

## THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

Traditionally the term "Development" has been conceived in 1949 with a speech by the US President Truman about development and the need to intervene to help out underdeveloped countries to improve people's conditions.

Analysing the trajectories of ideas and the relationships between institutions and people it is important to consider the historical points of development to understand how development studies changed.

### Colonial economics

We can say it's the birth of development economics. According to some authors the idea of development didn't start in 1949 (Truman's speech) but in the late 19th century (colonialism).

- Early phase

based on exploitation of raw material by the metropole country (by chartered companies, plantations and mining monopoly, protection measures...)

- Later stage

based on trusteeship: the management of the colonial economy was characterised by a view toward the interests of the native population. The raw material exploitation kept going but it started an increasing interest toward native population.

This change in management was based on the need of empires to increase the level of legitimacy of their administration to counterbalance the anti-colonial nationalism.

- **Development economics**

The approach to development was based on the idea that development is a synonym of economic growth (Truman's speech).

Development policies were figured out as economic growth, where the progress is linear and continuous with no limits. Based on GDP, production of goods and services through mechanisation and industrialization (Western type of economic growth).

### Modernization theory

start to include political and social aspects

Development thinking now tends to include modernization; this is linked to the political context of the world system after the IIWW (cold war). Based on the contraposition of what is traditional and what is modern, with the use of science to exploit and modify the environment for the aim of economic growth.

Modernization happens through economic growth, but also through other aspects (political and social).

- political modernization (e.g. nation building): development projects were aimed at state formation and building a nation identity, including the formation of a political élite.

- social modernization (e.g. entrepreneurship, family): idea of rationalisation of social institutions (in particular families). These were regulated with strict ways of behaving. Family is the result of patterns of behaviour and relationship between roles that became institutionalized.

- + formalization of the labor market and promoting entrepreneurial behaviour of citizens: individuals are responsible for themselves.

The goal is creating a structure that performs specialized activity, so the dismantling of the traditional family which used to perform a lot of different activities (educating children, production of goods,...) needed to be changed as it was not seen as functional. People started working outside of the family.

As a result, we have a convergence over a single model of society (market: industrial capitalistic society).

Colonial empires were trying to create an ideal type. In sociology the ideal type is an ideological abstraction used to regulate social phenomena. An ideal type is something that never exists in society, it's a pure model (Max Weber). The methodological abstraction is useful to analyse the society, but societies are never ideal types!

This theory disregarded the heterogeneity of societies, as the focus was a convergence of all societies into a unique model. The Western model of development which denies ethnocentrism and doesn't allow other types of development.

But in the '50s started to rise independence movements and there were a lot of mobilization processes. Riots ('50s and '60s) were organized by subaltern groups against this idea of development and the reality of the global system. This created **critical theories of development**

☐ from the global south a new movement: Non-aligned

From these movements emerge a new stream of literature against the Western type of development.

### **Dependency theory**

coming from the global south against the mainstream model

Underdevelopment is based on the *exploitation of raw materials by the global north*.

Underdeveloped countries: selling raw materials to rich

Rich countries: using raw materials to create manufactured goods and selling it to poor (with added value)

+ the direct penetration of foreign capitalism in these countries to maintain them underdeveloped.

+ the condition of underdevelopment was kept and reinforced by the recourse to international loans (IMF, WB,...).

☐ It is needed an intervention from the top of the state to reject capitalism framework.

Western world kept carrying out reforms inspired by the Washington Consensus. These were rejected giving more space to alternative approaches...

### **Alternative Human development**

these theories focus on *the reduction of social inequalities*

Alternative development: proposed a new understanding of development, social and community development as *"human flourishing"*.

Human development: development conceived as *"capacitation"*: development as enabling individuals ☐ switch from macro to micro-level.

### **Neoliberalism**

around the '80s and '90s the neoliberalism approach returned

The difference is that *development economies were not considered special cases*.

