

International
Institute of
Social Studies



Valedictory lecture 12 October 2017
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Age of Democratic Resilience**

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Veledictory lecture, presented on 12 October 2017

VALEDICTORY LECTURE

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Politics and Development at an Age of Democratic Resilience

The primacy of politics in development and economic transformation is a classic theme in development studies. Likewise, the capacity of development to awaken old political forces or pave the way for the emergence of new and probably more potent forces is as old as politics. Because of the ever-changing role of politics in garnering the emergence of new forms of development inspired by the set of ideologies, beliefs, and values the incumbents of political office aspire to achieve, the factors propelling the relationship between politics and development are ever changing, exciting and never dull.

Therefore, it is not difficult to argue that each decade of the past six or so decades of development has ushered in peculiar elements of continuity and change in its relationship with politics, often revealing compelling connections quite recently considered irrelevant or insignificant for present and future advances in development theory and practice. To be sure, the theme politics and development is old, but the relationship between development and politics is changing continually.

Because it is impossible to cover the whole spectrum of the relationship between politics and development, the scope of this lecture is limited to democratic politics in the here and now. The theme is inspired by my own interest in the evolution and institutionalization of political institutions, particularly political parties and parliaments in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere.

In a larger synthesis, I felt compelled to confront the contention of current depressing academic views, media reports and policy and development practitioners that democracy is declining and development is ending or has ended. Uncharacteristic of my non-confrontational nature, I characterize this debate as fake, misplaced and alarmist beyond belief. It is fake because, in large measure, the debate is rich in assumptions and poor in facts. It is misplaced because it stems from the erroneous assumption that the fundamental pillars of human achievements through the centuries are crumbling. Finally, the debate is alarmist because it is motivated by populist anti-solidarity movements that have opportunistically seized on moments of despair and economic turbulence during various epochs of human history to promote their views.

By now, my argument must be obvious. I argue that democracy and development are neither declining nor coming to an end. In fact, both are flourishing in new spaces, institutional forms and practices capitalizing on the new freedoms democracy has unleashed and the new technologies which have created millions of globally networked communities of interest, with a direct bearing on politics locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

But before engaging these debates, let me start by explaining the intractability of democracy and development as inclusive and self-reinforcing endeavors that share at least three enduring characteristics:

First, democracy and development are the most cherished values defining the aspirations of every human society and individual regardless of region, race, religion, culture or creed. From this perspective, democracy and development are closely tied to human freedom and dignity. The ISS Nobel Prize laureate, Amartya Sen (1995), describes development as freedom, or in other words, that authentic development energizes political freedoms and creates spaces for what Sen refers to as protective security, including freedom from poverty and freedom from the lack of basic human needs. This protective security, Sen asserts, widens one's opportunities for enjoying a better life. Democracy, on the other hand, is the driving force creating positive conditions for human development, through participation, inclusion and by ensuring the possibility of acting on civil, cultural, political and economic rights.

In a sense, both democracy and development are about fostering human flourishing and human dignity.

Second, democracy and development are used by the political elite in democratic and sometimes authoritarian regimes to bestow legitimacy on their system of governance. The renewal of democratic systems through competition and elite circulation lends itself to a conflict of ideas on debating multiple ideologies for development.

In contrast, however, both democratic and authoritarian regimes often use democracy and development as instruments to legitimize their retention of power, which often imposes oppressive pathways for regulating and controlling the totality of citizens' human affairs. For example, development is often portrayed as a national project and a unifying ideology that permeates class, religion, ethnicity and other social and political cleavages. Citizens were and still are being forced to sacrifice everything to realize this elusive national goal. And those who have refused to give up lands inherited from their forefathers and farmed for millennia to give way to large-scale agricultural mechanized projects, mining and oil and gas concessions have been considered enemies of development and, by extension, enemies of the state. We have also observed in many countries that citizens who refuse to heed the call "for sacrifice for the cause of development" are forcibly evicted or evacuated by the security forces.

Perplexingly, in some developing countries the state has even demanded that citizens should suspend their democratic rights and freedom in the wake of development until this cherished national project is accomplished. In some living circumstances, development has become an instrument of anti-democratic movements, a source of political oppression and conflict between state and citizens and between the gainers and losers in the name of progress.

Unfortunately, because development and democracy share so much, development has often been judged by the excluded as a source of conflict rather than freedom. Yet, the appeal of development is so overwhelming that some developing countries' governments are bent on eroding citizens' economic, social, cultural and political rights and deny them human dignity and wellbeing.

Third, democratic inclusion and participation and inclusive participatory development apply the same principle: they recall the iconic cry that the essence of authentic democracy is to protect the rights of the minority. Sadly, in some circumstances, that development is used as an instrument of political legitimacy and even as a tool to oppress those who resist exclusionary development. In common with development and with all its positive attributes,

democracy can be used as an instrument to legitimize policy decisions that foster exclusion in the name of the majority. Distant and recent history have shown that absolute democratic majorities relish what is known in democratic theory as the “tyranny of the majority.” Absolute majority rule usurps political ideologies and practices that are an affront to democracy and human flourishing.

Simply put: democracy and development are about inclusion and ensuring that the rights of the minority are not forsaken by regimes that are discriminatory or in the business of widening the wedge between citizens according to their race, religion, sex, creed or region for short-term political gain. Authentic democracy breeds long-term inclusive and sustainable development; authoritarianism promises the sacrifice of freedom for short-term, non-sustainable development that fosters exclusion and oppression.

What I am proposing in this introduction is that the problem is not democracy and development but the way these cardinal human values are used or abused for objectives that are never part of their noble endeavor. However, the intractability of the two is unassailable.

With these opening remarks in mind, I reiterated my initial premise that I focus on the here and now by revisiting what I call an old-new theme on the relationship between democracy and development. However, I will do this not without a few generalizations about the alchemy of the dynamic relationship between democracy and development before commencing a critique of the current debate on the ‘decline of democracy’ and the end of development’. The lecture will be concluded with an examination and elucidation of democratic resilience, despite the current onslaught.

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Revisiting an old-new theme

A lecture on politics and development might seem an old-fashioned and outdated deliberation on a well-treaded theme, where nothing new or only meagre ideas and explanations are left to be explored. However, I chose this theme because at my age, I have experienced all the decades of development as a person born before the first decade of development commenced in 1961. In fact, I have been most fortunate to survive more than half a century of development at a time when, according to Oxfam’s life expectancy projections of 1970, the average Sudanese would live at least 46 years. By those projections, I should have been dead almost 20 years ago.

But, more importantly, witnessing almost six decades of development, living half of them in the Sudan and the other half in Europe, as well as conducting research, teaching and offering policy advice for the larger part of my life have also motivated me to revisit this old/new theme with a special focus on the here and now.

