Lais de Oliveira Ramalho

From Developmentspeak to Dataspeak:

A Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Datafied Language of Development

Tese de Doutorado

Thesis presented to the Programa de Pós-graduação em Relações Internacionais of PUC-Rio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doutora em Relações Internacionais.

Advisor: Profa. Isabel Rocha de Siqueira

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Para a minha avó Deolinda,

minha amiga genial.

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Abstract

De Oliveira Ramalho, Lais; Rocha de Siqueira, Isabel (Advisor). **From Developmentspeak to Dataspeak: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Datafied Language of Development.** Rio de Janeiro, 277p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

Inspired by the seminal analyses of Developmentspeak, the dialect used in the development field, produced at the turn of the millennium, and feminist contributions in Science and Technology Studies (STS), this PhD thesis builds an epistemological critique of the 2030 Agenda taking Developmentspeak as an accurate proxy of the forces pushing and pulling international development agendas. Mixing qualitative and quantitative analysis, the methods pursued in this work unveil not only what development intends to be, but also how it might fall short from its own expectations. In simple terms, concepts and practices get disposed side by side in this work as a strategy to reveal how much of the elaborated and finely tuned discourse of official documents hits the ground. As a result, by tracking words, we track transformations going on in the field: discovering that some words remain, while some fade away, and that some concepts are included into official discourse with the purpose of producing euphemism, ambiguity or neutrality working many times as the spoonful of sugar that helps the bitter medicine of development go down. Two main concepts arise from this analysis: participation and data. As something old and something new, respectively, they help us to understand how the 2030 Agenda carries both ancient problematics and a novel façade. Considering the hyper-quantitative nature of the 2030 Agenda, the path that begins surrounded by discussions on the politics of language quickly evolves to places in which the main debates revolve around the politics of data.

Keywords

Development; 2030 Agenda; Language and Politics; Data Politics; Datafication.

Resumo

De Oliveira Ramalho, Lais; Rocha de Siqueira, Isabel (Orientadora). **Do developmentspeak para o dataspeak: uma análise de métodos mistos da linguagem datificada de desenvolvimento.** Rio de Janeiro, 277p. Tese de Doutorado – Instituto de Relações Internacionais, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

Inspirada nas análises seminais do Developemntspeak, o dialeto utilizado no campo do desenvolvimento, produzidas na virada do milênio, e nas contribuições feministas nos Estudos de Ciência e Tecnologia, esta tese de doutorado constrói uma crítica epistemológica da Agenda 2030 tomando o discurso do desenvolvimento como proxy das forças que agem sobre as agendas internacionais de desenvolvimento. Misturando análises qualitativas e quantitativas, os métodos aqui aplicados revelam não apenas o que o desenvolvimento pretende ser, mas também como ele pode terminar aquém das suas próprias expectativas. Em termos simples, esta tese dispõe conceitos e práticas lado a lado como uma estratégia capaz de revelar quanto do discurso elaborado e afinado dos documentos oficiais é traduzido em ações concretas. Ao rastrear as palavras, rastreamos as transformações que ocorrem neste campo e descobrimos que algumas palavras permanecem, enquanto outras desaparecem, e que alguns conceitos são incluídos no discurso oficial com o propósito de produzir eufemismo, ambiguidade ou neutralidade funcionando muitas vezes como uma colherada de açúcar que ajuda a tornar essas agendas em remédios mais palatáveis. Dois conceitos principais surgem desta análise: participação e dados. Como algo antigo e algo novo, respectivamente, eles nos ajudam a compreender como a Agenda 2030 carrega ao mesmo tempo antigas problemáticas e uma nova fachada. Considerando a natureza hiperquantitativa da Agenda 2030, o caminho que começa rodeado de discussões sobre a política da linguagem evolui rapidamente para locais onde os principais debates giram em torno da política dos dados.

Palavras-chave

Desenvolvimento; Agenda 2030; Linguagem e Política; Política de dados; Dataficação.

Index

List of figures

List of tables

1
Introduction

Before the compass was invented, civilizations measured and checked directions in various ways. While the Chinese used the 12 Zodiac signs, and the Arabs used stars, Europeans used the winds that blew from the Mediterranean frequently pictured by the wind rose. The eight major winds were named according to a lingua franca "spoken by sailors from various countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea". *Tramontana* was north, *Levante* was east, *Ostro* was south, and *Ponente* was west, (Dotson, 2023).

In the 16th century, cartographers began to use "Latin names" to identify the directions. They were "Septentrio", "Oriens", "Meridies", and "Occidens". Another change came after that when cartographers adopted the modern nomenclature we use today in which "North was based on Nord (likely meaning "wet" or from the rainy lands), East was based on Ost (meaning shining place, sunrise), South was based on Sund (sunny lands) and West was based on Vuest (meaning dwelling place, or where one goes in the evening)". Then, by the end of the Renaissance, wind roses, which held the "unique attribute" of being at the same time "decorative" and informative were replaced by the more precise latitude and longitude lines (Eade, 2010, p. 206).

Even though North, South, West, and East are taken as indisputable *truths* today, their history reminds us that they are an abstraction, tools to make the vast and complex world capturable, navigable, manageable. In this endeavor, we must notice, maps and their structures have been recognized by scholars as colonial instruments of domination as they produced the "reinscription, enclosure and hierarchization of space" (Huggan, 2008, p. 21). The fact that the European way of measuring direction prevailed over the stars and Zodiac signs makes this act of domination even clearer.

However, after living in the United States for five months doing part of my PhD program, I found myself observing a wind rose on the ground of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. It happened two days before my departure. I walked until my feet

hit the S (for South) inscription on the ground. And miles and miles away, I felt that I was already headed home. It was nothing more than stone and metal, an invented name for an invented direction. Still, it meant everything at that time. This thesis is about inventions and about how sometimes we make them our own.

Figure 1 - Headed home.

With promises of horizontal, comprehensive, and participatory methods, the 2030 Agenda has defended since its inauguration, in 2015, the possibility of breaking up with the paradigm of development as a phenomenon produced in the North and transferred to the South. Embracing the idea that sustainable development is for every country, and with the motto of "leaving no one behind", the 2030 Agenda has been envisioned as a project in which the South could make development its own. This thesis investigates the processes and beliefs that integrate the Agenda, the discursive, material and symbolic inventions that hold it together, and how they might confirm and/or deny this possibility.

The Agenda has been sold as a great statistical novelty that, even though, building from very well-established quantitative practices, take them to a new level which has been called an "unprecedented statistical challenge" (Lykketoft, 2017). Its rationale envisions a better world built from better data. This enterprise depends on impressive numbers: there are 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators paving the way towards sustainable development. As we will see, the 2030 Agenda encapsulates complex phenomena in a simple frame that I have called "a number and a problem". In this sense, statements such as "about 1 in 10 people worldwide are suffering from hunger" (p. 9) or "2.4 billion people still use inefficient and polluting cooking systems" (p. 14), are presented with colorful, didactic graphics, doodle and charts. As a consequence, they not only turn **the big problem of international development** into an easily capturable collection of occurrences. This movement, we will perceive, stands steadily on what seems to be the smallest particle of development in the 21st century: data. In sum, the 2030 Agenda and its practices integrate what Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho (2022) call a "global governance by indicators" (Ramalho, p. 2).

This whole phenomenon invites us to problematize what gets embedded in the practice of turning complexity into simple numbers. The Sociology of Quantification will guide us in the understanding that numbers have been, throughout history, instruments in the establishment of "authority, legitimacy and legality" (Bigo *et al.*, 2019, p. 3). In other words, they have been applied for matters of power (Porter, 1995; Desrosières, 2002), a process that has been intensified by the data revolution. As we will see, the 2030 Agenda builds from the data revolution to produce, as well, a governance revolution.

Riding the wave of the 21st century data revolution (to obtain from data on social, environmental, and economic issues the answers to formulate policies that might produce a better world for everyone) this oath of transformation that includes the collection of a vast multitude of inforumation has for various times been faced with criticisms that demonstrate that the Agenda (and its ambitious data collection project) is "unfeasibly expensive" and challenging even for developed countries' statistical systems (MacFeely, 2018), that it depoliticizes inequalities envisioning empowerment as something detached from power (Esquivel, 2006), that it equates more data with better decision-making (Jerven, 2016), that it carries an idea of development framed around the interests of powerful actors that hold advanced technical skills to negotiate indicators (Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019). All these voices reverb louder when put in parallel to the fact that only 12% of the 169 targets are advancing, half is evolving below the expected rhythm e 30% had not evolved since 2015[1].

In the field of development, it is not unusual to find claims for not throwing the baby away with the bath water – a movement that stems from the simultaneous realizations that, yes, development is intimately attached to colonialist visions, but if not development, then what? In this case, this work does not make an appeal for getting rid of indicators, but for questioning if they are worth the expensive investment and if they do have what is needed to be considered actionable.

Critiques	Critics
"The SDGs are financially unfeasible"	MacFeely (2018)
"The SDGs are blind to power relations"	Esquivel (2006)
"The SDGs equate more data with better decision-making"	Jerven (2016
"The SDGs reflect the interests of powerful actors because they have the upper hand on discussions of indicator-choice"	Fukuda-Parr and McNeill (2019)

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1 Lula volta à ONU com questionamentos à governança multilateral e defesa do Sul global: < https://oglobo.globo.com/mundo/noticia/2023/09/18/lula-volta-a-onu-com-questionamentos-a-governanca-multilateral-e-defesa-do-sul-global.ghtml>.

Table 1 - The main critiques that have been directed to the SDGs.

Considering that quantification practices translate complex problems into simplified, "decontextualized" and "homogenized" (Merry, 2016, p. 3) schemes, the Sociology of Quantification also invites us to ask and scrutinize how knowledge is produced. In a similar movement, we will be expanding this question to include, as well, a questioning of who is involved in this production.

This topic is especially worth of problematizing if we consider that "just over half of the world's population" was online and that "while 85% of the population was using the Internet in Europe and Northern America, only 20% were connected in LDCs [Least Developed Countries]" in 2019 (UN Secretary General, 2019, p. 30). Or that data science has been considered a "man factory" as only 26% "computer and mathematical occupations" in the United States of America are occupied by women of which only 12% are Black or Latin (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, p. 27).

Therefore, the problem guiding this journey will be that of authority, i.e., the substance that puts apart those who can and cannot have a say on how to achieve development, those enacting the practices and thinking located in this black box of turning global problems into 17 measurable goals. In this universe, certain nations and certain people, e.g., the development experts, hold the missionary prerogative of showing the path to be crossed in that direction.

Somehow, this is a thesis about the only story science can tell. In Elena Ferrante's "The Story of a New Name", the intrepid Lila describes it precisely: "it's always the same story: inside something small there's something even smaller that wants to leap out, and outside something large there's always something larger that wants to keep it a prisoner" (p. 365). Likewise, this work imagines the development field as an environment in which several forces struggle incessantly to escape and imprison each other. As we will see in chapter 3, the enterprise of international development is profoundly embedded in ideals brought up in colonial times and even though the discourse might change, hierarchies seem to persist. In sum, this chapter explores the means through which the big forces of coloniality and its adjacent ideals have been capturing development agendas in a play in which rich nations frequently sell empowerment in order to retain power.

As we will see, development has been a lot of things. From the revamping of *othering* practices in Truman's "Four Points Speech", passing through the neoliberal policies of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in the 1990s, the worldwide challenge proposed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the faith in a sustainable development in the SDGs, it has been transforming, adapting to different contexts, incorporating critiques. However, several scholars have realized that some ideals, beliefs, expectations, and biases that shape the field seem to be transmitted by and can also be perceived through the analysis of development's niche language, which has been called Developmentspeak.

Examined in the seminal works "The Development Dictionary", organized by Wolfgang Sachs[2] in 1992, and *Deconstructing Development Discourse*, organized by Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade in 2010, Developmentspeak has been theorized as a lingua franca that not only allows the actors in the field to communicate with each other, but also operates as a shared system of thought recognizing that language plays not only a "communicative" role, but also a "constitutive" one (Shapiro, 1989, p. 26) or that language is not only "used to describe reality but create our own realities" (Edelman, 1984, p. 45). Inspired by the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis[3] that says that "the particular language one speaks influences the way one thinks about reality" (Lucy, 2001), I argue that Developmentspeak frames and constrains speakers' thoughts working as a bridge between equals and a barrier for outsiders. As "something large", Developmentspeak imprisons conclusions and, consequently, the policies promoted in the field. Adding to the four main critiques listed above, this thesis offers an epistemological critique of the 2030 Agenda taking Developmentspeak as an accurate proxy of the movements going on in the field of development. In this sense, the attentive analysis of Developmentspeak pursued in this work unveils not only what development intends to be, but also how it might fall short from its own

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[2] Not to be confused with the American liberal economist Jeffrey Sachs, President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UN SDSN). Everytime this thesis mentions or cites "Sachs", it refers to Post-Development scholar Wolfgang Sachs.

[3] Even though the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been controversial (being confirmed and refuted by different researchers in different contexts), we will stick during this work to the notion presented by Basel Al-Sheikh Hussein (2012) that we gain much more not from being entirely favorable or contrary to the hypothesis but from asking "to what extent does language influence us?" (p. 645). The readings of Michael Shapiro (1984; 1989), Shapiro and Schiffman (1983) and Murray Edelman (1984) and others explored in this work suggest that language has an undoubtedly strong grip on how we create and perceive our realities.

expectations. In simple terms, concepts and practices get disposed side by side as a strategy to reveal how much of the elaborated and finely tuned discourse of official documents hits the ground. As it is frequently argued by the scholars of *Dictionary* and "Deconstruction", Developmentspeak tends to work as a spoonful of sugar that helps the bitter medicine of development go down. For such, it refurbishes foreign concepts to its own manner as we will see in the case of participation, which has been detached from its radical, antagonistic roots to become an aseptic space in which politics wait outside the door while conversation happens. Participation, Rahnema (1992) and Leal (2010) defend, has been transmogrified from dissensus into consensus.

In chapter 2, we will see that as concepts acquire different meanings, they also blur the sight of agendas. It is the case of the concept of Transparency, applied to promote surveillance (Fox, 2010); Security, applied to justify intervention (Luckham, 2010); Helping, applied to exert control (Gronemeyer, 2010); Basic Needs, which generates a sense of scarcity (Illich, 2010); a very specific idea of Science, that undermines traditional knowledges (Alvares, 2010); The Right to Development, that reifies the status quo (Uvin, 2010); Good Governance, that can be invoked in defense of neoliberal policies (Mkandawire, 2010); Gender Mainstreaming, which depoliticizes gender inequality (Smyth, 2010); Social Protection, that can be unproblematized in the shape of charity (Standing, 2010); One World, that can be used to erode diversity (Sachs, 2010).

As said before, development has lived many eras and in diving into the examinations of *Dictionary* (1992) "Deconstruction" (2010), , the first task proposed in the thesis is to understand what has remained and what has faded away in Developmentspeak comparing the concepts popular at the turn of the millennium and those which are now dominating the super-technologic and datafied age of the SDGs in order to understand the transformations happening in the field. In this sense, we observe language as an object capable of revealing how the values, beliefs and assumptions come and go in development agendas. These movements are understood in this work as representatives of how development gets reshaped and refurbished under the forces of specific global contexts. In this spirit, this work departs from the assumption that language is not "a neutral medium of communication" or a "unobtrusive conduit between thoughts or concepts and things". Instead, as proposes Michael Shapiro (1989), the thesis regards language

as "opaque", i.e., a practice in which "political, economic, social, biological" phenomena operate. According to Shapiro, various "phenomena find their way into language". Expanding the analysis on Developmentspeak, this thesis seeks to identify the several paths through which development finds its way into language.

Accordingly, Murray Edelman (1984) reminds us that "language, thought, and action shape each other". Language, he defends, is always embedded in a "social situation" and understanding it as a simple "tool for description" we lose track on how much it influences the creation of "social relationships" as well as "the roles and the 'selves' of those involved in the relationships" (Edelman, 1984, p. 45).

This effort is quite different form that made by the authors of the *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (2019). Also inspired by *The Dictionary of Development* (1992), the authors of *Pluriverse* (2019) propose "a broad transcultural compilation of concrete concepts, worldviews, and practices from around the world, challenging the modernist ontology of universalism in favor of a multiplicity of possible worlds" (Kothari *et al.*, 2019, p. xvii). In other words, they explore the ideas and epistemologies which are *not* contemplated in the 2030 Agenda, bringing new themes to the conversation intending to discredit the Agenda's tactic of "applying a set of policies, instruments and indicators to exit 'maldevelopment'" (Kothari *et al.*, p. xix). In the Foreword, Wolfgang Sachs (2019) explains that even though "development" is a word still in vogue, it has undoubtedly died in its promise that "all societies would close the gap with the rich and partake in the fruits of industrial civilization". According to him, this original type of development is completely gone as "everyday life is more often about survival now, not progress" (Wolfgang Sachs, 2019, p. xiii). Differently from that, this work does not propose an alternative, but seeks to produce an investigation of the 2030 Agenda as an expression of what seems to be the most massively disseminated perception of what development is supposed to be in the 21st century. What is curious about the 2030 Agenda is that even though standing afar from the perspectives posed by the scholars of the *Pluriverse* (2019), it still portrays signs of some transformation led by criticism, such as the tentative to efface (or perhaps attenuate) the North-South divide, so common in agendas advanced not so long ago, such as the MDGs for instance.

In chapter 3, the slow, exhaustive, and detailed analysis of concepts made by the authors of *Dictionary* (1992) and *Deconstruction* (2010) gets directly contrasted with distant reading methods. So, instead of just reading words, we read and count, and read again, and count again and so it goes. The quantitative methods of distant reading applied in this thesis and presented in this chapter serve two functions: first, they paint a portrait of the most important documents of the 2030 Agenda. In this sense, they encapsulate the main ideas (marked by presences and absences) circulating in the Sustainable Development Goals. Second, they offer an opportunity for seeing from the inside how data is cooked. It reveals the uncountable decisions, abstractions and scrutiny that cross the supposedly objective acts of counting and categorizing. Articulating quantitative methods in order to analyze the highly datafied, and quantitative rationality of the 2030 Agenda, chapter 3 works as a meta-analysis exercise that seeks to unveil the profane features imbued in the supposed sanctity of data. This sanctity, according to Gitelman and Jackson (2013), can also be attributed to objectivity, a concept which "suggests an acquaintance with objects", a capacity to "know things as they really are" (Porter, 1995, p. 3). This "acquaintance with objects" surmises of course a distance from subjects and, consequently, the ability to stand away from the secularity of bias. Inspired by Yamin's (2019) conclusion that quantitative data claim for qualitative data to be validated, the results obtained through the distant reading methods applied in chapter 3 were used as arrows pointing out to two more profound analytic pathways.

In chapter 4, we examine one of these pathways which we will call something old, i.e., "participation": the only concept besides "development" that gets repeated in both *The Dictionary of Development* (1992) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010). Following the traces of participation in the context of development, we learn about the depoliticization of the concept's radical roots in Participatory Action Research (PAR) resulted from International Financial Institutions' (IFIs) efforts to coopt local communities to cooperate with development projects. Along with "empowerment", participation has been articulated as a stamp of legitimacy for development policies and also as a strategy to keep deviant voices and ideas out of the debate. In this hyper-controlled environment, I will argue, participation assumes a state of suspended animation.

In chapter 5, the other pathway examined is called **something new**, i.e., "data": the concept that despite its relevance in the development field, has not been analyzed by the authors of "The Development Dictionary" (1992) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010). Investigating the role of "data" in the field, we find that its absence in these books might be attributed to the fact that for a long time "data" have been taken for granted as just an instrument in the bigger realm of Science (this one discussed in the Developmentspeak Glossary). Now, amidst a "data revolution", discussions of data for sustainable development are just exploding and several scholars have been busy with the task of analyzing the data-intensive practices taking place in the field, e.g., indicator choice, either in the 2030 Agenda as a whole or in specific SDGs (Fukuda-Parr, 2019; Ordaz, 2019; Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019; Yamin, 2019; MacFeely, 2019). More specifically, data have provided a new face and shape to what the field used to call science and technology. While the 2030 Agenda holds onto the power of data to save us all from poverty, inequality and hunger, critical scholars remind us of how important it is to pay attention to modern science and technology's "limits and impacts", and recognize how they marginalize "'other' knowledges" (Kothari *et al.*, 2019, p. xxvii).

Perhaps the most interesting part of the analyses of something old and something new is the realization that they are both cornerstones of the 2030 Agenda. The timeline of participation in the development field culminates in the 2030 Agenda, which clearly states the strong intention of being a participatory project. The Agenda, we learn, was praised in its efforts to guarantee an ample and long consultation process that included a variegated set of actors: diplomats, national statistical-offices, international organizations, scholars, civil society etc. However, participation is not the only concern shaping the SDGs. As it is identified by Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022), the 2030 Agenda is a project that carries two natures: as much as it is democratic, it is technocratic. Interestingly, their consideration of the Agenda as a participatory initiative seems to stand very close to a trap as they move from a comment on the open consultation process to argue that the data harmonization required for keeping track of the SDGs is a participatory strategy as well.

From this, I proceed to the argumentation that statistical capacity can be seen as a gatekeeper that, as cited by Fukuda-Parr (2019) narrowed the scope of actors

capable of participating in the Agenda as it requires a specific expertise in data science. In this sense, I argue that Developmentspeak reaches a new frontier as the lexicon already disseminated amongst the actors in the field is not enough to allow a seat at the table in the technical discussions, which turned out to be the centerfold of development in the age of the data revolution.

In this movement, we find the means to assume that Developmentspeak is but a dialect inhabiting a a niche language (a concept we will explore in chapter 2) which I have called *Dataspeak*: a specialized form of communication unique to the realm of data science that has been potently explored by the development community. My proposition is that, as any other language, *Dataspeak* must not be understood as just a floating lexicon, but a knowledge system that carries and reinforces beliefs, biases, assumptions and logics. *Dataspeak* is a frame and a gatekeeper. It offers the tools that allow experts to build a specific rationality, but at the same time it keeps the laypeople out of the conversation. Moreover, as any other language its structures and rationality imprison the insights of its speakers which results in the fact that complex problems being analyzed in a tabulated, quantitative way will not go much further than offering simplistic solutions. In sum, this speculation gives us some tools to understand that Developmentspeak does not exist in isolation. The analysis here conducted leads us to perceive that Developmentspeak is but one specific form of expression of *Dataspeak,* which might tell us about data science and data politics as much as Developmentspeak tells us about development.

If Datspeak is a gatekeeper, we can also find those willing to cross this bridge. The popularization of the Internet and the dissemination of knowledge on data analysis have provoked the flourishing of a phenomenon called Citizen-Generated Data (CGD), in which vulnerable communities produce data on their everyday problems in order to advocate for specific policies. CGD initiatives gained momentum from local communities' realization that the language of data has become the lingua franca of politics, which comprises the notion that every problem must be portrayed in the form of a number to become treatable. Quantifying or "[e]numerating is thought to be the most objective instrument we have for holding those in power accountable" says Jasanoff (2017, p. 1). It is a strategy to bring something into being. CGD projects seem to articulate the "performative attribute" of the language of numbers discussed by Bigo *et al.* (2019). CGD build a

connection between situatedness and data practices as they combine statistics with emotion-driven narratives. For CGD producers, numbers do not stand without a standpoint. Anchoring numbers in stories, they cherish exactly what objectivist scientists have envisioned as a problem for centuries. They take *Dataspeak* as a highway to authority and credibility with its projects frequently being named as "laboratories" or "observatories". They try to make *Dataspeak* their own.

On the one hand, to use Ferrante's analogy, as something small that wants to "leap out", these initiatives explore an act of liberation theorized by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) who says that being researched is a way of being colonized. Making science from a marginalized place, we will see in chapter 5, dislocates these communities from the role of objects; it operates as a way of gaining autonomy. Similarly, Mignolo (2008) sees this act of making science from somewhere, departing from and embracing a standpoint as an act of "epistemic disobedience" (Smith, 1999, p. 3).

On the other hand, CGD is frequently dismissed by powerful actors based on their quality and reliability. Consequently, the claims that these data seek to support end up devalued over the "inadequacy of the data" (Cinnamon, 2019, p. 8). In this sense, it gets clear that numbers hold a conditional veracity that gets sanctioned by the authority of the actor presenting it. In the words of Jasanoff (2004), making science is an act of imposing "a simplifying order on complex masses of humanity" and this power "lies, for better or worse, outside the competence of most social actors" (Jasanoff, 2004, p. 27). From this, we are led to conclude that data politics are thicker than data science skills and that numbers on their own seem to fall apart with no authority to make them hold. Situatedness, in *Dataspeak*, sounds like an exotic accent and CGD are made hostages of the very own inequalities they intend to fight. *Dataspeak*, using Ferrante's analogy, is something large wanting to imprison deviant ideas. In broader terms, examining the Agenda's data practices help us find signals that corroborate an idea that Bourdieu's (1991) have once proposed that the authority of the speech is directly connected to the "authority of the speaker" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 70). Accordingly, we find that processes of data production and validation are not only matters of "how", but also "whom". In this sense, diving into the quantification processes going on in the Agenda, we do not find ourselves restricted to the analysis of technicalities. On the contrary, this

journey has proven to be an interesting media for addressing as well an identity question in the field of development.

1.1
A Zigzagging Methodology

This research has been guided by a combination of two main methodologies thoroughly explored in chapter 3. From distant reading, I have borrowed the quantitative methods of word counting and clustering inspired by Jänicke *et al.* (2015), Miles and Huberman (1994), Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008), Stefanowisch (2020), Alfini and Chambers (2010) and others. I have applied the distant reading methodology as an instrument to find the breadcrumbs path that had the potential to lead us to deeper, more complex findings. Distant reading resonates Sheila Jasanoff's consideration that "[s]eeing with data, in other words, is a means of making sense of complexity, for discovering stories that matter in a field of infinite happenings, as when a world of randomly colored points resolves itself into figure and ground through the artistry of the pointillist painter" (Jasanoff, 2017, p. 2).

Inspired by feminist epistemologies, I have adopted the purpose of "making visible that which was previously invisible" (Tickner, 2006, p. 27). Analyzing the absence of certain subjects and of certain expressions, I have found a strategy to read the lack of data as a type of data in itself. The contrasts between absence and abundance, the reader shall notice, tell tales of prejudice, coloniality, and hierarchies that have been deeply embedded into the narrative of development. In this sense, Esquivel (2006), Ackerly, Stern and True (2006), Cohn (2006), Harding (1986, 2003, 2008), Harding and Norberg (2005), Tickner (2006) and others offered me the tools to question what has been taken as naturalized and universal in the discourse and practices of this field. Harding's (op. cit.) writings on science and technology provided this thesis with the resources to understand data as narratives, i.e., as stories told from a given standpoint. Similarly, it maximizes the analytical capacity of the postcolonial writings of *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing* in unveiling the biases that underpin Developmentspeak as a knowledge system: modern/traditional, civilized/savage, male/female, core/periphery. D'Ignazio and

Klein's (2020) ideas allowed me to move on with this analysis into the realm of *Dataspeak*. Their proposition of a Data Feminism is crucial to highlight how biases in science production tend to get exacerbated in data science. Data Feminism unveils how the non-representative demographics of Dataspeakers crystalizes power inequalities in this super-datafied world.

While taking into account the contributions of discourse analysis – especially assuming "language as evidence of a system or formation of meanings and the connections of those meanings to society, including the power relations within society" (Taylor, 2013, p. 10) – this thesis steps only lightly on the lands of specific discourse examination. The reader will not find in here, for example, a debate surrounding the "selection between alternative words", the use of "grammatical forms", or even the choice for certain "registers" (Taylor, 2013, p. 18). I seek to trail a path different from that of discourse analysts who are "interested in texts in their own right, rather than seeing them as a means of 'getting at' some reality which is deemed to lie behind the discourse – whether social, psychological or material" (Gill, 2000, p. 174). In fact, the case of participation explored in chapter 4 works as well as a demonstration that without a proper cross analysis with the actual practices and processes going on in the field, discourse can be incredibly misleading. By the end of this journey, I found that I have aimed at something similar to what the authors of "Words in Motion: Toward a Global Lexicon" (2011) intended. One of the editors states:

> This book considers the relation between words and worlds by tracing the social and political life of words—specific words in specific places at specific times— with an eye to their practical and public effect. We have chosen words that do work in the world, whether organizing, mobilizing, inspiring, excluding, suppressing, or covering up. We then track these words as they cross cultural borders and become embedded in social and political practices, changing their impact and their meaning as they go" (Gluck, 2011, p. 13).

In this thesis, I track words that work in the universe of development as they cross eras in an effort similar to that of Arturo Escobar in "Anthropology and Development" (1997) in which he concludes that "development discourse has changed throughout the decades – from its emphasis on economic growth and industrialization of the 1950s to the focus on sustainable development of the 1990s – managing, nevertheless, to maintain a certain core of elements and relations intact" (Escobar, 1997, p. 504). Considering that a few particularities can be

14

attached to each development era, this thesis seeks to understand which are the singularities being absorbed by Developmentspeak in the 2030 Agenda. What makes SDG-speak a different version of Developmentspeak? This question is brought in this thesis as a strategy to explore how much development agendas are affected by their historical contexts. Tracking these transformations and understanding how fast, profound or extensive they are, we may find out how much the world needs to change to make development change. The curious thing about this conclusion is that development's raison d'être is solidly based on the opposite. In this sense, it is not an exaggeration to attest that the world changes development a bit more than development changes the world.

There are several materials circulating in the universe of the 2030 Agenda: the Voluntary National Reports (VNRs), the reports produced by the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE), the national or subnational guides for localization of the SDGs, the regional monitoring reports such as those of the European Parliament or the African Union (AU), the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) etc. The corpus of this research, however, was designed to contain exclusively documents produced by the United Nations, more specifically by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in the case of the annual monitoring reports. This selection takes into consideration the plasticity of language and the idea that traveling through different institutions, countries and fora, Developmentspeak ends up absorbing new features. For such, the decision of analyzing the documents produced by UN DESA allows us to take a deep dive into the core of Developmentspeak. It is important to notice that this corpus does not claim to be exhaustive. Actually, this thesis departs from Anatol Stefanowisch's (2020) conception of a corpus as never a **totality**, but a **selection** of textual content about a certain topic made under some pre-defined criteria (Stefanowisch, 2020, p. 11-2). In this sense, our criteria helps us in the task of maintaining focus on the documents that carry the phrasing and the meanings carefully designed as representatives of the 2030 Agenda.

My choice for a distant reading methodology rests on the fact that Developmentspeak can be effectively explored through archival research, especially when we are departing from isolated words or expressions as in this case. In this kind of analysis focused on frequency, like beads in a rosary, quantity is key.

Specific analyses of context were conducted whenever the need for learning more about the meaning and specific uses showed up. They were especially put into practice in the case of words that disappeared from the lexicon such as "globalization", a phenomenon now generally cited through mentions to "global interconnectedness".

Despite not diving into discourse analysis, this thesis walks its path under the influence of Michel Foucault's considerations present in his seminal "Orders of Discourse" (1971). In this respect, the note of Derek Hook (2001) might enlighten the pathway chosen in this thesis. According to Hook, even though Foucault is invariably cited by scholars conducting discourse analysis, "there exists no strictly Foucauldian method of discourse analysis". In fact, Hook argues that Foucault's production can be better understood as a "critical genealogical work" than discursive analysis which can many times fall short of a thorough analysis of "power", "history", "materiality" and the "underlying conditions of possibility underwriting what counts as reasonable knowledge" (Hook, 2001, p. 36). Foucault's words are enlightening:

> There is, I believe, a third group of rules serving to control discourse. […] it is more a question of determining the conditions under which it may be employed, of imposing a certain number of rules upon those individuals who employ it, thus denying access to everyone else. This amounts to a rarefaction among speaking subjects: none may enter into discourse on a specific subject unless he has satisfied certain conditions or if he is not, from the outset, qualified to do so. More exactly, not all areas of discourse are equally open and penetrable; some are forbidden territory (differentiated and differentiating) while others are virtually open to the winds and stand, without any prior restrictions, open to all (Foucault, 1971, p. 17).

In "Language and Politics" (2006), John E. Joseph analyzes the works of Foucault and his consideration that "knowledge is not something existing apart from us but is itself determined by power, as social forces make it possible for certain people rather than others to determine what knowledge will consist of in a particular place and time".

> Whether or not one accepts this view, whatever knowledge is, those institutionally warranted as possessing it have a certain kind of power – the power to grant or withhold the same institutional warrant from others, plus whatever resources such warrants can be 'cashed in' for (Joseph, 2006, p. 34).

This thesis departs from the assumption that Developmentspeak is a territory dominated by a specific kind of individual: the development expert. The expert,

Nico Stehr and Reiner Grundmann defend, is a character that emerges from the "objectivized knowledge" that happens through the "appropriation of nature and society". This kind of knowledge, they assert, cannot be openly shared, it depends heavily on contention or, in their words, on a raw principle of "stratification". "An individual's opportunities in life, his lifestyle and his potential social influence are immediately dependent upon his access to society's current stock of social knowledge". In order to be rare and relevant, this stock must be limited to some (p. 6). In this sense, the **problem** investigated in this thesis is *the apparent mismatch between the experts, designers of development policies and agendas, and those for whom these policies and agendas are designed*. Accordingly, the analysis of Developmentspeak intends to make clearer that those who hold a specific kind of knowledge hold the authority as well to point out the pathway to development. In his analysis of technocracy, Massimiano Bucchi (2009) shows us that the expert has a missionary quality as it is supposed to save society from its ignorance. Accordingly, development was envisioned as a discipline to be transferred from North to South, which produced the expectation of the qualified expert personified in a version of the modern, rational, objective (most probably white and male, European or North American) scientist (Code, 1993).

The work done by Murray Edelman (1984) in "The Political Language of Helping Professions" can help us understand one or two things about language and authority. The author analyzes how psychiatrist hospital staff (and teachers) tend to ignore the demands of their patients (and students) under the assumption that the last are "weak" and in need of being "controlled for their own good" arguing that the language used in this context frequently exposes the "political functions language performs". Edelman takes this path to build a contrast between the authority exercised in "helping professions" and that exercised by politicians that choose to deliberately, for example, ignore the claims of activists. In his words, "[o]nce the subtle ways in which language serves power are recognized, the central function of language in all political interactions become clear, whether we call the interactions "government" or "professional". In sum, the study of "therapeutic" language conducted by Edelman allows us to perceive language's ability to produce and reinforce "popular beliefs about which kinds of people are worthy and which are unworthy: about who should be rewarded through governmental action and who controlled or repressed" (Edelman, 1984, p. 46). By adopting the "professional

perspective", the "lay public" then "confers power upon professionals and legitimizes their norms for society generally" (Edelman, 1984, p. 53). As development has been established as a sort of helping industry – this connotation will be particularly discussed in Chapter 2 through the reading of Marianne Gronemeyer's (2010) contribution to the *Dictionary* – also its language and experts seem to enact an authority to control and "rehabilitate" the "deviants" (Edelman, 1984, p. 47) carrying colonialist and scientificist undertones.

Jane L. Parpart (1986) tells us that it was during the Enlightenment, "embodied in the industrial revolution and the rise of liberalism", that the world saw the flourishing of the "specialization of knowledge". This movement, which rolled out through the "creation of new and separate disciplines within the academy" led the experts to proliferate in an environment in which "specialized knowledge became increasingly associated with the rise of the new middle class". Such association differentiated the expert from other men not only according to their levels of knowledge, but also to their economic strata. In addition, a crucial matter might be noticed: the rise of the expert was intimately pushed forward by the belief "in the ability of man (not woman) to apply rational, scientific analysis to the problems of life" (Parpart, 1986, p. 223).

In the first two decades of the development era inaugurated by Truman, the scene was not different at all as "development was regarded as a technical problem, one that required male expertise from the North and male cooperation in the South" (Parpart, 1986, p. 226). It was only in the 1970s that feminist scholars such as Ester Boserup (1970) gained momentum to argue that development was a "system that excluded women" and involved them only "as passive beneficiaries, or mothers and housewives, while training, technology and finance were geared to men" (Aguinaga *et al.*, 2013, p. 42).

> Women were dependents, in charge of the home. The model ignored the fact that in many cultures women worked in agriculture and food production (for example) and that there were different, or much more flexible, sexual divisions of labor. It also ignored the fact that the home, or the household, was a mesh of power relations that did not necessarily convert the aid given to male breadwinners into profit for "dependents" of either sex (Aguinaga *et al.*, 2013, p. 42).

Such discussions brought about a movement called Women in Development (WID) that claimed for a "women component" in development policies. As argued by Aguinaga *et al.* (2013), WID was not "a criticism of the idea of development

itself", but an effort to include women as agents in development promoting binary assumptions such as: "women, because they are socialized as carers which involves a greater sense of responsibility to others, would be better resource administrators, better savers, and they were even considered a 'so-far unexploited resource for greater efficiency in development'" (Aguinaga *et al.*, p. 42). Similarly, a second movement called Women and Development (WAD), appropriated "Marxist feminism and the theory of dependence" while still not exploring profoundly the "gender relations within social classes" and focusing on "income generation for women, without considering what this meant for them in terms of 'double-day' work", for example. In sum, WID and WAD failed in breaking up with the "androcentric theories of dependence, modernity and the political economy" (Aguinaga *et al.*, p. 43).

As the reader will notice, even though adopting feminist epistemologies as its main analytical lenses, this work is not exactly focused on diving into the case of WID or WAD. In fact, the effort made in this thesis can be better aligned with two other movements, namely, Gender and Development (GAD) and post-colonial feminism[4]. As an epistemological contribution to the field, this thesis explores development as a knowledge system and is interested in unveiling how the blocks in this structure have been created, transmitted, and transformed throughout history. Accordingly, it departs from the acknowledgement that development – sharing a congenital relationship with Western science (Alvares, 2010) – has been forged in a pretense masculine rationality. Scholars dedicated to Science and Technology

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[4] Born in the 1980s, GAD is a comprehensive perspective that "does not place "women" at the center of its analysis, but questions the assumption that "women" are a homogeneous social category It stresses that both genders are social constructs, beyond biological sex, and that women are shaped not only by gender, but by other categories of domination, such as their ethnic and cultural origin, their sexual orientation and age. It posits the need to research these power relations in all social spheres and to make women's empowerment policies cross-cutting" (Aguinaga *et al.*, 2013, p. 44). The post-colonial feminist movement, born in the 1990s, and deeply influenced by the "black, Chicana and lesbian feminists in the United States of the 1980s", was built around the critique of an "essentialist feminism" that defends that "women have some innate or spiritual superiority" and opposed vehemently "the attempts of hegemonic feminism and an ethnocentric trend anchored in the North to homogenize the concept of 'Third World women' as one group of development beneficiaries" (Aguinaga *et al.*, 2013, p. 47). As said by Chandra Mohanty (2003), the "Third World Woman" is a "singular, monolithic subject" that has been produced by "some (Western) feminist texts" (p. 17). In her words, "[t]his average Third World woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and her being "Third World" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.). This, I suggest, is in contrast to the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions (Mohanty,2003, p. 22).

Studies (STS) like Sheila Jasanoff (2004) have enlightened us with allusions to the profound connections between gender and science. Jasanoff herself quotes Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) to discuss how "concepts central to the practice of science, such as objectivity, came to be gendered as 'masculine'". The idea of "laws of nature", for example, – in which the word "law" is used to represent "monocausal, hierarchical" relations – imprisons the understanding of nature into "deterministic forces that dominate lower-order variables much in the manner of an authoritarian, centralized state ruling its citizens". As told by Jasanoff, this perspective "is anything but gender-neutral". In her words, just like "race, colonial relations and social class", also gender has been made "invisible in everyday routines of research" (Jasanoff, ANO, p. 35).

According to Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (1993), even though science "presents itself as subjectless", it "does have a subject, which in our community is a group of dominant males" (Potter, 1993, p. 5-6). In the same vein, Lorraine Code (1993) argues that science has been informed by the epistemologies of a "small, privileged group of educated, usually prosperous, white men". The "ideals of rationality and objectivity", according to her, "have been constructed through processes of excluding the attributes and experiences commonly associated with femaleness and underclass social status: emotion, connection, practicality, sensitivity, and idiosyncrasy" (p. 21). Like science, development carries the pretention of a rational, exact, aseptic, impersonal, and objective ground. Feminist epistemologies are used in this work as lenses zooming into the muddy parts of this terrain, as boots used for walking a marshy land in which this allegedly masculine kind of knowledge-making comes to life and populate the field.

In sum, as this thesis intends to examine the nature, scope, and limitations of knowledge in the field of development, feminist epistemologies operate in here as instruments that enrich our ability to read Developmentspeak as a system populated by underlying assumptions, biases and dominant paradigms. In this sense, we analyze how knowledge has been constructed and validated in the field frequently finding its connection to binaries forged in Modernity – many of them encompassing gender such as the idea that mind and science are related to masculinity while body and nature are related to femininity (Keller *apud* Bar On, 1993, p. 91).

1.2
Contributions

This thesis's main contribution is the elaboration of an epistemological critique of development departing from Michael Shapiro's (1984) proposition of "politicizing language" (p. 3) as a means to politicize the field. This movement, we will soon perceive, sheds some light on social, political and economic global contexts and how they affect development agendas leading us to understand that development and the world are trapped in a mutual construction: as much as development intends to change the world, it is also being affected by the world all the time.

The paths traveled in this work, then, allows us to offer two secondary contributions:

First, it allows us to comprehend how the language used in development communication has changed since "The Development Dictionary" (1992) and "Deconstructing Development Discourse" (2010), the most relevant academic works produced by critical scholars engaging profoundly on the analysis of the intersection of language and development. This kind of transformation has been considered in this thesis as proxy of other transformations: of perceptions, policies and actions going on in the field. In other words, investigating how language has evolved over time in the field of international development can lead us to find traces of changes in policy and practice. The overabundance of the word "data", for example, reflects a profound process of technologization of the field that, even though led by science and technology since its early days, has found in datafication a strong momentum to renovate the ambitious promises made in the past. The ubiquity of data and the faith in its capacity to point out the problems in need of solutions (recognizable in the maxim "we cannot change that which we do not know") has undoubtedly given development a new lease of life. Besides pushing forward a global effort for data collection – a movement that can be problematized in several levels –, this kind of movement carries the idea that development issues have persisted for decades because they were not actually known, a conclusion that attenuates the weight of power imbalances and inequalities in this equation.

Second, it helps us to examine how language has been responsible for shaping power dynamics within the development industry. As we will see, Developmentspeak is really undertheorized when taken as a transparent instrument for communicating development since it plays a key role in constructing and demonstrating authority, influencing decision-making processes, and perpetuating power dynamics. As the dialect of the expert, Developmentspeak imprisons not only the framing of development, but also the design of policies and, consequently, of the possible futures into the rationale of its speakers. The assumptions, biases and ideologies shared by this group – usually formed under a scientificist and modern way of thinking – circulate very clearly with the help of language in a self-reinforcing movement: Developmentspeak and its speakers are co-constitutive.

This research required lots of close and distant reading, but it has also been enriched with several ideas originated from the discussions and contributions that took place in two academic events that reunited highly qualified researchers (mainly PhDs and professors from several countries) dedicated to the investigation of the 2030 Agenda and data politics. The first one was the Workshop of preparation of the themed issue "Global Public Policy in a Quantified World: Sustainable Development Goals as Epistemic Infrastructures," edited by the ERC-funded METRO project ("International Organizations and the Rise of a Global Metrological Field") published by Policy and Society. The second one was the Workshop "Polycentric Perspectives on Digital Data Governance" organized by the Centre for Global Cooperation Research (GCR21) of the Universitat Duisburg Essen, that will soon culminate on a book to be published by Routledge. I attended both as co-author with my advisor, Professor Isabel Rocha de Siqueira (IRI/PUC-Rio).

