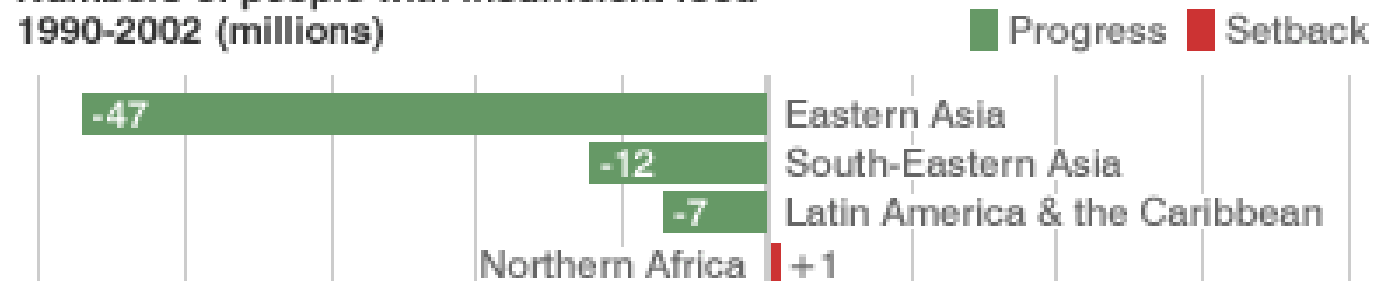




Martha Nussbaum:
Feeling, Fragility,
Flourishing

8. The Capabilities
Approach

Numbers of people with insufficient food 1990-2002 (millions)



lifestyle

lobal development

7 years old

christian
aid

About us ▼

Emergencies ▼

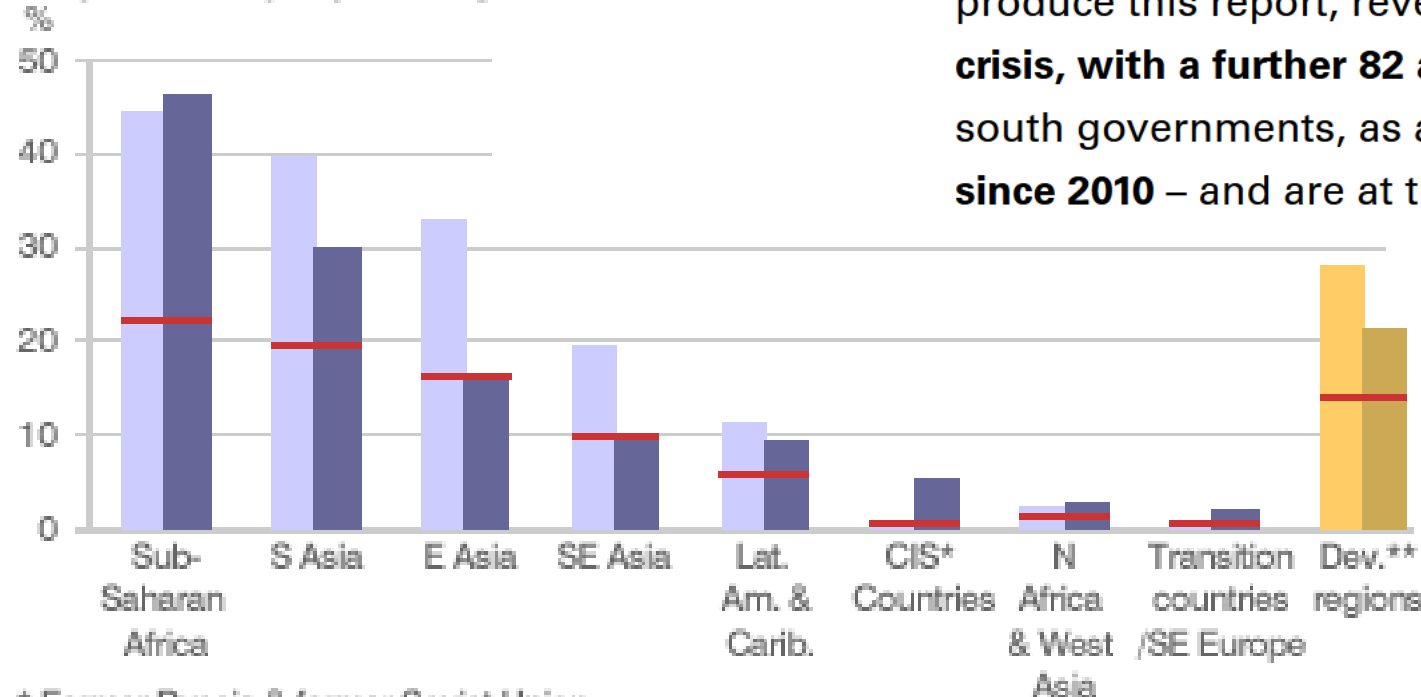
Campaigns ▼

Give time ▼

Give money ▼

Charity

Proportion of people living



* Former Russia & former Soviet Union

** Developing regions: N Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, SE Asia, Oceania, E Asia, S Asia, W Asia, Latin America and Caribbean