Some of us in this room are old enough to recall that the first decade of development was a decade of decolonization, freedom, and heightened optimism about development in the newly independent states of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Development, from this perspective, was a product of the post-World War II response to remedy the fundamental social, economic and environmental problems that confronted the newly independent states of the developing countries. As has been lamented in this 65th anniversary, the Institute of Social Studies, which is as old as I, was born during the first decade of development, and by

necessity, it bears witness to that long journey into the sixth decade of development and beyond.

Underdevelopment as shorthand for poverty, the absence of basic needs (food, water, shelter and education), inequality, environmental degradation and rural-urban migration continue to be the rallying point of all countries in the world, including those that assume they have reached the pinnacle of development. A pessimist may argue that over five decades, during which fundamental social, economic and environmental problems have preoccupied academia, policy and practice, these problems are not only still lingering, but some have even been exacerbated, and new social problems have been piled upon the old. Moreover, the intensification of old and new threats to human survival and wellbeing such as poverty, persistent hunger and inequality, epitomized by the juxtaposition of foods that kill and famines that kill¹, climate change and biodiversity loss, are common features that unite the first and current decade of development.

Contemporary development ideas are made up of a pedigree of buzzwords, policy toolkits and implementation recipes that have maintained striking commonalities with the antecedents of development as a profession and the domains of research and study. The majority of contemporary development ideas and concepts reflect dominant development paradigms propagated by Bretton Wood Institutions. These are often critically or uncritically adopted by diverse multilateral development agencies, including the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), governance, sustainable development, pro-poor growth, poverty reduction strategies, Washington consensus, human development, human security, inclusive development etc. And the list goes on.

In the academic realm, theories such as modernization, dependency, world system and their contemporaries (post-modernism, post-structuralism, environmentalism and sustainability, ecofeminism, post-development etc.) have been relegated to the intellectual heritage of development ideas. Those theories and perspectives have grown within the corridors of a restless academy, generally divided into pure academics, intellectuals and popular philosophers such as those depicted by my colleague, Professor Peter van Bergeijk, as relics of the past falling from debilitated ivory towers. The picture is also used as a cover for a booklet edited by my colleagues Peter van Bergeijk and Linda Johnson. On the other hand, there are those academics who are immersed in the more difficult pursuit of valorization and participating in putting their knowledge to the service of society in the field of development and other fields concerned with the improvement of human affairs.²

As has been highlighted by many colleagues before me, the present emphasis on the primacy of politics in development, in general, and development aid, in particular, is rather recent and could be credited to the 1990s and the triumph of a broadly defined neoliberal globalization in which the triple heritage of governance, democracy and the rule of law has gained considerable sway in the new development architecture since the 1990s. I do not have to go

¹ I contrasted foods that kill as a metaphor for the rich over consumption of food, which causes obesity vis-a-vis famine that kills as a metaphor of severe food shortages among the poor, which causes hunger and famine (Mohamed Salih 2009).

² The Institute of Social Studies has been one of the most imminent contributors to development studies concepts and practice, teaching and valorization and building capacities across the global South. The ISS staff, past and present, have been at the forefront of efforts of the struggle to impart knowledge for development and assist policy makers to abate some of the fundamental social problems which gave rise to development a little less than six decades ago.

further than the Institute of Social Studies and refer to the seminal work of my colleague, Professor Wil Hout (2007), on the governance politics of aid selectivity.

However, I do not wish to rehash the debate on governance and development as a signpost of the return of politics to development, which opened new possibilities for studying and researching what was a relatively new way of thinking through the relationship between politics and development. What is immediately relevant to this lecture is that the end of development scholarship is often accompanied by the assertion that the end of one, for example development, must lead to the end of the other, i.e., democracy.

The following section addresses the debate on the end of development and why. In my view, this debate is beside the point.

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The end of development

During the past two decades, calls to mourn the end of development have come from various, and at times, contradictory schools of thought, united by what they have perceived as a venture that produced more bad than good. These strange bedfellows included progressive and radical scholars of different theoretical strands, including anti-growth ecologists, ecofeminists, far-right, populists, neo-conservatives and many more, all united by the belief that conventional development has failed and that there is an urgent need for alternative development thought and practice.

I leave it for the audience to explore the full text of the lecture for more details, and would also draw your attention to a chapter I authored over 20 years ago under the title “Global Ecologism and its Critics”, in which I examined the theoretical edifice of environmental politics and its policy implications for sustainable development.

It suffices the purpose of this lecture to mention that during the late 1980s, academics, environment and development activists and intellectuals began to lay the foundations of various schools of thought as an alternative to conventional development practice and principles. In this lecture, I refer to all schools critical of conventional development as post-development, bearing in mind the often-narrow understanding of post-development reference to a peculiar school of thought with an incredible heritage of scholarly work. I therefore, I use “post-development” with a small ‘a’ and small “p”, which does not confine itself to the work of the founders of “Post Development” academic activists.³ Here I use post development to refer to a broader scholarly movement of alternative development which includes Western-inspired schools that denounce development as environmentally destructive, morally corrupt and exclusionary both in ideology and practice. An example of such Western post-developmentalists is Wolfgang Sachs, who, from an environmental viewpoint, declared in 1992 that development is dead. He argues that:

The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companion of development and they tell a common story: It did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions

³ Alvarez, Escobar 1995, Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998, Rahnema and Bawtree 1997, Esteva and Parakash 1998, Siai 2007, among others.

which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. But above all, the hopes and desire that made the idea fly, are now exhausted: Development has grown obsolete (Sachs 1992: 1).

Despite their various ideological orientations and reasoning as to why development has failed, post-developmentalists share Sachs' sentiment that conventional development has failed both in theory and practice, hence post-development. More significantly, the ideas common to post-development as an alternative development, include the imperative of creating new multiple sites, signposts and development narratives to replace conventional development, which is described as: hegemonic, Eurocentric, violent and ecologically destructive.

In recent years, the idea that development has come to an end gathered momentum with more than 50 books, articles, and reports published between 2000 and 2017 denouncing development as a thing of the past.

The idea that development is dead was yet again re-emphasized by Wolfgang Sachs (2000) in a paper published by the Wuppertal Institute of Climate and Energy, in which he outlined in more detail than the 1992 chapter his views on why development is dead. Sachs (2000) outlined what he calls the legacy of development under five subheadings: social polarization and increasing inequality, development has unsettled culture and led to the end of the peasantry (a metaphorical term which he borrowed from Hobsbawm, 1994), nature's predicament in the form of environmental destruction, and globalization which undercut solidarity and heightened competition and the privileged securitization of development.