Moreover, this research was also made possible by the enlightening series of 13 interviews conducted with people who are (or have been) responsible for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Brazil. They were made in the context of the project Mapeamento de Atores Quantificadores no Brasil: Dados de Progresso Social Relevantespara Agências Internacionais" coordinated by Rocha de Siqueira and funded by the Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq; Chamada Universal MCTI/CNPq no. 01/2016). These interviews cannot be directly cited in here as they were conceded by the interviewees solely for the investigative purposes of the mentioned project. For

such, whenever the insights proposed by the interviewees become necessary to present or develop an idea, they are indirectly cited in this thesis through the paper "Participatory Methodologies and caring about numbers in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda" (Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho, 2022).

Finally, this research has been partly conducted at The New School (New York, US), where I had the opportunity to be advised by Professor Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, leading author of the UNDP Human Development Reports and member of the UN Committee on Development Policy. These five months, which I have lived with a wide-eyed gaze, were made possible by a scholarship awarded by the Brazilian Coordination for higher Education Staff Development (CAPES).

Developmentspeak: Language, Power Dynamics and Belonging in the Development Industry

In "The Lying Life of Adults", Elena Ferrante narrates the story of Giovanna, a teenage Italian girl who is finally allowed to spend some time with her father's sister, the overdramatic, unrefined, "ugly" Vittoria, that he left behind in a search for an academic, intellectual life in the heights of Naples. Giovanna observes her aunt and those who surround her in a mix of rejection, inherited from the discourses repeatedly proffered by her parents on the miserable results of poverty and lack of education, and admiration, born from the realization that there is a sort of richness hidden in the exaggerated, unrestricted affection of those people's interactions. Nothing is to be spared. The splurge of kisses, hugs, and emotions scattered in the form of words, in dialect, never used in Giovanna's home make her jealous of such decadent affection. "What a pity", she thinks, "to be the last to arrive, not to speak the language they spoke, not to have true intimacy" (Ferrante, 2019, p. 80).

Ferrante's work exposes one of the main topics of this thesis: the "true intimacy" established by the sharing of a language. This bond, so simply demonstrated in Giovanna's thoughts, has been deeply theorized by linguists such as Noam Chomsky that said that "a language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is" (2010). This perception has also reverberated in other sciences. In International Relations, for example, it has been explored as a means to understand and explain the power imbued in language politics, which has been articulated by authorities throughout history especially for ends of "nation building" (Laitin, 2000, p. 534).

In "Seeing Like a State" (1998), James Scott tells us how the state gradually took control of its subjects: last names were made permanent, weights and measures were homogenized, surveys and population registers were created, cities were designed for better legibility, and, of course, language was standardized (p. 2). According to Scott, language standardization was essential for achieving a sort of "domestic colonization" of provinces that ended up "linguistically subdued and

culturally incorporated". Amongst "all state simplifications", he considers, "the imposition of a single, official language may be the most powerful" as well as a precondition for many other practices of standardization and centralization (Scott, 1998, p. 72).

As told by David Laitin, "[i]n the premodern era language was not politicized" (Scott, 1998, p. 72), i.e., the heterogeneity of ethnicities coexisted with the heterogeneity of languages and dialects. In the modern era, however, "language rationalization became a grave political problem" due to the fact that "social mobility and economic success have been dependent on literacy". The "backbone" of industrial economies were not peasants anymore, but clerks. Concomitantly, education became a service provided by the state. In this scenario, not speaking "the language of the state" felt much more determinant to people's lives (we can think of the "unfair competition for jobs", for example) and "people have become quite sensitive to the language of the state business, and if it is not their own they feel alienated from the state" (Scott, 1998, p. 535).

Shân Wareing (1999) states that language "has a key role in transforming power into right and obedience into duty" (p. 10) paraphrasing Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who once said that "[t]he strongest man is never strong enough always to be master unless he transforms his power into right and obedience into duty" (*apud* Wareing, 1999, p. 10). Language not only "creates power", Wareing says, it is also a site "where power is performed" (Wareing, 1999, p. 10). "What language/s you speak is one way in which you immediately have access to, or are excluded from, some kinds of power" (Wareing, 1999, p. 11). An illustrative example of this is a Decree issued by King Philip V of Spain in 1716 which intended to "transform Spain from a decentralized kingdom to one based more on Bourbon principles". For that reason, the Decree "required that all legal papers submitted to the king's court be written in Spanish". Although David Laitin (2000) does not agree with the theory that this decree signaled "the death of the Catalan nation" (Laitin, 2000, p. 534) – he defends that Catalan were already communicating with court in Spanish much before that – the decision has certainly made the language hierarchy, being until then progressively installed in the country, clearly official. This reading leads us to conclude that crafting and promoting language unity is a "powerful means of exercising social control" (Thornborrow, 1999, p. 158).

James Scott (1998) presents a similar case occurred in France. According to him, by the end of the 19th century all the communications with the state such as "petitions, court cases, school documents, applications, and correspondence with officials" in the country were mandatorily made in French. Scott is poignant when he says that it was a "gigantic shift in power". He believes that "[o]ne can hardly imagine a more effective formula for immediately devaluing local knowledge and privileging all those who had mastered the official linguistic code". In this sense, language standardization must be also understood as a strategy to mute marginal groups. Scott believes this was the definition of a language and cultural hierarchy in which anything that could not be considered official was then read as provincial (Scott, 1998, p. 72-3).

Similarly, Denis Ager (1997) discusses how the adoption of a certain language does not really depend on efficiency. Language competition, he says, is not linguistic, in the sense that it is not circumscribed into a decision for "intrinsically better forms of communication". People are much more pushed into adopting a language for "political, social or economic" reasons (Ager, 1997, p. 27-8). Shapiro and Schiffman (1983) believe that language adoption, especially in cases of multilingualism or "linguistic variability", can happen both ways, i.e., the status of "standard language" "may be the natural result of a large number of prior pragmatic decisions concerning the use of this code for socially prestigious purposes" or "a reflection of political decision making having little to do with the pragmatic value of the code in purely linguistic terms". In sum, they argue that a certain group "uses a particular code because it is of some worth to them in achieving some social end", a process that involves a calculation of "subjective values" (Schiffman , 1983, p. 243). It is important to notice that "discursive economies, which privilege various linguistic operators are associated with the circulation of persons in connection with relations of power, authority and control" (Shapiro, 1989, p. 23).Exploring the case of Timor-Leste, Marcelle Trote Martins (2022) analyzes how the "choosing of an official language" can also be conceived as a "politics of remembering and forgetting" – mainly applied in post-traumatic contexts (Trote Martins, 2022, p. 6). Trote Martins argues that "language plays a crucial role in post-conflict efforts to (re)establish political foundations for the state and can also define how individuals and groups will be remembered" (Trote Martins, 2022, p. 1). Being subsequently colonized by Portugal and Indonesia, Timor Leste has been the centerstage of

frequent debates on language choice. The brutality of the Indonesian government, known for its "violent political and social repression", incentivized a tentative to re-establish the culture and values disseminated in previous times (Trote Martins, 2022, p. 6). The strong participation of the Generation of 1975, "born and raised during the Portuguese colonial period" in the resistance made the case for the choosing of Portuguese as the country's official language. Even though it recognizes the efforts made by these generation – also privileging them with more opportunities –, the establishment of Portuguese as the official language erases the role played by other groups such as the Foun Generation – non-Portuguese speakers, who were born, and raised during the Indonesian government – in the fighting against the Indonesian domination (Trote Martins, 2022, p. 2).

The case narrated by Trote (2022) illustrates Annamalai's (1989) argument on how languages are actually "instruments of social control", especially when they become written – a quality that is essential for the practice of bureaucracy for example. "The mastery of the written language", the author says, is also "necessary for access to social mobility in the literate society and it creates a new elite who, in turn, control it and thus become the interpreters of the collective wisdom of the society as codified in the written language". Their "exclusive control of the codified Sanskrit", Annamalai argues, guaranteed the Brahmins' supremacy over other castes in India (p. 228).

In "Language and Politics", John Joseph (2012) argues that "oppression is the mother of identity" (Joseph , 2012, p. 40). This process can certainly be recognized in the case of Black English in the United States explored by Manfred Henningsen (1989). The fact that most scholars consider it a deformity of Standard English – especially through the decision of not recognizing it as "a full language" – is seen by Henningson as act of "colonization" of black culture. Instead of understanding the social and cultural importance of Black English, mainstream media "gave, on the contrary, its users the social stigma of being illiterate fools". In sum, "[u]sing Black English was for most speakers of Standard English the clear sign of illiteracy or, worse, mental deficiency (Henningsen, 1989, p. 33).

> The roots of Black English, in the culture of the slaves for example, are not examined. The resistance of the slaves, however, to the apartheid culture of the slavers expressed itself in a linguistic medium of their own. Like their religion, oral literature, music, and dance, the language necessarily gave primary meaning to their existence. This culture of the

> slaves empowered their community with a sense of future that transcended the misery of slavery. The dominant culture was largely ignorant of the slaves' culture and language or, at best, had a distorted picture of them (Henningsen, 1989, p. 33).

Shapiro and Schiffman (1983) have explored this problematic in their analysis of power relations going on amidst the languages used in South Asia. Education, literature, public administration, and communication are some of the areas they cite as stages for the interplay of politics and language. As they defend, the languages or "codes" used as medium in these stages always work "at the expense of others" as they have "prejudicial implications for those who do not control the codes selected". In this sense, competing languages can also be perceived as signs of "competing social forces" that not rarely lead to "acrimonious or even violent confrontations" between certain groups (p. 3-4).

The examples of France, Spain and Timor Leste demonstrate quite clearly that language is deeply affected by power dynamics that usually take place as political, social and economic aspects, a process that Norman Fairclough (1989) has summarized as the idea that "language contributes to the domination of some people by others" since it contributes to "the production, maintenance, and change of social relations of power" (p. 1).

According to Michael Shapiro (1989), languages act in a game of "identification and differentiation", a process that gets candid in "language purism", i.e., the categorization of "certain members of the community within an inherited linguistic social caste while placing others outside of this membership" (Shapiro, 1989, p. 22). Thus, language can also be understood as an agent in the shaping of the "identity of a society, of the individuals within it, and of the way they think" as a unique "set of meanings" that bonds a specific group together (Ager, 1997; Shapiro, 1989, p. 27). John Joseph's considerations on language politics begins with the exploration of the idea that language has "evolved as a ultraefficient means of distinguishing allies from enemies and of grooming allies and potential allies" (p. 1)."Every society", says Shapiro,

> [...] is involved to some degree with identity politics, with separating people into groups with identities which form a hierarchy of worthiness, and one's language group membership is an important part of many of these identity politics processes.
> Clearly, then, attempts to "purify" a language implicitly promotes those who can most closely identify themselves as belonging to the language base toward which the change is aimed to a position of moral superiority. And because purification implies getting rid of stain and

> thus evil, purification movements imply at some level that the impure language elements belong to impure persons. This impurity ascription makes it then possible to put people who cannot claim affiliation with the privileged language in a lesser moral space (Shapiro, 1989, p. 23).

Language, says Shapiro (1989) operates within an "ecology of Self-Other relations" in which identities "contain and animate relations of power and authority" (Shapiro, 1989, p. 28). Conversely, language is intimately connected to the feeling of belonging. Identifying ourselves "as belonging to a particular group or community often means adopting" their "linguistic conventions" (Thornborrow, 1999, p. 158). Language, in this sense, is a sort of "social code which people use to display membership of a social group, like dress codes" (Thornborrow, 1999, p. 165).

> Being able to show that you can use linguistic terms appropriately according to the norms associated with a particular group helps to establish your membership of it, both to other members of the group, the ingroup, and those outside it, the outgroup. Furthermore, adhering to the linguistic norms of one group may position you very clearly as showing that you do not belong to others (Thornborrow, 1999, p. 165).

Even though this is an International Relations thesis, my investigation of language as a sign of "true intimacy" does not explore an official national language, but a dialect that, sprawling beyond national borders, unites the experts of the development field. It is called Developmentspeak.

2.1
Colonial underpinnings, scientific façade:
a brief account of development (thought)

One can hardly know how the development field came to be without a close look at north American President Harry Truman's "Four Points Speech", addressed on his inauguration day: January 20, 1949. Truman's speech can be summarized in two main points: i. a clear separation between well-succeeded and primitive nations, and most importantly, ii. a notion that a certain path could be pursued as a means for the second group to "catch-up" with the first one (Rist, 2008, p. 70). What ended up known as the Point Four Program (since it was the fourth topic brought up by Truman) suggested that the United States of America had to "embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of [their] scientific advances and industrial

progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas" (Truman, 1949).

As Gilbert Rist defends, it seems that "everyone knows what is meant by the development of a child or a plant". The idea of development is elaborated on a parallelism to this movement: "a transfer from the natural to the social" (Rist, 2008, p. 26). Edelman (1984) argues that language "catalyzes a subjective world in which uncertainties are clarified and appropriate courses of action become clear" (p. 48). Thus, Truman's greatest achievement was not inaugurating the word, but the idea revolving around it and, consequently, the paths to be pursued in its achievement. According to Esteva (2010), development's appearance in new clothes was remarkable, since "never before had a word been universally accepted on the very day of its political coinage" (Esteva, 2010, p. 2). First, the term "already enjoyed a certain respectability within scientific discourse" (Rist, 2008, p. 25). Second, it also "occupies the center of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation" (Esteva, 2010, p. 3). Third, "very few words are as feeble, as fragile and as incapable of giving substance and meaning to thought and behavior as this one" (Rist, 2008). As said by Gustavo Esteva, "two hundred years of social construction of the historical–political meaning of the term 'development' were successfully usurped and transmogrified" to connote one idea which is "to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment" (Esteva, 2010, p. 3, p. 2).

Arturo Escobar (1999) describes the "'discovery' of mass poverty in Asia, Africa, and Latin America" as "the invention of development", a movement that has provoked a whole transformation of "global culture and political economy" as the "discourse of war was displaced onto the social domain and to a new geographic terrain: the third world". In this context, fascism was no longer the great enemy. It was poverty, and just as important, the threat that it posed on developed countries, that screamed for a battle (Escobar, 1999, p. 382).

> Almost by fiat, nearly 70 percent of the world's peoples were transformed into poor subjects in 1948 when the World Bank defined as poor those countries with an annual per capita income below $100. And if the problem was one of insufficient income, the solution was clearly economic growth. Thus poverty became an organizing concept and the object of a new problematization. That the essential trait of the third world was its poverty and that the solution was economic growth and development became semf-evident, necessary, and universal truths (Escobar, 1999, 382).

Development lays on "the idea of a natural history of humanity" (Rist, 2008, p. 39), which is the kind of narrative that relies on a common point of origin and, of course, on a single destination, "according to a pre-established pattern" (Pieterse, 2010, p. 19). The word "development", says Esteva (2010), "implies a favorable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better" (Esteva, 2010, p. 6). The word, he says, "indicates that one is doing well because one is advancing in the sense of a necessary, ineluctable, universal law and towards a desirable goal" (Esteva, 2010, p. 6). In this spirit, the main task of post-development scholars has been exposing that the substance that ties development to an alleged "promise of well-being, happiness and a better quality of life", seems to be what also ties it to "a certain way of thinking – one that is Western, capitalist and colonial" (Esteva, 2010, p. 9).

Truman's conception of development inherits several ideas previously articulated through coloniality, as the case of the self-and-other dichotomy Europeans established with the rest of the world. Coloniality, we should recall, can be perceived as a temporal and spatial movement. By identifying itself in the present, Europe made up an origin story. In that context, the dark and obscure Middle Ages became the perfect representation of a past overcame by Europe, which was considered to be in "the center of World History" (Mignolo, 2008, p. 453). Temporally, it put Europe in a present highly contrasting with the past Amerindians inhabited. Spatially, the territory of the New World has been taken as a space with no law and no Hist"ry ('Ignolo, 2008, p. 470). John Locke's statement, "in the beginning, the whole world was America", is an illustrative representation of this feeling (Locke *apud* Blaney & Inayatullah, 2010, p. 28). Besides that, the New World was understood as more than new, it was young. "Savage" peoples were taken as an undeniable proof that, while Europe enjoyed a privileged rationality that permitted them to thrive, in some places, the past was still happening. Lacking writing, religion and a formal mode of political organization (Mignolo, 2012), New World people was nothing more than something to be found. And of course, something to be fast forwarded to their 'future' (Europe's present).

As Kalyan Sanyal (2007) notes, the idea of a progressive History instituted European values and modes of living as a goal to be pursued. Those who inhabited a previous stage, therefore, should face a transformation of practices and beliefs as a strategy to be modernized. According to Sanyal, even the Marxist approach

maintained the idea of "an evolution from a backward mode of production to a modern one" as a foundation (Sanyal, 2007, p. 8). These points of view produced the Third World as a "delayed" space, a territory doomed to repeat "Western trajectory" (Sanyal, 2007, p. 18). The Global South has been envisioned in History as if it was destined to be turned modern. The necessity to promote the progress and salvation of those left out and behind gave coloniality a moral, Christian justification (Mignolo, 2008). In general, development has perpetuated the "devaluing of the multiple ways of life, social relationships and knowledges that exist in the South" that it so openly categorized as "backward" (Lang, 2013, p. 10). Truman's idea of development/underdevelopment offered new clothes to these dichotomic categorizations. With a renovated discourse, the otherness was redesigned to match the realities and expectations of the 20th century. This strategy was quite "attuned to North American interests" (Rist, 2008, p. 75). Post-development author Arturo Escobar defends that the idea of development emerged at that time as a way for the United States of America to take control over the then established "Third World" (Escobar, 1998). Once again, a hierarchy is instituted to define progress and backwardness, science and primitivity. The Self-Other mentality is pungently present in President Truman's speech. The United States are envisioned as *we, us, our, ours*. Underdeveloped areas are characterized by *they, them, their, theirs*. In his words, "**their** food is inadequate", "*they* are victims of disease", "*their* economic life is primitive and stagnant", "*their* poverty is a handicap and a threat both to **them** and to more prosperous areas". In a nutshell, the speech transmits the message that "*we*" have something "*they*" do not have and thus it was essential to dispose "**our** store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life" (Truman, 1949) [my emphases]. Development renovated the enterprise of coloniality by substituting the evangelization for *technicalization* and the Bible for "a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge" (Truman, 1949).

Miriam Lang (2013) reminds us that the North-South divide going on in coloniality has been refashioned after World War II, when the world "began to be divided into developed and underdeveloped countries". Reading from Foucault and Escobar, Lang argues that development has been used as "a power device which organized the world, giving new legitimacy to the international division of labor in

the capitalist context, by means of an immense set of discourses and practices" (Lang, 2013, p. 9). In her words:

> Development was transformed into a public policy objective. Budgets were allocated and a multiplicity of institutions set up to promote development at the local, national and international level. In the universities, countless courses sprang up to train specialists in development, which might be rural, sustainable, international, etc. In Northern countries, what used to be economic policies to deal with the colonies were re-worded in the terms of "international development cooperation" (Lang, 2013, p. 9).

It is crucial to highlight that what was meant by scientific at that moment stood inside the walls built up by modern cartesian philosophy. For Ramón Grosfoguel (2016), the assumption of a science based on objectivity, neutrality, impartiality, detachment from body and location was only made possible by coloniality and the pretentious realization of European men of their ability to conquer. The colonial expansion of the 15th century, that Grosfoguel sums up by the feeling of "Ego conquero" (I conquer), was the essential foundation over which scientific authority, represented by "Ego cogito" (I think), has been built (Grosfoguel, 2010, p. 31). In that line of thought, the critique offered by post-development scholars departs from the perception that science and development share a "congenital relationship" (Alvares, 2010, p. 245). In the era inaugurated by Truman, their bond has been strengthened as they "reinforced the need for each other; each legitimized the other" (Alvares, 2010, p. 246) and, as a result, "everything 'non-scientific' was devalued as subjective and arbitrary, of marginal value, and could hardly be made the foundation of public policy" (Alvares, 2010, p. 253).

The first mission sent by the World Bank to an underdeveloped country went to Colombia with the purpose of formulating a "comprehensive program of development" (Escobar, 2010, p. 149). The mission's report says:

> One cannot escape the conclusion that reliance on natural forces has not produced the most happy results. Equally inescapable is the conclusion that with knowledge of the underlying facts and economic processes, good planning in setting objectives and allocating resources, and determination in carrying out a program for improvement and reforms, a great deal can be done to improve the economic environment by shaping economic policies to meet scientifically ascertained social requirements.… In making such an effort, Colombia would not only accomplish its own salvation but would at the same time furnish an inspiring example to all other underdeveloped areas of the world (World Bank *apud* Escobar, 2010, p. 149).

Besides calling attention to the "colonial, Christian missionary overtones" of this excerpt, Escobar also comments on how it easily conceals "the whole history of colonialism" by blaming Colombia's underdevelopment on the country's "natural forces" and natural history (World Bank *apud* Escobar, 2010, p. 149). The push towards development establishment came from the idea that it could not be left to chance, it depended on planning, scheming, actively pursuing it. This path then presumed the need to adopt a Western rationality. Achieving development "is thus largely a matter of changing values and attitudes" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 58). Development discourse, says Ferguson, speaks "as if the problem of poverty is all in the head – as if impoverished villagers could escape their condition by a simple change of attitude or intellectual conversion" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 58). In this sense, underdevelopment was something to be resolved through "techno-fixes, regardless of the deep structural inequalities that colonialism had created both among and within nations" (Guttal, 2010, p. 74). Development, then, became a demonstration of science's ability to "*remake* reality" (Alvares, 2010, p. 252, italics in original).

For decades, development has thrived in a vacuum of critique since even the "real-socialist governments in Eastern Europe" and most of the "thinkers on the left in Latin America concentrated on criticizing imperialism and capitalism" still accepting development as a viable project. Important critiques of development were not born until the 70s when alternative modes started to be proposed, especially in Latin America (Lang, 2013, p. 10).

By that time, Brazilian economist Celso Furtado was already alerting about the "myth of progress" that had been built around the idea that "economic development, in the manner that it has been practiced by the countries that led the Industrial Revolution, could be universalized" (Furtado, 2013, p. 14), i.e., achieved by every country in the world. Amongst several critiques on this notion, Furtado argues that the high pressure on non-renewable resources and environmental pollution produced by said development would lead the world to collapse (Furtado, 2013, p. 17).

According to Eduardo Gudynas (2013), Furtado considered that the idea of development in which poor people would some day "enjoy the same lifestyles as those who are rich" was "simply unrealizable" (Gudynas, 2013, p. 15). Development, Furtado argued, was an idea used

> [...] to mobilize the peoples of the periphery and convince them to accept enormous sacrifices, to legitimize the destruction of ancient cultures, to explain and make people understand the need to destroy the environment, and to justify forms of dependence that reinforce the predatory nature of the system of production (Gudynas, 2013, p. 15).

In the 1990s, possible alternatives to development gave way to the idea of post-development, captained by Gustavo Esteva and Arturo Escobar, built from the assumption that development "had spread until it became a way of thinking and feeling". The most prominent feature of post-development must be its abandonment of the task of proposing "another development". Post-development can be understood as an effort for deconstruction that takes place on the shift from the previous trend of "development alternatives" to the more radical "alternatives to development" (Gudynas, 2013., p. 29-30).

In sum, post-development can be characterized as critique to the "project of Modernity" (Gudynas, 2013, p. 31). This notion is clearly presented by Escobar in the excerpt below:

> Will there still be "modern solutions to modern problems"? Or has modernity's ability to even imagine the questions that need to be asked to effectively face the contemporary ecological and social crisis been so fatally compromised, given its investment in maintaining the worlds that created it, as to make it historically necessary to look elsewhere, in other-than-modern world-making possibilities? (Escobar 2017, p. 19).

In Latin America, says Gudynas (2013), this critique has taken three main paths: the first one is that of "radical biocentric environmentalism" which "recognizes particular values in Nature itself" putting aside the modern myth of Nature as something to be explored for human benefit (p. 32). The second one is that of "critical feminism" that questioned the "patriarchal order in society and warned that development strategies were reproducing and consolidating its asymmetries and hierarchies". The third one is inspired by "the positions and cosmovisions of indigenous peoples" (Gudynas, 2013, p. 34).

However, development is very much persistent. The fact that "The Development Dictionary" (1992) announced the death of development was not enough to actually bury the project (Gudynas, 2013, p, 27). Politically, the main result of the development debate going on in Latin America was not its abandonment, but an adaptation that recognized the predator capacity of capitalism while still defending progress and economic growth as solutions to the problems faced in the Third World. Gudynas (2013) mentions the government of Luís Inácio

Lula da Silva in Brazil, as an example of "neoextractivism". This movement, he says, perpetuates "the appropriation of Nature on a massive scale, the enclave economies and subordinated involvement in global markets", substituting the transnational corporations by the state as the main actor "either through national enterprises or through higher taxes and royalties; and they present the collection of this revenue as an essential means to finance their social welfare and poverty reduction plans" (Gudynas, 2013., p. 25). Looking from where we stand now, in 2023, development's funeral seems like it has been frustrated with an undeniable resurrection that made it a shapeshifting entity – we can think of the MDGs and the SDGs as great examples of that quality.

Development's persistence and strength can perhaps be attributed to the fact that it carries a certain "politics of truth" directed related to the problem investigated by the thesis, i.e., the mismatch between the experts and non-experts in this field. The experts, says Arturo Escobar (1999), were allowed the authority to "classify problems and formulate policies, to pass judgements on entire social groups and forecast their future – to produce, in short, a regime of truth and norms about them". This mismatch has been artificially produced through a process of "professionalization" that encompassed a "set of techniques, strategies, and disciplinary practices that organize the generation, validation, and diffusion of development knowledge" (Escobar, 1999, p. 385).

This professionalization took away the relevance of "political and cultural" problems affecting these underdeveloped societies. Development was something to be achieved with traditional, objectivist, cartesian science only. This movement has been coronated by two events. First, the boom on the creation of "development studies programs in most major universities in the developed world" and the "creation of an institutional field from which discourses are produced, recorded, stabilized, modified, and put into circulation". Both emphasizing the idea that development was a quality, a state and a knowledge system to be transferred from North to South (Escobar, 1999, p. 385). As it is argued by Jane L. Parpart (xxx), the professionalization of the field stands on the "premise that these experts, with their special knowledge of the modern, especially the technical world, are particularly well placed to solve the problems of the developing world" (Escobar, 1999, p. 221) Writing in 1999, Escobar argues that

> [...] after four decades of this discourse, most forms of understanding and representing the third world are still dictated by the same basic tenets. The forms of power that have appeared act not so much by repression but by normalization; not by ignorance, but by controlled knowledge; not by humanitarian concern but by the bureaucratization of social action (Escobar, 1999, p. 386).

Very much influenced by post-structuralism, Escobar (1997) frequently defends that language and discourse should not be seen as reflections of "social reality, but as constitutive of it". Departing from this assumption, the author questions the idea of development ontologically challenging the premise that development "exist[s] in reality, 'out there', solid and material". His objective is answering questions such as: "What regimes of truth, and what silences, did the language of development bring into being?". This investigation, he defends, intends to "defamiliarize the familiar" (Escobar, 1997, p. 502). In other words, he claims that it is crucial that we face "development as invention, that is, a historically singular experience that was neither natural nor inevitable, but very much product of identifiable historical processes" (Escobar, 1997, p. 503).

Escobar seems to echo the task of the genealogist, as it has been proposed by Michel Foucault, i.e., dismantling the idea of a "primordial truth" in the process of perceiving "not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that [things] have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms" (Foucault, 1980, p. 142). As Foucault says, a genealogy searches for the "details and accidents" going on amidst the beginnings being "scrupulously attentive to their petty malice" (Foucault, 1980, p. 144).

Arturo Escobar's (1997) thoughts enlighten us with the relevance of language analysis as he attests that he looks into language as a means to

> [...] render the language of development unspeakable, to turn the basic constructs of the development discourse – markets, needs, population, participation, environment, planning, and the like – into 'toxic words that experts could not use with such impunity as they have until now (p. 503).

2.2
Decipher me or I'll devour you: Unravelling Developmentspeak

From development's general acceptance as the obvious, natural, undoubtable "raison d'état" (Nandy, 2010, p. 300), came the specialized international

organizations such as the Bretton Woods institutions: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). From these institutions' mission to promote development around the underdeveloped world, came "Developmentspeak". This "peculiar dialect of English" spoken all around the world, says Deborah Eade (2010), dominates the everyday practices of the "major institutions of global governance" with the lead clearly taken by the World Bank, which played a major role in "shaping the lexicon", by "burying outmoded jargon, authorizing new terminology and permissible slippage, and indeed generating a constant supply of must-use terms and catchphrases" (2010, p. viii).

Developmentspeak has served to anchor the field as a whole. According to Sheila Jasanoff (2004),

> [...] [s]olving problems of order frequently takes the form of producing new languages or modifying old ones so as to find words for novel phenomena, give accounts of experiments, persuade skeptical audiences, link knowledges to practice or action, provide reassurances to various publics, and so forth. […] such strategies often involve the appropriation of existing discourses (legal, medical and ethical languages, for example) and their selective retailoring to suit new needs (p. 40-1).

Jasanoff (2004) argues that "scientific language often takes on board the tacit models of nature, society, culture or humanity that are current at any time within a given social order" (Jasanoff, 2004, p. 41). In this sense, Developmentspeak can be considered as a demonstration of development's "tacit understandings" that do not go much farther from the "colonial underpinnings, scientific façade".

Despite being considered the "lingua franca of the International Development Industry" the intriguing point about "Developmentspeak" is that it operates as both a **bridge** and a **barrier**. Since it is "an essential qualification for entry into the Industry" of development (Jasanoff, 2004, p. 41), a password to "funding and influence" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 2), it surely acts as an instrument of connection among the experts, but also does the dirty work of keeping laypeople out of the big, decisive conversations. Such quality of language – more evident in movements claiming language purification – has been discussed by Shapiro (1989) when he says that it can be articulated to create solidarity within certain groups and differences between those groups and others" (Shapiro, 1989, p. 23).

As Buiter (2010) defends, words "can enlighten or obscure" and jargon – the kind of expression or concept which is only known by the specialists – does the

second as "it creates artificial barriers to understanding and participation and thus generates obscurity rents that the insiders can appropriate" (Buiter, 2010, p. 223). In the same spirit, Murray Edelman (1984) says that "[v]acuous languages serve several funcions. "Because it is a special vocabulary, it marks off the insiders from the outsiders and define the former as authoritative and professional. It helps insiders to legitimize social and political biases" (Edelman, 1984, p. 57). In a similar vein, Shapiro (2012) defends that "[t]he language shared by interlocutors is a sedimentation wherein past structures of power and authority articulate themselves through the speakers and auditors" (Shapiro, 2012, p. 24).

Perhaps one of the signs of the exclusory nature of "Developmentspeak" has to do with how much it is based on English and the fact that many of the words used in "Anglo-dominated development discourse" cannot be easily translated to other languages (Cornwall, 2010, p. 4). Andrea Cornwall attests that many of Developmentspeak buzzwords ended up being used in other languages as "loan-words", "their meanings ever more closely associated with the external agencies that make their use in proposals, policies, strategies, and reports compulsory" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 4).

In "Designs for the Pluriverse" (2017), Arturo Escobar argues that "negotiation" and "conflict resolution methodologies" are terrains in which we can easily perceive how Western and modernist languages are usually assumed as more "assertive" and "rational" than indigenous languages. The fact that topics such as "democracy building" and "transitional justice" are negotiated in modernist language, he proposes, "subdue[s] relational visions of peace, dialogue, and life" (p. 100). His analysis leads us to understand a phenomenon that has been perceived by linguists that a language or dialect's "amount of prestige" is profoundly attached to the "power of [its] users" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 1).

His reproduction of a key excerpt written by Ashis Nandy (1987) teaches us a lot about the intricacies of Developmentspeak:

> There is a pecking order of cultures in our times which involves every dialogue of cultures, visions and faiths and which tries to force the dialogue to serve the needs of the modern West and its extensions within the non-West. Under every dialogue of visions lies a hidden dialogue of unequals … A culture with a developed, assertive language of dialogue often dominates the process of dialogue and uses the dialogue to cannibalize the culture with a low-key, muted, softer language of dialogue. The encounter then predictably yields a discourse which reduces the second culture to a special case-an earlier stage or

simplified vision-of the culture with the assertive language of dialogue (Nandy, 1987, *apud* Escobar, 2017, p. 100).

It is imperative to acknowledge that Developmentspeak sets the ground on which conversations take place and by doing so it is more than a vocabulary, it operates as a knowledge system. James Ferguson talks of a "dev-speak" – an expression he borrows from Williams (1985) –, which "typically involves not only special terms, but a distinctive style of reasoning". From his perspective, "it is not only 'dev-speak' that is at issue, but "dev-think" as well (Ferguson, 1994, p. 259). Analyzing Developmentspeak, one is not only analyzing a dialect, but a system of thought.

The term *something-speak* is usually applied to refer to *niche languages*, sort of dialects that encompass and reinforce the main ideas shared by individuals of a said community. Generally used by linguists, *something-speak* is inspired by "Newspeak", the "radically revised version of the English language" presented by George Orwell in the fiction Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949). Attached to a political regime, Newspeak's purpose "was not only to provide a medium of expression for the worldview and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible" (Orwell *apud* Jones and Stilwell Peccei, 1999, p. 39).

An emblematic example of real life *something-speak* is "Nukespeak". In "Language, Society and Power" (1999), Ishtla Singh comments on scholar Carol Cohn's immersion in the North American nuclear industry. Her main conclusion was that Nukespeak "reflected and reinforced a particular perspective; namely that nuclear weapons are safe". By adhering to Nukespeak, people tended to demonstrate their perception of a "positive reality about nuclear power, as natural and as obvious to them as is the horror-filled alternative to many of the rest of us" (Singh, 1999, p. 27). Singh's reflections denote how ideology ("the taken for granted assumptions, beliefs and value-systems which are shared by social groups") is the blood running through Nukespeak's veins (Simpson *apud* Singh, 1999, p. 27). Cohn's (2006) observation of Nukespeak was a means to understand "the role of gender" in the shaping of North American "national security paradigms, policies and practices" (Singh, 1999, p. 91). Language, she believes, can be explored as a tool to comprehend "how and what people think" (Singh, 1999, p. 103).

According to Singh, Cohn perceived that this technostrategic language of Nukespeak depended heavily on "abstraction and euphemism" – something we will also be able to identify in developmentspeak. That is quite clear in the decision to call "nuclear devices" as "clean bombs" or the "resultant human corpses" as "collateral damage", for example (Singh, 1999, p. 28). Accordingly, she tells us that

> [...] clean bombs are employed in surgically clean strikes where an opponent's weapons or command centers can be taken out, meaning that they are accurately destroyed without significant damage to anything else. As Cohn (ibid.: 2) states, 'the image is unspeakably ludicrous when the surgical tool is not a delicately controlled scalpel but a nuclear warhead' (Singh, 1999, p. 28).

Maybe the most important aspect of Nukespeak is this sort of "sanitization" that extracts any human element (at least) from the (official) discourse. In this dialect, nuclear bombs can be envisioned as objective, efficient, and precise. They are never characterized in terms that allude to violence, mortality, or destruction. Cohn's methodologic decisions allowed her to reintroduce in the conversation what had been scratched out. She made use of feminist methodologies combining "cultural analysis and qualitative, ethnographic methods" (Singh, 1999, p. 92) – her research even features a chapter of its own in Ackerly, Stern and True's "Feminist Methodologies for International Relations" (Cohn, 2006). Cohn reinserted the human aspect by taking advantage of something usually discarded in academic research: feelings. She tells how the presence and absence of feelings in the speeches of those being observed as well as her own were important in guiding her "attention to issues that merit further analytic curiosity" (Cohn, 2006, p. 106). Differently from traditional scientists, feminists "tend to believe that emotion and intellect are mutually constitutive and sustaining rather than oppositional forces in the construction of knowledge" (Tickner, 2006, p. 29).This acknowledgement of the relevance of feelings in discourse comes from the researcher's understanding that "technostrategic discourse rests on the radical separation of thought from feeling, on the assumed necessity of excluding emotions from rational thought" (Tickner, 2006, p. 107).

> Noticing, and thinking about, feelings has consistently pushed my thinking further – and not only in learning about techno-strategic discourse. The fact that I have liked, and in a variety of ways respected, so many people whose choices and actions I not only "disagree" with but am sometimes enraged by and despairing about, has consistently led

me to realize the limits of my understandings, and that I had to go further (Tickner, 2006, p. 107).

Cohn has also felt that her own perceptions have been affected by her learning of Nukespeak. She clarifies it by saying that: "I had not only learned to speak a language; I had started to think in it. Its questions became my questions, its concepts shaped my responses to new ideas" (Cohn, 1987, *apud* Singh, 1999, p. 29). Cohn's impressions echo the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis discussed in the introduction, i.e., the hypothesis that "the particular language one speaks influences the way one thinks about reality" (Lucy, 2001). Cohn's conclusion fosters a relevant question that must be weaved throughout this thesis: Once someone learn this dialect and enter the conversation, can they not escape the field's logic? If not, what are the consequences of this phenomenon? And how does it affect the way we think and do development?

"The words we use", say Naomi Alfini and Robert Chambers (2010), "frame our perceptions and thoughts, and affect our mind-sets, ways of ordering our world, and actions". The same happens with Developmentspeak. "[T]hrough use and repetition" of buzzwords, it influences both policies and practice in development" (p. 30). Cornwall (2010) defends that Developmentspeak "defines worlds-in-the-making, animating and justifying intervention in currently existing worlds with fulsome promises of the possible" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 1).

> As words change, the world changes. This ancient conceit turns on the power of words to make worlds, but the world, we know, also has the power to change words. Words are always in motion, and as they move across space and time, they inscribe the arcs of our past and present (Gluck, 2011, p. 14).

According to Pierre Bourdieu (1991), "grammar defines meaning only very partially: it is in the relation to a market that the complete determination of the signification of discourse occurs. The objective meaning of discourse, he argues, is not automatically given by the lexicon, but also by the "the relationship that speaker establish, consciously and unconsciously, between the linguistic product offered by a socially characterized speaker, and the other products offered simultaneously in a determinate social space (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 38).

In Developmentspeak, words are used as pawns on a game of hide-and-seek. This niche language is recognized by its "elasticity". It can be "simultaneously descriptive and normative, concrete and yet aspirational, intuitive and clunkily

pedestrian, capable of expressing the most deeply held convictions or of being simply 'full of sound and fury, signifying nothing'" (Eade, 2010, p. ix).

Perhaps this problem emerges from the fact that the "buzzwords" of development are frequently contested ones as they are "terms that combine general agreement on the abstract notion that they represent with endless disagreement about what they might mean in practice" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 2). Some words are problematic because they "admit no negatives" as "rights-based", "poverty eradication" and "good governance" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 2). Everyone would probably agree that we should not pursue bad governance. The issue is how we characterize good and bad governance, but that goes almost unproblematized. In some cases, good governance is exclusively identified as a combination of neoliberal policies – that will be discussed very soon. Other words or expressions abuse a scientific aspect being "barely intelligible to those beyond its borders" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 2) as in the case of "moral hazard" (Standing, 2010, p. 60).

The alleged neutrality is also frequently questioned. Even though development is populated with terms that "appear to rise 'above' ideology" they indeed carry "ideological projects and positions" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 10) that did not remain restricted to Truman's era. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adopted by the member states of the United Nations (UN) in 2000, have not been spared of similar criticism. As said by Pablo Alejandro Leal (2010), the MDGs declaration "is peppered with buzzwords such as 'sustainability', 'participation', 'empowerment', 'equality', and 'democracy', but it makes no reference to what might be the forces that produce and perpetuate poverty", e.g., colonial exploitation (Cornwall, 2010, p. 94). In this perspective, "poverty, inequity, and marginalization" are conceived as the natural results "of a lack of application of technology, capital, and knowledge combined successfully through appropriate policy and planning mechanisms, leading to pertinent reforms of institutional structures" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 95).

The practice of smoothing down the effects of colonialism is not new to the field. It can also be observed in James Ferguson's analysis of a 1975 World Bank report on Lesotho whose "low stage of social and economic development" is imputed to a certain naivety of the British Empire as it *unfortunately*

> [...] did not attempt to introduce any development, expecting that the country would eventually be incorporated into South Africa and

assuming that it would be more or less automatically developed as an indirect result of the strong expansionary forces in South Africa" (World Bank *apud* Ferguson, 1994, p. 31).

The report also blames the concerning state of the country on the fact that "it was then virtually untouched by modern economic development" (World Bank *apud* Ferguson, 1994, p. 31), an assumption that "seems to be almost the exact reverse of the truth, unless the meanings of words are stretched in extraordinarily and mystifying ways" (Cobbe *apud* Ferguson, 1994, p. 34).

Like the case of neutrality, ambiguity is also seen as fuel to "the preservation of the *status quo*" as it is hard to contest something that is not really delimitated (Leal, 2010, p. 94). As said by Andrea Cornwall, ambiguity is key to avoid contestation and secure "the endorsement of diverse potential actors and audiences" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 5). A particularly important example of ambiguity is the case of participation – thoroughly explored in Chapter 4. Considered a type of "buzzword", participation is freely used in development projects in ways that misrepresent its liberatory origins. Perhaps the hardest critique is built on the perception that participation is actually managed as a tool to suppress opposition. By saving a space for participation, development programs both give civil society the illusion of agency and set the limits of its interference. This means that participation do not need to be feared because the rules under which it takes place are, since the beginning, designed to constrain possible deviations. Participation in development programs, says Leal, assumes a "modified, sanitized and depoliticized" form, "[o]nce purged of all the threatening elements, participation could be re-engineered as an instrument that could play a role *within* the *status quo*, rather than one that defied it. (Cornwall, 2010, p. 95) [emphases in the original].

2.3
Decoding developmentspeak one concept at a time

In this section, I present a summary of the concepts explored by the authors of "The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power" (1992) and "Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords" (2010) from development to science, from NGOs to civil society, from population to sustainability. The relevance of these seminal books lies on the fact that they have

inaugurated a discussion specifically located in the intersection of language and development. Adding to this discussion, this section has the objective of organizing a repository of the most central concepts articulated in the field of development and the critiques that have been directed to them. In sum, this movement allows us to unveil the politics going on underneath the surface of what one could consider as mere words. The work done by these scholars shed a crucial light on hidden meanings, euphemisms, inversions, ruptures and kidnappings taking place in the field. On that matter, I invite the reader to recognize that these analyses explore what these concepts produce, the effect they provoke when evoked in the context of development agendas and projects. These walks through the concepts make clear the plasticity of language and provide us with a rich theoretical framework to pursue a similar analysis of the language in the 2030 Agenda. I deliberately omitted the analyses of participation as this concept will be profoundly explored in chapter 4.

