity. Counting valued freedoms is not all that we need for thinking about human(-centred) development. This leads to the second suggestion.

We need a renewed awareness of how human development discourse has emerged from traditions of secular and religious humanistic thinking

Arguably the UNDP human development work will benefit from revisiting how it grew out of generations of discussion by both secular and religious humanistic thinkers. A concept of 'integral human development' (IHD) had already been adopted by the Catholic Church, to take just one example, in the 1967 encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (the development of peoples), and continues to be significant. Such thinking has been paralleled in many secular humanist streams, both liberal and socialist, with similarly complex genealogies. Thus, an IHD concept (though not always using that label) is shared across various religious and humanistic traditions. Various thinkers channelled such human development ideas into international development discussions – for example, Barbara Ward, teacher of Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen in the 1950s, and Denis Goulet, a pupil of L-J. Lebret (first drafter of the *Populorum Progressio*) and a founder of anglophone 'development ethics' in the 1970s.

How in practice to nourish a holistic approach to human development? I suggest two natural and feasible steps for HDRO and UNDP that build on their earlier work: re-knit human development analysis and human security approaches; and continue and intensify promotion and use of local, national and regional reports and cross-report learning. We see the complexity and specificity of living by looking at real situations and life stories.

A truly global perspective grows out of human development reporting at local, national and regional levels

UNDP has through its history had a distinctive openness and orientation to network-based learning. Local, national and regional Human Development Reports HDRs provide vital spaces for learning about local realities, specificities, complexities and opportunities, including in the expression and interaction of global forces. UNDP, HDRO and their partners have major roles to play in cross-learning, synthesis and reflection within and in parallel to the Sustainable Development Goals cycles. One good earlier example was Jolly and Basu Ray's 2006–2007 review of 13 national and regional HDRs that had adopted a human security theme. A 2012–2013 successor study by Gomez et al. of 20 human security-orientated HDRs confirmed and extended learning in many areas. The reports brought out how what is experienced as insecurity (1) is contextual – it arises through the intersections of many factors, so varies across persons, classes, localities, times; (2) is (thus) partly unpredictable in terms

of the threats arising/perceived, and must be studied case by case; (3) is partly culturally and personally subjective, but with objective consequences, so must be studied in situ.

Human development and human security need to be treated as existential, intellectual and organizational partners/twins

The human development concept and approach are part of a complementary and interlinked set of needed perspectives that includes human rights, human needs, human development and human security, within an overall UN approach. Not least, an artificial separation between human development and human security analyses should be avoided. The COVID-19 crisis, which will be followed by others, is a reminder to recall the integrated perspective outlined in the 1990s by Haq and his associates. Haq called for an integrated UN agenda, expressed as a concern for 'human security', or secure human development. Some other formulations see human security concerns – vulnerabilities, thresholds of basic need, meaningfulness, psychological/existential insecurities, human connection, environmental stewardship, peace – as distinct from the freedoms focus but still as its essential partner and not a separate agenda. The theme of vulnerability is part of a richer picture of the human than only stressing capability and reasoned choice. Many agencies' programmes cover specific aspects, but an integrative 'secure human development' perspective is needed, linking multiple stressors. As suggested also by the work in some of the best national and regional HDRs, cross-sectoral comparative studies may offer the best returns for HDRO and its sister sections in UNDP/UN HQ, rather than a duplication of what specialist sector agencies do.

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Des Gasper is a recently retired professor of human development, development ethics and public policy at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Hague. Professor Gasper has made substantive contributions to the field of development ethics, including work on theories of well-being, human security and the capabilities approach.

Human development must account for moral sentiments

Flavio Comim explores why we have to pay more attention to Martha Nussbaum's work in thinking about human development.

How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development, considering the contemporary context?

There are two key theoretical points to consider when rethinking the concept of human development. One is related to Amartya Sen, the other to Martha Nussbaum. Both points are grounded on my diagnostic that human development, in its current formulation, captures too little of Sen's 'capability and social choice' approach, and incredibly, ignores Nussbaum's 'capabilities and political emotions' framework. I dispute the claims, by some scholars, that human development is based on the 'capability' approach. Rather, I believe that it is a direct application of the 'basic needs' approach, later expressed in a capability language.

But, let me be clearer. If human development wants to be true to Amartya Sen's thought, then, it should consider it in all its extensions. My view is that his main approach is not the 'capability' approach, but what can be called Sen's 'social choice' approach. Indeed, this seems evident in one of his latest books, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, published in 2017 (an expanded edition of a book he wrote in 1970), which shows how capabilities are related to informational pluralism in his broader framework and tackle wider issues of critical scrutiny, partial and meta-rankings, etc. It seems natural that if we wish to rethink our conceptual understanding of human development, we should fully take into account Sen's 'social choice' approach. This is, in fact, a significant opportunity for refreshing and reinvigorating human development.

But this might not be enough. One of the greatest injustices perpetrated by Human Development Reports (HDRs) is how they have ignored the work carried out by Martha Nussbaum over the past 30 years. I do not blame the HDR Office here but the work of some capability scholars who have stereotyped Nussbaum's work as if it were only about capability lists. Rather, she talks about gender discrimination, women's empowerment, disability, animal rights, immigration, ageing, inequality, poverty, the workplace, children, play, education, parks, family finances and a wide range of topics that are central to human development. Her work is much more centred on ethics and 'micro categories', when we compare it to Sen's work, which seems to offer a more 'macro' investigation of issues such as health and education. More importantly, she invites us to think about the importance of love and compassion for human development. Taken together, Sen's 'social choice' approach and Nussbaum's 'capabilities and political emotions' framework can stimulate a rebirth of human development thought.

Could you clarify what are, in your view, Nussbaum's key contributions to a rethinking of human development?

Human development is still a subject dominated by macro analytical categories that more often than not apply mostly to entire countries. We are talking here about public spending, life expectancy, income per capita, education enrolment, among many others. But in real life, human development is not merely about what governments do but about people's lived experiences and attitudes. For instance, there is no point in governments enacting anti-discrimination laws if their citizens are not willing to comply with them. The beauty of Nussbaum's work lies in tackling fragilities in human nature that can only be fully appreciated from an ethical perspective. Although Sen is fond of regularly referring to Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* it is Nussbaum who provides the ethical elements that can be used to examine humanity's struggles for autonomy and love.

Can we talk about human development without taking into account people's moral psychology? It is doubtful. But so far that is what human development has done. Opening the doors of human development to Nussbaum's work is a first step in the direction of contextualizing development as part of humanity's struggle for meaning. Furthermore, Nussbaum's work can provide a bridge between Aristotelian and Kantian constructs that inhabit HDRs. Finally, I would like to mention that her work invites us to think about political issues that are extremely relevant for contemporary times (of pandemics and the exacerbation of inequalities).

What are the key challenges to human-centric development in the world today?

The world is much more unequal today than it was when the first HDR was published. Wealthy corporations and rich people are 'out of control': no one seems to monitor their earnings, and tax evasion as well as tax avoidance have weakened societies' power to improve the quality of life of their citizens. As much as the theme of inequality is always present in human development discussions, the issue of power related to inequality has not been fully addressed. It is essential to talk about how humans are using natural resources and how democracy has been challenged by kleptocratic and plutocratic regimes.

The fact is that human-centric development is not human-centric enough. If we could open the Pandora's Box of power, democracy and politics we would be able to understand not only how different societies think (or not) about the common good, but how they affect the way that humanity relates to nature and its multiple forms of life. We cannot think outside the human-centric development box without exploring this first, because what humans do to ecosystems is nothing but a consequence of what they do to themselves. The 2007/8 HDR on climate change showed how the impacts of climate change on the poor are much more severe because of their vulnerability and lack of resilience. This lack of resilience arises from the simple fact that the non-poor do not seem to care much about the poor.

Another key challenge relates to implementation. Human Development Reports are very normative. When I worked for UNDP Brazil, I was responsible for conveying Human Development Index updates and HDR key messages to the media. Sometimes I would feel as if I were a priest bringing the good news of salvation (or warning against the doom). But, the tough issues, which are issues of implementation, would often be bypassed. I understand that HDRs are not detailed, but by avoiding concrete implementation issues, they end up ignoring the tough realities that need to be faced. Perhaps there is something that should be more worrying in my remarks. It might well be the case that human development talks in theory about bottom-up, participatory policies but in practice is

driven by the (top-down) assumption that once national governments are convinced by the main messages in its reports, everything else will follow. In my own development practice, I have seen how UNDP often focuses its energy on engaging with governments and key stakeholders on the assumption that governments have the power and resources to effectively implement recommended policies. Nevertheless, this view often ignores ordinary people's power to make things happen. An alternative model of implementation in which HDRs addressed ordinary people and not governments could be much more effective.

The impact of the human development approach has been limited and economic growth and macroeconomic stability continue to dominate thinking. What can be done to more successfully influence policy and decision-making?

I would like to answer this question with two personal short stories. When I left my university job to work as a senior economist in Brazil, my work there was to coordinate a Human Development Report. I remember when my Country Chair came to my office and said, 'Please prepare five themes for next week that you think are interesting for the report and then we can choose one.' I had the biggest crisis in my life during that week because I thought that this was not what I was supposed to be doing there. The topics for a national HDR were not supposed to come from a UNDP employee but from ordinary people. After considerable struggle and help from my colleagues, we managed to organize a network of national public consultations to define the theme of the report, that turned out to be a major participatory exercise called 'Brazil Point-By-Point'. We heard the voices of over half a million people. This helped us to understand the issues people were concerned with, and informed a more mature human development perspective that ended up having a lot of uptake and influence in the country in the years that followed. In short, I would say that in order to influence policy and decision-making more, human development should tackle the issue of participation much more seriously than it normally does.

A second personal experience that shows ways to enhance impact emerged when Brazil was preparing its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I was not working for UNDP anymore, but was asked by former colleagues to speak to UNDP officials in charge of organizing a national consultation about the SDGs. After explaining what we did for the 'Brazil Point-By-Point' initiative, I heard a lot of appreciation, but I was then told that the consultation planned for the SDGs in Brazil did not have sufficient time and resources to organize a proper consultation. Instead, the official said that he was going to organize a nice breakfast meeting for government officials and key stakeholders. Business as usual.

The distance between these two different approaches is enormous. We need to ensure that topics put forward under the human development banner emerge out of people's own realities. It is of utmost importance to represent this diversity and generate strategies that help people address the problems they have. If everything depends on national governments, governments may not have the same interests as people nor the resources and means to do certain things. To me, the biggest revolution we need is to engage with civil society. Human development, championed by UNDP, carries the flag of integrity and impartiality. As such, it is extremely well positioned to promote dialogue, cooperation, and a 'more vulgar' approach to policy-making (as Mahbuh ul Haq would use this term).

Redesigning implementation methods and communication approaches will go a long way in making human development more influential and more impactful. It is not merely about publicizing one's work (as in the case of brilliant songs about the SDGs). Good communication is not simply about speaking in more accessible terms. It is about listening. There is still much progress to be made on actually listening and engaging with ordinary people and assisting them in their daily struggles.

What should be the definition of human-centric development today? What type of formulation would you put forward that captures the need for real engagement with citizens?

The history, not of human development, but of development paradigms as a whole, as illustrated by Gilbert Rist and so many others, has been a catalogue of failures, partially because policy-makers have not paid enough attention to implementation issues and to ordinary people's moral psychology and sentiments. Quite often, human development policies engage first with governments and key stakeholders, as I mentioned before, without considering the practical contexts in which these policies should be applied. For instance, HDRs can talk about inequality but in very hierarchical societies where people struggle for recognition (in Honneth's sense), it might well be that elites position themselves against these policies because they might eliminate their main source of 'distinction' (in Bourdieu's sense).

Working for the poor entails convincing the non-poor to care about the poor. But they will not do that if human development does not think about implementation and the design of mechanisms that might be conducive to desired changes.

To me, a comprehensive definition of human development has to take into account people's moral sentiments, and we have to talk about the types of societies that encourage people

to love each other (not in a romantic way) or not. Martha Nussbaum's 1990 book *Love's Knowledge* and her more recent book from 2013, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters to Justice*, argue that love is an important pillar for just societies. The more I think about her proposition, the more I agree with her. I might even dare to say that human development is about love. If you are a rich person but you don't love the poor, you will not bother about the quality of public services and the provision of public goods that are mostly used by the poor. If you are a white person and you do not love other people because they are black, you will not care about people being unfairly treated because of their skin colour. If you are a man and you do not love human beings qua human beings because they are also women, you might think that it is natural that women do not receive fair payment for the same job they do. And so on, for many other development issues. There is no human development without love.

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Human development can help bring SDGs from the billboards into people's lives

Big questions have been raised about the neoliberal agenda by COVID-19, **Stuart Carr** observes, and points out that the challenge lies in transforming macro indicators to capture what really makes a difference in people's everyday lives.

What do you think is at the core of the human development concept?

There is a Patrick Chappatte cartoon from 2015 in which two young people are walking past a big billboard, which has the goals that preceded the current Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on it. One of these young people turns to the other and says: 'I have the same goals every day'. That, for me, is what human development is about. The SDGs are not perfect, but they are the best plan we have ever had: it is the most widely consulted and I think a lot of the goals reflect people's objectives in their everyday lives. Human development is about taking these goals on the billboard and figuring out what they look like in those two young people's lives. Paradoxically, I think a lot of the SDG initiatives are still on the billboard and not on the ground. The indicators in the reports are still relatively

macro and materialistic rather than aspirational, and they do not necessarily inform us about what really makes a difference for people in everyday life. That is where I think human development comes in.

The other key issue that arises with the SDGs is that they often conflict with each other. Looking at COVID-19, it is clear that everybody wants a sustainable livelihood and sustainable health, but if they go to work to follow this livelihood, they may get sick (with COVID-19). There is a need to figure out how to balance these goals. We have a dilemma going on between lives 'or' livelihoods, and balancing that is not going to be easy in everyday life.

I think ultimately that the path to a better balance between the SDGs and a better understanding of what they mean for people in everyday life lies in asking people directly. The work that I/we conduct is on sustainable livelihoods and it is often about asking people to chart what aspects of their daily livelihood work for *them*, in everyday working life.

Do you think the different indices that we have today (Human Development Index, Multidimensional Poverty Index, Happiness and Wellbeing Indices) can complement the indicators of the SDGs?

I really like the idea behind the HDI and the MPI, of going beyond the purely economic aspects and of expanding the approach to include dimensions such as years of education, life expectancy and access to electricity. At the same time, these dimensions are then often used as criteria, even though they are relatively demographic and materialistic. The happiness and well-being indices in turn are much more subjective and relatable. Currently the two kinds of measure are kept largely separate from one another. Yet surely the two are interlinked. For example, if one has access to electricity and schooling and has a good life expectancy, then well-being and happiness indexes may also tend to go up. So, I think approaching the HDI and the MPI as criteria may be the wrong way around. They are more like some of the material means towards happiness. Hence, we need to figure out how the scores on those material indices co-vary with the more subjective happiness and well-being dimensions, and all other indicators similarly aimed at translating what the SDGs billboard says to the street level.

Do you think the COVID-19 situation will change or has it already changed the way we approach these issues?

Yes. It has changed it and we will not go back. In the world of livelihoods for instance, whole sectors are under significant threat. There are big questions around the neoliberal

agenda. The debate on decent wages is a very important one because there are human benefits as well as costs associated with them. A pragmatic and ethical way to understand this is to look at how everyday qualities of work/life, and (in)capacity to withstand shocks like COVID-19, can be predicted from prior work conditions, such as lack of living wages (see for example, project GLOW (Global Living Organisational Wage)). Otherwise, the whole Decent Work Agenda (SDG-8) remains quite abstract (on the billboard). There is surprisingly not a lot of research evidence systematically tracking how variations in those two variables (everyday work conditions like wage and quality of work/life) empirically match up to one another, in a predictable relationship.

To go back to the previous question, I think broadening the definition of human development to get away from purely monetary indicators is important. Before COVID-19, we had relatively high levels of employment but mostly in vulnerable and precarious work. Post-COVID-19, with higher unemployment, looking at supporting incomes is still hugely important but not as a *criterion* – which is where we have typically put it – but as a *predictor* variable of other dimensions. Amartya Sen in his book *Development as Freedom* explains that wages and income are not an end in themselves, they are means to an end. The idea is that people, if they have a decent income coming in whatever form, will meet with the SDGs in their own way. The challenge from COVID-19, as a disruptor, is to find innovative ways to enable human freedom to flourish. That may include for instance revisiting radical policy options like Universal Basic Income (UBI).

The other aspect we were hoping to discuss with you was interdisciplinarity and intersectoral policy-making and planning: what is your view on this? Do you yourself work with different disciplines?

I work in the academic system so I live in the world of ideas, and as you know, mostly in academia you have single disciplines that have their own journals and awards. There is a big cost to pay in terms of promotion and tenure if one goes into interdisciplinarity; the incentives are not there yet. However, I am encouraged by the new sustainability journals that are coming up, and we have started to publish in them. There is a space in there for my profession of psychology, although the economics discourse remains dominant. Behavioural economics is another manifestation of this same material discourse. I am not quite sure this is the right approach to how resilient people actually are. If they do not save in precarious times it is not because they cannot think properly or plan ahead, it is because economic necessity/ies govern what they do. They will do what is necessary for their family in their households and so on.

I think interdisciplinarity is incredibly important. In our living wage research, we work with employee relations, with economists, sociologists. I would like to work much more with public health; the current pandemic is a very strong reminder that health, community, cultural and economic systems are highly interconnected.

I am Editor for the American Psychological Association (APA) journal *International Perspectives in Psychology*, and we are trying to move away from conventional psychology articles, for example towards policy briefs. In that respect, its mission is very close to the SDGs, and translating the SDGs through the eyes of people in everyday life. So that kind of psychology has a chance to connect with other disciplines.

What is your view on linking knowledge and evidence to policy-making in New Zealand?

In the journal I work for, we now encourage authors to submit policy briefs, because traditional journal articles are not very user-friendly for policy-makers. We encourage them to start thinking about how they get their research into palatable formats for policy. We have a lot of science and social science to offer, but much of it does not make its way into policy. One of the reasons for that, I believe, is that we do not train people to be persuasive. Researchers can work in particular on developing new diplomacies: how do you take evidence into practice and policy in the modern world? How can you get in the room? How can you persuade policy-makers to take on board what is in the evidence base? How can you call out organizations like corporations when they do things that are actually dangerous for the whole planet and certainly for communities? I teach some of these aspects in my Master's level courses using the guidelines of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on corporations and country reporting systems, and tracking some of the stories that we hear through the OECD network. I think these 'new diplomacies', as the Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development (CSEND) calls them, are about holding systems to account through the evidence.

There is one related aspect of COVID-19 that I wish to address here: security, from a psychology perspective (see for example, Project S.A.F.E. (Security Assessment for Everyone)). The last major contribution we made to the UN approach to security was in 1994, in the Human Security Report. This report did not address cybersecurity, for example, but the approach was to identify ways to measure, through indicators, what factors made people feel insecure. Applied to the current situation with COVID-19, it would be useful to build on a measure of food security; for instance, are people hoarding food because

they are frightened for their food security? In addition, it is important to underline that it is a 'running policy' matter; we need ways to pick up changes that happen rapidly, in times of shock and crisis.

Sometimes these disasters are man-made ones – one could argue that this novel and zoonotic virus is a man-made disaster, resulting from greedy incursions into the natural environment and biosphere. Looking at the Sendai Framework, we know it is prevention that helps people to get through a crisis. We need to be doing much more on that side. I would strongly support an update from the UN on the human security side of the human development equation.

Stuart Carr is a Professor at the School of Psychology at Massey University, New Zealand. His books include *Psychology of Aid*, *Psychology and the Developing World*, *Globalization and Culture at Work*, *Poverty and Psychology*, *The Aid Triangle* and *The Psychology of Global Mobility*.

Human development is about people being able to meet their aspirations

Human development is ultimately about meeting aspirations that are contextually rooted, says **Arthur Grimes**, for whom the concept of well-being is a useful tool to inform policy-making.

What do you think is at the core of the human development concept?

I think human development is about people being able to meet their aspirations. Aspirations are contextual. They are formed through interactions with a person's immediate environment and also from what they see happening in the rest of the world. People want to be doing as well as the people they see around them and those that they see further afield, in a variety of ways, not just materially. To sum up, I would say it means meeting their aspirations, where those aspirations are informed by what they see is possible for other people.

Your research focuses on well-being. In what ways does it fit in the human development concept?

My research links strongly to this concept in two ways. One is that well-being – interpreted as people's satisfaction with their own lives – is based both on what they are achieving and also on what they see others achieving. Hence well-being is very much a relative concept. Whether it is health relativities or material relativities, people's judgment of their own well-being is very dependent on their perception of how well others are doing relative to themselves. The other area that is related, though this is one on which I have not worked as much, is the concept of worth. The idea that people are living a worthwhile life, people have aspirations about that as well.

Do different sectors in New Zealand's government collaborate on these issues?

In New Zealand they do. We have a very strong policy focus on well-being, which is still in its early days. People are looking at well-being across a lot of different fields. The New Zealand government's approach has been very much in line with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Better Life Index approach, emphasizing health, education, social contacts, etc., but with insufficient emphasis (in my view) on people's longer-term satisfaction with their lives. We see some cultural differences in people's overall well-being that cannot be fully explained by standard factors such as education, health or material well-being. There must be something more that is going on in those societies, which probably relates to social capital, and in thinking that what they are doing or believing is worthwhile.

You are the inaugural Chair of Wellbeing and Public Policy at Victoria University of Wellington. Could you explain your role?

There were people around the country conducting work on well-being from different angles, both academic work and in the policy arena. We joined forces and established a new Chair at the university. The new government had campaigned on a well-being approach to policy. It seemed like the ideal time to set up a position to bring together the academic and policy-related strands of the subject.

From your experience in this role, what are the key challenges in articulating academic research on well-being and policy-making?

Governments in a number of countries have tried for some years now to articulate a well-being approach to public policy, but have not come to a practical way of focusing policies

on well-being: examples include France, the UK, Australia. The biggest task now is 'how do you actually make these concepts practically relevant for policy?'

I think governments should think about what actions have the biggest effect on people's overall well-being in terms of their satisfaction with life. The impacts can be on momentary well-being and/or longer-term life satisfaction. Cost–utility analysis or cost–well-being analysis is a useful approach conceptually. For instance, we know that improving mental health has a much bigger payoff than improving physical health when it comes to well-being. Yet, most countries greatly underfund their mental health services and overfund their physical health services, relatively speaking. Armed with that sort of knowledge you can then indicate, in practical terms, that we should be redirecting public spending away from physical health towards mental health. Politically, it is more difficult. What is key is bringing to bear the research that we have on these topics, to really emphasize some of these practical policy priority decisions.

Do you think this trade-off between different dimensions can be applied in other fields, such as the Sustainable Development Goals?

I have to say I am not a fan of the SDGs. I was quite a fan of the Millennium Development Goals because there were only a few. I have always believed that for policy purposes, you need to focus on a few key aspects. For example, when I was at the Reserve Bank, we advised the Central Bank to concentrate on one thing: getting inflation under control. I have always believed that if policy tries to focus on lots of things it basically achieves nothing. In the case of the SDGs, you can always say you are achieving some objectives but then you ignore others; there are so many of them, which ones would you put resources into?

Regarding the current health crisis, what would you say are your first observations? How does it impact our approach to well-being and human development?

One of the big things in the well-being literature is the importance of family and friends and social contact and the community. I mentioned before how we have some groups in New Zealand with a much higher well-being than expected given their material circumstances, which could be explained by social capital; I think that is going to be one of the biggest things that makes or breaks people's reaction to the current situation: what it does to communities. We have seen for instance in this country some strengthening of certain communities in terms of action over beating COVID-19; it has united communities, and so in some sense, it could be quite a strong community development outcome. And yet I can imagine if it gets out of control, then it could also lead to a breakdown either within

or between communities. So, it seems to me that one of the big tasks is to be highlighting how we can strengthen communities; there could be long-term payoffs that could lead to greater community strength that can be used for other purposes once this is overcome.

Do you think there is something universally shared in the concept of human development? Although the challenges are very contextualized, do you think it is relevant to speak of it as a shared conceptual framework?

I think it does. What individuals aspire to in human development really relates to anybody in the world. Increasing their aspirations and hoping that they meet their aspirations, that is a broad concept that can be applied well to people around the world.

Nevertheless, individual aspirations are rooted in cultures. At the big picture level, people aspire to the same sorts of things. They want to be materially comfortable and have good health and be in good societal relationships, but then there are some cultural nuances to that. Different cultures emphasize different aspects more than others. For instance, I have done some work on how the Māori indigenous population values things relative to the dominant European population in New Zealand. There are not huge differences, but there are differences of nuance, for example with regard to the environment.

In relation to the whole measurement system of development, to what extent do you think the Human Development Index, the Multidimensional Poverty Index and the well-being index provide good measures of human development?

All these measures are positively correlated with each other, and with the OECD's Better Life Index. I think they are useful but I would not hang my hat on any one of them. For instance, the Human Development Index (HDI) puts a lot of emphasis on education, which I think overstates its importance. These indices tend to reflect the tastes of the people who put them together, and well-educated people put these things together, so education always figures quite highly. We think it is great that people have a good education and lots of schooling, but the literature suggests that it is not all that important for well-being other than its income-generating powers. I take each index with a bit of a grain of salt, but I still find each of them useful. What is particularly useful is choosing a particular index and then examining it for its distributional properties. For instance, you can learn a lot from the gender-specific HDI or, as we have done in New Zealand, from our version of the Better Life Index when it is calculated for different parts of the population either by ethnicity, by age or by gender. We are not sure which approach is actually the best measure of well-being but whichever measure we use we can observe disparities that can be addressed.

These different proxies are telling you different things and you might learn something from each of them. It is also worth noting the usefulness of historical consistency. One of the nice things about the HDI is that you can compare it over time. The World Values Survey, which includes a measure of life satisfaction, has been around for 30 years or so as well, and that is really useful.

Do you wish to make any additional point?

Yes. We see in the life satisfaction literature – at least for most developed countries – a U shape in life satisfaction by age. Young adults are very happy and similarly people who are in their 60s and upwards are very happy. By contrast, people in midlife are much less happy, and this issue seems to be really underplayed in the human development literature. We tend to think of middle-aged people as being people with resources and lots of opportunities, but there is a paradox here that we really have to look at. I think it has got to do with overwork and stress, because many of these people are overworking. Maybe they are in fact relatively underprivileged despite their material well-being status.

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Sustainable human development from the ground up

Mandy Yap argues that conceptualizing and measuring Indigenous well-being in a way that is both relevant and usable requires an alternative approach. Her work with the Yawuru community offers several learnings pertinent to building a concept of sustainable human development that is inclusive and relevant for our times. It is critically important that the pathways to sustainable human development are paved by involving those who know their lives best.

The term 'human development' first gained prominence in the 1990s through the UNDP Human Development Report. It presented three interrelated concepts – people, opportunities and choices (UNDP, 1990). Anchored in the capabilities framework, the focus on enabling freedom for individuals to live the lives they themselves consider to be meaningful was a much-needed departure from the focus on income. The three concepts are still fundamentally important today. However, the challenges we are now confronting as a society require us to think beyond the now, and be cognizant of our diversities and lived experiences while achieving our aspirations within the boundaries of our planet.

Amartya Sen's 1986 Stanner Lecture, 'Standard of living', is an important reference point for the concept of human development. In Sen's eloquent articulation, the complexities in differentiating between being well, being well-off, having freedom and being happy were shown. Having demonstrated the inherent subjectivity associated with these concepts, Sen presented the challenges of navigating the opposing pulls of 'relevance' and 'usability'. While relevance calls on us to do justice to the richness and complexities of the underlying concept, usability nudges us to be pragmatic and this often means defaulting to measures derived from existing data (Sen, 1987; Alkire, 2015; Yap and Yu, 2019).

The Yawuru community, First Peoples of Broome in Western Australia and I have taken up the challenge to ensure that 'relevance' is not lost entirely in the process of creating 'usability' measures. Conceptualizing and measuring Indigenous well-being that is both relevant and usable requires an alternative approach. As Smith (2012, p. 196) argues, 'When indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently and people participate on different terms'. This necessitates a fundamentally different starting point from what is considered the norm in the academy.

For the Yawuru, that alternative starting point is *mabu liyan* (YRNTBC, 2011). *Mabu liyan*, or good feelings, is centred on the Yawuru's sense of belonging and being. Expressions of *liyan* are based on collective structures and on living well with country, culture, others and within oneself. Achieving and sustaining *mabu liyan* stems from having strong family relations, maintaining and fulfilling one's responsibility to country and culture, feeling respected and valued by others, and being able to be self-determining on matters concerning one's self, one's family and one's country. Furthermore, experiences of *mabu liyan* are intertwined with surviving in the modern world, with Yawuru women and men negotiating the trade-offs in maintaining the various dimensions of living well against competing development activities on their land and sea country (Yap and Yu, 2016, 2019).[i]

Like many Indigenous nations around the world, connectedness is a key dimension of the life they have reason to value (Watene, 2016). Connectedness extends beyond just relationships to each other but also to the broader environment, the human and non-human world (Watene and Yap, 2015; Marsden, 2003). As saltwater people, Yawuru articulations of connectedness are multi-layered; from traditional knowledge and practices learnt as a child and transmission of those to future generations to the reciprocity of sharing and receiving the gifts from the land and waters. These practices are heavily dependent on their

freedom to access the environment and their ability to carry out the responsibilities that have been handed down to them through their ancestor creation stories (YRNTBC, 2011).

The work with Yawuru offers several learnings pertinent to building a concept of sustainable human development that is inclusive and relevant for our times, particularly for the theme of the 2020 Human Development Report. The first relates to process. It is critically important that the pathways to sustainable human development are paved by involving those who know their lives best. This requires repositioning Indigenous peoples and communities as equal partners in designing and implementing policies and programmes. This approach has the benefit of transforming the way that data and information are presented and collected, by actively involving those on the ground, living in communities.

The second learning relates to localizing human development. Working with the Yawuru community reveals the many local specificities important for designing a tailored response. The seismic changes brought about by COVID-19 mean locally driven place-based initiatives will be more needed than ever. Through more inclusive processes that better reflect lived experiences and differing worldviews, we obtain deeper insights into existing dimensions and a better consideration of 'missing dimensions' that are often invisible partly because as a society, we have yet to attach a monetary value to them. Many of these 'missing dimensions' are reflected in the global responses to the ISC.

Perhaps 2020, with all its challenges, will be the year when the 'business as usual' way of understanding human development is transformed, where the gap between the aspirations of human development and the concepts and tools used to achieve human development can be narrowed to truly sustain human development for the coming decades.

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Human development must not ignore the suffering of people in poverty

People living in poverty need to be involved with rethinking human development. They help make visible dimensions of poverty that are too often invisible in the human development discourse, argues **Xavier Godinot**.

In the year 2000, the World Bank undertook a study in 50 developing countries. The findings were published in a report entitled *Voices of the poor*, which made the point that 'there are 2.8 billion poverty experts, the poor themselves. Yet, the development discourse about poverty has been dominated by the perspectives and expertise of those who are not poor'. It is thus refreshing that today, there is a new will to build knowledge in a more inclusive manner and to combine different types of knowledge innovatively. *The Global Sustainable Development Report 2019*, entitled *The future is now – science for achieving sustainable development* (GSDR, 2019), reflects this will. The overall report and the chapter on sustainability science, especially, explore how to re-conceptualize sustainable human development.

The report insists that scientists, policy-makers, business leaders and civil society radically rethink their partnerships and create experimental spaces for collaboration that could lead society onto a transformative pathway. Citizen science is a key tool for collaboration. Many sources of knowledge remain untapped and the best research happens when scientists collaborate with the communities that would be the immediate beneficiaries of the research. The report also highlights the need for combining academic knowledge with practical and indigenous knowledge. To ensure success, research partnerships should be based on principles that include joint agenda-setting, building trust, mutual learning, shared ownership, and accountability to beneficiaries.

The report's recommendations regarding science for sustainable development have been implemented in a research project, 'The hidden dimensions of poverty', conducted by International Movement ATD (All Together for Dignity) Fourth World with the University of Oxford, following the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals. The project sought to combine three different kinds of knowledge: (1) knowledge gained from the life experience of people trapped in poverty; (2) knowledge gained by professionals who serve the most deprived people, such as teachers, healthcare workers and social workers; and (3) academic knowledge, which is indispensable but partial.