Less compromising contentions on the end of development were proclaimed in Moyo's (2009) rather narrowly focused book on development aid under the title: *Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How there is a Better Way for Africa*. However, *Dead Aid*, signaled Moyo's conception of alternative development as a development that privileges "trade over aid", the private sector and entrepreneurship over state intervention and foreign direct investment over aid etc. Moyo's work is rather simplistic but not without support from within the market-oriented aid establishment. Nevertheless, it has been subjected to more critical and ruthless reviews and positive acclaim than the *Clash of Civilization*⁴ and the *End of History*.⁵ What *Dead Aid* has succeeded in doing is that it has boosted Moyo's profile more than either of her two other equally controversial books.⁶

A more serious contribution to the debate on the end of development is published by De Rivero's (2010) *The Myth of Development: Non-viable economies and the crisis of civilization*. De Rivero's (2010), main premise is that development is a myth because poverty reduction programmes will neither alleviate nor reduce poverty in any significant manner under the current global context of development. Moreover, according to de Rivero, in a world economy based on Darwin's concept of the survival of the fittest⁷, the earth's carrying capacity cannot sustain a world made up of developed nations, and therefore it is a myth that the industrially advanced countries will welcome developing countries into the exclusive club of developed nations, and therefore frustrate their efforts at every turn. In the circumstances, developing

⁴ Huntington 1990

⁵ Fukuyama 1996

⁶ Moyo 2011 and 2012.

⁷ De Rivero uses Darwin's 19th century concept of human society where, in the struggle for survival, the fittest eliminates the unfit in order to survive; therefore, development is not about solidarity and cooperation but about competition and comparative advantage.

countries will continue to suffer from shortages of water, food, adequate health and other basic needs, and will be unable to break through this poverty trap without industrialization, and industrializing developing countries will shift production and employment to the Global South. Trade barriers will intensify and the industrialization of developing countries will falter. De Rivero argues that given the current economic climate and history of many developing nations, the myth of development will remain as an elusive aspiration without any possibility of being realized.

The latest determination of the end of development is a book by Brooks published in June 2017 under the title, *The End of Development: A global history of poverty and prosperity*. Three main interjections on *The End of Development* articulate Brooks' conception of the unlikelihood that development will survive: 1) environmental degradation is so great that humans have brought about irreversible global climatic change. 2) Overconsumption in an unequal world is a global problem that will not be overcome by market instruments, which will continue to widen the gap between rich and poor, depoliticize development and consolidate the status-quo. 3) There are few, if any, opportunities to confront global capitalism, and those who have tried, such as post-developmentalists who attempt to disrupt development, have had little impact during the past two decades.

Seen together, in my view there are at least three distinguishing similarities between the attributes of the end of development thesis: 1) they employ an essentialist position that portrays the meta-narrative of development as a total failure. From this perspective, the end of development thesis is not disposed towards believing in the possibility that the glass could be half or one quarter full. Simply, the glass is empty. 2) None of the advocates of such a life-changing premise uses data or figures, and when data is used, it is used only selectively. And even when data is used, it is common for negative data to be hailed, while positive data is denounced. 3) Although one can understand that academics are not in the business of prescribing policy or at least hinting at alternative options, they have either provided no alternatives or alluded to development alternatives which, in the final analysis, show that development is not dead. A case in point is Trevor Parfitt (2002), who in his book *The End of Development: Modernity, post-modernity and development*, suggests it is impossible to argue for post-development on a global scale without reference to post-modernism. This is an argument that echoes the attempts of some academics who view post-development as akin to post-modernity. Parfitt (2002: 164) commented in the last paragraph of the conclusion: "We may conclude by observing that development is not at an end. It cannot come to an end, because its ends (*or objectives*, emphasis added) must undergo a process of constant redefinition, and this will last as long as there are groups that pursue their own projects of emancipation". Parfitt's contention echoes the difficulties confronting alternative development and the inability of those who declared it dead to come up with alternatives that can be practicable on a global scale. In essence, the end of development thesis offers critical reflections on the state of development, and proposes alternatives often within the confines of the dominant forms of development. Conventional development has been very successful in co-opting alternative development concepts (participation, empowerment, NGO, and civil society engagement, etc.) and put them to good use. One more factor why the end of development thesis does not hold much sway is that it defies the reality of development.

The following section contrasts the glass is empty with the glass that is probably half-full by using some recent data to show whether development is dead or dying.

Has development died or is it in the process of dying?

If development is misconstrued for international development aid, it has not died nor is it in the process of dying soon. In April 2017, the OECD published a comparison between 2015 and 2016 development aid, which shows that, development aid reached a new peak of US\$142.6 billion in 2016, an increase of 8.9% from 2015 after adjusting for exchange rates and inflation. The data also show that a rise in aid spent on refugees in donor countries boosted the total. However, when deducting costs of hosting refugees, development aid rose 7.1%.⁸

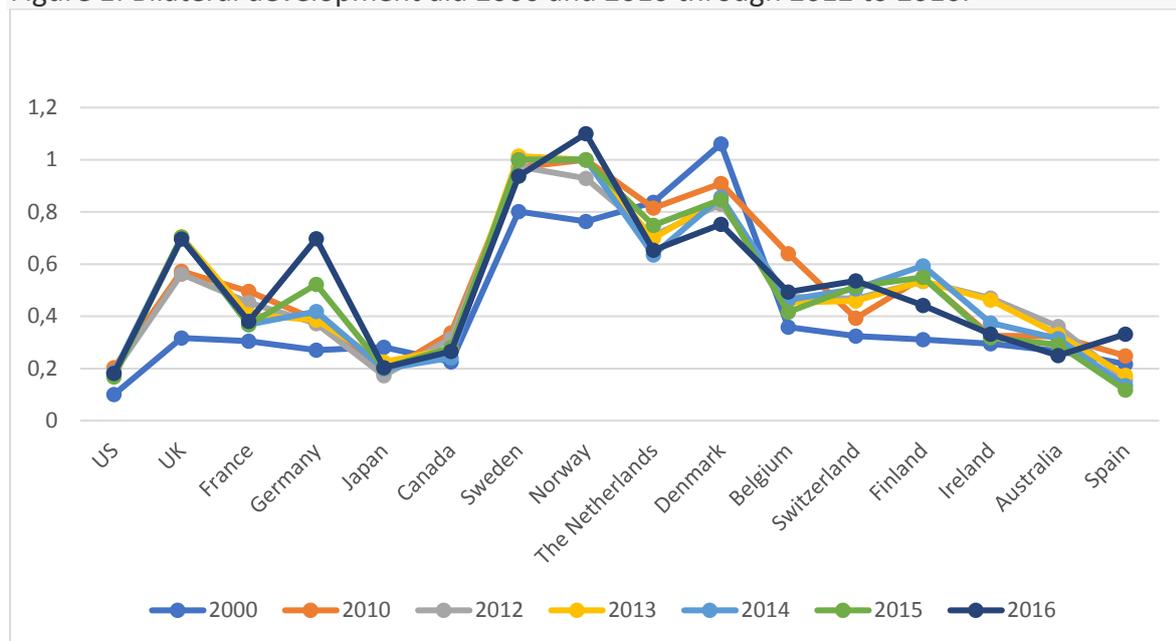
Nevertheless, despite the overall increase in development aid, the 2016 data show that bilateral (country-to-country) aid to the least-developed countries fell by 3.9% in real terms from 2015, and aid to Africa fell 0.5%, as some DAC members backtracked on a commitment to reverse past declines in flows to the poorest countries. Official development assistance (ODA) from the 29 DAC member countries averaged 0.32% of gross national income (GNI), up from 0.30% in 2015, as aid volumes rose in most donor countries. Measured in real terms – correcting for inflation and currency fluctuations – ODA has doubled (up 102%) since 2000.⁹