2.3.1
The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power

Organized by Wolfgang Sachs, *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power* came to life in 1992 reuniting authors interested in reviewing "key concepts of the development discourse" (Sachs, 2010, p. vi) from a decolonial and post-developmentalist perspective. In his preface to the second edition, published in 2010, Sachs tells us how he and the other scholars involved in the project were still "blissfully ignorant" of how the fall of the Berlin wall had given development "a new lease of life" (Sachs, 2010, p. vii) – which seems a sort of *mea culpa* since Sachs himself has said in the original edition's introduction that it was time to write development's obituary (Sachs, 2010, p.xv). Differently from their expectations at that time, the event "opened the floodgates for transnational market forces to reach the remotest corners of the globe" and "as the era of globalization came into being, hopes of increased wealth were unleashed everywhere, providing fresh oxygen for the flagging development creed" (Sachs, 2010, p. vii).

According to Sachs, the book's main goal was calling attention to the need to contest development as "a habit of thought". In that sense, the project considered that development did not have an impact only on "politics and economics" but also

on minds. "Just as domestic furniture carries the imprint of its age", says Sachs, "mental furniture is also marked by the date of its formation". Development, thus, is a result of "the post-war era of fossil-fuel-based triumphalism, undergirded by colonial perceptions and the legacy of Western rationalism". The writers defend the need to make a "conscious effort" to clean the mind "from development certainties" (Sachs, 2010, p. xii). They do that by tackling the field's main concepts. The concepts examined by the authors are: Development, Environment, Equality, Helping, Market, Needs, One World, Participation, Planning, Population, Poverty, Production, Progress, Resources, Science, Socialism, Standard of living, State and Technology. Even though each one of these analyses deserve an attentive reading, in the name of efficiency, some of them will be sampled below (Development, Environment, Equality and Helping – a choice made merely by their order of appearance in the original book) while the others can be found in Annex I.

2.3.1.1
A walk through the dictionary

Gustavo Esteva discusses *development* in its rawest meaning, i.e., "to escape from the undignified condition called underdevelopment" (Esteva, 2010, p. 2). According to him, development is the cornerstone of an "incredibly powerful semantic constellation". Perhaps the most remarkable thing about development is that the concept is incredibly plastic; it has acquired an incomparable power in the context of modern mentality as it is a "force guiding thought and behavior" at the same time as it is "feeble", "fragile" and even "incapable of giving substance and meaning" to them (Esteva, 2010, p. 3).

Esteva's critique of development intends to question the idea of inevitability that has been attached to it throughout history. Development was initially used to describe "the potentialities of an object or organism" reaching its "natural, complete, full-fledged form" (Esteva, 2020, p. 3). Between the 18th and 19th century, especially fostered by the work of Charles Darwin (1859), development gained a different meaning which is that of achieving "an ever more perfect form" which caused "development" and "evolution" being used as interchangeable terms. "The transfer of the biological metaphor to the social sphere", tells Gustavo Esteva, "occurred in the last quarter of the eighteenth century" (Esteva, 2010, p. 4).

> Both the Hegelian concept of history and the Darwinist concept of evolution were interwoven in development, reinforced with the scientific aura of Marx. When the metaphor returned to the vernacular, it acquired a violent colonizing power, soon employed by the politicians. It converted history into a program: a necessary and inevitable destiny. The industrial mode of production, which was no more than one, among many, forms of social life, became the definition of the terminal stage of a unilinear way of social evolution (Esteva, 2010, p. 4).

According to Esteva, it was in Truman's hands that development "suffered the most dramatic and grotesque metamorphosis of its history" as it was simply reduced to "economic growth"; this was the version of development that made to cut to the United Nations Charter in 1947 (Esteva, 2010, p. 8).

Development's main problematic originates from the fact that it implies this "ineluctable, universal law"; "a favorable change, a step from the simple to the complex, from the inferior to the superior, from worse to better" in a context in which "complex", "superior" and "better" mean Western (Esteva, 2010, p. 6). Sachs (2010) explains this idea quite accurately in the preface when he says that countries "do not aspire to become more 'Indian', more 'Brazilian' or for that matter more 'Islamic'". Searching for development means searching for "industrial modernity" (Sachs, 2010, p. ix).

Similarly to Esteva, Sachs calls attention to the mystical aspect of development: "a perception which models reality", "a myth which comforts societies", "a fantasy which unleashes passions". In his point of view, these perceptions, myths and fantasies "rise and fall independent of empirical results and rational conclusions; they appear and vanish, not because they are proven right or wrong, but rather because they are pregnant with promise or become irrelevant (Sachs, 2010, p. xvi) – an interesting perspective to our investigation of the steadiness of participation and the dramatic emergence of data in developmentspeak.

Esteva's (2010) point of view is that "development" is deeply attached to ideals of "growth, evolution, maturation" and that scholars' insistence in using the term demonstrates some kind of "blindness to their language, thought and action" (p. 6).

> When Nyerere proposed that development be the political mobilization of a people for attaining their own objectives, conscious as he was that it was madness to pursue the goals that others had set; when Rodolfo

> Stavenhagen proposes today ethnodevelopment or development with self-confidence, conscious that we need to 'look within' and 'search for one's own culture' instead of using borrowed and foreign views; when Jimoh Omo-Fadaka suggests a development from the bottom up, conscious that all strategies based on a top-down design have failed to reach their explicitly stated objectives; when Orlando Fals Borda and Anisur Rahman insist on participatory development, conscious of the exclusions made in the name of development; when Jun Nishikawa proposes an 'other' development for Japan, conscious that the current era is ending; when they and so many others qualify development and use the word with caveats and restrictions as if they were walking in a minefield, they do not seem to see the counterproductivity of their efforts. The minefield has already exploded (Esteva, 2010, p. 2-3).

Esteva's central plea is that humanity should "recover a sense of reality" that has been lost in the establishment of this "conservative, if not reactionary, myth" of development (Esteva, 2020, p. 21).

Wolfgang Sachs (2010) talks about the problems with the concept of **environment** by saying that just as with the "development", the meaning of "environment" "depends on how the rich nations feel" (Sachs, 2020, p. 25). Sachs demonstrates that by pointing out the turning point lead by the Our Common Future Report produced in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, which is more commonly known as the Brundtland Report. According to him, before that, environmental degradation was considered a problem of the "industrial man", a lifestyle poor people could only aspire achieve. The report inserted a new logic in development's imaginary that has been clearly demonstrated on a section called "Reviving Growth":

> Poverty reduces people's capacity to, use resources in a sustainable manner; it intensifies pressure on the environment. Most such absolute poverty is in developing countries; in many, it has been aggravated by the economic stagnation of the 1980s. A necessary but not a sufficient condition for the elimination of absolute poverty is a relatively rapid rise in per capita incomes in the Third World. It is therefore essential that the stagnant or declining growth trends of this decade be reversed (WECD, 1987, p. 60).

The Brundtland Report, says Sachs, has cleared the way "for the marriage between 'environment' and 'development': the newcomer could be welcomed to the old-established" family (WECD, 1987, p. 28). This combination persists and even gets stronger everyday. One demonstration of that is the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

C. Douglas Lummis explores *equality* by observing that the concept has been embedded in the context of development as a synonym to the ideas of "catching up"

and "narrowing the gap". This meaning has been explicitly presented in the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), adopted in 1974 by the United Nations which propose to combat "existing injustices" by ensuring the acceleration of "economic development" (Lummis, 2010, p. 45).

Even though equality has been presented as one of its most important promises, development practices have resulted in "devastating inequality". Analyzing the statistics produced by the World Bank, Lummis says that "these figures should help us avoid being unnecessarily surprised when we hear that, after all the efforts that have gone into 'development', the gap between the rich and poor countries continues to widen at an accelerating pace" (Lummis, 2010, p. 47). In conclusion, he says that "the world economic system" not only "generates inequality", "it runs on inequality" (Lummis, 2010, p. 48).

Marianne Gronemeyer (2010) analyzes **helping** observing that as innocent as it may appear, this practice has been used as an instrument of "elegant power", that is, "unrecognizable, concealed, supremely inconspicuous" (Gronemeyer, 2020, p. 55). In the field of development, Gronemeyer asserts, help leaves behind its unconditional component, present in the stories such as "the good Samaritan" to become "frankly calculating". In this sense, helpers are not really moved "by a concerned consideration for the other's need", but actually by the possibility of their own advantage (Gronemeyer, 2010, p. 56).

The colonial roots of the concept are undeniable. Gronemeyer reminds us of the atrocities committed by the "conquistadors" against the native peoples of the Americas and how they propelled Pope Paul III to recognize them as human beings assuming, thus, the duty of the Catholic Church "to Christianize them". The words of a Franciscan missionary recalled by the author exemplify the spirit of the assignment: "the missionary must regard himself as a doctor, and the alien culture as a kind of disease that has to be cured" (Gronemeyer, 2010, p. 59).

Throughout History, helping has been articulated as a tactic of control, "[w]hoever desires help is 'voluntarily' made subject to the watchful gaze of the helper" (p. 56). President Truman's Inauguration Address brings this idea to the forefront as it proclaims the need to help the underdeveloped world as a strategy to keep the United States' own national security and prosperity (p. 66).

2.3.2
Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords

Organized by Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade, *Deconstructing Development Discourse: Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* was published in 2010 reuniting several "scholars, activists, and aid workers" who claim to be "fluent" in Developmentspeak while not being unaware of its effects. The book's main purpose is reflecting on how "buzzwords serve to numb the critical faculties of those who end up using them, wrapping all manner of barbed policies and practices in linguistic cotton wool" (Eade, 2010, p. ix). The book nods directly to *The Dictionary of Development* (1992), which it considers a "landmark publication" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 1). However, differently from *Dictionary*, which takes the responsibility to demolish the final ruins of development by writing its "obituary", "Buzzwords and Fuzzwords" searches for a more balanced perspective by being "deliberately eclectic in its range of voices" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 1).

Cornwall calls attention to how things can change very fast in the field and illustrates this with the fact that "there is so little overlap between the words" featured in both books (Cornwall, 2010, p. 4).

> But many of the entries in The Development Dictionary appear in today's development discourse in new guises: state as fragile states (Osague) and good governance (Mkandawire); environment as sustainability (Scoones); planning (development institutions' preoccupation of that age) as harmonization (Eyben) (their preoccupation in this one). Equality is as much of a concern as ever, but has come to be used in development more often with gender (Smyth) in front of it. Capacity building (Eade) transforms helping into a technical fix, generating its own entourage of 'experts'. International NGOs have made much of a shift from needs to rights (Uvin). And progress continues to be regularly invoked, even as the hopes once associated with it quietly slip away (Cornwall, 2010, p. 4).

According to Deborah Eade, developmentspeak plays a constraining and a building role: it simultaneously restricts "the boundaries of thought" and shapes "policy and practice" (Eade, 2010, p. ix). Observing developmentspeak, says Cornwall, allows us to do more than just "playing games with words". It also evokes "bigger questions about the world-making projects that they define and describe (Eade, 2010, p. 16).

The concepts examined by the authors are: Accountability, Advocacy, Best practices, Capacity building, Citizenship, Civil Society, Corruption, Country

ownership, Development, Empowerment, Faith (faith-based), Fragile States, Gender, Globalization, Good governance, Harmonization, Human Rights, Knowledge, Language, NGOs, Participation, Partnership, Peacebuilding, Poverty Reduction, Right to development, Secularism, Security, Social capital, Social change, Social protection, Sustainability, Technology and Transparency. Just as argued in the case of *Dictionary*, even though each one of these analyses deserve an attentive reading, in the name of efficiency, some of them will be sampled below (Development, Poverty reduction, Social Protection and Globalization) while the others can be found in Annex I.

2.3.2.1
A walk through the Buzzwords and Fuzzwords

Gilbert Rist reflects about *development* as an idea that promoted a substantial transformation of a dichotomy into a progression. According to Rist, it was first used in President Truman's inaugural address with the objective to sound "original". The word choice was made in a such a nonchalant manner that "when the idea was first aired in international circles, no one – not even the US President – really knew what 'development' was all about" (Rist, 2010, p. 19). Nevertheless, development became a big hit relocating the dichotomic relationship between colonizers and colonized to a progressive path in which "time", "money" and "political will" would be enough "to fill the gap" between them. Two main aspects made the concept powerful: first, "no one cared to define it properly"; second, it was taken not as a social construct, but "the consequence of a natural world order" (Rist, 2010, p. 20).

Development, then, was empowered by Cold War, when even though "the Great Powers disagreed on almost all issues" they were both promoters of the idea of development. As says Rist, development was "the magic word that reconciled opposite sides" serving both the purpose of improving the lives of poor people but also of attracting "developing countries to side with one camp or the other" (Rist, 2010, p. 20).

When a "development fatigue" was installed after some failures, the concept was revamped with several adjectives such as "endogenous, human, social" and,

according to the author, the most problematic of them all: sustainable. "Sustainable development", says Rist, "is nothing but an oxymoron, a rhetorical figure that joins together two opposites such as 'capitalism with a human face' or 'humanitarian intervention'" (Rist, 2010, p. 21). If we intend to describe development seriously, we must get rid of the general naiveté and look straight at its "actual social practices and their consequences" (Rist, 2010, p. 23), and "expose its mischievous uses" (Rist, 2010, p. 25). In this sense, development could only be considered as "the general transformation and destruction of the natural environment and of social relations in order to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by means of market exchange, to effective demand" (Rist, 2010, p. 23).

John Toye discusses *poverty reduction* as a concept that is hard to defy since it carries this sort of "moral imperative" usually endorsed by NGOs, governments, and international financial institutions. The task of poverty reduction could only come to life with a definition of poverty. According to the author, poverty is thought of "as a kind of generalized lacking, or a state of being without some essential goods and services" (Toye, 2010, p. 45).

> How much consumption can that amount of local currency buy? That will depend on the types of goods that the poor eat, and on their prices. In some countries, the staple of the poor is rice, in others manioc, in others potato. There is no single basket of consumption goods that the poor of all countries consume (Toye, 2010, p. 45).

Just as we have seen in the discussions surrounding the standard of living in *The Development Dictionary*, the description of poverty is very much narrow and particularly measured through calories intake or income – especially the "dollar-a-day" standard that face the problem of poverty as something that could be solved with a homogenizing one-size-fits-all remedy (Toye, 2010, p. 48). Poverty reduction policies often operate as instruments of control. The case of "income transfers" is frequently applied along with the "principle of 'less eligibility", i.e. the notion that conditions there should be such that nobody would choose to enter it if they had ay other option" (Toye, 2010, p. 47).

Guy Standing explores **social protection** as an idea "peculiarly susceptible to the seductiveness of buzzwords and euphemism" (Standing, 2010, p. 53). The major critique offered by the author is that the expression has been acquiring the pacifying meaning of charity, that is opposing to a rights-based approach. Since "poverty and

economic insecurity are reflections of inequality, of income, wealth, power, and status", why isn't social protection working against these? (Standing, 2010, p. 65).

This "paternalistic" point-of-view comes obviously accompanied by an entitlement to decide who is deserving of this kind protection and who is not, a "arbitrary and unfair, and pernicious" decision according to the author. Imbued with a moralistic trait, this perspective incarcerates social protection in the tiniest possible box assuming that some people will remain on poverty or unemployment in order to be supported by the state effortlessly (Standing, 2010, p. 60) living in the reprehensible state of "dependency" (Standing, 2010, p. 62).

Shalmali Guttal believes that *globalization* has been strongly promoted by "the development industry", considering the centrality of "the World Bank, IMF, and regional development banks, who control much of the financing for development, and are instrumental in entrenching globalization as the only development model available to developing countries" (Guttal, 2010, p. 74). Globalization, she says, is not a progressive, but hegemonic process. "Rather, it is the successful expansion on a world scale of particular localisms of social, economic, and political organization, which are neo-liberal and capitalist in character" (Guttal, 2010, p. 76).

Guttal seems to perceive globalization as a synonym to "global capitalism". According to her, the phenomenon has increased inequality as it "has integrated rich, affluent, and educated classes, but has fractured working classes and marginalized the poor, who do not have the skills and economic clout to profit from open markets" (Guttal, 2010, p. 77). In what she sees as a paradox, global capitalism is usually proclaimed as a movement in promotion of "democracy, human rights, and government intervention", a kind of ethical environment in which the forces of globalization could not thrive. In this sense, "corporations need a neo-liberal state and multilateral forums and institutions in order to advance their interests". This formula is sold as "development" (Guttal, 2010, p. 77).

2.4   Consolidating a Developmentspeak Glossary

53

It is important to notice that, even though very carefully made, this brief examination of the concepts defined in "The development Dictionary" (1992) and "Deconstructing Development Discourses" (2010) is not exhaustive for two main reasons. First, because reproducing the extensive analyses that compose these books is just unfeasible. The former is 332 and the latter is 320 pages long for several good reasons and one of them is their rich, deep, and of course exciting expedition around the most cardinal and remote locations of the field of development. Both books are an incredible demonstration of how far one can get departing from language.

Second, because I have chosen to adopt strong objectivity as a methodological path, and accordingly, I consider quite important to admit that the excerpts and the ideas reproduced in here are the results of a selection made from my perspective of what is relevant or not, of what transmits better the spirit of these books and the tone used by these authors in their chapters. My conclusions are that *The Dictionary of Development* is much more enraged while *Deconstructing Development Discourse* is much more balanced. The first one portrays development as a bankrupt enterprise ready to be discarded as the second envisions it as a problematic system that must be debated if we intend to improve it. *Dictionary* presents a much more unified discourse while *Deconstructing* features more variegated opinions. My main decision in bringing excerpts from all of the entries explored in both books, aware that I could not capture all of their nuances, was to expose the consonances and dissonances that run across these works.

The greatest consonance, I argue, is the perception that Developmentspeak is the "spoonful of sugar" that "helps the medicine go down", as Mary Poppins would sing. Each of the chapters in these books presents a different way in which language is stretched, kneaded, and refurbished in order to sweeten the bitter business of development. *Transparency* can be used to promote surveillance (Fox, 2010); *security* can be invoked to justify intervention (Luckham, 2010); *helping* can be applied as a tactic of control (Gronemeyer, 2010); *basic needs* can be articulated to generate a sense of scarcity (Illich, 2010); *science* can be exercised to undermine traditional knowledges (Alvares, 2010); the *right to development* can be claimed to reify the status quo (Uvin, 2010); *good governance* can be used to promote neoliberal policies (Mkandawire, 2010); *gender mainstreaming* can be appropriated as a strategy to depoliticize gender inequality (Smyth, 2010); *social protection* can

be unproblematized in the shape of charity (Standing, 2010); *one world* can be safe-guarded as a means to corrode diversity (Sachs, 2010). The list could go on forever. The dissonances are multiple. Perhaps the most notorious case is that of Buiter (2010), commenting on country ownership, Chandhoke (2010) commenting on civil society, and Jad (2010) commenting on NGOs. Chandhoke and Jad's analyses stress how civil society, especially revamped in the neoliberal skin of the NGO, an artificial movement, has been instrumentalized to handicap developing countries' state, advocating for the ideals and advancing the interests of the big donors, i.e., developed nations. Buiter, in contrast, stress how development programs conducted by IFIs usually favor "unrepresentative and repressive, ranging from mildly authoritarian to brutally totalitarian" states that do not defend the interests of civil society, but actually of corrupt elites (p. 226). It is not possible to say that there is a direct disagreement amongst them as Chandhoke and Jad are probably speaking of democracies while Buiter is clearly speaking of dictatorships. Yet, their critiques locate the state and the civil society in diametrically opposed positions, sometimes they are victims, sometimes they are perpetrators of the injustice of the development industry.

Another notable case is that of Samuel (2010), Leal (2010) and Batlivala (2010). On the one hand, John Samuel (2010) highlights participation and empowerment, especially through people-centered advocacy, as a requirement for social transformation. In this sense, he defends the power of "social-change communication" as a method for a large-scale education that can enable people "to change or redefine their attitudes and values and become more socially responsible and empowered citizens". Leal and Batliwala, on the other hand, are very cynical about participation and empowerment. Pablo Alejandro Leal considers participation as a "radical proposal" that has suffered a brutal depoliticization or, in his words, a "political decapitation" (Leal, 2010, p. 89). Srilatha Batliwala argues that, in development discourse, empowerment has been left bereft of power struggles. Empowerment, she says, used to be "about shifts in political, social, and economic power between and across both individuals and social groups" (Leal, 2010, p. 113), but in the enterprise of development it is about self-help and individual achievements (Leal, 2010, p. 119).

Commenting on participation, Pablo Alejandro Leal also offers an enlightening take on empowerment inspired by Paulo Freire. According to him, participating, that is, sharing the work, does not translate into sharing the power circulating in the field. Empowerment depends directly on the exercise of questioning "the causes of oppression or marginalization", a movement that tends to be suffocated in development.

> Genuine empowerment is about poor people seizing and constructing popular power through their own praxis. It is not handed down from the powerful to the powerless, as institutional development has conveniently chosen to interpret the concept. Those who give power condition it, for, as Paulo Freire (1970) best put it himself: 'Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift' (Leal, 2010, p. 96).

We will return to some of these problematics discussing participation in chapter 4, and citizen-generated data in chapter 5. For now, it is important to acknowledge that while *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing* do a great job in highlighting development incongruencies and inconsistencies, they also carry incongruencies and inconsistencies of their own. This conclusion works as a useful reminder that there are no easy answers when it comes to discussing development and its language. This thesis takes this as an opportunity to revisit and expand developmentspeak considering that "the objective effect of unveiling [the hidden meaning of words] destroys the apparent unity of ordinary language" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 40).

2.5
Conclusions

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the act of sharing a language works as a kind of "true intimacy", an invisible string that holds together not only speakers, but a whole system of thought. Moreover, studies on "language politics" demonstrate that language holds power – it affects how citizens access rights, privileges and opportunities in a given polity. For such, language has for centuries now been articulated as a tool of state-building: uniting equals and excluding outsiders.

Language politics, we can notice, has not remained contained to national official languages. The dynamics operating in language politics flows to niche

languages and dialects. Scholars that have analyzed Developmentspeak, argue that language has been an important instrument for reinforcing biases and assumptions from which the development industry has been built.

Carrying colonial underpinnings and a scientific façade, development and, consequently, Developmentspeak have inherited the ideas of otherness and hierarchy of colonial times, updating the dichotomy of human/savage to modern/traditional and developed/underdeveloped. Developmentspeak has been built, popularized and naturalized by the specialized international organizations such as The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. From the perspective of scholars as Carol Cohn (2006), niche languages are rich archives for investigating the thoughts and behaviors circulating amongst a given group. Understanding the "words make worlds" (Cornwall, 2010), we can consider that Developmentspeak not only operates as demonstrations of the shared rationality in the field. It also has a self-reinforcing aspect. As such, it also authorize the system of thought it intends to represent.

From the analyses of post-development scholars, we can perceive that Developmentspeak has frequently served as a spoonful of sugar that helped the bitter medicine of development go down, i.e., it has been used to shape development in a more palatable way, hiding or smoothing down problematic aspects through depoliticization, euphemism, ambiguity, and neutrality. These perceptions are very much explored in "*The Dictionary of Development*" (1992) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010). Even though both works reunite a collection of observations of the pervasive results of Developmentspeak, they assume different tones. While *The Dictionary of Development* (1992) has a blunt perception of development as a failed enterprise, *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010) builds a more balanced impression of development and counts on a more variegated range of contributions. The analyses proposed by these scholars hold convergences and divergences that demonstrate that there are no easy answers when it comes to development, which leaves us with questions such as "civil society is a problem or a solution?" In a certain way, these scholars' observations might be more useful in their diversity and incongruencies, than in their accordance. Perhaps, their greatest demonstration offered by them is the fact that development fails exactly in its pretension to be straightforward, accurate, unquestionable. Hence, looking for a definitive answer would mimic what they so hard try to avoid.

As mentioned before, the analyses of *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing* imbue us with a theoretical framework for examining the 2030 Agenda. In chapter 3, we depart from this repository explored in chapter 2 to understand what have remained and what have faded away in the field in the middle of the SDGs era. Accordingly, the works of *Dictionary* and "Deconstruction" give us a ballast to analyze the language circulating in the SDGs. In return, the 2030 Agenda serves as one more sampling universe for expanding the discussions of Developmentspeak.

3
Counting Words: a Quantitative Analysis of Developmentspeak

Naomi Alfini and Robert Chambers have a very interesting chapter in *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010). As we can see from the title, "Words count: taking a count of the changing language of British aid", their work calls attention not for exploring a specific buzzword but for the methodology in it applied. Alfini and Chambers produced "a word analysis of six UK Government White Paper policy statements on aid (selected between 1960 and 2006)" in order to highlight development policy trends that have been going on in the mentioned period. According to the authors, "[t]he prevailing words and expressions in development discourse" change all the time (Alfini; Chambers, 2010, p. 29).

> Some become perennials, long-term survivors year after year, like *poverty*, *gender*, *sustainable*, and *livelihood*. Others have their day and then fade, like *scheme* and *integrated rural development*. Yet others mark major shifts in ideology, policy, and reality, as have *liberalization*, *privatization*, and *globalization* (Alfini; Chambers, 2010, p. 29) [emphases in original].

Alfini and Chambers defend that "studying how the language of development policy has changed can give us a sense of the historical shifts in development thinking and priorities" besides helping us "to reflect on where we are going (or could go) in the future" (Alfini; Chambers, 2010, p. 30). Inspired by their work, this thesis applies a similar method with the intention to identify which of the concepts discussed in *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing* are still survivors and which have faded away in order to understand the effects of the establishment of datafication as the cornerstone of development in the 21st century. For such task, I decided to conduct a similar analysis in a corpus composed by official documents of the 2030 Agenda. In this sense, the reports are taken as representatives of what can be considered the most extensive, ambitious and encompassing development project of the 21st century: the 2030 Agenda. This is a movement to revisit Developmentspeak.

Additionally, I have also decided to identify what can be considered the biggest novelty in Developmentspeak, a concept or idea that shows vividly in the contemporary official documents that had not been captured in the discussions

promoted in *Dictionary* and "Deconstruction". This is a movement to expand developmentspeak.

Besides a qualitative analysis, this research also makes use of word count as a method for unraveling meanings and patterns going on in the language of development. Proposing quantitative methods for the analysis of qualitative data, Nancy L. Leech and Anthony Onwuegbuzie (2008) defend that the "basic assumption" of the word count method is that "the more frequently a word is used, the more important the word is" for the speaker or writer. They build from the work of Miles and Huberman (1994) to identify the three main reasons for word count as a research method: (a) to identify patterns more easily, (b) to verify a hypothesis, and (c) to maintain analytic integrity (Miles; Huberman, 1994, p. 594).

> Proponents of word count procedures contend that it is more precise— and thus more meaningful—for qualitative researchers to specify the exact count rather than using terms such as "many," "most," "frequently," "several," "always," and "never," which are essentially quantitative (cf. Sechrest & Sidani, 1995) (Miles; Huberman, 1994).

Valeria Esquivel (2006) has conducted a feminist analysis of the concept of empowerment in the 2030 Agenda's inaugural document. One of her methods of choice was word count. She searched for the word "power", which returned one single strike that features in the following sentence: "at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development… There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power" (2015, para. 14). According to Esquivel, this perspective takes power "as a given" and not the product of social relations in which some "actors, policies and practices" (and even a "particular rationality") are clearly privileged over others (Esquivel, 2006, p. 12). The author defends that the Agenda combines progressive gender equality targets with targets on women's economic empowerment which limit themselves to addressing liberal concerns in the existing profoundly unequal global economy" (Esquivel, 2006, p. 19).

The timid apparition of "power" in the document denotes that the idea of empowerment is articulated in the Agenda in a highly apolitical way or, as she summarizes, it evokes "empowerment without power" (Esquivel, 2006, p. 14). Examining SDG 5, "Gender Equality", she finds other demonstrations of that. Target 5.5, which seeks to "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life", measures that through indicators 5.5.1, "Proportion of

seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments", and 5.5.2, "Proportion of women in managerial positions". Esquivel argues that the target and its indicators equate "women's political empowerment" with "sitting women at the table", which is not even remotely sufficient for addressing gender inequality.

> Political participation is notorious for the obstacles presented to women from non-elite groups; and class inequality forms a very significant barrier for women in poverty and favors women politicians rather than women's movements. In contrast, women's participation in the economic and public realms does provide a broader focus on the participation of women from "civil society". Though the reasons for Target 5.5's wording might well be understood as deriving from the difficulties of measuring women's mobilization, there is a clear problem with this target which may mean it will prove to be empty rhetoric. Women's full and effective participation and leadership is not only dependent on women's own effort and interest in coming to the national and international negotiating tables and having equal opportunities to men to participate [...] but also on access to the resources that act as preconditions for participation (money, time, confidence, and education among them), and on the existence of concrete mechanisms for promoting women's participation (Goetz and Jenkins 2016a, and their article in this issue) (Esquivel, 2006, p. 15).

In this thesis as well, the use of distant reading has been applied with the purpose of examining the language of development from surface to depth. In this sense, we depart from word count as a method that allows is to face a big textual collection and move on with close reading in order to reach more profound meanings and understandings. Besides being inspired by the analytical possibility presented by Esquivel (2006) – of unraveling signs of power struggles through word count –, my decision for using a quantitative method to investigate a knowledge field usually criticized for being hyper-quantified or data-intensive came also from the curiosity of playing with these tools, getting a feeling of it, testing how numbers, more "economical and manipulable than words" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 253), can be useful for examining the language of development and, consequently, its system of thought. In this spirit, the quantitative steps adopted in this research are not only important in their generation of insights, but in their open demonstration of how allegedly objective methods are embedded in subjectivities. If data are cooked, the distant reading analysis in this thesis is a walk around the kitchen.

It required several steps. Each of them is described below.

3.1
The Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary

3.1.1 Step 1. Consolidating a Developmentspeak Glossary.

The table below comprises all the concepts discussed in *The Dictionary of Development* (1992) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010) alphabetically organized – as discussed in the previous section. Repetitions appear highlighted in bold and blue letters.

#	Concept	Book and First date of publication
1	Accountability	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
2	Advocacy	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
3	Best practices	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
4	Capacity building	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
5	Citizenship	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
6	Civil Society	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
7	Corruption	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
8	Country ownership	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
9	**Development**	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
10	Empowerment	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
11	Environment	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)

12	Equality	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
13	Faith (faith-based)	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
14	Fragile States	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
15	Gender	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
16	Globalization	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
17	Good governance	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
18	Harmonization	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
19	Helping	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
20	Human Rights	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
21	Knowledge	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
22	Language	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
23	Market	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
24	Needs	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
25	NGOs	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
26	One World	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
27	**Participation**	**Both**
28	Partnership	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
29	Peacebuilding	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
30	Planning	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
31	Population	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
32	Poverty	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
33	Poverty reduction	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)

34	Production	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
35	Progress	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
36	Resources	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
37	Right to development	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
38	Science	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
39	Secularism	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
40	Security	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
41	Social capital	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
42	Social change	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
43	Social protection	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
44	Socialism	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
45	Standard of living	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
46	State	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
47	Sustainability	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)
48	Technology	*The Development Dictionary – A Guide to Knowledge as Power* (1992)
49	Transparency	*Deconstructing Development Discourse – Buzzwords and Fuzzwords* (2010)

Table 2 - Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary.

This step helps us to conclude that (i) the consolidated glossary of Developmentspeak – built from "The Development Dictionary" and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* counts 49 words or expressions; and, (ii) that the words "development" and "participation" are the only repetitions, which mean that they were considered relevant enough by the editors of *Deconstructing Development Discourse* to be re-analyzed in 2010. Development seems a much more intuitive choice since it is the umbrella expression that encompasses all the discussions happening in the field of, of course, development. The repetition of participation seems to me much more intriguing than that of development.

3.2
The 2030 Agenda Corpus

3.2.1
Step 2. Constructing a 2020 Agenda Corpus.

According to the University of Queensland's Library webpage, a corpus is "a large and unstructured set of texts" normally used by scholars "to do statistical analysis and hypothesis testing, checking occurrences or validating linguistic rules within a specific language territory". An example of corpus is the Acquis Communautaire, which encompasses all of the "European Union (EU) law applicable in the EU Member States, and currently comprises selected texts written between the 1950s and now" [5].

Anatol Stefanowisch (2020) has written what seems to be the most comprehensive book on corpus linguistics and explains that "the term corpus has slightly different meanings in different academic disciplines". According to him,

> [...] [i]t generally refers to a collection of texts; in literature studies, this collection may consist of the works of a particular author (e.g. all plays by William Shakespeare) or a particular genre and period (e.g. all 18th century novels); in theology, it may be (a particular translation of) the Bible. In field linguistics, it refers to any collection of data (whether narrative texts or individual sentences) elicited for the purpose of linguistic research, frequently with a particular research question in mind (Stefanowitsch, 2020, p. 22).

Accordingly, in this research, the corpus being analyzed is a collection of official documents chosen as representatives of the discourse circulating in the 2030 Agenda with the purpose of unraveling what has remained and what has changed in Developmentspeak since 1992 and what it can tell us about the industry of development.

Even though large, a corpus cannot be understood as a *totality*, but as a *selection* of textual content about a certain topic made under some pre-defined criteria. Corpus data "are necessarily incomplete, both in a quantitative sense (since every corpus is finite in size) and in a qualitative sense (since even the most

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[5] University of Queensland's Library Website [https://guides.library.uq.edu.au/research-techniques/text-mining-analysis/language-corpora].

carefully constructed corpus is skewed with respect to the language varieties it contains)" (Stefanowitsch, 2020, p. 11-2).

> First, just like a corpus, the linguistic experience of a speaker is finite and any mental generalizations based on this experience will be partial in the same way that generalizations based on corpus data must be partial (although it must be admitted that the linguistic experience a native speaker gathers over a lifetime exceeds even a large corpus […]). Second, just like a corpus, a speaker's linguistic experience is limited to certain language varieties: most English speakers have never been to confession or planned an illegal activity, for example, which means they will lack knowledge of certain linguistic structures typical of these situations (Stefanowitsch, 2020, p. 12).

In this sense, this kind of methodological choice does not imply the possibility of ultimate conclusions about language or its use. As an approach that assumes its own limits, corpus analysis echoes the values cherished by feminist methodologies – discussed in this thesis' introduction – and their deep commitment with the task of "acknowledging the subjective element in one's analysis, which exists in all social science research" as a strategy that "actually increases the objectivity of the research" (Tickner, 2006, p. 27).

Accordingly, in this research, the analysis of the current shape of Developmentspeak will be conducted using a corpus created by the amalgamation of two groups categories of official documents of the 2030 Agenda:

(a) its inauguration document, the report entitled "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2015). Considered the "plan of action for people, planet and prosperity", the document encompasses all the ambitions and expectations surrounding the adoption of the SDGs. It was selected to integrate the corpus as a representative of the atmosphere of the project. It is of utmost importance to understand aspects such as the commitment to "leave no one behind", the belief that it is possible to pursue a delicate balance between social, economic and environmental dimensions, and the messianic promise to "free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet" (United Nations, 2015).

(b) the *Annual Sustainable Development Goals Reports from 2016 to 2022*. They are "the only UN official report that monitors global progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), these

reports can be considered the official barometer of the 2030 Agenda. They reunite data produced by the "UN Statistical System, consisting of more than 50 international and regional agencies, based on data from over 200 countries and territories"[6]. The reports were selected to integrate the corpus as representatives of the Agenda's evolution throughout the years. Since this corpus was created and analyzed between 2021 and 2022, the 2023 Annual Report is not part of it right now, but might be later incorporated in subsequent research projects. This research has the potential to grow and become more complex until 2030, when the Agenda will be finally concluded.

Stefanowitsch (2020) argues that a "representative sample is a subset of a population that is identical to the population as a whole with respect to the distribution of the phenomenon under investigation" (p. 28). Accordingly, the corpus counts on one document for each year of the 2030 Agenda's existence, covering from 2015 to 2022 in a homogeneous distribution. In this sense, the corpus created and used in this research respects the three properties proposed by the author: "the instances of language use contained in it are authentic"; "the collection is representative of the language or language variety under investigation"; and "the collection is large" (Stefanowitsch, 2020, p. 22-3).

The corpus has been created through the consolidation of all the mentioned reports (in PDF format) in a zipped folder. Each document was numbered as to allow a chronological analysis once uploaded in the distant reading software. The Annual SDGs reports were numbered according to their year of publication (2016-2022). Since the "Transforming Our World" inauguration document has a different nature from that of the reports, I decided to number it "0000". They were titled as follows:

- 0000_Transforming Our World Agenda 2030 (2015)

- 2016_The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2016)

- 2017_The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2017)

- 2018_ The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2018)

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[6] The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 [https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/].

- 2019_ The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2019)

- 2020_ The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2020)

- 2021_ The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2021)

- 2022_ The Sustainable Development Goals Report (2022)

3.3   Close and distant reading: Mixing qualitative and quantitative methods

3.3.1
Step 3. Uploading and running the 2030 Agenda corpus through Voyant Tools[7]

Voyant Tools is an open-source "web-based text reading and analysis environment". According to their website, Voyant Tools is "a scholarly project that is designed to facilitate reading and interpretive practices for digital humanities students and scholars as well as for the general public".

Voyant Tools is considered "an application in wide use among digital humanities researchers" (Hendrigan, 2019, p. 1). Even though used here mainly for its word count ability, Voyant Tools serves several types of analysis based on links, keywords, collocates (a group of words that are most frequently used together), correlations, topics, frequencies, distributions, trends, word cloud etc. (Alhudithi, 2021). These tools are useful for a "a process which Italian literary theorist Franco Moretti recently coined 'distant reading'" (Hendrigan, 2019, p. 7).

> Since the mid-twentieth century, American literary scholars favored textual analysis via close readings: "the critic should give a detailed, almost microscopic analysis...to find its meaning" (Oberhelman 2015, p 57). Moretti was less interested in individual texts of a particular nation; he was more interested in studying literature on a broader historical and national scale. With world literature, "we are talking of hundreds of languages and literatures here. Reading 'more' seems hardly to be the solution." (Moretti 2013, 45). He argued that text mining digitized for common themes and motifs results in a more quantifiable and less selective literary analysis. Where close reading provides a microscopic view of one text, distant reading facilitates a macroscopic view of the bigger picture (Hendrigan, 2019, p. 7-8).

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[7] Voyant Tools [https://voyant-tools.org/].

According to Jänicke *et al.* (2015), close reading is the traditional "thorough interpretation of a text passage" generally made through "the determination of central themes and the analysis of their development". Close reading implies attention to details and nuances and is usually conducted through annotation. Most importantly, it "retains the ability to read the source text without dissolving its structure". Distant reading "does the exact opposite" by generating "an abstract view" of the material. It shifts the task of reading "from observing textual content to visualizing global features of a single or of multiple text(s)" (Jänicke *et al.*, 2015, p. 83).

Most criticism directed to distant reading, says Ted Underwood (2017) has been fixed on parochial ideas. According to him, "we have spent too much time on inward-looking debates that pit distant against close reading", when we should actually be exploring distant reading's "connections to other disciplines" such as data science (p. 1).From the fact that this thesis holds a great number of literary quotes, I hope the reader to notice that I am not supposing that distant reading is capable of doing what close reading does. In "Where the Crawdads Sing" (2018), a fictional book written by naturalist Delia Owens, Kya, a girl that lives in isolation in the marshes of South Carolina, only learns how to read when she is already a teenager. When facing for the first time a poem that encapsulates an important part of her personality – "there are some who can live without wild things, and some who cannot" – she says "I wasn't aware that words could hold so much. I didn't know a sentence could be so full". That kind of feeling that Kya transmits can certainly not be achieved through distant reading. The nuances, the tones, the richness and complexity, and (risking to sound really tacky) the truths speaking directly to our hearts will not show up in quantitative analysis for sure. Johanna Drucker (2020) explained it clearly:

> But human perception is characterized by infinite variation and a high degree of specificity, alongside a capacity for ambiguity, ambivalence, contradiction, and association. Reading is an act of self- production, subject enunciation, and, as such, is an emergent and shifting process in human cognition (Drucker, 2020, p. 634).

Curiously, what seems to make close reading interesting and complex is exactly the *distance* between text and reader. This distance is what I believe Fairclough (1989) called in "Language and Power" the "relational value of words" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 116).

> Distant reading, when properly understood, is neither mechanistic nor hermeneutic. Its literalness makes it the closest form of reading imaginable. What distant reading lacks is distance. That distance is critical; it is the space between the literal text and the virtual text, between the inscriptional, notational surface and the rhetorical, cognitive effect that produces a text (Fairclough, 1989, p. 116).

However, it does not mean that distant reading cannot be valid and useful for other purposes. Underwood (2017) defends, for example, that embracing distant reading requires the individual to assume their own ignorance about "literary history above the scale of (say) a hundred volumes". "We've become so used to ignorance at this scale and so good at bluffing our way around it", he says, "that we tend to overestimate our actual knowledge". In parallel, he suggests that distant reading is a means to "generate new perspectives". Not better, or worse, just different, new ones (Underwood, 2017, p. 5).

In sum, the best way to avoid a grudge with distant reading seems to be assuming the perspective proposed by Johanna Drucker (2020) that what machines do is pretty different from what humans do. The verb "reading", she reminds us, "has been used to describe many mechanical processes and sorting techniques" such as in the sentence *this computer can read these punch-cards*. However, the contrary is also true:

> The surface of a compact disc, of a piece of magnetic tape, or of a flash drive offers nothing legible to the eye, hand, or ear—our modes of sensory input. We cannot read these media inscriptions, cannot discern any meaning in their traces; we see them mainly as cultural artifacts, even though the devices for which they are designed have automated capacities with which to read them. In the vernacular, we refer to the processing that decodes these invisible traces as reading (Drucker, 2019, pp 628-9).

Drucker's conclusion is that "computers do not interpret; they simply find patterns", but at some point in history, we humans have made an association between that activity and what we call *reading*.

The combination of close and distant reading conducted in this research is also a nod to the discussions pursued in the context of feminist methodologies. Tickner (2006) tells us that quantitative research methods have once been rejected by feminist researchers as "instruments for structuring reality in certain ways", as tools that assume that they can have a monopoly in the examination of the world. As Tickner says, feminist methodologies can carry the belief that "statistical procedures serve to legitimize and universalize certain power relations because they

give a "stamp of truth" to the definitions upon which they are based (Tickner, 2006, p. 38). However, when used in a certain way, quantitative methods can be incredibly useful for feminist social scientists.

> Thanks to the efforts of women's international organizing, especially around the United Nations Decade for Women (1975–1985), the UN began to disaggregate data by sex, thus helping to bring the plight of women to the world's attention. The United Nations Human Development Report of 1995 (UNDP 1996) focused specifically on women and gender issues. In that report, the United Nations Human Development Program first introduced its gender development index (GDI), based on gender differences in life expectancy, earned income, illiteracy, and enrollment in education. It also introduced the gender empowerment measure (GEM), based on the proportion of women in parliament and in economic leadership positions (Benería 2003: 19–20; Seager 2003: 12–13). While they are crude indicators, the GDI and the GEM do give us comparative, cross-national evidence about the status of women relative to men. It is data such as these, which go beyond traditional categorizations of national accounting, that can support feminists' claims about gender inequality and provide support for efforts to pressure states and international organizations to design and support public policies that are better for women and other disadvantaged people (Tickner, 2006, p. 40).

Proposing a combined analysis of narratives and numbers, Stewart and Cole (2006) defend that "feminist scholars have been particularly vocal in arguing for the value of mixed methods research approaches" (Cole, 2006, p. 238). This can be attributed to a variety of reasons, but the most important might be the fact that feminist researchers "are often particularly interested in phenomena that are studied in many different social science disciplines (women's labor market experience, breastfeeding, sexual harassment, etc.)" which leads them to "read across fields". Said contact with "interdisciplinary theory and evidence inevitably exposes feminist scholars to alternative habits about methods" (Cole, 2006, p. 239) favoring a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in their research projects.