The research was implemented in six countries: three from the Global North (France, the UK and the US) and three from the Global South (Bangladesh, Bolivia and Tanzania). An international coordination team was managed by ATD Fourth World and researchers from the University of Oxford, and national research teams were set up in the six countries. Each of the latter had 9–15 members: 4–6 people with direct experience of poverty and 2–4 academics and practitioners who provided services or advocacy for people in poverty. Experienced core workers from ATD Fourth World supported people living in poverty in ways that enabled their full participation on an equal footing with the academics and practitioners through the 'Merging Knowledge' approach. This approach is based on a shift in paradigm and in practice: instead of being objects of research and policies designed by others, people in poverty become co-researchers whose intelligence contributes to a common endeavour.

The research questions were: (1) What is poverty? and (2) What are its characteristics? The different types of knowledge resulting from life experience, action and academic research were first built in an independent way through meetings with peer groups. The subjective perceptions of individuals, when discussed and combined in many peer groups that are then merged, result in new collective knowledge with 'positional objectivity', as defined by

Amartya Sen. When the positional objectivity of people living in poverty is cross-fertilized with that of practitioners and academics, it results in more comprehensive knowledge with 'trans-positional objectivity'. For a given country, dimensions of poverty from rural and urban areas were combined to yield a single set for that country.

Eventually, 71 dimensions of poverty from six countries were merged during an international Merging Knowledge session. This process led to the identification of nine key dimensions of poverty that, despite differences in the daily lives of people in poverty across countries, are surprisingly similar.

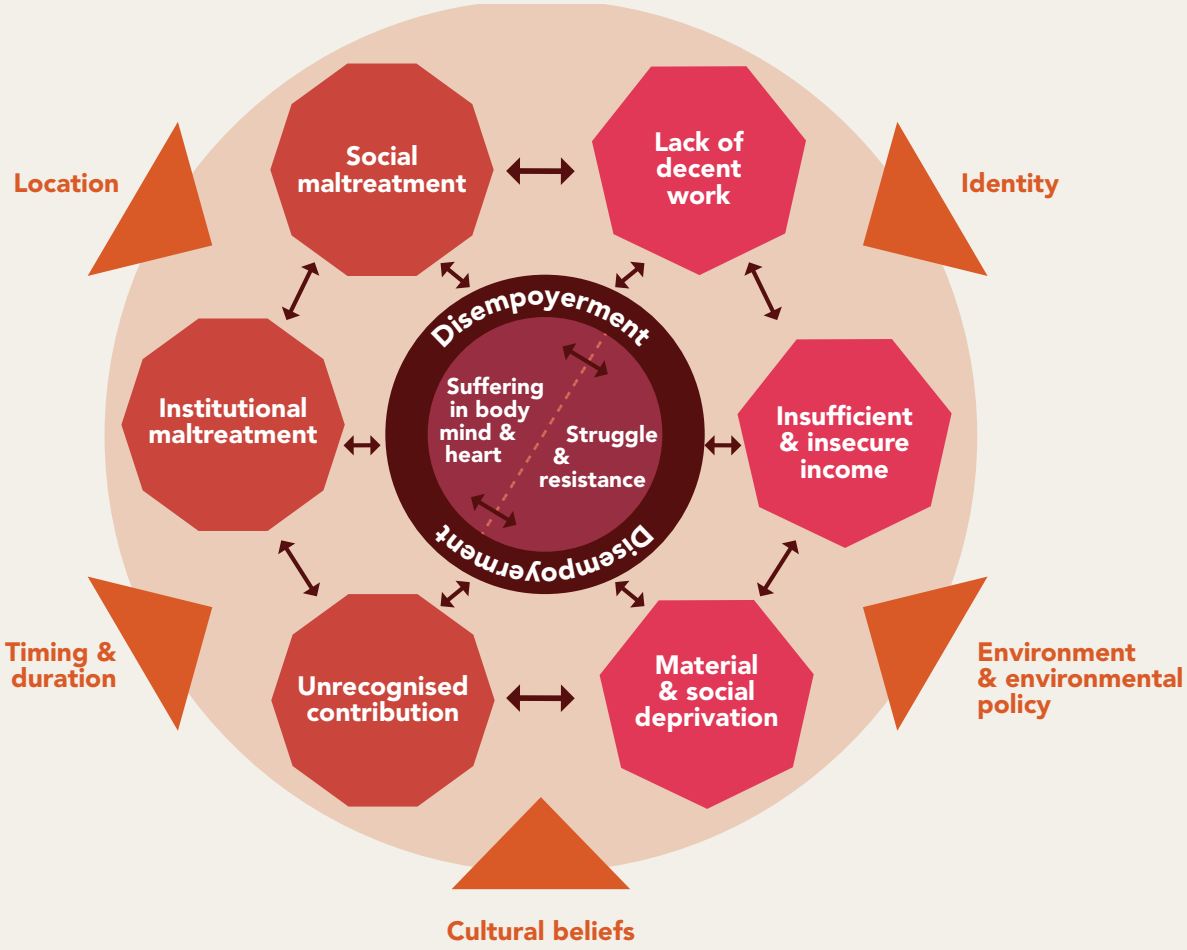

Figure: ATD Fourth World – University of Oxford diagram of the dimensions of poverty (BRAY et al., 2019)

> 'For the first time, the ATD – University of Oxford research places a bridge across [the] gulf in the measurement approaches to poverty in rich and poor countries…allowing us to see poverty through a single perspective.'
>
> Angel Gurria, Secretary General of the OECD

Six of these dimensions were previously hidden or rarely considered in policy discussions. Existing alongside the more familiar privations (highlighted in green in the diagram) relating to lack of decent work, insufficient and insecure income, and material and social deprivation, are three dimensions that are relational (highlighted in blue). These draw attention to the way that people who are not confronted by poverty affect the lives of those who are, through social maltreatment, institutional maltreatment and unrecognized contributions. The three dimensions that constitute the core experience of poverty (red circle and semi-circles) place the anguish and agency of people at the centre of the conceptualization of poverty: suffering in body, mind and heart, disempowerment, and struggle and resistance. These dimensions remind us why poverty must be eradicated. They also drive home that everyone, living in poverty or not, is dehumanized by the continued existence of poverty. All nine dimensions of poverty are closely interdependent and typically, in varying degrees, experienced together, cumulatively.

While every dimension is evident in all countries and most contexts, each varies in form and degree according to: *identity,* with discrimination on grounds such as ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation adding to that associated with poverty; *location*, urban, peri-urban, rural; *timing and duration*, short spells differing from long spells, poverty experienced in childhood or in old age varying from that experienced in working age; *cultural beliefs*, concerning for example, whether poverty is generally thought to be caused by structural factors or by personal failings; and *environment and environmental policy*, from climate change, soil degradation, pollution and associated policies, to urban deprivation and inadequate public infrastructure.

Why are six of these dimensions of poverty often invisible in the development discourse? The French historian Arlette Farge has revealed how, in past centuries, societies made every effort to deny the suffering of people trapped in poverty because it was disturbing and challenged all those who took advantage of the established order. Economists have also demonstrated this denial: John Kenneth Galbraith described the many ways of ignoring the worst-off in an article titled 'How to get the poor off our conscience'. There are many books on empowerment's capabilities, but the active process of dis-empowerment is rarely made visible. When governments decide not to invest in education so that they can continue to dominate and manipulate their people, this is a type of disempowerment.

The outcomes of the ATD Fourth World/University of Oxford research have been published in *The Hidden Dimensions of Poverty: International Participatory Research* (BRAY et al., 2019)

and in *World Development Journal*. The hidden dimensions of poverty that emerged from this research point to the need for new indicators and new policy recommendations that should be included in the forthcoming Human Development Report to increase its influence.

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Sustainable human development means living in harmony with nature

One of the most important aspects of rearticulating human development is to emphasize the need for fairness to nature and other living beings. We cannot be developed unless our lives become reconnected and in balance, cooperation and harmony with nature. A good balance between indigenous knowledge and modern science and technology can take us a long way towards this new vision of sustainable human development, says **Yanfen Wang**.

How should the concept of human development be re-conceptualized today, taking as a point of departure your work in China?

The general processes of human development are socio-economic development, emancipative cultural change and the democratization and extension of civil rights. This can lead to human activities focusing only on what we need, regardless of the environmental carrying capacity and resulting in unsustainable human development.

Such human-centred development is a common deficiency in human development nowadays. One of the major reasons is the lack of consideration of the environmental carrying capacity for long-term development. Many essential resources (e.g. fossil fuels) are non-renewable resources but they are being unreasonably exploited. Unrestricted human activity has also caused increasing pollution, such as air, water and soil pollution, which significantly threaten the health and safety of human beings. Therefore, we must abandon the human-centred development concept, advocate for the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, rationally develop and utilize resources, pay attention to environmental issues, and build the future of human development based on sustainable development.

Based on my experience, I have two suggestions in this field. One is the rational development and utilization of fossil energy, and the other is the development of clean energy, such as solar energy, wind energy and nuclear energy, which can not only ensure human development needs but also avoid environmental pollution. In fact, we are now promoting solar energy in the Tibetan Plateau to partly take the place of yak dung (which is burned as fuel) to protect people's health and also the local grasslands.

This is an important message to convey, that human-centred development might actually be misleading us. Why is it a problem to isolate humans from the rest of the environment?

I would like to use the term 'resilience' to further elaborate on this issue. Resilience is the ability of a system to bounce back to its original status when a disturbance disappears. It should be recognized that human beings and nature are interdependent and interrelated components of the earth system with some resilience when disturbance is at low levels. Indigenous knowledge has a good understanding of the laws of nature, such as the 24 solar terms in ancient China, which still can be used to guide farming activities. However, this is not enough for us in a much more quickly changing world with much more disturbance.

Science and technology has greatly improved social productivity and liberated the labour force. For example, agricultural production can be maximized through reasonable and scientific cultivation. Scientific research can provide better seeds for planting (e.g. hybrid rice), mechanized agriculture can reduce the burden on farmers, and a diversity of agricultural products can increase farmers' income. Furthermore, the advancement of science and technology has improved the efficiency of human labour, and the saved time can create additional value, such as agricultural product processing and work outside, which can also boost farmers' income. Moreover, progress in science and technology can effectively track climate change and predict natural disasters, helping us to face these

challenges. All these advancements have greatly improved social resilience. However, such advancements also bring problems, in terms of contributing to global warming, climatic extremes and pollution, which bring about more uncertainties in natural laws. Therefore, human development in the future should consider the effects of human activities on the natural laws.

To me, the coexistence of indigenous knowledge with science and technology is a way forward. We must obey the basic rules of being part of nature, while using our wisdom to improve living conditions. We must admit that we will never be able to live independently from the other elements of nature, such as animals, plants and even microorganisms.

You are an expert on education, and you have mentioned how the right type of education is important. How can education help us to educate people to understand their connection with nature and to better use science and technology to produce from nature without depleting the natural environment?

Education, as well as science and technology, is the foundation of human development. The significance of education for human development is reflected in two aspects. One is to increase social productivity from the perspective of production, and the other is to promote the concept of sustainable development through environmental education. For example, education can help people use natural resources more efficiently. I have found this with herdsmen in Inner Mongolia who have received knowledge through education on how to delay the grazing period to make their grass grow better, thus enabling them to have more efficient and healthier grasslands and more income from livestock. They have been able to learn from the experience of their elders and local and regional research groups. Complementing indigenous knowledge with modern science and technology will hugely improve local livelihoods while keeping them in balance with the local environment.

Environmental education may improve human awareness and participation in environmental protection, popularize environmental protection knowledge and skills, and thus help achieve sustainable development. Education is also the basic pathway for large-scale, rapid and effective dissemination of science and technology. Through education, the inheritance and innovation of science and technology can be realized, continuously developed and strengthened, and eventually effectively promote human development at no cost to the environment.

How can we make this message that the key to rearticulating human development lies in building from (rather than destroying) indigenous knowledge and culture more policy-friendly and influential?

We have talked about the knowledge and education of individuals and small communities, but what is more important is the education of society. In particular, I think we need to make efforts to enhance the environmental education of policy-makers and members of governments at national and international levels. I like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework because it helps us think about the sustainable 'us', and reminds us of personal behaviour (e.g. our carbon footprint and consumption habits). Meanwhile, we need more education at all levels of society, so more and more individuals regard these different elements as an interconnected whole. Clearly, these 17 goals are not all equally important to different countries, regions or communities. But finding the goals to emphasize in a specific context and ensuring they are integrated at all levels by education can be an important way forward.

If you were to propose a new definition of human development, what would it be?

I would like to identify some words to contribute to a new definition. One is 'harmony', conveying the importance of dealing with the relationship between humans and nature. The second is 'evenness' or 'even development', which suggests a joint development of all aspects of the SDGs and also all regions. The third is 'leave no one behind', indicating that human development should benefit everyone regardless of race, gender and social class.

Yanfen Wang is a Professor of Ecology and Executive Vice-President at the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. She has served as Vice-Chairman of the Ecological Society of China and the China Natural Resources Society, and is also an Independent Board Member of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

Human development should focus on people and the planet

David Molden suggests that a rethinking of human development needs a suitable vision of the future that puts just as much weight on non-material aspects such as happiness, cultural richness, diversity or nature as it does on economic growth.

Beyond the dichotomy of developed versus developing

The dominant vision of human development focuses on wealth and tangible things such as roads or building, and the provision of services. This vision, which takes countries like the United States (US), Japan or European states as models, leads to a dichotomy between developed and developing countries. But this dichotomy seems superfluous today because of several reasons. One reason is the growing inequality within countries, not just between them: some of the richest people in the world could be living in the same country as some of the poorest.

Another reason is that the dominant vision ignores viable alternatives. Bhutan, for example, prioritizes what it calls gross national happiness or well-being. This reframing focuses on what it is that really counts: it is people centred and about happiness, cultural richness, diversity and nature. Wealth and prosperity are not unimportant, nor are healthcare or infrastructure. But the vision of the future needs to put just as much weight on non-material aspects.

I find the word 'development' misleading. It is a bit strange to think of, say, Nepal as a 'developing' country. Yes, the country does not have the wealth or material resources that the so-called developed world has. But other things are valued in Nepal: there is a strong emphasis on society, culture and family ties. From that perspective, Nepal is quite well developed compared with countries such as the US, in which these crucial human dimensions are no longer the priority that they might once have been.

Challenges to human-centred development

Human development should focus on people and the planet; the vision should emphasize that everyone is in this together and overcome differences while respecting diversity. This would also help address climate change and put technologies at the service of people instead of in the hands of the few who own them. But there are some challenges involved in operationalizing such a vision.

One challenge is how human development is conceptualized outside the constraints of the environment. For example, there is often a debate – certainly in the Global South – about the relative importance of economic development versus the importance of the environment. In my opinion this debate is fruitless because, clearly, the economy and the environment are not only both important but are also interdependent. There is also a debate about the importance of large-scale projects, such as dams, versus community-led development. But one need not preclude the other. Framing the debate in terms of one perspective versus the other hinders creative responses for enhancing human development.

Another challenge is posed by a dominant short-termism. There is a tendency to think that long-term issues can be put to one side in order to focus on immediate needs: for example, cutting down a forest to facilitate immediate economic or social gains. But this tendency gets in the way of addressing questions such as climate change, which will affect not only the lives of our children but also our own lives in the coming decades.

A third challenge has to do with development aid and the bureaucracies that manage it. It is time to move beyond the notion of rich countries helping the poorer ones. Issues such as building resilience to climate change are not restricted to just some parts of the world: they are truly global. When somebody suffers in one part of the world, it should be everybody's problem. The perspective needs to be that global problems require global cooperation.

Finally, there might be simply too many political agendas that get in the way of joint work and long-term perspectives. Objectives change over time, often very quickly with changed administrations, and make it difficult to adopt a consistent, long-term approach to human development that encompasses also the interrelations among societies. Today's global institutions are important and do good work, but we need to bear in mind that underlying the concrete challenges of climate change are conceptual and operational challenges that need to be overcome. The COVID-19 epidemic is a blatant example of the importance of both political narratives and the effective operationalization of measures to enhance resilience across all sectors of societies.

Building resilience together

Mountain areas in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region offer a good example of the challenges posed by rapid climate and socio-environmental change. Many men migrate from villages to cities, leaving women behind to handle major problems. But more generally, people are moving from subsistence-based lifestyles to other ways of earning a livelihood. These are profound changes and shocks to the system on which communities in this region have been built over decades. Building resilience – the ability to adapt and thrive in the face of both social and environmental change – is important, and for that, working with communities themselves is critical. Solutions need to be co-developed with the affected communities in order for them to thrive and to advance.

In the work that we do at ICIMOD, it has been quite inspiring to bring together different perspectives, and to engage actively with communities. It is not only communities but also governments that appreciate this approach in the region. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to build resilience, and it does take some training and experience. For example, it is crucial to recognize that people might value different things in life. Sometimes, working with people on the ground is more time-consuming than top down measures, but it is certainly the approach that needs to be used more in the future – because in our experience in this region and other mountain areas, it is the only one that works.

In this context, it is encouraging that people in the HKH region are keen to understand and learn about what is happening. They have been open to scientific knowledge provided, for example about how climate change is affecting water systems, and how this has consequences for energy systems. It has therefore been possible to get science-based resilience strategies higher up on the agendas of local policy-makers. Of course, there is a debate about what can and should be done now as opposed to later, given the very tight and limited resources available. But, unlike in some parts of the world where there is a lot of political polarization, people in the HKH region have been very open to science-based messages.

In the HKH region, lack of regional integration is a real concern that inhibits economic growth and development in its many dimensions, and has led to conflict. On the other hand, many people in other countries appreciate their shared cultures and background, and recognize the joint challenge of climate change in mountain areas. ICIMOD has therefore been working across boundaries, bringing countries together to address mountain environments and livelihood development. Communities and governments across HKH countries, while diverse, have similar challenges like addressing climate change. ICIMOD has set up platforms to bring scientists, communities, practitioners and policy-makers together, and in spite of political differences, there is a good understanding between participants. Perhaps crises like COVID-19 and climate change are also a perfect opportunity for countries to come together and put together a vision of sustainable development that includes what is important for mountain people.

David Molden is Director General of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), an intergovernmental knowledge organization dedicated to the mountains and people of the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. He comes from a background specializing in water resource management and sustainable mountain development with an interest in integrating social, technical, environmental, community and policy views for better management of natural resources.

The biggest threat to human development is excessive consumption in high-income economies

In this interview, **Jason Hickel** highlights the need for human development to focus on excessive resource use in economies of the Global North. He points out that countries currently scoring high on the Human Development Index are not able to do so within planetary boundaries, which goes against the aim of long-term common well-being.

How should the concept of human development be rearticulated?

We've already made important strides in improving the definition of development. It used to be entirely based on gross domestic product (GDP) but since the 1990s, with the emergence of the Human Development Index (HDI), it has come to account for education and health as well. More recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have added a broader range of different objectives that we seek to achieve.

So, our objectives are becoming more human-centred, and that is important. Unfortunately, GDP remains a strong component of our development concept, including in the HDI, where

it represents one third of the total value. Even the SDGs have a full goal dedicated to GDP growth, SDG 8. In an era of ecological breakdown, we must rethink this pervasive centrality of GDP growth. For instance, in my work I have demonstrated that SDG 8 is incompatible with ecological objectives in the SDGs, because of the tight coupling of GDP to energy and resource use.

The dominant idea in development is that we should pursue GDP growth as our top objective, and hope that this will somehow magically trickle down and improve people's lives. This is an irrational approach. Instead, we should focus on the goals that we actually want to achieve: better health, better education, better wages – whatever they might be. In the Global South, doing this is likely to entail some growth, and that's okay as most of these countries are still well within the planet's ecological boundaries. The good news is that we know it is possible for countries to achieve high levels of human development while also remaining within planetary boundaries.

Costa Rica is a brilliant example of this. Costa Rica has a life expectancy higher than that of the United States (US), with happiness levels that rival northern European and Scandinavian countries, and it does all this while remaining almost entirely within planetary boundaries. How? By investing in high-quality universal healthcare and education for all. That's the secret to progress. And it does not take high levels of GDP to get there.

High-income nations, however, face a different problem. High-income nations vastly exceed planetary boundaries. Indeed, they are responsible for virtually all of global ecological overshoot, which is destabilizing ecosystems around the world. The notion that high-income nations need still more economic growth is madness. Why does the US need to grow any further? There are dozens of countries that achieve higher levels of human development than the US, with much less GDP. Portugal beats the US with 65% less GDP per capita. So, the US does not need more GDP to accomplish its goals; rather, it needs to distribute income more fairly, and to invest in universal public goods.

The Human Development Index has a problem. If you want to score high on the HDI, if that is your objective as a government, then you have to raise your GDP up towards US$75,000 per capita. It is impossible to do that while remaining within planetary boundaries and without extraordinary levels of ecological impact. And this kind of income is actually not necessary to achieve healthy, happy and flourishing lives for all. We must re-evaluate the extent to which rich nations need to pursue more growth. There is no justification for it, especially given that excess growth in the North is now causing severe damage in the South.

Remember, the North is responsible for the vast majority of historical emissions that have caused climate change, but the effects of climate change disproportionately damage the Global South. The same is true of other forms of ecological breakdown. Fifty per cent of the North's resource consumption is appropriated from the South, with significant impact in extraction zones, including through deforestation, pollution and mining. What this means is that excess economic activity in the North is not innocent: it actively harms people elsewhere in the world.

Every time media outlets give data on stock prices, they should also give data on insect biomass, biodiversity, carbon emissions and deforestation rates. We need to understand that our economy is embedded in our planet's ecosystems, not separate from it. The fate of our civilization hinges on the fate of the living world.

Ultimately, we need to shift to a model of human development that is consistent with planetary boundaries. What does this mean for the SDGs? It means we need to get rid of the growth objective in Goal 8. As for HDI, it is essential that we correct it for ecological impacts, and change how we measure the income component. Right now, the HDI violates the principles of justice and universalizability. It is not possible for all countries to inhabit the top of the HDI because of the way that the income component is structured. Instead of aiming for high levels of GDP, we should be aiming for levels that are sufficient for human flourishing.

You are completely collapsing the concept of human development with the HDI, whereas the concept that emerged 30 years ago defines human development as living the lives people have reason to value. It seems this core meaning has been displaced by the HDI. Do you think that's the case?

I think that is true to some extent. Indexes and metrics always have a dark side. They are useful to the extent that they may help us measure our objectives more easily, but they also obscure the real complexity of social life. Look at the way the HDI is structured in terms of education: we can all agree that education is an important factor in human development, and yet the indicator we use for that is the number of years people spend in school, when there is no guarantee that spending lots of years in school is going to give you a good education, and there are also no grounds on which we can say that those who spend less time in school are not educated.

As an anthropologist, I can tell you that working with indigenous people you will find that maybe they have only spent a few years in school and yet they have a grasp of how ecology and ecosystems work that exceeds that of most university professors, for instance. One could

never gain that kind of understanding even after 15 years in formal education. Are we to say they are uneducated? So, the education metric today blinds us to the complexity of social life and, unfortunately, it also creates really problematic hierarchies. If you look at a map of countries that score highest on the education index, they are all in the Global North. So, we are led to conclude that the North is 'smarter', and yet it is precisely those countries that are causing the most harm to our collective future. How is that smarter? How is that more advanced? There's something wrong here. We must ask: what gets left out of this picture?

The anthropological perspective is extremely important to hear because it is not only the problem of the centrality of GDP growth, but is also how the other measures are interpreted. If we take an idea of human-centric development that is all these things, what would be the key challenges today?

For the past half century or more, the project of international development has been organized around the 'deficiencies' of poor countries. The idea has been that there is something wrong with poor countries and they need to be fixed. For example, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and bilateral development agencies such as United States Agency for International Development (USAID) all send missions to Global South countries to try to fix them.

This is a problem in two ways. Firstly, because in reality underdevelopment in the Global South isn't primarily about domestic problems. It is about power imbalances in the world economy. Think about it this way: the Global South contributes up to 80% of the labour and resources that go into the global economy, and yet it receives a mere fraction of the income from global economic growth. The poorest 60% of humanity receive only 5% of new income from growth. These are the people that harvest the tea, coffee and sugar that the world uses every day – grow the bananas and berries that Europeans eat for breakfast, sew the clothes that everyone wears. The global economy literally depends on the labour of the poor, and yet they receive only pennies.

Secondly, the richest 1% of humanity receives about 28% of all new income from global growth. The disparities are extraordinary. And this is not an accident. It's because of the way the global economy is structured. It's because of the way the debt system works, which grants rich nations the ability to control economic policy in poor nations. It's because of how the trade system works, where the richest countries have all the bargaining power and get to set the rules in their own interests. Poor countries have been integrated into the global economy on unequal terms – that's what is perpetuating poverty.

This will never be fixed by sending missions to help poor countries 'fix' domestic policy. This is a problem that has to do with power and balances in the global economy. Who has the voting power in the World Bank and the IMF? Who has the bargaining power in the World Trade Organization? These are not democratic institutions; these are institutions that allow a small handful of rich countries to determine the rules of the global economy. If we want to see real development in the Global South, we have to challenge the balance of power in the global economy. Anything else misses the point.

So, that's one shift we have to make. Stop seeing poor countries as the primary problem. It's rich countries that are the problem. This is true in another sense as well. Remember, the goal now is to accomplish human development within planetary boundaries. On this front, poor countries are the easy part. We know it is possible for the Global South to achieve high levels of human development within planetary boundaries, like Costa Rica has done. How did Costa Rica do it? Universal public healthcare, universal education, social security and so on. These human-centred public services are systems that most countries in the Global South were putting in place in the immediate post-colonial decades of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and yet were systematically dismantled in the 1980s and 1990s by structural adjustment programmes. Structural adjustment cut public sector spending on healthcare and education, cut wages and privatized public assets, all with devastating consequences for poor people. That is the main reason why life expectancy is lower in the Global South today than in the Global North. The rest of the South could have been like Costa Rica, with a life expectancy of 80 years, had they not been brutalized by structural adjustment.

So, poor countries are the easy part. We know how to do it, and we know it's possible. It's rich countries that are the hard part. Rich countries have to massively scale down their energy and resource use to get back down within planetary boundaries and back into balance with the living world – that has never been attempted before in all of history: it is new terrain. Therefore, this is the real challenge of development in the 21st century: to bring the North back within planetary boundaries. It is possible to do, but requires a totally different economic paradigm; it requires abandoning GDP growth and shifting to post-growth and degrowth models.

If we were to really make the case for human-centric development being the priority for any kind of decision-making, not only policy decision-making but also private sector, how can this be achieved and what needs to happen to push for that understanding of putting human development within planetary boundaries?

New Zealand has made some interesting moves in this direction: they recently abandoned GDP growth as an objective and replaced it with human well-being. Scotland and Iceland are following suit. That is an immensely important first step. Right now, we have a situation where we target GDP growth and then we hope that somehow magically it will accomplish our social goals. This is an irrational and imprecise way of approaching the economy. It makes more sense to target the things we want to achieve directly and to make that the goal of governments.

But it's also not enough, in and of itself. Rich countries need to actively scale down resource use and energy use. And I'm not talking about distant targets, like: 'let's have resource use down to sustainable levels by 2050'. No, cap resource use and ratchet it down, year on year, to sustainable levels. We need annual targets. Ecological economists have been calling for this for a very long time. It's not rocket science.

This means having a conversation about what parts of the economy we actually need. We often start from the assumption that all sectors of the economy must grow, all the time, regardless of whether we need them. But it doesn't have to be this way. We can decide what sectors we want to grow (like clean energy and public services), and what sectors should radically degrow (like SUVs, private jets, McMansions, the arms industry and industrial beef and dairy). Real economic sovereignty means having the freedom to have this conversation.

What I am calling for here is not peripheral to the project of international development; it is absolutely central. Excess growth in rich nations is driving ecological breakdown and actively harming development in the South: we are seeing hunger and poverty rates rise in some areas, and that will only get worse as the century wears on. If we don't deal with the problem of excess in the North, we undermine the project of international development itself.

What will be an optimal definition of the concept of human development?

Well, ideally, we probably need to get away from the concept of development altogether. Perhaps we should speak about flourishing or promoting well-being instead, within planetary boundaries. We need a much more holistic approach.

One of the problems with capitalist civilization is that for 500 years we have imagined that humans are fundamentally separate from the rest of the living world, and that sense of separation is what has allowed us to treat nature and other human beings as objects to be exploited. What the 21st century demands from us is to restore a sense of our intrinsic connection to the rest of the living world.

Ultimately, what we call 'the economy' is the material expression of our relationship with each other and with the rest of the living world, with all of life. We must ask ourselves, what do we want that relationship to look like? Do we want it be a relationship of extraction and exploitation, or a relationship of reciprocity and care? That is the question we have to ask ourselves. If our conception of human development does not take that broader picture into account, then I think we are missing the point.

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Well-being versus GDP: the challenge and opportunity of human development in the 21st century

In this commentary, **David C. Korten** asks – is humanity's defining economic goal to grow GDP or to secure the well-being of people and the living Earth?

A rearticulation of human development for the 21st century is much needed. I am honoured by the invitation from the ISC and UNDP to contribute to the discussion. I suggest that a defining focus of the discussion be on a question that the UN has long evaded: is humanity's defining economic goal to grow gross domestic product (GDP) or to secure the well-being of people and the living Earth?

A global commitment to the economic development of low-income countries began to gain international traction shortly before the end of the Second World War. By the mid-1980s, many of us who had dedicated our lives to that cause concluded that something was badly amiss.

Important progress had been made in extending people's lives through immunizations and other public health measures. The focus on growing formal sector production and

consumption as measured by GDP, however, ignored the essential needs of most people and completely ignored the requirements of Earth's natural systems. People were being stripped of control of their means of living and Earth was being stripped of its capacity to sustain life. Those alarming outcomes have continued to worsen.

By the estimates of the Global Footprint Network (2018), humans currently consume at a rate 1.7 times what Earth's regenerative systems can sustain. As a consequence, we are destroying the health of the living systems that provide the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the stability of the climate that shapes the daily life of every living being. As ever more of Earth's surface becomes uninhabitable, growing millions of displaced people abandon their homes in fear and sadness to seek refuge in Earth's shrinking liveable places.

In October 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned that greenhouse gas pollution must be reduced by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030, and 100% by 2050 to prevent irreparable consequences for Earth and humanity. Meanwhile, extreme and growing inequality compels the vast majority of the world's people to struggle for survival on a daily basis.

Oxfam reports that 26 billionaires now hold personal financial assets greater than those of the poorest half of humanity (Oxfam, 2019). Oxfam further estimates that the poorest 3.9 billion people account for only roughly 10% of total carbon emissions, while the richest 10% account for roughly half (Oxfam, 2015).

In the United States – which boasts of being the world's richest country – the wealthiest 1% own substantially more wealth than the bottom 90%. Many of the latter face a daily struggle to meet essential needs. Six in ten would have difficulty coming up with $1,000 to cover an emergency expense like a medical bill or car repair[1].

Some countries are doing a better job than the United States, but the overall picture is a combination of obscene overconsumption by a favoured few and unconscionable desperation for the majority – a situation highlighted and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Stated simply, we are destroying Earth's capacity to support life to grow the fortunes of a few billionaires.

1 Vasel, Kathryn. 2018. Most Americans can't cover a $1000 emergency. CNN Money. https://money.cnn.com/2018/01/18/pf/lack-of-savings-cover-unexpected-expense/index.html (Accessed 15 October 2020)

Despite improvement on selected indicators, from a well-being perspective the overall development experience has been a profound failure. We are assured that holding course on the commitment to grow GDP will eventually end poverty and save the environment. Experience suggests the exact opposite. We are long past due in recognizing that the economic theory underlying this assertion is based on false assumptions regarding Earth, ourselves and money.

The deadly COVID-19 pandemic that has shut down the entire global economy now combines with the climate emergency and the threat of future pandemics to bring nature's primacy to the forefront of human attention. The pandemic also demonstrates our human capacity for rapid, dramatic global-scale change when conditions demand.

The human future depends on deep change guided by a 21st century economics grounded in three basic truths:

1. **Human well-being depends on the well-being of the living Earth.** All living beings depend on living communities that self-organize to create, share and continuously regenerate the conditions essential to life. We are children of the living Earth community that birthed and nurtures us. Our well-being depends on her well-being. She long existed without us. We cannot exist without her. Restoring her health must be a defining economic priority.