I compiled data on the 15 (out of 29) largest donor countries, which between them contribute about 75% to 85% of total bilateral development aid, to show whether development aid has decreased significantly to justify the claim that it is dead or dying (regardless of its desirability or not). The data (Table 1 for 2000, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016) coincide with the period during which most publications about dead aid have been published. Evidently, despite pressure from conservatives and the far-right demagogues and populists to scale down development aid or use development aid to lubricate trade, clearly, international development has not declined to the extent that we can sustain arguments such as “dead aid” or “the end of development”. Countries that were once known for their unrivalled contributions to international development have become inward looking at best or have diverted resources formerly used for development to forestall migration or support humanitarian and peacekeeping missions.

⁸ ODA spent on hosting refugees inside donor countries jumped by 27.5% in real terms from 2015 to reach USD 15.4 billion. That equates to 10.8% of total net ODA, up from 9.2% in 2015 and 4.8% in 2014. Many donor countries have seen unprecedented inflows of refugees in the past two years, and the DAC is working to clarify its ODA reporting rules to ensure that refugee costs do not eat into funding for development. Humanitarian aid rose by 8% in real terms in 2016 to USD 14.4 billion (OECD, 11/04/2017).

⁹ OECD 11 April 2017.

Figure 1: Bilateral development aid 2000 and 2010 through 2012 to 2016.



Source: OECD 2017. Bilateral development aid, URL: <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm> (accessed 25 September 2017).

In terms of answering the question concerning what grave development failure might have inspired the growth of discourse on the end of development, I offer an insight (below) into how development has fared in Africa to ascertain whether such development supports or opposes the “glass is half-full” argument. My reference point is poverty and inequality, not because of their possible negative influence on the performance of and their prevalence may therefore be used as an explanation of democracy is declining

Among 23 Sub-Saharan African countries in a global sample of 80 countries, according to Fosu (2014:4) “Cameroon was the best performer on both the \$1.25 and \$2.50 standards, followed by Ethiopia, Niger, Swaziland, Ghana, Uganda, Senegal and Mali, in that order, at the \$1.25 level; and similarly at the \$2.50 standard by Ghana, Swaziland, South Africa, Senegal and Uganda. The worst performers were led by Kenya, followed by Burundi, Cote d’Ivoire, Madagascar, Mauritania and Zambia, in alphabetical order, on the \$1.25 standard; and again by Kenya, followed alphabetically by Lesotho, Burundi, Guinea, Madagascar, Mauritania, Tanzania and Zambia at the \$2.50 level”.

However, while some African countries have performed well in reducing poverty, in actual fact, poverty is rising in some countries, as illustrated in a recent World Bank 2016 Report under the title, “Poverty in Rising Africa” (Luc et al. 2016). The report states: “The share of the African population in extreme poverty did decline – from 57 percent in 1990 to 43 percent in 2012. At the same time, however, Africa’s population continues to expand rapidly. As a result, the number of people living in extreme poverty increased by more than 100 million. Further, it is projected that the world’s extreme poor will be increasingly concentrated in Africa” (Luc et al. 2016: xi). It further argued that there are still many more Africans living in poverty (more than 330 million in 2012) than in 1990 (about 280 million).

Projections of future trends show that poverty eradication, one of the four main promises of the first decade of development, has not been achieved, despite concerted efforts by the United Nations, multilateral and bilateral development agencies, organizations and

programmes. Closely linked to the failure to eradicate poverty is the widening inequality gap within and between African countries.

In their report to the World Bank, Luc et al. 2016 stated that income inequality is higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in other regions (the only exceptions are Latin America and the Caribbean). Gender inequality is also higher in sub-Saharan Africa than elsewhere. Of the 10 most unequal countries in the world, seven are in Africa. But African countries other than these seven do not have higher inequality than developing countries elsewhere in the world. For the region as a whole, however, inequality is high, because of the wide variation in income across countries. The past 15 years of high growth in sub-Saharan Africa produced a small decline in the level of gender inequality, but income inequality has remained broadly unchanged. The report further highlights the fact that, within the region, income inequality is highest among middle-income and oil-exporting countries, such as South Africa and Angola, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Sub-Saharan Africa also remains one of the regions with the highest gender inequality as measured by the United Nations' Gender Inequality Index (GII), just behind the Middle East and North Africa, with very high levels observed in Niger, Chad and Mali.¹⁰

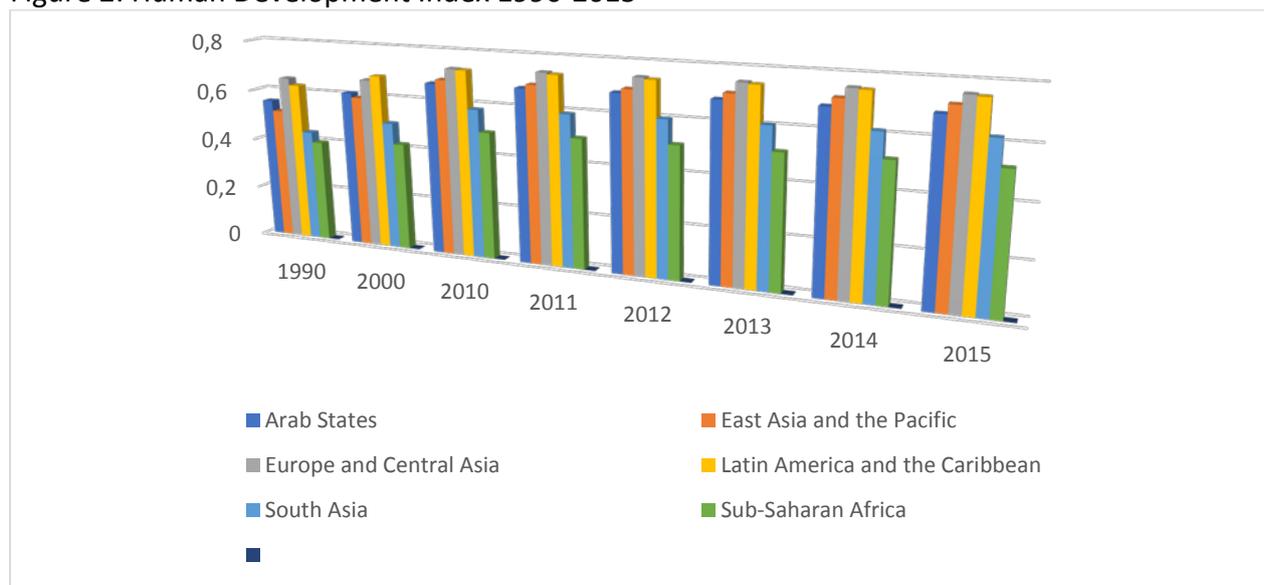
Eradicating income (and consumption) inequality and inequality between men and women were among the aims set forth in the first decade of development. A women's bill of rights, known as the "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)", was adopted on December 18, 1979, and entered into force on September 3, 1981. Unfortunately, while the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was ratified by 189 countries, only 99 (52 percent) of those countries have their signature to it. Human Development data covering the period from 1987 to 2016 shows that there has been considerable progress in gender equality, but not sufficient to claim that the glass is even half-full.