The govt of these countries needs to support the development of the capitalistic model, promoting it. At the same time, to make it work, reducing its intervention.

What matters is to *get the market forces work*, economic growth will come if the market is free to operate. This comes from *deregulation, liberalization, privatization*.

This eliminates the idea that underdeveloped countries could be an exception to the rule. *If the market is free to work it will create equal growth*.

### **Post-development**

claiming for an end to development

In 50 years, we achieved only some results in macro-level but looking with clear eye we can see growing inequalities. The state of the global south still occupies a subordinate position. Starting from the '90s, facing the persistence of an unequal global order: *the idea of development needs to be rejected*.

Development itself is the problem! It fails to address solution and *only creates new issues* (e.g. increased dependence of rich countries, depletion of resources, environmental destruction, cultural alienation...)

At the same time what is the alternative? We don't have any.

+ harsh critique of the label -development- and -underdevelopment-: "the idea of development and underdevelopment began with the Truman speech in 1949" and so the division of us and the others.

### **Millenium Development Goals (2030 agenda)**

Today the idea of development is still very alive, an example is the UN millennium development goals.

Born because of a new mediatic area, characterized by a type of development based on promoting aid.

Critiques:

- again, conceived by economists of the western world
- idea of technicians that solve problems
- it persists the idea of liberalization

Development in question

Features:

- The basic unit of development → the nation (vs. globalization and regionalization)
- The conventional agent of development → the state (vs. international institutions and market forces)
- The aim of development → modernization (vs. what modernity?)

→ Development is multilevel, multiscale series of efforts, takes place at lower levels and at the same time at levels beyond the national level, connected to global dynamics, macro regional.

How to respond to this crisis?

- Post-development: let's forget about development and do something entirely different;
- Qualify the crisis: acknowledge failures, but there are also achievements, no simplistic

....

What is globalisation?

A set of phenomena that entails increasing interconnection and transboundary flows of goods, services, capital and labour.

It became a buzzword since the 1990s (but it was already there in 30s) and despite its popularity, it lacked of reflection over the etymology and history of the concept. It's a condensation symbol, since it condenses a broad ...

A brief history:

-1930s to 1970: used in different fields with different meanings:

-- education (1930), to refer to unholistic approach

-- international relations (1959/1961) several scientific articles in field of international organizations, suggest the idea that we should extend common markets, linked to the period of first period of European community (CEE).

-- journalism (1944/1951) academic writing in journals were using the idea of global in way where it was stressed concept of global impact of culture in political views (discrimination of Afro-American in USA).

-- global civil society (Arendt 1958 "The human condition" who anticipated the idea of global without using this word to describe it, she talked about idea beyond national boundaries, entire planet is the new reference for the human condition, people that can easily connect and communicate, earth new reference for the society, era of sputnik.)

1980s to 1990s: the establishment of current meaning:

-the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-space and world-time.

-linked to economic dimension, cultural dimension secondary role.

**"Grassroot globalisation" (Appadurai)** movements coming from below which refuse the global power domination → idea of an international civil society, different from the capitalist dominant model but belief in global connection:

-forms of knowledge transfer, try to make other forms of knowledge powerful and valuable, in contrast to the dominant ones

-forms of mobilization

-acting independently from action of corporate capital and nation-state system

• for a democratic and autonomous standing [vs. global power domination]

Main actors are NGOs, but also actors that are in between movements, networks, organizations and there can be heterogeneity among NGOs in the way they interact with state systems or supranational forces etc. They are linked across countries and regions through the Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). They are a form of globalisation as they are interconnected throughout the world, but they wish a different model of globalisation.