2. **Humans are a choice-making species of many possibilities.** The historical diversity of human cultures and institutions demonstrates that we are a species of many possibilities. We can, for example, cooperate to nurture. Or compete to exploit. What defines our distinctive nature is our ability to make shared cultural and institutional choices that in turn shape our individual and collective relationships with one another and Earth.

3. **The drive to grow money imperils the human future.** Money is a number that has value only when other people have something to sell that we need or desire. Useful as a tool, money becomes dangerous when embraced as a purpose. A society that chooses to exploit people and nature to grow money for people who already have more money than they need increases the gap between rich and poor, destroys Earth's capacity to support life, and leads ultimately to human self-extinction.

The human future depends on making cultural and institutional choices that align with our needs as living beings – make life, not money, our defining value, and actualize the potential of our human nature and democratic aspirations. These choices frame an emerging vision of a new and truly civilized civilization of peace, justice, material sufficiency, and spiritual and creative abundance for all.

The path to this desirable future requires stepping back to see ourselves anew as a self-aware choice-making species with a profound responsibility to contribute to Earth's healing from the harms our past carelessness has wrought. Fulfilling that responsibility will require deep restructuring of our human relationships with one another and Earth, grounded in a recognition that our human capacity for choice comes with corresponding responsibilities for the well-being of the whole on which our well-being in turn depends.

In our focus on human rights, we have neglected our corresponding human responsibilities. Recrafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Responsibilities could be a defining mark of our readiness to take the step to a new pro-life civilization that provides adequate, secure and fulfilling work for all through a redirection of Purpose, Power and Procreation.

1. **Redirect Purpose from growing GDP to securing the well-being of people and planet.**
   In making GDP growth our defining human purpose, we have made money our defining value and created an economy at odds with our nature as living beings that depend on a living Earth and are possessed of a highly evolved capacity for self-aware choice. We get what we measure. We now have ample evidence that growing GDP is detrimental to the well-being of people and Earth. It is time to focus instead on measures of well-being.

   Managing our complex relationships with one another and Earth using GDP as our only performance measure and growth as our only goal is like flying an airplane using only an airspeed indicator, with the goal of maximizing speed. Since the fastest speed can best be achieved by rapid descent, it is a formula for a deadly crash.

   Safely flying an airplane requires a dashboard of indicators, including altitude and direction. Managing a modern economy to meet our essential needs in balanced relationship to Earth is even more challenging. Kate Raworth, in her widely acclaimed Doughnut Economics model, calls for two dashboards: one for human well-being and the other for Earth's well-being. The goal is to move all indicators into a healthy balanced relationship and then hold a steady course.

2. **Redirect Power from money-seeking corporations to life-serving communities.**
   The concept of equality enshrined in one-person, one-vote democracy was intended to secure the power of the people. Ultimate power, however, resides in control of access to the means of living.

   Democracy, and humanity itself, cannot survive extreme inequality in the distribution of ownership and control of finance and the means of making a living. Limited liability

corporations are legal instruments for concentrating virtually unlimited power into the hands of private individuals seeking to maximize personal financial returns freed from public accountability for the consequences of their decisions. As such, they are illegitimate institutions and their transformation must be a key human priority.

Ownership must be equitably distributed, and owners must be held accountable by the community for exercising their ownership rights in ways that align with their ownership responsibilities. Equitable distribution of ownership rights and responsibilities must be enshrined in both law and culture.

3. **Redirect Procreation from increasing the human population to launching healthy, meaningful and productive lives.** Finite Earth is the common creation and heritage of all living beings. The products of its regenerative systems must be equitably shared among humans and other species. Among humans, no one holds a right to excess while others are denied their fundamental needs. The more we limit our human numbers, the more of Earth's products are available for us each to share. If we choose to grow our numbers, we have less to share, and we must each be more frugal.

   Every child must be a wanted child. Human conception must be a conscious choice consistent with our distinctive human abilities and responsibilities. And every person must have the means to make conception a conscious and informed choice.

It truly requires a village to raise a human child. Thus, every person must be educated to fulfil their responsibilities for the children they bear and to fulfil their shared responsibility for all of Earth's children. Similarly, every person, whether or not they choose to conceive a child, is entitled to share in the joy and challenge of securing the well-being of the children of our species and preparing them for the responsibilities of their future adulthood. No one should feel they must have children to share in the joy of raising children, or to assure their own security in their final years. The world has more than enough human children. What we lack is adequate attention to the care and development of all our children to reach their full potential.

The pandemic's disruption of every aspect of normal daily life presses us to step back and take a deeper look at how we can redefine human development within a well-being framework. It is well past time to free the UN's work on human development and its Sustainable Development Goals from the misdirection created by inserting perpetual GDP and personal income growth as defining human goals.

We are an intelligent self-aware species falling far short of our potential contribution to Earth's living community. That so many among us now recoil from the thought of a return

to business as usual after the pandemic is a source of hope. Perhaps we may yet come together to actualize our possibilities to reconnect to life with a deepened understanding of ourselves and our relationship to and responsibility for Earth, one another and Earth's community of life.

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We need a stronger notion of common human needs

Ian Gough argues for the kind of development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to do so, and a rearticulation of a theory of human needs that allows us to meet individual and social needs within planetary boundaries.

How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development?

My point of departure is the basic needs approach that I set out with Len Doyal in 1991 in our book *A Theory of Human Need*. The theoretical foundation of this work is that we need an objective notion of the needs all people share. These are, for example, health, education, effective participation or autonomy. This means that some social organizations are better equipped than others to provide for these needs. This perspective is now more relevant than ever, yet it is blatantly clear that universal human needs ought to be seen against planetary boundaries.

I have always been keen on the Human Development Index because it places health and education alongside GDP growth, and represents a better proxy to measure how autonomous people can be. However, other crucial variables are not taken into consideration. A key missing variable is environmental sustainability, as we live in a world with important material constraints and climate change is a threat to all.

A clear example of this perspective is illustrated by Kate Raworth's Doughnut Diagram. She places planetary boundaries on the outside, while the human needs base remains at the core. In my view this is the bottom line and what the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) enable us to see more clearly. However, the SDGs do not have a strong theoretical foundation, and this is the area where we need most work going forward. If we take, for example, the basic definition in the *Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. That is, rethinking human development within planetary limits.

Could you tell us more about the core ideas you present in your book *Heat, Greed and Human Need*?

The book introduces a discussion on the theory of human needs, in a manner that can inform the operationalization of the SDGs. The subtitle of the book is *Climate Change, Capitalism and Sustainable Wellbeing*, as I believe this is the real concrete context in which to rethink needs and development.

I am aware that there are other people who argue we need a more disaggregated measure of human development, for example the disaggregation that Raworth makes in the inner circle of her Doughnut approach. I believe that today, the work of Julia Steinberger and Dan O'Neill at Leeds University – A Good Life For All Within Planetary Boundaries – has a lot of potential. This work iterates the two insights that we need to attend to both planetary boundaries and human needs. These authors challenge our theory of human needs and reframe needs as material intermediate needs that enable human development, such as housing, water and nutrition. At the same time, they cross reference those needs with planetary boundary measures. The end result is an overall measure of what you could call a rearticulated (sustainable) human development.

The authors look at three groups of countries in the world. They look at the rich countries that do well on human development but terribly on the sustainability and planetary boundary index. Then they look at countries like India, which score quite badly on many social grounds, but have very low emissions and natural resource impact. And then somewhere in between you find the score of countries like China. What this tells us is that we need high human development that has low impact on planetary boundaries, and no country is close to such a goal.

What are the most important challenges for this notion of human development within planetary boundaries?

The answer to this question is very simple. The biggest challenge is global capitalism. In my book I look at the possibilities for a hopeful future and unpack how the current levels of inequality are simply outrageous. Inequalities keep rising and the absolute differences in income and wealth widen continually over time. This is the result of a model of growth that is taking the whole planet along the same pathway. The key question is how this can be modified, challenged, diverted to avoid the climate and ecological breakdown that might become inevitable. An extraordinary amount of action is required to keep global temperatures below the 1.5°C average in relation to pre-industrial times, as recommended by the Paris Agreement. The intellectual challenge relates to the fact that neoclassical economics and individual satisfaction remain at the core of the measure of well-being. This view remains central in all countries and it is still being taught at most universities. In short, the connected challenges of global capitalism, climate breakdown and the pervasiveness of neoliberal economic thinking are, in my mind, the three most important challenges to human development.

How can we then make the human development approach more relevant and more influential for policy-making and for decision-makers? What do you think needs to happen in order to move it beyond this dominance of neoclassical economics?

To me, the only way is to challenge this paradigm, first and foremost, theoretically. We need a stronger notion of common human needs. It is the only thing that can apply in the rich West and in the poorer South. A notion of human needs that has meaning everywhere and for everyone. From this theoretical perspective then one can differentiate necessities and luxuries, including the luxuries that destroy the environment and the hopes of future generations. There have to be challenges to the types and levels of consumption in the West, as well as challenges to the modes of development in the South. I still think that is the central challenge. I believe, however, that these challenges are already beginning to be made, at least to a certain extent.

The COVID-19 crisis has shaken things up a lot. It has led, for example, to the need to identify essential workers, and now we see that many governments have lists of who those essential workers are – demonstrating that this accounts for almost one third of the total labour force. Then we have seen more clearly who the non-essential workers are, often emerging as those involved in the types of activities that lead to individual pleasure, or activities that are simply unproductive, that create dangers and undermine welfare. That sort of discourse is coming back now.

This epidemic has also shown that governments can spend lots of money quickly if they want to. They can borrow money at 0% interest, also showing that the way we manage finances can be changed at short notice. To me these shifts that are happening now are hopeful and could lead to a revival of the human needs-based approach.

To conclude, what would be, in your opinion, a meaningful and useful definition of human development for our changing world today?

To me the most meaningful definition of human developed is expressed very clearly in the Brundtland Report. Human development is about meeting the needs of everyone on the planet today without preventing future generations from doing the same. And this is what many good scholars are trying to do now when providing alternative ways to measure development. For example, Jason Hickel is building what he calls the Sustainable Development Index, building on the Human Development Index. He wants to keep health and education, but rather than focusing on income, he factors in measures of emissions and use of material resources. This leads us to a very different view on who is and who is not 'successfully developed', and reveals that middle-income countries such as Costa Rica often score the highest. The second approach that I believe is also important is represented by the work of the 'Living well within limits', or LiLi approach, that I introduced earlier. Here scholars propose a much more disaggregated perspective both regarding planetary limits and human needs satisfaction.

What all this work tells us is that it is possible to tackle the SDGs. Many of us thought the SDGs, even though hugely influential and signed by most countries in the world, were almost like an impossible task, with 17 goals and more than 150 targets. In my work I have attempted to separate the indicators that apply to individuals, such as nutrition, from other social development goals, such as peace and gender equality, which are dependent on structural issues. This enables us to see better what the potential actions are to meet the targets.

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Human development is dependent on planetary well-being

Aditi Mukherji argues that the dependence of human development on planetary well-being needs to be embedded formally within the Human Development Index, and that investment in social welfare, reduction in inequality, and decentralization are needed both in the Global North and the Global South. She also touches upon water as a crucial issue for climate change adaptation.

Flourishing within planetary boundaries

The notion of human development, when it started 30 years ago, was revolutionary and certainly far more holistic than gross domestic product (GDP) indices. Now, we have reached a point where it's clearer than ever that humans can flourish only if our planet remains habitable. Our aspiration for 'development' should be tempered by our knowledge that we cannot keep emitting carbon dioxide and expect that our children and grandchildren will flourish. Climate change has communicated this message loud and clear, but so has COVID-19 – by reminding us of the costs of environmental destruction.

Human development is all about choosing one's destiny. Parents can still tell their children that they can be whatever they want to be, but also that this is contingent on respect for

the Earth. As Mahatma Gandhi noted, the Earth has enough to satisfy everyone's need, but not everyone's greed. In the past, there was the idea that the world was for humans to conquer and subjugate, a means for fulfilling our aspirations. That brashness needs toning down: today's human aspirations must not come at the expense of harm to the planet or to future generations.

Of course, the dependence of human development on planetary well-being is understood pretty well today, at least by the research community. But it needs to be embedded formally within the Human Development Index. Moreover, governments need to be weaned away from a 'development versus environment' framing. People cannot be lifted out of poverty if the environment that supports them is destroyed.

Investing in society, tackling inequality

Many countries in the Global South have done rather well recently with respect to growth in GDP. They have managed to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. But at the same time, some of these countries did not invest adequately in social welfare and healthcare. This underinvestment has happened not only in the Global South but also in many parts of the Global North. The consequences are becoming clear with the spread of COVID-19, which has highlighted the integral role of social development and its requirement for investing in health, education and water, for instance.

Growing inequality is a major challenge to human development. The benefits of the phenomenal growth of the past few decades have not been equitably distributed, leading to stark inequalities within almost every society. No wonder, then, in countries like India, a two-month lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has caused such tremendous hardship. Look at the situation of migrant labourers in India, for example. When the lockdown was announced at very short notice, preventing people from moving around the country, no one had thought of the terrible consequences this would have for the migrant labourers who found themselves in no man's land without housing or jobs.

Around the world, more equal societies have tackled COVID-19 relatively better than more unequal ones. Take, for instance, the Indian state of Kerala. Despite registering the first three national cases of COVID-19 and having the highest number of cases initially, the state was able to flatten the curve – a big deal given its high population density. What seems to have worked for Kerala is its long-term investment in healthcare and education, and its strong and effective local governance. The panchayats – the local governing bodies – are

empowered to take decisions in an efficient and democratic manner. Kerala therefore highlights the importance of decentralized decision-making. Kerala also has quite high literacy levels.

Water as a crucial issue for adaptation

Continuing with the theme of decentralization, water is an example of how the lure of large, centralized undertakings leads to small-scale, locally managed projects getting pushed to the margins. Governments' fascination with mega dams or interlinking of rivers often comes at the expense of simple low-cost projects, such as reviving small water bodies and providing water access through decentralized models. In part, this is because there are too few local voices in the decision-making process. While understanding of the global water cycle and its changes due to climate change is crucial, at its heart, water is a local issue: critical water actions need to be rooted in the local context.

In the context of climate change, if mitigation is about carbon then adaptation is really about water. Yet, water is not prominent in discussions on adaptation finance, for example. Water needs to be more central in the discourse of climate change and even while coping with crises such as COVID-19. Indeed, access to water will determine how well society responds to such challenges.

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Human-centred development must focus on protecting and restoring nature's systems

Joshua Farley reflects on how definitions of essential needs – and how they are met – are culturally specific, and how market mechanisms may be inadequate to meet certain needs central to human development.

What do you think is at the core of a human-centred development concept?

We must be careful how we talk about 'human-centred', because I really believe that humans are an integral part of global ecosystems, part of nature. To call it a human-centred approach is similar to taking a 'heart-centred' approach to health: it is only one small component of the system. In terms of thinking about human well-being in contrast to simply the accumulation of material things, I heartily approve of it, but I am deeply concerned about a human-centred focus that neglects the rest of the ecosystem that we and all other species absolutely depend on for our survival. For example, I am an ecological economist and in my field a lot of people talk about ecosystem services in terms of benefits that nature provides to people. While I think that is important, I also think we have to recognize that

if the scientists are right, we have exceeded multiple planetary boundaries and are at risk of catastrophic outcomes. That means that if we want to continue to thrive as a species in a civilization, we need to start focusing on restoring the damage we have done before it is too late. We have a narrow window of opportunity in which to act before the damage becomes irreversible. What we really need is a society that, instead of thinking about what nature does for us, begins to think about what human society can do for nature. Since we depend on nature's systems for our survival, even purely human-centred development must focus on protecting and restoring nature's systems, but too much emphasis on the human side makes us forget we are only a small part of the whole.

In connection to that idea, what do you think are the main challenges or obstacles to human development today?

One of them, I think, is precisely that idea that humans view themselves as distinct and separate from nature and not dependent on nature in any way. Economists in particular are very explicit about it: we used to talk about nature, capital and labour as the three factors of production, where nature includes land and raw materials; but gradually, a hundred years ago, economists decided that nature is not really necessary, and labour and capital are perfect substitutes for nature. This contradicts the basic physical law that we cannot make something from nothing. Nature provides all the raw materials required for economic production and is the sole recipient of all the wastes we generate. Economists first dropped nature from the production function and now we are focusing more and more on financial capital. At this rate, economists might drop labour from the production function as well.

The other big obstacle in terms of how I would define human development relates to the fact that we are among the most social species: humans are incapable of surviving apart from their society and culture. Even our most basic functions, to go to the bathroom in a sustainable way for example, requires this incredible accumulation of knowledge, generated by millions of people over thousands of years, to develop our sewage systems, our toilets. In human development there is often this emphasis on individual freedoms and individual needs, but we have to recognize that we are part of a huge society, a culture we cannot survive without, and that most of the challenges we face today do not rely on individual choices. Rather, they call for collective actions and collective choices, about climate, about biodiversity, even about things like equity and how our society is distributing our resource base – our shared inheritance from nature. We have this myth that markets award resources based on people's productive capacity or more specifically on their marginal output. We live in a political economy in which power relations determine who gets what. Focusing

too much on the individual prevents us from understanding that only collective action and collective decisions are possible for many of our most serious challenges: I cannot possibly, as an individual, choose how much climate stability I want or how clean I want my water sources or air to be.

Even how we satisfy our basic needs is heavily influenced by our society. Our culture defines what is necessary and different cultures can define that very differently. I agree with Manfred Max-Neef's view that there are basic needs that are universal across cultures. He notes there is a need for subsistence, but also for affection, understanding, participation, creativity, identity and so on. These are universal across cultures, but the way each culture satisfies them can differ a lot. As cultures, we shape what is required to fulfil those needs and that makes this really difficult and culturally context-dependent. Too many of the experts in these areas come from what has been dubbed the WEIRD cultures (White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic), who then assume that their values apply everywhere. That is a major problem with any definition of human-centred development developed by the educated elite.

The other important point about human development that interests me is the evolution of cooperation and cultural evolution. I think that we have evolved not just to want to have things but also to be able to participate in and contribute to our societies in a meaningful way. Those are basic human needs. Rich nations and most economists are obsessed with the idea that only increasing material consumption enhances well-being. We only work so that we can consume more and more, but I think we actually should be trying to flip that paradigm to focus more on the pleasures of production. We must acknowledge that we have a finite planet, finite resources and enormous numbers of people, so the amount we can each consume sustainably without causing irreparable damage to the planet is incredibly limited. We should reframe development as satisfying our basic needs in the most enjoyable, fulfilling, rich and rewarding way possible.

Of course, if we are talking about human development, our priority should be those people who have not met their basic needs. But once basic needs are met, we should focus on meeting them in a way that is as rewarding and fulfilling as possible. Human development cannot just focus on less developed nations but must also consider how overconsumption in the rich nations has used up the surplus ecological capacity, thus reducing the capacity of poor nations to achieve human development. We have to look at humans as part of a finite planet. Overdeveloped countries are consuming so much it hinders the capacity of poor countries to meet basic needs. The mainstream view is that the more the rich nations

consume, the more markets there are for poor nations to make products and make income. I think that is exactly the wrong way to do it.

Do you wish to add something we have not addressed yet?

You had one question in there about how my own research can contribute. I am very interested in the economics of essential resources. Essential resources fulfil basic human needs: food, water, energy and other ecosystem services. I would also include information, as there is no economic activity without knowledge. I think all of these are essential services or essential resources, but I also think essential resources have fundamentally different economic characteristics that make them a poor fit for market allocation.

Markets supposedly drive the economy to equilibrium because, as a resource becomes scarce, the price goes up, so demand goes down and we develop new substitutes, so supply increases. Markets then allocate resources to those who value them the most, which theoretically maximizes utility for society. But in a market, demand is preferences weighted by purchasing power. I did a global study estimating the elasticity of demand for food in 170 different countries – elasticity of demand is determined by how much you decrease your consumption when the price of food goes up by a unit percentage. Economists say, 'well, you know, the magic of the market is that it allocates resources to those who need them most'. The poor clearly need more food the most, since they will starve if their consumption decreases. But in reality, in an unequal economy, purchasing power completely dominates preferences. When the price of food goes up in rich countries, we do not change consumption at all. When the price of wheat tripled in 2007 and 2008, there was zero decrease in demand on the part of the rich. The poorest countries actually decreased food as much as seven tenths of a per cent for each percentage increase in price. The sacrifices are made by the poor and so what this means, first of all, is that the price mechanism is broken: demand is not responsive to price except for the poor.

Furthermore, if we believe the scientists about our planetary boundaries, the biggest threat to those planetary boundaries is agriculture. Increasing supply has an immeasurably high cost to ecosystems. And we need to eat every day. So if there is a food shortage it takes at least one growing season to increase supplies, and then only at tremendous cost to global ecosystems, so the price mechanism is broken in terms of both demand and supply. And then, when you have unequal distribution of wealth as we have now, the market systemically allocates essential resources to those who actually need them least. That is empirically verifiable, although economists say you cannot compare utility between individuals – it's seen as not being scientific. Maybe that is true for a cell phone; I do not

know if I get more pleasure from my cell phone than you get from yours; but for food and essential resources, we can definitely say that the person without enough to survive gets greater marginal utility than a person who has them in abundance.

I think that we should handle a lot of essential resources outside of markets. I like the example of California; it had a big electricity crisis when Enron and a few other corporations got together and agreed to take some production offline, knowing the price would skyrocket with a small change in quantity, and so they made billions of dollars and were fined a few hundred million or whatever. But at the same time, Brazil had a drought and they are totally dependent on hydropower, so their energy supply dropped. California let prices adjust to supply; Brazil just said, 'You know what, we have 10% less electricity than last year. We know what we consumed last year. You're going to consume 10% less this year at the same price. You'll actually spend less money,' and there was no hardship. In California we had brown-outs, we had businesses go bankrupt, we had the governor chased out of office and Arnold Schwarzenegger elected. In Brazil they used a non-market mechanism. It was a non-event.

Then the other thing I am very interested in is monetary and financial systems. Mainstream economics actually says that money is neutral, that it really facilitates barter and has no other role so it does not matter who creates it; it is largely ignored in economic theory. In fact, I think it is one of the most important mechanisms out there: the finance sector can loan money to businesses to create real productive capacity and jobs and real wealth. Over the past 40 years, it has primarily loaned to buy existing assets, which skyrockets their value while creating no new wealth, but the loans have to be paid back with interest. So, you have this mechanism requiring exponential growth in value, but if it is buying and selling the same assets over and over, it is just driving up their prices while creating no new value. All that does is create this massive instability that leads to a huge crash and then we will bail out the financial system. I really think that our current financial system is horribly ill-suited to human development.

And another research area I am very interested in is cultural evolution, evolution of cooperation, and again here I look at the physical nature of resources. Take fossil fuels. We have a fossil fuel economy right now: capitalism emerged hand-in-hand with the fossil fuel economy. Oil has exclusive owners and one person's use leaves less for others, so competition and rationing are required. Oil fits very well into the market system. Now, we have to transition to an alternative energy economy. If you take the example of solar energy, no matter how much you use in one country, it has no impact on how much we have

available to use in other countries. So, there is zero competition across regions. What is required to capture solar energy is knowledge, which actually improves through use. Energy is required for all economic activity; it has an incredibly important role in the design of our economy. Owing to the different physical characteristics of fossil fuels and solar energy, we are moving to an economy in which cooperation objectively helps us meet the human need for energy far better than competition. Furthermore, once you have the knowledge required for alternative energy, its value is maximized at a price of zero. If I develop some clean alternative to fossil fuels and put a patent on it and sell it the highest price markets can bear, China and India cannot afford it and we still get runaway climate change. What we need is cooperative investment in knowledge that is then freely available to all, which is a radically different economic paradigm. I use energy as an example, but I actually think that paradigm applies to biodiversity loss, to climate change, to dealing with pandemics, to all of these things, and so again, I really see a fundamental shift. Different physical characteristics of different resources call for different approaches to allocation. We need a scientific economic system that designs economic institutions according to the goals we want to achieve and the characteristics of the resources needed to achieve them.

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Human development as an individual, social and transformative process

Craig Calhoun discusses, among other things, the importance of including solidarity (among humans and with non-humans) and transformation as central concepts to enrich our ideas about human development.

What do you think is fundamental in the human development concept?

I am very sympathetic to the view that Martha Nussbaum has developed through the capabilities approach that the core of human development is realizing the potentials and capabilities of human beings. I would add that it is also about social capabilities. I think that both Amartya Sen and Nussbaum also saw the social dimension, but sometimes the capabilities approach is taken up as though it was all about individuals realizing their autonomous capabilities. Could they do well in exams? Could they get good jobs? Could they have small businesses? Microcredits? But these examples are situations that involve other people as well, and I think that nobody realizes their human potential completely by themselves. Moreover, the things that count as realization are often shared social things:

whether we are talking about being in love or having a family, or being able to launch a business, or being able to be part of a social movement.

First, is therefore to address these questions in terms of capabilities and potentials. Second, to make sure that we look through an individual and social/collective lens. Third, I would distinguish human development from human transformations (for lack of a better word) when we approach the concept of capabilities. Indeed, when we speak of human potentials to be developed, we tend to think there is something set at the beginning. There is the potential one has, but on top of this there are the capabilities one is going to develop.

I think realizing what is already there, as our potential, is part of the story. Human beings do not just *develop*. A plant may develop from a seed; it is completely preordained what the path of development is, and if nothing goes wrong (no drought or early frost), the plant develops. That is not quite true of people; there are many more forks in the road. But there are also potential transformations. This is true at the individual level, but it is even more true at the level of populations or societies, or the species itself.

I will illustrate this idea with a couple of examples: firstly, the extent to which people have changed physically with nutrition and with better healthcare, meaning that people are taller on average in many different countries. They can overdo this change and become obese, but that is not better nutrition, rather it is too much food. The transformation of human beings is interactive with the social environment.

But beyond the merely physical we are altering human beings with technologies in a variety of ways. Some are supports for human beings as they work, some are prosthetic devices that have become more and more sophisticated, and somewhat change what it is to be human. Going further, genetic engineering is another field where potentials are transformed. We could engineer human beings to be immune to certain diseases. But then, how do we regulate the research and ensure equitable access and distribution of benefits?

What this points to is the extent to which being human is not just a matter of realizing fixed capabilities; it is something that can be transformed over time. And again, people as individuals change, but these transformations are also social. If you think of languages – inventing a language or becoming literate – this is a transformation that occurs at the individual level. But for a society to be literate, in which most people can read and share information, is a transformation in what it means to be human and what capabilities humans will have.

Building on your work on solidarity networks, how could this fit within the human development concept?

I mentioned that human development could be thought of as social capabilities: realizing the capability depends on sharing or solidarity among people. Sometimes this solidarity is warm, loving and friendly, which is our everyday sense of solidarity; but sometimes it is a matter of social organization, through markets and businesses. In the middle of this coronavirus pandemic and the economic crisis related to it, we see how much we depend on social solidarity; how much our capabilities to realize our own agendas or our own possibilities are interdependent with other people. Part of our human capabilities is to work with others, to help others, to love others, to cooperate with others, to exchange with others.

If we go back to something like the French Revolution with its slogan 'Liberty, equality, fraternity', political theory of development has focused ever since first and foremost on liberty, and secondarily on what the trade-off is with equality, but tended to overlook solidarity, what was then called fraternity, which refers to the ways in which we cooperate. The way in which we live together is as vital as individual liberty, and relative equality among people is vital to making democracy possible. And again, we see in the disruptions we face now with the pandemic how that solidarity can be damaged and how we feel that we have lost something basic to ourselves.

Reflecting on the observation that we are interdependent at the local level as much as at the global level, do you think it is possible to build a universal concept of human development or human transformation?

It depends on what we mean by universal: humans develop differently and realize different capabilities. Taking the example of languages, maybe a good way to look at this is to say human beings do not have the potential just for a language, they have the potential for languages and the result is that humans speak different and multiple languages. The universal concept is a capability for diversity, not a capability for sameness.

How do you see these solidarity networks applying with non-humans?

I think we do have solidarity with non-humans. The obvious example for many people will be a dog or a cat. But in a variety of ways, we are interdependent with non-human beings, with nature and inanimate objects. Now, I do not think it is a problem for the concept of solidarity and feeling that we should have some solidarity with these non-human beings; it is a moral question whether we live up to that solidarity: do we fail if we are mean teachers?

Do we fail if we are not vegan? Do we fail if we allow the environment to be destroyed? It raises moral questions for us. Just as relationships with other people raise moral questions for us. Should we have inequality? Should we dominate people? How do you treat people with respect?

Within that, though, there is a big question about how special human beings are or are not. The human development idea focuses very specifically on humans. If we begin to think about that socially, we also need to begin to think about it in relationship to various kinds of environments and to other non-human beings. In addition, part of our potential to be who we are, the capabilities at the beginning of human development, only exist because of our relationships to others and we do not have to say they are exactly the same as our human relationships to recognize that they are relationships.

Would you say these aspects of the question are under-studied at the moment?

Yes, but I think they are becoming more and more prominent; there has been a growing recognition of the ways in which we are interdependent with other beings. This has come from different directions: there is thinking about the rights of animals or non-human animals; and thinking about nature in some different sense with regard to climate change, in the potential destruction of the Earth and our relationships to nature itself.

The idea that we are part of that nature, of that whole Earth, has also come up in other ways with medical and technological scientific changes. For example, most of the genetic material inside our bodies is not unique to us; it is transient and comes and goes with the microorganisms in our body. That is a path of scientific development that did not come out as a rethinking of what human development means except in fairly specific scientific medical senses. However, it does change how we understand what it means to be human. This why I think for the last 20 years or so, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of the non-human to understanding the human.

To what extent do the academic fields where these questions emerged cross and meet?

They ought to cross a lot more than they do. This also then extends to the relationship to other kinds of knowledge. All of the disciplines and all of the specializations are guilty of defending their territories and prospering even at the expense of others. But it is key to pay attention to science across disciplines in this rethinking of the human being and rethinking of the world as a whole. There is, however, more and more recognition of the need for interconnection.

And do you think that situation affects the ways in which policy-makers may pick up on academic knowledge to design policies?

I think there is a direct path in which a specific bit of scientific knowledge can inform a policy. For example, we know about the patterns of social influence on smoking and we use that knowledge in policy-making. The second path is a kind of technology: it is not policy that science first informs but the development of a technology, which then raises policy questions. If you think about genetic engineering, even now very few policy-makers have a deep understanding of it. But the science that has informed the technology of genetic engineering is pushing the policy-makers.

There are other paths by which science does get to policy, including changing a general sense of what the issues are and the understanding of them. In the context of the pandemic, for example, the role of scientists is partly to directly inform policy-makers; to say, this is a good technique epidemiologically to reduce the spread of the virus. But it is also partly to shape public understanding and a notable example of this is climate science, which reached large parts of the public faster than it reached policy-makers and created a public demand for policy-makers to 'listen to the scientists' as Greta Thunberg put it.

How would you explain this observation on climate science? Is the narrative easier to capture for the general public?

I think it is partly because policy-makers tend to pursue short- to medium-term immediate goals, which means they do not often think about the next hundred years or the rest of human possibilities. For example, if your task is to write the regulations about distributing face masks in the middle of the pandemic, then you might pay a little attention to science. But you are mostly going to pay attention to economic and other factors that shape your ability to get the face masks produced and distributed.

Rather, it is not that the whole public picks up on scientific concerns but there are groups that do, and they spread it and create engagement. The public may not know what to do, but it turns to policy-makers and expects them to do so. The general public appears as civil society organizations, social movements, religious leaders, ethical leaders and others with strong articulated views, such as journalists; *the public* has many faces and we see it with climate change, with the pandemic; there is a lot of public uptake, but it is not distributed in an even pattern.

The biggest pathway for science is unfortunately a relatively slow one, but a really important one: education. It is really the translation of science into education of new

generations in general and of professionals in particular, that brings scientific knowledge most to policy, by way of educating wide ranges of people including future policy-makers.

With regard to the current COVID-19 pandemic, do you have observations to make about how it changes our understanding of human development and human transformation?