According to them, there are various possibilities for integrating narratives (which they equate with "qualitative data") and numbers (which they equate with "quantitative data") in academic research (Cole, 2006, p. 330). These possibilities usually depart from one and move to the other, i.e., they illuminate quantitative data with qualitative analysis, or they use quantitative analysis to systematize qualitative data. In this thesis, the adopted strategy can be better visualized in a zigzagging pattern in which research moves forwards alternating between qualitative and quantitative methods (Figure 2).

In this research, quantitative methods are mainly applied to identify the breadcrumbs path that might lead us to deeper findings. Inspired by feminist methodologies' purpose of "making visible that which was previously invisible" (Tickner, 2006, p. 27), I use quantitative methods to highlight issues that are worth of investigation. While analyzing the Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary and the 2030 Agenda Corpus, and zigzagging between them (Figure 3), I have been able to identify what remains, what fades away and what shows up in the language of development.
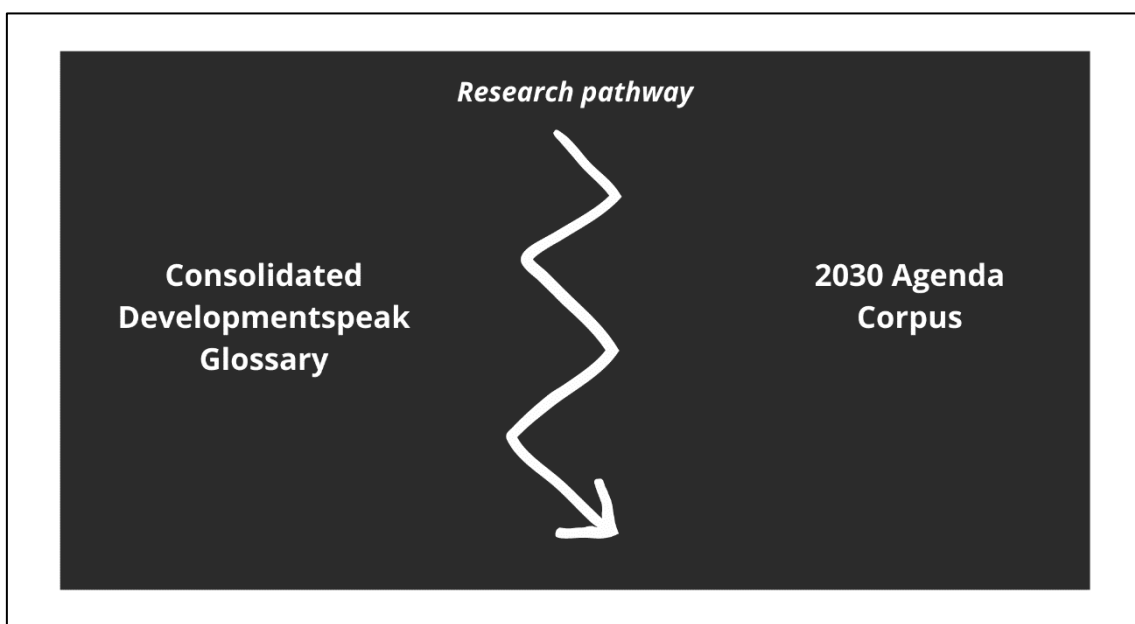
Figure 2 - Research Pathway: Zigzagging between the Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary and the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

In this sense, this research proposes a combination of close and distant reading as research analytical methods. We departed from a **close reading** of *The Dictionary of Development* (1992) and of *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010) in order to create a Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary. Now, we move towards a **distant reading** of the 2030 Agenda corpus using the entries of the Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary as guiding lines for this exploration. The results of this phase are peppered with qualitative analyses made through close reading in order to make sense of these findings such as the persistence of words as "progress" and the disappearance of "globalization".

3.3.2
Step 4. Collecting and organizing the results of word count produced by Voyant Tools

Inspired by the quantitative analysis of UK Government White Papers conducted by Naomi Alfini and Robert Chambers (2010), I decided to follow their decision of revealing the 20 most frequent words in the 2030 Agenda corpus. However, just as happened with them, many of the words featuring at the top do not deliver much substance about the topic. In their chapter, they mention their decision to exclude words such as "million", "the", "then" or "should" because they are "unlikely to tell us much". They have, then, retained only the "words with a clearer development significance" (Alfini; Chambers, 2010, p. 31).

I expected something similar could happen in this research. For that reason, I started identifying the 65 most frequent words so I would have a starting point to build from.

The table below reunites such words as listed by the Voyant Tools and their number of appearances. It is important to notice that in this kind of analysis, the software only identifies single words and not expressions. This is the reason why we see "sustainable" and "development" featuring in the 6th and 7th positions but no "sustainable development" at all.

#	Word	Number of appearances
1	Cent	2508
2	Countries	2247
3	Asia	1059
4	Data	1032
5	global	1007
6	Sustainable	998
7	Development	983

8	Africa	839
9	people	801
10	world	704
11	developing	656
12	million	574
13	america	563
14	eastern	562
15	regions	542
16	water	540
17	population	539
18	goal	536
19	progress	534
20	national	533
21	women	528
22	health	515
23	northern	514
24	sub	508
25	saharan	498
26	new	490
27	economic	472
28	access	469
29	children	457
30	income	451
31	goals	444
32	covid	444
33	percentage	439
34	billion	439
35	pandemic	425
36	nations	419
37	developed	418
38	rate	409
39	number	402
40	united	399
41	proportion	395

42	areas	390
43	report	388
44	2030	374
45	energy	366
46	increased	361
47	international	359
48	growth	358
49	climate	357
50	southern	349
51	central	327
52	high	326
53	poverty	324
54	social	314
55	services	313
56	south	312
57	caribbean	306
58	including	303
59	latin	301
60	food	291
61	levels	289
62	share	287
63	western	285
64	years	282
65	change	275

Table 3 - Top 65 words in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

3.4
Counting words that count: Finding the right substance for analysis

3.4.1
Step 5. Selecting the words of interest

Applying the method used by Alfini and Chambers (2010), I have examined the whole list and marked which words did not seem to add a lot of substance to the analysis. I cannot pretend that this is not a subjective exercise, but in the name of scientific rigor, I decided to exclude words under certain criteria:

a. names of regions, including the words "countries" and "region";

b. words related to quantity or proportion such as "increased" or "rate";

c. the word "report" for considering it redundant and useless in an analysis of a corpus composed by reports;

d. the date "2030".

The table below reunites the top 65 words. Those selected under the criteria mentioned above are highlighted in bold and red letters.

#	Word	Number of appearances
1	**Cent**	**2508**
2	**Countries**	**2247**
3	**Asia**	**1059**
4	Data	1032
5	global	1007
6	Sustainable	998
7	Development	983
8	**Africa**	**839**
9	people	801
10	world	704
11	developing	656
12	**million**	**574**
13	**america**	**563**
14	**eastern**	**562**
15	**regions**	**542**
16	water	540
17	population	539

18	goal	536
19	progress	534
20	national	533
21	women	528
22	health	515
23	**northern**	**514**
24	**sub**	**508**
25	**saharan**	**498**
26	new	490
27	economic	472
28	access	469
29	children	457
30	income	451
31	goals	444
32	covid	444
33	**percentage**	**439**
34	**billion**	**439**
35	pandemic	425
36	nations	419
37	developed	418
38	**rate**	**409**
39	**number**	**402**
40	united	399
41	**proportion**	**395**
42	**areas**	**390**
43	**report**	**388**
44	**2030**	**374**
45	energy	366
46	**increased**	**361**
47	international	359
48	growth	358
49	climate	357
50	**southern**	**349**
51	**central**	**327**

#	Word	Number of appearances
52	high	326
53	poverty	324
54	social	314
55	services	313
56	south	312
57	caribbean	306
58	including	303
59	latin	301
60	food	291
61	levels	289
62	share	287
63	western	285
64	years	282
65	change	275

Table 4 - Top 65 words in the 2030 Agenda Corpus with non-relevant words selected.

The exclusion of these words resulted in the table below from which I also considered prudent to exclude "goals" (highlighted in bold and purple letters) since we already have "goal" in the 10th position:

#	Word	Number of appearances
1	Data	1032
2	global	1007
3	Sustainable	998
4	Development	983
5	people	801
6	world	704
7	developing	656
8	water	540

9	population	539
10	goal	536
11	progress	534
12	national	533
13	women	528
14	health	515
15	new	490
16	economic	472
17	access	469
18	children	457
19	income	451
20	**goals**	**444**
21	covid	444
22	pandemic	425
23	nations	419
24	developed	418
25	united	399
26	energy	366
27	international	359
28	growth	358
29	climate	357
30	poverty	324
31	social	314
32	services	313
33	including	303
34	food	291
35	change	275

Table 5 – Top 35 words of interest in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

Then, since my primary goal was identifying the top 20 words, I isolated them from the others, which resulted in the following table:

#	Word	Number of appearances
1	Data	1032
2	global	1007
3	Sustainable	998
4	Development	983
5	people	801
6	world	704
7	developing	656
8	water	540
9	population	539
10	goal	536
11	progress	534
12	national	533
13	women	528
14	health	515
15	new	490
16	economic	472
17	access	469
18	children	457
19	income	451
20	covid	444

Table 6 - Top 20 words of interest in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

At this point, I was able to confirm a precocious intuition. Data is not only in the top 20 words of interest, but also the most frequently used of all. This information in comparison to the non-existence of the expression in the Developmentspeak Glossary also evokes the praxis of feminist methodologies of pursuing the meaning of absence. Maryzia Zalewski (2006) offers an enlightening reflection on that:

> As Avery Gordon suggests, "tracking ghostly or spectral forces by looking at the shape described by absence, captures perfectly the

paradox of tracking through time and across all those forces that which makes its mark by being there and not there at the same time" (2001: 6). Thinking about how to articulate the pieces, the lost ideas, the broken thoughts, the puzzles, the curiosities, the silences, the not seen/not there, "the disqualified" (Foucault, 1980: 83), gestures toward some ways through which to articulate how the (un)thought, the (un)imagined, the forgotten, the disliked, the abject, the feared and the (un)remembered are drained and expunged by conventional social science methodologies (Zalewski, 2006, p. 52).

The issue becomes even more intriguing when we come across works such as James Ferguson's (1994) who comments on the World Bank's fixation with statistics in its 1975 report on Lesotho. Even arguing that the "economic indicators" on the country were "scarce and unreliable", the Bank used said statistics as the main instrument of analysis of the country (World Bank *apud* Ferguson, 1994, p. 40). Ferguson's conclusion demonstrates that the authority of development intervention depends directly on the authority of numbers. "In 'development' discourse", he says, "the fact that there are no statistics available is no excuse for not presenting statistics, and even made-up numbers are better than none at all" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 41). Then, how come "data" or even "statistics" were not considered relevant enough as entries by the authors of *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing*? This question will lead us in an exploration of "data" in chapter 5.

3.5
A comparative analysis of Developmentspeak Glossary and the 2030 Agenda Corpus

3.5.1
Step 6. Comparing the top 20 words of the 2030 Agenda Corpus with the Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary

In this step, I combined Table 1 (presented in step 1) with Table 5 (presented in step 5) to identify repetitions. My intention was discovering which of the concepts that compose the Developmentspeak Glossary (built from analysis made in 1992 and 2010) are still in vogue in the field of development right now. For such task, I used Microsoft Excel to build a single table and used the software's Repetition Identifier tool to check if there was any. The software found 3 cases. They are highlighted in bold and green letters in the table below.

#	Concept	Origin of expression
1	Accountability	Developmentspeak Glossary
2	Advocacy	Developmentspeak Glossary
3	Best practices	Developmentspeak Glossary
4	Capacity building	Developmentspeak Glossary
5	Citizenship	Developmentspeak Glossary
6	Civil Society	Developmentspeak Glossary
7	Corruption	Developmentspeak Glossary
8	Country ownership	Developmentspeak Glossary
9	**Development**	Developmentspeak Glossary
10	Empowerment	Developmentspeak Glossary
11	Environment	Developmentspeak Glossary
12	Equality	Developmentspeak Glossary
13	Faith (faith-based)	Developmentspeak Glossary
14	Fragile States	Developmentspeak Glossary
15	Gender	Developmentspeak Glossary
16	Globalization	Developmentspeak Glossary
17	Good governance	Developmentspeak Glossary
18	Harmonization	Developmentspeak Glossary
19	Helping	Developmentspeak Glossary
20	Human Rights	Developmentspeak Glossary
21	Knowledge	Developmentspeak Glossary
22	Market	Developmentspeak Glossary
23	Needs	Developmentspeak Glossary
24	NGOs	Developmentspeak Glossary
25	One World	Developmentspeak Glossary

26	Participation	Developmentspeak Glossary
27	Partnership	Developmentspeak Glossary
28	Peacebuilding	Developmentspeak Glossary
29	Planning	Developmentspeak Glossary
30	**Population**	**Developmentspeak Glossary**
31	Poverty	Developmentspeak Glossary
32	Poverty reduction	Developmentspeak Glossary
33	Production	Developmentspeak Glossary
34	**Progress**	**Developmentspeak Glossary**
35	Resources	Developmentspeak Glossary
36	Right to development	Developmentspeak Glossary
37	Science	Developmentspeak Glossary
38	Secularism	Developmentspeak Glossary
39	Security	Developmentspeak Glossary
40	Social capital	Developmentspeak Glossary
41	Social change	Developmentspeak Glossary
42	Social protection	Developmentspeak Glossary
43	Socialism	Developmentspeak Glossary
44	Standard of living	Developmentspeak Glossary
45	State	Developmentspeak Glossary
46	Sustainability	Developmentspeak Glossary
47	Technology	Developmentspeak Glossary
48	Transparency	Developmentspeak Glossary
49	Data	2030 Agenda Corpus
50	global	2030 Agenda Corpus
51	Sustainable	2030 Agenda Corpus
52	**Development**	**2030 Agenda Corpus**
53	people	2030 Agenda Corpus
54	world	2030 Agenda Corpus
55	developing	2030 Agenda Corpus

56	water	2030 Agenda Corpus
57	population	2030 Agenda Corpus
58	goal	2030 Agenda Corpus
59	progress	2030 Agenda Corpus
60	national	2030 Agenda Corpus
61	women	2030 Agenda Corpus
62	health	2030 Agenda Corpus
63	new	2030 Agenda Corpus
64	economic	2030 Agenda Corpus
65	access	2030 Agenda Corpus
66	children	2030 Agenda Corpus
67	income	2030 Agenda Corpus
68	goals	2030 Agenda Corpus

Table 7 - Identified repetitions between the Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary and the Top 20 words of interest in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

3.6
Discourse change, hierarchy resists: The case of "progress"

3.6.1
Step 7. Combing distant reading and close reading to prevent from erroneous interpretations.

Distant reading has found us three exact repetitions: development, population and progress. Close reading, however, can help us find a few more affinities among terms such as "sustainable" and "sustainability", or the similar contexts surrounding "gender" and "women". Also, close reading can help us problematize the results of distant reading.

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2008), the isolated use of word count "can lead to misleading interpretations". One of the issues they mention is that of decontextualization, a problem that can be prevented with a combination of methods (Leech; Onwuegbuzi, 2008, p. 594). An example of that happens with the word "progress".

In *Dictionary* (2010) José María Sbert portrays progress as an idea that has redefined time as a "vector" pointing to "a future of plenty, freedom and justice"

that affects both the perception of the planet of humanity. When it comes to the planet, this conception, of course, surmises that the world is nothing but a "resource" to be spent and consumed through the path towards this idealized future. On humanity, the traditional understanding of progress in the field of development has been built around the belief that there is a "unified humanity" that should be guided "by those who have already progressed, but open to all races and nations provided they jettison their tribal and traditional bonds, which are but the capricious obstacles to universal redemption" (Sbert, 2010, p. 217). Progress, we can realize, has produced or at least crystallized a hierarchy in which humanity gets placed as a creator for which Earth serves as a subdued creature.

According to Philosopher William Rowe (1987), progress stands on 4 main cornerstones:

> 1. a belief in the superiority of the West over other, non-Western cultures (regarded, by Hegel for example, as the remnants of Spirit's past forms), 2. the exaggeration of, and reliance upon, continuity over and against discontinuity in history, 3. the subjugation of nature by culture, especially through industry and technology, and finally 4. a need to justify the present (Rowe, 1987, p. 74).

All these elements, Rowe defends, are soaked in *faith* as progress "emboldens self-satisfaction and nurtures it into a feeling of arrival" (Rowe, 1987, p. 75). Accordingly, Sbert (2010) envisions progress as a "desperate search for transcendence that, again and again, annihilates the world as it is" disassembling "any real sense of place, rhythm, duration and culture" in order to produce a sterile version of the world, a "non-world" in which space is homogeneous and time is linear (Sbert, 2010, p. 222).

As said by Reinhart Koselleck (2002), the concept of progress is a product of the modern experience which has turned change "the great theme of history". From that, a new group of "vanquished" has been established: "those who perceive themselves surpassed by history or progress, or who have set themselves the goal of catching up with or surpassing the development of things". In other words, where we stand in history, i.e., "left behind or thrust forward" depends on our social and economic situation (Koselleck, 2002, p. 80).

For Sbert, development can be characterized as a journey while progress is destiny. Losing its "prestige" in the 20th century, especially after the Great Wars and the Great Depression which made the concept sort of embarrassing (Sbert, 2010, p.

212). The problematization of the concept required some sort of review. Progress had by then achieved a similar status to words such as "uncivilized, uneducated and backward" which had been revamped to "underdeveloped". Development, says Sbert, "came in handy" as a substitute. However, "[w]ithin this new development scheme of things, the idea of progress remained implicit as a crude dogma" (Sbert, 2010, p. 214). In sum, even when it is not directly mentioned, progress remains an intrinsic part of development.

Because I had read the reports before running them through Voyant Tools, I had a hunch that "progress" was probably being used in the 2030 Agenda Corpus with a different meaning from that of the Developmentspeak Glossary. Because of that, I used the Contexts tool of Voyant Tools to confirm this impression.

If in Developmentspeak Glossary, "progress" has been scrutinized as a harmful idealization of a universal and unescapable linear path peoples should take in order to move from a traditional to a modern way of living (Sbert, 2010), in the 2030 Agenda Corpus, it is used to make reference to the advancement towards reaching the goals and targets. We can confirm that meaning in excerpts such as:

> Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of **progress** and to ensure that no one is left behind" (United Nations, 2015).

> While considerable progress has been made over the past decade across all areas of development, the pace of **progress** observed in previous years is insufficient to fully meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets by 2030" (United Nations, 2017).

> Despite *progress*, 2.2 billion people around the world still lacked safely managed drinking water, including 785 million without basic drinking water. The population using safely managed sanitation services increased from 28 per cent in 2000 to 45 per cent in 2017 (United Nations, 2020)

This is an interesting finding about the plasticity of words in Developmentspeak. Of course, "progress" is still being used to refer to an evolution, a transformation from "worse" to "better". However, the most pervasive message attached to it in the past seems to be mitigated mainly by the fact that the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda are not just for developing countries, but for all of them. Nevertheless, the idea of "progress" as a term "applied only to what the self-designated First World had already achieved" (Sbert, 2010, p. 215) remains implicit as developed countries are closer to or have already achieved the goals and targets

proposed by the Agenda. As a matter of fact, there is an SDG Index Rank[8] organized by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) that measures the "overall performance of all 193 UN Member States". The 1st position is occupied by Finland. South Sudan is the last for which statistics are available: it features in the 166th position. Discourse might have changed, but hierarchy resists in the field.

3.7
Some remain, some fade away

3.7.1
Step 8. Checking how the words and expressions listed in the Developmentspeak Glossary perform in the 2030 Agenda Corpus

Having already discovered that "development", "population" and "progress" figure in the top 20 words of interest of the 2030 Agenda Corpus, I decided to analyze how the other terms performed in this Corpus. My intention was to understand if the terms considered as keywords of the field of development by the authors of *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing* are still relevant, at least numerically, in the SDGs era. For such, I have conducted an individual query for each of the elements of the Developmentspeak Glossary in the 2030 Agenda Corpus through Voyant Tools.

The table below comprises all the terms of Developmentspeak along with their work of origin (1992 for *Dictionary* and 2010 for *Deconstruction*) and how many times they feature in the inaugural document and reports of the 2030 Agenda. For analysis purposes, they are color-coded in tiers of hundreds.

#	Concept	Year of publication	Number of appearances
1	Development	Both	983
2	Population	1992	539
3	Progress	1992	534
4	Poverty	1992	324
5	Resources	1992	255
6	Gender	2010	159

7	Production	1992	156
8	Social protection	2010	96
9	Needs	1992	92
10	Technology	1992	92
11	Human Rights	2010	89
12	Equality	1992	87
13	Security	2010	85
14	Environment	1992	67
15	Planning	1992	60
16	Partnership	2010	59
17	Participation	Both	54
18	Sustainability	2010	51
19	Market	1992	41
20	Civil Society	2010	41
21	Capacity building	2010	32
22	Science	1992	31
23	Empowerment	2010	29
24	Helping	1992	22
25	Knowledge	2010	22
26	State	1992	17
27	Peacebuilding	2010	12
28	Corruption	2010	11
29	Accountability	2010	10
30	Citizenship	2010	7
31	Best practices	2010	7
32	Fragile States	2010	6
33	Transparency	2010	5
34	Good governance	2010	4
35	Standard of living	1992	4
36	Poverty reduction	2010	4
37	Right to development	2010	2
38	Advocacy	2010	2
39	Social change	2010	2
40	NGOs	2010	2
41	Social capital	2010	2
42	Harmonisation	2010	1
43	Socialism	1992	0
44	Globalisation	2010	0
45	Country ownership	2010	0
46	One World	1992	0
47	Faith	2010	0
48	Secularism	2010	0

Legend:
Tier 1. **> 901**
Tier 2. 801 − 900
Tier 3. 701 − 800
Tier 4. 601 − 700
Tier 5. 501 − 600

Tier 6. 401 – 500
Tier 7. 301 – 400
Tier 8. 201 – 300
Tier 9. 101 – 200
Tier 10. 0 – 100

Table 8 - Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary and number of appearances in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

"Development" conquered an isolated position as the only term in Tier 1, which is not very much surprising. Tiers 2, 3 and 4 have no representatives. "Population" and "progress", figure in Tier 5. What is noticeably about it is that even though they are part of the 20 words of interest, they are still impressively far from "development" in number of appearances. "Poverty" and "resources" did not make the cut for the top 20 words of interest, but they come right after in Tiers 7 and 8. "Gender" and "production" are also remarkable with approximately 150 appearances each, figuring in Tier 9. Since the variety within Tier 10 is large, I decided that it could be better analyzed in detail.

3.7.2
Step 9. Taking a closer look at Tier 10 words and expressions

At this stage, I decided to make sense of the words and expressions that had less than 100 hits in the 2030 Agenda Corpus and divided them into 4 tiers according to their number of appearances. My criteria for categorizing them went like this:

- first, I have isolated the words or expressions who had no hits at all in order to find the terms who have literally "disappeared" in Developmentspeak;

- second, I have also isolated those who could be considered the most expressive within Tier 10. For that, I created a group of terms with more than 50 appearances;

- third, I have divided those who were left "in the middle" into two tiers that range from 1 to 25 appearances and from 26 to 50 appearances.

This resulted in the following table:

#	Concept	Year of publication	Number of appearances
1	Social protection	2010	96
2	Needs	1992	92
3	Technology	1992	92
4	Human Rights	2010	89
5	Equality	1992	87
6	Security	2010	85
7	Environment	1992	67
8	Planning	1992	60
9	Partnership	2010	59
10	Participation	Both	54
11	Sustainability	2010	51
12	Market	1992	41
13	Civil Society	2010	41
14	Capacity building	2010	32
15	Science	1992	31
16	Empowerment	2010	29
17	Helping	1992	22
18	Knowledge	2010	22
19	State	1992	17
20	Peacebuilding	2010	12
21	Corruption	2010	11
22	Accountability	2010	10
23	Citizenship	2010	7
24	Best practices	2010	7
25	Fragile States	2010	6
26	Transparency	2010	5
27	Good governance	2010	4
28	Standard of living	1992	4
29	Poverty reduction	2010	4
30	Right to development	2010	2
31	Advocacy	2010	2
32	Social change	2010	2
33	NGOs	2010	2
34	Social capital	2010	2
35	Harmonization	2010	1
36	Socialism	1992	0
37	Globalization	2010	0
38	Country ownership	2010	0
39	One World	1992	0
40	Faith	2010	0
41	Secularism	2010	0

Legend:
Tier 10.1. 51 – 100
Tier 10.2. 26 – 50
Tier 10.3. 1 – 25
Tier 10.4. <1

Table 9 - Tiers within tier 10 - Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary and number of appearances in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

Tier 10 accounts 41 words, which imposes a great challenge for a close reading analysis of each term. In this regard, for now, I have opted to investigate the complete disappearances (Tier 10.4) and one case of a rather weakened persistence.

3.7.3
Disappearing for real?

The maxim "nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything is transformed" is attributed to Antoine Lavoisier. Some say that he never actually said this sentence, but captured the idea of it in his famous work "Elements of Chemistry" published in 1789[9]. Said by Lavoisier or not, this maxim has been a useful guide for this research because sometimes expressions do not disappear, they just change.

As we can see in Tier 10.4, "socialism", "globalization", "country ownership", "one world", "faith" and "secularism" have completely vanished from the discourse of development, at least in the scope of the 2030 Agenda. In order to understand these absences a bit better, I decided to adopt a double-check strategy using similar terms.

The absence of "faith" and "secularism" are not surprising as we can see in Cassandra Balchin's (2010) reading that their relevance does not reside in the fact that these are words frequently used, but actually ideas frequently evoked as a way of controlling the Third World. I have double-checked it searching for "religion" and found 6 hits that mention it mainly as a cause of discrimination along with gender, disabilities, and race.

Curiosity about "socialism" led me to search also for "capitalism" which has returned no hits either. The 2030 Agenda is apparently blind to economic systems.

Close reading of other materials that integrate the "SDGs universe" such as the "Roadmap for localizing the SDGs: Implementation and monitoring at subnational level" [s.d.] has allowed me to notice that the idea behind "country

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[9] Quest of Antoine Lavoisier's quote in Quora webpage [https://www.quora.com/The-quote-%E2%80%9CNothing-is-lost-nothing-is-created-everything-is-transformed-is-attributed-to-Antoine-Lavoisier-but-did-he-really-write-or-say-those-words-Who-came-up-with-that-kind-of-summary-of-the-idea-of-the-conservation-of-mass].

ownership" seems to be now represented by the terms "localization" (and "localizing") and "territorialization" (and "territorializing") – which returned no hits either in the 2030 Agenda Corpus. I believe this absence can be attributed to the fact that the Corpus encompasses global and national statistics whereas "localization" and "territorialization" are mostly evoked in materials directed to subnational levels.

Then, we still have the cases of "one world" and "globalization". First, I have double-checked "one world" searching for "unity", which returned only one hit from the 2018 report that reproduces the speech of Secretary-General António Guterres: "Narrow the gaps. Bridge the divides. Rebuild trust by bringing people together around common goals. **Unity** is our path. Our future depends on it" [emphasis is mine].

Then, I have searched for "together", which returned a much more expressive number of hits. Even though we can find 41 uses of "together", not all of them directly evoke the meaning behind "one world". This other quote of Guterres reproduced in the 2017 report does carry the same meaning: "**Together**, we can make the full, transformative ambition of the 2030 Agenda a reality for all" (2017) [emphasis is mine]. However, this excerpt extracted from the 2020 report has "together" attached to "brings" signifying the action of compiling: "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2020 brings **together** the latest data to show us that before the COVID-19 pandemic, progress remained uneven and we were not on track to meet the Goals by 2030" [emphasis is mine].

When it comes to "globalization", I had the impression that its absence could be attributed to the fact that the phenomenon seems to be now "taken for granted" in the discourse of international organizations, especially those in the United Nations system. However, I knew the idea of it was there somehow. Pursuing this hunch, I have searched for "interconnectedness", which returned one hit only from the inaugural document:

> The spread of information and communications technology and global *interconnectedness* has great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy (2015, par. 15) [emphasis is mine].

Then, trying to go deeper on it, I have also searched for "interconnected". I have found two hits from which only one carried a similar meaning: "The **interconnected** global economy requires a global response to ensure that all countries, developing countries in particular, can address compounding and parallel health, economic and environmental crises and recover better" (2021).

3.7.4
Participation: thick or thin?

The curious case of participation is built on three realizations that require both close and distant reading as analytic strategies.

First, it was a concept considered important enough to be re-discussed in "Deconstruction" in 2010 after already being analyzed in *Dictionary* in 1992. "Participation" was the only term besides "development" that had attracted such attention.

Second, distant reading helped me to perceive that participation did not vanish from the lexicon of development as it still counts 54 appearances in the 2030 Agenda Corpus. However, it does figure in Tier 10 that only reunites words with less than 100 hits in the whole Corpus, which leaves the word in a state of *weakened persistence*. It is still in the game, but not the strongest contender. I have double-checked this query using "participatory", which returned a timid number: 6 hits only. Another interesting finding about "participation" is that it is mostly used in the inauguration document of the 2030 Agenda and not so frequent in the annual reports (Figure 4).
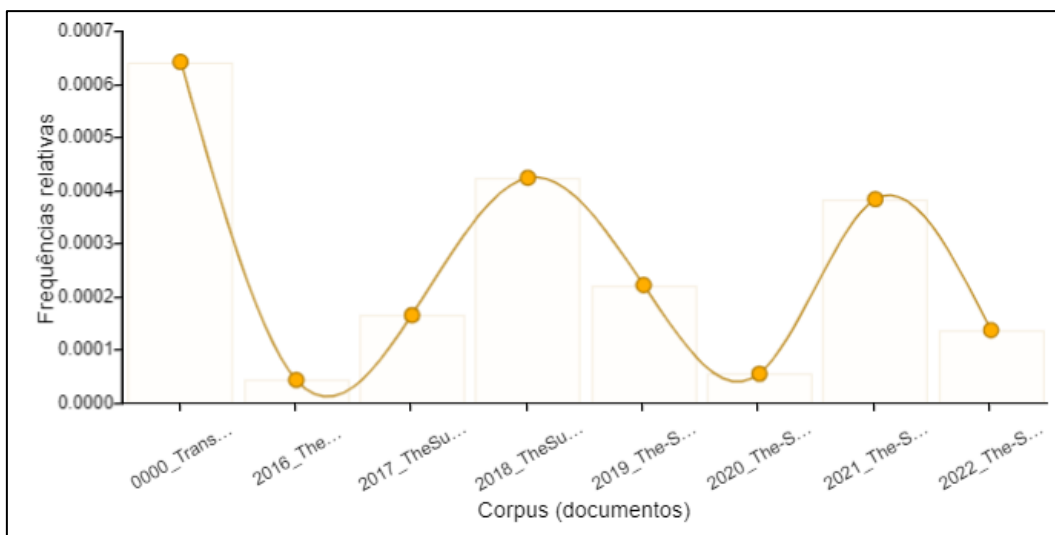
Figure 3. Irregular distribution of "participation" throughout the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

Third, close reading allowed me to learn that "participation" has been articulated as one of the greatest pillars of the 2030 Agenda. As it is pointed out by Tichenor *et al.* (2022), the SDGs established connections with several "actors in the field" by combining a technocratic feature with another one intently "bottom-up, grass-roots and transformative, distinct from older Western-liberal ideas and practices" (p. 2).
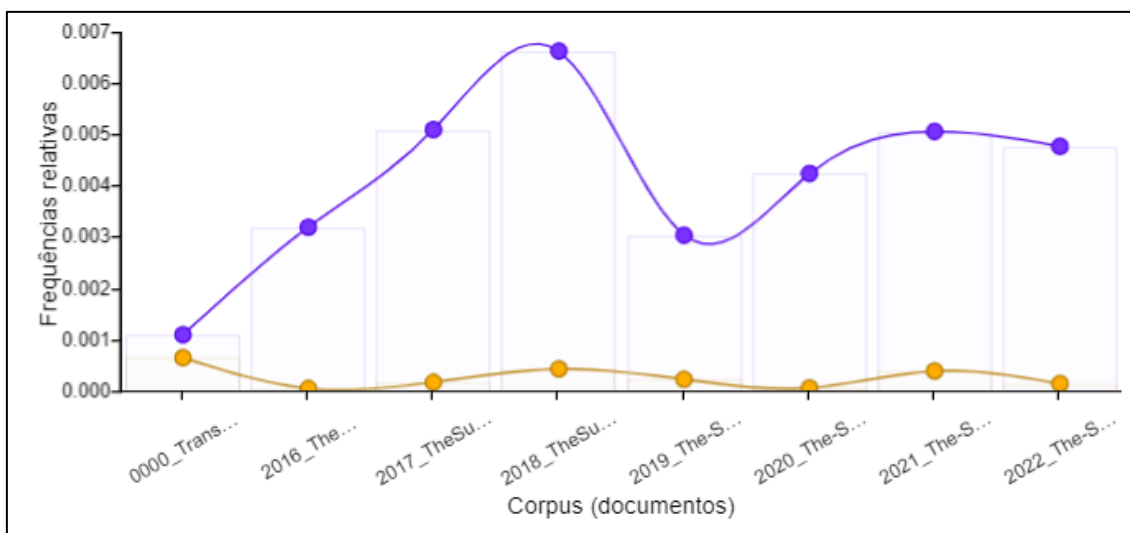
Figure 4 - Compared distributions of "participation" and "data" throughout the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

Is the importance of "participation" overestimated in the publicity of the 2030 Agenda? Does it live up to the hype? These questions will guide our exploration of participation in chapter 4.

3.8
Conclusions

This chapter explored the idea that observing changes in Developmentspeak can helps us understand changes in the priorities and expectations of the development field. Inspired by feminist methodologies, we have accomplished this observation through qualitative and quantitative methods, contrasting the Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary, integrated by the analyses of *The Development Dictionary* (1992) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010), and the 2030 Agenda Corpus created by me in the amalgamation of the inaugural document and the annual reports of the SDGs.

The quantitative steps have been used to identify patterns, verify hypotheses, and keep analytic integrity. This methodological choice seeks to explore the problematics inhabiting the debate between distant and close reading by demonstrating that they are both powerful allies for achieving **different results**. In this sense, this thesis does not intend to argue that distant reading can do what close reading does. In fact, distant reading's strongest contribution can be found exactly in what it differs from human textual analysis. As we have seen, close reading gifts us with nuances, tones, and complexity while distant reading provides us with a rapid and schematized machine capacity of processing a great amount of textual content. In this sense, distant reading has been included not as a substitute, but an additional way of reading, one extra method with which we can interrogate the language of development.

However, even though a corpus can be understood as a large, representative and authentic sample of textual context, it must never be taken as a totality. In this sense, I have tried to expose as much as possible the criteria that guided my selection of materials. Accordingly, I have broken down every step as a strategy to offer the reader the opportunity to look inside the "black box" or "the kitchen" of supposedly objective research methods. This decision has clarified how much of

the process permeates subjective decision-making rather in the act of excluding some words or choosing to focus on others.

During these steps, I have zigzagged between quantitative and qualitative methods (mainly between close and distant reading) in order to avoid that the exercise of counting would produce a loss of context. In this sense, both genres of methods were pursued as supportive of the other. In fact, word counting can be deceiving and hyper-confining if not used in combination with close reading.

Quantitative practices usually push us to look for the big numbers. However, also inspired by feminist scholars and their concern with observing the absences, I have tried to conclude how these numbers could be useful in revealing the invisible, how they could help me find meaning in the absence. In that path, I realized that Developmentspeak, as other languages, is plastic and that, sometimes, ideas that seem to be vanishing are actually being expressed in different words as in the case of "progress" that seems to carry a renovated meaning, but still nods to hierarchy or "globalization" whose meaning seems obsolete in a hyper-interconnected world. These transformations are result of the pressure of circumstances that claim for close reading to be identified.

It was never my intention to produce numbers disconnected from the materials they had been extracted from. Similarly, I do not take any of these numbers as "stamps of truth", but as perspectives, narratives – something that is still to be discussed in chapter 5. Similarly, I have taken quantitative results as inspirations for closer observations. The mismatch produced by "participation", which seems to be underrepresented in frequency according to the relevance attributed to it in the 2030 Agenda, will guide us through the next chapter.

4

Something Old: Participation in Suspended Animation

In *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott narrates how Mrs. March would smile and wave her hand to her daughters from the window every time they left the house, a ritual they couldn't go through the day without. In a snowy and windy morning, Jo and Meg leave the house while Jo cries: "If Marmee shook her fist instead of kissing her hand to us, it would serve us right, for more ungrateful wretches than we are were never seen". Horrified, Meg begs Jo no to use "such dreadful expressions". Jo replies: "I like good strong words that mean something" (May Alcott, 2004 p. 41).

This chapter explores how participation, once *a good strong word that meant something*, has been transformed into a buzzword. Post-development scholars argue that the insertion of participation into the development industry has detached the concept from its radical roots in Participatory Action Research (PAR) not only to make it more palatable to neoliberalism, but also as a powerful tool acting in its favor. From a liberating idea marked by a contentious aspect, participation has been made dormant and depoliticized. For such, my analysis envisions participation in a state of suspended animation. The 2030 Agenda made great promises towards expanding the need and importance of participation for development purposes. Even though its design phase has been marked by a great effort in this direction, its data-based nature fails its promises and makes it hard for some agents to keep up with the conversation. In this sense, we are led to understand the 2030 Agenda, aiming for both participation and quantification, ends up being smashed under the weight of numbers.

4.1
Development meets participation

In the Oxford Handbook of International Organizations (2016), Klaus Dingwerth and Patrizia Nanz describe participation as "a powerful principle" that is frequently invoked with the purpose of improving "the legitimacy and effectiveness of international organizations". In sum, participation carries a

"democratic principle" that "assures that the authorization to exercise power arises from collective decisions by citizens over whom that power is exercised" (Dingwerth, 2016, p. 1.126). The three main functions of participation presented in the Handbook are

i.   expanding the number of perspectives on a certain topic;

ii.   learning about the interests of minorities; and

iii.   bringing specific knowledge or expertise to a debate (Dingwerth, 2016, p. 1136-7).

They observe, however, that participation seems to be more articulated as a "strategy" than as a "principle". It means that what makes the concept popular amongst International Organizations is not so much the recognition of its functions, but the "cost–benefit calculations" made by these institutions under the fear of heavy criticism for not being participatory enough (Dingwerth, 2016, p. 1.136).

The analysis of participation in "The Development Dictionary" (2010) [originally published in 1992] was made by Majid Rahnema. The author envisions it as one of the most manipulative expressions dissected in the *Dictionary*. He asserts that participation is used in the field of development the same way "children use Lego toy pieces". As a jargon, "it ha[s] no context, but it do[es] serve a function". Usually applied with a "moral aspect", it carries a "positive connotation" that disguises the fact that it can also serve "evil or malicious purposes" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 127).

Appearing in the context of development for the first time in the 1950s, the term was adopted by activists advocating against "top-down strategies" as they believed that "most of the failures of development projects" were due to "the fact that the populations concerned were kept out of all the processes related to their design, formulation and implementation". Concomitantly, development authorities, such as the World Bank, were recognizing that "the billions spent on development projects had failed to produce the expected results", which lead them to believe that "whenever people were locally involved, and actively participating, in the projects, much more was achieved with much less, even in sheer financial terms" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 128).

Similarly, in *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010), Pablo Alejandro Leal considers the insertion of participation in the development industry as a strategy of self-reinvention. Even though Rahnema (2010) locates participation as an emerging topic in the 1950s, Leal argues that it was in the 1980s that it "ascended to the pantheon of development buzzwords, catchphrases, and euphemisms" becoming as important as "sustainable development", "basic needs", "capacity building", and "results based" (Leal, 2010, p. 89).

> The historic and systemic failure of the development industry to 'fix' chronic underdevelopment puts it in the challenging position of having both to renew and reinvent its discourse and practice enough to make people believe that a change has, in fact, taken place and to make these adjustments while maintaining intact the basic structure of the status quo on which the development industry depends. This explains why we have seen, over the past 50 years, a rich parade of successive development trends: 'community development' in the post-colonial period, 'modernization' in the Cold War period, and 'basic human needs' and 'integrated rural development' throughout the 1970s. The neo-liberal period (1980s to the present day) witnessed a pageant of such trends as 'sustainable development' and 'participatory development' from the late 1980s and all through the 1990s; 'capacity building', 'human rights', and 'good governance' throughout most of the 1990s; and, we must not forget, 'poverty reduction/alleviation' in the dawn of the twenty first century (Leal, 2010, p. 90).

Participation was inserted as a "new battle horse" exactly at the same time of the "shock treatment of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) inflicted on the underdeveloped world by the World Bank and the IMF". SAPs were the instrument used by IFIs to introduce "neo-liberalism in[to] poor nations". Their implementation was made possible through the "re-negotiation of Third World debt as leverage" which were used by IFIs "to force poor countries to do things that were clearly against their best interest" such as "privatization, denationalization, elimination of subsidies of all sorts, budgetary austerity, devaluation, and trade liberalization". This process led the Third World to a "deep social desperation" that resulted in several riots, strikes and popular uprisings. Some of the cases mentioned by Leal are those of Caracas in 1989, Tunis in 1984, Nigeria in 1989, and Morocco in 1990 (Leal, 2010, p. 90). In this sense, participation was useful "to put a 'human face' on inhumane policies; at the very least, to create the illusion that they were not indifferent to the suffering inflicted upon the poorest of the poor by the new neo-liberal shock treatment" (Leal, 2010, p. 92).

Leal calls attention to the primary "incompatibility" between the idea of participation and the original shape of development programs. Nevertheless, the

riots and uprisings happening in the context of SAPs required a transformation from the development industry who "could not simply ignore the increasing critiques and challenges to its reigning paradigm" (Leal, 2010, p. 92). Moreover, we must remember that in the 1980s the Cold War was at full blast and "participation" was much more aligned with the Left than with the Right. This would not go unnoticed by the industry, especially the World Bank. Pablo Alejandro Leal considers that a reformation of the language made the trick. Peppering the old discourses with words such as "empowerment", "self-reliance", and "participation", "the Bank assumed a populist appearance reminiscent of PAR" (Leal, 2010, p. 92).

Leal quotes Rahnema in describing participation as a "redeeming saint". The popularity of the concept exploded not only for what it could offer in the future paths of the field, but also for what it could justify about its past. "Development's failures were now to be explained by its top-down, blueprint mechanics, which were to be replaced by more people-friendly, bottom-up approaches that would 'put the last first'" (Leal, 2010, p. 91).