Human Development Report (2016) points out that, "despite the fact that in all regions women have longer life expectancy than do men and the fact that in most regions the expected number of years of schooling for girls is similar to that for boys, women consistently have a lower HDI value than do men. The largest differences captured by the GDI are in South Asia, where the HDI value for women is 17.8 percent lower than the HDI value for men, followed by the Arab States with a 14.4 percent difference and Sub-Saharan Africa with 12.3 percent".¹¹

¹⁰ Luc 2016

¹¹ Ibid. 2016: 54.

Figure 2: Human Development Index 1990-2015



Source: UNDP 2016: Human Development Report, p. 204. URL: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf (Accessed 15 August 2017)

At the global level, UNDP Human Development Report 2016, records human development progress in the world from 1990 to 2015 (Figure 2 and Table 2), shows that there has been some progress in human development. When unpacked according to the main dimensions of human development, it implies that people live longer, there is improved enrollment in schools and more people have access to basic social services (water and sanitation, for example). Certainly, the detailed data per country shows that human development has been uneven and human deprivations persist. According to UNDP (2016: 1), new development challenges have emerged, ranging from inequalities to climate change, from epidemics to desperate migration, from conflicts to violent extremism.

Therefore, it is safe to argue that if development has performed so badly, its total failure, which is not the case, should explain the decline of democracy in developing countries. Interestingly, the decline of democracy thesis paints a picture insinuating that democracy is declining on a global-scale. The latest aggregated data on human development is more optimistic than the disaggregated data on poverty and inequality, two of the most compelling factors that can potentially fuel citizens' disappointment with the performance of democracy and development. However, as the following sections show, citizens hold on to democracy and development despite largely unfounded claims which predict that democracy is in decline and development is at dead end.

Democracy in decline

Predictions of the decline and even the end of democracy are not new and date back to its earliest development. However, for the sake of this lecture, I commence with Ralph Adam Cram's 1937 book: *The End of Democracy*. The opening paragraph of the first chapter of the *End of Democracy* (the same as the book's title) reads as follows:

The end of democracy is now in process of accomplishment, and so far as this particular thing is conceived, the words [i.e. the end of democracy] do well enough. Of this phenomenon, writes Cram, it is true to say that it is at an end, at least so far as its energizing force is concerned (1973:19).

Cram's (1937) concerns are understandable as the period between World War I and World War II did not give much room for optimism. About 38 years later (Crozier, Huntington and Watanku, 1975), the Trilateral Commission¹² published a report titled *The Decline of Democracy in the USA, Europe and Asia*. The report was prudent enough to ask the question as to whether political democracy as it existed during the mid-1970s is a viable form of government for the industrialized countries of Europe, North America and Asia. It is a question that is still relevant today, and is followed by the question: Can these countries continue to function during the third quarter of the 20th century?¹³ But even here democracy never came to an end and bounced back immediately following the end of the World War II.

In the post-Cold World War era, democracy has not only survived and expanded like never before in the history of humanity, but it has become the defining ideological edifice that distinguishes the Free World from the totalitarian and authoritarian communist and military socialist regimes. Some of us are old enough, even retiring, and can recall that the Cold War was fought and won on the battlefield of ideas and values, where democracy was the rallying cry of the oppressed. The Cold War was never won by nuclear or biological and chemical weapons.

But it is perplexing that the phenomenal expansion of democracy during recent decades has lately been greeted by suggestions in a considerable number of publications that democracy is in decline or has died. This, in spite of the fact that we live in an age in which democracy has flourished like never before.

Eighty years after Cram's book on the *End of Democracy*, publications warning of the possible end of democracy began to emerge, but a book that has received more attention than others is John Kean's (2009) work, *The Life and Death of Democracy*. The book traced the rise and fall of democracies and empires from the early history of civilizations and empires as well as documenting the most recent expansion of representative democracy from Europe to the rest of the World. It received more acclaim than criticism, which shows the potency of its rigor and resonance as a critique of current democratic forms and practices. The best acclaim that the *Death of Democracy* has received and which I value most is John Kampfner's praise, which reads as follows: "A gargantuan feat of erudition". Upon reading this brief, rather grammatically puzzling tribute, I had to reach out to the dictionary to know exactly what "A gargantuan feat of erudition" means. I'm rather disappointed to learn that, he simply meant *The Life and Death of Democracy* is "an enormous source of knowledge".

The essence of John Keane's argument is that the current democratic forms of representative institutions are shadows of themselves; weak, out of touch with citizens, and far from being truly representative. And, because of all these negative attributes, he argues that representative democracy alone is no longer capable of satisfying citizens' craving for new forms of democracy, drawn largely from the current development of human society as well

¹² The Trilateral Commission refers to the trio North America, Europe and Asia, each represented by a leading academic in the field of democracy. Most prominent among the authors is Professor Samuel Huntington who later published *The Third Wave of Democratization and the Clash of Civilization*.