The first observation is that we have wanted to think the pandemic was a very short-term emergency and that is partly true in the sense that an emergency means something is urgent and demands our attention now. But in other ways that is a misleading idea. We think emergencies happen unexpectedly. Well, the specific pandemic was unexpected, but that there would be pandemics and infectious diseases was not; it was predictable. We could have been better prepared.

The notion of emergency implies to us a very short-term, focused event. After an earthquake we have to do a certain amount of rebuilding and we have to take care of survivors. The pandemic is a different situation: it is a change. First, I think the pandemic will go on longer than most people and most policy-makers think. Second, there is the potential for reinfections and for the pandemic to become endemic, at which point it changes our general living conditions similarly to the way that we live with a variety of other diseases. As we realize that this is something that is part of the transformations of being human and not just a short-term event, we will go back to 'normal'. We will be producing some new normal.

The pandemic has other implications: it reminds us that we cannot completely control human development and human possibilities. It might remind us that we live in very complex, large-scale interdependent systems. Systems thinking is not very well developed, not just among the general public, but among policy-makers; we tend to isolate issues and try to deal with separate parts.

The pandemic is a lesson in interdependence: the way in which it is global, the way in which infection spreads among people, and the way in which it is interdependent with the state of our institutions. Obviously, healthcare and hospitals have been overwhelmed, but the fact that the economy is in crisis is based in large part on financial leverage; it is not just jobs, but finance, institutions, credit and stock markets. All this encourages a sense of interdependence. How well we will do at thinking about this sense of interdependence is uncertain, but that is a human development question because we either think about human development in very individualistic, separate terms, or we recognize how much the development and possibilities for each of us are interdependent with others.

Do you wish to cover any additional aspect?

We talked about different academic fields, different research specialities relating to each other and coming to a better understanding of transformations in the human being. We also addressed how the pandemic should make the connections between social sciences and natural and physical sciences much more continuous. The pandemic is so clearly a public health issue, not just a curative medicine issue, however crucial this is to understanding it. This public health crisis is a mixture of social and human sciences, natural sciences and medical sciences.

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Human development is about interdependence and connectedness

Karen O'Brien asserts that human development needs to address connections across societies, with non-human species and with the environment.

How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development to be more responsive to today's situation?

One of the most important aspects of human development to consider today in response to a dynamic and uncertain global context is *connection*. Not connection as in 'linked', but in terms of relatedness. Earlier, I worked a lot with the concept of human security, which is closely related to human development. Within the context of global environmental change, human security is about individuals and communities having the capacities to respond to threats to their social, environmental and human rights. This work puts humans at the centre of the picture and focuses on how we individually and collectively respond to multiple stressors. But today, when we think about human development and human security, we see

a different conceptual understanding emerging. This new understanding takes into account not just how humans respond to external stressors, but the character and quality of our connections and relationships. It recognizes the importance of our interior development – in other words, the unfolding of our potentials and the recognition of our capacities to relate to each other and the environment in a more resonant, harmonious way.

Earlier, we relied on the Human Development Index, which is based on indicators like life expectancy, education and per capita income. But there are many other aspects to human development that are not captured in these metrics, yet are central to human development. For example, how do we measure whether our actions take into account our interdependence and connectedness? Or measure social consciousness, recognizing that human development within one community, country or region cannot occur or exist at the expense of others? Rethinking human development involves seeing it in a more collective and connected way, while at the same time situating it in dynamic contexts. This includes climate change, biodiversity loss, growing inequality, or today's defining context, the COVID-19 pandemic. Human development is about being human and developing without destroying nature and without oppressing other people or limiting opportunities for future generations.

You mention connectedness as a fundamental element of human development. Can you tell us more?

Human development has focused on individual well-being within a social context, such as a community or a state. At the same time, it has downplayed connections across societies, and connections with non-human species and with the environment. Much development thinking today seems to reflect an individualistic, reductionist, fragmented paradigm that considers people to be separate rather than connected. This also applies to our relationship with nature. Even though we have been socialized to accept this individualist, disconnected narrative, many people have a deep sense of knowing that this may not lead to a fulfilling life. I believe this disconnect and tension is at the heart of most of the problems we face today.

In my view, we need a paradigmatic shift in the way we perceive human development. Instead of asking why connectedness to others and to the natural world is important, maybe we should be justifying why we're *not* thinking of ourselves in relation to other humans and the environment. Many cultures and traditions see people and nature as connected and continually interacting. These relational issues are fundamental for a rethinking of human development, as humans cannot be healthy if the planet is not healthy. Climate change makes this clear.

We continue to pay attention to and to measure things that are external to human development. And yes, these are important. Health, education and nutrition are the foundations of human security. But we know from psychology and the neurosciences that our brains are wired for connection, and research shows that we feel social pain in the same part of our brains as physical pain. We often refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs and consider self-actualization as important after our security needs are met. What if a realization of our connectedness were taken as the starting point for human development, rather than an afterthought?

If we take connectedness as our point of departure, then we might ask: how do we organize society in a way where you can have both individual and collective thriving? How do we organize economies and governance systems? How do we optimize our social needs, our healthcare systems, our water systems? The answer to these questions would help us to think about different types of metrics and different types of stories about what human development is. In a world of rapid change where we face existential threats, this narrative will lead us to reflect more deeply on what human development actually means. In fact, what does adaptation mean? If we take connection as a starting point for human development, we would prioritize the well-being of all, and recognize that a lot of the threats to human development and human security are coming from us, not elsewhere.

What do you mean by saying that we are the origin of a lot of the threats?

The way we perceive external threats is related to our meaning making, how we view ourselves in the world, and the stories that we tell about ourselves and our future. For example, when we focus on an 'us versus others' narrative, we tend to organize our society and economy around the idea of winners and losers, which contributes to growing inequality and exclusion. Paying attention to internal factors means recognizing that we all have blind spots in our worldview. And we're blinding ourselves to seeing the possibilities and solutions to our global crises. In terms of human development, it's much easier to say that other people need to change, develop or act differently, when in fact it's up to each of us to explore our own blind spots by taking a critical look at the filters and the lenses through which we're currently viewing the world.

What would it be like to widen our circle of care to include 'others'? Here I mean the people, species, ecosystems and generations that we currently treat as if they are not connected or related to us. Humans hold an enormous capacity to care, but we are socialized to focus primarily on ourselves and those who are like ourselves. We have been told that progress and development are about having more, shopping more, experiencing

more, and achieving more for ourselves. This creates an internal contradiction, which creates a lot of stress, especially since equity is important to all of us, as a species. Fundamental values like equity, dignity, compassion and integrity inherently apply to everybody, and once we start to recognize this, we are likely to start prioritizing very different types of solutions.

In short, human development is not only about individual well-being – it includes the well-being of others and the planet. We tend to equate human development with economic growth and pay little attention to interior growth and our capacity to hold multiple perspectives and act with integrity – a sense of ourselves in relation to the whole.

Who can help create and promote this new narrative of human development focused on connectedness and our inner capacity to situate ourselves in relation to others and in relation to the whole?

Well, I think it is a matter of collective reframing. The stories are already there, we just need to collect them and share them, and to do so together. It's easy to feel like the work of shifting the paradigm is a big deal, yet in reality the alternative paradigm already exists. Maybe we just need to pay closer attention and listen to the stories from all over the world that capture the essence of human development within this paradigm. These stories are being told every day, but not necessarily in the news. They may be there, but they tend to get drowned out by the noise of the polarizing 'us versus them' narrative.

Take for example the COVID-19 crisis now. We do not really hear what is happening in communities in Kerala, where social cohesion and care across society is widespread and many are drawing attention to the rights of citizens, migrants and refugees. Instead, we keep hearing the same stories; in fact, technology enables the perpetuation of the counter-narrative, which overshadows the many examples of solidarity we see in the world today. For example, Twitter and the use of artificial intelligence perpetuates this idea of a very polarized and hierarchical world – a view of humans as set against one another. This polarizing narrative is a constructed one, and it is trying hard to silence a narrative that recognizes humans as connected and caring for one another.

You seem to be suggesting that rearticulating human development is more about creating an enabling environment where we let alternative voices emerge. How can this enabling be done?

I believe this enabling environment emerges when we recognize that there are values behind the choices and decisions that we make, and that they reflect what is considered

important to us. Enabling is first and foremost an exercise of making these values explicit. But rather than focusing only on value conflicts that perpetuate 'us versus others' and 'culture wars', we can focus on connecting to the values that enhance human development for all. This means shifting conversations towards something that would support *our* human development, not just yours and mine, but everyone's, including that of future generations. So, for example, when somebody says they do not care whether the entire Greenland ice sheet melts, because there are important mineral resources beneath it, we need to recognize that this melting has implications for the lives, livelihoods of and future of many people, species and ecosystems. We need to ask, 'What are the values motivating people to not care about losing Arctic ice?' Whose values count when actions influence our collective human development?

The exploitation of people and resources is not value-neutral, and there is a deeply normative dimension here, as well as a highly political dimension. But again, the alternative voices are already here. Young people today were born into a world that is obviously globalized and connected. They do not have the same view of the world, nor the same blind spots, as those who grew up in the Cold War era. Many are not only open to new paradigms – they are living and being the new paradigm of human development.

To conclude, let's focus on a topic that you have worked on a lot: the connection between human development and planetary health. How do you think we can give more theoretical depth and robustness to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? How do we ensure human development is also about the planet?

If we want to bring sustainability and human development together, we might need to think about different or additional indicators to those currently being used to measure progress related to the SDGs. The SDGs currently only scratch the surface in terms of what needs to be done. For example, take our responses to climate change (as described in SDG 13). This is important, but it's not just about the technical targets and indicators of this or that that we achieve. It's also about the manner in which we achieve them, including the quality and inclusiveness of the changes. This includes distributional aspects, but also the deeper human dimensions involved with transformative change, such as what people care about and why. Are we creating a society that works for everyone, or are we contributing only to pockets of sustainability? Are we considering climate change in relation to other issues, or are we addressing problems in a piecemeal manner? Are we reducing vulnerability and risk for everyone, or are we merely deluding ourselves with technical fixes?

To address the connected nature of human development, and maintain the ecological integrity of the planet, we need to align actions with values that apply to the whole system. It's important to take a systemic perspective, but also to recognize that people are part of these systems, and that human development is about realizing our collective potential to create a planet where life can thrive, not just for some people and species, but for all. We cannot continue to promote human development on the one hand while continuously exploiting humans and degrading the environment on the other.

A core question that is especially visible in today's situation relates to what really matters to people, and how that can be used to generate equitable transformations to sustainability. In collaborating with Dr Monica Sharma on radical transformational leadership, I have learned to distinguish frameworks for understanding from frameworks for action. Frameworks for action create results, and they involve conversations and strategies based on values that apply to everyone – such as equity, justice, dignity and compassion. Actions in the political and practical spheres are aligned with these values. A values-based approach recognizes the collective and interdependent nature of human development, and it makes it clear that some of today's systems lack the integrity needed to promote outcomes that benefit people and the planet. Human development in the context of planetary health calls for personal, political and practical transformations, and every person has an important role to play.

Karen O'Brien is a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo, Norway. She is also co-founder of CHANGE, a company that supports transformation in a changing climate. Karen has participated in four reports for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and as part of the IPCC was a co-recipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Human development is about the absence of discrimination and marginalization

Only through listening to poor and vulnerable people can we understand what human development means. We need to collect people's stories about how they live their lives and make this central to our rearticulation of human development, says **Adrian Jjuuko**.

From a perspective that reflects your work on law and human rights in Africa, how should we rethink the concept of human-centric development? What do you think are the key issues, considering today's challenges?

I think the global human rights debate has not moved issues like discrimination and marginalization forward. What we now need to think about is how human development should be helping us to address inequalities among different groups.

The inequalities we face in the world today are enormous. We have a substantive number of billionaires with huge influence in the world, people like Bill Gates or Warren Buffet, and then we have large numbers of people who cannot feed themselves from day to day because of problems that are not of their own making. It is time to take these differences seriously.

The current system makes you think that if people are poor, it is their own fault. I believe otherwise. I think it is because of the lack of opportunities available to them. For me, any concept of human development that doesn't include inherited structural issues is problematic.

When we think of gross domestic product (GDP), when we think of how much income people have, we end up in some sort of a contest comparing how equal or unequal countries are. But we also have to think of the reasons why countries are poor, and why people continue to be trapped in poverty. Part of this is due to the widespread idea that there is only one way to be developed.

Just last night I was watching an old romantic comedy named *Coming to America* with my son. For us here (in Africa) we grow up with this idea of America being a wonderful place. The movie juxtaposes a fictional African country, Zamunda, and New York City, in the United States. The main character, Akeem Joffer – the crown prince of Zamunda – travels to the United States in the hopes of finding a woman he can marry. He ends up in Queens, disguised as a student, and rents a very modest apartment. The movie shows the surprising wealth inequalities and bad living conditions in a country that is supposed to represent the pinnacle of development. My son was surprised that they were in America. I asked myself: What kind of place is this? America with all its wealth and power has parts of society with unimaginable poverty. Then, in my own country, Uganda, we have places where people live exactly as you would in the wealthier neighbourhoods of Europe or the United States.

Thus to me, the most important thing in this exercise to rearticulate human development is to be able to look at the whole of humanity, not just one group that develops as others are left behind. How can we say some parts of the world are developed when other parts of our planet are full of people who cannot even afford clean water or have access to food? Some people are poor because of structural issues. I'm not saying that everyone should drive a Ferrari. But they should have the best chance in life, be able to stand up and be counted as human beings, with dignity and freedom. To me, this distinction between the haves and the have-nots is totally outdated and it is in fact a trap that perpetuates the differences. Moreover, these high-level distinctions do not enable us to see people for who they are, their culture and their way of living. Where are the perspectives of what is to be developed from those living in villages in Africa or in Asia? How can we engage them to help us define what it means to reach human development? How can we hear their voices in addition to those of academics and experts?

You are also concerned with environmental issues. What is the role of sustainability in this rethinking of human development that also includes the voices of people and not only experts?

Environmental degradation and climate change are super-important issues in many African countries at the moment. To me the question we need to ask is: for whom are all those natural resources? To whom do governments respond when they create policies about environmental exploitation? We are collectively destroying the environment that supports us, and in doing so we are failing to create social equality. Rather, this exploitation of natural resources is simply making a few people very rich. To me, this is the tragedy, and this is the main problem.

Take Lake Victoria, the biggest freshwater lake in Africa. We know this fabulous body of water and the life it supports will be gone by 2070, and this is primarily because rich people are building in its catchment areas. At the same time, many people living in in Kampala are losing their property because of floods. Scientists tell us the reason is because the water has nowhere to go, as construction in the catchment area is diverting the water in an unsustainable manner. In short, the rich are building living spaces for themselves at the expense of the poor and the environment. At the same time, in public discourse, there is no link made between the degradation of the environment and the poverty of people. To me justice ought to be a key component of any rearticulation of human development.

Can you elaborate more on what you see as the key challenges for human development today?

I believe the current situation is a blatant example of how inequality is one of the biggest threats to human development. Look at what is happening in Uganda today with COVID-19. The virus is supposed to be affecting all of us. We have right now a nationwide lockdown, but in reality, this affects primarily the poor. At first there was a ban on public transport. Yet we know that wealthy parts of the population do not use public transport, as they primarily use private transport systems. When public transport was banned, they made exceptions for essential workers, and among that category bank workers were included. This means in Uganda today banks and insurance companies are considered essential whereas people like me, lawyers and human rights activists, are deemed non-essential people to our society.

I am in the office because the police arrested 20 people for violating COVID-19 regulations, but this in reality was due to their sexuality. These people have spent 50 days in jail without access to a lawyer. After a lot of struggle, the courts agreed and gave us an access order to visit them. Twenty people are now suffering in jail without any due process, with COVID-19 being used as the excuse.

Maybe the problem is simply capitalism more than anything else. A system where banks remain open instead of organizations that help the poor is truly problematic. I think unbridled capitalism is an issue that is very critical for all of us. Most African countries are capitalistic states, but in an uncontrolled manner. We tax the poor, less so the rich, and then we do things that only facilitate the interests of the elites. Africa's richest city, Johannesburg, is devoid of public transport. And when you wonder why, you remember that every white person has a car. So, roads are wide, and yet public transport is non-existent. The same thing is happening in Uganda right now. They are constructing more and more roads for the rich when a vast majority of people have no means of transport. Yes, unbridled capitalism is a problem.

Governance is also a key issue. We are witnessing the derailing of democracy, and to me this is a key challenge to human development. Populism is triumphant in too many parts of the world, and democracy is suffering. In Tanzania, a populist president has refused to take stern action against COVID-19. Those most affected do not have a voice, they cannot speak, they cannot be heard. It is almost impossible to engage in democratic processes as even if people do vote, their choices are not respected or taken into consideration.

Another key challenge to human development is the weakening of the UN system and the demise of multilateralism. In 2011, I was present during the UN Human Rights Council sessions, and I could see the United States leading on most issues that came up for debate. Now, in 2020, the US has withdrawn from the Human Rights Council. We also see US threats to withdraw from the World Health Organization, in addition to leaving one of the world's most meaningful multilateral agreements, the Paris Agreement. How is this possible? To exert such influence in a system and then also undermine it? And, what does this type of policy behaviour mean?

If we look at the African Union, this intergovernmental organization is also becoming more conservative, driven by interests that facilitate exclusion rather than inclusion. If the UN system fails, if intergovernmental cooperation fails, we are in trouble and human development will suffer.

In light of these challenges, how can we make human development more influential for policy and decision-making?

I believe the most important way in which to make human development a priority for policy and other decision-makers is to include the voices of the poor and marginalized. We need to rethink the involvement of people and participatory processes.

In these types of debates, often purely academic, what we now practice is tokenism. We need to include people from the Global South because we need voices from there. Usually, when we do that, that voice is not the voice of the poor but that of some privileged person living in the Global South.

We have to make people understand that every single person is entitled to her basic rights. Many governments are completely against this because it means that when people are empowered, they will speak and make demands. But this is where we should focus our attention, reaching and empowering the grassroots to voice their concerns and their views, and to be in charge of their human development. I don't know how to do that. But we must hear their voices, as poor people live with impossible choices.

We are now, for example, being told that COVID-19 is a dangerous disease. But poor people live with cholera, HIV and malaria, and many die from these diseases every single day. The poor also have impossible choices to make to protect themselves. I can afford to stay at home but my clients, who I represent, cannot. They are being arrested for being homeless. When you are homeless, where are you supposed to stay? Thus for me, amplifying the voices of people at the very bottom of our societies is critical. This debate about rearticulating human development should not be left to academics and elites alone. Everybody should be able to engage through their own grassroot structures and communities. We need to collect people's stories about how they live their lives and make this central to our analysis going forward. We must be able to understand cultural dynamics in many parts of the world, to see people's potential and priorities. We cannot base our view of the world on the elites and the upper middle classes, for whom culture is about consumption and flying in airplanes to America or London and in Uganda. If we don't appreciate other people living their own lives and the differences among people, then what remains is an elitist idea.

Thank you very much for these important insights about the centrality of the perspectives poor people themselves have about human development. Taking this as your point of departure and to conclude, what would be your own definition of human-centric development today?

I would define human-centric development as living conditions devoid of discrimination and marginalization. Economic development versus equality is not a zero-sum game. For me, once we remove discrimination and equality emerges, then we will have the conditions for human development at all levels.

Adrian Jjuuko is a Ugandan human rights lawyer, researcher and activist. He is the founder and Executive Director of Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), an organization that operates the only licensed and specialized legal aid clinic for LGBTI people in Uganda.

Interconnected social and natural systems must be reflected in human development

Amy Luers says it's time to shift our thinking towards 'humanity development' – an approach that removes the emphasis on the individual and instead focuses on the systems in which humanity functions every day.

How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development?

The concept of human development as it emerged in the early '90s focused on people and their opportunities and choices. As a metric, the Human Development Index (encompassing three key dimensions of heath, knowledge and standard of living) is a means to emphasize people and their capabilities as criteria for assessing a country's development. But, in today's geo-socio-political reality, even the term 'human development' might be dated, with its focus on the individual 'human'. Humans now are deeply connected to each other through both the digital and the natural worlds. The fragile balance of our global society is defined by our interdependence on multiple planes (social, natural and digital). So, perhaps we need to shift our thinking towards 'humanity development', an approach

that removes the emphasis on the individual and instead focuses on the systems in which humanity functions every day. In the Anthropocene, it is vital that society recognizes that human health, security and prosperity are inextricably linked to the state of Earth's life-support systems, including water, oceans, land, air and climate. So, a concept of 'humanity development' would recognize that the choices or possibilities for individuals are influenced by our collective success in taking a systems-based, multidisciplinary and multilateral approach to global risks now and in the future. This will require rethinking our metrics of development, along with our norms and lifestyles.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) begin to hint at a 'humanity development' perspective. The 17 SDGs were adopted as an 'integrated and indivisible' agenda for global sustainability. But, in practice, SDG strategies are often pursued in sectoral or disciplinary silos. Now that research has demonstrated inherent trade-offs and synergies among SDGs and highlights the need for systems-based or nexus approaches we can extend this kind of holistic thinking to humanity development, to build resilience for people today and tomorrow.

What are the major emerging challenges to human-centred development in the world today?

The degradation of Earth's life support systems and the rise of intelligent systems are both increasing inequities and moving us away from a humanity-centred existence. At this particular moment in time, the convergence of challenges – COVID-19, systemic racism, viral misinformation – might seem overwhelming. As machines increasingly mediate our interactions with each other, and as the digital divide widens, inequities increase. And zoonotic diseases like coronavirus, that disproportionately affect marginalized populations, will remain as long as we continue to encroach on wild spaces and destroy wildlife habitats. The major challenge is to not treat these in isolation. There is an opportunity to capitalize on our connections to each other, the natural world and the digital world, and pivot towards the values of collectivism and humanity-centred development.

For example, I am leading a new initiative, Sustainability in the Digital Age, that explores how we can leverage new digital capabilities to drive systems changes and to steer society towards a climate-safe and equitable world. This initiative grew out of a year-long effort led by Future Earth. We engaged over 250 experts worldwide to develop a research, innovation and action agenda to identify and ultimately pull key levers of change across global governance and economic and cognitive systems.

How can the human development approach inform public debates and decision-makers about current and future challenges?

Assuming a 'humanity development' approach will also be key to informing new policies and public debates as we aim to navigate the digital age. This will require building a community of practice, with members who are 'bilingual' in the digital and sustainability languages. This is a key part of the Sustainability in the Digital Age initiative. We have just launched a new training programme, Leadership in Environment and Digital Innovation for Sustainability (LEADiS), which will focus on training graduates and postgraduates at this critical intersection to become the powerful sustainability leaders that we need.

We need leaders who can speak both languages, and we need leaders who will invest in taking a systems approach to change. Pivoting the framework of human development to 'humanity development' may help to reset the narrative.

In short, when rearticulating human development, our decision-makers must consider humanity within the context of its interconnected social and natural systems, to truly enable generations, now and in the future, to enjoy full, healthy and ideal lives.

Amy Luers is is the Global Lead for Sustainability Science, Microsoft. Previously she served as Executive Director of Future Earth, Assistant Director in the Obama White House and Senior Manager at Google. She is a member of the United States Council on Foreign Relations and has served on committees of the United States Global Change Research Program and the National Academies of Sciences.

Human development should become relational

Facundo García Valverde argues that social and environmental factors make people's capability sets unequal. Institutions, policies, laws and social norms in particular have a tremendous influence in the shaping of people's capabilities. Human development therefore needs to incorporate a specific account of egalitarian relations as there is a strong link between inequality and lack of valuable freedoms.

Two individuals have tickets to a rock concert. One lives in a poor neighbourhood and the other in a middle-class neighbourhood. While the latter arrives early to the concert, the first arrives during the fourth song because police have stopped and interrogated him for no other reason than his location and colour of skin.

Two women spend the same amount of time in their workplace but one (the teacher) feels that her talents are recognized and esteemed by their community while the other (the cleaning woman) perceives that her talents are menial and unworthy of recognition.

Two stockholders strongly disagree during a meeting about some company decision. The board takes the aggressive attitude of the man as a sign of determination but the aggressive attitude of the woman as a sign of being uncontrollable and driven by passions; the first gets a promotion and the second a reputation.

What makes these three examples problematic from a normative point of view? The problem is not the violation of any right, nor the amount of direct interference in their choices, nor the distributive inequality among them. Everyone can do what they prefer, nobody is so poor that they have to accept coercive offers, and there seems to be no law or formal institution that totally hinders the satisfaction of, for example, the right to free movement. So, is there any normative problem at all in these examples?

The human development community is committed to an affirmative answer. The three examples illustrate how valuable capabilities are diminished by structural constraints that are not exclusively the responsibility of any particular individual. It is not the individual member of the school community nor the board who are restricting on purpose the real freedoms of the cleaning woman or the female stockholder. It is social and environmental factors that are making the capability sets unequal: racial profiling and stereotypes influence the conversion of the same amount of resources into different levels of access and freedom of movement and affect our imaginations; hierarchical signs of status and recognition attached to positions and jobs affect capabilities for affiliation, by expressing the symbolic message that some workers are more worthy than others; sexist practices at work damage the capability of women to demonstrate their epistemic value on equal terms to men, producing a biased community of knowledge.

While human development's initial breakthrough was its significant reconceptualization of poverty as an individual lack of fundamental capabilities, it has, to a certain extent, incorporated the influence of structural constraints in the 'beings and doings' available to an individual. For example, the 2004 Human Development Report focused on how racial and cultural identities shape the real freedoms of individuals, and how belonging to certain minorities was a reliable proxy for being poor in capability terms. The 2019 Human Development Report considerably expanded its attention beyond basic capabilities and focused on how a myriad of inequalities (such as gender, power, health, education and ethnicity) were not only consolidating but also diversifying through an accumulation of disadvantages across a lifespan.

In the same direction but in the conceptual field, Ingrid Robeyns has provided a tremendous defence of the absolute indispensability of incorporating structural constraints into any project or evaluation that claims to respect the core principles and modules of a capabilitarian theory. According to her, institutions, policies, laws and social norms have a tremendous influence both on people's conversion factors and in the shaping of people's capabilities, even capabilities such as friendship or self-respect that are not dependent on material resources (Robeyns, 2017).

Despite this initial step, inequality in human development goes deeper than what is identifiable at the level of formal institutions, laws and policies. As our three initial examples aim to show, it runs fundamentally at the level of social and informal norms that constitute and structure the values, attitudes and beliefs with which individuals and groups relate to each other. In other words, relations between individuals are mediated by a set of beliefs, biases, attitudes and expectations that could not be fully covered by formal and legal norms.

For example, it is not only conceptually possible but also sociologically expectable to find a society that has enacted affirmative actions or compensation policies and that is still racist, misogynist and segregated. This is so because policies and laws, in many cases, leave untouched the social norms and practices that justify hierarchies of worth, differential evaluations, subordination and the exclusion of underprivileged members of communities.

This suggests that **human development needs to incorporate a specific account of egalitarian relations – if it is the case (and I think it is) that there is a strong link between inequality and a lack of valuable freedoms.** As I will show next, 'relational egalitarianism' offers such an account that is attractive from a human development standpoint.

Relational egalitarianism is a conception of social justice that argues that the main focus is not the attainment of a fair or equal distribution between individuals but, instead, the attainment of a community whose members can relate to each other on egalitarian terms – that is, without appealing to status divisions, hierarchical categories or rankings of worth (see work by Elizabeth Anderson, Jonathan Wolff, Carina Fourie and Schemmel for example). Hence, it opposes systems of apartheid and caste, segregation and orders of nobility because they imply a hierarchical division by which some members are superior and others are inferior.

By focusing on interpersonal and intergroup relations, this egalitarian conception has developed conceptual tools and arguments in order to build a critical perspective on the social bases and practices of an inegalitarian society. Since inequality is no longer conceived as a purely distributive problem, its relational aspects emerge. Stereotypes, implicit biases and explicit prejudices, signs of status, positional goods, and attitudes of disdain and of deference are all elements that structure those inegalitarian relations; since these elements are embedded in specific contexts, consolidated in practices and reproduced through rewards or reprimands, they are more stable and, then, harder to change.

In analysing whether this or that policy, or this or that transfer of resources, promotes egalitarian relationships, we should look both to the real outcome and to the process. For example, a relational egalitarian has conceptual resources for a strong critique of wheelchairs ramps that are carelessly designed and built, of medical attention provided to indigenous groups that humiliates and infantilizes them, of stigmas attached to social protection focused on poor persons and of the prestige and status granted to certain jobs or natural talents and not to others. All these cases show that both at the deliberation and the design level, elements of inegalitarian relationships (the emotion of pity, a patronizing attitude, an able-bodied privileged public space and a fetishistic desire for status) are identifiable and should be criticized.

The proposal of this text is that human development should become relational or, at least, incorporate an explicit concern for how social norms and relations impact on valuable freedoms. The fundamental reason is that stigmatization, subordination, domination and hierarchies influence in specific ways those freedoms. This influence can be registered at two levels: the individual and the communal. Regarding the first, when the features of inegalitarian relations are widespread in a society, they restrict critical reflection on what an individual values by favouring a dominant conception of what is valuable. Regarding the second, those same elements affect levels of empathy and commitment among members of different status groups and hamper the social conditions necessary to expand real individual freedoms.

The incorporation of this relational aspect into the concept of human development opens a new agenda, which calls for interdisciplinary work that is beyond the limited scope of this text. Without any intention of exhaustiveness, three dimensions are worthy of attention.

Firstly, regarding the individual dimension, the recognition and esteem obtained by an individual should be analysed relationally: how does being called names, being bullied at high school or not having certain qualities that are esteemed by your community (such as beauty, money, clothes) impact on one's self-confidence, one's sense of recognition and in the pursuit of valuable beings and doings?

Secondly, regarding the work dimension, the prestige and status attached to highly paid positions provoke a relational question: how does a culture of competition in a work environment impact on the freedoms enjoyed by 'winners' and by 'losers' and on the relations between these two groups?

Thirdly, regarding the political dimension: how do ethnic or gender stereotypes place heavier burdens on minorities and oppressed individuals participating politically or actively in the lives of their community?

The concept of human development is a major invention of the academic world that transcended its own borders and obtained some political recognition in international and national documents and institutions. A rearticulation of the process should aim to cross even more frontiers and become a public discourse accessible not only to the poor but also to those whose freedoms are limited by social inequalities.

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Facundo García Valverde is Professor of Human Development at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and a researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET). He has been a Fulbright Scholar and has published several papers and book chapters in different international journals (*Dianoia, Análisis Filosófico, Revista Latinoamericana de Filosofía* and *Revue Ethique et Economique* among others). His research areas are the normative foundations of the capability approach, republicanism and relational egalitarianism.

Human development needs to include social aspects

In this interview, **Desmond McNeill** reflects on his work on the power of ideas in the UN system and asserts that a focus on social and relational aspects must be added to the concept of human development.

You have done a lot of work investigating the power of ideas in the UN system. How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development?

In my work with Morten Bøås, *Global Institutions and Development: Framing the World?* (Bøås and McNeill, 2004), we explored the lives of certain ideas like sustainable development, the informal sector, social capital and human development. We showed that these ideas have had great impact in two senses: they have influenced *what* we think about and they have also influenced *how* we think about these things. In our analysis, we established that the concept of human development has been very successful, partly because of institutional backing from the UNDP and the annual Human Development Reports. UNDP has a clear definition of human development and the accompanying Human

Development Index (HDI), which have served as powerful tools to counteract a narrow focus on gross domestic product (GDP).

However, there are certain dangers with these concepts (McNeill, 2007). One danger is that they often get extended and blurred; additions of new dimensions over the years lead them to lose meaning over time instead of acquiring more clarity. A second danger is the often-inappropriate quantification of complex ideas; in the desire to translate the concept into measuring tools, many quantification errors can occur. The third danger is overextension – giving in to the temptation to apply a concept or idea to all types of different issues. To me, it is important to know what one wants to do with a concept such as human development. Is it to serve as a vision of where to go, a roadmap on how to get there, or rather a motivation for setting off on the trip in the first place?

Regarding human development, my initial response is that this is a good concept and we should keep its original meaning; we should not try and revise it. But I recall a quote from Kofi Annan as part of an interview for the UN Intellectual History Project. He said, 'one of the greatest achievements of the UN was the human development concept'; and he went on to say that the UN had succeeded in defining what development means 'for the individual'. On reflection, that statement could be regarded as being too individualistic. This may in fact be a limitation of the concept. In the current context, I believe we need to add social, relational aspects to our concept of human development.