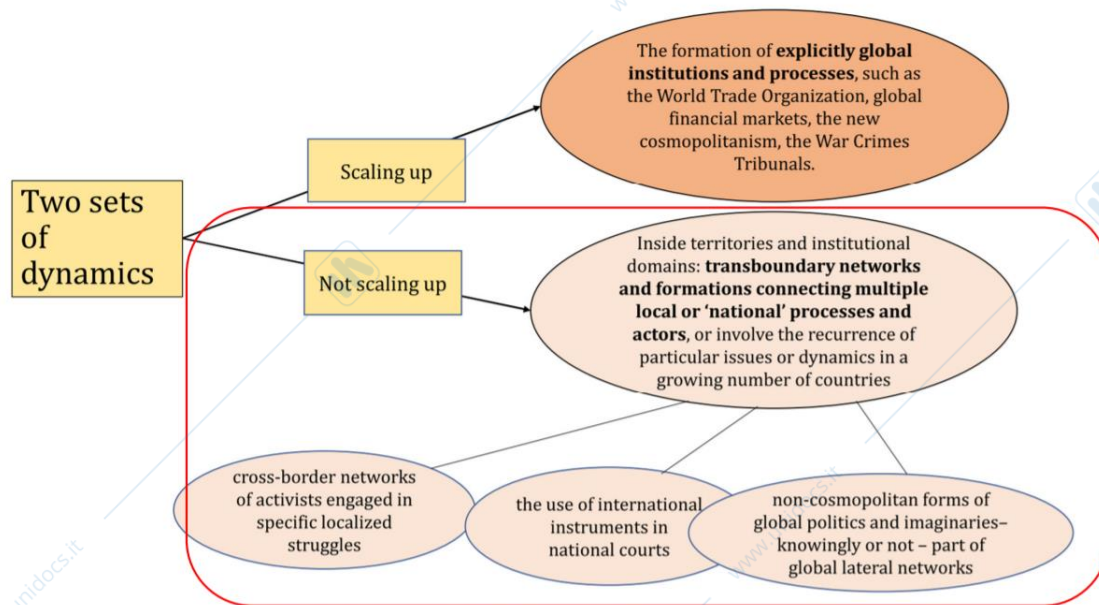
Themes:

-main critic: "globalisation produces problems that manifest themselves in intensely local forms but have contexts that are anything but local" (Ex. Climate change).

- a “runaway horse without a rider (Greider 1997)
- increased inequalities within and across societies
- environmental crisis
- unviable relationship between finance and manufacturing capital

Another author which criticizes globalization is **Sassen S.** who says that globalisation has two sets of dynamics: scaling up and not scaling up

## GLOBALIZATION OR DENATIONALIZATION?



Sassen, S. (2003). Globalization or denationalization? Review of International Political Economy. 10:1 February 2003

New additional dimensions of the national and the global:

- The “nation” as container category is inadequate given the proliferation of transboundary dynamics and formations
- Because a network is “global” does not mean that it all has to happen at the global level

An agenda for the social sciences:

- a) distinguish the various scales of the global process (multi-scalar globalization)

b) distinguish the specific contents and institutional locations of such multi-scalar globalization

Focus on

- locally scaled practices and conditions articulated with global dynamics
- cross-border connections among various localities
- globally scaled dynamics (e.g. global capital market) are embedded in sub-national sites and move between differently scaled practices and organizational forms.

#### PARALLEL GEOGRAPHIES OF POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE

*Does the category "global", however one modifies it, include the first and third worlds? Is it truly global?*

There is a north-south divide marked by radical differences in hunger, deaths, kinds of war. But these differences in a way belong to an older history, even though they are also becoming part of a new history. In this new history, there are realities that cut across borders and across this old north-south divide. Thus the elites in Sao Paulo and the elites in Manila both share an emergent geography of centrality that connects them - rather comfortably - with elites in New York, or in Paris. There are parallel geographies of poverty and disadvantage that also cut across old divides: we are becoming a planet of urban glamour zones and urban slums. I focus on these types of formations. It's not enough to talk of rich countries and poor countries. (Saskia Sassen interviewed by John Sutherland. The ideas interview. The Guardian. 4 July 2006.)