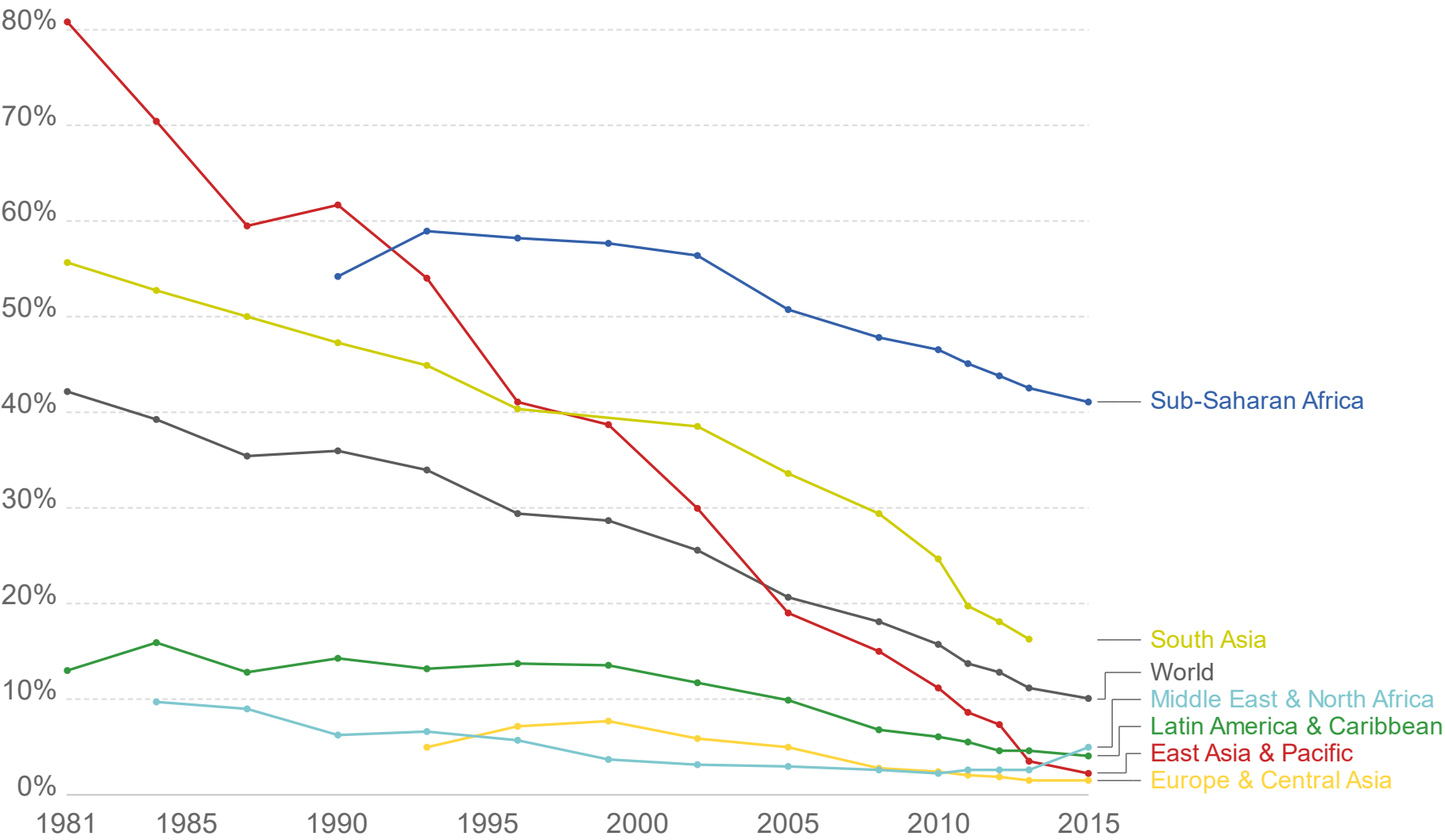
SOURCE: UN

Research by the Jubilee Debt Campaign, with whom we have teamed up to produce this report, reveals that **31 countries across the world are now in debt crisis, with a further 82 at risk**. Average debt payments have risen for global south governments, as a proportion of government revenue – **increasing by 85% since 2010** – and are at the highest level since 2004.



Share of population living in extreme poverty by world region

Extreme poverty is defined as living with less than 1.90\$ per day (in 2011 International Dollar). International dollars are adjusted for price differences across countries and across time.