Of the six dimensions outlined by ISC-UNDP project Steering Group in its background work for this project – environmental change and sustainability, collective and relational dimensions, human well-being, the digital transformation, local specificities and global interdependencies – I would omit the last three, which do not go to the heart of the concept. But I would retain the first three, which follow on from the emphasis I recommend: the collective, relational dimension of human development. That is, at the centre of human development is the well-being of both the individual and the collective.

With this conception of human development in mind, what are the key challenges for human development today?

The absolute basis for human development is social cohesion – because without it we cannot solve any of the other challenges. But we see today an increased erosion of social cohesion, from leaders like Trump in the United States or from political decisions such as Brexit, to the widespread negative impacts of technologies (like social media). Yet, social cohesion is fundamentally needed to solve environmental challenges, to protect future

generations and to achieve individual human well-being. Technology has both a positive and negative impact on social cohesion. Technologies enable us to enter into global discussions, but often we don't even know our own neighbours or see those around us as part of our social environment. Also, many technologies are amplifying extreme views, with negative consequences for social cohesion. In short, this erosion of social cohesion is a key challenge to human development.

A second key challenge is environmental degradation and climate change. This endangers our welfare. There are valid arguments that nature is important to us also in a non-material way, but the problems to be solved are material. Pollution, loss of biodiversity and climate change impacts are visible dangers to human well-being. Many people recognize this and would like, in principle, to do something about it. However, politicians are not willing to risk taking the necessary steps. Those politicians who are worried about the environment know that their political support would rapidly drain away if they started to implement the measures that are necessary to protect it. Constituencies are still not aware enough of the danger to support the politicians who want to make these changes. In addition, it is difficult to generate agreement on what needs to be done. This confluence of issues is a huge risk for human development.

How can we make the human development approach more influential and more central in informing public debates?

The work we have done on tracing the power of ideas has already shown that the gap between the idea of human development and policy-making is simply too large. The HDI has done its work in attempting to oppose GDP, but has become less and less influential, partly because it has also become a sprawling set of measures, adding new dimensions for which it has been difficult to raise substantive political commitment.

In my opinion, the HDI has run its course, and it is time to test new ideas. Unfortunately, some of the new concepts emerging are very unsatisfactory. Take for example, degrowth. In my opinion, degrowth is a hopeless term – hindering rather than helping discussions on sustainable consumption. Growth, and development, are words with powerful positive connotations, closely related to progress. But now is perhaps the time to become more creative and rethink concepts and measures more closely related to well-being, both individual and social.

This is where the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) come into play, as they represent a transformative agenda supported by almost all countries in the world. What is required

now is to translate these goals into a more conceptually clear agenda. To me, a key issue is SDG 9 on sustainable production and consumption, which is rather weak once it has been translated into targets and indicators – as discussed in a recent Special Issue I co-authored with Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (Fukuda-Parr and McNeill 2019). Perhaps this is a topic to which the Human Development Report Office could again pay some attention; we certainly need something more radical than a watered-down version of the green shift.

To conclude, what will be a meaningful and useful definition of human development for our changing world?

I believe we need a definition of human development that moves beyond the individual level and also associates development with the social aspects of well-being.

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Human development happens in the context of our lived realities

In this interview, **Connie Nshemereirwe** discusses how human development needs to be self-determined, arguing that it is the result of fitting in with our contexts and cultural settings, as well as striving towards achieving our self-identified value.

You are primarily an educator; can you tell us how you think we should reconceptualize human development?

I do indeed consider myself an educator; this is a conscious choice that I made about 20 years ago now, even though my earlier training was as a civil engineer. My main scholarly pursuit is to understand how education forms humans and influences our possibility to survive, to make a living and to develop as unique individuals. To me, it is clear that education should be recognized as one of the most important developmental phases of humans. Unfortunately, what I see around me today is a world where the large majority of people are not really prepared to access the full spectrum of education available; gaps between the educated and uneducated are becoming larger; and worse still, even the

education that *can* be accessed is not really able to deliver what it promises. There are huge challenges in education that need our urgent attention.

Take the specific issue of low literacy rates in children in contexts like mine: to some extent this is the result of the disconnect between the child's daily life and what they are taught in school. In Uganda, for instance, the majority of the population lives in a rural setting, and most children who start school may have encountered neither a book, nor the English language itself. However, a lot of their instruction is carried out in English, using books written in English, and depicting life unlike anything the child is accustomed to. From that moment on, they are expected to take on literacy skills in a language they do not speak or understand, while simultaneously trying to make sense of the ideas that are being expressed in that same foreign language – no wonder they struggle to transfer what they encounter in school to their daily lives.

Uganda has made some attempts to remedy this situation by mandating that the language of instruction in the first three years of primary school should be in the region's dominant local language. However, teachers are not equipped to teach in the local language, nor are there adequate teaching resources in these languages. To make things worse, some teachers are transferred to areas where they do not even speak the local language, making it impossible for them to teach in it. For these and other reasons, therefore, this policy has not been as successful as it could have been.

I'll share a final example from an experience during the recent COVID-19 lockdown, where I took on the task of teaching an 11-year old boy how to read – Mukisa had been in school for six years but had kept being held back because he could not read. The school materials available online, such as Jolly Phonics, mention things like picnics, ponies and snow, and I had to explain to him what these words mean because he has obviously never experienced these things. So not only the language but also the concepts are foreign, and these are the problems we encounter before we even speak of the acquisition of other skills like numeracy. This reality, therefore, means that counting the number of children enrolled in schools is a very poor measure of education and human development.

Thirty years ago, the main idea underlying human development was the fulfilment of the potential or capabilities of human beings. What does this mean for you today and in the context of your work?

The word 'potential' is very important and concerns me a lot. I will go back to Mukisa's case: despite the fact that he has lagged behind in school, with targeted attention and

correct instruction he has made tremendous progress. So, it was never that he did not have the potential, but that his potential could not be realized. I can't help but wonder, in that case, how he ever would have fully realized his potential had he not met me. I imagine him at age 18 – would I still be able to rescue the situation? Would the tactics I used at age 11 still work at age 18? Probably not! Which is why 'one-size-fits-all' is not a viable approach to human development.

To make things even more complex, the idea of human capabilities is itself quite multidimensional, so that thinking about how to create the conditions in which everyone can fully realize their potential, at any age, becomes *Mission Impossible*. The central issue for me then becomes the following: how can every human being have the opportunity to *become* who they are, and to take their place in the world after acquiring the necessary skills and utilizing all the opportunities available to determine their own reality? Moreover, even with institutions in place to create these enabling environments, do we have the capacity to reach an individual's inner environment?

What do I mean about our inner environments? Let's go back to Mukisa. At his young age he already had quite strong beliefs about how far he could go in life because of his limited reading skills. He once dreamed of being a lawyer but has now settled on becoming an apprentice in an auto garage. So even with the enabling environment in place (such as my volunteering to teach him), my efforts still might fail if there is no change to his internal environment.

How, in our current development frameworks, can we reach people's minds, their attitudes and their beliefs? This is multi-layered because if Mukisa cannot read and believes he will never be able to learn properly, even access to schooling and a teacher won't be enough to ensure the full development of his potential. The constrained self-belief already creates a limit to how far he can develop or put what he learns to use. All this says that we can create an institutional enabling environment, but we must in addition allow for the limitations that people's inner structures of self-worth and value can throw in the way, and how this can be addressed (if at all possible).

Adding another layer of complexity to this picture, we also need to account for the role of the informal education system. This is one more important arena in which education in a context like mine proceeds, especially for those who never access, or those who drop out of, the formal education system. The informal education system creates parallel realities in our societies. Within the informal education system, children learn a lot about their environment, about their culture, and pick up beliefs about how to go about life that have been passed down for generations.

Alongside this system is formal education, where children can learn about science and mathematics and the history of the world, but also pick up a lot of ideas about life that were passed down through generations, but not by generations that lived in their environment. These 'educated' individuals then live side-by-side with the 'uneducated', and a development approach must encompass them both.

Reflecting a little further on these parallel realities, it would seem that when one benefits from the informal education system, one is most likely losing out on the formal, and vice versa, resulting in the mis-education of both. Why can't we have both? Having been raised in a city and having full access to the formal education system, for instance, I became quite divorced from my environment and consider myself uneducated in many ways.

My ability to move around in my environment is hampered by my limited knowledge of the contextual factors that define my city and my country, even though I am considered to be highly educated. I have often thought, for instance, that I would find it very difficult to run for political office simply because I may not understand the language, concerns and ways of a large proportion of the society that I would be seeking to represent. I am divorced from it by the fact that I have been formed primarily in this other parallel formal education system.

Finally, overlying all this is a layer beyond these parallel realities created by the formal and informal education systems. As an African, or as a woman, there are other beliefs I hold that I have unconsciously absorbed from sources beyond my immediate environment. This comes through the media I consume, the books I read, and the people I talk to, which present me with their own view of who I am and what place I inhabit or *should* inhabit in the world, and therefore what is possible and what is not. Some of these ideas are so unconsciously taken in that one is not even aware of acting based on the assumptions underlying this unquestioned social, economic and cultural hierarchy.

The way that we are perceived or represented as a group in comparison to other groups in society also affects our inner self-perception of being this or that way, able to do this or not do that, and ultimately the extent to which we can fulfil our true potential. So, the three aspects are interlinked: our formal education; the education we get informally experiencing and interacting with our own localities and contexts; and finally the education we absorb about the way our societies, and ourselves as part of them, are perceived from the outside.

I will end by saying that although this third layer is fully external to people, it can deeply affect people's inner lives. The history of colonialism, and the naming and labels countries get, such as more or less developed, all have profound consequences for the possibility

of attaining our full potential, and as such should concern anyone thinking about human development as a concept as well as a reality.

What are the major emerging challenges, problems and threats to human-centred development in the world today?

Given everything that I have said up to this point, it should come as no surprise that I see a major challenge in the notion that development can be driven externally. Development can be described, studied, measured and quantified. However, at its heart it is (or should be) about the individual and about context. On the one hand, there is so much diversity at the individual level, in addition to a diversity of contexts, that synthesizing this complexity into a single view is a sure way to lose meaning altogether. So, in the first place, the main challenge is the conceptualization itself.

The second challenge is how to measure this development (if we say we succeeded in conceptualizing it), and then finally to chart a path to a more desired future. I find it really difficult to conceive of the many potential development pathways that different people and different societies could take. This is especially difficult without an understanding of, or access to, people's internal environments, as well as their unique *and changing* contexts. Human development, to me then, appears only to be possible through activating people's individual possibilities for self-determination – the future that someone else with their own measures could dream for them is not necessarily desirable, even if it was attainable.

This is in stark contrast to what we have seen in the entrenched idea of economic development taken on by our African leaders, with visible and grandiose infrastructure projects as evidence alongside a neglect of the factors that would really lead to people's self-determination. A lot of these leaders think that they will bring development to their constituencies by building roads or hospitals. As important as these projects are, this will not bring up levels of human development, which in my view entails providing for self-determination.

Young people are facing a very uncertain future. What are their key human development challenges?

What I see around me are two, possibly opposite, realities. On the one hand, education is becoming a source for disenchantment, because it no longer leads to the opportunities that it has traditionally promised. On the other hand, there is a quietly rising awareness about the lie we have been fed about the benefits of development, as it becomes apparent that it produces as many problems as it purports to solve. These two realities simultaneously

create an opportunity to have more control of our future and produce some first tentative signs of taking bold steps in that direction.

Speaking with reference to the first reality, there are many educated yet unemployed, *and unemployable,* young people. The relevance and adequacy of education for the average Ugandan, for instance, has become so low that people have become disillusioned with education altogether. At the other end of the spectrum is the uneducated youth. These individuals are aware that they are surrounded by a lot of urgent challenges, but they feel completely incapacitated to address them, since they have a deep belief that without education one can do nothing. And then in the midst of this educated–uneducated mix is also the reality that our economies are not able to provide jobs to occupy all the restless youth.

What this brings me to is the need to urgently revisit the purpose of our formal education, rather than focusing on how many schools we have in this or that district. What's more, instead of piling on more content, or running after the latest fads, we ought to start from the ground up: what matters in each child's environment? Is it drought? Is it disease? What community approaches have worked in the past? Where could they improve? Is it appropriate to have a single curriculum for the entire country? Or should we allow the environment to dictate what should be taught in addition to the basics?

Take for example the current race across the continent to prioritize education on information and communication technologies (ICT) in secondary schools. These plans do not consider provision of computers, or the proper training of and equipment for teachers. So, children will be in a school for two or three years 'learning' ICT but will in fact learn very little since they will not have any first-hand experience of a computer during those three years, or even soon after. Why not, instead, use the time and sparse resources to provide education that is more connected to the challenges that young people will face in their region; for example, the challenges of livelihoods, climate change impacts or social issues.

Why not create an opportunity for these children to learn about challenges they could tackle, to identify specific problems and to then obtain skills to solve them? If they are taught about ICT without the needed equipment, they go back home empty-handed, unable to take advantage of ICT and unable to solve pressing issues, such as access to energy or clean water. They are educated but have no opportunities, which is waste on top of more waste; this is one reality in Africa.

Coming to the other more promising reality, there is a rising consciousness that one feels across the continent: the realization that these stories about development in other

countries do not add up, that those lives lived elsewhere, shiny as they are presented to us, also have their downsides and create other problems. For example, regarding climate change or environmental degradation, we know that our lifestyles are much more sustainable than the lifestyles that are considered developed. We now begin to think, instead, that our lives are quite good if we are not unhappy or sick very often, and that our families are strong, for instance.

So, we need to raise consciousness about how what we are told about a better life 'over there' infiltrates our societies, and we should become aware of the problems that occur in other societies. I see more and more people now being sceptical about the 'better life' that they are being sold. More and more people are spreading a counter message. Perhaps this message is spreading only among more educated people like myself, but it nevertheless gives me a sense of hope that we might still be able to self-determine and decide what human development means for us. When I see this shift in people beginning to become more conscious, with the internal environment beginning to awaken, it gives me a lot of hope.

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Human development demands engagement at the individual, community and state levels

In this interview, **Sari Hanafi** explores how to conceptualize and promote human development in the face of authoritarianism, populism and political conflicts.

How could we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development?

In order to conceptualize human development, let me start from the wonderful aphorism of philosopher Paul Ricœur, 'the aim of living a good life with and for others in just institutions'. I will spell out this in four terms. First, a 'good life' is expressed in the indicators of the Human Development Index (a long and healthy life, a decent standard of living and a good level of education) but maybe more indicators should be added about happiness.

Second, live 'with others' means you cannot live while your neighbours and co-citizens are starving. Here the issue of inequality is central. Living with others also means recognizing their identity, à la Axel Honneth, and their ethnic, religious, secular groups and/or networks, in line with the paradigm of pluralism and multiculturalism. Third, living 'for others' means observing and promoting the ethics of love, hospitality, care and solicitude for others. Fourthly, Ricœur's phrase 'in just institutions' refers to the establishment of a pluralistic and democratic system.

Human beings are not only *Homo economicus* but also constantly exchange gifts. The gift relationship and moral obligation concepts of sociologist Marcel Mauss should be considered and enhanced by all civil society actors, including researchers. For instance, while we denounce the lack of hospitality of some states and societies for refugees, we tend to forget to dig deeper into niches of hospitality, at the micro-level, of cities, villages and religious or secular communities.

It is crucial to rethink the construction of *otherness*, not only with regards to who is perceived as the adversary and why that may be, but with regards to how we care about 'the other'. I would add to Ricœur's thinking that the other is not only people who live with us on the planet at this moment, but also future generations. This is related to considering consumption in a way where nature can be regenerated; it also relates to our claim for raising wages.

We need to move more seriously with concrete steps towards minimum wages, heavy taxation on high levels of capital and wealth, and a 'smart green growth' – to be fuelled by a desire for new, attractive and aspirational lifestyles (to speak like the economist Carlota Perez) and a slow-growth economy and its corollaries (including cheap and low-carbon public transportation, seeing public services as investments rather than liabilities, and increased security of labour markets).

Such conception of human development calls for engagement at three levels. The individual level operates with acknowledgement of the anthropological quality of a human being as a moral subject who strikes a balance between his/her freedom and responsibility, between rights and duties, and can be in solidarity with his/her neighbours and persons in need. The community level is crucial and requires not only citizenship and human rights but also the politics of recognition. The current movement 'Black Lives Matter' in the United States (US) and Europe is part of this politics: recognition starts when communities acknowledge racial injustice, and act against white supremacy and its colonial and slavery heritage (symbolized by statues).

Finally, at the state level, engagement is a matter of responsibility for the public good. In this regard, the work of five female economists – Esther Duflo (Nobel Prize 2019), Mariana Mazzucato, Stephanie Kelton, Carlota Perez and Kate Raworth – that was praised by the *Financial Times*, is instrumental, providing some alternatives to mainstream neoliberal policies. For instance, Mariana Mazzucato, with her case study on innovation, rightly argues that much of commercial innovation and profit has grown out of governments' basic research spending, yet without any return to promote a greater good. In Lebanon,

where I live, the local small-scale farmer cannot survive without establishing agricultural cooperatives. Corrupt political parties are so absorbed in the geopolitical game that they cannot deal with urgent survival tasks for their electorate, while sectarian voting can pre-empt new social movement actors from reaching parliament and executive power.

What are the major emerging challenges to human-centred development in the world today?

Today, we have three phenomena that impede any development: authoritarianism, populism and political conflicts.

Authoritarianism is more than the tendency of states to act undemocratically by deploying bureaucracy and police compulsion in social life. It is rather the systematic removal of popular accountability or participation in the decisions of the state, and a substantial centralization of executive power in a bureaucracy. One can think of the surge of a soft authoritarianism, related to neoliberalism, i.e. the erosion of the middle classes – the historical, social carrier of a neoliberal system. With this authoritarianism has come a weakening of national bourgeoisies together with an absence of any process of productive capitalist development, instead replaced by a 'rentier' economy of economic monopolies where exploitation and precarization of the labour force are two major processes.

Such processes are very well analysed in Karl Polanyi's work on factitious commodities, which include labour, land and money. The state then will develop authoritarian modes of governance to shore up its power against popular discontent. In many peripheral societies, this has meant not only that the capitalist class become thinner and more heavily contested, but also that the state has become more brutal. In the Arab world, some regimes, like the Syrian regime, are simply genocidal to their own people. Since the Syrian uprising, no less than one million of the population have died, and half of the population are either refugees or internally displaced persons.

Between state and paramilitary violence, we witness what the political economist Mary Kaldor has qualified as 'new wars': a growth in organized violence and its changing nature in late modernity have led to both more wars and an increase in their moral degradation. No human development is possible without addressing this authoritarianism, and analysing it not only as a neo/post-colonial phenomenon but also as closely related to the multiplicity of regional empires as well as the formation of divided local elites. In the Arab world, Kim Ghattas eloquently analyses such local and regional dynamics in her book *Black Wave*, particularly in regard to the role of Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The second phenomenon is populism – right or left wing. There are varieties of populist surges in different parts of the globe. By this, I refer to a direct political bond between a charismatic leader and the masses – a bond that occurs outside established institutional channels, and that fosters anti-pluralism by the claim of the leader that he, and only he, represents the people.

We live in a real crisis of globalization and technical democracy (devoid of philosophy and principles). Not all populism is authoritarian and vice versa; yet, more and more there is a connection. The recent book by Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism* , is very compelling. In the view of the authors, after a value shift for young generations in terms of their civic culture, populism and authoritarian leaders have attracted most support from those who view recent societal changes towards multicultural cosmopolitanism negatively. The populist hold on power and discourse is said to be anchored in state control in Latin America, in economic redistribution in the US, in immigration and protection of domestic economic opportunities in Europe, and in issues of corruption and criminality in Southeast Asia.

The final phenomenon is conflict. In some regions, like the Middle East, conflict is triggered by two factors: different elite formations that do not talk with each other and a thin liberal culture. Those who are hard-line secularists are often part of leftist movements which operate against religious people supporting Islamic movements. This is why we need a new framework for the relationship between religion and the state. I argue that 'post-secular societies' need to be theorized as societies dealing with some collusion and blurring boundaries between what has long been dissociated: religion and the state, ethics and politics, and sacred and secular arguments in the public sphere. As Armando Salvatore puts it, post-secularity is generally associated with a plurality of views and practices resulting not from the negation of secularity but rather from the rise of rather comprehensive reflexivity on secularity and secularization.

Sometimes regional forces behave just for sectarian reasons (Iran or Saudi Arabia), or to divide the region in order to accelerate colonial practices (Israeli annexation of part of the West Bank through the 'deal of the century'). Many liberal democratic countries are more interested in selling arms than supporting democratic forces (unless these forces are allied with them). In brief, the triumph of all these mini-Trumps worldwide has given new energy to illiberal movements and dictatorships. The international reaction to the mass violation of human rights in many countries (including Syria, China and Saudi Arabia) is terribly mild, if not non-existent. In March 2018, China introduced a resolution at the UN Human Rights Council, entitled 'Promoting the international human rights cause through win–win cooperation'. The title might sound benign, but the resolution gutted procedures to hold countries accountable for human rights violations,

suggesting 'dialogue' and 'cooperation' instead. Adopted by a distressingly strong majority, this resolution would become the start of a process to wither away the UN human rights ecosystem.

How can the human development approach inform public debates and decision-makers about current and future challenges?

I think the COVID-19 crisis generates momentum for making the development approach more human. Just as Roland Barthes read Albert Camus's *The Plague* as the battle of European resistance against Nazism, we must read the COVID-19 crisis as an existential human test and a political, social and moral metaphor. The post-pandemic era should be prepared by us, social scientists, as well as all civil society actors and policy-makers, in order to turn this tragedy into an asset.

Just to remind you, the Great Depression in the early 1930s had a deep impact worldwide, and political responses to the crisis were radically different. Let us take the US and the New Deal proposed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt between 1933 and 1939. This was a series of programmes, public works projects, financial reforms, labour reform and inter-racial relations reform that were enacted. By comparison, Germany, in its response, replaced democracy with a Nazi system.

Sociologist Michel Wieviorka, in an interview in March this year with the French newspaper *Libération*, reminds us that in the post-World War II period, the French resistance created an action programme which was given the label *Les jours heureux* (the happy days) in 1944. It is essential to say that this included not only some political measures to restore democracy, but also radical economic measures characterized by the nationalization of large-scale economic and financial institutions for the management of the economy, and of course some social measures – in particular, significant salary readjustment, re-establishment of independent trade unions, and a comprehensive social security plan. The following 30 years were indeed happy days for France. Thus, it is up to us now to decide in which direction we will go.

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Human development is about becoming more resilient

We must put resilience at the centre of human development and balance the interests of the economy, the environment and social issues, says **María Mendiluce**.

You have worked for many years for the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) and have just taken up the challenge of leading the We Mean Business coalition. How could we rethink the conceptual understanding of human development? What does human development mean today?

When I think about human development in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic – something that is concrete and specific, something that is challenging everything, something that has shown how interconnected and yet how fragile our world really is – I realize human development is really about building human resilience.

Resilience is the capacity to bounce back after a shock and to adapt to new circumstances. As humans, we have lived through many different shocks. Today it is COVID-19. We are

seeing how this terrible epidemic has become more than just a health crisis – it is now also a major economic crisis impacting people and development around the world.

We can also see how those who are the most vulnerable are being impacted the most and are less able to respond. The crisis has highlighted the inequities in our society, and it is having a more detrimental effect on people who were already less resilient, and who are now having a very tough and difficult time.

When I think about human-centred development, I think about education and well-being as fundamental pillars for resilience. Education is one of the ways that people can become more resilient and live better lives. We have progressed enormously thanks to the internet and other technologies, but we need to do more around the world to ensure that children, and especially girls, can easily and safely access education.

Well-being is also important. But we need to extend the scope of what we consider to be the sources of well-being. Of course it is physical, and the pandemic is showing how essential it is that people have access to medicine and to health systems. But it is also illustrating the way that well-being is economic, as it requires having the financial means not only to survive but also to have a good life.

There is a third key component to well-being, and this is related to our natural environment. Air pollution, climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss are impacting human physical and economic well-being. These environmental factors are key for well-being and are key for people to be resilient to shocks and impacts.

In short, I believe that one way to rethink the concept of human development today is to link it with resilience and to expand the human-centric focus with the integration of the natural environment as a central pillar. The pandemic has shown us how unprepared we were for a systemic shock, and we already know that there is another major shock coming, and that is climate change. We need to get ready for this so that we can become resilient.

You have a lot of experience in promoting the idea that business and industry are central actors in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contributing to resilient societies. Taking this lesson as a point of departure, what do you think are the most important challenges to human development today?

I believe that the most important challenges to human development today are the trade-offs between the economy, the environment, promoting development and addressing inequality. Finding the right balance is a challenge, and we are seeing some positive signs

as companies begin to consider how to move to a newer system of stakeholder capitalism that is more equitable than traditional shareholder capitalism.

So we must consider how to balance these factors: the competing interests of the economy, the environment and social issues. For example, the economic recession that is already clearly looming today is going to have a huge impact on the development of people and it will significantly exacerbate social inequality. I believe that it is by seeing the interconnections among these stakeholder groups that we can find a way forward.

For example, we know that a well-performing economy depends on people who are healthy, who are satisfied, whose basic needs are met. And this means people require a healthy environment. So, there are difficult trade-offs between these issues but there are also some multipliers. What matters most is to ensure that we can make sustainable development a profitable business model – so that it is good for the planet and good for people. This will in turn create positive benefits for the economy as well as social well-being.

Tells us more about what needs to happen to make human-centric sustainable development more profitable.

The first thing is that we need to internalize the costs of environmental and social impacts so that they are reflected in the prices of goods and services. This is an exercise in pricing the cost of nature, emissions and also pricing social costs. Until now, these concepts of nature-pricing and social-pricing didn't really exist. But it is imperative that we start operationalizing them, because at the moment those costs are included in the goods and services we purchase. If we *correctly* price the real cost of producing goods and services, we will provide an incentive for companies to reduce those environmental and social costs and win a competitive advantage.

The second thing is that business needs to understand, assess and mitigate the real risks that are occurring both on the social side and on the environmental side. Before the crisis, we saw an increase in social unrest: riots in Hong Kong, in Chile and many other countries. Social discontent is in fact a fundamental risk for business. It makes companies anxious, because of course people are the lifeblood of business – they are the employees, customers and the suppliers of companies.

With the pandemic there is a clear set of problems and risks, just as there is with climate change. We need to use these moments when a particular risk is very visible to accelerate the change that is needed in order to address it. By including environmental, social and

governance (ESG) risks in the financial reporting of companies, companies will make sure that they have the measures in place to mitigate them. The financial sector will take this into account in their capital allocation, and companies that manage to reduce these risks will have a lower cost of capital.

Integrating the cost and risk of externalities in the economic system will completely transform the economy so more sustainable projects will have a cheaper capital cost and their products will have a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Many businesses are engaged with the SDGs, but we see little real change. How can we make the idea of human development more impactful and influential?

I believe the most direct way to make human development more influential is for it to be translated in a way that measures the social and environmental risk and opportunities for companies. What are the concrete metrics that can help companies measure and track performance? How can the UNDP help develop these?

While there has been a lot of progress on the measurement of climate change, for example, on the social side of things progress has been very slow. Although there is good work underway, for example with the Social Capital Protocol, we need more, and we need it to be mainstream rather than just receiving the attention of those who are leading the way. We need to create a stronger and more compelling narrative on why social and developmental dimensions are important for business, how social unrest impacts business, and why business needs to measure, track and report progress and achievement of metrics on human development.

What gets measured gets managed. An agreed framework for the measurement of human development will help companies measure, track and report progress and benchmark with other companies.

To conclude, what do you think is a meaningful definition of human development, keeping a business audience in mind?

To appeal to business, we must speak its language. At a very practical level, business understands the importance of skills, talent and the potential of people. I believe that any definition of human development that raises the importance of these issues will be useful not only for business but also for the public sector.

Many companies that have complex supply chains and rely on many different people are making an effort to ensure that those people have decent jobs, decent working conditions,

a good environment. These issues are very important, not only for the results of the company but also for the performance, sustainability and reliability of these employees within their supply chains.

There are good precedents for change. We can see how in recent years companies have become increasingly familiar with the importance of gender diversity and human rights. I think business realizes that more diverse companies – geographically, culturally and in respect of gender – are more successful. A team that has a lot of diversity brings out the best in everyone and is very enriching.

In this pandemic, and in other shocks, companies have seen that they can be very resilient – but if their people (consumers, employees, providers) are not resilient then they will struggle enormously.

In short, what makes companies resilient are resilient people and resilient societies. As UNDP rethinks the definition of human development, it should put resilience at the centre.

María Mendiluce sits on the Senior Management Team of the WBCSD, guiding over 200 member companies on transformative climate policy and energy transition. In addition to her role at WBCSD, María is also CEO of the We Mean Business coalition.

We become what we think: the key role of mindsets in human development

Jürgen Nagler provides seven points on rethinking human development from a 'mindset' point of view.

> 'Because mindsets and paradigms guide behaviors, changing them can have a profound impact… People who manage to intervene in systems at the level of paradigm hit a leverage point that totally transform systems.'
>
> Donella H. Meadows (1999)

Beyond GDP: towards Sustainable Development Goals and well-being

While development efforts showcase success stories, such as the decrease in the number of people living in extreme poverty, the current paradigm is unable to fully explain the successes and failures of development interventions. As we increasingly live beyond our

planetary boundaries, inequality and mental health issues have been rising, and happiness and well-being remain elusive for many around the world.

Furthermore, given the number of crises – from climate change to COVID-19 – alongside the ambitious nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an urgent need to investigate the effectiveness of the 20th century human development paradigm for the 21st century. While the current human development approach shifted the development focus from gross domestic product (GDP) to a somewhat broader perspective some 30 years ago, we have not made major progress since to truly advance human development in a holistic manner.

Calls for a more holistic human development paradigm are supported by the 'Beyond GDP' movement as well as other well-being initiatives around the world[1], and have also been recognized by the UN General Assembly (resolution 65/309: Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development, 2011). These global mindsets are very similar to paradigms in that they are the source of manifesting systems. As Achim Steiner, UNDP's Administrator, stated:

> 'We are now on the verge of shifting into an economic paradigm that is not about communism or capitalism; it is about recalibrating equity and sustainability into a development paradigm.'
>
> (Steiner, 2020)

Key questions

Based on the need to rethink human development, the following key questions come to mind. How can we shift towards a holistic development mindset that advances physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being? Are we willing to leapfrog to an enlightened paradigm that recognizes and develops humans as multidimensional beings? How can we harmoniously advance the well-being of both people *and* planet?

We protect and develop what we cherish, what we feel part of and connected with. So, how can we nurture three essential connections: with our inner being, with our communities and with Mother Nature? The opportunity to create a new paradigm for the 21st century comes from combining current science with timeless wisdom. Could the root causes and transformative power of human development be within us?

1 For example see the global Wellbeing Economy Alliance and EU's Beyond GDP initiative.

Inspiration from Bhutan

Some countries have not fallen into the trap of blindly pursuing GDP and materialistic growth. The UNDP awarded Bhutan with a Special Award of Recognition for holistically advancing human development in 2019[2]. Bhutan famously declared gross national happiness (GNH) to be more important than GDP. GNH is a holistic and sustainable approach to development, which is based on nine pillars that balance material and non-material values.

It is noteworthy that GNH should not be confused with a shallow understanding of fleeting happiness. Rather, GNH is a multidimensional approach which some argue is more holistic than the SDGs, given that it also entails dimensions such as psychological well-being, time use and community vitality. The COVID-19 crisis has amplified this importance of mental health. But even before the crisis began, a staggering 800,000 people died due to suicide every year globally (World Health Organization, 2016).

2 UNDP. 2019. UNDP presents His Majesty the King of Bhutan a Special Award of Recognition https://www.bt.undp.org/content/bhutan/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2019/undp-presents-his-majesty-the-king-of-bhutan-a-special-award-of-recognition.html (Accessed 14 October 2020)

Furthermore, Bhutan is heralded as a global example of a carbon-negative country that lives in harmony with nature. It is a biodiversity hotspot and is often seen as a leader in sustainable tourism. Its strong emphasis on health and protecting communities is seen as a success factor, and has notably allowed the country to handle the COVID-19 crisis well. It is evident that Bhutan's enlightened development approach and leadership has led to extraordinary poverty reduction while also protecting the environment.