¹³ Crozier, Huntington and Watanku 1975: 2.

as from the past. In this new configuration, assembly democracy (or call it direct or deliberate democracy) combined muted forms of representative democracy which have almost replaced representative democracy as we know it. Keane laments: “In the new era of democracy that is dawning, the word democracy itself comes to have a new meaning: the public scrutiny and public control of decision makers, whether they operate in the field of state or interstate institutions, or within the so-called non-governmental and civil society organizations such as businesses, trade unions, sports associations and charities.”¹⁴

Keane argues that a momentous change in representative democracy is that “during the last six decades, assembly-based and representative mechanisms have been mixed with new ways of public policy monitoring and controlling the exercise of power by the executive. Therefore, the death or near death of representative democracy will be replaced by monitoring democracy, in which power-monitoring and power-controlling... [power controlling by citizen-based institutions]” will “penetrate the corridors of government and occupy the nooks and crannies of civil society, and in so doing they greatly complicate, and sometimes wrong-foot, the lives of politicians, parties, legislatures and governments.”¹⁵

The closest way one can visualize monitoring democracy is what my colleagues Dr. Kees Biekart and Professor Alan Fowler coined in their many publications as “civic-driven change” or engagement. These, in Keane’s (2009), language, are “extra-parliamentary power-monitoring civic associations of citizens, including public integrity commissions, judicial activism, local courses, workplace tribunals and consensus conferences, parliaments for minorities, public interest litigation, citizens’ juries, citizens’ assemblies, independent public inquiries, think-tanks, experts’ reports, participatory budget, vigils, blogging and other novel forms of media scrutiny.”¹⁶

Paradoxically, the *Rise and Death of Democracy* struck a positive accord among some readers for observing that there are newly emerging trends of post-representative democracy that are popularly practiced as alternatives to conventional representative democracy. What Keane wrote in 2009 and coined as new forms of democracy signaling the death of representative democracy. Never the less, it seems that we are not witnessing the death of representative democracy, but the emergence of new forms of an expanded democracy that goes beyond the orthodoxy.

Proclamations of the decline of democracy in 1916 and 1917 intensified when democracy indices entered the fray in 2016 and 2017. Freedom House was the first to sound the alarm bells. It contrasted the data it had compiled for its 2000 Report with the 2017 Report. Freedom House 1999 Report stipulated that 85 of the world’s 192 countries (44 percent) were Free... Another 59 countries (31 percent of all states) were rated as Partly Free and 48 countries (25 percent of all states) as not free – these are countries that deny their citizens basic rights and civil liberties.¹⁷

By contrast, 19 years later, the Freedom in the World Report of 2017: Populists and Autocrats: The Dual Threat to Global Democracy’s Key Findings claims that: “1) With populist and nationalist forces making significant gains in democratic states, 2016 marked the 11th consecutive year of decline in global freedom; 2) there were setbacks in political rights, civil

¹⁴ Keane 2009: xxxvii

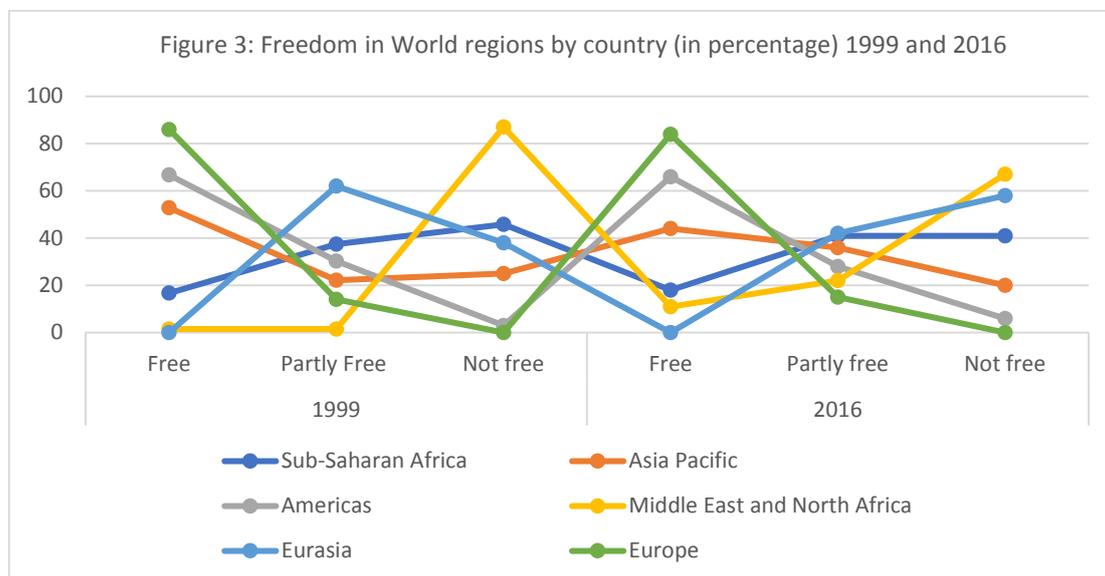
¹⁵ Ibid. 1999: xxxvi

¹⁶ Ibid. xxvii.

¹⁷ Freedom House 2000.

liberties; 3) of the 195 countries assessed, 87 (45 percent) were rated Free, 59 (30 percent) Partly Free, and 49 (25 percent) Not Free ”.¹⁸

With reference to regional trends, I compiled some data from Freedom House Reports of 1999 and 2016 to visualize the status of freedom with a particular interest in exploring how Africa fared in comparison with other world regions. The data are presented in Figure 3 below, elaborated in Table 3:



Source: Freedom House 2016. Freedom in the World Report, Regional Trends, pp. 11-17. URL https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf (Accessed 10 September 2017).

Despite negative reporting on Africa’s recent democratic development, led both by the media and academics, who trust their own perceptions about Africa more than reality, data collected from the field show contrary results. Figure 1, which is compiled from Table 1 (see annex 1), shows that focusing only on the increase or decrease of Free countries obscures the overall trends. In fact, democratic trends across the region have remained almost the same, with the exception of the Middle East and Eurasia, in which democracy has increased. In the case of Africa, the trend between 1999 and 2016 is positive, but not sufficient to show a leap forward in civil liberties, freedom of expression or impartial, free and fair elections. Short-term upward and downward trends in democratic performance should not come as a surprise for long-term democracy observers. Crises are common in the context of democracy when governments are inundated with scandals, dereliction of duty and abuse of office, including corruption, or during times of economic slowdown.

The contention that the democracy theme is in decline soon drew the attention of some prominent international commentators on democracy, analysts and trend setters of all ideological trends and political persuasions. The *Journal of Democracy* (2015) released a special issue with the overall theme: *Democracy in Decline*, edited by Diamond and Platter (2015). In this special issue, Fukuyama (2015: 11) asked the question: “Why is Democracy Performing so Poorly?” And whether we are experiencing a momentary setback in a general movement toward greater democracy around the world, or whether this signals a broader shift in world politics and the rise of alternatives to democracy. The main reason for this,

¹⁸ Freedom House 2016.

according to Fukuyama (2015: 12), is that it has to do with a failure of institutionalization – the fact that state capacity in many new and existing democracies has not kept pace with popular demands for democratic accountability... and that there has been a failure to establish modern, well-governed states that have been the Achilles heel of recent democratic transitions.

Foreign Affairs, a journal considered the preserve of the best in the business of unlocking future political trends and inform world-class policy and decisions makers, followed suit with a special issue bearing the title: *Democracy in Decline and how can Washington Reverse the Tide?* The issue featured articles with several unqualified statements not supported by data. The publication's editors considered it sufficient to mention the Freedom House Report, which I have used in the preceding paragraph.