Source: World Bank

OurWorldInData.org/extreme-poverty/ • CC BY-SA

THE FUTURE
IS NOW

SCIENCE FOR ACHIEVING
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT REPORT

2019

I hope that politicians and policymakers take note of the aims of the six key “entry points” identified in the report, where focused and collaborative action by various stakeholders can accelerate progress towards the Goals:

1. Strengthening human well-being and capabilities;
2. Shifting towards sustainable and just economies;
3. Building sustainable food systems and healthy nutrition patterns;
4. Achieving energy decarbonization and universal access to energy;
5. Promoting sustainable urban and peri-urban development;
6. Securing the global environmental commons.

‘A community is like a ship – everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.’ – Henrik Ibsen

‘One may observe in one's travels to distant countries the feelings of recognition and affiliation that link every human being to every other human being’ – Aristotle

‘The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth’
– Mahbub ul Haq, Pakistani economist, 1990.



Creating Capabilities

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

MARTHA C. NUSSBAUM





Creating Capabilities (2011)

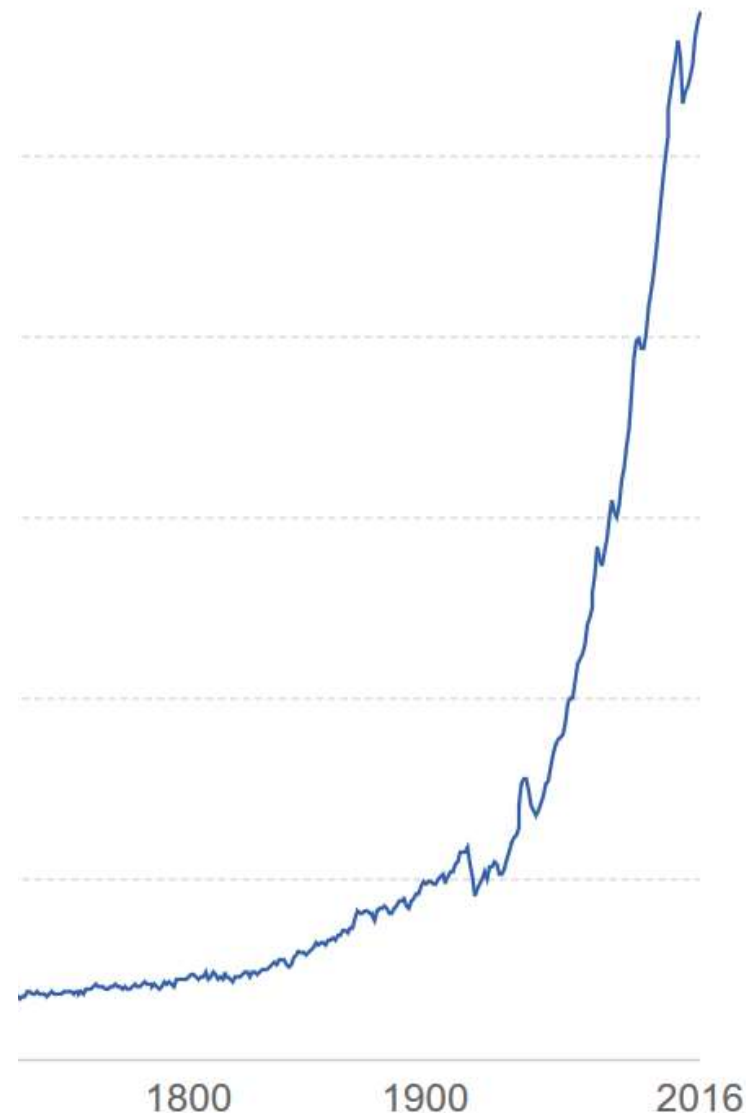
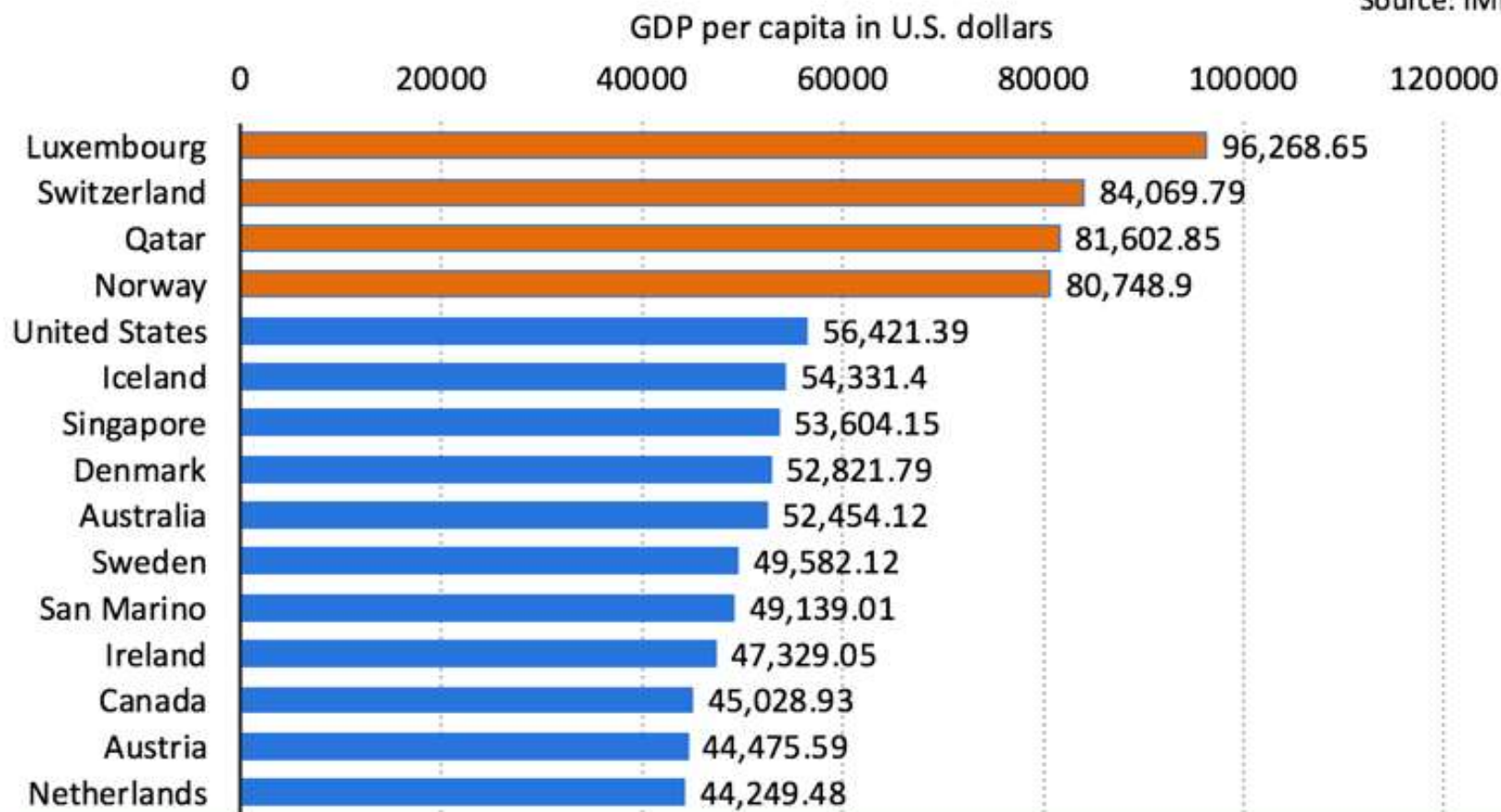
- The story of Vasanti (Chapter 1)...
- A small woman in her 30s from Ahmedabad, Gujarat. Her husband is an alcoholic and gambler who has a vasectomy, and often beats her.
- She flees the home, and moves in with her brothers, and starts home-working on saris. Her brothers give her a loan to buy a sewing machine.
- Then she discovers the Self-Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA), an NGO that gives her a loan. It has 50k members, a labour union, education, health care, credit.
- SEWA is like the literary project: it emphasises 'the ability of women to control and plan their own lives' (10).