> 'Our generation is called upon to rethink, to redefine the true purpose of growth and, in doing so, to find a growth that is truly sustainable. We must never forget that, for lasting peace and happiness in this world, the journey forward has to be one that we must all make together… It all starts with leadership of the self.'
>
> (His Majesty the 5th King of Bhutan, 2011)

The blind spot: mindsets

The strong focus of development assistance on external factors and measurable progress has left aside an understanding of internal factors and potential hidden root causes. Internal factors such as mindsets can play a transformative role in people's, nations' and humanity's development journey.

While there has been research on behavioural insights, self-empowerment, personal development, leadership and transformation in some specialized fields such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and neuroscience, there has been no – or minimal – direct connection made to human development approaches. There is indeed a significant knowledge gap on inner dimensions – such as people's mindsets – which are difficult to measure.

These 'soft' inner factors have, so far, not been well considered in the field of human development, in contrast to 'hard' indicators such as income levels, life expectancy and years of education. This underscores the need for a new holistic approach that takes into account the interaction between internal and external factors, in order for development to be transformative and advance sustainable well-being for people and planet. As Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Muhammad Yunus illuminates: 'Unless we change our mind we cannot change the world.' (Yunus, 2019).

The key role of mindsets

Mindsets are the invisible leverage point to be included in a new 21st century human development paradigm. Mindsets are made up of our deep beliefs, attitudes and values; they frame our thinking, and therefore determine our behaviour, life experiences and journey. They influence how people lead their lives, how they vote, what personal, educational and professional opportunities they pursue, and what they make out of crises, challenges and opportunities. Even national policies and global development goals spring from national and global mindsets.

For example, during the COVID-19 crisis, we can either perceive staying at home as being forced into lockdown or consider it as voluntarily protecting our vulnerable elderly. Mindsets are not, of course, a panacea and external factors should not be negated altogether. However, by acknowledging the role of inner dimensions, foremost mindsets, we emphasize the agency that people have in realizing their true human potential. History is full of change makers and social leaders who have overcome and changed their external circumstances and structures, and therefore written history.

Need for a global mindset shift

It is widely accepted that the SDGs cannot be achieved by business as usual. For behaviour and actions to be different, we require a new way of thinking, a new mindset and a sense of urgency for transformational change. The urgency to shift towards a development paradigm that finally translates the 'beyond GDP' aspiration into a well-being and sustainability mindset with its corresponding concept and measurements is increasing.

In systems thinking and leadership, shifting mindsets is considered the highest leverage point to change a system – even higher than policies and goals. Shifting the global mindset towards a well-being economy can be inspired by examples from Bhutan, Costa Rica and New Zealand, among others. This indeed also reflects the call by the UN Deputy Secretary-General for a 'New paradigm shift to replace the traditional sustainable development approach to realize the 2030 Agenda'. (Mohammed, 2019).

Suggestions for mindset shifts

While we are largely unaware of mindsets due to their intangible nature, they can be changed. Pressing issues such as greed, violence and discrimination also start in our mind, and in the minds and hearts are the keys to transformational development.

Six mindset-shifting suggestions:

- Sustainable transformation happens from the inside out.
- Mindsets matter. They play an important role in human development at the individual, collective and global level.
- Mindsets can be shifted by increasing awareness, and fostering self-reflection and self-responsibility.
- Solutions need to be co-created, which requires a mindset shift of development practitioners themselves.
- Current development approaches are too materialistic; therefore, they need to move beyond overly focusing on GDP and economic development.
- A new holistic development paradigm should include inner, collective and planetary well-being.

While the above-mentioned points indicate the important role of mindsets, there is a blind spot in the academic and development literature. This calls for further research exploring the role that mindsets play in human development, towards sustainability, transformation and well-being for people and planet.

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There can be no single conception of human development

Marc Fleurbaey proposes to define human development with a diversity of values in mind.

In your view, what does human development fundamentally include?

Drawing up a list of the components of human development (which I think is synonymous with human flourishing) is easy and difficult at the same time. People generally hesitate about the least material aspects, such as the quality of social relations, status and recognition, intellectual and spiritual development, and mental health.

What insights can your work lend to the concept of human development?

I have been very intrigued by the question of taking into account people's own perspectives on their lives. The question of drawing up a list of the components of human development is closely related to that of weighting the various components. A component that is

excluded from the list is one that receives a null weight. I am not sympathetic to the view that human preferences are too frail and malleable to serve as a guide to the valuation of the quality of life. Admittedly, preferences are very imperfect, but without relying on human values there is no way to figure out whether health or social inclusion or freedom of thought is more important.

In Sen's approach to taking account of human values, there is the idea that this must be a collective deliberation done at the community level, and that this deliberation about the value of different capabilities must lead to a consensus within the community. I don't think such a consensus is needed. There can be multiple reasonable value systems, and people embracing these different value systems can live peacefully together. Materialistic people can coexist with more spiritually oriented people, for instance. There is no need to impose the idea that health or education should have the same weight for everyone.

So, in my work on fairness, my co-authors and I have shown that it is possible to define measures of human development and of societal development that take account of the diversity of values within the community.

What key dimensions of human development are often ignored in academic research and policy-making and planning?

I think that the quality of social relations is generally ignored, which is odd because human beings are ultra-social and completely depend on the support of others in multiple ways. People are shaped by their social settings, and yet we tend to focus on more individualistic achievements in production, market success, health and education. If we measured the flourishing and the breakdown of social relations at various levels accurately and in real time, many crises (such as the 'deaths of despair' in the United States) could be avoided.

To what extent do existing indices such as the Human Development Index, the Multidimensional Poverty Index or the Happiness and Wellbeing indices provide an accurate measure of human development?

They all provide useful information but only partial information. It is important to be aware of their limitations and to keep searching for additional information. In the list you provide, you invoke indices that are on two extreme ends of the objective–subjective spectrum. But interestingly, they all characteristically fail to record what is really important to people, and do not attribute proper weight to the various aspects of people's lives. This criticism may seem unfair to the subjective well-being indicators, because presumably people's perspectives are embedded in such indicators. But, in fact, these indicators mix how people

assess their situation with how they come up with a number when answering a happiness question. The former is very important, but the latter is essentially noise. This noise makes these subjective data hard to compare across people.

In light of your approach to human development, what are the major current and emerging challenges facing development?

Pursuing a line already mentioned, it seems to me that we do not manage the growth of people appropriately because we focus too much on their personal assets and ignore their vulnerability and dependence on the support of others (not just in interpersonal relations, but also in organizational settings, such as the workplace). In particular, we rely too much on systems of selection that treat people as endowed differently, systems that try to ensure the best emerge so they can reap the rewards. This undermines and destroys many people. We need to invest in systems that make the most of everyone's potential, through mechanisms in which the better equipped share their know-how and assets with the less advantaged, so that everyone can reach their full potential and contribute to the collective's success. In a nutshell, our current institutions and way of thinking in terms of selection is generating a huge waste of human potential.

How would you assess current knowledge on the interlinkages between development challenges and other issues such as inequality, poverty or climate change? What is the level of integration between the different research fields, and between policy sectors?

The research is getting more integrated than policy, it seems. For instance, I have followed the growth of research on climate policy in relation to inequalities and poverty, and this is becoming a vibrant topic. In contrast, policy-makers need movements like the 'yellow vests' in France to understand that one cannot pursue climate change mitigation in an ambitious way without looking at the distributive consequences and without preparing a policy package in which environmental and social issues are addressed jointly.

What are the major challenges in building a concept of human development that is useful for decision-makers and stakeholders?

We should abandon the ambition of building a unique conception that will convince everyone. We must live with a diversity of values and conceptions of justice and of the good life in our societies, and build data and synthetic indicators that respond to these diverse perspectives. Recognizing that human development means different things for different schools of thought, and for different people (not just different generations, or social groups,

but down to the individual level), is important to allow public debates and policy-making processes to be inclusive. It can be disenfranchising to try to impose a particular view of human development. We should keep it plural.

In your view, can the concept of human development provide academics, policy-makers and activists with a shared framework for strategic thinking towards sustainable development?

In a sense, it is actually crucial. Think of the debate about degrowth, which comes from concerns about the unavoidable destruction of the planet if we continue on the current growth system. Human development is what we should be striving for, as opposed to material development, production development or economic development. Decoupling human development from material destruction may be hard, but there is no reason to abandon the goal of allowing people (and we should not forget other species) to thrive as much as possible. Refocusing our efforts and policies on life (human and non-human development), away from the traditional focus on 'stuff' – objects and destructive consumption – is our only hope of keeping the fascinating adventure of life on this planet going.

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Human development requires multidisciplinary engagement

Ilona M. Otto speaks about the importance of contributions from various disciplines, complex modelling tools and multidimensional approaches to address complex realities.

What do you think is at the core of a human development concept?

In my view, the core of human development is improving human well-being. Not in the sense of having more and more things, but in the sense of having a good quality of life: basic needs are satisfied and there is time to do things; at a collective scale, societies take care of the most vulnerable, leaving no one behind or alone; society provides this safety net. At the same time, it is also about taking care of nature, trying to keep a balance. Human development is a collective process in which we always try to improve.

Within the human context, I think education is very important – giving children equal chances to develop, to learn, to improve. If you look at what is happening at the moment, addressing inequalities is at the core of the issue. It is indeed difficult to imagine that in the 21st century we have people who are starving. I think it is just wrong that we collectively

fail to satisfy basic needs, that people do not have enough food to fulfil their own bodily and metabolic needs – it impacts their whole life. I conducted some research about the impact of malnutrition on children: if children are undernourished at a young age and/or when pregnant women are undernourished, the negative impacts span their whole life. It is on this very basis that individuals are given equal chances: while acknowledging that not everyone will take up these opportunities or that they might not use them appropriately, it is about at least creating a pathway for everyone.

To what extent does your work fit into the human development concept? In particular, could you bring in your research on modelling human environmental systems?

I worked for a long time on climate change impact and adaptation but my most recent work is on the concept of human agency, rapid social change and social tipping. I think this is useful because it first recognizes that we all have a different degree of agency, that agencies are not distributed equally in society and that there is a collective aspect to agency. I think it was at the end of the 20th century that the rational choice paradigm emerged – if all individuals pursue their own interests it somehow adds to the collective good. Within the rational paradigm there is not much room for changing system rules. In the agency concept that I am exploring, you also have a collective or strategic agency where you act as a citizen, not only as a consumer, and you try to structure the social institutions, the rules and regulations, and also the collective involvement, to have more agency. An example of this is the Fridays for Future movement: if you are just one school child, your agency is very low, but if there are millions of school children on the street, then they cannot be ignored. Through this collective engagement you can change the structure of society and increase your agency and power.

In this modelling perspective, we also look at the minority-majority principle. There is some evidence that, in order to tip or change the dominant behaviour pattern or even technology, you do not need everyone in a society to follow the pattern, but only a small share of the population. In financial markets, this might be 10% and for social norms it is around 20–25%. While the percentage may vary for different areas, the idea is the same: a committed minority displaces the other pattern and manifests a commitment, and you can really make others follow this. This is, for instance, exactly the same phenomena used by populist movements – although it is not the whole of society involved, just a small group, they are committed, radical and they change the debate in society and maybe even some rules. This supports the same idea that you need an active minority that tries to change societal rules and institutions in a more desired direction.

The human development concept touches many different dimensions and we are looking at how to improve collaboration between and across disciplines and policy sectors. Do you think this approach is becoming the new 'normal' when dealing with multidimensional issues such as environmental change or development?

Yes, I think so. Addressing human development requires contributions from medicine, nutritional science, epidemiology, educational science, philosophy, psychology, etc. It all comes together and it has some value because it allows one to see the bigger picture. Therefore, it is very important to me to be able to work interdisciplinarily and with experts from other fields, because otherwise my research would be very limited. Especially in the environmental field, technical issues are very important, for instance the capacity to store water in an irrigation system or the speed of water flow. And it is the same with energy. You have to understand the physical properties of the resources you are dealing with, and it is a 'must' when you work on these kinds of subjects.

What are the main challenges in building a knowledge base that will be taken up in policy-making and decision-making?

I see that there is a need, and I am leading an EU project on cascading climate change risks, including systemic risks like those spreading from one area to another or from one sector to another. We were asked recently to prepare a policy brief for the European Commission about systemic risk in the context of the COVID-19 crisis on what it means for trade networks, international security and financial networks. I think in many countries or regions politicians are actively searching for this kind of new knowledge, especially if you see the limitations of classical economics in particular, where you do not have crises. Instead, you have a linear system that continuously develops in some direction, so if you come across a crisis then you do not know how to address it. Therefore, you need more interdisciplinary approaches, which oftentimes actually come from physics, and you also need complex modelling tools. Even the integrated assessments that are used in the environmental sciences are based on economic models and are derived from the classical economics in a rational choice theory, with the idea that you have a number of populations in the model that are all equal agents, for example they have the same energy use, same demand for food, etc., but this is not true in real life. More detailed, complex and agent-based models allow you to have more social differentiation and to look at networks between agents in the models. This is very important because you can see regime shifts, and you are able to reproduce them in the modelling work. Whereas when you use standard modelling approaches you don't have a regime shift, a crisis or any kind of system change.

Of course, politics is a complex process and it is important to have different pressures to deliver the expertise, for example some pressure from non-governmental organizations and citizen groups, or to have regular press coverage. But there is also the problem of timescale: politicians tend to work with a short- to medium-term perspective. The issue related to this point is that societies lack political vision. It takes a lot of courage to say, 'We are facing a crisis, which we need to deal with. Potentially, the next few years will be hard, and this is a challenge for our generation.'

You did mention the COVID-19 situation, which is interesting when you look at the science-policy nexus. What do you observe and how does it impact our understanding of human development? Does it shed light on aspects that we may have overlooked?

I think it does change a lot. I mentioned that many people and decision-makers have a linear perspective of 'always more' – having a more interconnected world where we travel more and more, with more and more globalization. But suddenly, you see that there are systemic risks in the system. For example, if you have this interconnected world, you have a higher likelihood that there will be a crisis, which can spread across the networks rapidly, affecting other areas; this could be a crime or a disease that you do not know how to react to. You have something small that happened locally but it affects the whole globe and so you have to think in the broader context of our global system, and recreate the system to make it more resilient to such systemic risks.

Another dimension is environmental health because there are scientists, including myself, who point out that this has not emerged from nowhere. We are trespassing across natural boundaries, for example we have fewer and fewer natural protected areas, people are getting closer to wild species, and this increases the likelihood that you might get some unknown diseases and that it might spread to the rest of society. Fortunately, more people are becoming aware of the environment and its importance and they note that we are biological beings who live within the environment and that we cannot separate ourselves from it, because we are part of it, and that we have to respect the natural boundaries. People are becoming more aware of those connections.

In addition, due to the crisis, people are realizing what is actually important in life. They might not worry about having several pairs of shoes but instead worry about getting food, having access to water and electricity as well as access to schools and hospitals. This has helped us re-evaluate and assess what is really important in life.

This links very strongly with your definition of human development, including the things we value and care about. Do you wish to add anything that we may have not covered?

Yes, in line with this, I must underline how key it is to address inequalities. The role of national governments should be redefined: they should be protecting the most vulnerable and creating public goods such as healthcare and educational systems. In addition, companies and very wealthy people should fall under some sort of obligation to contribute more and take care of the less fortunate in society.

Would you say the main issue here is one of solidarity?

Yes, that is one of the main issues, cooperation and providing chances. Indeed, if you have bad luck and you are sick and have no medical insurance, then you struggle to survive. Providing those basic life chances, opportunities and services is very important.

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Human development is about freedom

Sakiko Fukuda-Parr argues that we need to go back to the big, visionary ideas at the heart of human development 30 years ago, the idea that human development is about freedom – about having the ability to live the life one has reason to value.

You were Director of the Human Development Report (HDR) Office for 10 years and have been very active in maturing and expanding the concept of human development. With that long-term perspective, what should be, in your opinion, our conceptual understanding of human development today?

In my opinion, the most important thing is to start with the fundamental concept of human development. It was articulated by Mahbub ul Haq when he worked closely with Amartya Sen to create the HDR in 1990. Its premise was to define development as a process of expanding choices, and a process where the agency of people plays an essential role. The title of Sen's book, *Development as Freedom*, published several years later, encapsulates this concept. Over the years, we seem to have lost sight of this original vision. However,

before I expand on the reasons for this change, I would like to start by discussing the major challenges that face the contemporary world.

As Mandeep Dhaliwal of UNDP pointed out during a recent webinar at The New School (The New School 2019), the pandemic comes on top of two other crises: the crisis of climate change and the crisis of inequality. These crises are highly interrelated. It is evident in the way that COVID-19 has disproportionately affected low-income and marginalized population groups, exposing many of the deeply entrenched structural inequalities and the weaknesses in our institutions to protect public health. We experience this daily while living in New York. African American and Latino populations are disproportionately affected. These disproportionate effects are partly because of where they work – such as in healthcare, transport or food distribution, providing indispensable services to the whole community.

But the problem is also systemic and reflects weaknesses in the health system that leaves many without access to insurance. Thus, it leaves many with underlying conditions vulnerable to COVID-19. Moreover, there are disparities in the quality of care. The incidence is higher in areas served by the less well resourced 'safety net' hospitals compared to the higher-income areas that are served by private hospitals. These are the same populations that are also vulnerable to employment losses and life consequences and depend on social protections such as unemployment insurance and other social provisions that provide universal and equitable systems for basic human needs, from health to education, housing and nutrition.

The effects of the policy response – social distancing and lockdown – are also unequal. Many argue that it is particularly problematic in developing countries where the poor are simply not able to socially distance, and where the effects on food security are dire. A study in South Africa shows that the country's social distancing measures have favoured the high-income white population. For the majority of the African community, the measures have had perverse and negative consequences.

We have known for a long time that unequal health outcomes are not only due to biology and medicine, but also to social determinants, the conditions in which you live and work. However, I want to emphasize that these social determinants are not immutable. They depend precisely on the strength of our institutions – health systems, transport systems, safety nets and so on.

The unequal human consequences of the pandemic are also rooted in the structures of the global economy. I have been teaching a course on 'Human rights in global fashion'. We explored how the workers at the bottom end of the global value chain are hit the hardest. The pandemic led to a sharp drop in production. That is not surprising. What is distressing is that when orders were cancelled, many of the big fashion brands pushed costs to the suppliers. The factories then either had to close or could not pay workers their wages and were left with the goods made to the brands' specifications. This happened even when the contract required payment; but the brands declared *force majeure*. It highlights the unequal power structures in the global supply chain.

A final example of the interlinkage between inequality and the pandemic's human cost is the challenge of the universal vaccine as a global public good. When a safe and effective vaccine is developed, it needs to be mass-produced, globally distributed and priced affordably. These conditions will not be possible with the current business model for pharmaceutical innovation and pricing under a monopoly patent. Inevitably, countries will be bidding against each other to get their hands on the scarce supplies and thus, low-income communities and countries will be priced out. Indeed, we see governments and companies declaring strong commitments to equitable access to vaccines, and billions of public funds are being pledged to fund research, development and production. However, a patent-free vaccine is still seen as idealistic and out of reach.

The point about these challenges – the unequal likelihood of falling ill or dying from COVID-19, the inability to adapt to social distancing, the failure to develop an agreement on a patent-free vaccine – result from failures of solidarity, to make the necessary social arrangements for human development priorities. So, these difficulties of political negotiations for the public interest – at the local, national and international level – are the critical challenges for human development.

Can you elaborate more on those basic principles underpinning human development?

At the beginning of our conversation, I said that we must go back to the original idea of human development. What I am most concerned about is that we seem to have got fixated on the Human Development Index (HDI) somewhere along the way. I have expressed this concern before, in a 2003 article: 'Rescuing the human development concept from the HDI'.

Economists think of the HDI as an analytical tool. But the real value of the HDI is as a communications tool that uses the incredible power of numbers. It was the primary reason why Mahbub ul Haq developed the HDI. Amartya Sen has written about how he resisted developing an index of human development that he did not consider feasible, but that he was ultimately persuaded by Mahbub, who argued that an index was necessary to communicate the idea that people's well-being, not GDP growth, was the real purpose of development. It was very effective in communicating this in 1990. But it also had the perverse effect of communicating the idea that human development was about investing in the social sector and meeting basic needs. The complex idea of development, understood as a capability expansion, was overshadowed by this simplified measurement and communications tool. The index includes outcomes that are measurable and for which an international data series exists. Other essential capabilities are not reflected, such as voice in decision-making and political freedoms. The index focuses on outcomes and does not reflect agency, which is an essential element of the capabilities concept.

The HDI inappropriately communicates human development as a policy agenda for social sector investment and meeting basic needs. How do inequality, climate change, or the social and political determinants of health translate into the HDI framework? How can we measure the critical dynamics of the relationship between the ability to live a long life and the social institutions that shape unequal outcomes? These are elements that are just simply not captured in the HDI, and analyses of human development are very much shaped, driven and framed by the HDI.

So, if this project aims to rearticulate human development, it should include rethinking the HDI.

For instance, observe the recent efforts to revise the gender indices. It's a great opportunity to start with a blank slate and devise a new index from scratch. But the current thinking seems to be aimed at making minor changes to existing measures that are based on the HDI and focus on health, education and employment outcomes. These outcomes are important but have not kept up with feminist thinking. What matters to gender equity is not only access to schooling or parity in pay. Certainly, those things are important, but a gender equality measure that doesn't include gender violence, political participation or decision-making within the household can never give us a proper view. Research has moved on from investigating obstacles to schooling and now also considers why equality in educational attainment does not lead to equality in employment and wages. When the Millennium Development Goals came along in the 2000s, one of the biggest critiques among feminist

groups was that school enrolment data were meaningless. So, I think it is time to be ready for these types of challenges, for thinking differently, and most importantly, for thinking politically.

There is a tremendous political risk in tinkering with measurement. What has made HDRs an essential exercise within the UN for leading the thinking about development is the courage to advance big, visionary ideas. The big ideas, not the index, are what have mattered the most. Thirty years since the beginning of the HDR is enough time to have the courage to say that although the HDI has been a good messaging tool, it does not fully encapsulate the meaning nor the spirit of human development.

Your key message is to go back to the original core of human development. How would you then reconceptualize this idea in today's context?

I return to my initial comments. I believe we need to return to the core 1990 concept, which is not only about human outcomes but also about agency: development for, by and of the people. But the analysis and the language need to move to 21st century concerns that have shifted far beyond social and economic issues, and have incorporated a much greater focus on institutions and processes that are creating inequality, and the existential threat of climate change in a context of hyper-globalization and financialized capitalism.

A 21st century reformulation needs to resonate with contemporary social concerns for human development, to gain momentum with those seeking change from prevailing economic systems. The notion of development itself is increasingly rejected as a highly flawed concept that is rooted in colonialism. Movements such as 'degrowth' and alternatives, such as the 'circular economy', have gained momentum in challenging prevailing economic models. This rearticulation needs a broader framework that goes beyond social and economic issues and takes on board matters of environmental sustainability and institutional questions such as structural inequality. The language of human development does not resonate with these movements.

I would go back to 'development as freedom', and particularly to the framework of 'instrumental freedoms', which includes social opportunities, economic facilities, transparency guarantees, security and political freedoms. In developing the chapter for the recent *Palgrave Handbook of Development Economics*, edited by Nissanke and Ocampo, I had the opportunity to read more about the discussions that took place during the origins of the HDR. The 'development as freedom' concept draws on the capability approach but also on other ideas. It would be helpful at this time to be more explicit about its foundation

in the capability approach and why that is important. On the policy front, there has always been ambiguity about what the human development agenda should look like. It has never been articulated, but that is because human development is not a policy prescription. In any case, it would be absurd to prescribe a policy formula that would fit all countries at all times. But the focus has been on the social sector and on economic policies. The five instrumental freedoms are more coherent with the capability approach and with the central idea of human development articulated in 1990. It sets up a broader framework that includes transparency, security and political freedoms, which are not in the HDI and have been neglected in UNDP reports and associated debates. Most importantly, these broader concerns are essential aspects of the original core concept.

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Human development: from rhetoric to policy

In this commentary based on an interview, **Adebayo Olukoshi** asserts the need to reclaim the notion of human development in thinking and policy-making.

There was a time when the world was preoccupied with measurements and descriptions of development. Ironically, these either excluded or minimized the very human beings who should be at the centre of the development experience, its direct beneficiaries. Indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), per capita income or foreign exchange reserves might tell us something about the health of an economy. But they tell us little about how equitably the fruits of development are distributed. This is why the emergence and operationalization of the concept of human development was such a refreshing moment in the history of development thinking.

But even as the concept of human development was gaining traction, it never quite came to dominate the conversation. Competing for attention was the neoliberal narrative, backed by some of the most powerful actors in the global system. These actors advocated an approach to governing economies and societies that was in direct contradiction to the very idea and ideal of human development. Paul Krugman referred to this as the counter-

revolution, which became the hegemonic policy framework for action in most countries around the world. The shortcomings of this revolution were evident in the past too, but they have been exposed in an unprecedented manner by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is time to reclaim the notion of a human-centred development experience in both thinking and policy-making.

It is not so much a matter of redefining human development or updating the Human Development Index in a different way. People hardly need convincing that an alternative is needed: that alternative already exists, but it needs to be pushed as the decisive framework for changing the rules of the game. Around the world, people know – without a shadow of doubt, from lived experience – that neoliberalism is simply not working. It is just that the conversations are fragmented, becoming about Greece or Spain or this or that part of Africa.

This is where the human development framework has a role to play: it can link the fragmented conversations and take advantage of the fact that institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are finally having to introspect. It can help ensure that this introspection does not simply lead to temporary palliative efforts but instead becomes part of the mainstream of policy-making. The starting point must be broad goals for the progress of society; the economic tools should then be adapted to help achieve those goals. Then the state needs to be retooled so that public policy-making keeps the long-term perspective in mind.

On one hand, the rhetoric of human development has gained traction and won the battle of ideas. On the other hand, the rhetoric has not translated into concrete policy. This is because decision-making about social and economic development is dominated by finance ministries and central banks, which are driven by a neoliberal logic that is antithetical to long-term development thinking. More effective engagement with such actors is essential to ensuring that human development is integral to how national medium-term expenditure frameworks are defined. Especially in Africa, governments use these frameworks to define policy, but the frameworks are controlled firmly by the IMF and the World Bank. Unfortunately, despite their lip service to human development, these global organizations are preoccupied with price, inflation targeting, and so on. Ultimately, all of this translates into a permanent state of austerity in most African countries.

Although the concept of human development is appealing and intuitive, it often comes as an afterthought. Instead of being the starting point of policy-making, it comes in only after inflation targeting and servicing of the external debt. The attention given to the Sustainable

Development Goals or human development is miniscule in relation to the need to do so and is more a way of buying political legitimacy for austerity. The production of the Human Development Report is not sufficient to lift human development from its residual position to centre stage. Doing so will require building coalitions and building strategies, for example to reclaim a key role for planning ministries, a role that is currently claimed by the finance ministries. Economic policy-making and the parameters used for this will need to be wielded in the service of the social progress of citizens.

It has been 30 years since the human development perspective emerged. It has not been much longer since neoliberalism came into force. The effect of those decades has been documented poignantly by Thomas Piketty, but also in reports by Oxfam and others. The world has never been more unequal, and Africa is becoming the capital of poverty. Informalization is worsening, open slums are expanding, and people are completely locked out and excluded – they are being consigned to the dustbin of history. There is clearly a case for recalibrating the human development perspective in view of the momentous changes that have taken place over the last three decades. But what needs recalibrating is also the strategy for delivering on this perspective.

The 2008/2009 financial crisis was supposed to be the wake-up call, but neoliberalism proved to be resistant, and it was back to business-as-usual. The risks of systemic collapse only keep getting bigger, and the implications more frightening. This potential predicament should serve as an urgent call to pay as much attention to questions of strategy as to questions regarding content. An update of the human development framework needs to take place with this in mind.

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This is the moment to think about the big picture

This is not a good moment to come up with small improvements to the definition of human development, says **Isabel Ortiz** – governments are facing an unprecedented level of debt and fiscal deficits because of the COVID-19 emergency, and now is the time to solidly make the case for human development, as agreed by governments at the UN for decades.

You have long experience at various UN agencies, in particular the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). How should we, in your view, rethink our conceptual understanding of human development, considering the great changes we see in the world today?

The COVID-19 crisis is an unprecedented crisis that leaves governments with many challenges. While I understand the intellectual drive to advance definitions and polish them with minor improvements here and there, I believe this is not the right moment.

Now is the time to think about the big picture. The world never recovered from the 2008 financial crisis and the majority of governments in both the North and the South have been undergoing austerity cuts for a decade. COVID-19 is creating a new social and economic

crisis on top of the existing crisis. Countries are becoming massively indebted and we already see major fiscal deficits, necessary to palliate human tragedy. But sooner rather than later – in the next months – there will be pressures to correct these fiscal deficits and service the debts incurred, leaving us with very reduced national budgets. To me this is a bad context for rearticulating human development.

The human development concept was conceptualized in the 1980s, at the time of the external debt crisis in the Third World. Many low-income countries implemented dramatic austerity cuts to service external debt. This solution came to be known as the 'Washington Consensus', a formula that proposed structural adjustments requiring drastic cuts in public expenditure, privatization of public assets and services, and a focus on economic growth accompanied by a few minimal, palliative, targeted safety nets. Many have questioned whether paying loans, promoting economic growth and downsizing the state should be the main priorities of development. As President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania demanded publicly, 'Must we starve our children to pay our debts?' Critics argue that the primary purpose of structural adjustments was to protect banks and investors in high-income countries at huge social cost in low-income countries. The 1980s were the so-called 'lost decade of development', a title also well earned by the 1990s. Poverty, infant mortality and other social indicators worsened. It was in this context that the concept of human development was created, to ensure necessary investments in education, health, social protection, water supply and others.

The situation is worse now. Levels of external debt have reached unprecedented historical levels. We know the orthodox way in which institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial organizations tend to solve debt and fiscal deficits. They do so with adjustment programmes, major austerity cuts, privatizations or expensive private–public partnerships (PPPs), and so forth. To me, this means that fine-tuning the concept of human development is not enough.

Rather, now is the time to solidly make the case for human development, as agreed by governments at the UN for decades. The magnitude of the depression that looms should be taken very seriously. A Great Depression requires a New Deal mindset. We need to not only protect human development expenditures at their current levels, but to ensure that governments invest in universal education, universal health and universal social protection in accordance with human rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and other international commitments, advancing human development.

What are the biggest challenges and threats to that core of human development?

In my view, the most important challenge is the limited fiscal space, the limited resources available to invest in what is needed. The conservative mindset, which dominates our world today, prioritizes macroeconomic stability and growth over human development. This was the case when the concept of human development was born at the end of the 1980s and, despite governments being more receptive to social development issues, it still applies today. Even though the SDGs have emerged in the past years as a major global commitment, what we have seen this past decade is the persistence of austerity cuts and this has led to a lot of unnecessary human suffering.

If we look at the health sector, while there was progress in some countries, many others were affected by austerity cuts over the last decade. Under IMF guidance, for example, governments reduced health budgets, and cut or capped public sector wages that limited the number of doctors, nurses and other public health staff. In the name of efficiency, governments – often advised by 'development' banks – decreased the number of hospital beds, closed public services, and underinvested in health research and medical equipment. All this undermined the ability of health systems to cope with infectious disease outbreaks, leaving billions of people highly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the current context, the main challenge is going to be financing – there is a tsunami of austerity cuts on the horizon. This means this is not a good moment to come up with an intellectual exercise to polish and improve the definition of human development, even though this may be moving in the right direction. Faced by this tsunami, what we need to do is to urgently safeguard and advance the core of human development, universal education, universal health and universal social protection, and the other dimensions of human development as we understand it today.

You say the urgency today is not to rearticulate human development but to protect and advance the core elements of our current understanding. How can we communicate this urgency better to policy-makers and decision-makers?

Crises are always a big opportunity for transformation. I suggest that we need to look at this opportunity for transformation from a human development lens, as a collective goal. What is at stake is the survival of the planet.

We have had major agreements put forward by countries at the UN in the last decades, and most of those are based on human rights principles. What we need is to ensure that the priority of those human rights is made clear at all decision levels and that financial support

follows those commitments.