Larry Diamond (2016) made the following statement: “Democracy itself seems to have lost its appeal. Many emerging democracies have failed to meet their citizens’ hopes for freedom, security, and economic growth, just as the world’s established democracies, including the United States, have grown increasingly dysfunctional.”¹⁹

At least two main issues deserve some reflection here: first, there are those giants of political science that search for forms of democracy that are state-based and subscribe to certain characteristics common to the classics of the theory of democracy. The Freedom House Reports, which are quoted by these academic powerhouses, provide answers within the realm of orthodoxy. The common view here is that democracy is judged as performing well or not, according to the capacity of the state to cope with citizens’ demand for accountability. Second, unfortunately, none of the articles published in the two special issues of these prominent journals (*Foreign Affairs* and *The Journal of Democracy*) was curious enough to ask a question about whether what is happening is a decline of democracy or the emergence of new spaces and forms of democracy. As a result, conventional representative democracy has become only one space of multiple democratic spaces. In the following section, I attempt to demonstrate this reality.

New spaces and forms of democracy are expanding

In this section, I deal with three developments that characterize the past two decades of democratic resurgence. Local and grassroots democracy, which can also be termed the fourth wave of democratization,²⁰ cyber democracy and electronic voting. I take these in turn:

First, the near breakdown of public service institutions in some African states during the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) has shaken state legitimacy and its role as a provider of public amenities (health, education, water and sanitation, etc.). Even after the resurgence of SAPs and democratic development during the 1990s, most African states’ ownership of national public policy was largely constrained either by incapacity or by a lack of resources to fulfill their responsibilities as functioning states. It is estimated that over 37 African countries undergoing local government reforms or which have undergone them are aiming to devolve service delivery functions to the local authorities. Whether the devolution

¹⁹ Diamond 2015: 2

²⁰ This characterization follows on Huntington 1990. *The Third Wave of Democratization*.

of power to local government has created mirror images of central government authoritarianism at the local level or provided a breakaway from the hegemony of the center, the available evidence suggests that increasing forms of local deliberation are taking place, covering jurisdictions which until recently were the monopoly of the central government authority. For instance, 37 African countries have developed forms of local authority, while there are about 15 codified laws that recognize chieftainships as part of local governance.

Withdrawal from state-created political spaces to participate in local and indigenous forms of direct deliberation instead of representation is not new to Africa. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Rwanda and South Africa, endogenous and modern local institutions exist side by side and often develop joint functions that benefit from each other's leverages. Deliberation at the local level is not only about service delivery, it is also about local politics, local elections and how to respond to the swarms of political elite who storm the villages and animal camps in search of votes during national elections. In total, national political party representatives and individual candidate agents operating in the countryside hold manifold more primaries and debates than those organized at the national, provincial or district capitals. Youth, women, farmers, pastoralists, traders, and non-governmental and civil society organizations deliberate on local issues from water to health and from education to forestation. They also discuss soil and water conservation on their own or supported by like-minded transnational organizations. This has been the case for decades, not only in Africa, but also in the rest of the developing world. If proclamations on the decline of democracy are to be trusted, they should go beyond national statistics to engage the emergent new forms of local level, community and grassroots deliberations practiced by the majority of the world. Therefore, the ease with which the gatekeepers of orthodoxy judge the quality and performance of other democracies should inspire some skepticism.

Second, since the late 1990s, the rapid expansion and convergence of information and communication technologies has created new spaces for political engagement, which has expanded citizens' freedom to exchange information, organize political action and social movements, and rediscover the growth of a new vocabulary of resistance. While democracy's essential values have persisted, the forms and spaces of democratic practices have multiplied. Consider, for example, e-government, e-political parties, e-parliaments, e-civic networks and associations which have become prominent features of citizens' vehicle not only for accessing information but also for using information to make government more responsive.

The emergence of local, national, regional and globally networked interest groups using the social media to debate social issues of great significance online across the globe has ushered in an era of unprecedented global interaction. These virtual communities engage real politics, and include grassroots organizations, social movements, like-minded political party members, traders, innovators, indigenous movements and religious denominations, to mention a few. Private service broadcasting, digital radios and private print and electronic newspapers and TV stations have broken the state monopoly over information and the old-aged capacity to hinder political competition. Long gone are the days when the state-owned radio and TV stations and print newspapers were the only sources of information about the political programmes of competing political parties. Cyber democracy is one of the foremost enablers of freedom of information, the most cherished pillar of democracy.

However, this positive tone on the role of ICT in expanding the political space and enabling the practice of democracy in much more diverse forms outside institutional politics should be

tempered by the phenomenon of electronic voting, which was hailed as affordable, reliable and time saving. But is it?

Third, already, during the 1960s, Western democracies started experimenting with electronic voting and achieved mixed results. Most of the opposition to electronic voting stemmed from scant knowledge of the technical aspects of the system, which was known only to a few technicians. There was also citizens' mistrust of the system, which at the time was perceived to be a lack of transparency and accuracy in re-counting votes in cases of disputes.

Below I contrast the cases of the Netherlands experiment with electronic voting, which ended in 2007 with Kenya's muddled elections in 2017, in which electronic voting was subject to human interference with the functioning of the system. These cases highlight the failure of technology to replace humans in the voting process, which is one of the cardinal practices of democracy in the two countries: The Netherlands experimented with various types of electronic voting from the 1960s to 2007²¹, but not without challenges and minor setbacks. Accordingly, the Ministry of Interior decertified the use of voting machines, which marked the return to the Red Pencil and ballot paper. The Voting Machines Decision-making Commission published its report on April 16, 2007. The report was titled: Voting Machines: An Orphaned File.²²

The Voting Machines Decision-making Commission Report was critical of the government's past role in approving electronic voting without due diligence. It concluded that "voting machines did not receive the attention they deserved." It found that the Ministry of Interior did not have sufficient technical knowledge, leading to a situation in which officials became too dependent on external actors for conducting elections. In this situation, technology vendors became part of the decision-making process and the ministry was unable to exercise effective oversight.²³

Kenya introduced electronic voting in 2017 due to what the opposition believed to be massive election fraud and vote rigging during the 2007 and the 2013 elections. The opposition leader, Mr. Raila Amolo Odinga, twice challenged the election results and lost: first to President Mwai Kibaki (2007), and second to President Uhuru Kenyatta (2013). Electronic voting, therefore, is introduced to neutralize human error by curbing human interference in the process of vote counting and tallying. While the voting process, and counting of votes were not in doubt according to the international observation missions, which declared the election free and fair, with few irregularities that would not alter the results, the Supreme Court of Kenya annulled the results of the August 8, 2017 presidential election. Among the main reasons the Supreme Court annulled the elections was that the Independent Boundaries and Election Commission (IBEC) had failed to satisfy the Supreme Court. It concluded as follows: "As to whether the 2017 Presidential Election was conducted in accordance with the principles laid down in the Constitution and the law relating to elections, upon considering inter alia Articles 10, 38, 81 and 86 of the Constitution as well as Sections 39(1C), 44, 44A and 83 of the Elections Act, the decision of the court is that the 1st Respondent failed, neglected or refused to conduct the Presidential Election in a manner consistent with the dictates of the Constitution and inter alia the Elections Act, Chapter 7 of the Laws of Kenya. Therefore, a declaration is hereby issued that the Presidential Election held on 8th August 2017 was not conducted in

²¹ The Report Voting Machines: An Orphaned File is available in Dutch at www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2007/04/17/stemmachines-een-verweesd-dossier.html

²² De Vries and Bokslag 2016.