**Horner** (from international development to **global development**)

Challenges to international development

- blurring of North/South; developed/underdeveloped boundaries
- interconnectedness of globalized capitalism
- the universal challenge of sustainable development and climate change

→ Global development, based on a relational approach, is more appropriate

- overcomes the North/South binary logic
- addresses collective issues (e.g. climate change) and shared challenges that regions across the world face
- better include the wide range of actors and practices that are in the arena • economic, social, cultural (uneven) relations are part of normal processes occurring in a uneven capitalist development

Underdeveloped countries are not entirely poor, because there are elites which are more similar to the one in the richer countries. There are dimensions of poverty which are huge problems in the western countries.

We may go beyond global development. There are challenging in the blurring of North/South and developed/underdeveloped boundaries. As well as interconnectedness of globalized capitalism and the universal challenge of sustainable development and climate change.

We should think about the fact that there are no national boundaries, the global scale is what matters, the global dynamic has to be considered.

Global development overcome the North/South binary logic. The idea of developed north has to help the underdeveloped south challenges at all levels the macro level.

All over the world, there is poverty and collective issues (e.g. climate change) which requires collective actions. This idea better include the wide range of actors and practices that are in the field of development.

The inequalities and the status power distribution al global level has to put in relation with capitalist development. Economic, social, cultural (uneven) relations are part of normal processes occurring in an uneven capitalist development.

The current situation of developed can be understood if we think about the global developed. Development means intervention for an aid (poor countries are the objects of the intervention). There are issues that are interconnected at global level, financial level. There is a blurry between the developed north and undeveloped south.

Global development became popular.

### **Unheard voices: Carant**

Although the UN has designed methods with the supposed intention of gathering marginalized voices, the MDGs and SDGs should only be seen as persuasive rhetoric, as they rely too exclusively on problem-solving frames that aim to temper the paradigms of opponents. Analysis of the implementation of these methods clarifies a fundamental sampling error, which produces an unrepresentative voice for the global seven billion and thus is a redeployment of technocratic development methods. The integration of criticism can and should be seen as trivial concessions rather than true concessions. As long as the goals remain steeped in power-laden hegemonic frameworks, serving only as an opportunistic means through which power interests can assert, maintain, and defend their position and their preferred economic modes, poverty eradication will remain relegated to the imagination.

**Sustainable development goals** were in the agenda, they were a goal of the *United Nations Millennium Declarations*.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "strategic action to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all".[1] The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly (UN-GA) and are intended to be achieved by the year 2030, as they are included in the so-called Agenda 2030. The SDGs were developed in the Post-2015 Development Agenda as the future global development framework to succeed the Millennium Development Goals which ended in 2015.

They were a response to a criticism to globalisation. There was the idea of setting some overall goals which had major indicators to keep check improvement. They were launched with a big mediatic campaign. Also, the idea of poverty was challenging. Poverty, hunger, quality education, gender equality, inequalities, peace and justice.

The idea is that development has to be driven by the main goals which are indicators. *One of the criticisms which have been raised was that despite there were 17 goals, they contain an idea of poverty as constructed and represented by the UN (this vision tends to overlook at the power dynamics behind poverty). These goals and the way in which they are conceived are socially constructed. They portrait a certain representation of the problem which comes from the most powerful actors. It is a product of human action which shape the socially constructed goals. They contain political and economic discourse, reflecting the concern of the problem and power solution frame.*

Resolution adopted by the general assembly on 25 September 2015 come from a large consultation started in 2012. The goal was to prepare the proposal geographically fair. There was a panel and a large consultation. The sustainable solution developed that represented consultation with civil society and people working in the field of society. In 2013, The General Assembly establishes the Open Working group (30 members) tasked with preparing proposal on SDGs (one sit owned by several countries).