Creating Capabilities (2011)

- Why is she small? Malnutrition for girls; fewer employment opportunities; the 'missing women' gap in India is large – 92/100, should be 102/100.
- SEWA teaches women that they are not merely passive, not objects to be pushed around by others or mere pawns or servants of others: they can make choices, they can plan their futures
- 'All over the world people are struggling for lives that are worthy of their human dignity. Leaders of countries often focus on national economic growth alone, but their people, meanwhile, are striving for something different: meaningful lives for themselves' (Nussbaum)

Countries with the highest per capita GDP in 2015

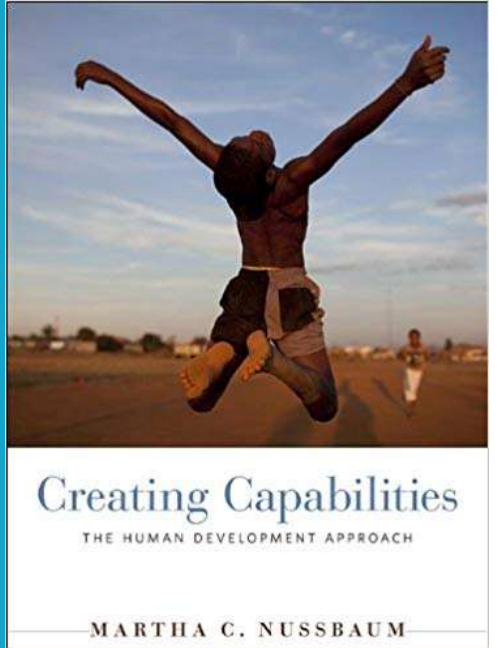
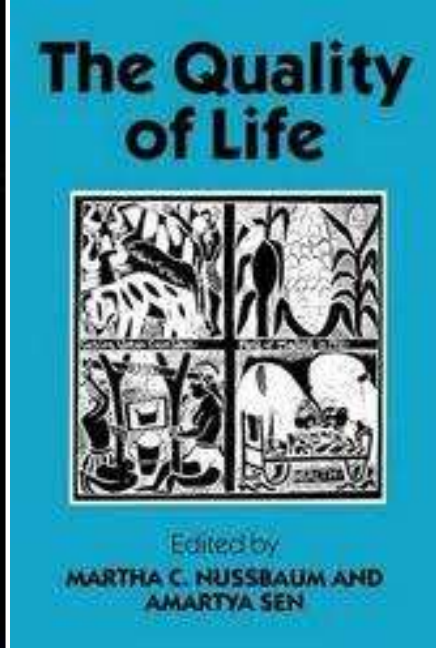
Source: IMF



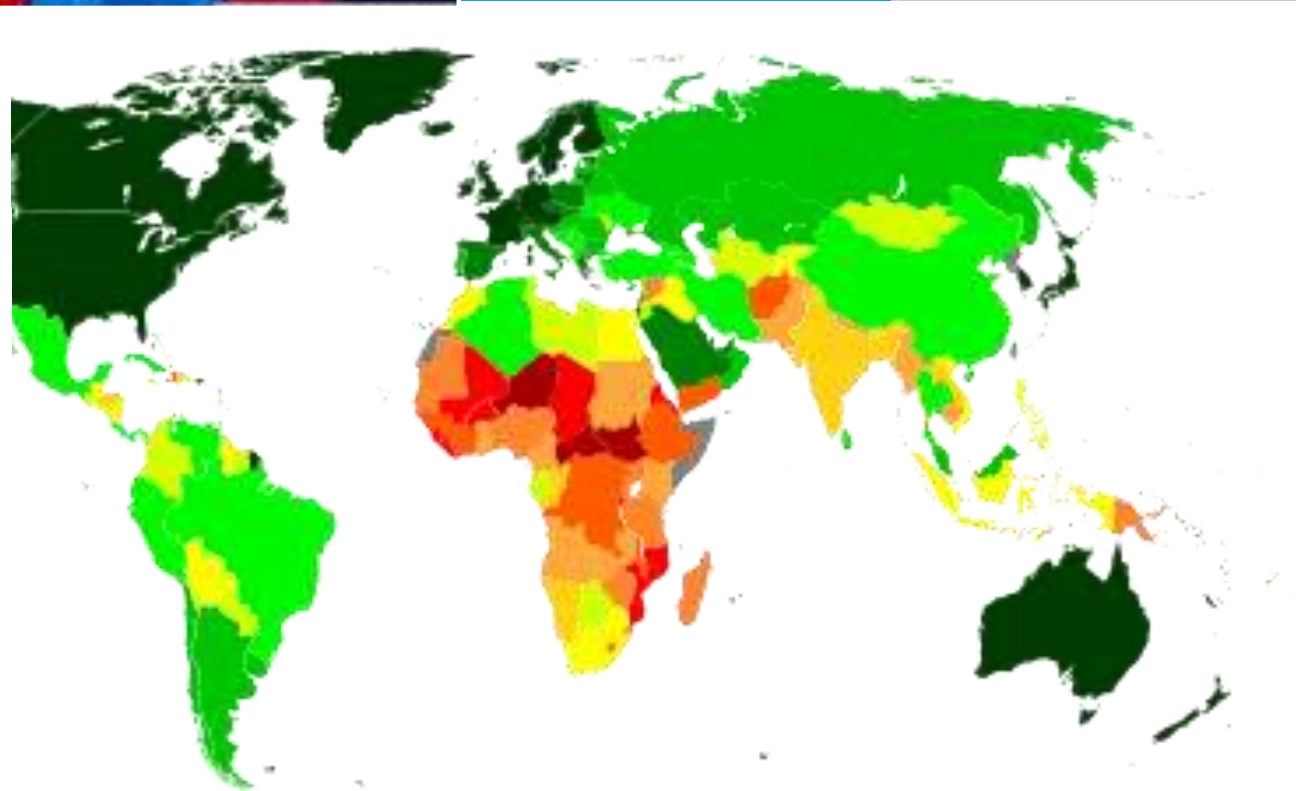
GDP per capita = GDP / total population expressed in a common currency