²³ Jacob and Pieters 2009; Ben and Goldsmith and Ruthrauff 2013; and

accordance with the Constitution and the applicable law rendering the declared result invalid, null and void.”²⁴

With all its positive attributes, cyber democracy is not without disrepute. Some of us in this room are probably old enough to remember the 2000 American election, which was won marginally by President G. W. Bush against Vice President Al Gore. The world was shocked that even in a great democracy such as the US, vote-counting wrangling is not impossible. Resorting to court action to resolve vote-counting issues emanating from machine failure made a mockery of the integrity of the US election, even in emergent democracies in Africa and elsewhere in the developing countries.

On the whole, I agree with de Vries and Bokslag’s (2016) evaluation of e-voting in which they state that: “We conclude that the advantages of E-voting do not outweigh the disadvantages, as the resulting reduced verifiability and transparency seem hard to overcome.” However, this should not take the shine away from the many benefits of e-democracy and the possibilities it has created for deliberation and influencing politics across the globe. It alerts us to the new possibilities information technology offers and the new forms of democracy that have been made possible through its use by millions of citizens and thousands of globally networked virtual communities, all of which has had a tremendous impact on how politicians conduct politics in the second decade of the 21st century and beyond. What Keane (1999) and others call the end of democracy should be reconsidered and thought of in terms of what he calls monitoring and controlling democracies, making greater use of advances in the information and communication communities. Keane’s futuristic vision of democracy after the death of representative democracy is already here. Indeed, the future is here.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us share at least four paradoxes I have found uplifting while attempting to negate the theses on the decline of democracy and the death of development. Paradoxically,

1. Democracy is expanding in new spaces and taking new forms that are complementing, rather than replacing representative democracy. The modest gains or presumed decline of democracy can be attributed to citizens’ relocation of their democratic energies to these new spaces and local deliberative democracies;
2. Rather than retreating, democracy has exhibited considerable resilience, despite some sluggish development, rampant poverty, inequality and a shrinking environmental space;
3. Development remains the most cherished human endeavor, and the hobby horse not only of quasi-democrats but also dictators and authoritarian regimes; and
4. Despite compelling efforts to couple democracy and development or use one as the dialectical other, democracy continues to gain credence derived from its normative value, rather than from being an instrument of development and *vice versa*.

What has declined is not democracy but educated democracy; not development but authentic development that sides with the poor and critically addresses the main messages and meaning enshrined in the goals laid down in the first decade of development. For, if democracy is allowed to decline and development to die at the end of their treacherous

²⁴ Kenya, Government 2017. The Supreme Court of Kenya at Nairobi Ruling on Election Petition No. 1 2017. Issued 1st Day of September, 2017.

journeys, there would be nothing left for humanity to celebrate by way of embracing solidarity against want, hunger and fear, resisting tyranny and authoritarianism or confronting discrimination in all its forms. In a nutshell, humanity is not complete without the pursuit of authentic democracy and inclusive and empowering development.

Thank you for your attention

Annex 1: Development Aid by 15 major bilateral donors (percentage of GDI) 2000, 2010 and 2012 to 2016

Country	2000	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
US	0,1	0,203	0,186	0,182	0,186	0,168	0,181
UK	0,317	0,573	0,562	0,705	0,702	0,704	0,696
France	0,305	0,495	0,453	0,406	0,368	0,368	0,38
Germany	0,27	0,387	0,372	0,386	0,419	0,523	0,698
Japan	0,281	0,182	0,173	0,225	0,198	0,202	0,203
Canada	0,225	0,336	0,316	0,275	0,241	0,28	0,265
Sweden	0,801	1	0,974	1	1	1	0,937
Norway	0,764	1	0,929	1	1	1	1
The Netherlands	0,837	0,815	0,71	0,699	0,635	0,749	0,654
Denmark	1	0,909	0,83	0,852	0,856	0,847	0,753
Belgium	0,358	0,64	0,475	0,453	0,463	0,416	0,493
Switzerland	0,324	0,393	0,468	0,459	0,505	0,514	0,536
Finland	0,311	0,55	0,534	0,535	0,594	0,55	0,442
Ireland	0,295	0,325	0,47	0,462	0,375	0,318	0,332
Australia	0,267	0,323	0,361	0,331	0,314	0,291	0,25
Spain	0,216	0,248	0,156	0,174	0,134	0,117	0,332

Source: Freedom House 2016. Freedom in the World Report, Regional Trends, pp. 11-17. URL https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf (Accessed 10 September 2017).

Table 2: Human Development Index 1990, 2000 and 2010-2015

Region	1990	2000	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Arab States	0,556	0,611	0,672	0,677	0,684	0,685	0,686	0,687
East Asia and the Pacific	0,516	0,595	0,688	0,692	0,7	0,709	0,717	0,72
Europe and Central Asia	0,652	0,667	0,732	0,741	0,745	0,75	0,754	0,756
Latin America and the Caribbean	0,626	0,685	0,73	0,735	0,739	0,745	0,75	0,751
South Asia	0,438	0,502	0,583	0,592	0,601	0,607	0,614	0,621
Sub-Saharan Africa	0,399	0,421	0,497	0,504	0,51	0,515	0,52	0,523

Source: UNDP 2016: Human Development Report, p. 204. URL: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf (Accessed 15 August 2017)

Table 3: Freedom in world regions by country (numbers and percentage) 1999 and 2016

World Region	1999						2016					
	Free	%	Partly free	%	Not free	%	Free	%	Partly free	%	Not free	%
Sub-Saharan Africa	8	16.7	18	37.5	22	45.8	9	18	20	41	20	41
Asia Pacific	19	52.8	8	22.2	9	25.0	17	44	14	36	8	20
Americas	22	66.7	10	30.3	1	3.0	23	66	10	28	2	6
Middle East and North Africa	1	1.5	1	1.5	13	87	2	11	4	22	14	67
Eurasia	0.0	0.0	8	62	5	38	0.0	0.0	5	42	7	58
Europe	38	86	6	14	0.0	0.0	36	84	6	15	0.0	0.0

Source: Freedom House 2016. Freedom in the World Report. URL https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FIW_2017_Report_Final.pdf (Accessed 10 September 2017).

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