Rahnema (1992) identifies six reasons for the "unprecedented" success achieved by participation in the development industry:

(1) "The concept is no longer perceived as a threat" mainly because participation can generate "productivity at low cost" and also because governments and IFIs have "learned to control the risks inherent in possible 'unruly abuses' of participation" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 129);

(2) "Participation has become a politically attractive slogan" mainly because it creates "feelings of complicity" between the implicated actors as it makes politicians and other authorities appear "sensitive" to people's problems. Moreover, "peacefully negotiated forms of participation can take the heat out of many situations where development policies create tension and resistance on the part of their victims" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 130);

(3) "Participation has become economically, an appealing proposition" for developing countries mainly because it allows them to pass on "the costs to their poor – which is done in the name of participation and its corollary, self-help" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 130);

(4) "Participation is now perceived as an instrument for greater effectiveness as well as a new source of investment" mainly because they offer development projects what they need the most such as "close knowledge of the field reality" and "networks of relations" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 131);

(5) "Participation is becoming a good fund-raising device" mainly because NGOs have attracted billions in investment as they built the reputation of applying "participatory" and "less bureaucratized approaches" to "meet the needs of people with greater efficiency and at less cost". This movement has encouraged governments of developing countries to take the same pathway (Rahnema, 1992, p. 131);

(6) "An expanded concept of participation could help the private sector to be directly involved in the development business" mainly because "private corporations and consulting agencies" instrumentalize the idea of participation as a means to guarantee their share in this money-making business (Rahnema, 1992, p. 131).

The growing importance of participation could be mainly attributed to the belief that it could "help improve the financial and technical effectiveness of loans" (Nay, 2020, p. 149). The very idea of participation in IOs (and especially in the World Bank) has been mutated: "while the original idea of the 1980s focused on the emancipation of the poor, the global norm of the 1990s concentrated on efficiency for better policy results" (Nay, 2020, p. 158).

Accordingly, participation has been heavily propagandized in the development industry for three main assumptions:

> That participation is intrinsically a 'good thing' (especially for the participants); that a focus on 'getting the techniques right' is the principal way of ensuring the success of such approaches; and that considerations of power and politics on the whole should be avoided as divisive and obstructive (Cleaver, 2001, p. 36)

Participation, argues Rahnema (1992), "has come to be 'disembedded' from the socio-cultural roots which had always kept it alive" to be "simply perceived as one of the many 'resources' needed to keep the economy alive". In this sense, participating means nothing more than "partaking in the objectives of the economy, and the societal arrangements related to it". This kind of participation, of course, has led scholars to consider the ludicrous idea that "traditional societies are not

101

participant". For the modern construct of participation, a person should be part of a predefined project, more specifically an economic project, in order to qualify as a participant (Rahnema, 1992, p. 132).

Frances Cleaver (2001) suggests that one should not "deny the usefulness of a people centered orientation in development". However, she defends the necessity of recognizing that the way in which participation gets translated into "policy and practice is not necessarily consistent with the desired impacts" (p. 37).

4.1.1
The curious case of the World Bank

In his contribution to "Participation: From tyranny to transformation" (2005), Bill Cooke prescribes "rule of thumb for participatory change agent". Rule number, according to him, is "don't work for the World Bank" (Cooke, 2005, p. 43). In sum, Cooke secures that "the World Bank is an organization that sees more neo-liberalism as the remedy for the problems it has visited on the world's poor" or, in other words, the Bank "uses participatory methodologies and practitioners to enforce that agenda" (Cooke, 2005, p. 44).

Olivier Nay (2020) tells us that the "rise of social movements and advocacy coalitions" was taking place since the 1970s. Demanding "greater transparency in policy development, better environmental protection, and the protection of disadvantaged populations' rights, including workers, peasants, indigenous people, cultural minorities, and women", several national movements used international organizations as a space in which they could exchange ideas. This movement eventually gave birth to "transnational advocacy networks" that would consequently broaden their scope to claim for "global justice" (Nay, 2020, p. 141). According to Nay, the Word Bank was one of the first "international institutions to be targeted by NGOs" demanding the participation of the poor in development programs. As a response to it, the Bank inaugurated in the 1970s the NGO World Bank Committee in which staff and activists could share their ideas (Nay, 2020, p. 142).

In the 1980s, the institution, highly influenced by Ronald Reagan's election, introduced its "structural adjustment programs" that proved to cause considerable

impacts on developing countries such as "price instability, mass unemployment, falling wages, and the impoverishment of part of the population". In 1984, the NGOs that integrated the NGO World Bank Committee demonstrated their dissatisfaction inaugurating an independent organ: the NGO Working Group on the World Bank. Even though this group could organize and conduct research independently, as it was still "sponsored and co-funded by the World Bank, many national movements refused to participate and decided to act through protest campaigns". In this context, "the first collective mobilizations took place, denouncing the impact of the Bank's infrastructure projects on the living conditions of local populations". This movement would become mainly famous for its "counter-meetings" or "counter-summits" organized "in parallel with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund" events (Nay, 2020, p. 142). The cry for participation escalated quickly and the

> [...] idea of "participatory development" became a rallying collective demand brought by both environmental NGOs and other transnational movements committed to various causes, such as transparency and accountability, debt cancellation, women's rights, and the protection of indigenous peoples. Researchers, practitioners, and activists used the concept to justify local experiments seeking to promote "popular participation", "people's participation", and "community participation", which were perceived as offering a means of promoting social emancipation and greater autonomy for the poor (Nay, 2020, p. 142).

Differently from Leal (2010), Olivier Nay (2020) identifies more substance in this movement. He considers the World Bank a "catalyst for social ideas that have given traction to the norm of participation in the international agenda for development" (Nay, 2020, p. 137). According to him, the Bank was "one of the first institutions to set up a working group on participation" (Nay, 2020, p. 140) and has "contributed to the gradual recognition of participation as a global norm to be implemented in public governance reforms". Nay's perspective is clearly more tempered than those of Leal and Rahmena, as he considers the "Bank" not as a homogeneous unity, but an environment in which some of the experts would push for "emerging or disruptive ideas" while others would "resist, circumvent, or distort them in order to preserve prevailing norms and paradigms endorsed in the organization" (Nay, 2020, p. 138). Moreover, he defends that ideas are not "stable", but actually "subject to successive reframing before they are shaped into a consensual definition that is made public" (Nay, 2020, p. 139). Nevertheless, he

also defends the necessity to be cautious with dichotomic analyses based on "binary perspectives" that ignore the existence of the heterodox employees of the Bank, who he calls "institutional activists". Nay finds crucial not to promote a discourse in which activists or "social campaigners and advocates involved in social movements" oppose "bureaucrats who are deemed to be disciplined agents promoting the views of their institution 'with one voice'" (Nay, 2020, p. 146).

From Cooke's (2005) perspective, these internal activists suffer from undoubtable naiveté and/or vanity when they assume that they can "succeed in changing the Bank from within when others better qualified have not been able to do so, from Nobel prize-winning Joseph Stiglitz through to World Development Report author (or not) Ravi Kanbur (Pincus and Winters 2002)". He argues that these change agents "are allowed in through the door precisely because there is no danger of them challenging neo-liberal hegemony, or, worse, because they sustain it". Cooke almost seems to be engaging in a conversation with Nay (2020) when the later criticizes the idea of the World Bank as a monolithic homogeneity proposed by post-development scholars. Cooke argues that "[t]here is enough in political and organizational theories to show that institutions present different faces to different people the better to incorporate them, to legitimize themselves in society, and to buy critics off" (p. 44). In this sense, he seems to assume that even the incorporation of dissonant voices is a strategy to alleviate harsh criticism.

Nay (2020) argues that ideas are always being transformed through processes of "interpretation" and "acclimatization" (p. 139). From Leal's (2010) perspective, these processes were apparently sufficient to transform an originally radical concept into a slogan used to promote neoliberal policies. In this new "rhetoric", national governments (controlled by the local elites who would always try to defend their own interests) became the bad guys suppressing good governance and development. "At a first glance", Leal argues, "one might naively infer that the logical implication is to call for people to be empowered to overturn the current and oppressive state of affairs through increased political participation". This image, however, was used to call for the "removal of the state from the economy and its substitution by the market". Empowerment, then, was equated with the "liberation from an interventionist state" and participation was equated with the establishment of "free-market economics" (to be achieved through development programs) that could enable people to "take fuller charge of their lives" (Nay, 2020, p. 93).

4.1.2
PAR and participatory development

Both Rahnema (2010) and Leal (2010) identify a direct influence of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the insertion of participation as a default concept in development programs. Born from "radical roots", the idea of participation has arisen from "the emancipatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire". According to Leal, "the principal objective of the participatory paradigm was not development – or 'poverty alleviation' – but the transformation of the cultural, political, and economic structures which reproduce poverty and marginalization".

> "The basic ideology of PAR", according to Mohammed Anisur Rahman (1993:13), "is that a self-conscious people, those who are currently poor and oppressed, will progressively transform their environment by their own práxis". Or, in more Freirean terms, development can only be achieved when humans are "beings for themselves", when they possess their own decision-making powers, free of oppressive and dehumanizing circumstances; it is the "struggle to be more fully human" (Freire 1970:29) (Leal, 2010, p. 91).

In the seminal book on the topic, *Participatory Action Research* (1991), William Foote Whyte describes PAR as a "powerful strategy to advance both science and practice". According to him, "PAR involves practitioners in the research process from the initial design of the project through data gathering and analysis to final conclusions and actions arising out of the research (Foote, 1991, p. 7). Whyte *et al*. (1991) argue that PAR dismantles the myth that science must be pursued "by distancing oneself from the world", but the opposite. Science, they believe, can be achieved through the engagement of the scientist with the world (Whyte *et al*., 1991, p. 21).

Patricia Maguire (1987) describes PAR as an "alternative style of research" that stands on three processes: "social investigation, education and action to share the creation of social knowledge with oppressed people". In her words, "[r]ather than merely recording observable facts, participatory research has the explicit intention of collectively investigating reality in order to transform it" (Maguire, 1987, p. 3).

PAR can also be connected to feminist methodologies since it departs from the principle that "objectivity is impossible" and that "multiple or shared realities

105

exist". Patricia Maguire (1987) quotes Adrienne Rich when she says that "in a patriarchal society, objectivity is the name we give to male subjectivity" (Maguire, 1987, p. 91). In this sense, PAR can be considered an alternative research approach which breaks up with "conventional prescriptive methods, and seeks to decentralize traditional research" (MacDonald, 2012, p. 36). The main claim made by PAR scholars is that research must include in all of its phases the people who are being studied, dislocating them from the position of objects to subjects in all these processes (MacDonald, 2012, p. 38). It differs from traditional research from its unique "alignment of power within the research process" (Cornwall; Jewkes, 1995, p. 1668).

According to Cathy MacDonald (2012), PAR is

> […] democratic, thus enabling the participation of all people; equitable, as it acknowledges equity of people's worth; liberating, in that it provides freedom from oppressive, debilitating conditions; and life-enhancing, which enables the expression of people's full human potential (MacDonald, 2012, p. 39).

Patricia Maguire (1987) has articulated a connection between PAR and feminist methodologies in her book "Doing Participatory Research: A feminist approach". According to her, both PAR and feminist methodologies propose a restructuring of the "researcher-researched relationship". In her words, both "are experimenting with ways to change a previously hierarchal, detached relationship to a horizontal, reciprocal one" (Maguire, 1987, p. 93). Nevertheless, only feminist scholars have related the traditional relationship between researcher and researched to "androcentric roots of control" (Maguire, 1987, p. 97).

On the other hand, Maguire notes that the primary purpose of feminist research (producing "knowledge [about women] for knowledge's sake"), has caused a concerning negative effect since this knowledge, she argues, was "becoming a faddish, profitable, marketable commodity" that could even be used against women (Maguire, 1987, p. 103). PAR's origins come from another place as one of its main important pinnacles requires that "the social scientist must stand 'with the people' and err on the side of action for social justice". In this sense, Maguire defends that what feminists can learn from PAR is that one "cannot study women's struggles from a safe distance. Instead, she must be a consciously partial and passionate frontline participant in the work to construct a just world" (Maguire, 1987, p. 104).

Characteristics	PAR	FR
Questions the relationship and hierarchy between researcher and researched	X	X
Questions the androcentric roots of this relationship and hierarchy		X
Had as its primary purpose knowledge production		X
Had as its primary purpose the liberation of the oppressed	X	

Table 10 - Comparing Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Feminist Research (FR) according to Maguire (1987).

Gatenby and Humphries (2000) argue that there are several similarities in the ideals of PAR and feminist methodologies. They cite "emancipation, participation and collaboration" as some of the examples. However, PAR has contributed to keep women's issues "minimized or marginalized" since it "has traditionally been conducted as if the social world were a place of gender-neutrality or gender-equality (Gatenby; Humphries, 2000, p. 90). June Lennie (1999) comments a participatory process held in India in which women have faced "practical constraints" since "the time and location of the process, and the need for their collective presence were incompatible with women's work roles" and "social constraints" since the meetings were held in places women were usually not allowed to enter (Lennie, 1999, p. 98).

> Processes used by mainstream planners to consult communities have tended to be based on adversarial models of human relations which are often alienating to women (and some men). Such consultations have also excluded women because they often lack the technical skills, and

"legitimate" knowledge and experience required to contribute to male-defined agendas (Lennie, 1999, p. 98).

According to Lennie, there was also a difference in the way women responded to tasks in comparison to men. Women have been connected to a certain degree of "inaccessibility" and "inarticulateness" that Mosse has read as a "manifestation of structural gender relations" that reinforced the view that "women have nothing to say about natural resources management" (Lennie, 1999, p. 98)

Laurel Weldon (2006) departs from a feminist perspective to defend that "science at its best is an open, public endeavor" and that "complex problems, especially social science's problems, are best dealt with when all of those affected can participate in discussion" (Weldon, 2006, p. 70).

> Each person participating contributes to greater collective intelligence. Participation here does not mean mere involvement. It means that individuals are engaged in discussion, and critically reflect on the questions and problems at hand. In order for people to engage in such discussion, we have to be sure that everyone has the support they need to contribute. Collective interactions should serve to develop the capacities of individuals. In order to maximize intelligence, then, we have to ensure that individuals are not prevented from voicing an idea or question because they are intimidated or silenced by the powerful or because they do not have the resources they need to contribute effectively. The results of such inquiry are not answers that are timelessly true, but better understanding of social problems, or perhaps a reframing of the problems. Such insights depend greatly on context, however. They may not apply equally in all times or places or to all people (Weldon, 2006, p. 70).

Rahnema (2010) argues that even well-intended discourses can "eventually produce opposite results" and that seems to be the case with participation and development (Rahnema, 2010, p. 135). In his words, the "new methodologies" originated from PAR and the adjacent creed in the formation and propagation of a "popular knowledge" have promoted "waves of enthusiasm and hope, mainly among fieldworkers engaged in grassroots activities". One of the main pitfalls of PAR, he argues, is the disregard to the fact that "local knowledge systems" also carry "very questionable values and biases". In that sense, not always a mix of local and foreign knowledges will be able to lead a society towards emancipatory ends. Participation can be easily translated into "a conceptually reductionist and patchwork type of exercise, but also may turn out to be a strange mix of very heterogeneous biases" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 134).

This perspective, thus, solidifies local knowledge as "a fixed commodity that people intrinsically have and own". It ignores the social, political and cultural

pressures molding every kind of knowledge whose formation can never happen "in isolation from power relations". Knowledge, marginal or hegemonic, is embedded in power relations (Kothari, 2001, p. 141).

Similarly, Mohan and Stokke (2000), emphasize that essentializing and romanticizing "the local" can downplay "local social inequalities and power relations". Also, they defend that viewing "'the local' in isolation from broader economic and political structure" can underplay "the contextuality of place, e.g., national and transnational economic and political forces". They argue that "studies of local development should pay more attention to the **politics of the local**", considering how it "cannot be confined to the local level". In their words, "it is crucial to pay attention to issues of scale, i.e., to transgress analytically the boundaries between 'local', 'national' and 'global' scales" (p. 249-50). In this sense, they comment how local power imbalances produce policies that favor the local elites (Mohan; Stokke, p. 253) [emphasis is mine].

Likewise, Dan Connell (1999) denounces that power relations exerts an unescapable pressure over participatory actions in development projects:

> Gather members of a community under a tree in the center of a village and invite them to select a committee to manage a new project, and the results are fairly predictable. The meeting will be dominated by those who traditionally exercise influence in the community, with the most skilled orators and debaters monopolizing the exchange. With few exceptions, these will be older men from the dominant clan or ethnic group — often landowners, merchants, mayors, or village headmen, who occupy the upper end of the socio-economic spectrum as it exists in this particular community (Connel, 1999, p. 83).

Andrea Cornwall (2003), one of the organizers of *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010), questions, in another work, who participates in participatory development. According to her, even development projects that claim to be transformative can "turn out to be supportive of a status quo that is highly inequitable for women" reinforcing gender norms and exclusion. "Women's involvement", she says, "is often limited to implementation, where essentialisms about women's caring roles and naïve assumptions about 'the community' come into play" (Cornwall, 2003, p. 1.329).

Cornwall and Jewkes (1995) problematize PAR listing several issues: local people can be skeptical and decide not to devote their time to the project; some are simply not interested in participating; there might be lack of motivation or enthusiasm; some people will be busy securing their basic necessities; involvement

is neither continuous or predictable; people can be frustrated with the approaching outcomes; the variety of people integrating a community can point to different directions; local people can suffer repression when questioning authorities, among others (Cornwall; Jewkes, 1995, p. 1673).

4.2
Participation in suspended animation: From threat to asset

The main problematic proposed by scholars who pursue a critical analysis of participatory development seems to be summarized by Uma Kothari (2001) when she questions participatory methodologies' ability and efficiency to analyze "the local power relations" when they are actually drowning in them. She describes the enterprise of participatory development as "the identification, collection, interpretation, analysis and (re)presentation of particular forms of (local) knowledge" and stresses that what usually gets forgotten in the middle of these processes is that they are all "inseparable from the exercise of power" (Kothari, 2001, p. 143).

The professionalization of participation has also pushed development towards depoliticization. With the propagation of NGOs, participation in development programs was turned into a sort of business. The "change agents", then, were no longer common people from the local community, or "a sensitive party to a process of mutual learning" but actually "the professional expert hired by a development project" operating as a bridge between the organizations and the locals. In many cases, these "agents of change" would "use conscientization or participatory methods, simply as new and more subtle forms of manipulation" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 138). In the context of the development industry, empowerment is nothing more than the "management of power" (Leal, 2010, p. 96).

Another problem identified by Rahnema (1992) arises from the overconfident assumption that participatory development programs have the ability of empowering people. In his words, "[w]hen A considers it essential for B to be empowered, A assumes not only that B has no power – or does not have the right kind of power – but also that A has the secret formula of a power to which B has to be initiated" (Rahnema, 1992, p. 135). In "Participation: A new tyranny?" (Kothari,

2001), Uma Kothari offers a consonant analysis by attesting that participatory methodologies position the micro against the macro, "the margins against the center, the local against the elite and the powerless against the powerful" in an exercise that essentializes both poles (Kothari, 2001, p. 140).

> However, the almost exclusive focus on the micro-level, on people who are considered powerless and marginal, has reproduced the simplistic notion that the sites of social power and control are to be found solely at the macro- and central levels. These dichotomies further strengthen the assumption that people who wield the power are located at institutional centers, while those who are subjugated and subjected to power are to be found at the local or regional level – hence the valorization of 'local knowledge' and the continued belief in the empowerment of 'local' people through participation (Kothari, 2001, p. 140).

Respectively, she contemplates participatory development as an endeavor that "simplify the nature of power" and by doing so holds the ability to reinforce "power and social control not only by certain individuals and groups, but also of particular bodies of knowledge" (Kothari, 2001, p. 142). Besides, empowerment in development programs can be under scrutiny for their persistent unclarity of "who is to be empowered". In Cleaver's (2001) words: the individual, the 'community', or categories of people such as 'women', 'the poor', or the 'socially excluded' (p. 38). These choices, defends Kothari (2001) are also an act of power and control exerted by development agencies and experts (Kothari, 2001, p. 142).

The most important critique towards the insertion of participation into the industry of development, however, is built from the conclusion that the concept has been rearticulated in the form of a tool capable of coopting dissidents. As Rahmena (1992) aptly puts it, participation has been transformed from a "potential threat into a possible asset" (Rahmena, 1992, p. 141). Leal (2010) proposes a Gramscian reading of this phenomenon. According to him, "preserving the hegemony of the status quo" requires the maintenance of a "social consensus around the interests of the dominant power structures" and neutralizing "challenges and threats" to this dominant rationale. For doing so, a series of "manipulations" are needed, and it is of utmost importance that they do not lack "sophistication" (Leal, 2010, p. 94).

> Whatever the method used to co-opt, the dominant order has assimilated an historic lesson, as White (1996) affirms with simple clarity: 'incorporation, rather than exclusion is the best form of control'. Since frontal negation or attacks to those challenges to the dominant order often serve only to strengthen and legitimate the dissent in the eyes of

society, co-option becomes the more attractive option for asserting control (Leal, 2010, p. 94).

Likewise, Kothari builds from Foucault's Discipline and Punish (1977) to argue that power is as much exposed as it is masked; that what we rapidly perceive as instruments of discipline, e.g., prisons, are nothing more than a "continuation and intensification of what goes on in more ordinary places". Participatory actions can also be used to colonize people's bodies, behaviors and perceptions (Foucault, 1977, p. 144). The author cites the practice of "building consensus" within local communities as a process that can result in the crystallization of power inequalities as "social norms" (Foucault, 1977, p. 145). Attached to it, is the "purification of knowledge and space":

> Furthermore, there is a purification of space by the exclusion or rejection of certain people and certain forms of knowledge. The methodological tools and techniques of participatory development, such as seasonal calendars and wealth ranking, similarly require a purification or cleaning up of knowledge and experience: a tidying up of people's lives through the exclusion of anything that is messy or does not fit the structured representations implied by participatory tools. The use of participatory techniques often requires the taking out of anything complicated, making people's lives and their social interactions linear and sterile as they fit into charts, diagrams and tables and conform to the boundaries and limitations of the methodological tools (Kothari, 2001, p. 147).

Equally, participation carries such a heavy moral weight that those who decide not to participate end up characterized as deviants. This happens because "there is no positive opposite or counter to participation – it is implicitly good, constructive and productive" (Kothari, 2001, p. 148).

Mohan and Stokke (2000) argue that participation in development have been supported by two different perspectives:

The *first* perspective can be envisioned as a **"*revisionist neoliberalism*"** that encompasses "a 'top-down' strategy for institutional reform", i.e., it assumes that participation must be installed through "an effort by state agencies and collaborating non-governmental organizations to make institutions more efficient and to include identified target groups in the development process". The **second** perspective can be identified as a form of **"*post-Marxism*"** that assumes the need for a complete "reversion of this neoliberal view", i.e., it considers that participation should depart from "'bottom-up' social mobilization in society as a challenge to hegemonic interests within the state and the market" (Mohan; Stokke, 2000, p. 249).

While the first perspective considers participation and empowerment being generated through a "harmony model of power", the second one presumes that "power is conceptualized in relational and conflictual terms". Revisionist neoliberalism proposes that "the empowerment of the powerless could be achieved within the existing social order without any significant negative effects upon the power of the powerful". On the other hand, Post-Marxism defends that the "empowerment of marginalized groups requires a structural transformation of economic and political relations towards a radically democratized society" (Mohan; Stokke, 2000, p. 249). Leal (2010) and Rahnema (2010) would probably argue that in the development industry, participation only takes place in the first shape.

From their point-of-view, participation has been coopted through a brutal slaughtering: it was modified, sanitized and depoliticized. Its function became no more than that of an apparatus of "legitimation" of development (Rahnema, 2010, p. 135). "Once purged of all the threatening elements, participation could be re-engineered as an instrument that could play a role within the status quo, rather than one that defied it" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 95).

Likewise, Cleaver (2006) comments on development's hyper-fixation with techniques. According to her, this "techniques-based participatory orthodoxy" or "the tyranny of techniques" fails to "address issues of power and control of information and other resources and provides an inadequate framework for developing a critical reflective understanding of the deeper determinants of technical and social change" (Cleaver, 2006, p. 38-9). She endorses post-development reading of participation as she considers that development has been detached from its "radical roots" by being turned into "a managerial exercise based on 'toolboxes' of procedures and techniques". She delivers an enlightening perspective that participation as a critical topic has been insistently impoverished. If once the concept favored "problematization, critical engagement and class", now it is all about the aseptic enterprise of "problem-solving" (Cleaver, 2006, p. 53). Equally, Bill Cooke (2005) comments on how the co-optation of participation has required a dismantlement of the concept as a promotor of emancipation that made it "reduced to technique, and applied for non-emancipatory ends" (Cooke, 2005, p. 46). Participation seems to be a case of what Carol Gluck calls "words as points of transit". In this kind of words, she defends, "meaning changed direction" and they move "like balls in a billiard game, where the initial hit sent them scattering every

which way. Sometimes their trajectory landed them in situations with unexpected outcomes" (Gluck, 2011, p. 19).

Participation has frequently been considered by post-development scholars as a misleading slogan within development programs. Emblematic of a superficial commitment to inclusivity and empowerment, in many cases, the rhetoric of participation serves as a façade that obscures the persistence of top-down decision-making and reinforces existing power differentials. As Cornwall and Brock (2005) argue, genuine participation necessitates a transformative process that challenges unequal power dynamics, yet in practice, it can be co-opted to create an illusion of local involvement while allowing external actors to retain control. The shallow and unproblematized inclusion of marginalized communities in development processes, without providing them meaningful agency or influence, has been criticized for actually promoting the disempowerment of local people. I propose that this hollow form of participation can be characterized as *participation in suspended animation*.

"Empowerment" and "participation" have been terms widely used in the development industry and, in many cases, they can enrich development projects and achieve positive results. The problem, however, is that there seems to be "a temptation to use them in a way that takes the troublesome notions of power, and the distribution of power, out of the picture". In the words of Jo Rowlands (1999), "in spite of their appeal, these terms can easily become one more way to ignore or hide the realities of power, inequality, and oppression. Yet it is precisely those realities which shape the lives of poor and marginalized people, and the communities in which they live" (Rowlands, 1999, p. 148).

Accordingly, participation has been managed in the development industry as a tool capable of suppressing opposition. By saving a space for an ultra-organized form of participation, development programs both give civil society the illusion of agency at the same time as they set the limits of its interference. This means that participation do not need to be feared by development organizations because the rules under which it takes place are, since the beginning, designed to constrain possible deviations from the mainstream discourse.

As said by Kothari (2001), participatory methodologies can end up imposing "forms of control that are more difficult to challenge, as they reduce spaces of conflict and are relatively benign and liberal" (Kothari, 2001, p. 143).

> That is, those people who have the greatest reason to challenge and confront power relations and structures are brought, or even bought, through the promise of development assistance, into the development process in ways that disempower them to challenge the prevailing hierarchies and inequalities in society, hence inclusionary control and the inducement of conformity (Kothari, 2001, p. 143).

In that sense, the development industry seems to have led participation into a state of suspended animation, "a state in which life in a body is temporarily slowed down or stopped" (Cambridge Dictionary). Like bears during Winter, participation survives dormant, demanding almost nothing from this big development organism, and producing even less.

Suspended animation, we should notice, is a state provoked by an environment characterized by scarcity of given resources, i.e., creatures in suspended animation spare what is meager. Similarly, the control of the outcomes of participation in development programs can only be achieved through the manipulation of a balance between scarcity and abundance. In this sense, the development environment can abound with participatory methods while it lacks the adequate substance to produce real change, i.e., it can involve popular consultations while it ignores power struggles as a cause of deprivation.

This hibernating form of participation can only take place in an aseptic environment. Depoliticization, which Rahnema and Leal would probably consider "a good strong word that means something", crystalizes the belief that "poverty, inequity, and marginalization are results of a lack of application of technology, capital, and knowledge combined successfully through appropriate policy and planning mechanisms". Consequently, development steers away from class struggles and towards "technocracy or the technification of social and political problems" which put the focus on "the techniques of participation, rather than on its meaning" (Leal, 2010, p. 95).

> Freed from its originally intended politics and ideology, participation was also liberated from any meaningful form of social confrontation, aside from the very superficial dichotomy between 'outsiders' and 'insiders', or 'uppers' and 'lowers'. Power, in the current global context, and especially so in the context of Third World societies, implies significant degrees of social confrontation and contradiction which are inherent and imminent in processes of social change and transformation. However, for reasons that should by now be self-evident, social confrontation is an issue that the development industry has never been able or willing to address (Leal, 2010, p. 95).

A great example of that, according to Leal, would be the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) which even though "peppered with buzzwords such as 'sustainability', 'participation', 'empowerment', 'equality', and 'democracy'", "makes no reference to what might be the forces that produce and perpetuate poverty" (Leal, 2010, p. 94). Wit this, Leal hits the soft spot of development: the generalized criticism on its ability to promote depoliticization.

James Ferguson's (1994) concept of development as an "anti-politics machine" sheds some light on how development interventions can often function to depoliticize local contexts and even reinforce existing power structures. As the author asserts, "development schemes have often served quite effectively as machines for the production of political indifference" (p. 337). This perspective underscores how development projects, despite their purported aims of empowerment and progress, can inadvertently marginalize local agency and suppress grassroots political mobilization. Ferguson's critique resonates with broader post-development discourse, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the intricate interplay between development interventions, power dynamics, and the sociopolitical realities of the target communities. Observing the case of Lesotho, he argues as follows:

> For while we have seen that "development" projects in Lesotho may end up working to expand the power of the state, and while they claim to address the problems of poverty and deprivation, in neither guise does the "development" industry allow its role to be formulated as a political one. By uncompromisingly reducing poverty to a technical problem, and by promising technical solutions to the sufferings of powerless and oppressed people, the hegemonic problematic of "development" is the principal means through which the question of poverty is de-politicized in the world today (Ferguson, 1994, p. 256).

Glyn Williams (2005) argues that this participation in suspended animation favors depoliticization by:

i. stressing "personal reform over political struggle" (Williams, 2005, p. 92);

ii. privileging "'the community' as the site where empowerment is assumed to occur", veiling "repressive structures and deflecting attention away "from wider power relationships that frame the construction of local development problems" (Williams, 2005, p. 92);

iii.   treating communities "as fixed and unproblematic and idealized in terms of their content" (Williams, 2005, p. 92);

iv.   "incorporating marginalized individuals in development projects that they are unable to question" (Williams, 2005, p. 93);

v.   "producing 'grassroots' knowledge ignorant of its own partiality and foreclosing discussion of alternative visions of development" (Williams, 2005, p. 93).

Leal (2010) is cautious about completely internalizing the idea of depoliticization. According to him, the depoliticization of participation "is not entirely true" since it serves "to justify, legitimize and perpetuate current neo-liberal hegemony". Politics might have vanished from the language of development, but it is still embedded in its practices. In Leal's words, "by having been detached from its radical nature, participatory action was consequently re-politicized in the service of the conservative neo-liberal agenda" (Leal, 2010, p. 95).

Williams also offers a tempered critique on the topic of depoliticization in participatory development. She is suspicious of arguments forged from "an almost conspiratorial air of intentionality, as implied in Rahnema's phrase: 'teleguided and masterly organized'". As she says, even though it "may have become an international and powerful discourse", it is too much of a stretch believing that participatory development is "an intentional project capable of being controlled by a narrow set of 'interest groups', be they local southern elites or policy-makers in Washington" (Williams, 2005, p. 93). Similarly, she calls attention to the fact that such perspectives can encompass a "reductionist view of power" that rejects the possibilities of resistance. According to her, "any configuration of power/knowledge opens up its own particular spaces and moments for resistance" (Williams, 2005, p. 94).

> Seeing these possibilities for resistance we should not forget the lessons learned from Scott's 'weapons of the weak' (Scott 1985). To take the 'incorporation' of participatory events at face value is to ignore people's ability for feigned compliance and tactical (and self-interested) engagement. Furthermore, there is the ever-present possibility that while participatory development projects can seem all-consuming to practitioners and academics evaluating them, they may play a relatively small part in their intended beneficiaries' lives (Kumar and Corbridge 2002; Williams *et al.* 2003a). Limited engagement or even exit thus

provide means of passive resistance to the 'tyranny of participation' (Williams, 2005, p. 94).

Power, says Leal (2010), is "as it has always been, at the center of the participation paradigm". He is poignant in his critique of development's failure to produce social change. From his perspective, it is not so much a failure since it has never been a real goal for the major actors in this system. Similarly, Ferguson (1994) affirms that, in this industry, "failure is the norm" (p. 254). "Re-politicization", Leal (2010) defends, cannot arise from the aseptic, highly controlled environment of the "institutional development agenda", but from "the social, political, and cultural context of grassroots struggle" (Leal, 2010, p. 96).

> Institutionalized development, unable to accept or assume the original connotations of power and empowerment that participation carried with it, maneuvered to create new interpretations of the concept. Principal among them is the idea of power as something which could be 'given' by the powerful to the powerless. Of course, as Tandon (1996:33) points out, this is highly problematic: Those who 'give' power condition it; it has to be taken. It is through the active struggle for rights that you secure those rights. It is through the active struggle for resources that you secure those resources. That is the lesson of history (Leal, 2010, p. 96).

Leal seems to claim for what Mohan and Stokke (2000) call a "paradigm shift" in which participation requires the dismantlement of the authority of 'outside agents, whether that be the state or Western development agencies, for achieving changes to self and/or community". It departs from the assumption that "experts" don't "know best what creates the space for local knowledge to be accessed" (Mohan; Stokke, 2000, p. 252).

Frances Cleaver defends that despite "heroic claims", there are little evidence that participation has actually improved the life conditions of vulnerable people or even produced social change. Thus participation has become "an act of faith in development, something we believe in and rarely question" (p. 36).

4.3
Participation in the 2030 Agenda

In "Participatory Arts in International Development" (2020), Paul Cooke and Inés Soria-Donlan describe the 2030 Agenda as a focus point for investigation of participation in the enterprise of development in the 21st century. In their words, "to highlight the centrality of 'participatory development' to mainstream international

development practice, one need to look no further than the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". According to them, the idea of participatory governance runs like a thread throughout the SDGs stitching them together – with a particular intensification in SDG16 which pledges for "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels" (s.p.).

Cooke and Soria-Donlan (2020) emphasize a crucial difference between the participatory nature of the SDGs and their predecessors, the MDGs. While the MDGs still located development as something that flows from North to South, the SDGs "move away" from an understanding of development based on "financial and knowledge transfers from the Global North to the Global South". The SDGs, they defend, are based on "a far more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the development challenges faced by the world's most vulnerable communities". Perhaps the greatest demonstration of this perspective was the "unprecedented global consultation" undertaken by the United Nations in the creation of the Agenda, a process that has involved a "special effort to reach out to the poor, the marginalized and others whose voices are not usually heard" (s.p.).

Proposing methods for qualitative analysis, Miles and Huberman say that "[a]lthough comparisons are supposedly odious, they are what we do naturally and quickly when faced with any life experience, including looking at a qualitative data display" (p. 254). Accordingly, I believe that the best way to understand the role and importance of participation in the SDGs requires an attentive comparison to their predecessors, the MDGs.

4.3.1
From the MDGs to the SDGs

The 2030 Agenda can be understood as a planet-wide collaborative partnership to alleviate or extinguish several of the most urgent problems of humanity – the preamble of its inaugural document, the report called Transforming Our World (2015), mentions poverty, peace, human rights and gender equality. According to this document, the participants, member-states of the United Nations (UN), agreed "to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path". The 2030 Agenda also

pledges that it seeks "to free the human race from the tyranny of poverty and want and to heal and secure our planet" without leaving no one behind by "reaching the furthest behind first".

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are defined as "integrated and indivisible" and are intended to balance "the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental". They are also described as "a comprehensive, far reaching and people centered set of universal and transformative Goals and targets" which are distributed in 5 categories called "people" (SDGs 1 to 6), "planet" (SDGs 7 to 10), "prosperity" (SDGs 11 to 15), "peace" (SDG 16) and "partnership" (SDG 17) – these are also known as the 5 Ps (n.p.).

Figure 5 - The SDGs categorized in the 5 Os.

It is important to notice that the Transforming Our World (2015) document does not hold back with the self-compliments. The 2030 Agenda is described as "a historic decision", and also as the owner of a "supremely ambitious and transformational vision" (n.p.). This perception that the 2030 Agenda brought about a renovated view of development, differently from the MDGs, can be attributed to:

i.   the fact that the agenda departs from a proposition mainly encouraged by the global South;

ii.   the fact that it frames sustainable development as something to be pursued by every country, even those who are already considered developed;

iii.   the fact that it puts aside the donor-recipient logic that dominated the field of development for decades; and

iv.   the fact that it was built on a holistic and complex perspective of development.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a 15 year long project established in 2000 to face some of the most urgent problems inflicted on developing countries entering the new millennium. They were understood as an attempt "to bring governance and coordination to the global development agenda" with the primary aim "to reduce extreme poverty and hunger" (MacFeely, 2018, p. 2).

The MDGs were originated from the Millennium Declaration published by the United Nations in September 2000 during the Millennium Summit. Said document attested, for example, the UN member-states' commitment to "free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected" (United Nations, 2000, p. 4). Despite being "quoted in countless speeches, reports and articles", the declaration started to lose momentum. From that, came the idea to "place selected targets contained in the Millennium Declaration into a free-standing category in order to rescue them from oblivion. They came to be known as the millennium development goals" (Vandermoortele, 2011b, p. 4). The MDGs were eight in total and ended up mainly popularized through their colorful visual identity.

Figure 6 - The MDGs.

Fukuda-Parr and McNeill (2019) stress that the biggest achievement of the MDGs was not really in the sense of a "policy change or impact", but on the level of discourse – which certainly gives a nod to our discussion of Developmentspeak. As they say, the MDGs were extremely important in "raising awareness about global poverty as an urgent moral imperative of the world as a whole" and much of this success can be attributed to the fact that "they expressed the objectives of a complex process – development – in a simple set of eight goals" also encompassing "a semblance of scientific certitude and accountability" as they were "concrete, time bound and quantitative targets, and set universal standards". According to the authors, even though the Millennium Declaration was populated with ideals of "equality, respect for nature, solidarity, and human rights", the MDGs ended up being "reductionist" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 8).

Jan Servaes (2017) envisions the MDGs as a set of goals that "look at development as an 'engineering problem' to be solved from a top-down perspective" (Servaes, 2017, p. 7). The MDGs, Fukuda-Parr and McNeill say, "framed a narrative of development as a top down (sic) approach to meeting basic needs, promoting a target-driven strategy, and de-contextualized from local settings" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019 p. 8). The MDGs "began to communicate [a] simplified understanding of development: gender equality as educational parity, food security as adequate calories and so on" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019 p. 8).

In 2006, for example, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published a report called "Claiming the Millennium

122

Development Goals: A Human Rights Approach" whose objective was aligning the MDGs and the human rights agenda. The report defended that the "MDG-based development planning" was not up to the task proposed by the Millennium Declaration. Some of the cited problems were that "goal 2 ignores the crucial requirement of free primary education, which is an immediate obligation in international human rights treaties", "the lack of participation of Southern countries and civil society organizations", and "the lack of effective accountability mechanisms for the MDGs" (OHCHR, 2006, p. vii).

Jan Vandermoortele (2011a), one of the co-writers of the MDGs, balances "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of the MDGs in a piece called "If not the Millennium Development Goals, then what?". Although very informative, his work is a bit frustrating as he addresses some of the drawbacks of the agenda as problems of misunderstanding. He says, for example, that the MDGs "have been misinterpreted as one-size-fits-all targets" when they were actually meant to be adapted to local contexts (Vandermoortele, 2011a, p. 11), and that "they have been misappropriated to reaffirm the conventional view of development", being "misconstrued and distorted to make them fit with the orthodox policy framework" (Vandermoortele, 2011a, p. 13).

However, one of his most interesting comments is focused on the misinterpretation of "the intended users of the MDGs". "Policy makers and development practitioners", he says, "already have frameworks, covenants, paradigms and sectoral best practices to carry out their work […] The MDGs were not meant for them" (Vandermoortele, 2011a, p. 12).

> They were primarily meant to foster a better understanding of what development efforts are about among the wider public and other stakeholders, such as the media. Development is a complex matter which needs to be simplified when communicating with an audience of non-specialists. The MDGs therefore present a deliberate shorthand version of human development (Vandermoortele, 2011a, p. 12).

In this sense, Fukuda-Parr and McNeill's conclusion that the achievement of the MDGs was contained to the matters of discourse could be read not as partial, but actually as a total success. Vandermoortele has also defended that a "limited number of targets is a sine qua non for success" rejecting the idea of adding more targets to the project as "the resulting set would be so colossal that it would implode

under its own weight" (Vandermoortele, 2011a, p. 17). I wonder what he would say about the 17 SDGs and their 169 targets and 232 indicators.

The MDGs' biggest failure, Vandermoortele says, was not being capable of shifting "the focus of the development discourse from income–poverty to the multidimensional nature of human poverty" (Vandermoortele, 2011b, p. 1). The fact that poverty reduction has been "defined in money-metrics terms" (Vandermoortele, 2011b, p. 11) disturbs the MDGs' original idea that "the end of human poverty will not result from more wealth or aid, but from more equity and justice" (Vandermoortele, 2011b, p. 3). He affirms that "it is not the MDGs that posit income–poverty as the cornerstone of human development, human wellbeing or human rights; quite the contrary" (Vandermoortele, 2011b, p. 12). According to him, the MDGs were just not successful in changing this orthodox perspective that was around much before them.

The "Transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs" (2015), a report co-produced by the World Bank and the UN, assesses the results of the MDGs with temperance by emphasizing that "time lags between actions and effects add to the difficulty of identifying when a particular factor may have spurred improvement" and that "these realities complicate efforts to ascertain the value of the MDGs" (United Nations, 2015, p. 14).

The last annual report of the MDGs states clearly that "thanks to concerted global, regional, national and local efforts, the MDGs have saved the lives of millions and improved conditions for many more" also defending that "with targeted interventions, sound strategies, adequate resources and political will, even the poorest countries can make dramatic and unprecedented progress" (United Nations, 2015, p. 4). The report demonstrates, for example, an impressive decline in the under-five mortality rate (from 90 deaths per 1,000 births in 1990 to 43 in 2015), a considerable fall in the number of new HIV infections (40 per cent between 2000 and 2013), and an important increase in primary school net enrolment in developing regions (from 83 per cent in 2000 to 91 per cent in 2015). It also attests that "extreme poverty has declined significantly", an assertion that Jan Vandermoortele would problematize because of the money-metric indicator (number of people living on less than $1,25 a day worldwide) (United Nations, 2015, p. 4).

On the other hand, the report also calls attention to the fact that despite several improvements the "progress has been uneven across regions and countries, leaving significant gaps" and that millions of people are "being left behind", "especially the poorest and those disadvantaged because of their sex, age, disability, ethnicity or geographic location". The document proposes that these gaps will require "targeted efforts" to be closed (United Nations, 2015, p. 8).

Even though the MDGs have suffered vehement criticism and failed in certain ways, Vandermoortele defended that "among their many shortcomings, indifference is not one of them". "A decade after they came into existence", he said, "the MDGs continue to energize people, mobilize stakeholders and galvanize political leaders" (Vandemoortele, 2011a, p. 9). Besides that, we cannot ignore what seems to be their most impressive achievement, i.e., the crystallization of the idea that "data are an indispensable element of the development agenda" (United Nations MDGs report, 2015, p. 10).