Problems with global development

- Problem: traditional economic models of development prioritise economic growth or functions which might not benefit many, or might not be suitable for all.
- GDP isn't suitable for understanding quality of life, it doesn't capture distribution, or guarantee spending on health care or education
- 'What does that figure, however glorious, mean to Vasanti? It doesn't reach her life, and it doesn't solve her problems. Somewhere in Gujarat is increased wealth deriving from foreign investment, but she doesn't have it.
- To her, hearing that GDP per capita has increased nicely is like being told that somewhere in Gujarat there is a beautiful painting, only she can't look at it, or a table set with delicious food, only she can't have any.' (13)



‘Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy ... Focusing particularly on people's capability to choose the lives they have reason to value’ - Amartya Sen



Introducing Capabilities

- Sissy Jupe, *Hard Times*: ‘unless I knew who had got the money and whether any of it was mine.’
- Nussbaum: it’s about ‘the quality of a human life’. Asks: “What are people (and what is each person) actually able to do and to be?” (14)
- Opportunity for choice: ‘What real opportunities are available to them?’ (x) Beings and doings (Sen: ‘substantial freedoms’).
- It’s a view of development that tries to begin from ‘widely shared human values (such as respect for equality and respect or dignity’ (xi).

- Societies become minimally just when they secure to all citizens a threshold level of certain opportunities.
- Choice and agency, plurality
- ‘All nations, then, are developing nations, in that they contain problems of human development and struggles for a fully adequate quality of life and for minimal justice. All are currently failing at the aim of ensuring dignity and opportunity for each person. For all, then, the Capabilities Approach supplies insight.’ (14)

1. *Life*
2. *Bodily health.*
3. *Bodily integrity.*
4. *Senses, imagination, and thought*
5. *Emotions.*
6. *Practical reason*
7. *Affiliation.*
8. *Other species.*
9. *Play.*
10. *Control over one’s environment.*



Over to you

What is the basis of Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach, in Chapter 2?

What does it want, and how does it hope to achieve it?

The basis of Capabilities (18)

- “What is each person able to do and to be?”
- ‘takes *each person as an end*, asking not just about the total or average well-being but about the opportunities available to each person.’
- ‘It is *focused on choice or freedom*, holding that the crucial good societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs.’
- It is ‘*concerned with entrenched social injustice and inequality*’ – particularly resulting from discrimination and marginalisation – and targets its reform through public policy
- Liberal, pluralist, Kantian...



Capabilities Approach

1. *Life*. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living
2. *Bodily health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter
3. *Bodily integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction
4. *Senses, imagination, and thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's own mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and avoid nonbeneficial pain.

Capabilities Approach 2/3

5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.
6. *Practical reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
7. *Affiliation*. (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

Capabilities Approach 3/3

8. *Other species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. *Control over one's environment*. (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.



Over to you

What problems or difficulties does this approach face?

Some criticisms elsewhere...

- Nearly all the capabilities are actually derived from Aristotle
- Is it paternalistic for a middle class North American philosopher to determine capabilities for other cultures and societies and have advocated the deployment of more participatory approaches?
- Her book *Women and Human Development* (2000) draws on two brief field trips to India, but her case studies may be rather thin in both number (two) and depth (perhaps from single meetings reliant on interpreters), for her ambitious project (Des Gasper)
- Nussbaum's list should be viewed 'not as a headcount of present-day opinions, but as a hypothesis about what would over time become an acceptable starting points for discussions in each society, as a rational interpretation, implication and evolution of their values' (Gasper)



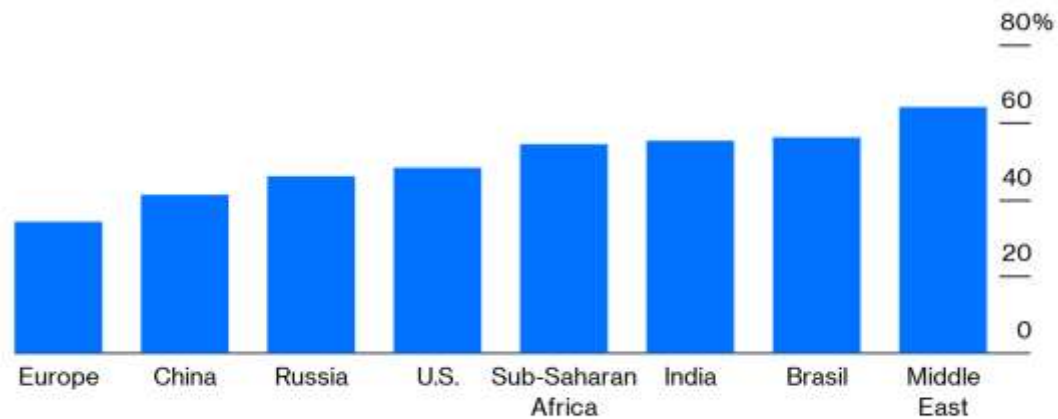
ମା. ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ
ମା. ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ
ମା. ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ
ମା. ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ
ମା. ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ

Liberalism, individualism, aspiration?