The comes back from different dimensions of intervention. The core circle regards people and mainly deals with ending poverty. Then there is the economic dimension which refers to prosperity (economic progress). There are two other levels which refer to social aspects: peace (living in a peaceful society) and partnership at global level and between states. The major innovation regards the planet. The idea is to combine economic, social and environmental sustainability.

There are 17 goals which are translated into a series of indicators. Each goal is divided into target which regards the idea of general goal to more measurable indicator. The target track something of the major goal. Indicators are measurable states against which we assess progress.

Many criticisms have been raised, saying some of these goals are contradictory. The goal which increases education conflicts with the one which deals with social exclusion.

Another critique on a macro level is that the goals are though in some dominant discourses:

- Keynesianism → some indicators refer to the idea of circulating economy, intervention of state, generate aggregate demand.
- neoliberalism → focus of regulation and privatization to reduce government expenses, promoting technology can increase the functioning of the economy
- liberal feminism → focus of the contribution of women in labour
- World social forum → inclusion of marginalised groups, they focus on the locally control on efficient making to increase human rights.

A critique of this sustainable goals says the approach behind is *technocratic approach* with the idea of articulating problems to be monitorable achievable. The framework behind is connected to the hegemonic framework.

The major critiques say there is *no questions about the system of power and domination*. Some poverty measures are no longer valid (e.g. the poverty line) because they can lead to idea of improvement but they are no longer the type of indicator that represent that challenge.

There is a lack of prioritization among goals; those which promote education should have priority.

There are some *aspects that the dominant discourse tends to preserve*. Other discourse that does not imply radical change. the approach is still in line with a *social constructed women view* in a classical way.

#### Monitoring system

Countries put in place the monitoring systems in which countries are invited to take voluntary international review. Countries receive the report from UN member states, which are voluntary working in that direction.

An improvement is considered major by indicators, the majorment of the indicator is part of the improvement. The fact the goals are target social phenomena and the need to measure social phenome leads to their definition. When we collect statistics, it is an evaluation of statics.

From methodology of the social sciences:

Empirical translation of theory implies to operationalize concepts:

- occurs through indicators, i.e. concepts that are more concrete and specific than the general and abstract ones contained in the theory and more easily observable empirically
- more easily translatable into observational terms, linked to the broader concept by an indication relationship

From concept we go to indicators which can be more easily observable and translated into observational terms (variables) through a process of operationalization. There is no one-to-one correspondence between concept and variable because a concept can be operationalized in different ways.

There are two issues when translating concept in indicators:

- The indicators are able to grasp only part of the complexity of the original concept → a plurality of indicators is needed per each concept
- on the other hand, an indicator can be connected to multiple concepts

this problem is quite sensitive because the indicator must be chosen to be relevant to that topic.

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## Sustainable development

Various dimensions but environmentalist especially.

File "the long road to the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development": uploaded in 2004

1992 meeting, some action started to be taken facing environmental crisis. 2005: Kyoto protocol taking action and trying to contain environmental crisis and try to improve in Paris agreement (2015) → considered one of the major achievements in the direction of contrasting global warming, one the most successful meeting. Recently there was a meeting to test goals achieved and to verify that points were followed.

A relation with natural resources. Put in place a type of development that meet the needs of future generation and not compromise their future, provoking damage and precluding development of tomorrow (1987), update of this definition which stresses the idea we need a type of development allowing us to avoid irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources. Type of consumption we have in these days has to be careful in order to preserve resources for future generations. Planetary Boundaries (2009 Johan Rockstrom), concept shared by scientists, that our planet doesn't stretch to the infinite but finite number of resources.

## Anthropocene

Anthropocene (geological era of human beings): the current geological era, in which the environment is deeply conditioned from the effects of human action. Current geological epoch in which the terrestrial environment, understood as the set of physical, chemical and biological characteristics in which life is created and evolved, it is deeply conditioned from the effects of human action.