I use the word "crystallization" on purpose because data-dependency was not something alien to the field of development before the MDGs. In 1994, James Ferguson was already criticizing the World Bank's fixation with statistics in its 1975 report on Lesotho that attested that the "economic indicators" on the country were "scarce and unreliable" (World Bank *apud* Ferguson, 1994, p. 40). The poor quality of the statistics, says Ferguson, does not stop the World Bank from using them as the main instrument of analysis of the country. This kind of occurrence seems to demonstrate that the authority of development intervention depends directly on the authority of numbers. Prescribing ways to achieve development without statistics is somehow like a physician prescribing medication to a patient they have not examined. "In 'development' discourse", Ferguson says, "the fact that there are no statistics available is no excuse for not presenting statistics, and even made-up numbers are better than none at all" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 41).

The final report of the MDGs defends that their "monitoring experience" made it clear that "effective use of data can help to galvanize development efforts, implement successful targeted interventions, track performance and improve accountability" and, from this, it concludes that "sustainable development demands a data revolution to improve the availability, quality, timeliness and disaggregation of data to support the implementation of the new development agenda at all levels" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 41).

Using direct assertions as "measure what we treasure" and "what gets measured gets done", the report emphasizes the role played by the MDGs in animating the "production and use of development data" and calling attention to "the need for strengthening statistical capacity and improving statistical methodologies and information systems at both national and international levels" culminating in an "increased availability of more and better data", which would become a flagship to the SDGs (Ferguson, 1994, p. 41).

The SDGs inherited at least three imperatives from their predecessors. The first one was overcoming the persistent obstacles and making sure that the results of development would reach everyone, especially the most vulnerable. This imperative was translated to their motto: "leaving no one behind".

The second imperative was transforming the negotiation process to make it more democratic. That is, expanding participation and abandoning the North-South divide that dominated the field until then. It is important to remember that "the MDGs had been widely criticized as an agenda that was formulated without consultation, drafted by the SG's advisers on the 38th floor of the UN and data experts from the OECD, World Bank and UNDP" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 10).

According to Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022), one of the "major criticism of the MDGs was that the process by which goals were included in the global agenda was decided from the top without proper consultation with member countries and many bilateral or multilateral development partners" (Bandola-Gill *et al.*, 2022, p. 23). Tichenor et al. (2022) highlight that differently from the MDGs, the "SDGs were the product of two and a half years of consultation and deliberation among civil society actors, international organizations, and nation states, including many Global South countries" (Tichenor *et al*, 2022, p. 3).

Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho (2022) present a demonstrate how participation played an important role in the design of the Agenda mentioning the case of SDG16. Brazilian government, at first contrary to "the inclusion of a goal dedicated to peace", has changed its positioning under the pressure exerted by discussions promoted by national civil society. This transformation shows how dialog amongst diverse actors can go a long way (p. 5).

From her feminist analysis, Valeria Esquivel (2006) tells us that the SDGs were born from "a two-year open consultation process, involving the active

engagement of member states (particularly middle-income countries) and civil society groups" (Esquivel, 2006, p. 10).

> This process made it possible to shed some of the most restrictive features of the MDGs, most notably the aid-driven approach to poverty reduction and other 'poor countries'' problems, and the exclusive emphasis on outcomes (or 'results'), as opposed to policies and means of implementation. In contrast, the SDGs do explicitly mention both of these – even if vaguely in many instances (Esquivel, 2006, p. 10).

Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) identify a "participatory turn" in the UN. This event, which took place in the "design of the SDGs", were pushed by the "apparent failure" of the MDGs that ended up being considered a "top-down structure". This turn was not only directed towards the inclusion of policymakers "but also a range of other stakeholders (such as the civil society and national representatives" (Bandola-Gill *et al.*, p. 100). The authors consider that since the launching of The Future We Want document in 2012, an understanding has been built around the idea that development governance should encompass "national actors, the private sector and civil society". Subsequently, in the SDGs, participation has been taken as a process that should happen "across institutional boundaries but also – and perhaps more importantly – across previously traditional lines of power and influence" (Bandola-Gill *et al.*, p. 101).

As it is told by Fukuda-Parr and McNeill (2019), "the SDGs did not result from a one-off negotiation but should be seen as part of a process of contestation over development agendas that had been on-going for decades" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill (2019, p. 11). Perhaps the most illustrative example is the fact that the 2030 Agenda "emerged from two parallel processes" that "differed markedly in their agendas, politics, and thinking". The first one orbited the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the need to establish a "successor agenda". The second one orbited the Rio+20 Conference on the Environment and Development that happened in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012. The first process aimed at the creation of a "follow-up to MDGs – 'MDG plus' or MDGs version 2.0" while the second process aimed at a "sustainable development agenda incorporating poverty, environmental sustainability, economic development, and social equity". Where the first one was pursuing the establishment of "a poverty/basic needs agenda", the second one was "seeking structural change" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 9).

The first process, also known as the post-2015 process, was led by the United Nations Secretary General and the UN bodies; the second, by member states through the Open Working Group (OWG). The OWG was "a deliberate strategy to by-pass" the traditional processes of negotiation of the UN General Assembly (GA), which is "closed to non-state actors, and proceeds with regional blocs developing their own positions first, and then coming together at the GA to negotiate" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019). The adoption of the OWG intended to avoid "the North-South political divide, to reduce reliance on the UN secretariat and agencies, and to ensure that the process itself would be open to inputs from civil society, academia, and business" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 10).

> Cognizant of criticisms of the MDGs, the SDG process aimed to create a people-centered development agenda from the outset. To do so, an unprecedented global consultation was undertaken. Specialized panels were held to facilitate intergovernmental discussions, with the result that 193 governments expressed their opinion. The online My World survey amassed over seven million responses (Bhattacharya and Kharas 2015). Civil society organizations, citizens, scientists, academics and private sectors around the world were consulted through various fora and given an opportunity to express their views (MacFeely, 2018, p. 3).

The OWG process gained momentum. It "met in 13 sessions from March 2013 to July 2014" when it "reached agreement […] on a proposed list of 17 goals and 169 targets to be submitted to the GA" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 9). As it is told by the Transforming Our World report,

> [...] the Goals and targets are the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society and other stakeholders around the world, which paid particular attention to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable" (UNITED NATIONS, 2015, s.p.).

The third imperative was expanding the scope of the agenda as to escape the criticism on a reductionist idea of development. In this sense, it was "deliberately designed to reflect a different theory of development". "The SDGs are universal, integrated, and complex; in contrast, the MDGs were for developing countries, and designed to be simple, narrowly focused on meeting basic needs" (Fukuda-Parr and McNeill, 2019, p. 11). In the foreword to the "Transitioning from the MDGs to the SDGs" document, Ban Ki-moon, then UN Secretary-General, affirmed that the MDGs "were an expression of solidarity with the world's poorest and most vulnerable". The SDGs were supposed to pursue their "unfinished business", but also to go "beyond poverty eradication, breaking new ground" balancing "economic

growth, social justice and environmental stewardship" and underlining "the links between peace, development and human rights" (p. 1).

> This expansion of scope arose from an attempt to move beyond the symptoms of poverty and hunger and to begin to address the causes: the pillars of social cohesion, economic stability and environmental sustainability, and many of the other interrelated issues that contribute directly or indirectly to poverty, hunger and inequality, such as peace, stability, human rights and good governance (MacFeely, 2018, p. 3).

The expansion cited by Steve MacFeely can be perceived through the number of goals, targets and indicators. While the "MDGs had 8 goals, 21 targets and 60 indicators", the SDGs "have 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators" (MacFeely, 2018). In this sense, the SDGs do what Vandermoortele considered impossible. We are still to find out if the 2030 Agenda is about to "implode under its own weight" (2011a, p. 17).

4.3.2
The participatory and technocratic SDGs

Tichenor *et al.* (2022) believe that even though the SDGs carry an indicator framework that has been built "on the MDG approach", they have also "dramatically expanded the scope of issues and types of indicators that are included" (p. 3). For the same reason, Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) interpret the SDGs as much of a sign of "continuation" as of "divergence" in relation to the MDGs (Tichenor *et al.*, 2022, p. 23).

Proposing the existence of an "epistemic infrastructure" in the scope of the SDGs, Tichenor *et al.* (2022) define the 2030 Agenda as a product built from "human agents from different positionalities in the transnational space and the non-human agents of indicators, protocols, data, and so on". And here is the quite interesting part: For the authors, the fabric that brings together all these agents is precisely the process of data production, i.e., the "participatory governance" or "network governance" so much propagandized in the SDGs is majorly anchored on data practices (p. 7).
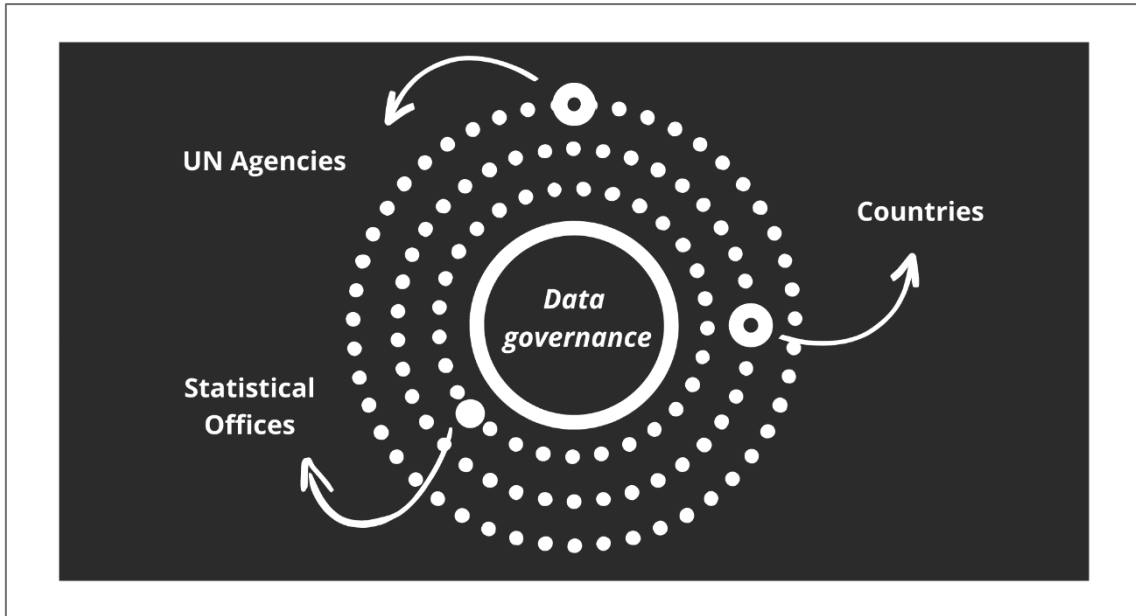
Figure 7 - The system of data governance.

Even though "it is a widely held view that the SDGs were a large step towards producing a global agenda that is participatory for all member states" (Bandola-Gill *et al.*, 2022, p. 62), they can be better described as a project that is split into two different natures. The 2030 Agenda is driven "by both the technocratic logic of quantification and the democratic logic of participatory governance". Both branches (or logics) meet in the "polycentric data governance of the SDGs" (Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho, forthcoming).

According to Bandola-Gill (2022), the turn the SDGs make towards participation "played an important political role in communicating the equality as the underpinning value of the SDGs as well as—or perhaps more importantly—securing the buy-in into the epistemic infrastructure of this measurement program" (Bandola-Gill, 2022, p. 113). These two natures, however, are not unacquainted: The data-intensive nature of the SDGs, thoroughly expressed through "data harmonization" – "a process through which a variety and diversity of national statistics become translated into one global number" – is envisioned by the authors as a generator of spaces not only for "governing" and "measurement", but also for "participation" (Bandola-Gill, 2022, p. 2).

> These universal metrics smooth out profound political, economic and cultural differences between different countries, promote and produce universal policy agendas, and "create comparability" by promoting

competition between countries in various policy arenas (Bandola-Gill et al., 2022, p. 42).

It is crucial to notice that the perspective Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) adopt for speaking of participation is quite different from that proposed by post-development scholars, especially those who have analyzed developmentspeak: Rahnema (2010) and Leal (2010). While Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) consider participation a process of homogenization or "smoothing out" differences, Rahnema (2010) and Leal (2010) assume participation as a radical process in which the particularities of minorities or vulnerable communities should be made more visible and, consequently, attended. Thus, in this case, differences were supposed to be emphasized, not effaced. This *interpretive mismatch* is a revealing demonstration of the main critique proposed by the authors compiled in the Developmentspeak Glossary: the fact that concepts, once strong words that meant something, are made plastic, stretchy, so much flexible that they end up being used to mean almost the opposite of their original sense.

Besides this interpretive mismatch, there seems to be an internal mismatch in the 2030 Agenda as well, one that nods to the idea of a Janus-faced project. On one hand, we have seen that the design of the 2030 Agenda has counted on a two-year-long consultation process that indeed brought into the discussion the ideas and perceptions of a multiplicity of actors, including civil society (Bandola-Gill et al, 2022; Tichenor *et al.*, 2022, Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho, 2022, Esquivel, 2006; Fukuda-Parr and McNeil, 2019). On the other hand, as the Agenda advances, and debates concede space to the monitoring phase, this multitude of voices seems to be pushed back to the margins. If data governance or data harmonization is *the* current space for participatory action in the 2030 Agenda, as Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) propose, how would the disparity of statistical capacity or even financial resources allow equal participation of all actors? [The transformation of developmentspeak into *dataspeak* produces obstacles of its own. This will be more profoundly discussed in chapter 5.]

This kind of question is made possible from a feminist understanding of participation. Laura Weldon (2006) reminds us that participation "does not mean mere involvement. It means that individuals are engaged in discussion, and critically reflect on the questions and problems at hand" (Weldon, 2006, p. 70). A feminist methodology would favor the context of those being marginalized, it would

look for the *margins*, not the *center*. Weldon's words help us find a logical thread in this *interpretive mismatch*.

> Taking the perspective of the marginalized reveals the importance of legitimation processes, processes by which existing political structures are portrayed as just, natural, and rational. It reveals the presence as well as the limits of coercive power in the everyday lives of those at the bottom of the hierarchy of power (p. 67).

In this sense, Weldon's approach leads us to problematize the idea of data governance or data harmonization as a "just, rational, and natural" participatory process. I do not believe that Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) are blind to this phenomenon. Instead, it seems to me that their analysis identifies an idea that stands at the core of the 2030 Agenda: an urgency to guarantee as complex social problems might be, they will be translated into the manageable form of numbers. A radical form of participation, they mention, would "stall" the process. Then, it must be superficial, or contained to the design phase in order to keep it moving forward.

> The focus on both democracy and technocracy has proved to be challenging for the experts within the IOs, as neither of the two logics could have been completely satisfied. Instead, the experts engaged in the process of 'sufficing' and navigating both logics and types of accountability: the technical and the democratic ones. This balancing act proved to be difficult, as prioritizing either one of the two 'logics' risks the loss of momentum and support: for example, as indicated in our discussion of different approaches to dealing with imperfect numbers, prioritizing methodological practices of mechanistic objectivity (Daston & Galison, 2007) risked stalling collaborative action, politicizing it or stopping the political processes aimed at actually fulfilling the targets of the SDGs. Alternatively, the technocratic process was mobilized when delaying practices aimed at changing the focus from often difficult political decisions, turned to seemingly endless and irreconcilable methodological debates. On the other hand, the baseline legitimacy of the process still rested on the epistemic virtues of numbers (cf. Bandola-Gill, 2021). Focusing entirely on democratic accountability risked inviting 'stealth' politics whereby the powerful actors got more influence within the 'participatory' processes (Bandola-Gill, 2022, p. 113-4).

The authors argue that it is not possible to affirm that this "participatory governance actually disrupts the power asymmetries that have long structured the relationships between UN agencies and countries in the Global North on the one hand, and countries in the Global South on the other". Nevertheless, they recognize that the epistemic infrastructure of the SDGs explicitly creates interdependencies between all these actors in the act of producing a common global public policy because of and despite these power differentials" (Bandola-Gill, 2022, p. 8). From

a feminist perspective, we could argue that interdependency is not an obvious sign of equality and that, instead, they can be articulated as instruments that crystalize inequalities, reinforcing positionalities. The analysis of women's participation in development projects in the next section will allow us to go deeper in this argument.

The hype built around participation and its subsequent loss of momentum can certainly raise some red flags after the several discussions of participation being used as a legitimating tool we have seen in the beginning of this chapter (Dingwerth and Nanz, 2016; Cooke, 2005; Lennie, 1999; Rahnema, 1992; Leal, 2010). Can the 2030 Agenda be considered a case in which participation is brought up more as a "strategy" than as a "principle"? Perhaps proposing this question is more useful than actually answering it. As Nay (2020) has argued, there is a naiveté in the tentative to categorize or fix a solid, impenetrable idea of participation in a development project. The multitude of voices that has contributed to the design of the 2030 Agenda certainly makes it almost impossible. In this sense, I suggest the exercise of paying attention to the project's inner contradictions which serve as clues not of a mischievous intention of applying participation as a stratagem to attract innocent people into it, but as signs of a proposed intention that do not live up to the hype or that only lightly scratches the surface of what it aims at.

Ariel Salleh (2016), for example, departs from ecofeminist reading to argue that the SDGs are not only "unrealistic" but also "undemocratic" as they "are to be realized by growing gross domestic product (GDP), increasing market liberalization and free trade, as well as according more power to the World Trade Organization (p. 2). She calls attention to the "nonsense" of the exercise of pursuing "sustainable development while advocating continued extractivism, rising GDP, and expanding global free trade" (Salleh, 2016, p. 2).Writing with Kothari, Escobar, Demaria and Acosta in the introduction to *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (2019), Ariel Salleh also defends that, amidst several other problems, the 2030 Agenda serves to carry an "international model of green capitalism" and that the SDGs fail to recognize "how the structural roots of poverty, unsustainability, and multidimensional violence are historically grounded in state power, corporate monopolies, neo-colonislism, and patriarchal institutions" (Salleh *et al.*, 2019, p. xxvi-xxvii).

As she very well sums up, "this irrational development model cuts off the very feet that it stands on" (Salleh, 2016, p. 3).

4.4
Qualitative and quantitative analysis of participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus

We have browsed through several analysis of participation in the 2030 Agenda. Now, it is time to check what the Agenda itself says about participation. For such, we will return to the analysis of the 2030 Agenda Corpus. All the steps and their reasoning are described as follows:

4.4.1
Step 1. Using Voyant's context tool to identify all the occurrences of "participation" in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

The tool's name is almost self-explanatory, but, objectively speaking, it provides a compilation of all the occurrences of a given word or expression along with the words standing near to them, i.e., it offers a portrait of the word of interest and its surroundings. In this case, I chose the extension of ten words preceding and ten words succeeding "participation". The results of this step are presented in the table below.

Year of document	10 words preceding the word of interest	Word of interest	10 words succeeding the word of interest
2015	needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the	participation	of all countries, all stakeholders and all people. The interlinkages
2015	enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political	participation	as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for
2015	and skills needed for productive and fulfilling work and full	participation	in society. We will strengthen the productive capacities of least
2015	countries. We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and	participation	of developing countries — including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked
2015	family as nationally appropriate 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective	participation	and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making
2015	recycling and reuse technologies 6.b Support and strengthen the	participation	of local communities in improving water and sanitation management ! ! Goal

2015	representative decision making at all levels 16.8 Broaden and strengthen the	participation	of developing countries in the institutions of global governance 16.9
2015	two years. The task team will be open to the	participation	of all United Nations agencies, funds and programs and the
2015	They shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the	participation	of major groups and other relevant stakeholders. 85. Thematic reviews
2015	issues, as appropriate. 89. The high level political forum will support	participation	in follow up and review processes by the major groups and
2016	work; have full access to productive resources; and enjoy equal	participation	with men in political, economic and public life. Globally, the
2016	as men, based on data from 2000 to 2016. Women's	participation	in single or lower houses of national parliaments worldwide reached
2017	disabilities—and actions needed to help them gain more equitable	participation	in society—remain in short supply. In response, the United
2017	of the global out-of-school population at every level.	participation	rate in organized learning one year before the official age
2017	men effective policymaking to achieve gender equality demands broad political	participation	. Yet women's representation in single or lower houses of parliament
2017	more ambitious measures are needed. Quotas to boost women's political	participation	and empowerment have been helpful: 75 out of 190 countries
2017	needs to be done to ensure that the voices and	participation	of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting
2018	are required, particularly in LDCs. At the global level, the	participation	rate in early childhood and primary education was 70 per
2018	Over half of countries have policies or procedures for the	participation	of women in rural water supply Policies and procedures for
2018	of women in rural water supply Policies and procedures for	participation	by local governments in the management of water and sanitation
2018	that they have policies or procedures in place for the	participation	of local communities in the management of rural water supply
2018	for urban water supply and sanitation. The role of women's	participation	is increasingly important as a measure of equity. Among the
2018	the number of countries that had policies specifically mentioning women's	participation	is higher for rural communities than for urban areas. Proportion
2018	users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's	participation	, 2014 and 2017 (percentage) Percentage with specific mention of women's
2018	2014 and 2017 (percentage) Percentage with specific mention of women's	participation	(2017 survey: total 84 countries) Percentage with defined procedures for
2018	2017 survey: total 84 countries) Percentage with defined procedures for	participation	by local communities (2014 and 2017 surveys: total 110 countries
2019	for school, in both high-income and low-income countries.	participation	in organized learning one year before the official entry age
2019	steadily over the past years. At the global level, the	participation	rate in early childhood education was 69 per cent in

2019	cent to nearly 100 per cent. The early childhood education	participation	rate was only 43 per cent in least developed countries
2019	rate was only 43 per cent in least developed countries.	participation	rate in organized learning one year before the official entry
2019	of-school children Despite considerable progress in educational access and	participation	, 262 million children and adolescents (6 to 17 years old
2019	score for IWRM implementation was 49 out of 100. Community	participation	is key to ensuring that IWRM is adapted to local
2019	in place (defined in either policy or law) for community	participation	in the areas of rural drinking water supply and water
2020	a still-enormous digital divide. Containing COVID-19 requires the	participation	of all Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and
2020	services of LDCs reached 0.8 per cent in 2018. However,	participation	remains concentrated within a few economies, particularly in Asian countries
2021	SDGs. Building back better requires effective multilateralism and the full	participation	of all societies. This global crisis demands a shared global
2021	affects everyone, everywhere, the implementation of solutions requires action and	participation	from all sectors of society, including Governments at all levels
2021	build back better is lacking in many countries handwashing facilities electricity drinking water	participation	in organized pre-primary learning increased from 65% in 2010
2021	gender equality and empower all women and girls Women's equal	participation	in decision-making is crucial for COVID-19 response and
2021	children aged 3 and 4 years are developmentally on track.	participation	in organized pre-primary learning (one year before the official
2021	in every region. However, considerable variation was found among regions.	participation	in early learning in 2019 was 43 per cent in
2021	years can diminish children's chances of success throughout their lives.	participation	rate in organized learning one year before the official entry
2021	coverage of available data. * Excluding Australia and New Zealand. Broader	participation	in continuing education and training is needed to create resilient
2021	adaptable to technological change. Prior to the pandemic, the average	participation	rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal
2021	the 73 countries with data. In nearly half of them,	participation	rates were below 10 per cent, but were 40 per
2021	among countries in Europe and Northern America. Gender parity in	participation	rates was achieved in less than a fifth of the
2021	women with children have experienced sharper drops in labor force	participation	than men, particularly women living with children under 6 years
2021	from Liberia and Malawi. Goal 5	Gender equality37 Women's equal	participation	in decision-making, crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery
2021	children. This further increased longstanding gender gaps in labor force	participation	rates. Unemployment rate, 2019 and 2020 (percentage) 2019 2020 0

2022	Tailored publications for specific groups Press conferences or press releases	participation	in external events such as conferences Use of social media
2022	learning one year before the official primary school age. Yet,	participation	was highly unequal: among countries with available data, disparities in
2022	poorest households are consistently more disadvantaged in term of educational	participation	and outcomes than their urban, wealthier peers. School closures during
2022	particularly pronounced in middle-income countries, which have long leveraged	participation	in production chains as a source of employment and growth
2022	composite score – measuring enabling frameworks, concrete actions of support and	participation	in decision-making by small-scale fishers – rose to an

Table 11 - Occurrences of "participation" in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

4.4.2
Step 2. Tidying up the contexts in which "participation" is used in the 2030 Agenda.

As we can notice from the analysis of the previous table, the context tool might sometimes identify the word of interest (in this case, "participation") standing in the middle of an excerpt that includes more than one sentence. This is the case in: "more ambitious measures are needed. *Participation* quotas to boost women's political participation and empowerment have been helpful: 75 out of 190 countries".

In order to improve the analysis of these occurrences, I have decided to reframe this quest for contexts by reuniting the exact sentences in which the word "participation" appears. I have also decided to number the occurrences in order to refer to them more easily. This step resulted in the table below.

Occurrence	Year of document	Context
1	2015	We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the *participation* of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.
2	2015	Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political *participation* as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.
3	2015	All countries stand to benefit from having a healthy and well-educated workforce with the knowledge and skills needed for productive and fulfilling work and full *participation* in society.

4	2015	We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and *participation* of developing countries — including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries — in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance.
5	2015	Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective **participation** and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
6	2015	Target6.b Support and strengthen the *participation* of local communities in improving water and sanitation management
7	2015	Broaden and strengthen the *participation* of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
8	2015	The 10 representatives will be appointed by the Secretary-General, for periods of two years. The task team will be open to the **participation** of all United Nations agencies, funds and programs and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and it will initially be composed of the entities that currently integrate the informal working group on technology facilitation, namely, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Bank.
9	2015	They [reviews carried out by the HLPF] shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the *participation* of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.
10	2015	89. The high-level political forum will support *participation* in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290.
11	2016	Goal 5 aims to empower women and girls to reach their full potential, which requires eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including harmful practices. It seeks to ensure that they have every opportunity for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; receive due recognition for their unpaid work; have full access to productive resources; and enjoy equal *participation* with men in political, economic and public life.
12	2016	Women's *participation* in single or lower houses of national parliaments worldwide reached only 23.4 per cent in 2017. In the majority of the 67 countries with data from 2009 to 2015, fewer than a third of senior- and middle-management positions were held by women
13	2017	Improving data on difficulties faced by children with disabilities: Tools to collect robust and comparable data on the barriers faced by persons with disabilities—and actions needed to help them gain more equitable *participation* in society—remain in short supply.
14	2017	*Participation* rate in organized learning one year before the official age of entry into primary school, 2014 (percentage)
15	2017	Effective policymaking to achieve gender equality demands broad political *participation*. Yet women's representation in single or lower houses of parliament in countries around the world was only 23.4 per cent in 2017, just 10 percentage points higher than in 2000.
16	2017	Quotas to boost women's political *participation* and empowerment have been helpful: 75 out of 190 countries (39 per cent) have used some form of quota system to increase women's representation, and election results in 2016 show that the strategy is working.

17	2017	However, more work needs to be done to ensure that the voices and *participation* of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance are broadened and strengthened
18	2018	At the global level, the *participation* rate in early childhood and primary education was 70 per cent in 2016, up from 63 per cent in 2010.
19	2018	Over half of countries have policies or procedures for the *participation* of women in rural water supply
20	2018	Policies and procedures for **participation** by local governments in the management of water and sanitation can help ensure that communities are informed, consulted and represented in the delivery of these vital services.
21	2018	Data for 110 countries from two surveys—in 2014 and 2017— show that 85 per cent of countries reported that they have policies or procedures in place for the **participation** of local communities in the management of rural water supply, 81 per cent have the same for rural sanitation, and 79 per cent for urban water supply and sanitation.
22	2018	The role of women's **participation** is increasingly important as a measure of equity.
23	2018	Among the 84 countries participating in the 2017 survey, the number of countries that had policies specifically mentioning women's **participation** is higher for rural communities than for urban areas.
24	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)
25	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)
26	2018	Percentage with specific mention of women's **participation** (2017 survey: total 84 countries)
27	2019	Percentage with defined procedures for **participation** by local communities (2014 and 2017 surveys: total 110 countries)
28	2019	**Participation** in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school has risen steadily over the past years.
29	2019	At the global level, the **participation** rate in early childhood education was 69 per cent in 2017, up from 63 per cent in 2010.
30	2019	The early childhood education **participation** rate was only 43 per cent in least developed countries.
31	2019	Despite considerable progress in educational access and **participation**, 262 million children and adolescents (6 to 17 years old) were still out of school in 2017
32	2019	Community **participation** is key to ensuring that IWRM is adapted to local contexts.
33	2019	Seventy per cent of countries reported that they had procedures in place (defined in either policy or law) for community **participation** in the areas of rural drinking water supply and water resources management.
34	2020	Containing COVID-19 requires the **participation** of all Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and ordinary citizens around the world. Strengthening multilateralism and global partnership are more important than ever.
35	2020	However, **participation** remains concentrated within a few economies, particularly in Asian countries, with most other LDCs struggling to export services international
36	2021	Building back better requires effective multilateralism and the full **participation** of all societies.

139

37	2021	Since the pandemic affects everyone, everywhere, the implementation of solutions requires action and **participation** from all sectors of society, including Governments at all levels, the private sector, academia, civil society and individuals – youth and women, in particular.
38	2021	**Participation** in organized pre-primary learning increased from 65% in 2010 to 73% in 2019
39	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making is crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, but gender parity remains far off
40	2021	**Participation** in organized pre-primary learning (one year before the official age for primary school entry) rose steadily before the pandemic, from 65 per cent in 2010 to 73 per cent in 2019, with gender parity achieved in every region.
41	2021	**Participation** in early learning in 2019 was 43 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 96 per cent in Latin American and the Caribbean.
42	2021	**Participation** rate in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school, 2010 and 2019 (percentage).
43	2021	Broader **participation** in continuing education and training is needed to create resilient and adaptable workers.
44	2021	Prior to the pandemic, the average **participation** rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education was only 25 per cent, with significant variation across the 73 countries with data.
45	2021	In nearly half of them, **participation** rates were below 10 per cent, but were 40 per cent and above among countries in Europe and Northern America.
46	2021	Gender parity in **participation** rates was achieved in less than a fifth of the countries.
47	2021	Evidence from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico shows that partnered women with children have experienced sharper drops in labor force **participation** than men, particularly women living with children under 6 years of age
48	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making, crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, remains a distant target
49	2021	This further increased longstanding gender gaps in labor force **participation** rates.
50	2022	**Participation** in external events such as conferences
51	2022	Yet, **participation** was highly unequal: among countries with available data, disparities in attendance were found based on gender (39 per cent), urban or rural location (76 per cent) and household wealth (86 per cent).
52	2022	They also showed that children living in rural areas and in the poorest households are consistently more disadvantaged in term of educational **participation** and outcomes than their urban, wealthier peers.
53	2022	The impact has been particularly pronounced in middle-income countries, which have long leveraged **participation** in production chains as a source of employment and growth.
54	2022	The average global composite score – measuring enabling frameworks, concrete actions of support and **participation** in decision-making by small-scale fishers – rose to an average implementation level of 5 out of 5 in 2022, improving from 3 out of 5 in 2018.

Table 12 - Contexts of occurrences of "participation" in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

4.4.3
Step 3. Close reading of these contexts.

As my intention was since the beginning to understand the essence of participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus, I have departed to a close reading of these excerpts in the original documents. Sometimes, the positioning of these textual materials is just as important as the words themselves to understand the meaning implied in the discourse. From this step, I could identify that occurrences 35 and 53, marked below in bold red letters, evoke a meaning of "share" [in economic activities such as production and exportation] and not that of "membership", which is the one that I am looking for in this step. Consequently, I have decided to remove them from the table. This movement led us from 54 to 52 occurrences.

Occurrence	Year of document	Context
1	2015	We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the **participation** of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.
2	2015	Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political **participation** as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.
3	2015	All countries stand to benefit from having a healthy and well-educated workforce with the knowledge and skills needed for productive and fulfilling work and full **participation** in society.
4	2015	We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and **participation** of developing countries — including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries — in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance.
5	2015	Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective **participation** and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
6	2015	Target6.b Support and strengthen the **participation** of local communities in improving water and sanitation management
7	2015	Broaden and strengthen the **participation** of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

8	2015	The 10 representatives will be appointed by the Secretary-General, for periods of two years. The task team will be open to the **participation** of all United Nations agencies, funds and programs and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and it will initially be composed of the entities that currently integrate the informal working group on technology facilitation, namely, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Bank.
9	2015	They [reviews carried out by the HLPF] shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the **participation** of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.
10	2015	89. The high-level political forum will support **participation** in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290.
11	2016	Goal 5 aims to empower women and girls to reach their full potential, which requires eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including harmful practices. It seeks to ensure that they have every opportunity for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; receive due recognition for their unpaid work; have full access to productive resources; and enjoy equal **participation** with men in political, economic and public life.
12	2016	Women's **participation** in single or lower houses of national parliaments worldwide reached only 23.4 per cent in 2017. In the majority of the 67 countries with data from 2009 to 2015, fewer than a third of senior- and middle-management positions were held by women
13	2017	Improving data on difficulties faced by children with disabilities: Tools to collect robust and comparable data on the barriers faced by persons with disabilities—and actions needed to help them gain more equitable **participation** in society—remain in short supply.
14	2017	**Participation** rate in organized learning one year before the official age of entry into primary school, 2014 (percentage)
15	2017	Effective policymaking to achieve gender equality demands broad political **participation**. Yet women's representation in single or lower houses of parliament in countries around the world was only 23.4 per cent in 2017, just 10 percentage points higher than in 2000.
16	2017	Quotas to boost women's political **participation** and empowerment have been helpful: 75 out of 190 countries (39 per cent) have used some form of quota system to increase women's representation, and election results in 2016 show that the strategy is working.
17	2017	However, more work needs to be done to ensure that the voices and **participation** of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance are broadened and strengthened
18	2018	At the global level, the **participation** rate in early childhood and primary education was 70 per cent in 2016, up from 63 per cent in 2010. The lowest rates are found in sub-Saharan Africa (41 per cent) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (52 per cent)
19	2018	Over half of countries have policies or procedures for the **participation** of women in rural water supply
20	2018	Policies and procedures for **participation** by local governments in the management of water and sanitation can help ensure that communities are informed, consulted and represented in the delivery of these vital services.

21	2018	Data for 110 countries from two surveys—in 2014 and 2017— show that 85 per cent of countries reported that they have policies or procedures in place for the **participation** of local communities in the management of rural water supply, 81 per cent have the same for rural sanitation, and 79 per cent for urban water supply and sanitation.
22	2018	The role of women's **participation** is increasingly important as a measure of equity.
23	2018	Among the 84 countries participating in the 2017 survey, the number of countries that had policies specifically mentioning women's **participation** is higher for rural communities than for urban areas.
24	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)
25	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)
26	2018	Percentage with specific mention of women's **participation** (2017 survey: total 84 countries)
27	2019	Percentage with defined procedures for **participation** by local communities (2014 and 2017 surveys: total 110 countries)
28	2019	**Participation** in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school has risen steadily over the past years.
29	2019	At the global level, the **participation** rate in early childhood education was 69 per cent in 2017, up from 63 per cent in 2010. However, considerable disparities were found among countries, with rates ranging from 7 per cent to nearly 100 per cent.
30	2019	The early childhood education **participation** rate was only 43 per cent in least developed countries.
31	2019	Despite considerable progress in educational access and **participation**, 262 million children and adolescents (6 to 17 years old) were still out of school in 2017
32	2019	Community **participation** is key to ensuring that IWRM is adapted to local contexts.
33	2019	Seventy per cent of countries reported that they had procedures in place (defined in either policy or law) for community **participation** in the areas of rural drinking water supply and water resources management.
34	2020	Containing COVID-19 requires the **participation** of all Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and ordinary citizens around the world. Strengthening multilateralism and global partnership are more important than ever.
35	**2020**	**However, participation remains concentrated within a few economies, particularly in Asian countries, with most other LDCs struggling to export services internationally.**
36	2021	Building back better requires effective multilateralism and the full **participation** of all societies.
37	2021	Since the pandemic affects everyone, everywhere, the implementation of solutions requires action and **participation** from all sectors of society, including Governments at all levels, the private sector, academia, civil society and individuals – youth and women, in particular.
38	2021	**participation** in organized pre-primary learning increased from 65% in 2010 to 73% in 2019
39	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making is crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, but gender parity remains far off

40	2021	**Participation** in organized pre-primary learning (one year before the official age for primary school entry) rose steadily before the pandemic, from 65 per cent in 2010 to 73 per cent in 2019, with gender parity achieved in every region.
41	2021	However, considerable variation was found among regions. **participation** in early learning in 2019 was 43 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 96 per cent in Latin American and the Caribbean.
42	2021	**Participation** rate in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school, 2010 and 2019 (percentage)
43	2021	Broader **participation** in continuing education and training is needed to create resilient and adaptable workers
44	2021	Prior to the pandemic, the average **participation** rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education was only 25 per cent, with significant variation across the 73 countries with data.
45	2021	In nearly half of them, **participation** rates were below 10 per cent, but were 40 per cent and above among countries in Europe and Northern America.
46	2021	Gender parity in **participation** rates was achieved in less than a fifth of the countries.
47	2021	Evidence from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico shows that partnered women with children have experienced sharper drops in labor force **participation** than men, particularly women living with children under 6 years of age
48	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making, crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, remains a distant target
49	2021	During the crisis, women were more likely than men to drop out of the labor force in order to care for children. This further increased longstanding gender gaps in labor force **participation** rates.
50	2022	**Participation** in external events such as conferences
51	2022	Yet, **participation** was highly unequal: among countries with available data, disparities in attendance were found based on gender (39 per cent), urban or rural location (76 per cent) and household wealth (86 per cent). The data showed that girls tend to score higher than boys in reading proficiency at the end of primary school.
52	2022	They also showed that children living in rural areas and in the poorest households are consistently more disadvantaged in term of educational **participation** and outcomes than their urban, wealthier peers.
53	**2022**	**The impact has been particularly pronounced in middle-income countries, which have long leveraged participation in production chains as a source of employment and growth.**
54	2022	The average global composite score – measuring enabling frameworks, concrete actions of support and **participation** in decision-making by small-scale fishers – rose to an average implementation level of 5 out of 5 in 2022, improving from 3 out of 5 in 2018.

Table 13 - Contexts of occurrences of "participation" in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

4.4.4
Step 4. Clustering the uses of "participation" according to their correspondent subjects and spaces

Miles and Huberman propose clustering as a "tactic for generating meaning"

from the analysis of qualitative data. According to them, clustering or categorizing

is such a natural activity for the human brain that it almost dismisses the need of a "how-to". The purpose of clustering, they say, is answering questions such as "what things are like each other?" or "which things go together and which do not?" in order to "understand a phenomenon better by grouping and then conceptualizing objects that have similar patterns or characteristics". Clustering, according to them, "is a tactic that can be applied at many levels to qualitative data: at the level of events or acts, of individual actors, of processes, of settings/locales, of sites or cases as wholes" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 249).

In this research, clustering has been applied at the level of subjects and spaces.

In this step, the close reading was essential to label each of the occurrences of "participation". In the column named "who", I have identified the group, entity or subject, e.g., **women**, being mentioned and in the column named "into what", I have identified the spaces into which this participation must take place, e.g., **politics**.

Take the example of the excerpt from the 2017 monitoring report reproduced below:

> Effective policymaking to achieve *gender equality* demands broad *political participation*. Yet *women's* representation in single or lower *houses of parliament* in countries around the world was only 23.4 per cent in 2017, just 10 percentage points higher than in 2000 (UN, 2017).

It mentions "*gender equality*", "*women*", "*political participation*" and "*houses of parliament*". Thus, I have found appropriate to use the labels "**women**" and "*politics*" since it is referring to the still incipient participation of **women** into **political** *spaces*.

My objective in this step was finding a way to qualify the ways in which participation is brought up in the context of the SDGs. For such, I have tried to label these aspects in ways that would really allow me to grasp the context of these occurrences. My intention was to minimize the (unavoidable) erasure of specificities. In this effort, I have not amalgamated "children" and "children with disabilities" under one single label. Each of these groups has a label of its own. Similarly, I have not compiled "small-scale fishers" into "local communities". Interestingly, there were many repetitions of both subjects and spaces. I was fearing that the variety would be so extensive that it would become totally impractical to deal with these clusters. But I was proven wrong.