For example, people have a right to health, a right to education, a right to social security, a right to work, a right to drinking water, and so forth. Cutting expenditures and privatizing the social sectors is going to make societies worse off. Privatizing or promoting PPPs in health systems is going to make societies much more vulnerable to diseases, thus what is needed is to invest in universal public health. And like health, in other public goods such as education, social security or water supply.

Lastly, we need to show how austerity cuts have been detrimental to human development. It is not that governments are opposed to human development or human rights. Rather, the problem is that they face multiple pressing priorities while they have very limited budgets. These very limited resources result in poor social outcomes.

Human rights are enshrined in the constitutions of most low-income countries. Even authoritarian governments call for the respecting of human rights. But their importance is undermined by the pressures coming from austerity cuts, fiscal deficits and debt servicing.

There are a number of reasons why governments support human development and human rights. The first one is social: every country wants healthy, educated and prosperous citizens. But there are also important economic arguments. Human development boosts productivity, and raising people's incomes generates domestic demand and consumption. Thus human development not only alleviates human suffering, a goal in itself, but also has a primary role in sustaining growth. Thirdly, there are important political arguments – all governments aim to be re-elected and granting citizens their rights demonstrates that the administration is functioning well.

These arguments are very important to fight the renewed Washington Consensus and pressures to implement austerity cuts. At stake is the world's survival.

One of the big changes since the emergence of the concept of human development and the emergence of the SDGs is that this no longer applies only to low-income countries but also to advanced economies. How can we make this more visible and thus ensure stronger commitments for the protection and advancement of human development for all?

Yes, currently there is no such divergence. Poverty is re-emerging in high-income countries. Three decades of Washington Consensus policies, and the previous decade of austerity cuts, have eroded the living conditions of citizens in the North, and increased inequality to unseen historical levels. So human development, like the SDGs, applies to both North and

South.

Further, the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that some Southern countries have done better than Northern countries; so indeed, there are lessons to be learnt.

You have a strong background in social protection. Can you elaborate on social protection and human development?

Social protection is part of human development. However, it is not part of the Human Development Index (HDI), which remains a high-level tool to compare countries.

If the UNDP, which produces the HDI and the annual Human Development Report (HDR), wants to consider social protection as part of the Index, it should work with the ILO. This is the UN agency with the mandate for social protection, and it is the custodian of SDG 1.3, which looks at progress in the coverage of social protection systems. The ILO also produces the World Social Protection Report, which uses the most comprehensive set of social security/social protection indicators to review progress across the world. The HDI and HDR could look at the progress of countries in achieving universal social protection coverage, and whether the benefits provided are adequate.

Now, what is very important is to avoid an HDI indicator based on the Washington Consensus notion of minimal safety nets only targeting the poor; this is a concept based on keeping social expenditure cheap and contained. This would be a disservice to human rights and to all the conventions and recommendations signed by all governments, workers and employers of the world. Social protection is not only about minimal safety nets targeting the poorest; this is its minimal expression. Social protection includes child benefits, pensions for older persons, and benefits for people of working age in case of maternity, disability, work injury or unemployment. So you understand me, everybody needs an adequate pension when they become old, it should not be just a hand-out for the poor.

So if social protection were to be incorporated into the HDI and HDR, it should be in accordance with UN principles agreed by all countries, and in collaboration with the ILO, which is the custodian of the social protection SDG 1.3. and has all the necessary data, collected from countries in the World Social Protection Report.

Thus you argue for coordinated work across the different UN organizations to ensure the protection and advancement of human development and human rights. Do you have any closing thoughts?

Indeed, the concept of human development is supported by all UN agencies. The COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced the weak state of overburdened, underfunded and understaffed health systems. As in health, years of austerity reforms in the majority of countries have undermined other areas of human development.

Now more than ever, at this time of historically high debt levels and austerity cuts, it is essential that the UN joint work continues, working with governments to ensure that human development and human rights are protected and advanced, as well as to create new fiscal space and resources for human development and human rights, and to secure adequate investments in universal education, universal health and universal social protection and the other dimensions of human development as we understand it today.

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Rethinking human development means rethinking what we mean by 'value'

Mariana Mazzucato explores how a missions-orientated approach must be used to solve 'wicked' problems, including reinvigorating the debate about value and value creation.

When it comes to addressing the major challenges facing us today – the current COVID-19 pandemic and inadequate healthcare systems, increasing levels of inequality in our economies, and climate catastrophe – too often our solutions and policies are inadequate because they don't have public purpose (or human development) at the centre.

One of the key ways in which our economies and public policy solutions are skewed against human development is how we tend to understand 'value' in our economies (Mazzucato, 2018). The way the word 'value' is being used in modern economics has made it easier for value-extracting activities to masquerade as value-creating activities. Value extracting creates nothing new: it simply moves money around. It does not grow the economy, it does not lead to innovation, and it contributes to greater inequality.

We have moved from a system where price was determined by value, to one where value is determined by price. If value is defined by price – in other words, set by the supposed

forces of supply and demand – then as long as an activity fetches a price, it is seen as creating value. If you earn a lot, you must therefore be a value creator.

The COVID-19 crisis has revealed what a fiction this is. For example, the workers who have kept our countries going during lockdown and healed us during the pandemic are the least paid, more precarious and (up until now) the least valued in our economies. I would argue that keyworkers make up our essential economy.

Another example of value extraction is pharmaceutical companies who sell drugs at disproportionate, and in some case predatory, prices. This idea of 'value-based pricing', where price is based on how much someone is willing to pay, becomes perverse when you apply it to life-saving drugs, including a potential COVID-19 vaccine (Mazzucato and Torreele, 2020). I was therefore pleased to lend my support to the World Health Organization's technology access pool, which will make a COVID-19 vaccine accessible and affordable to all.

By reinvigorating the debate about value and value creation at all levels – right down to how economics is taught at universities, like we do at UCL's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose – we can change our economies to support public purpose and human development.

Another key way that purposeful approaches to human development can be brought to life is in policy-making. The state has a key entrepreneurial role (Mazzucato, 2013) to play shaping markets and designing policies that address grand challenges and create public value. Markets alone, for example, will not address climate change or inequality. States need to seize these 'wicked problems' as opportunities to set bold and ambitious missions towards which policies, sectors and financing are orientated to deliver. A true missions-oriented approach means not being constrained by finances, but rather adopting novel outcomes-based budgeting methods. Missions can create new markets and dynamic spillovers into economies – opportunities which can pay for themselves many times over (Mazzucato and Dibb, 2019).

The design of social missions must involve a wide group of stakeholders in both definition and implementation. These missions should inspire the public, bring new voices to the table, and be geared to generate value for the whole community.

For instance, green missions can shape economic growth in a sustainable direction bringing jobs and improvements in living standards, and building the vital resilience we will need to

take on the impending climate emergency (Mazzucato and McPherson, 2019). We have also seen that governments that took a mission-oriented approach to addressing the COVID-19 crisis have fared better than others (Mazzucato and Quaggiotto, 2020).

Applying austerity logic to public administration and services has resulted in underinvestment and a lack of understanding of what is really valuable in the economy, and has made us more vulnerable and less resilient, and less able to respond to crises and pandemics. By changing the conversation about value, and re-orienting our economies towards public purpose, we can address the major challenges facing human development.

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Cities can be fundamental enablers of human development

Julio Lumbreras argues that cities that are able to provide their citizens with non-material services, such as access to culture or public safety, as well as basic services such as clean water, sanitation, access to energy and meaningful jobs, are fundamental enablers of human development.

What elements should the human development concept fundamentally include, considering today's challenges and in the context of your work on sustainable cities?

I think the original concept of human development as the process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being, and the three key dimensions of the Human Development Index, are still a great approach. What I believe we should do today is to look at this concept from the context in which a large majority of people live, cities. To me, cities are a system of systems that provide services to people. In this sense, cities are an enabler of human development. A major driver for people to move from rural areas to cities is precisely because they think basic services are better in cities.

I would like to make, however, a distinction between material and non-material services. Material services include housing, access to food, water, energy and mobility, waste management and green spaces. People move to cities to find these types of material services. But people also go to cities because of social and other non-material services, for example education, jobs, culture and public safety. Education was included in the Human Development Index, but culture and public safety, which are also fundamental needs for people, were absent in the original idea. Another aspect of the services cities provide is that they are dependent on the environment, such as energy or water. Thus, to me it is important to also see the city as a key part of a larger system.

Following on from this idea of viewing cities as centres providing services fundamental for human development, are you indicating that it is important to add a relational dimension?

Yes, I believe that fundamental elements of human development are relational. For example, people are attracted to cities by the offer of cultural and other social services such as theatres, cinemas and museums. Social and relational services are also very relevant, enabling diversity and promoting both interaction and understanding among different people and diverse cultures. The intercultural relationships one finds in cities today have become central to many people's conceptions of quality of life.

Safety is also important. Many people tend to go to cities thinking that they will be safer because they will have access to protection services, which they believe can improve their lives, make them safer and even improve their life expectancy. Unfortunately, in many cities this is no longer the case, and often cities have become less safe than rural areas.

Building on the perspective that cities need to provide certain things in order to enable human development, what are the major emerging challenges?

Besides the risk of pandemics that we have all now learned is enormous, a major challenge is that many urban areas, mainly in low-income countries, have residents without access to basic services. Too many people who move to urban centres, attracted by the possibility to enhance their quality of life, end up living without access to energy, water, sanitation or waste management. Unfortunately, the number of people lacking these basic services is not decreasing at the pace needed worldwide. Cities that grow without the provision of these services become very problematic.

Another major challenge is the overall ageing of the population in many parts of the world. Comparing population pyramids of today and the future, we see that about 35% of the

population will be 65 years or older as we approach the end of this century. Global average life expectancy will be around 80 years, and this means a large population of people over 80 and even over 90. Unless we radically change the length of working careers, we will have millions of people that do not work for over two decades. This will have very challenging consequences in terms of income, taxation, retirement pensions and the costs of health and elderly care. Cities should adapt services to this reality.

Another challenge is migration and people's mobility within and across countries. One type of migration is from rural areas to urban areas, which puts pressure on the services available in cities, as I outlined earlier. Another type of migration is between continents and countries due to different levels of economic development, climate change and other pressures, such as a generalized lack of services or natural resources. Global migration from rural to urban areas and across continents due to climate change will be extremely important in the future. We need to be prepared for flows of people displaced by increased extreme events and other climate impacts, which many do not have the resilience for. Considering that many urban centres across the world are already unable to provide for their inhabitants, these increased migration flows may truly jeopardize human development outcomes.

Another challenge is, in my view, existing rates of inequality. Clearly, we need a new social contract. Just a few decades ago the world, although still unequal, distributed wealth creation more equally. For example, when companies increased productivity, wages also went up and people earned more money. But this is not the case nowadays. Today, productivity and wealth creation go only to the very rich. This increase in inequality worldwide is another challenge for the coming years.

This leads us to a related issue, global security and governance. How can people participate in democratic processes when inequality continues to erode the social fabric? People are willing to adopt more radical and less democratic systems. We have the case of many populist leaders, like Donald Trump or Boris Johnson, and the increased global influence of a major authoritarian regime in China. Authoritarian and populist leaders move forward with their agendas while ignoring people's demands. So how can we promote democracy, civic participation and citizen engagement, and how can we develop systems so that people can participate in a more profound way? To me, this is an important and central challenge for human development. In this sense, mayors are in general not ideologists and less populist, as they are focused on solving the problems that citizens face.

How can we make the concept of human development more strategic and link it more with sustainable development?

First, let me say that I think we should definitely consider how to incorporate more elements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their targets, in the ways we measure human development. The main problem of a concept based on gross domestic product (GDP) is that this is a macro indicator that does not relate to the reality of a country – GDP might be increasing because of a few rich people making lots of money but the well-being of the majority of the people might be getting worse. We therefore need to consider measuring human development with micro indicators at the level of communities and people. If you measure the variation of GDP per capita, not only aggregating at a geographical area but also for each range of income percentile, then the results would be very different. The SDGs can also help to disaggregate this measurement into different aspects. The challenge is to translate the SDGs so they reflect people's lives and people can relate them to their own problems.

Regarding how to make human development more strategic, perhaps we could learn from the mission-driven perspective that is now being put forward by the European Commission. We need to agree on a North Star, a goal and purpose, and generate excitement about it. In a sense this is what SDG 17 was all about, a call to all stakeholders within global society to work together. The problem is that, rather than working towards the mission of sustainable development, we create silos in terms of sectors, in a fragmented manner. For example, in the context of COVID-19, some cities are thinking about how they can create solutions and consult other cities, a form of *coopetition*, cooperative competition.

These networks of cities are important, but they are incomplete, as they often do not include consultations with citizens or other key social actors such as private companies or researchers. Thus, what we need to do is to create spaces for collaboration between governments, citizens, scientists and the private sector. This is, in my view, the only way we can really reach our mission of implementing sustainable human development. The problem is that it is difficult to create these partnerships. First, we need trust, and it takes a lot of time to facilitate these processes. Creating spaces for collaboration has nothing to do with research or money invested in infrastructure. It is about people facilitating processes and building trust.

What is a meaningful and useful definition of human development?

To me, a meaningful and useful definition must be human-centred and focused on people. This is why GDP is not a good metric because it is about money within a country and not about people. People, their material and non-material needs, as well as the services addressing these needs, should be at the centre of the definition, and let me add, these should also be at the centre of the current transformation we are experiencing.

The reconstruction that needs to happen after the COVID-19 crisis needs to be human-centric. The reconstruction will rebuild the economy, but this recovery should be focused on human development. We should develop new neighbourhoods that offer the above-mentioned services and really cover the needs of people. For example, we can build what is called 'the city of 15 minutes'. This concept conveys an urban centre where essential services are located within a 15-minute walk so that vulnerable people do not need to depend on transportation. They can walk everywhere to access food, healthcare, and social and cultural interaction and services. So, when we think about the transformation that we need to create, let us focus on improving human development, on meeting the SDGs, and on making a new social contract that truly puts people at the centre.

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Empowerment is at the heart of human development

Leena Srivastava argues that empowerment and equal opportunity are crucially important in advancing human development and reflects on how this can be achieved.

Reimagining human development

Last year's Human Development Report (HDR 2019) focused on equity and the importance of going beyond income and averages. The next step would be to focus on empowerment and equal opportunity. Indeed, looking back over the past three decades, it is apparent that people thrive when they feel, and are, empowered. For instance, the issue of energy access cannot just be about creating supply opportunities and leaving it at that. The poor and marginalized need to be empowered *actively*, and opportunities need to be created consciously, so that these segments of society can access good quality energy in quantities commensurate with their needs, whenever they want.

Alongside empowerment and opportunity, dignity and respect are crucially important but do not receive sufficient attention. The design of empowerment measures should be such that those who are the target of such measures are able to feel and exercise their rights. Yet, present-day policies and governance, technology development and pathways towards sustainability – indeed, the structure of society itself – are not *a priori designed for inclusiveness*. Treating the marginalized sections of society with the dignity and respect they deserve, and ensuring their full and equal participation in development, are often an afterthought.

Consider driverless cars and robots. Technology firms tend to design these solutions for the richer segments of society around the world, where ageing populations are coupled with declining pools of labour. It is up to governments then to regulate the use of such technologies to minimize unintended consequences – including the prevention of wealth concentration. However, economic compulsions and stakeholder interests often take precedence. The consequences of introducing such aspirational technologies on the poor rarely enter the equation, and they are left to adapt the best they can.

The digital economy, too, is a case in point – this economy is not designed for the poor, particularly the illiterate and elderly, or women. The concept of fit-for-purpose does not exist for low-income groups. Similarly, disaster preparation and adaptation often does not apply to all people. The ill, aged and the very young may be missing from plans. This may not be deliberate, but design has always focused on the fittest – physically or economically.

Changing the ground rules

Part of the problem is that the poorer sections of society do not have the capacity to pay. Thus there is little incentive in innovating for them, which puts them at a further disadvantage. Exiting this vicious cycle requires an institutional mechanism that will prioritize the poor and their needs, as well as ensuring that catering to their needs is remunerative. Only then can the desire to leave no one behind become a reality. It may be time to set up an equal opportunity watchdog, for lack of a better word. The core responsibility of such a watchdog would be to ensure inclusivity in all societal endeavours, be it the development and deployment of intellectual property, rules for international trade or the use of public funds for various activities.

Public funds have a role to play in creating equal opportunity and empowerment. Governments support many private sector activities, and various regulations reward economic activity, innovation and entrepreneurship. It is certainly possible to design specific

incentives and put in place specific rewards to facilitate empowerment and opportunity creation. This is not about creating a system of reservations or quotas: it is about removing barriers and recognizing that doing so today may lead to rewards tomorrow. Such rewards should be recognized and rationalized to move towards human development for all.

It is also important to involve citizens themselves in reimagining human development such that it is inclusive and speaks to their needs and aspirations. Citizen science approaches could be effective in this regard: given the right types of questions and the right design, it should be possible to quickly mobilize responses from a wide range of people.

Measuring empowerment and opportunity

Evaluating whether and to what extent people have been empowered is not the same as measuring other aspects of human development: for example, taking a few billion people out of poverty or placing a few million more in classrooms speaks to quantitative performance but not to the qualitative or sustaining nature of performance. That said, it should be possible to come up with indicative ways of evaluating the efforts made to empower people and create equal opportunity in relation to such poverty and education data if we moved further up-cycle and investigated the job market and/or the regulatory environment around societal safeguards. The flow of public funds, for example, could be deconstructed to gauge the percentage of the funds that are leading to issues that have direct impact on increased empowerment and opportunities.

Take intellectual property, for example the development of a vaccine for COVID-19. Typically, one would assume that a vaccine would be available to everyone who needs it. But, as we know, availability by itself does not guarantee accessibility. Something else, something more, needs to be done for that to happen. Again, it should be possible to work this out and create the right types of metrics that enable us to assess whether a particular community has been empowered and provided with the requisite opportunities.

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Human development should be guided by norms and values

A normative vision of human development, concerned with present and future generations, and focused on enabling democratic governance and agency, is our best hope for a sustainable future, says **David A. Crocker**.

You have worked for many years on the ethical dimensions of development and know very well the trajectory of the capabilities approach. How do you think we should rethink the concept of human development in the current context?

I believe that the current situation created by COVID-19 shows us one very important issue: our lack of capacity to anticipate key challenges for human development. I believe our societies have focused too much on predicting what will happen in the near future, and this means we have failed to think about longer-term options for the future. This fixation on predicting what will happen spreads to all areas of life, from sports to the economy. It seems we are uncomfortable debating what could or should be done and end up more interested in what is likely to be done.

This normative impulse was the defining characteristic of the Human Development Reports. I believe we should keep the spirit of this visionary thinking about what the future should look like, combined with the best empirical work about how things are and how they can change. The core idea that development should be not guided by data, but guided by norms and values, needs to return to centre-stage.

Clearly, one important issue in this normative exercise is to envision what our obligations to future generations should be. Development for the future is something that needs to be more carefully articulated than in the past. If we continue along the development trajectory of today, we are going to be facing major catastrophic situations. Our ethics will need to change, because some people are going to have to forgo certain ways of living if we're going to survive. We see some of this today, with the reopening of our societies when the peak of the pandemic starts to recede. Some even argue that the social and economic pressures for reopening societies means that some will have to die for the sake of economic recovery and we need to accept that sacrifice. It is frightening, but it is the attitude of many today and this requires moral critique.

Philosophers have dealt with the general question of justifiable sacrifice. But now they need to deal with it in a very concrete policy situation. I think we can learn something from the present situation regarding the options of future generations. To avoid a future catastrophic situation and foresee a normatively guided vision of the future, we need to make changes today, even if these are painful and costly. The sacrifices, however, must be freely adopted and fairly distributed.

A second key area that is fundamental for the rethinking of human development is related to governance. I have worked for many years on democratic governance. More than a decade ago, this was a central topic in the UN's development work. But democratic governance is even more important and called for today. Current levels of inequality and imbalances in power means that the voices of people – especially powerless people – must be heard and become influential in local, national and global debates. There is an urgent need for all types of people and groups to be actively involved in the creation of our common future. A pertinent example is the 'Black Lives Matter' response to racial injustice in policing and incarceration in the United States.

Governance is about process and clearly there are many different conceptions of democracy. But most of them are thin and incomplete. We need a strong, deep and inclusive view of democratic governance to guide the rearticulation of human development, to guide social change. When looking at what is happening in the United States today,

when a minority has decided to reopen our society too early and too fast, those voices that challenge this reopening are silenced, the voices of women, minorities and the vulnerable.

Good democratic governance is about broad participation, especially of those who have been overlooked and repressed in the past. To me, this simply means that good development is about democratic development. This combination will and should take different forms in different contexts. Bringing development and democracy together in creative ways should be the basis for development and assistance, as argued by Thomas Carothers, the director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Another key element that is fundamental for our rethinking of human development is anti-corruption. Certainly, corruption is related to good governance. A responsible public leader is one whose basic aim is to serve the public or common good rather than enrich themselves, their tribe or their family. Corruption is about, among other things, personal responsibility and personal ethics. We all know that corruption is bad and we can define it in different ways. But we are all tempted by it in various ways, small and large. This is why it is so important to understand the role of normative commitments and ideals.

Tell us more about the importance of development ethics.

The most important challenge I see with development ethics today is to bridge the gap between theory and practice. We see this concern clearly in the efforts of Chloe Schwenke and others in the LGBT movement. But there is much more to be done. The fundamental challenge is that development teams – at whatever level – must have close collaborations with ethicists or ethically concerned practitioners. Yet this rarely happens. All development work entails value choices that need to be brought to the surface, to ensure they are seen and evaluated. In her 2020 memoir, *The Education of an Idealist*, Samantha Power illustrates ways of making relevant moral arguments in high-level policy decision-making.

Ethicists are also needed because all development work – planning, execution, evaluation, modification – should have a local emphasis. We do not need outside ethicists who just bring in blueprints they may have developed for another part of the world. What is needed is their effective involvement in, and ongoing dialogue with, local communities and people. This is the way to ensure that challenges such as inequality, gender injustice and corruption are confronted, so that the participation of vulnerable groups plays out in concrete situations.

Normative or ethical training is important, because if done in the right way it can bring

to light these issues and challenges. Of course, some professionals care a lot about these matters – human costs and the impact of different development programmes on people – but an expansion of this ethical inquiry would improve the outcomes and enable better implementation of visionary views on human development.

In short, I think that the dimensions of our concerns for humanity and visionary thinking on what ought to be, concerns for future generations, and emphasis on democratic governance and corruption, alongside ethical guidance, need to be core components of rearticulating human development.

What are the key challenges today to that idea of human development?

I believe that climate change is a first major challenge. The second is a substantive democratic deficit and related to this is the resurgence of authoritarianism. Both challenges are connected because autocrats love to discount the future; they want to make as much money and profit as possible in the present.

The pandemic shows us how fragile our ecology is, but also how we are all connected to one another. We have also seen glimpses of how the whole global system could collapse in ways that we have not envisioned in the post-World War II or even the Cold War periods. I think that the pandemic shows us the kind of radical rethinking that we need to do. Politicians in the United States like Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders have been saying this for a long time. We cannot simply just tweak things; we need to get to the underlying causes and aspire to realize humane values. The social and economic inequalities in the world today are fundamental challenges facilitating the spread of authoritarianism and undermining democracy. The short-termism that colours the views of authoritarian regimes is the biggest challenge to finding a solution to climate change as well.

How can we then make human development more relevant for policy and decision-making?

I believe we need to continue putting normative concerns at the centre of human development and show that measures like gross domestic product are at best a means to human ends (and often not very good ones). Bridging the gaps between academics, policy-makers and those in the development trenches is another way to demonstrate the relevance of human development.

Ethical guidance for development work has not been influential, like say the way in which animal rights and animal ethics have successfully influenced attitudes and polices towards the treatment of animals. The comparison may seem strange, but it is very instructive to see

how animal rights has succeeded in changing local and national legislation governing the treatment of animals. See, for example, the writings of Bernard E. Rollin in *A New Basis for Animal Ethics: Telos and Common Sense*.

Another way to improve impact and promote change is to practise more immersion in the lives of local communities. Even development professionals in the World Bank realized that having a sabbatical where one would go and live in a village was much more efficient in understanding development problems and solutions.

To conclude, how would you define human development in a manner responsive to today's challenges?

I think we need to define development as freedom, as simple as that. The original definition of living the lives people have reasons to value, even if complex and abstract, still captures the core concerns that I have outlined. The vision that there are certain human capabilities that are valuable in and of themselves is key. But to me the most important capability is agency. It is a kind of super-capability, as it enables us to decide what the other capabilities should be. In some sense the result is transcultural, not in some spooky Platonic sense, but relevant for people anywhere in the world. The notion of being not just free from constraints but free to run your own life with other people together remains, I think, a core value. A focus on agency tells us all that people – individually and collectively – should never be treated as things but rather as people responsible for their own lives.

Together with agency, I believe that holding onto equality and well-being is key for a meaningful definition of human development today. But I believe there is a lot of work to be done in making this vision of agency, equality and well-being attractive, as well as accounting for sustainability and future generations. For recent work in international development and development ethics, including three of my new essays, see the Festschrift (Hominaje) *Agency and Democracy in Development Ethics* (2019), edited by Lori Keleher and Stacy J. Kosko.

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Rearticulating human development requires participatory processes

Jhonatan Clausen Lizárraga suggests that environmental sustainability be considered a dimension of human development and that there is a need to engage the broader public to link concepts related to the human development approach to their daily lives.

How can we rethink our conceptual understanding of human development, taking the perspective of the poor in Latin America into consideration, in the changing context of today?

I have been working on poverty measurement and analysis of human development in Latin America for a while, at Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and more recently at the newly created, interdisciplinary Institute of Human Development for Latin America (IDHAL). My immediate short answer is that we must remember that the human development approach has as its conceptual base the capability approach. In my opinion, we might be at risk of losing this fundamental insight. It seems as if, in practice, development institutions and stakeholders are involved in some sort of competition between a human-centred development approach and a sustainable, natural and ecological perspective to

development. This competition is based on a false dichotomy and is potentially damaging. We should find a way to bring together these two approaches.

The UNDP has been working on sustainable development in a broader way, but we should bear in mind that the motivation for a human-centred development approach is recognizing each human being as the ultimate unit of ethical concern, and acting accordingly. Clearly there are environmental aspects that we have to consider, but we should prioritize the capability of people to live the lives they value as the core. Of course, living those lives people value has fundamental environmental aspects today, but these need to be integrated with social issues and as key integral parts of a broad conception of human well-being. To me this might involve a 'reloaded' understanding of human development.

Regarding the second part of your first question, 'What is the meaning of human-centred development in a changing world' – for us, at IDHAL, having the human being at the centre of development involves bearing in mind all the time that all public policies, work on social change, the agendas of social movements, and regulations and institutions should have the expansion of the capabilities of people as their main concern. At a very practical level, the question is then: How do we measure if we are making progress regarding this human-centred development? In my view, what matters is both to identify how people are actually doing in their lives and how to enable people to enrich their own lives. That would lead us into a more multidimensional approach to evaluate well-being – and poverty – that can trigger action.

As mentioned earlier, this means including environmental issues as an integral part of the social and human aspects. All in all, this multidimensionality can be operationalized using indicators and goals. This is not because we should adopt a 'quantitativist' approach, but because numbers and goals that can be measured are powerful tools for accountability, communication and other policy purposes.

The main focus of the capabilities-based definition of human development is 'for people to live the lives they have reasons to value'. You seem to indicate that there is competition between the human-centric capability focus and sustainability outcomes. How can we integrate these two key approaches? It is difficult to conceive of well-being without resilience to climate change impacts. How can we resolve this tension?

There are many ways in which we could make progress regarding this issue. The first thing we need to do is to explicitly recognize the relationship between human beings and nature as a dimension of human development and well-being. That is, to consider nature and the

environment as dimensions of human development alongside all other dimensions such as education, health and others. So far, these dimensions have been difficult to incorporate in a general measurement of human development outcomes, potentially because of the lack of data. Efforts in this direction may help to resolve the tensions I mentioned before. The second has to do with the structural aspects of human development. Most empirical work about human development has relied on household surveys. This is absolutely relevant but we should go one step further and also pay attention to evaluating human development beyond individuals. For example, by attending to the relationship between human beings and the environment, and on the way in which environmental facts, such as the state of nature, access to natural resources, institutions or social norms that impinge negatively on the environment, could enhance people's well-being or lead to deprivation. These structural aspects have been relatively less explored in recent capability literature and in the discourse on human development, yet these structures are very important. Sometimes, Latin American scholars hesitate to use the term 'structure', perhaps because it could look like a reference to structuralism and this is something that seems to be outdated, but I think we have to rethink structures and how we incorporate them in development studies and particularly in human development studies.

Can you tell us what are, in your view, the key challenges that prevent human development outcomes?

There are three very important central challenges that we have to address in the near future.

First, a significant proportion of the population in many countries have been successful in improving their socio-economic situation and leaving poverty behind. However, these people remain vulnerable, and it is likely that they will be pushed back into poverty, for instance because of the current COVID-19 crisis. What I believe is crucial is to move beyond a focus on income poverty and look at multidimensional poverty and its drivers. People who are multidimensionally vulnerable should be prioritized and put at the centre of all our efforts regarding human development. At the same time, we have to remember that a significant number of people in the world have never left poverty. Therefore, eradicating poverty and vulnerability to poverty, from both an income and a multidimensional perspective, should be the first important challenge to address.

The second challenge is inequality and its consequences for political imbalance in low- and middle-income countries. Inequality, like poverty, is also multidimensional, and this is now part of a global public debate and recognized also by high-income countries. I

believe we need political processes that enable countries to conduct reforms to help poor people, enhance their well-being and support them to be more resilient to shocks. However, inequality is a hindrance to policy change. In Latin America, inequality – not only income inequality, but other non-monetary kinds of inequality – prevents governments from making reforms. For example, in the case of Peru we are in a debate right now on whether we should relax the lockdown that was put in place due to COVID-19, but the debate demonstrates the differential power of certain voices over others. There is a small but very powerful group within the population that is advocating opening the economy now for economic reasons. On the other hand, there are many people struggling, scared and worried because relaxing the lockdown would have a negative impact on their health and on their capacity to stay alive, given that they are less resilient and less able to protect themselves. This situation is caused by power inequality, and this imbalance correlates with other types of inequality, from income to access to basic facilities.

The third key challenge to human development is about environmental degradation and climate change, which affects more clearly vulnerable people and poor people across many different dimensions. This is not a minor issue at all. Environmental concerns and issues such as climate change are important issues on their own, globally and for all. But they also reinforce dynamics of inequality and poverty. It is very important for the international development discourse to explicitly emphasize the relationship between climate change and the real lives people in poverty lead. Otherwise, we risk seeing the environment and climate change only as 'first world problems', which is not the case at all. In Peru, for example, this is already visible. Those most concerned about climate change tend to be the wealthiest groups in our society even though the consequences are and will be much more severe for poor people. Unfortunately, except for some rural populations that have been directly affected by polluting activities such as mining, climate and environmental degradation is still perceived as a concern of the rich, of academics and elites.

Is this perception that concerns for climate change are often the concern of academics and rich people something that applies across many low-income countries?

It would be interesting to carry out some formal research regarding the importance that people living in poverty give to the environment. I do not have robust certainty of this perception from a scientific perspective, but in the media, as well as on social media and other communication platforms, there is a feeling that these topics are of concern to a minority, to rich and privileged people. Even though we have seen some important social movements led by indigenous people, for example regarding the preservation of

nature, these are still a minority. Climate change is not on the public agenda in Peru at the moment. We should understand and be open to rethinking the relationship between people living in poverty and the environment, not only from a practical perspective but also looking at the way in which poor people themselves consider this interrelation as important or not. We, the academics, always hear that climate change is going to have a severe impact, affecting poor people in particular, and that it is going to increase inequality and all types of vulnerabilities. We know this and there are some initiatives that work with people in poverty who are fighting for their rights regarding nature, contamination and pollution, etc. However, at the same time, perhaps we are too confident about the way in which the general public cares about this, and we could do a bit more to raise awareness in this regard. I believe that UNDP must put this interrelation and poor people's views at the centre of its work.

How can the human development approach inform debate and decision-makers about current and future challenges?