International chronostratigraphic chart (slide)

two perspectives on the Anthropocene:

→ geological studies: the impact of human activities on the biosphere is so strong to make humans comparable to other natural drivers affecting the climate system (e.g. geophysical forces like earthquakes, glaciation...) [E. Stoermer and Nobel Prize Paul J. Crutzen (2000)]

→ environmental humanities: underline the intersection between environment, socio-political activities and discursive practices (a natural-cultural dimension), with particular attention to the link between environmental and social justice, the unequal distribution of impact, risks and consequences (and power). (Guide produced by scholars of Turin)

>environmental and social justice

→ Issues of unequal distribution of vulnerabilities, impacts and costs: a) 'high development countries' have a larger impact on the planet, but b) 'low development' countries bear the major consequences → Countries with high ecological threats tend to be also countries with greater social vulnerability.

The higher the index more power is possessed by countries. Those who suffer the consequences the most are the low-income countries.

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### Local development

A particular form of regional development, in which the resources and endogenous factors of a territory are key to its social and economic development.

The process of developing a territory, by actors who belong to it or whose activity in it has an impact, which implies the formulation of strategies, decision-making and implementation of actions that allow civic participation (institutions, public and private, individuals).

The Weberian approach to Western modern capitalism (1904-05)

Modern capitalism and in general economic development are based on two factors: cultural and institutional factors. At the basis of the emergence of modern capitalism there is the interrelation between two sets of factors (cultures and institutions, values and norms). requires a high degree of consistency between values and norms.

-*cultural factors*: values, ethics, religion (which is a key factor of change, development diffuses in some areas more than in others). Some particular features of providentialism are crucial to understand a certain idea of what god judgement would be. The fact of having success in economic context was a sign of benevolence of God and predestination (Protestantism and Calvinism, idea of commitment to hard work, savings would allow investments and more success, sober lifestyle).

-*institutional factors*: rules overarching (dominating) political and social life (rule of law, nation-state, science and technology)

Institutions represent dominant values in a society which have to be coherent.

-From here depends the final outcome taken by capitalism (different "models of capitalism" → western but also several models such as anglosaxon, central European conservative model)

-crucial role of historical specificities of local contexts: need of analysing actors' values and how these are linked to economic activities and economic behaviour.

Implications for sociology of development:

-*need of greater sensitivity to specific features of culture and institutions* vs. international organizations applying standardized and simplifies programs (not implying cultural factors and interrelation between these two factors)

-imposed standardized institutions are not able to activate and employ cultural factors: institutions are 'extractive' (non inclusive political institutions; political institutions are inclusive (but no consistency between values and norms of a territory).

-*need for interventions designed taking into consideration local specificities*

Examples:

-Latin America

-Southern Italy

The 'trap of institutions':

-democratic national state, institutions favourable to market economy

-local elites 'bend' these institutions in opportunistic ways: -personalistic use, arbitrary decision-making  
prevalence of personalistic interests over the collective

→ formally inclusive institutions were lacking both cultural (civicness) and organizational (social and political pluralism, active civil society) features that would have positively influenced the functioning of these institutions

→ vicious circle of adaptive behaviours further hampers the potential of legal-rational institutions

Need for strategies that go beyond: objectives → instruments → resources

But rather

Local development policies= a joint process of exploration and discovery of possible solutions, taking into consideration:

-the institutional context in which these policies will be implemented

- intervention on the institutional features upstream of such policies of development:

- empowerment of the civil society
- strengthening (improvement) of political culture
- but also, intervention on the institutions

The institutional turn → institutions matter!

-incentives for economic action are shaped by social forces

-institutional frameworks affect the long-term performance of production systems

Aim of policies: to trigger a process of socio-institutional transformation that will change the regulatory structure of disadvantaged areas.

An example: Territorial Pacts

-**mid-1990s in Italy** (220 between 1997-2003; 80% of the south involved)

-local authorities, social organizations, other public and private actors

-bottom-up approach, multilevel governance (opposed to the centralization, involvement of different actors and subjects)

-mobilize endogenous resources and abilities: producing "local collective competition goods"

→ successful ones had a positive impact on territories and long-lasting effects.