Generalizations were only used to express the generalizations made in the analyzed discourse itself. Therefore, I have labeled as "generic" the occurrences of participation in which the subject cannot be identified for the highly wide scope adopted in the sentence, e.g., "major groups and other relevant stakeholders" or "all countries, all stakeholders and all people" or even "all Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and ordinary citizens around the world". This step resulted in the following table:

Occurrence	Year of document	Context	Who	Into what
1	2015	We are determined to mobilize the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity, focused in particular on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable and with the **participation** of all countries, all stakeholders and all people.	Generic	2030 Agenda
2	2015	Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political **participation** as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.	Women	Rights
3	2015	All countries stand to benefit from having a healthy and well-educated workforce with the knowledge and skills needed for productive and fulfilling work and full **participation** in society.	Workforce	Society
4	2015	We recommit to broadening and strengthening the voice and **participation** of developing countries — including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries — in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance.	Developing countries	Global governance
5	2015	Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective **participation** and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	Women	Rights
6	2015	Target6.b Support and strengthen the **participation** of local communities in improving water and sanitation management	Local communities	Management of natural resources
7	2015	16.8 Broaden and strengthen the **participation** of developing countries in the institutions of global governance	Developing countries	Global governance

8	2015	The task team will be open to the **participation** of all United Nations agencies, funds and programs and the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and it will initially be composed of the entities that currently integrate the informal working group on technology facilitation, namely, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the International Telecommunication Union, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the World Bank.	United Nations Agencies	IAEG
9	2015	84. The high-level political forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, shall carry out regular reviews, in line with General Assembly resolution 67/290 of 9 July 2013. Reviews will be voluntary, while encouraging reporting, and include developed and developing countries as well as relevant United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector. They shall be State led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants. They shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the **participation** of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.	Generic	Follow-up and review processes
10	2015	89. The high-level political forum will support **participation** in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290. We call upon those actors to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda.	Generic	Follow-up and review processes
11	2016	Goal 5 aims to empower women and girls to reach their full potential, which requires eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including harmful practices. It seeks to ensure that they have every opportunity for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; receive due recognition for their unpaid work; have full access to productive resources; and enjoy equal **participation** with men in political, economic and public life.	Women	Rights
12	2016	Women's **participation** in single or lower houses of national parliaments worldwide reached only 23.4 per cent in 2017. In the majority of the 67 countries with data from 2009 to 2015, fewer than a third of senior- and middle-management positions were held by women	Women	Politics

13	2017	Improving data on difficulties faced by children with disabilities Tools to collect robust and comparable data on the barriers faced by persons with disabilities—and actions needed to help them gain more equitable **participation** in society—remain in short supply.	Children with disabilities	Society
14	2017	**participation** rate in organized learning one year before the official age of entry into primary school, 2014 (percentage)	Children	Education
15	2017	Effective policymaking to achieve gender equality demands broad political **participation**. Yet women's representation in single or lower houses of parliament in countries around the world was only 23.4 per cent in 2017, just 10 percentage points higher than in 2000.	Women	Politics
16	2017	Slow progress suggests that stronger political will and more ambitious measures are needed. Quotas to boost women's political **participation** and empowerment have been helpful: 75 out of 190 countries (39 per cent) have used some form of quota system to increase women's representation, and election results in 2016 show that the strategy is working. However, quotas may also impose a false ceiling on women's representation; they therefore need to be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure continued progress.	Women	Politics
17	2017	However, more work needs to be done to ensure that the voices and **participation** of developing countries in international economic decision-making, norm-setting and global economic governance are broadened and strengthened	Developing countries	Global governance
18	2018	At the global level, the **participation** rate in early childhood and primary education was 70 per cent in 2016, up from 63 per cent in 2010. The lowest rates are found in sub-Saharan Africa (41 per cent) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (52 per cent)	Children	Education
19	2018	Over half of countries have policies or procedures for the **participation** of women in rural water supply	Women	Management of natural resources
20	2018	Policies and procedures for **participation** by local governments in the management of water and sanitation can help ensure that communities are informed, consulted and represented in the delivery of these vital services.	Local communities	Management of natural resources
21	2018	Data for 110 countries from two surveys—in 2014 and 2017— show that 85 per cent of countries reported that they have policies or procedures in place for the **participation** of local communities in the management of rural water supply, 81 per cent have the same for rural sanitation, and 79 per cent for urban water supply and sanitation. T	Local communities	Management of natural resources

148

22	2018	The role of women's **participation** is increasingly important as a measure of equity.	Women	Management of natural resources
23	2018	Among the 84 countries participating in the 2017 survey, the number of countries that had policies specifically mentioning women's **participation** is higher for rural communities than for urban areas.	Women	Management of natural resources
24	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)	Women	Management of natural resources
25	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)	Women	Management of natural resources
26	2018	Percentage with specific mention of women's **participation** (2017 survey: total 84 countries)	Women	Management of natural resources
27	2018	Percentage with defined procedures for **participation** by local communities (2014 and 2017 surveys: total 110 countries)	Women	Management of natural resources
28	2019	**Participation** in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school has risen steadily over the past years.	Children	Education
29	2019	At the global level, the **participation** rate in early childhood education was 69 per cent in 2017, up from 63 per cent in 2010. However, considerable disparities were found among countries, with rates ranging from 7 per cent to nearly 100 per cent.	Children	Education
30	2019	The early childhood education **participation** rate was only 43 per cent in least developed countries.	Children	Education
31	2019	Despite considerable progress in educational access and **participation**, 262 million children and adolescents (6 to 17 years old) were still out of school in 2017	Children	Education
32	2019	Community **participation** is key to ensuring that IWRM is adapted to local contexts.	Local communities	Management of natural resources
33	2019	Seventy per cent of countries reported that they had procedures in place (defined in either policy or law) for community **participation** in the areas of rural drinking water supply and water resources management.	Local communities	Management of natural resources

149

34	2020	One of the few bright spots at this time is the increased use of technology as people flock to the Internet to work, shop and connect with others, but even this draws attention to a still-enormous digital divide. Containing COVID-19 requires the **participation** of all Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and ordinary citizens around the world. Strengthening multilateralism and global partnership are more important than ever.	Generic	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
35	2021	Building back better requires effective multilateralism and the full **participation** of all societies.	All countries/all societies	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
36	2021	Since the pandemic affects everyone, everywhere, the implementation of solutions requires action and **participation** from all sectors of society, including Governments at all levels, the private sector, academia, civil society and individuals – youth and women, in particular.	Generic	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
37	2021	**participation** in organized pre-primary learning increased from 65% in 2010 to 73% in 2019	Children	Education
38	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making is crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, but gender parity remains far off	Women	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
39	2021	Pre-COVID-19 data for 2012–2020 drawn from 76 mostly low- and middle-income countries and territories show that around 7 in 10 children aged 3 and 4 years are developmentally on track. **participation** in organized pre-primary learning (one year before the official age for primary school entry) rose steadily before the pandemic, from 65 per cent in 2010 to 73 per cent in 2019, with gender parity achieved in every region.	Children	Education
40	2021	However, considerable variation was found among regions. **participation** in early learning in 2019 was 43 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 96 per cent in Latin American and the Caribbean.	Children	Education
41	2021	**participation** rate in organized learning one year before the official entry age for primary school, 2010 and 2019 (percentage)	Children	Education

42	2021	Broader **participation** in continuing education and training is needed to create resilient and adaptable workers	Young people and adults	Education
43	2021	Prior to the pandemic, the average **participation** rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education was only 25 per cent, with significant variation across the 73 countries with data.	Young people and adults	Education
44	2021	In nearly half of them, **participation** rates were below 10 per cent, but were 40 per cent and above among countries in Europe and Northern America.	Young people and adults	Education
45	2021	Gender parity in **participation** rates was achieved in less than a fifth of the countries.	Women	Education
46	2021	Evidence from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico shows that partnered women with children have experienced sharper drops in labor force **participation** than men, particularly women living with children under 6 years of age	Women	Labor force
47	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making, crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, remains a distant target	Women	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
48	2021	During the crisis, women were more likely than men to drop out of the labor force in order to care for children. This further increased longstanding gender gaps in labor force **participation** rates.	Women	Labor force
49	2022	**Participation** in external events such as conferences	National Statistical Offices	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
50	2022	In 2020, for example, 3 out of 4 children attended some form of organized learning one year before the official primary school age. Yet, **participation** was highly unequal: among countries with available data, disparities in attendance were found based on gender (39 per cent), urban or rural location (76 per cent) and household wealth (86 per cent). The data showed that girls tend to score higher than boys in reading proficiency at the end of primary school.	Children	Education
51	2022	They also showed that children living in rural areas and in the poorest households are consistently more disadvantaged in term of educational **participation** and outcomes than their urban, wealthier peers.	Children	Education

151

52	2022	The average global composite score – measuring enabling frameworks, concrete actions of support and **participation** in decision-making by small-scale fishers – rose to an average implementation level of 5 out of 5 in 2022, improving from 3 out of 5 in 2018.	Small-scale fishers	Management of natural resources

Table 14 - Identifying the subjects and spaces of "participation" mentioned in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

4.4.5
Step 5. Counting the occurrence of clusters to generate meaning about participation in the 2030 Agenda

At this point, we cross the border to quantitative analysis once again. Since the previous step has allowed us to qualify the types of "participation" being mentioned in the 2030 Agenda, my proposition now is analyzing the number of occurrences of each cluster.

The results are presented in the tables below. One of them contains the subject clusters. It groups individuals or entities. The other one contains the space clusters. It groups the abstract locale in which participation is expected to happen. Each of the tables are succeeded with charts that offer a visual representation of the obtained data.

Subjects	Number of occurrences
All countries/all societies	1
Children with disabilities	1
Children	12
Developing countries	3
Local communities	5
Generic	5
Young people and adults	3
Women	18
National Statistical Offices	1

Small-scale fishers	1
Workforce	1
United Nations Agencies	1

Table 15 - Participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus clustered according to subjects.

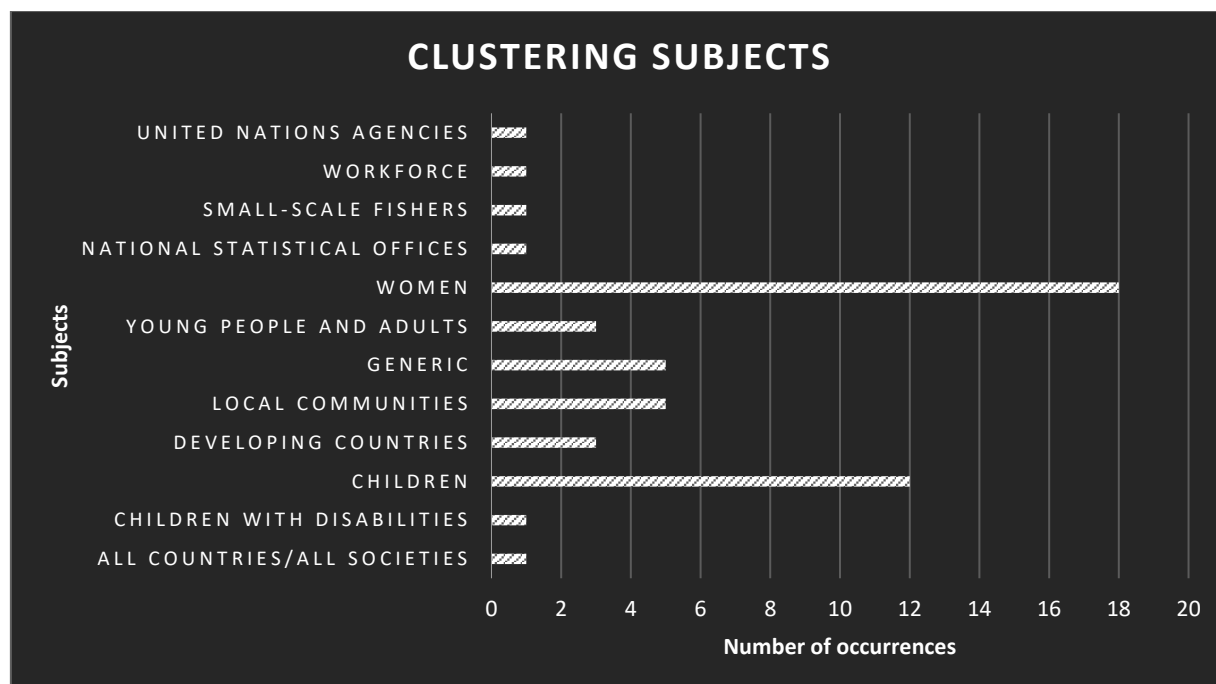Figure 8 - Participation clustered by subjects.

Spaces	Number of occurrences
2030 Agenda	1
Education	16
Management of natural resources	13
Actions to contain COVID-19	6
Follow-up and review processes	2
Global governance	3
IAEG	1

153

Labor force	2
Politics	3
Rights	3
Society	2

Table 16 - Participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus clustered according to spaces of participation.
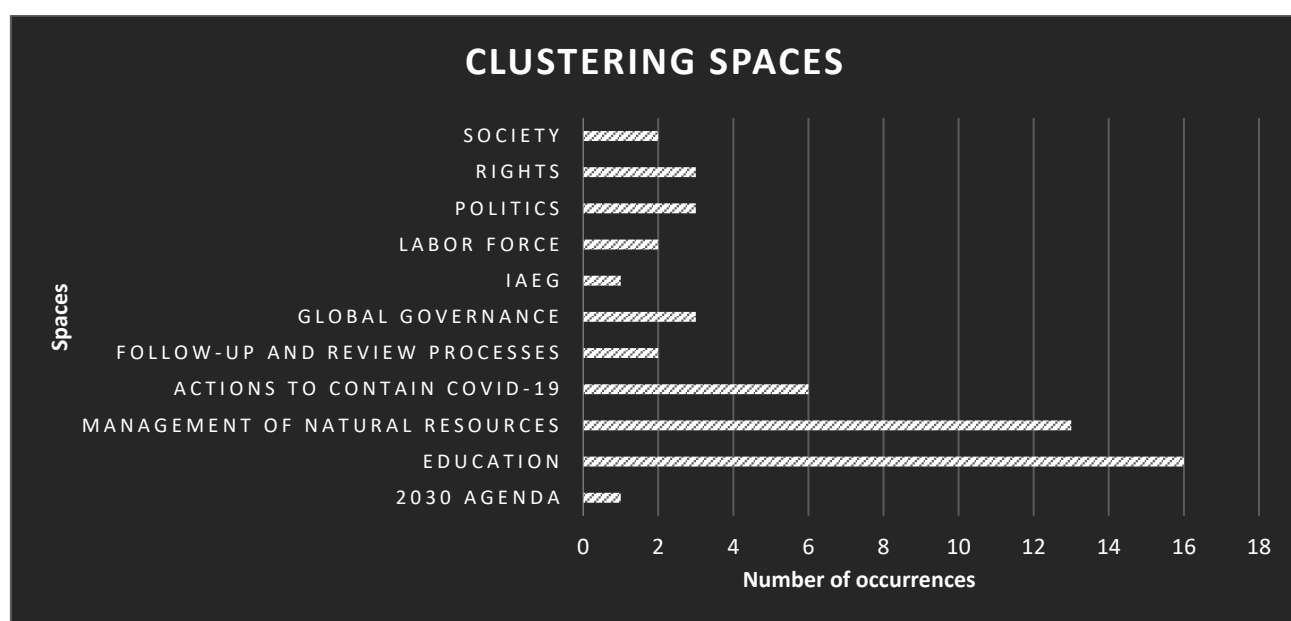

Figure 9 - Participation clustered by spaces.

These tables and charts help us understand that there are two clusters of subjects and two clusters of spaces that are much more mentioned than the others. In sum, the 2030 Agenda cites more frequently:

- participation of women and children;
- participation in education and management of natural resources.

4.4.6
Step 6. Identifying relationships amongst the most popular clusters

It comes with no surprise that the subject cluster "children" always occur in companion of the space cluster "education". It can be attributed to SDG 4 – Quality

education. Nevertheless, the subject cluster "women" occur in companion of variety of space clusters. Since this research is anchored on a feminist methodology, the fact that women showed up brightly in this phase came as a positive surprise. Therefore, I have isolated the cases in which the subject is "women" as to analyze the case of female participation more deeply. I kept the cases numbered as they were in table 13.

Occurrence	Year of document	Context	Who	Into what
2	2015	Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political **participation** as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels.	Women	Rights
5	2015	Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective **participation** and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	Women	Rights
11	2016	Goal 5 aims to empower women and girls to reach their full potential, which requires eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including harmful practices. It seeks to ensure that they have every opportunity for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights; receive due recognition for their unpaid work; have full access to productive resources; and enjoy equal **participation** with men in political, economic and public life.	Women	Rights
12	2016	Women's **participation** in single or lower houses of national parliaments worldwide reached only 23.4 per cent in 2017. In the majority of the 67 countries with data from 2009 to 2015, fewer than a third of senior- and middle-management positions were held by women	Women	Politics
15	2017	Effective policymaking to achieve gender equality demands broad political **participation**. Yet women's representation in single or lower houses of parliament in countries around the world was only 23.4 per cent in 2017, just 10 percentage points higher than in 2000.	Women	Politics
16	2017	Slow progress suggests that stronger political will and more ambitious measures are needed. Quotas to boost women's political **participation** and empowerment have been helpful: 75 out of 190 countries (39 per cent) have used some form of quota system to increase women's representation, and election results in 2016	Women	Politics

		show that the strategy is working. However, quotas may also impose a false ceiling on women's representation; they therefore need to be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure continued progress.		
19	2018	Over half of countries have policies or procedures for the **participation** of women in rural water supply	Women	Management of natural resources
22	2018	The role of women's **participation** is increasingly important as a measure of equity.	Women	Management of natural resources
23	2018	Among the 84 countries participating in the 2017 survey, the number of countries that had policies specifically mentioning women's **participation** is higher for rural communities than for urban areas.	Women	Management of natural resources
24	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)	Women	Management of natural resources
25	2018	Proportion of countries with defined procedures in law or policy for **participation** by service users/communities, and proportion of countries with policies specifically mentioning women's **participation**, 2014 and 2017 (percentage)	Women	Management of natural resources
26	2018	Percentage with specific mention of women's **participation** (2017 survey: total 84 countries)	Women	Management of natural resources
27	2018	Percentage with defined procedures for **participation** by local communities (2014 and 2017 surveys: total 110 countries)	Women	Management of natural resources
38	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making is crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, but gender parity remains far off	Women	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its social, economic or political impacts
45	2021	Gender parity in **participation** rates was achieved in less than a fifth of the countries.	Women	Education
46	2021	Evidence from Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica and Mexico shows that partnered women with children have experienced sharper drops in labor force **participation** than men, particularly women living with children under 6 years of age	Women	Labor force
47	2021	Women's equal **participation** in decision-making, crucial for COVID-19 response and recovery, remains a distant target	Women	Actions to contain COVID-19 and/or its

156

				social, economic or political impacts
48	2021	During the crisis, women were more likely than men to drop out of the labor force in order to care for children. This further increased longstanding gender gaps in labor force **participation** rates.	Women	Labor force

Table 17 - Identifying the space clusters related to women's participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus

4.4.7
Step 7. Identifying the strongest relationship of the "women" cluster.

I have used table 16 to count the mentions of women's participation in relation to the space clusters. This step resulted in the table below:

Spaces	Number of occurrences
Education	1
Management of natural resources	7
Actions to contain COVID-19	2
Labor force	2
Politics	3
Rights	3
Society	2

Table 18 - Space clusters related to women's participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

As we can see, the most frequent relationship established with the "women" cluster is the "management of natural resources" cluster. Returning to table 16, we can also perceive that all these combined occurrences happen in the 2018 report, more specifically in the section dedicated to SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation. It

reviews the propostion of countries that have policies or laws that encourage the participation of women in water supply.
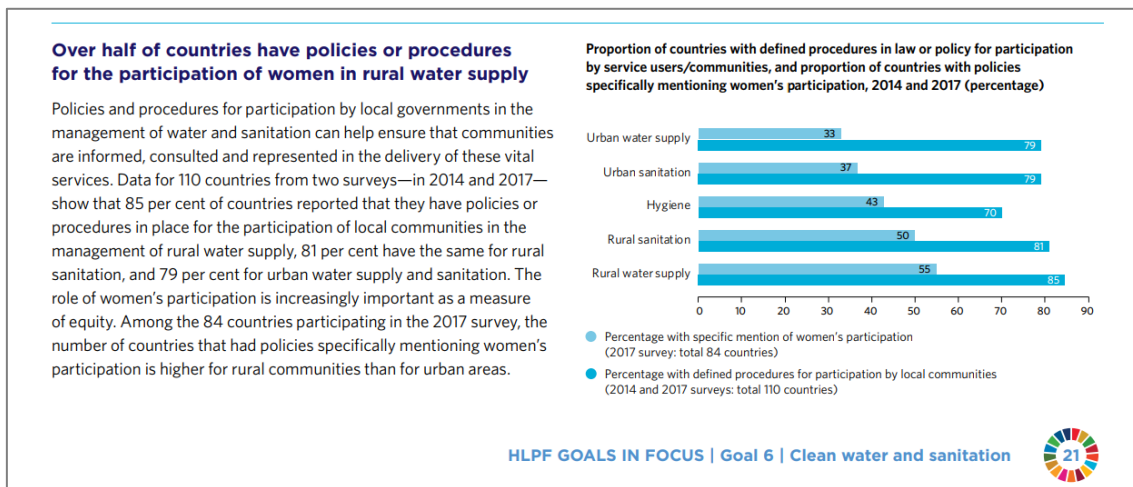

Figure 10 - Screenshot of the 2022 Annual Report of the SDGs.

I consider it quite interesting the women's participation appears more in connection to the "management of natural resources" than to "rights", for example. Even though the total of 7 occurrences might not seem very much remarkable, relatively, "management of natural resources" has the far best performance amongst space clusters: it accounts for more than twice of the results of "rights" and "politics". Briefly diving into it gives us two opportunities:

i.   *recognizing that the 2030 Agenda is effective in calling attention to an area that has been considered problematic in the participatory development literature;*

Analyzing a case of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in India, David Mosse discusses how a methodology considered participatory encompasses several dynamics that contribute to the exclusion of specific knowledges. Mosse's gender-informed perspective allows him to identify that women's participation is both "limited and discontinuous" for several reasons (Mosse, 1994, p. 507).

> Firstly, women faced a number of practical constraints to participation. The PRAs took place during a season when women's work (especially weeding) did not allow participation (a choice based on the need to have PRAs during a season when few families migrate). PRAs assumed that

women would be available collectively at central locations (away from the work sites of the home and field) for continuous period of time. These requirements of time, location and collective presence were incompatible with the structure of women's work roles. Women are rarely free of work responsibilities for substantial lengths of time and it is hard to find times when women would be available collectively. This imposes major constraints on women's participation. Organized PRAs, for example, require the allocation of blocks of time away from field and house to carry out transects, mapping exercises, analysis and presentation, which women are unable to give. Secondly, women faced social constraints. PRAs usually took place in public spaces (e.g., schools) and in the presence of outsiders. Bhil women are typically (explicitly or implicitly) excluded from such public spaces and activities. This exclusion of women 'is so normal and "naturalized" that it is rarely noticed or questioned. In fact, the presence of women causes remark while their absence goes unnoticed' (Mehta et al., forthcoming). The comments made on the cultural specificity of 'informality' above have an important gender dimension. Notwithstanding the team's efforts to create relaxed and informal contexts, as mentioned earlier, the whole PRA exercise operated at a socially formal level. In a society which ascribes to women a sphere characterized as private, domestic, manual, low status, informal and by implication socially less visible and valued, any event which creates processes perceived and understood as public and formal tends to exclude women (Mosse, 1994, p. 512-3).

Women's silence reinforced the idea that "women have nothing to say in relation to natural resource management" (Mosse, 1994, p. 515). Even when women managed to participate in PRAs, they ended up being considered "inaccessible" and "inarticulate" as they would focus on personal issues, ask the outsiders very intimate questions, or simply get bored while completing the proposed tasks. Alice Welborn (1991) recounts the case of a group of women in Serra Leone who were required to draw on a map how their lives could be improved. They replied that what they needed could not be drawn or mapped. "They were referring to social issues such as overwork, the breakdown of co-wife relationships, and violence from husbands" (*apud* Mosse, 1994, p. 513).

Discussing "the role of women in socio-environmental conflicts caused by extractivism and disputes over development in Latin America and the Caribbean", Enara Echart Muñoz and Maria del Carmen Villarreal (2019) discuss how women are victims of several "types of discrimination in relation to, for example, the use, ownership and work of the land" (Villarreal, 2019, p. 313).

> They account for less than 12% of the population benefitted by agrarian reform, administer percentages below 40% of the region's land – with significant variations between countries – and have been historically excluded from and penalized in land ownership, distribution and inheritance policies, which consider them mothers, wives and helpers in agricultural tasks rather than autonomous producers, impairing their autonomy and survival (Villarreal, 2019, 313).

ii. *exploring the argument that interdependency can crystalize inequalities;*

Mosse's (1994) and Muñoz and Villareal's (2019) works offer an illustration for the argument that I proposed before that interdependency does not always lead to equality. In the cases investigated by these authors, women's roles were certainly essential to guarantee the expected functioning of their communities. Male and female individuals were probably interdependent. However, the roles attributed to each of them shaped an interdependency that crystalized inequalities since these communities depended on women remaining "private, domestic, manual, low status, informal and by implication socially less visible and valued" in order to work as expected (Mosse, p. 513).

For now, I would like to resume the consideration made by Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) that even though we cannot affirm that "participatory governance actually disrupts the power asymmetries that have long structured the relationships between UN agencies and countries in the Global North on the one hand, and countries in the Global South on the other", at least we must recognize that "the epistemic infrastructure of the SDGs explicitly creates interdependencies between all these actors in the act of producing a common global public policy because of and despite these power differentials" (Bandola-Gill *et al.*, 2022, p. 8).

Differently from them, I believe that localizing interdependency and participation as similar movements is a tricky choice, especially in the case of data production. The idea that interdependency can actually reinforce unbalanced power positionalities will guide our analysis of data and their embedded politics in chapter 5.

4.5
Conclusion

This chapter explored how participation has been transformed from *a good strong word that meant something* into a buzzword, i.e., how it has been detached from its radical roots in PAR to become a sort of pacifying strategy, applied by IFIs to control contentious groups and guarantee legitimation to development policies. In this sense, I have argued, that participation has assumed a state of suspended animation.

Considered essential in the tasks of multiplying perspectives on a topic, identifying the interests of minorities and unveiling specific knowledge, participation has been embraced by international organizations much more as a strategy than as a principle. We have seen that post-development scholars consider "participation" has been appropriated by the development industry in a moment of self-reinvention when the constant failures of development projects were attracting harder scrutiny.

In sum, by being sanitized, participation has been turned from threat into asset: embraced by IFIs, it was no longer about disputes, but about complicity. People were invited to participate as long as they left their politics waiting outside. Instead of claiming for a deep "transformation of the cultural, political and economic structures which reproduce poverty and marginalization", participation has been refurbished as a tool for promoting development and poverty alleviation (Leal, 2010, p. 91). Along with participation, "empowerment" has gained the status of a buzzword presuming that some people have the power to actually empower others – the absurdity of that is clearer if we remember that PAR considers that empowerment is not something you can teach, it is something that must be conquered, it derives from struggle.

The 2030 Agenda has been designed with great expectations around the centrality of participation, especially because the SDGs were supposed to right the wrongs of the MDGs, highly known for being "drafted by the SG's advisers on the 38th floor of the UN" (Fukuda-Parr and McNeil, 2019, p. 10). In fact, it was born from "two and a half years of consultation and deliberation among civil society actors, international organizations, and nation states, including many Global South countries" (Tichenor *et al.*, 2022, p. 3). However, assuming data practices as the substance that must hold all the actors together, the Agenda ends up split into two logics (participatory and technocratic) that might constrain each other.

Even though the polycentric data governance presumes the participation of several actors, it is also a hard to navigate terrain, which can usually be attributed to financial costs, inequality in statistical capacity and even the non-representative demographics of dataspeakers [to be discussed in chapter 5]. In this sense, I speculate in this chapter a perspective that will be more deeply explored in the next chapter that participation, in the form of inter-dependency, can actually favor the crystallization of inequalities.

The mixed analysis of participation in the 2030 Agenda Corpus that closes the chapter helps us understand that participation is scarcely mentioned in comparison with other terms, especially if we consider that participatory action has been of the most important slogans of the project. Moreover, we can also perceive that several times participation is mentioned in a generic form that nods to the idea of depoliticization proposed by post-development scholars such as Rahnema (1992) and Leal (2010). In this sense, the subjects that must be included in participatory processes are expressed in the evasive language of "all countries", "all societies" and other similar constructions. Accordingly, the tactic of approaching formal education as participation seems like a tentative to stretch the concept. This idea is especially curious because "education" is the most mentioned space for participation mentioned in the 2030 Agenda Corpus. However, I find it intriguing that education can be read as a type of participation when it is, in fact, a basic right according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I could also notice that, despite its pitfalls, the 2030 Agenda does a positive move in calling attention to a topic considered problematic in the participatory development literature, i.e., women's participation in the management of natural resources. Even though the project falls short in strategies for promoting participation (and this can be attributed to the fact that these documents are directed to monitoring development and not exactly or directly building strategies to foster it), it is important to recognize the discursive power of the SDGs and how it is useful at least to keep the discussion and attention to certain topics alive.

5
Something New: From Developmentspeak to Dataspeak and Everything in Between

In the Hollywood blockbuster *Mean Girls*, teenager Cady Heron goes to school for the first time in her life. Previously homeschooled by her zoologist parents, Cady was raised in the African savannah amidst wild animals, which she frequently compares with the competitive environment of her new North American high school. Cady was brilliant in mathematics, a talent she decides to abandon in order to have an excuse to spend more time with Aaron (Goff, 2004) and to work in her vendetta with the super popular Regina George. Before diving into this journey, she has a conversation with Janis and Damian that try to convince her that engaging publicly with mathematics is "social suicide". In this interaction, Damian asks why she loves mathematics so much. Cady, probably affected by how much she feels out of place in high school responds: "because it is the same in every country". The usually sarcastic Damian replies in what seems to be a true state of shock: "that is beautiful".

Cady and Damian's conversation illustrates quite clearly where the fascination with mathematics seems to come from: the idea that there is an intrinsic beauty in the universality of numbers. The 2030 Agenda seems to embody this spirit carrying the ambition of photographing a portrait of development in the whole world.

Even though data-based practices were always there in the development field, as we have seen in the analyses of Ferguson (1994), "data" was not considered a concept important enough to be included as an entry in the Developmentspeak Glossary (which include works published in 1992 and 2010). However, a new wind is blowing in the streets of development. Most probably encouraged by the MDGs and now, of course, by the SDGs advocacy for evidence-based development policy, numbers in the field are being more and more scrutinized, questioned and doubted.

When data are considered to produce more "noise" than actionable knowledge, when data are understood as no guarantee of effective public policy, when unequal access to technologies are recognized to produce non-representative datasets, when data are taken as always "cooked" and never "raw", when numbers have been acknowledged as tools for gaining or maintaining power, when data

production is envisioned as an accelerator of climate change, when datafied objects are taken as entities that cannot be detached from their datafying subjects... what are the real advantages of a worldwide data-intensive development agenda? Apparently, Morten Jerven (2016a) has a point when he says that "not all issues can be resolved through counting" (Jerven, 2016a , p. 11).

It is at least ironic that the sanctity of data is being more hardly questioned precisely at the time when we have it in unprecedented abundance. This chapter walks through the analyses of S&T and feminist scholars as a means to understand how the authority of data has been built and then scrutinized. It delineates a similarity between standpoints and language as structures that both frame and constrain thought in order to suggest that, inside and outside of developmentspeak, a new dialect has been burgeoning all along: dataspeak.

5.1
In numbers we trust? Data and authority through a feminist lens

Data, data, data. In 2012, *Harvard Business Review* published a piece called "Data scientist: The sexiest job of the 21st century" (Davenport; Patil, 2012). In a two years period, Forbes has affirmed both that "data is the new oil" (2019) and that "data isn't the new oil" (2021). Besides the indecision and speculative feeling around the term, the headlines at least portray the centrality of data in our current world. The discussions around data, however, do not seem to inquire very much what they are, but what they usually do.

Rob Kitchin argues that data, given their acknowledged importance, have attracted "little conceptual attention" in contrast to the "thousands of articles and books devoted to the philosophy of information and knowledge". He has a great analogy for explaining this: "Just as we tend to focus on buildings and neighborhoods when considering cities, rather than the bricks and mortar used to build them, so it is the case with data". According to him, assuming data as a sort of material element usually leaves it unproblematized. He recalls that if "we think of bricks and mortar as simple building blocks" we end up ignoring that they are also "elements that are made within factories by companies bound within logistical, financial, legal and market concerns, and are distributed, stored and traded". In this

sense, data have been attracting discussions around "how they should be generated and analyzed, or how they can be leveraged into insights and value, rather than to consider the nature of data from a more conceptual and philosophical perspective" (Kitchin, 2014, p. 29).

This lack of conceptual discussions is easily perceived in the fact that "data", even though very frequently mentioned, is still one of those terms that cause hesitation when the need for a definition comes up. The conceptualization offered by Kitchin (2014) might be helpful here: Data, he says, "are commonly understood to be the raw material produced by abstracting the world into categories, measures and other representational forms […] that constitute the building blocks from which information and knowledge are created (Kitchin, 2014, p. 28). Kitchin tells us that "what has been understood as data has changed over time with the development of science". Firstly used in the 17th century, it emerged when Europe was living a transition from "theology, exhortation and sentiment to facts, evidence and the testing of theory through experiment". Throughout history, "data" was then detached from "facts, evidence, information and knowledge" to be considered an element used in their creation. The most disseminated understanding of data takes it as "pre-analytical and pre-factual" (Kitchin, 2014, p. 29).

The etymological analysis of the term demonstrates this quite clearly: "data", derived from the Latin word "dare" (to give), presumes "raw elements" being *given by* the world through natural and social phenomena. Consequently, this idea of something that has been *given* (something that exists independently of any decision or manipulation) encourages an understanding of data as a representative of truth. In this sense, Kitchin proposed that "data" would be more adequately expressed through the term "capta": derived from the Latin word "capere" (to take) since "those units of data […] have been selected and harvested from the sum of all potential data" (Kitchin, 2014).

Daniel Rosenberg (2013) also proposes an etymological study of the term and its peers. According to him, "data" comes from "dare" (to give), "fact" comes from "fare" (to do), "evidence" comes from "vide" (to see). Accordingly, he proposes that "[a] datum may also be a fact, just as a fact may be evidence". However, "the existence of a datum has been independent of any consideration of corresponding ontological truth. When a fact is proven false, it ceases to be a fact. False data is data nonetheless" (Rosenberg, 2013, p. 18).
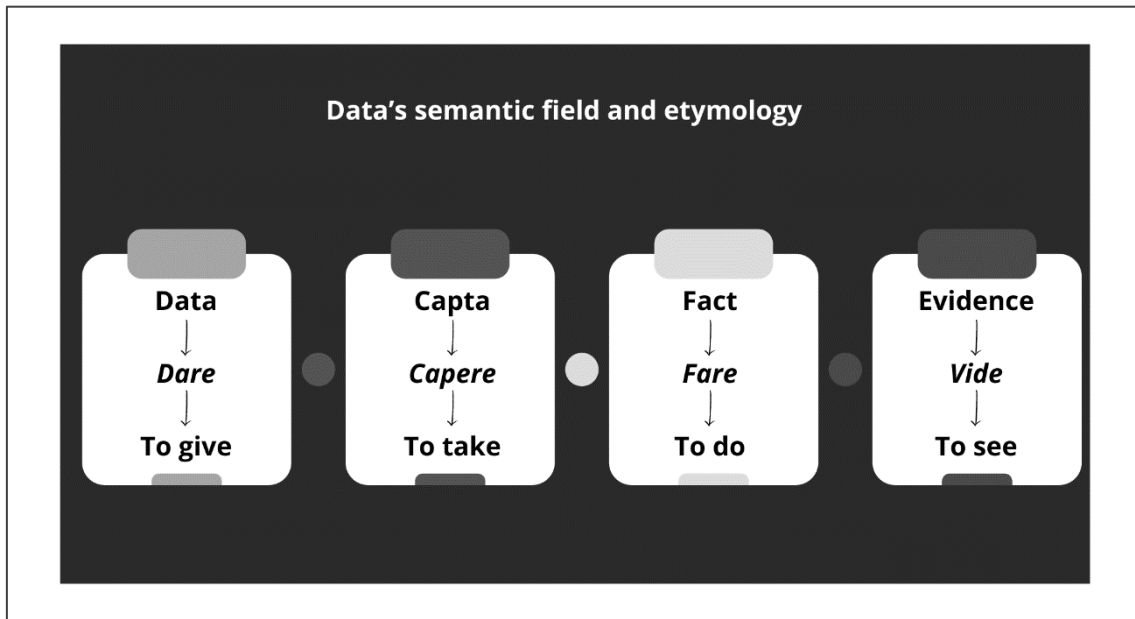
Figure 11 - Data's semantic field and etymology. Elaborated by me.

In the same spirit, Lisa Gitelman and Virginia Jackson (2013) affirm that "'raw data' is an oxymoron" and argue that data are always "cooked". "At first glance", they say, "data are apparently before the fact", which "often leads to an unnoticed assumption that data are transparent, that information is self-evident, the fundamental stuff of truth itself" (Jackson, 2013, p. 2). These assumptions are deeply based on language. On that matter, they argue:

> Think of the ways people talk and write about data. Data are familiarly "collected," "entered," "compiled," "stored," "processed," "mined," and "interpreted." Less obvious are the ways in which the final term in this sequence — interpretation — haunts its predecessors. At a certain level the collection and management of data may be said to presuppose interpretation. "Data [do] not just exist," Lev Manovich explains, they have to be "generated." Data need to be imagined as data to exist and function as such, and the imagination of data entails an interpretive base (Jackson, 2013, p. 3).

Data's sanctity, argue Gitelman and Jackson (2013), couldn't have been built without the help of another popular term: objectivity. Its etymology, according to Theodore M. Porter (1995), "suggests an acquaintance with objects", it is usually invoked as the ability "to know things as they really are" (Porter, 1995, p. 3). Porter discusses that objectivity, in most contexts, is used to refer to "fairness and impartiality". When "prejudice or self-interest" affect someone's judgement, that

person cannot be considered objective (Porter, 1995, p. 4). The understanding of objectivity as synonym to "abnegation, neutrality, or irrelevance of the observing self" is quite recent. It was in the 17th century that objectivity got to be envisioned as a sort of intellectual superiority. Gitelman and Jackson quote Joanna Picciotto in her discussion of how "innocence, traditionally understood to be a state of ignorance, ever came to be associated with epistemological privilege" (Porter, 1995, p. 4).

Mechanical objectivity, which can be "characterized by the observer's restraint", became a scientific ideal in the middle of the 19th century. Gitelman and Jackson trace a parallel with the emergence of photography at the same time:

> When Louis Daguerre, Henry Fox Talbot, and others developed and then popularized the first photographic processes, observers were struck by the apparent displacement of human agency in the production of life-like images. Fox Talbot's lavish account of his calotype process captures this displacement in its title, The Pencil of Nature. No artist necessary. Light itself is enough. Photography is objective (2013, p. 5).

Ann Fabian (2013) recounts the practice of measuring the internal capacity of human skulls, used to determine "racial difference of offer clues to human history". Until the 1880s, [c]raniologists had tried beans, buckshot, and sand" for the exercise. The search for objectivity led them to use water which protected "scientists from the temptation to use 'muscular exertion' to press a few more beans into a head" (p. 2). Objectivity was cherished in its ability to allow different researchers obtaining the same result. The findings were totally given by the object under analysis, in this case a human skull. The subject, the researcher, was there for unveiling that truth with nothing more than mechanical steps.

Objectivity, as Porter (1995) suggests, favor numbers. As a consequence, "mathematical and quantitative reasoning" gained momentum and nowadays "a vast array of quantitative methods is available to scientists, scholars, managers, and bureaucrats" that allow reasoning to be made in a uniform manner, usually considered more "rigorous", "truer" or "more powerful" than qualitative ones. Curiously, despite the presumed *methodologic rigor* these methods are so "flexible" that "almost any issue can be formulated in this language" (Porter, 1995, p. 5-6).

Numbers, according to Sally Engle Merry (2016), are "seductive" precisely for their ability to simplify complexity. "Numerical assessments such as indicators", she argues, "appeal to the desire for simple, accessible knowledge and to a basic

human tendency to see the world in terms of hierarchies or reputation and status". Numbers "convey an aura of objective truth and scientific authority despite the extensive interpretive work that goes into their construction" (Merry, p. 1). According to D'Ignazio and Klein (2020), traditional scientific reasoning seems to follow this line of thought: "[t]he more plain, the more neutral; the more neutral, the more objective; and the more objective, the more true" (D'Ignazio; Klein, 2020, p. 76)

This establishment of numbers like so was mainly propelled by a transformation of what should be considered a respectable knowledge. If before knowledge had to be connected to experience (we can think of guilds in which masters taught apprentices all they knew about their crafts), in the 19th century, objectivity has bound knowledge to objectivity and consequently to "the application of sanctioned methods, or perhaps the mythical, unitary 'scientific method', to presumably neutral facts" (D'Ignazio; Klein, 2020, p. 7). Good knowledge, then, was the one obtained through impartiality and indifference, never corrupted or contaminated by "the biases of the researcher". Objectivity was then considered a sign of authority, an understanding that has sprawled through different areas. Democracy is a great example of this, as elected politicians depend on numbers to authorize their mandate just how monarchs would depend on "divine right" in other times (D'Ignazio; Klein, 2020, p. 8).

Merry (2016) and Porter (1995) emphasize that what usually goes unnoticed is that playing with numbers requires decisions. In Merry's words, quantification involves "an extensive interpretive work" of the researcher (Merry, 2016, p. 1). From Porter's (1995) perspective, quantification implies that the decision is being made by the numbers, i.e., it is "a way of making decisions without seeming to decide" (p. 8). Translating social phenomena into the form of data, Zuboff proposes, replaces "trust" with "certainty" (p. 330). In governance, data-based practices provoke a shift of responsibility from the politician to the experts (Merry, 2016, p. 11).

However, even when numbers seem to offer an objective result, it never happens without the researcher's perceptions paving the possible ways for it. Merry (2016) analyzes the results obtained from two research projects investigating the treatment offered by the courts to battered women. The first one was conducted by an NGO in which 14 "domestic violence survivors" interviewed 75 "other domestic

violence survivors about their experiences in the courts and produced a report that outlined a series of abuses". The second one, conducted by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has created a globally scaled set of indicators for measuring violence against women (Merry, 2016, p. 2).

While the first project focused on battered women's experiences and called attention to the problems they usually face in this context, e.g., "losing custody of their children", the "inadequate measures for safety in the court buildings" and, "the unprofessional conduct of judges and lawyers", the second one offered global indicators that facilitated comparability amongst several countries, "e.g., the "proportion of new recruits to police, social work, psychology, health (doctors, nurses, and others), education (teachers) completing a core curriculum on all forms of violence against women" (Merry, 2016, p. 2-3).

Similarly, Porter (1995) explains the differences "between public opinion polls and academic surveys of attitude". The first method depends on "a strict discipline on employees and respondents" as they propose a "rigid standardization" of answers. The second method allows employees to "rephrase questions" and "subjects to respond in their own words" with the intention to obtain "a genuine expression of beliefs or feelings" (p. 34). More than arguing which of these methodologies is better, or more reliable, the comparisons proposed by Porter and Merry are useful in exposing the idea that "[m]ore than one solution is possible because more than one measurement regime is possible, and this means that there is a range of potentially valid measures" for several phenomena (Porter, 1995, p. 33). In other words, the same question answered through different methods will most probably produce different results. This helps us understand that knowledge, contrarily to what objectivists have disseminated, is profoundly attached to perspective or, even better, to standpoints.

Differently from the philosophy that dominated science for centuries, the one built on cartesian assumptions that knowledge should be true "beyond time and space" (Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 28), the feminist epistemologies have been engaged in the deconstruction of the fallacy that "socially situated knowledge" is a contradiction. While in traditional science, knowledge has been treated as a transcendental matter, harshly separated from personal interests and agendas,

feminist scholars have been recognizing not only the importance, but the necessity to observe the bond between subject and object (Harding, 1993, p. 50).

Feminist scholars do believe that certain values can, indeed, block the development of scientific knowledge. Their biggest concern, however, resides in the assumption that it is possible to separate the scientist from her own values and biases. The main critique has to do with the fact that many "sexist, racist, bourgeois, Eurocentric and heterosexist" points of view have dominated science passing as universal or non-situated knowledge (Harding; Norberg, 2005, p. 2010). By pursuing an impartial point-of-view, social science can actually be complicit with ideas that reinforce power relations (Harding; Norberg, 2005, p. 2009). Pretending to get out of the "marked body", this kind of science intends to come from "nowhere", which is another term used to refer to Western, modern, and masculine (Haraway, 1995, p. 18). This assumption of detachment from makes invisible the ways in which science also transforms the world it intends to analyze.

> From this perspective, Hiroshima, environmental destruction, the alienation of labor, escalating global militarism, the increasing gap between the "haves" and the "have nots," gender, race, and class inequalities—these and other undesirable social phenomena are all entirely consequences of social and political projects. The history of Western science proper makes no contribution to such social events and processes. These are a matter of the political and social uses of the pure knowledge which scientific inquiry produces. They are appropriately discussed under the heading of the applications and technologies of science, but not of sciences' representations of the natural world or distinctive (they say) methods of intervening in it (Harding, 2008, p. 4).

As it is argued by Sandra Harding (2008), "[o]bjectivity, rationality, good method, real science, social progress, civilization—the excellence of these and other self-proclaimed modern achievements are all measured in terms of their distance from whatever is associated with the feminine and the primitive" (p. 3). Harding (1986) seems to reverb the critiques posed by the scholars of the "Development Dictionary" (2010) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (1995). Western science, just like modernity and its most important project, development, is an exercise that thrives in dichotomies:

> Objectivity vs. subjectivity, the scientist as knowing subject vs. the objects of his inquiry, reason vs. the emotions, mind vs. body—in each case the former has been associated with masculinity and the latter with femininity. In each case it has been claimed that human progress requires the former to achieve domination of the latter (Harding, 1986, p. 23).

With development it was no different. As Harding (2008) argues, "development was conceptualized as achievable only through the transfer to the South of Northern scientific rationality and technical expertise and the democratic political forms that these purportedly bring into existence and are, in turn, supported by (Harding, 2008, p. 142).