The human development approach is a very powerful tool to inform public debates and guide policy-making. However, we should make an effort to translate these complicated narratives and messages from the capability approach and the human development approach to language that can be communicated to the wider population. What we lack is a linking of these concepts to issues relevant to the general public, to their daily lives, and to matters that people actually value and understand. It is important to build a bridge between the very informed and interesting approaches from development studies to the general perception of the entire population.

What would be a meaningful and useful definition of human development in our changing world, one that has meaning in Latin America today?

To me, development from a human perspective could be understood as an enabling process. A process in which people actually have *the ability to live their lives* in a manner they consider important and meaningful. The idea of 'value' might sound too abstract so maybe we could focus on synonyms that might be more tangible for people. I see human development more like an enabling process in which people are allowed to pursue their most important life goals. This might sound too simple or too colloquial for academics, but it could be a definition that people can relate to.

At the same time, I believe that the most important thing to do in this process of rearticulating human development is to involve the general public, to engage with a

broader audience and actually seek out and hear also the voices of marginalized and vulnerable people. A consultation process with experts, leaders and political actors is of course important, and it is not easy to conduct large participatory exercises with poor people on a regular basis. However, we should find a way and test methodologies, even if imperfect, to involve a broader audience in this process. *Voices of the Poor* is still a compulsory reference in 2020, but 20 years since its publication perhaps it is time for us to conduct a second version of that project. This second version should focus on people living in different forms of non-monetary poverty and also on people who are not currently living in poverty but are vulnerable to a range of non-income forms of deprivation. People's well-being and priorities are dynamic; therefore, our metrics and policies should be designed accordingly.

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The challenge of the next decade is to make the digital century compatible with democracy

In the face of today's challenges, including digitalization and climate change, ensuring human development will require us to move beyond the hard-won focus on individual autonomy, agency and capacity to a new frontier that is defined by the individual in relationship to the collective, says **Shoshana Zuboff.**

You have worked for many years on the interface of technology, power and society. Your most recent work, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*, addresses the key challenges posed by digital technologies to our humanity. You are also a social psychologist with a long trajectory of working in interdisciplinary research teams. With this background in mind, how should we be rethinking human development today? What are the key challenges? What are the hopes?

The concept of human development is a modern psychological concept, but the phenomenon of human development is not purely modern. There is a long arc and a more contemporary arc. It is a phenomenon that has developed over millennia, because

human development happens within the conditions of existence that occur in history. In terms of this big arc, human development has moved towards a meta-process of individualization over millennia. If we think about the history of mentalities and of human sensibility, the notion of the individual as a psychological entity has been extruded, drawn out with great difficulty and sacrifice, over many centuries and millennia. This *larger arc of millennia constitutes a long process of differentiation and the construction of the self. It has produced the psychological individuals that we think about today when we speak of human development.*

This new individual is marked by the construction of inner life as a legitimate realm that – ultimately, in the history of the emergence of the individual inner life – takes on not only a legitimate position, but an urgency and authority that in some ways supersedes social and collective life. The psychological individual is foundational for the very possibility and idea of democracy, let alone its practical construction – however imperfect. We cannot imagine a democratic society without imagining psychological individuals who have free will, autonomy, self-referencing capabilities to norms, values and rights, and who can conceive of situations where an inner reference to fundamental rights is stronger than the immediate demands of authority or of the collective.

The contemporary arc reflects the conditions of existence that we experience today, which now also challenge us to look beyond ourselves because of threats that require collective action based on attention to our shared humanity. We are challenged to bring the capabilities of individualization into a larger context, which really is the context of 'us'. Today's threats cannot be met solely with those cherished capabilities of autonomy, agency and the capacity for individualized judgment, self-reference and self-reflection. We don't leave them behind, but we must integrate them into a larger felt space, and this will further differentiate our composition of what we consider 'developed'.

The challenge now is moving from these miracles of individualization to a new frontier that is defined by the individual in relationship to the collective. Not through opposition, domination and subjugation, but rather through necessary solidarity. This is a new kind of sensibility. The climate crisis, for example, requires this shift. We cannot think of ourselves only as individuals, which is essential, but we also have to think as 'one', as a collective, as humanity, because there is no way of separating the threat to ourselves from the threat to us – it is *one threat.*

I regard the challenges of the digital century as analogous to the climate challenges: challenges to all of us and at the very same time challenges to each of us. When we talk

about the threats of the digital century, we hear that privacy is a major one. Yet, privacy is a 'catch phrase'. We are under the delusion that privacy is something private because we are thinking about this concept through the lens of individualization. This dilutes the meaning of privacy into some sort of private calculation, calculations that are exploited by the empires of surveillance capitalism.

For example, we think 'I'll give you this little bit of personal information – perhaps a photo I post on social media – in return for the 'free' service of sharing my photo with friends and family and connecting'. In fact, privacy cannot be a private calculation in at least two ways: first, a society that cherishes privacy will always be fundamentally different from a society that it is indifferent to privacy. A surveilled society will never be the same as a society that prioritizes privacy as a right. They will be at variance in their respect for the dignity of the sovereign individual, the capacity for human autonomy, agency, free will and decision rights – all of the capacities essential to the democratic self. At the same time, every time we engage in these simple trade-offs of free services for a private advantage, we are captured by a lie. The surveillance capitalist empires have amassed unprecedented concentrations of information about us through systems designed to be hidden. Most of what they possess has been taken from us without our awareness. These data feed systems of artificial intelligence to discover patterns and predict future behaviour. The end result of this exchange has nothing to do with our presumed private calculation; it is information that is extracted from our experience without our knowledge and without our consent. It is, quite simply, *surveillance*. By choosing to participate in these unprecedented systems of knowledge and power, we unwittingly contribute to the large-scale monitoring and control of society.

For example, we innocently and willingly post our photos to Facebook and to other parts of the internet. Those photos are taken, without our knowledge and certainly without our permission, for example by Microsoft – a leading surveillance capitalist – for the largest data set in the world used to train facial recognition algorithms. When Microsoft created its 'Microsoft Celeb' training data set for facial recognition (it turned out that they were NOT merely taking celebrity faces), they said that it was only for academic research. But, in fact, the data set was sold to law enforcement agencies, companies and military operations including the military division of the Chinese Army that incarcerates members of the Uyghur Muslim minority in Xinjiang. The whole province is essentially a surveillance mini-state. There are specific detention camps in Xinjiang where people are imprisoned by the ubiquitous presence of facial recognition systems that monitor them on a continuous basis on the street, in their homes and their workplaces, etc. These facial recognition systems are

built on our faces, that we have freely given, under the delusion that privacy is private. No, it is not. Privacy is public – a collective good that can now only be preserved by collective will.

Here we have this very visible example of how thinking about this problem as if we are only individuals, with the capacity for judgment and decision rights to make a private trade-off, contributes to collective systems of tragedy and violence, control and injustice. This is why I link the challenges of the digital century to those of climate cataclysm. They are challenges that exceed our capacity as individuals to solve. They require us to integrate our hard-won capabilities as individuals into a larger framework of how we think, feel and act as members of a class called humanity. This is the positive challenge for humans all over the Earth. This is the new contest of human development.

The alternative to our engagement at this further frontier of human development is already present in the surveillance capitalists' vision of our future. Their solution is to use systems of monitoring and control of populations to reconstruct society as a *hive*. This hive society is remotely tuned and controlled by psychological triggers, subliminal cues, engineered social comparison dynamics, real-time rewards and punishments and the pleasures of gamification. These are the tools that the tuners, those who administer the human hive, are inventing to redefine the social.

In this future we find that instead of *society*, it's *population*; instead of *individuals,* it's *statistics*; instead of *democratic governance*, it's *computational governance*, where populations are tuned remotely based on behavioural data flows and their adherence to predetermined algorithmic parameters. This computational governance is imposed as the top-down solution to the emerging challenges of human development. What develops here are algorithms, not people. Computational governance is a replacement for the arduous challenging work of human development.

The politics of the hive are a feudal politics, a hierarchical politics of control, of one-way mirrors. They do not require violence, terror or murder, but they are, nevertheless, systems of unilateral control where the mechanisms of the black box are indecipherable. In this future, democracy becomes a distant memory, because there is no longer a need for participation, free will, autonomy, agency, decision rights or fundamental rights. There is, instead, the perfect confluence of the hive and the necessary metrics of efficiency and effectiveness as measured by, not only outcomes related to survival, but in the West – for now at least – outcomes related to profit and the profitability of the systems that are administered by the tuners, the feudal lords of algorithmic governance.

This is how I see the landscape and challenges of human development. These are the thoughts that are evoked by your questions inquiring about the meaning of human development today, the challenges and the way forward. If we are to meet these challenges, it is in that very meeting, in that very contest and struggle, that we surrender ourselves to precisely the kinds of experiences, processes and conflicts that are the motor of human development in the first place.

Human development happens not through observation but through participation; not just through harmony but through conflict; not just through stability and satisfaction but through instability, threat and problem-solving. These experiences compose human development. The pleasure principle alone requires no human development. Civilization is the product of sublimation – grief and contest, dissatisfaction and injury. In the same way, we only develop because we engage with challenges and contests. That is how over millennia we created the rule of law and charters of human rights to subdue violence. Engaging the conflict and driving it forward is how we advance human development.

Give us some concluding thoughts on what hopes you have to leverage these powerful digital technologies and the systems that create and operate them to do things differently and to get back to fundamental democratic values.

I have nothing but hope. The challenge of the next decade is how do we make the digital century compatible with democracy? How do we create a digital century and a digital future that can fulfil the aspirations of democratic people? Only in the past few years have we come to appreciate that the digital century is moving on a very different trajectory from the one that we had anticipated or that we would choose. This is the time. It is not too late, and not too early, for us to engage in this challenge and to create the needed legal frameworks, regulatory paradigms, new institutional forms and the new charters of rights that will assert democratic governance over the digital. This is the big work now. This big work is consonant with the challenges as developing individuals. The development of one cannot be alienated from the development of all.

Scholar, writer and activist **Shoshana Zuboff** is the author of three major books, each of which signalled the start of a new epoch in technological society. Her recent work, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, has been hailed as the tech industry's *Silent Spring*. Zuboff is the Charles Edward Wilson Professor Emerita at Harvard Business School.

Human-driven development through shared ownership and decentralization

Carolina Odman and **Kevin Govender** explore how science and technology can fundamentally change the context in which human development is defined, through the lens of shared ownership and decentralization.

Introduction

Conversations, insights, planning, strategizing and thinking over the last three decades about human development, by great minds from all over the world, have shaped an amazing landscape around this issue, within which we all strive for one simple goal: to make the world a better place. While 'rearticulating human development', we must celebrate the wisdom that came before and recognize the strengths of the current state of play. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with the current definition of human development, nor with the Sustainable Development Goals – they are a comprehensive

and worthy set of ambitions that has managed to rally the world's leaders (both in government and industry) and provide common ground for a diverse human population to work towards a united vision.

The question rather is what can we do better in a world very different from 30 years ago? Where are the gaps that would motivate this rethinking of human development? The six *'emerging dimensions for a new human development paradigm'*, as articulated by the ISC-UNDP project, capture well the possible issues in need of consideration. Here we explore an overall perspective of this already well-informed landscape, with a focus on science and technology, and two underlying principles: one of shared ownership and one of decentralization. With a combined lens of shared ownership and decentralization, we explore how science and technology can fundamentally change the context in which human development is defined.

Shared ownership: what if development goals were everyone's goals?

Astronomy gives people the perspective and humility needed to be able to change the world. In the current world, it seems like the expectation, the vocabulary, the narrative, the very spirit of human development, has been built around the idea that it is the responsibility of a few to deliver 'development' to the many. The responsibility seems to lie heavily on governments or large organizations providing infrastructure or services such as water, power, healthcare and education. Furthermore, a model has emerged since World War II where 'development' has been delegated to 'the economy'. Indeed, the wealthy can afford access to services and infrastructure because they have economic power, whereas those who don't have to make do without. In the book *Poor Economics*, the authors make the observation about rich nations that their peoples' needs are not just met, but are also protected by structural safety nets such as the welfare state. Their citizens therefore are less vulnerable than their poorer fellow humans and can live much more secure lives (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011).

While the current definition of human development goes beyond economic indicators, economic power remains the only tool by which development is driven. Wealthy countries invest economic power into mainly centralized infrastructures and services that in turn make that society able to feed back power through, for example, taxes. But is this model of economic power as the only driver of development sustainable and suitable for all societies? Countries with weak institutions leak economic power through corruption, for example. If development wasn't enabled solely through the power of economic

currency, could the loss of development for those countries be reduced? And can we trust governments to provide for everyone, when globally, even democracy has been shaken by the use of misinformation for political ends?

So, let us explore what would happen if we changed the expectation, the vocabulary, the narrative, the very spirit of human development, to one where the ownership of development lies not so much in government structures but more in empowered individual and community structures closer to the ground.

We must emphasize that this is not about completely shifting ownership from government to individuals, but rather a greater sharing of ownership. More importantly, it is about the spirit of empowering people to be more resilient on their own. This could be a very sensitive matter in many countries, as it involves changing how we have been groomed to think as a society. This is especially true in highly unequal societies where the government is expected to provide for the poor, given how many rich there are within that society. An anecdote from rural South Africa to illustrate this: when trying to install biogas digesters for human waste in a remote village, implementers of the project faced a challenge of adoption by the local community, and were asked 'why should we have to shovel our own sh*t when the rich people in the country can just press a switch?'

Sharing ownership does not imply a removal of governments' responsibility to serve their people, nor does it imply any less need for governing structures in society. A narrative of human-centred development being owned by the humans themselves means that governing structures focus their energies more on the empowerment of individuals and communities in order to deliver on development goals, enabling human development to flourish in its own context.

In practice this would mean that achieving a goal of zero hunger, for example, relies on a spirit of disconnecting this goal from economic reliance and moving towards investment in self-sustainability. Rather than investing in cheaper foods through imports and mass production, or moving large quantities of food great distances, often at the cost of nutritional value and the environment, governments would invest more in empowering people by providing them with access to land, stimulating community gardens, spreading education on sustainable food production techniques as well as nutrition. Changing the narrative means changing how we think about a particular development goal.

Importantly, creating a spirit of empowerment means that society becomes less reliant on 'the economy' and a more sustained system of human-*driven* development is achieved.

If development is indeed about freedom, as described by Sakiko Fukuda-Parr in her contribution to this volume, then governments can strive to ensure that their people have the freedom to take care of themselves. *Human-driven development* means that a government should actually strive to empower its people, through knowledge and resources, to be able to take care of themselves and take ownership of the means of their development. That is where true resilience resides.

In astronomy education and research, a big focus is on the 'knowledge' part of empowerment. We tackle some of the biggest questions imaginable, and push the boundaries of technology in trying to find answers: Where did the universe come from? Where is it going? Is there life beyond planet Earth? However, in recent years, the field of 'astronomy for development' has emerged, where, through these questions, we also try to inspire every human to realize and release the incredible potential of their own minds. We strive to create problem solvers. We use the excitement of exploration to push the limits of our problem-solving abilities, and then apply these abilities directly to development challenges on earth. Within every individual mind lies the capacity to understand the mechanics of the universe – and that capacity, if adequately supported and celebrated, would take us beyond the challenges of today and the unforeseen challenges of tomorrow.

An example to illustrate: one of the authors of this article took telescopes into a refugee camp and explained what people could see through it. Amid all the desperation and hopelessness around the camp, the author was overwhelmed with enthusiastic questions, conversations and debates on everything from the shape of the earth to the existence of life on other planets. When one of the individuals from the camp, who had voluntarily helped with translations, was helping pack up the telescopes, he could hardly contain his excitement: 'I never thought that I could actually understand and explain to people about such things like the planet Jupiter!' He went on, 'I have always wanted to study journalism but never thought I was good enough. But if I can actually understand something like Jupiter, then I know I can do journalism.' An inspired mind can do great things.

Governments should inspire and empower their people. Inspiration requires an environment that feeds natural curiosity about the world around us and beyond – curiosity that in turn can trigger motivation and creativity. Empowerment requires two things: knowledge and resources. These are things that governments can make available for, and accessible to, their people, thereby sharing the ownership of development

goals with them. This decentralization of ownership needs to be accompanied by a decentralization of the tools and technologies of development. Fortunately, science and technology has reached a state of sophistication and democratization that enables the complexities of a decentralization of development.

Decentralization: taking the eggs out of the basket

In very broad strokes, the two technological elements that have brought many developed societies to where they are today are digitization and networking. Digitizing information from any source (biological, physical or social, for example) has given machines the ability to process and analyse it. Networking has connected not only people but also the machines processing information. This has given access to new data sources and new analyses, bridging the realms of the physical world and the cyber world and effectively making the internet an organically connected form of distributed intelligence. At the endpoints of the vast internet are increasingly intelligent machines in the hands of humans – like smartphones, or bits of technology forming their own infrastructure (the 'internet of things'). Today, we find ourselves at the meeting point of powerful technologies.

Where technologies this powerful meet, new dimensions of innovation open up, which previously belonged in the realm of science fiction. Between high-performance computing, big data, artificial intelligence and machine learning lies the sweet spot that rushes us into the fourth industrial revolution (a term coined by Professor Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, to describe the deep technological evolution triggered by the crossing of cyber, physical, biological and social boundaries). But therein lies also the opportunity for smaller, maybe less impressive, but highly adapted affordable technology to service the needs of communities. It is important to note that empowering communities to use the fruits of science and technology for their benefit is conditional on the availability of open data, open knowledge, open source technologies and open science.

Previous industrial revolutions were greatly aided by the definition and adoption of technical standards, some as innocuous as screw threads to match nuts and bolts, others as dramatic as railway gauges. Likewise, standards in all aspects of technology nowadays democratize access to those technologies. Web technologies have standards that enable anyone to write a web page and anyone else to be able to read it through any browser. Standards break down technologies into small parts that can be used together to create

something new. What is different is that standards exist now not just in the technological elements themselves, but in the tools to build them. That enables economies of scale for minor users. 3D printing, for example, enables the conceptualization of a usable object and its creation from a desktop. Today, people can create technology on a small scale, and start using it without incurring the high costs associated with technology creation in the past.

Science and technology give us the ability to decentralize development, and to shift the ethos of human-*centred* development, towards human-*driven* development. Currently, most countries rely on central infrastructure and centralized services. Banking, water distribution systems, the power grid, national school systems and even hospitals are all forms of centralized infrastructure and services. What happens if we adopt the decentralized perspective enabled by technology, and apply it to those aspects that are considered fundamental for human development?

To develop that perspective, we can look at society as embedded within layers of networks. It is known that less centralized networks are much more resilient to failure. A decentralized network is one that distributes a workload and provides redundancy instead of being vulnerable at single points of failure. This is one of the key principles of a strong internet infrastructure, for example. Let us look at some of those centralized infrastructures and services mentioned above, and try to make them more resilient based on the idea of decentralized networks.

Banking and financial services

The formal economy is centralized, and whenever it is hit by a strong downturn, like the 2008 financial crisis, shockwaves are sent all the way down to the individual consumer. The informal economy, however, is quite different and has properties of a decentralized network. It depends much more on local conditions, meaning that an event that occurs due to poor decision-making by a relatively small number of people in one place is unlikely to change informal trade in another place far away.

The informal economy is also a highly adaptive system. Blockchain technologies and their implementation as cryptocurrencies are a way to decentralize trust in financial transactions and rely less on central financial authorities. In fact, there are several different cryptocurrencies that each have their own marketplaces and operate independently of one another. Does this open the road towards an alternative to traditional financial services for

the world's 'unbanked' population? This is a growing possibility with both opportunities and challenges currently being taken seriously by the financial services industry (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Water and sanitation

Many of us rely on a central piped water system, which itself relies on large water treatment plants, far away from where the water is used. It is acknowledged that water loss through piped systems cannot be eliminated (Lambert, 2002) and places as developed as Central Europe report that 25–50% of water is never billed for; of this, 80–100% is physical loss through leaks. This is critical considering that only about 1% of the world's fresh water (itself only about 2.5% of the world's total water) is available for human use (Boberg, 2005). As more places around the world face droughts, the need for consumers of water to have a close connection with the source of this water is key to changing wasteful attitudes towards this limited resource.

The way the 2017–2018 drought in Cape Town was managed made global headlines. With people fully behind avoiding 'day zero' (when the taps would run dry) it showed that it is possible, with the right message, to shift the behaviour of a large urban population in a small amount of time (Mahr, 2018). Rain is the main way water resources are replenished, and the state of our water resources and the climate are well researched. So, from scientific research for drought management (Obringer and Nateghi 2018) to rain collection and water purification technologies, there are numerous and affordable tools for better water management that can easily be deployed at a community level.

Power

Power supply is possibly the most obvious of sectors to decentralize. Numerous technologies are more environmentally friendly, standalone and affordable than the system of burning large quantities of fossil fuels to feed into a maintenance-heavy power grid infrastructure. With renewable energy technology, the current centralized system could become obsolete. The grid remains useful, however, when it enables private power generation to be fed into the system, giving it more resilience. This can reduce the need for rolling blackouts, used by some emerging economies to manage an ageing central power grid in the face of surging demand. When stressors are applied to an ailing infrastructure such as the power grid, it can stimulate the adoption of better technologies. For example,

when rolling blackouts started happening in South Africa, where they are locally known as 'load-shedding', they stimulated a local industry of small-scale power self-reliance solutions and some economic opportunities (Reuters, 2020).

Education

Could national education systems be dismantled in favour of a decentralized system? This is a difficult question as education is typically a sector where regulation is valuable – it has been shown that a fully free-market approach to education is detrimental to the students of that education (Hemsley-Brown, 2011; Dynarski, 2016). We do see, however, that some of the most respected educational courses can be studied from nearly anywhere with the rise in online learning. The coronavirus pandemic has precipitated the world of education online like nothing previously, and it is difficult to imagine that we will ever go back to a physical-only education system.

But even before the COVID-19 crisis, it was possible to gain fully accredited qualifications, or even refresh one's knowledge, from many institutions without ever setting foot on those institutions' central campuses, with some universities setting up satellite sites internationally. Of course, access to technology here is the key enabler to access education, both formally and informally. It is worth noting also that many smaller institutions are now able to provide online education. This includes locally and regionally relevant education providers that play a key role in empowering communities (Ramaboa, 2018).

Healthcare

Since 1978, the World Health Organization and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have advocated for primary healthcare, where 'Emphasis is placed on the importance of maximum community and individual self-reliance as the most reliable route to widespread, equitable, and sustained improvements in health' (WHO and UNICEF, 1978). Bringing primary caretakers into the bigger picture of healthcare enables the inclusion of rising public health challenges, with information and education of those primary caretakers being a powerful vector for prevention and mitigation.

In areas of the world where human development (as currently defined) is not the highest, primary caretakers are most often mothers, and women in general. Their ability to care can be greatly enhanced with better information, better education and better public health monitoring, for example. Educational mobile apps, telemedicine, better data collection and

monitoring of public health issues are examples already in existence. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, public health officials have repeatedly highlighted the importance of social distancing, testing and contact tracing because medical infrastructure is not able to cope with very large numbers of cases. That is putting the first step of containment of a global challenge directly into people's hands, and relying on existing infrastructure only to assist those who really need help.

Information

The shift to big data can be broadly described as a move from once-off analyses to a real-time, contextually relevant intelligence. It is a change of perspective in reporting systems from a limited number of static and statistical indicators to a near-real-time granular, interacting complex system. This opens the door to going beyond averages, towards a more complex understanding of the challenges to human development. Machine learning and other means of creating complex algorithms allow for the inclusive analysis of outliers and the contextualization of needs as informed from big data analytics.

At the crossroads of science and technology, the many projects of the UN Global Pulse (the UN Secretary-General's initiative on big data and artificial intelligence for development, humanitarian action and peace) are great demonstrators of this thinking. This new paradigm of information and knowledge ought to enable a much more complex and adaptive definition of meaningful development indices, tailored to local conditions. Again, open data, open source technologies and open science are critical for this to be realized.

Each of the examples above could certainly be developed further, but this is beyond the scope of this contribution.

In the description of digital transformation as an emerging dimension of human development on the ISC-UNDP project website, it is written that 'Leveraging technologies for human development, to serve the goals of social and environmental sustainability, is a major challenge'. We acknowledge this challenge; in the healthcare and education examples above, the solutions mentioned often require smart device technology.

But new technology is not always a necessity. Community radio is a much older technology that, in certain regions, has a much better penetration than, say, smartphones equipped with an array of sensors. So, we need to acknowledge that when technology is applied, impacts depend on the level of availability, access and adoption of that technology. But innovation isn't limited to the creation of new technology. Innovation is often repurposing

existing technologies, whichever they may be. That's why current innovation, driven by science and technology, points strongly to growing opportunities to create solutions at the local and community level.

Conclusion

Changing the lens through which we view development, to one of shared ownership and decentralization, would mean that society as a whole becomes more resilient both to unanticipated shocks of the future and to the foreseeable grand challenges facing humanity. The spirit of development needs to move away from the expectation of a central authority that provides, to one of shared ownership, and from central infrastructure and service provision to decentralization. Through examples, we have painted a picture of how democratized, affordable, compatible elements of technology, along with the vast realm of scientific research, can deliver locally relevant, owned and valued development for communities globally. This requires a major shift in thinking from governments, development organizations and communities, where centralized structures are facilitators rather than providers of development. It requires humility and a big-picture perspective from all stakeholders and deep engagement with communities.

Carl Sagan famously spoke of the earth as viewed from the Voyager spacecraft, saying 'it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known' (Sagan, 1994). Astronomy gives people the perspective and humility needed to be able to change the world. Just as the sky is accessible to all who wish to engage with it, so can human knowledge and technology be made available to individuals and empower communities around the world, such that they are free to have as much ownership of their development challenges as their governments do.

Finally, to truly achieve human development, and to release the full potential of the human mind, people also need to be inspired. Reaching a level of development where most people are secure, the environment is under less pressure and peace is everywhere, should be seen as no less of an achievement than discovering life elsewhere in the universe.

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A global call for input was posted on the ISC website in May and June 2020 and resulted in many contributions from the scientific community. These are excerpts from a few of the responses:

'The conceptual understanding of Human-centred development must shift towards Nature-centred development while respecting the Rights-of-Nature and Rights-of-Soil so that nature is protected, restored and allowed to flourish. Because humans are part of nature, restoration and enhancement of nature will automatically lead to human well-being and prosperity. Humans must learn to work in synergy with nature.'

Rattan Lal
Ohio State University, and the International Union of Soil Science

'We are in an era of unprecedented technological advancements. Science providers need to reflect on ethical dilemmas, with an eye to improving gender/age/context specific communication and coordination with communities and Indigenous people.'

Shona van Zijll de Jong *Queens University, and the International Association for Promoting Geoethics (IAPG) Canada Chapter, C*

'Keep[ing] our human bond with and within the web of life is the biggest challenge of our time. Therefore, we must leave behind the present human-centred development for an overall human development centred within Nature.'

Othon Henry Leonardos
University of Brasilia, Brazil

'[Human-centred Development] implies thinking about both the structural determinants and the subjective dispositions associated with the transformation of people into subjects who build the life they desire. It implies thinking about development from people's everyday lives. It implies, above all, assuming that it is people acting either individually or collectively; they are the true protagonists of the processes of social change; therefore, they should never be considered as mere passive recipients of social benefits or prejudices. By actively engaging as agents of development, people make all the difference.'

Rodrigo Marquez
University of Valparaiso, and Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Chile

'The potential of the human development approach is that, since its primary conceptualizations in the 80s […] it has tried to bring philosophical aspects of development into the political debate. […] This philosophical coalescence is not easy to achieve, nonetheless, [it] has its rewards in the changing of misconceptions about human ends and human needs. A risk exists, however, in the 'technocratization' of the human development approach and its policy content. An optimum point of view must make communicable to technical and political elites, as well as ordinary people, a message that has profound roots in reason and in the reflection about human nature.'

Felipe Correa
Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

'The regeneration of natural and built environments, on the one hand, and the social and cultural regeneration, on the other, is a two-way street, both intertwining and depending on each other. Changes must be simultaneous in time and space, in view of reciprocal support (motivations and enabling contexts are complementary aspects). An ecological civilization includes natural and built environments, health, education, equity, ethics, safety, justice and beauty.'

Andrea Francisco Pilon
University of Sao Paulo, and the Brazilian Academy of Sciences

'The COVID crisis reminds us of the importance of the state, the collective and solidarity. We need to advance towards a conception of human development that has at its centre the possibility to build a new order, based on justice, the recognition of diversity, the rearticulation of science and public policy, the deepening of democracy, peacebuilding and the recognition of the key role of social movements and inequality.'

Karina Batthyány
Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO)

‘One core challenge is that the expert–policy maker nexus frequently does not understand the context in which the problem exists. The second challenge, to get better policy and implementation, calls for meaningful engagement by the marginalized stakeholders who are the major targets of the SDGs. As the marginalized (gender, race, religion), they end up with unequitable benefits. Most importantly, they are marginalized in the policy development and implementation process.’

Sam Lanfranco
Society for the Advancement of Science in Africa, Canada

‘Human development is founded on the understanding that we are part of a larger ecosystem that requires balance; a balance that is exhibited in our cultural and geographical differences, our values, and our preferences on how to live.’

Angela R. Pashayan
Howard University, Washington DC, USA

‘[Human Development] means development that is centred around humans in harmony with their environment; a development that prioritizes health and education over aspects of the production of goods and services, and that plans production of those goods and services in such a way that takes into account the equality and abilities of all human beings.’ (translated from Spanish)

Alba Carosio
Centro de Estudios de la Mujer de la Universidad Central de Venezuela (CEM UCV), and Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos Romulo Gallegos (CELARG), Venezuela

“Humanity has become a geological force, which interacts with natural processes, not always in a positive life-supporting way. […] Since human beings are a species in development, the concept of human development should definitely be rethought and reworked towards an increase in self-development by means of complex multidisciplinary methods, leading towards a more positive interplay between humans and natural processes.’

Cristina De Campos
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, and the Brazilian Academy of Science

‘We need to move beyond the assumption that human agency is the only force shaping development, and to embrace the increasingly apparent fact that natural systems such as the climate and other components of the global ecosystem are imbued with a form of capacity, serving as impersonal agents shaping our world. Embracing both social and ecological sources of agency in the world entails a far-reaching shift beyond conventional human-centric assumptions of agency, and towards an approach to human development theory that embraces complexity and systems theory.’

Kishan Khoday
UNDP Regional Hub for the Arab States, Egypt/ Jordan

‘Human-centred development is about more choice. It is, in fact, about providing people with opportunities, not insisting that they make use of them. […] The process of development (HD) should at least create an environment for people, individually and collectively, to develop to their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive and creative lives that they value.’

Santosh Kumar Mishra
SNDT Women’s University, India

‘[The human development approach] should utilize all unpolarized communication means so that institutions of goodwill participate in the process. The framework is the global achievement of happiness, equality of opportunities, and harmony of mankind. The blind spot is to change the mentality of success meaning accumulation of assets.’

Paulo S R Diniz
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and the Brazilian Academy of Science

‘In the near future, the digital divide is a particularly decisive challenge, not to mention pandemics [such] as COVID-19. The disruption fostered by digital technologies is shaping the world to come, like never before in the history of humanity.’

Anaclé Bissielo
University of Omar Bongo, Libreville, and UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme

‘The human development approach may help the public in the developed world grasp the immense challenges posed by gross inequalities and possibly also help that public to further understand the dependence of all humans on a healthy natural world and, thus, the need to protect land, sea and climate, all without exacerbating disadvantage.’

Kerryn Higgs
University of Tasmania, Tasmania

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The foundational contribution of the human development paradigm has been to highlight that progress should be seen a process of enlarging people's choices and promoting well-being rather than being measured in terms of narrow income-based criteria. While this central idea remains as valid as ever, the global development landscape has evolved. Thirty years since the first Human Development Report was published in 1990, ongoing and impending crises in ecological, health, political and economic systems have become evident. Fundamental shifts are taking place in how we understand ourselves and our connections to local and global societies and our planet in the light of new technologies, socio-political realities and deep environmental changes. A reinvigorated conceptual framework of human development can help navigate key challenges and leverage the opportunities to promote human well-being.

The International Science Council partnered with the Human Development Report Office at UNDP to initiate a global discussion on rethinking human development with participation from across the scientific community. This publication gathers interviews and essays by experts from various disciplinary and geographical backgrounds and represents an important step in this ongoing journey to reimagine the human development approach in today's world.

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