Social capital-Trust-Cooperation creation in the policy process itself

Vs.

### Inherited endowments of social capital

- Social context matter but also... social context can be positively affected by public policies
- Three key factors of success: process variables:
  1. **Concertation factor** (actors able to select together and work to select entrepreneurial projects that were ideal for local development, arriving to a final decision coherent with needs of local territories;
  2. **Leadership factor**: actors were able to manage the project;
  3. **continuity factor**: local actors were taking decisions through process

### Growing importance of research in food systems:

- Food safety, ecology, security, access, distribution

Local is (always) good? Local is desirable, superior and preferred a priori

.... → Beware of the local trap! Core argument: there is nothing inherent about any scale, neither bad nor good

→ context matters! It is not the scale, rather the agenda of those empowered by scalar strategy=who will benefit? What is their agenda?

Three shared principles about scale: a. scale is a strategy; b. scale is fluid and fixed at the same time; c. scale is *relational*.

### Education and development

It is always been a priority, there were some important steps in this direction such as Education for all in 1990, a big first attempt and precursor of MDGs and SDGs, monitoring education access and development in various and developing countries especially. It was launched by international organizations such as Unicef, Unesco, World bank, trying to provide quality education for all.

Education continuum: on one hand an approach that highlight an instrumental function in development (as support to economic right), emphasize importance of return to investment and economy. On the other hand, education is seen as a human right, that has to be enjoyed by everyone and provided to everybody, it does not matter the cost.

Development continuum: two opposing views. Mainly, it is considered as economic growth and only unique objective of development. But there is also the idea of development as advancement of social and human development.

### Why investing in education?

1. The rights argument → primary education is a priority and a human right: 1948 universal Declaration of Human Rights; it was included in many national constitutions such as in Indian and Chinese; it was also explicitly stated by the World Bank, and it has a large consensus in the population worldwide.
2. The economic argument → education increases workers' productivity; it leads to economic growth, essential for development (Human Capital Theory, Becker 1963); more recently there is a broader social cohesion and social benefits: focus on quality education and secondary education; reduces poverty directly; lower crime rates; greater civic engagement; improvement of health conditions (including maternal and child health, delays marriage age, reduces fertility).

## Emerging trends

### 1. Strong movement towards universal outcome measurement systems:

- International standardized learning assessments

■ e.g. PISA, PIAAC (OECD)

[https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-results\\_ENGLISH.png](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA-results_ENGLISH.png)

- TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study)
- PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)

### 2. Growing role of non-public actors in education

- Heterogeneity across countries, educational levels
- UN emphasizes the crucial responsibilities of the state in providing quality basic education for all
- Large presence of private actors in ECEC, vocational training, higher education
- o Tends to emphasize employability and short terms productivity goals + different opportunities of access for different social groups
- o Opposed to vision of education for social integration + reducing economic and social inequality (SDG nr. 10)

### 3. Blurring North/South divide

- Growing of South-to-South cooperation
- Rise of non DAC-donors (e.g. China, India, Brazil, Gulf States)—development assistance committee
- and associated changing discourse: from aid to «mutual benefit»
- less focused on development agenda, more on human resource development (higher and technical education for instrumental purposes, e.g. China/India scholarships in Africa)

### 4. The promise of the ICTs (information and communications technology)

- MOOCs, online education
- Promise of access and quality education for all
- PROs: large reach; low cost
- CONs: infrastructures (connection, hardware), digital skills, cultural homogenization and dependency

## Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Since 2010s a type of online education and training enjoyed great popularity and spread globally: Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs):

- Open (participation is free-of-charge and without prior educational qualification);
- Courses (focused on a specific subject, structured into several modules, planned to last for a specific length of time, encompassing lectures, assignments and grades)
- Online (delivered through the internet on digital platforms, e.g. Coursera, edX, FutureLearn)
- Massive (potentially accessible to huge numbers of people, as long as they have an internet connection);