- Social justice, rooted in individualism...
- Capabilities belong 'first and foremost to individual persons' (35), and then, later, 'only derivatively to groups'.
- It seeks to be 'aspirational but not utopian, challenging the nation to be ingenious and to do better' (42).
- Western-centred?
- No... that is 'chauvinistic' (*Thinking Allowed* interview) – Gandhi and Nehru uses notion of freedom of religion and freedom of speech to challenge the West, the Raj, which stood for tyranny and the opposite of that. Tagore says they are indigenous to India, not the West.

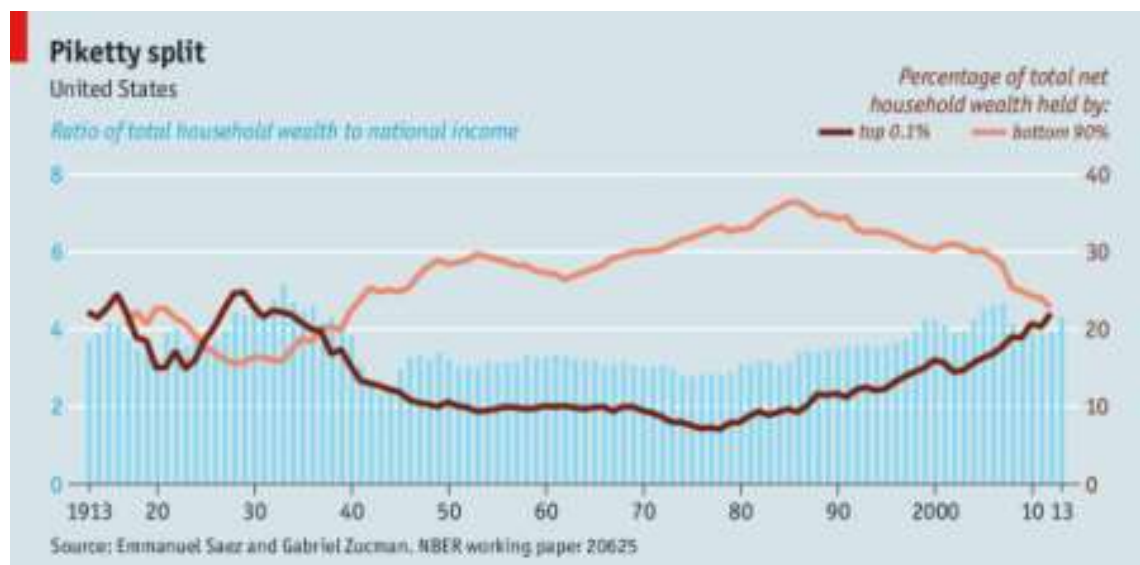
An Unfair World

Share of national income accruing to the top 10%, 2018



Source: T. Piketty, Capital and Ideology, 2019

BloombergOpinion



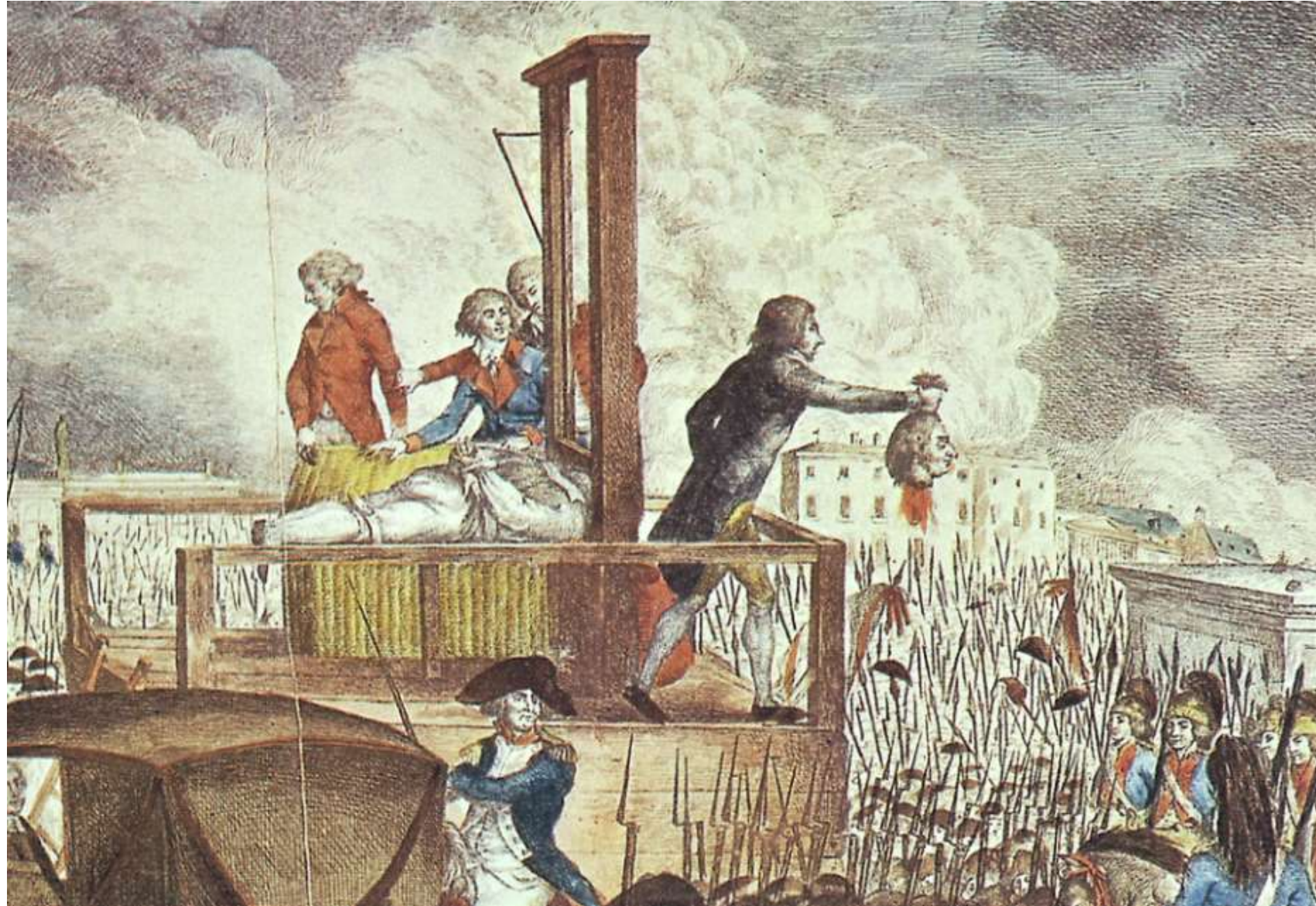
Source: Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman, NBER working paper 20625

CAPITAL AND IDEOLOGY

THOMAS
PIKETTY

Author of the #1 New York Times Bestseller *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*

TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER



Utopianism vs ambition

The problem of economic inequality isn't necessarily about justice

'At one extreme, we might specify such a high threshold that no nation could meet it under current world conditions. Tragic conflicts would be ubiquitous, and even ingenuity and effort would not be able to resolve them. At the other end of the spectrum is lack of ambition: we might set the threshold so low that it is easy to meet, but less than what human dignity seems to require.'



**WOMEN AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

MDG3