Characterized by a pervasive and enthusiastic media hype about the potential of MOOCs in 'democratizing' education, started in 2012 in the USA and in the following years in Europe:

- techno-solutionist approach to long standing social problems and revamped in 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic

### 1) The discourse around MOOCs

Critics: Accompanied by a rhetoric of 'disruptive innovation', virtuous by itself (Head 2017)

- a narrative of 'secular evangelism' and 'digital universalism' (Losh 2017b): a mix of missionary and philanthropic spirit of MOOCs, associated to the belief that computational technologies can solve all types of problems, including social problems.
- Risk of generating new inequalities, exacerbating existing ones and even betraying the original intent of accessibility and openness of the Open Educational movement

### 2) Figures

The phenomenon remains remarkable in real terms, and keeps growing (worldwide) particularly outside of the Western world ... And a remarkable share of learners come from developing countries

MOOCs as flexible, customized, and cost-effective form of education, opening up a series of opportunities to reduce social inequalities in access to education and compensate for lack of public support for education

- low cost or no cost
- large choice of courses (levels and topics)

- overcome physical and geographical barriers (e.g. reach rural and remote areas)
- quality education

However, empirical research outlined a more articulated and complex picture, made up of opportunities but also of old and new inequalities linked to:

- technology affordability and accessibility (digital divide)
- language and cultural barriers
- risk of cultural homologation, a sort of academic 'neocolonialism'
- key role of economic and cognitive resources
- different quality levels of education available to different social groups
- consequences for the academic profession
- betray the original intent of accessibility and openness of the Open Education movement

#### Trends in Moocs Use

☒ learners tend to be highly educated individuals residing in developed countries, predominantly in English-speaking countries

☒ highly educated individuals have a higher chance of 'success' in MOOCs (e.g. permanence, completion, grades)

☒ learners in wealthy and developed countries also have higher chances not only of enrolling in MOOC courses but also of completing them with a certificate

☒ women and learners from lower-middle- HDI countries are disadvantaged in terms of persistence, completion and grades

- selective and elitist nature of MOOCs observed for learners in the USA and Europe is confirmed in the GS:

- in developing countries, those individuals who are most motivated, affluent, and have high educational levels tend to participate more in MOOCs (Christensen et al., 2013; Dillahunt et al., 2014). "online is actually for those that are really ready to succeed in life" (Small et al. 2019)

- research in South Africa, Colombia, and the Philippines confirms the prevalence of learners who have college degrees (46%), are employed (60%), or are in education

(36%). But, on the other side, a large majority of learners (80%) have low or medium income backgrounds (Garrido et al., 2016)

Suggestions on how to use MOOCs to contribute to local development needs

- ☑ Greater involvement of actors from the Global South (learners, educators, institutions)
- ☑ Adaptation and localization of existing MOOCs:
- ☑ Open Education Approach: mixing and recombining materials with free licences
- ☑ customize to the needs of local places
- ☑ re-combine these components to suit the context and purpose
- ☑ Promoting and supporting regional MOOC providers:
- ☑ complementary role to MOOCs aiming at a global, primarily English-language audience
- ☑ focussing on socio-linguistic communities with a shared language and culture, able to reach more diverse population of learners (e.g. low education, female, young people,...)

A PARALLEL WITH OTHER ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT... De-centring the 'White Gaze' of Development: In its constant negotiation of poverty, power, politics and privilege, development continues to be structured in hierarchies of race and place (Robtel Neajai Pailey).

Development takes place outside of the racialised histories, meaning that while discourse of race – strongly embedded in colonial power structures – may have played a role in the history of development, there is no continuity between those historical processes and development practices and discourses today.

It is assumed that development takes place in non-racialized places. This means that even though race exists as a social construction, it does not constitute a determining factor in the way people relate to each other in the development context.