**PROMOTE GENDER
EQUALITY AND
EMPOWER WOMEN**

**THE WORLD HAS
ACHIEVED EQUALITY
IN PRIMARY EDUCATION
BETWEEN GIRLS
AND BOYS**

**LET'S
TAKE
ACTION
TO ACHIEVE
GENDER
EQUALITY IN
ALL FIELDS**

COPYRIGHT © UNITED NATIONS | UN PICTURES/ARCO/DOBBANC



2015
**TIME FOR
GLOBAL ACTION
FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET**

Genuine human development

‘We are living in an era dominated by the profit motive and by anxiety over national economic achievements. Economic growth, however, while a part of wise public policy, is just a part, and a mere instrument at that.

It is people who matter ultimately; profits are only instrumental means to human lives. The purpose of global development, like the purpose of a good domestic national policy, is to enable people to live full and creative lives, developing their potential and fashioning a meaningful existence commensurate with their equal human dignity.

In other words, the real purpose of development is *human development*’. (185)

Next week... *Hiding from Humanity*

- We turn to the 2004 text *Hiding from Humanity: Shame, Disgust, and the Law*, an intriguing work of moral philosophy reflecting on how negative emotions shape and constitute our ideas of justice
- At their root, shame and disgust are dangerous for justice (even if often being the motivation for some justice campaigns), because they encourage us to deny our humanity, pretend to be invulnerable and flawless, and heighten an infantile dislike of the unfamiliar...
- There's a few excerpts in your reading from the Introduction, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3