Appleton *et al.* (2011) comment on how the idea that modern science as the only one "capable of providing the solution to 'underdevelopment'" has promoted a constant devaluation of traditional knowledge systems which ended up being considered inept to produce innovation (p. 212). Western sciences have been fed on an unshakable sense of "exceptionalism" as they presume that they "alone among all human knowledge systems are capable of grasping reality in its own terms – 'cutting nature at its joints'" (Harding, 2008, p. 3).

> According to this view, only modern Western sciences have demonstrated that they have the resources to escape the universal human tendency to project onto nature cultural assumptions, fears, and desires. Indeed, these research projects alone of all human inquiries into natural and social orders are entitled to be called sciences, according to the defenders of exceptionalism (Harding, 2008, p. 4).

Differently, admitting a "corporeal nature" in every vision (Haraway, 1995, p. 18), the strong objectivity proposed by Sandra Harding undoes the possibility of a dislocated subject. It consists in taking into considerations our "personal experiences", "loyalties" and "privileges" affect the research we do (Harding, 1993, p. 69). Likewise, David Hess (2011) argues that "social differences can translate into epistemic differences regarding for methods, problem areas, concepts, and even equipment design" (Hess, 2011, p. 422).

> When the doors of science open to a broader social composition, the answer to the question of what counts in science as an important problem area, especially for health and environmental research, depends a great deal on whom one asks. Debates over different agendas and methods benefit science in the sense of making visible unseen biases that have previously passed as unquestioned neutrality, and they result in improved research methods as well as better allocation of resources to problem areas. To use Sandra Harding's phrase, diversity leads to "stronger objectivity" (Hess, 2011, p. 422).

Strong objectivity presumes that it is impossible to separate "politics and knowledge". For such, it is a strategy that seeks to unveil "the practices of power" going on in scientific institutions. For Harding (2008), knowledge and politics are co-constitutive, each one produces and is produced by the other (p. 121). For such,

exposing the perspectives that are commonly silenced by "current power relations" (Welson, 2006, p. 80), strong objectivity assumes the importance of working with explicitly democratic moral and/or political points-of-view (Harding, 1993, p. 69).

Reading from Harding, Tickner (2006) considers that marginalized standpoints "leads to more robust objectivity" for two main reasons: i. it expands the universe under analysis, and ii. it unveils "aspects of reality" that might have been "obscured by more orthodox approaches to knowledge-building". Moreover, building a parallel between Harding and Porter (1995) and Merry (2016), Tickner defends that "objectivity depends on the positionality of the researcher as much as on the method used". In this sense, science cannot be considered "a foolproof procedure", but a set of multiple possibilities of observation of the world that will most probably point to several different directions (Tickner, 2006, p. 26).

In the same vein, the work of Evelyn Fox Keller (1985) is praised by Jasanoff (2004) in its ability to demonstrate that the idea of "laws of nature" could only be conceived from a masculine perspective. In her words, "[o]nce cast as a search for law, scientific research orients itself toward monocausal, hierarchical explanations in which nature is controlled by deterministic forces that dominate lower-order variables much in the manner of an authoritarian, centralized state ruling its subservient citizens". Keller's reading of nature suggests it operates under a certain order, but not under the definitive pressure of laws (p. 35).

Below, I added my own version of an image we frequently find reproduced in academic works discussing perspectives. Observing from a x direction, we could assume that the object casting a shadow on the wall is a sphere. From a y direction, we could assume that it is a cube. Both perspectives put together would allow us to understand that the object in question is neither a cube or a sphere, but a cylinder.
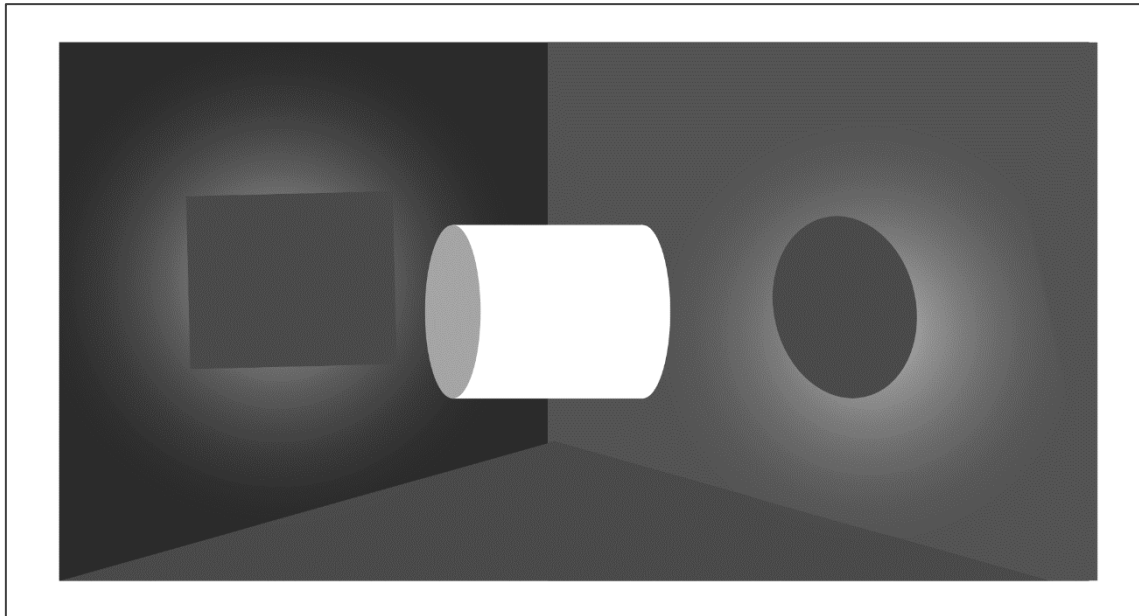
Figure 12 - Standpoints. Elaborated by me.

Of course, this case is an oversimplified demonstration of standpoints. Its simplicity illustrates the partiality and situatedness of every point of view, but still portray the possibility of achieving the true answer with the combination of two perspectives. But things get much more complex in social sciences. For feminist scholars, nevertheless, the real deal is that there is no possible way to "see everything, all at once, from an imaginary and impossible standpoint" (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, p. 76). Every standpoint is partial and limited, and even though combining several of them, it will never be possible to have them all. Thus, truth is simply untenable. For objectivists, this might be enough reason for throwing the spreadsheets in the air and giving up on science as it apparently cannot achieve what is has been made for. Harding, however, proposes a beautiful interpretation for this incompleteness. Science, she says, must not be perceived as "the West's idealized understandings of its own practices", but as "the universal human impulse to understand ourselves and the world around us in ways that permit effective interactions with such worlds" (p. 4).

5.2
From small data to big data: What datafication does to governance

In 1686, the Marquis de Vauban wrote a letter to Louis XIV defending the wonders of a rationalized and annotated quantification of the French population. In other words, he proposed a census, "a useful and necessary pleasure" for the king that would allow him to know "in a hour's time the present and past condition of a great realm of which he is the head, and be able himself to know with certitude in what consists his grandeur, his wealth, and his strength" (Marquis de Vauban apud Scott, 1998, p. 11).

In 1858, nurse and statistician Florence Nightingale published her work entitled "Notes on Matters Affecting the Health, Efficiency, and Hospital Administration of the British Army. The "Diagram of Causes of Mortality in the Army of the East" which featured in the document, of a type now commonly known as a Rose Chart or a Rose Diagram, was then an innovative form of presenting "complex statistics simply, clearly, and persuasively". The diagram "showed that epidemic disease, which was responsible for more British deaths in the course of the Crimean War than battlefield wounds, could be controlled by a variety of factors including nutrition, ventilation, and shelter" (Norman, 2021)[10].

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[10] Retrieved from <https://www.historyofinformation.com/detail.php?entryid=3815>. Access on: April 1, 2024.
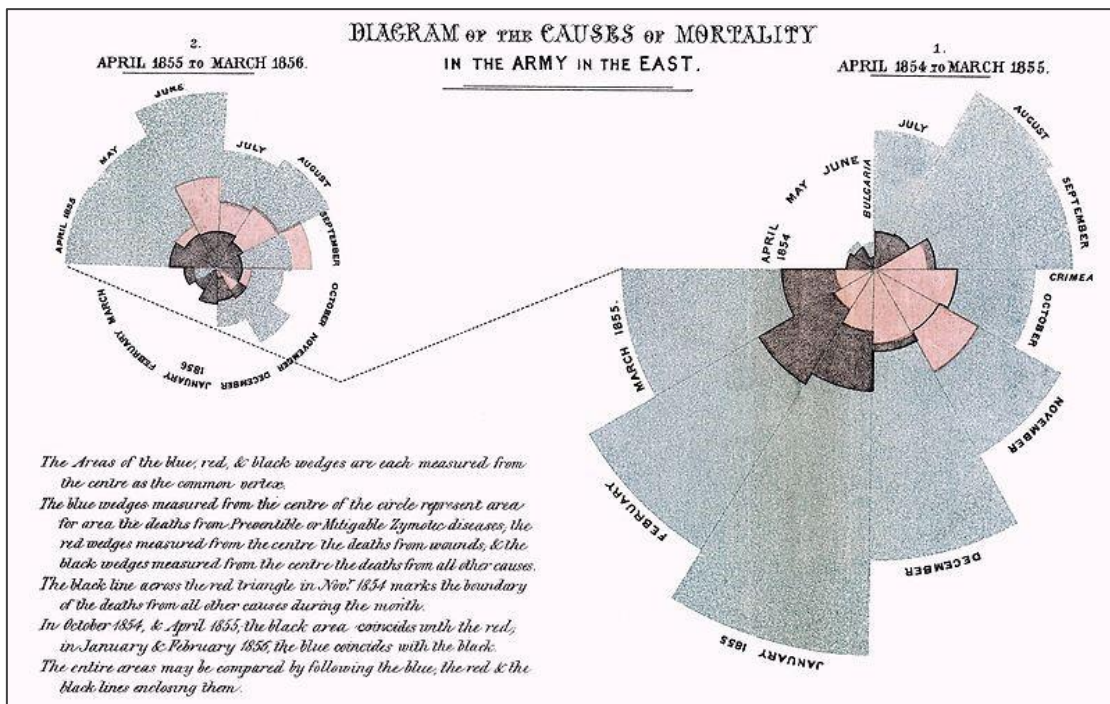
Figure 13 - Diagram of the Causes of Mortality in the Army of the East produced by nurse and statistician Florence Nightingale in 1858.

Not very much different from that, the pages of the 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report (United Nations) and its predecessors are widely populated with a singular combination: a number and a problem. Statements such as "about 1 in 10 people worldwide are suffering from hunger" (UN, 2022, p. 9), "2.4 billion people still use inefficient and polluting cooking systems" (UN, 2022, p. 14), "99% of the world's urban population breathe polluted air" (UN, 2022, p. 18) or "1/3 of the world's population – mostly women – fear walking alone in their neighborhoods at night" (UN, 2022, p. 23) are just a few amongst several occurrences.

Presented with colorful schemes and accompanied by graphic facilitators (e.g., doodles, small charts, and simple graphs), these statements seem to communicate about the big problem of international development in an incredibly palpable, capturable and systematized way. With a number and a problem, one can cover hunger, climate change and even violence, but also informality, education, health, gender inequality, biodiversity and so it goes. With a number and a problem, one can translate complexity into easy-to-absorb information that can readily answer the one relevant question in the development monitoring enterprise: *how is*

it going? Said combination, of course, stands on what seems to be the smallest particle of development in the 21st century: data.

If numbers are useful for keeping track of development worldwide, they are also very much illustrative of how ambitious the 2030 Agenda is: 17 goals split up into 169 targets that are monitored through 232 indicators. Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho (2022) argue that "if there is a novelty in the international approval of such an ambitious agenda, the SDGs are also a culmination of deep-rooted practices of quantification" (Ramalho, 2022, p. 1). According to them, the Agenda both borrows and extrapolates "from old reasonings and well-established Western modern ways of interviewing in the world" which they define as "the simplification of complex social phenomena in statistics; the counting and accounting way of doing policy through numbers (or numerical data); and the measurement and comparison of institutional performance". Put together, these practices integrate what they call a "global governance by indicators" (Ramalho, 2022, p. 2).
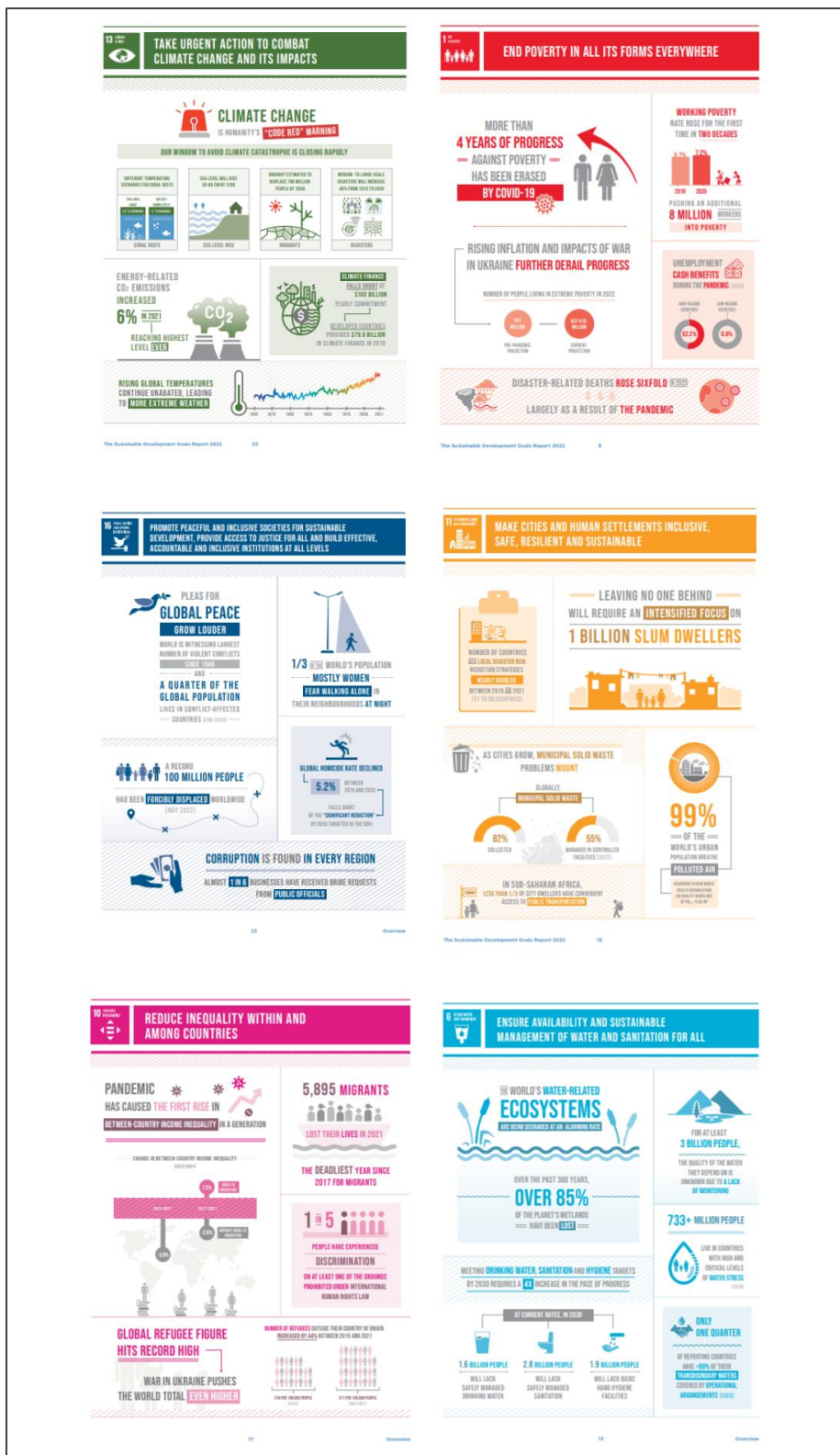
Figure 14 - Screenshots of data visualization in the 2022 Annual Report of the SDGs.

It was in 2013 that the *data revolution for sustainable development fever* showed its first symptoms and patient zero must have been the Report of the High-

Level Panel of Eminent Persons (HLP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The document, certainly informed by the critiques that had been directed to the MDGs (see Chapter 4), contains a section called "Wanted: A data revolution" in which it states that "[t]he revolution in information technology over the last decade provides an opportunity to strengthen data and statistics for accountability and decision-making purposes". It claims that technology should be used "to enable real-time monitoring of development results", a movement it assumes still "largely disconnected from the traditional statistics community at both global and national levels". The report defends the importance of improving "development data" as a strategy to "reach the neediest, and find out whether they are receiving essential services". For such, it advocates for data "disaggregated by gender, geography, income, disability, and other categories, to make sure that no group is *being left behind*" (United Nations, 2013, p. 23) [emphasis is mine].

This revolution can be understood as the phenomenon that Mayer-Schöenberger and Cukier (2013) called "datafication". Speaking of a "datafication" in a very objective manner implies that something is being datafied, i.e., transformed into data (Mejias and Couldry, 2019). In a wider understanding, datafication is not only the process of translating human life into data, but the massive propagation and replication of this process itself. As said by Crooks and Currie (2020), datafication "names the increasing mediation of many forms of sociality by data-intensive network technologies and platforms". Consequently, the phenomenon also causes a sort of "imperative for organizations, including organizations that serve the public, to become data-driven" (p. 202).

Perhaps the most important aspect of datafication is the fact that the proliferation of "data-generating devices", such as cellphones, gave gigantic datasets the status of "goldmine" or "new oil". Differently from the "avalanche of statistical numbers of the nineteenth century", in which the big amount of data was envisioned as something of equivalent importance to "the scientific and calculative techniques that rendered [that] data available", our current phenomenon of datafication lacks this profound reflection "on the situated calculative techniques and processes used in the gathering, analysis and deployment of big data". If it is all about the data and its capacity of functioning as a "magical material", the politics embedded in these datasets get easily lost (Amoore; Piotukh, 2015, p. 342-3). In other words, "one of the many problems with a pervasive focus on *big* and *data* is

that the finite and granular minutiae of the analytics are overlooked" (Amoore; Piotukh, 2015, p. 344). According to Bigo *et al.* (2019), the data revolution was made possible by the fast popularization of the Internet and the personal computer. In their words, "[j]ust about every device is now connected to the Internet and generating vast quantities of digital traces about interactions, transactions, and movements whether users are aware or not" (Bigo *et al.*, 2019, p. 3). It goes without saying that this said data revolution is not restricted to the development field. In fact, the most important claim of the global sustainable development agenda is that of putting this already ongoing revolution to the service of bettering people's lives.

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the self-reinforcing aspect of the 2030 Agenda. As much as it pledges that data are splurging everywhere, it is necessary to keep datafying what has not been datafied yet. In a sense, the datafying practices of the 2030 Agenda are methods for measuring as much as they are methods for transforming the field they intend to measure. In this sense, it exploits datafication as a mean whereas it gives a decisive push on its direction. Louise Amoore (2020) proposes a similar perspective on contemporary algorithms in her speculation of a cloud ethics. When public debate seems to be focusing on how much algorithms are transgressing or not the "settled societal norms", Amoore argues for the need to recognize that what they are actually doing is "establishing new patterns of good and bad, new thresholds of normality and abnormality, against which actions are calibrated" (Amoore, 2020, p. 6).

Even though the report defends that "better data and statistics" are essential for helping governments to "track progress and make sure their decisions are evidence-based", it also emphasizes that a "true data revolution" cannot be "just about governments", but also "[i]nternational agencies, CSOs and the private sector" and including not only new sources of data but also those that already exist (United Nations, p. 24)

In 2014, it was time for the Independent Expert Advisory Group Secretariat (IEAG) to produce the report called "A World that Counts: Mobilizing a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development" which pledges that having the "right information on the right things at the right time" was essential for effective policies. More directly, the report states that "[d]ata are the lifeblood of decision-making". It portrays part of the world living this great honeymoon with the experimentation with innovative technologies and calls attention to an increasing inequality in this

179

matter since many are excluded from this event due to the "lack of resources, knowledge, capacity or opportunity" (IEAG, 2014, p. 2).

> Data needs improving. Despite considerable progress in recent years, whole groups of people are not being counted and important aspects of people's lives and environmental conditions are still not measured. For people, this can lead to the denial of basic rights, and for the planet, to continued environmental degradation. Too often, existing data remain unused because they are released too late or not at all, not well-documented and harmonized, or not available at the level of detail needed for decision-making (IEAG, 2014, p. 2).

These documents have many aspects in common. They:

i. claim for a data revolution for sustainable development;

ii. assume that development data needs improvement;

iii. envision an effervescent moment for data-intensive technologies;

iv. recognize that this phenomenon is characterized by inequality;

v. consider that disaggregated data is indispensable to reach vulnerable people; and most important of all,

vi. believe that better data produce better development policies.

Morten Jerven (2016a) considers that the SDGs (as well as the MDGs) are expressions of an increasing fixation with "quantifiable metrics". However, this "reliance on numbers", which he describes as "the dominant strategy in the international development community", is not very much new (Jerven, 2016a, p. 11). As we have seen in previous chapters, development has, since its very early days resorted to statistics not only as a guide for decision-making, but also as a legitimating tool for policies appointed by international agencies. James Ferguson tells us that the 1975 World Bank Report on Lesotho considers the economic indicators for Lesotho "scarce and unreliable" and that "[p]roduction statistics are virtually non-existent". Still, the report uses the "unreliable" and "virtually non-existent" data to create "very precise-looking figures" portrayed in the document as well as to support several conclusions about the country such as that Lesotho is marked by "poverty and stagnation over a long period of time, reflecting the country's poor natural resources and lack of development in the past". In Ferguson's words, "[i]n 'development' discourse, the fact that there are no statistics available is no excuse for not presenting statistics, and even made-up numbers are better than none at all" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 41).

The obsession of development with statistics can be understood, of course, as a replication of a movement that had already been endured in European and North-American states around the 19th century when quantification practices, e.g., "censuses, indexes, indicators, registers, rolls, catalogues, logs, and archives" (Bigo, Isin & Rupert, 2019, p. 6), proved to be essential for matters of state building. Alain Desrosières (2002) tells us that while in the 18th century statistics was "a description of the state", in the 19th century it was reformulated to include practices such as "encoding, summing, calculations, and the creation of graphs and tables" that allowed the whole to be "grasped and compared at a single glance" (Desrosières, 2002, p. 147).

James Scott (1999) envisions statistics as one of the several forms of mapping that the state has adopted to get a grip on society (Scott, 1999, p. 87). Even though the state used to have its ways of imposing "its schemes on society" [as we have seen with the standardization of language in chapter 2], until the 18th century, the European states still "lacked the consistent coercive power, the fine-grained administrative grid, or the detailed knowledge that would have permitted them to undertake more intrusive experiments in social engineering". The 19th century brought the conditions that allowed the West the aspiration to produce an "administrative ordering of nature and society". This movement, named by Scott as 'High modernism', was promoted by "the avant-garde among engineers, planners, technocrats, high-level administrators, architects, scientists, and visionaries" that "envisioned a sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life in order to improve the human condition" (Scott, 1999, p. 88). This social engineering, of course, could only be realized by an authoritative state, which fiercely embraced the "authority of scientific knowledge and its tendency to disallow other competing sources of judgment" (Scott, 1999, p. 93).

Bigo, Isin and Rupert (2019) tells us that the task of "producing knowledge about objects and subjects" allowed the state to constitute "their authority, legitimacy, and legality". Desrosières (2002) speaks of how this "legitimacy did not fall from the sky by decree", but was actually "shaped and woven day after day, forgotten, threatened, questioned, and rebuilt at further cost". National statistical offices nowadays enjoy two sources of legitimation inherited from that time: they count on the authority of both the state and science (Desrosières, 2002, p. 148).

High modernism, Scott (1999) argues, can be understood as a "strong (one might even say muscle-bound) version of the beliefs in scientific and technical progress that were associated with industrialization in Western Europe and in North America from roughly 1830 until World War I". While the scholars of The Development Dictionary (2010) call attention to a said "congenital relationship" between science and development, they seem to reverb James Scott when he speaks of High Modernism's cornerstone:

> [...] a supreme self-confidence about continued linear progress, the development of scientific and technical knowledge, the expansion of production, the rational design of social order, the growing satisfaction of human needs, and, not least, an increasing control over nature (including human nature) commensurate with scientific understanding of natural laws (Scott, 1999, p. 89).

High Modernism fed on an unshakable belief that the production of statistical knowledge about population was indispensable for shaping it. Statistics offered "simplified description" that allowed "design and manipulation" of several issues such as "personal hygiene, diet, child rearing, housing" etc. being the "working poor" the group most frequently elected as subject of "social engineering" (Scott, 1999, p. 92). If we consider that the SDGs have been built on the assumption that "data are the lifeblood of decision-making", it is easy to perceive that the one-cannot-change-what-one-cannot-know logic has remained strong for almost two centuries now. This excerpt from the "A World that Counts" report makes this idea explicit:

> Data are the lifeblood of decision-making. Without data, we cannot know how many people are born and at what age they die; how many men, women and children still live in poverty; how many children need educating; how many doctors to train or schools to build; how public money is being spent and to what effect; whether greenhouse gas emissions are increasing or the fish stocks in the ocean are dangerously low; how many people are in what kinds of work, what companies are trading and whether economic activity is expanding (IAEG, 2014, p. 4).

In sum, the 2030 Agenda can be understood as a system that datafies development issues, i.e., puts them in a "quantified form so that [they] can be tabulated and analyzed" (Mayer-Schöenberger & Cukier, 2013, p. 78) and then acted upon. On the one hand, we can notice that this datafied structure brings some positive results that come in the form of standardization, comparability, accountability, prioritization, rationalization of resource distribution etc., besides,

of course, the advantage of moving nonresistantly along what seems to be this global phenomenon of datafication. On the other hand, this presumed objectivity tends to efface the role of power dynamics that allows some subjectivities to prevail in this *language of development*.

5.2.1
Policy without politics

As we have noted while discussing objectivity in the previous section, this high-modernist ideology "tends to devalue or banish politics". According to Scott (2019), the right answers for perfecting society and its way of living could not be achieved through "political interests", but through the adequate "scientific tools" (p. 94). This movement, we can observe, envisions the possibility of making *policy without politics*. Statistics, says Desrosières (2002), has been "simultaneously oriented toward knowledge and action, and toward description and prescription". That is, after measuring, comes decision. The second moment, however, have been considered as completely detached from human interference (Desrosières, 2002, p. 9).

Scholarship on this matter has pointed to a different direction though. Porter, for instance, argues that "[n]umbers, too, create new things and transform the meanings of old ones (Porter, 1995, p. 17). Data have for centuries now been applied for matters of power. Desrosières (2002) calls attention to the fact that "[a]s the etymology of the word shows, statistics is connected with the construction of the state, with its unification and administration" (Desrosières, 2002, p. 8). This connection is made crystal clear when he discusses the work of Jacques Peuchet. Published in 1805, it was eloquently called "An Elementary Statistics of France, Containing the Principles of This Science and Their Application to the Analysis of the Wealth, Forces, and Power of the French Empire, for the Use of Those Who Intend to Pursue the Study of Administration". Intending to understand the "Power of the French Empire", the author presents statistics on its "territory, population, agriculture, industry, commerce, navigation, state budget, and its army" (Desrosières, 2002, p. 36).

Bigo *et al.* (2019) advance this matter presenting the concept of data politics, through which they presume data as generators of "new forms of power relations

and politics" (p. 4). The relevance of data politics, they say, has been intensified by the data revolution propelled by the "rapid development of the Internet".

If data collected through archaic methods were already a powerful tool for establishing "authority, legitimacy and legality" in the 19th century, it comes naturally to us the assumption that the advent of the Internet, in which people produce actively and passively tons of information about themselves in the most variegated set of tasks, would also cause a revolution for governance (Bigo *et al.*, 2019, p. 3).

> There has never been a state, monarchy, kingdom, empire, government, or corporation in history that has had command over such granular, immediate, varied, and detailed data about subjects and objects that concern them. What exactly governments, corporations, and a whole series of agencies and authorities collect, analyze, and deploy is complex but it is now generally understood that data has become a major object of economic, political, and social investment for governing subjects (Bigo *et al.*, 2019, p. 4).

Generated from a "bewildering array of activities and transactions" such as "[o]ur spending and travel patterns, our online search queries, our reading habits, our television and movies choices, our social media posts" (MacFeely, 2019, p. 122), big data has for years now been used to respond questions such as "who communicates with whom, who goes where, and who says what" (MacFeely, 2019, p. 3). In "Doubt and the Algorithm" (2019), Louise Amoore tells us about physicist Richard Feynman's lecture (1955) in which he claimed that scientists "must leave room for doubt". Doubting, Feynman argued, is an act of "responsibility to society". "In contrast to Feynman's notion that science's responsibility to society resides in leaving open the incalculability of the future", Amoore says, "algorithms hold out the promise of securing against all possible future events (terrorism, irregular migration, financial crisis, climate change), via the analysis of data" (Feynman, 1955, p. 2).

Big Data has certainly paved the way for the resurgence of the idea that with more data humanity will be able to solve its most persistent problems – a belief that is latent in the 2030 Agenda. The enthusiasm has even brought back the old trend of Cartesian thought and its aspiration for the enactment of a God's eye view [so deeply criticized by feminist scholars] that departs from objectivity and rationality to reach a future that sounds almost supernatural. That is explicit in the work of Alex Pentland:

> Revolutionary new measurement tools provided by mobile telephones and other digital infrastructures are providing us with a God's eye view of ourselves. For the first time, we can precisely map the behavior of large numbers of people as they go about their daily lives. For society, the hope is that we can use this new in-depth understanding of individual behavior to increase the efficiency and responsiveness of industries and governments. For individuals, the attraction is the possibility of a world where everything is arranged for your convenience—your health checkup is magically scheduled just as you begin to get sick, the bus comes just as you get to the bus stop, and there is never a line of waiting people at city hall (Pentland, 2011, p. 10-1).

Shoshana Zuboff (2019) analyzes Pentland's works with skepticism. In her words they indulge "in the euphemisms and thin rationalizations that are also standard fare for surveillance capitalists and that contribute to the normalization of the dispossession of human experience" (p. 395). In this vein, Zuboff highlights a matter of contention surrounding the debate on big data: the fact that it has been exaggeratedly explored, especially by the tech industry, as a means to exert control over people, which she condemns through her theory of surveillance capitalism. Data have been highly "valorized" for the assumption that they "afford a higher level of insight than human intuition" as a tool to answer both "historical and futurological problems" (Smith, 2018, p. 8).

> Data are portrayed by authority figures in ambiguous ways, as the motor of transnational crime and terror, but also, conversely, as the solution to these problems. The capture and analysis of data is described as being critical for safeguarding national interests and security from the imminent, kinetic and dislocated menace of radical Islamists, splintered criminal cells and pedophile rings. An example of this perspective is manifest in a 2003 US joint Senate and Congress inquiry which concluded that 'on September 11, enough relevant data was resident in existing databases' and that if 'dots had been connected' the events could have been 'exposed and stopped'. Similarly, providing evidence at a US Congressional hearing shortly after the World Trade Center attacks, IBM's federal business manager testified that 'in this war, our enemies are hiding in open and available information across a spectrum of databases' (Smith, 2018, p. 8).

Moreover, Pentland's position (assuming big data in a 1:1 equivalence with "reality") is also questioned by José Van Dijck (2014) who argues that "the ideology of dataism" is one more tentative to reify "objective quantification" that tends to carry a naïve understanding of how agents "collect, interpret, and share (meta)data culled from social media, internet platforms, and other communication technologies" (Van Dijck, 2014, p. 198), i.e., it takes Big data as "*imprints* or *symptoms* of people's actual behavior or moods, while the platforms themselves are

presented merely as neutral facilitators" (Van Dijck, 2014, p. 199) [emphases in original].

Morten Jerven (2016) condemns the 2030 Agenda of partaking in the same creed. On that matter, he argues that "[there is no automatic connection between having correct information and making the right choice". He goes on to say that "It is tempting to conclude that we have been making wrong decisions because we have not had the right information, but it contains an unstated assumption that the chief constraint in policy making has been a lack of information" (p. 1). Jerven seems to acknowledge that not even all the data in the world could stop bad outcomes from happening.

I believe post-development scholars would agree with Jerven adding a hint of intention into the mishaps. The fiasco of neoliberal policies imposed by IFIs that we have perused in chapter 2 demonstrates that failure in policy cannot be completely attributed to lack of information. Many times, it is the product of political interests, i.e., actors decide to make it fail. As Ferguson (1994) would say, the failure of a recipient country cannot be really considered a failure when it is actually a means to install a whole new financial system that benefits donor countries.

In a sense, the 2030 Agenda presents a great paradox. As much as they symbolize a hyper-quantitative and data-intensive governance strategy, the objective 232 indicators that compose the Agenda could only see the light of day after exhausting negotiations. As said by Mejias & Couldry (2019), data can "only emerge through a process of abstraction: something is taken from things and processes, something which was not already there in discrete form before" and that is certainly true in the case of the 2030 Agenda. From its first traces in Rio+20 in 2012 to its adoption through the Transforming Our World document in 2015, the 2030 Agenda construction has been the stage for countless discussions. The systematization transmitted by 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators can only be achieved through a strenuous dispute that is as much political as it is technical.

Even though Sally Engle Merry (2016) agrees that numbers are efficient in "exposing problems and tracking their distribution", they also result in a kind of knowledge "that is decontextualized, homogenized, and remote from local systems of meaning". In this sense, she argues that "[i]ndicators risk producing knowledge that is partial, distorted, and misleading. Since indicators are often used for policy

formation and governance, it is important to examine how they produce knowledge" (Merry, 2016, p. 3). According to her, "[c]ounting things requires making them comparable", which usually strips these things "out of their context, history, and meaning". Qualitative knowledge is crucial in reconciling "numerical knowledge" to the original "surrounding social structure" (Merry, 2016, p. 1).

Arlene Tickner (2013) departs from Latour to argue that "for the world to become 'knowable' objects of study and language must be made to correspond through processes of manipulation and translation. This is because theory does not mirror nature, but rather, scientists are responsible for converting nature into words (or theory)" (Tickner, 2013, p. 630).

> In a fascinating case study of soil analyses in the Brazilian Amazon, the author observes that 'if virgin forest is to be transformed into a laboratory, the forest must be prepared to be rendered as a diagram' (Latour, 1999: 43). From the tagging of trees to photograph-taking, map-making and the collection of soil samples, Latour traces the steps through which the Amazon is translated into codes that are compatible with previously existing (core) knowledge, thus preparing it for international transport to Paris. The transformation of objects of study such as the Amazon into 'inscriptions' is referred to as 'circulating reference' (Latour, 1987: 226–227; 1999: 73). Such mediations that take place between the world and language/theory allow for the conversion of the local or the particular into mobile, immutable and combinable resources, abstractions of reality that can be easily moved and combined (Tickner, 2013, p. 630).

Fukuda-Parr and McNeill (2019) argue that development projects are built around framed discourses, i.e., they are built from a crystalized narrative that frame a "social problem in a particular way that points to certain types of response as obvious, and others as irrelevant or unthinkable". The MDGs, for instance, were created as "a vehicle for the norm to end global poverty". However, the task of ending global poverty has been framed as "meeting basic needs" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 8).

> This kept out unfavored ideas – such as patriarchy and gender discrimination – as well as the core challenges that had long been at the center of global discourse of development such as economic transformation, employment, productivity, role of the state and national strategies. It also kept out capabilities and human rights agendas such as reproductive rights, access to justice, and so on. It kept out the critical but controversial issues of climate change, migration, conflict, and democratic governance (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 8).

The SDGs, as we have seen in chapter 3 tried to make things differently, opening up the conversation for a multitude of actors, a task that made framing

much harder. As said by Fukuda-Parr and McNeil (2019), "[t]he development field is replete with competing ideas about the essential objectives of what we mean by 'development', and theories about the best ways to achieve them". A global development agenda, therefore, intends to "bridge those divides and find common ground". For such, "it is not surprising that the formulation of the SDGs – an exercise to define a collective vision of development and set out key priorities – was an intensely contested process" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeil, 2019, p. 5).

> There are multiple measurement tools for important social phenomena – such as inequality, economic prosperity, hunger, or access to justice. The chosen tool for measuring such phenomena embeds – in a covert way – theories about what that social phenomenon is, and influences the type of policy interventions that are judged to be needed. In a field like development which is marked by contestations over alternative strategies and policy approaches, the choice of indicators and targets in global goals becomes a critical political issue (Fukuda-Parr; McNeil, 2019, p. 7).

The authors defend that such process "brings politics to data" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeil, 2019, p. 6) by attesting that "the contestation over ideas is not only about whether a priority such as employment should be included but how it should be measured and how rapidly it should be achieved" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeill, 2019, p. 6). As they put it, indicators are expected to "represent a social reality but often they reinterpret it" (p. 7). In this sense, they believe that the objective enterprise of goal setting actually embeds "theories, values, and ideologies" and conclude that the development field, and I believe the same might happen to the *language of development*, is deeply affected and shaped by certain "types of knowledge and politics" (p. 6).

In a solo paper, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (2019) recounts the imbroglio taking place in the definition of the inequality goal. According to her, there were "two divergent perspectives". The first one, which she calls the perspective of "extreme inequality" pledged for "control over the concentration of power and wealth among the elite" and "poses a radical challenge to the economic model". The second one, which she calls a perspective of "exclusion", claimed for the alleviation of "exclusion of the vulnerable and marginalized population from opportunities" and "implies a need for expanding social services, a continuation of the MDG agenda with more emphasis on reaching the most vulnerable" (Fukuda-Parr, 2019, p. 63). According to her, this is a process in which "differentiating between the political and technical is not possible". Indicator, she defends, is not a "technical matter",

but a political choice that depends on how the problem is defined" or framed. "Measurement tools have different strengths and weaknesses in terms of what they measure. The best indicator is one that is most responsive to the policy concern at hand" (Fukuda-Parr, 2019, p. 67).

Fukuda Parr and McNeil (2019) seem to echo the concerns presented by feminist scholars when arguing that "[t]he limitations of quantification need to be recognized". The "language of numbers", they say, "is best suited to capturing tangible outcomes or inputs, and is particularly ill-suited to representing processes, structural obstacles to achieving transformative change, and the particularities of local context – elements that are central to the realization of human rights" (Fukuda Parr; McNeil, p. 14).

Thus, inspired by Jasanoff's idea that "data sets emerge from this account of public knowledge-making as situated forms of storytelling", I propose that we look at data as narratives[11]. The term "narrative", it is useful to remind, is frequently described as the result or the process of telling a story, a sequence of events that might be true or fictious. However, truthiness in here is not as important as the fact that to narrate something the narrator must assume a standpoint. They can be inserted in the story or looking from the outside, but both standpoints presume perspective, i.e., a visible scene. As defended by Jerven (2014b), most times quantification requires standardization and categorization that result in the fact that "[w]hile we gain knowledge from aggregation and addition, we also lose information in the same process" (Jerven, 2014b, p. 13). The existence of a narrative implies that someone is standing somewhere. Thus, the assumption of data as narratives intends to highlight that the datafication of a phenomenon implies that it is being translated from one form to another through a certain perspective, from a specific point of view. I recall here Clifford Geertz conception of translation as

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[11] Czarniawska's reading of Lyotard brings an interesting insight about narratives. Lyotard, she says, "constrasted the narrative form of knowledge, typical of the non-modern type of society, with that modern invention – scientific knowledge" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 7). She goes on by saying the following: There is a peculiar relationship between the two, he said: while science requires narrative for its own legitimation (there has to be a story to tell why scientific knowledge is important at all), it repays the favor in poor coin. Not only does it refuse to perform the same service and to legitimize narrative knowledge (with the possible exception of structuralism and formalism in literary theory) but also it fiercely denies narrative its legitimacy as a form of knowledge and, above all, demands that the question of knowledge status and legitimation remains taken for granted, unexamined. Paradoxically, however, as the grand narratives of legitimation lost their privileged status, narrative and science both came back into the light of scrutiny (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 7).

something "rather closer to what a critic does to illuminate a poem than what an astronomer does to account for a star" (Geertz, 1983, p. 10).

Merry clarifies that indicators result of the "assumptions, motivations, and concerns of those who carry them out". Consequently, they must be read as reflections of their producers' specific interests and agendas (Merry, 2016, p. 20). Accordingly, translating a social issue into data means interpreting this issue from a particular standpoint that illuminates some features while masking others and privileging measurement while obscuring "structural obstacles to achieving those rights" as well as distracting "political energy" from the task of combating injustice to that of producing data instead (Merry, 2016, p. 20). As argued by Jerven (2014a) indicators "have the behavioral effects of skewing activities to the completion of a specific indicator and thus away from other non-quantified goals" (p. 1). Enrique Ordaz (2019) agrees that indicators "can be reductionist of the phenomena they measure", however, reductionist is the practice of basing public policy solely on an indicator (Ordaz, 2019, p. 141).

Indicators are so powerful that it is not rare for them to become the strongest expression of the phenomenon they "claim to measure". Merry (2016) cites the case of intelligence: hard to define, it has been considered as "what the IQ test measures". The same can happen with "rule of law or corruption" (Merry, 2016, p. 12). Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that "those who create indicators aspire to measure the world but, in practice, create the world they are measuring" (Merry, 2016, p. 21).

> In other words, indicators do not stand outside regimes of power and governance but exist within them, both in their creation and in their ongoing functioning. They are a blending of science and politics, of technical expertise and political influence. The two work hand in hand, sometimes in overlapping or competitive ways, with considerable slippage between them. The technical is always political because there is always interpretation and judgment in systems of classification, in the choice of things to measure, in the weighting of constitutive elements, and in decisions about which denominator to use for a ratio. The political hides behind the technical (Merry, 2016, p. 21).

Accordingly, it is crucial to bear in mind that the 2030 Agenda, as the current flagship of development, the one that intends to "transform peoples' lives everywhere", stands on specific notions of what development means. These notions are deeply informed and shaped by the values and beliefs of the sanctioned and

stamped experts, those authorized to have a say on it, which must certainly produce some results on how different actors access and interact with the project.

As we have seen in chapter 4, the 2030 Agenda assumed from its origins the persona of a participatory project. As it is pointed out by Tichenor *et al.* (2022), the SDGs established connections with several "actors in the field" by combining a technocratic feature with another one intently "bottom-up, grass-roots and transformative, distinct from older Western-liberal ideas and practices". A great demonstration of that is their description of the 2019 meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on the SDGs:

> [...] the idealism expressed by most speakers was quite striking: the SDGs, many of them said, were our best chance to bring about radical change for people and the planet. Although the SDGs represent a broadly global monitoring agenda, the tenor was highly aspirational, with calls to carry forward their transformative vision. Listening to the speakers, those less knowledgeable about the SDGs would never have known that performance measurement is at the core of the endeavor (Tichenor *et al.*, 2022, p. 2).

Even though the project has been attentive to the claims brought up by civil society as it is "the product of two and a half years of consultation and deliberation among civil society actors, international organizations, and nation states, including many Global South countries" (Tichenor *et al.*, 2022, p. 3), when *dataspeak* took the centerstage, the actors capable of dealing with such technicalities, i.e., indicator choice, were far less diverse.

> Ironically, where the SDG process made great strides in mobilizing a diversity of knowledge – from the South and the North, from the public and policy makers, from researchers and practitioners, from technocrats and politicians – the politics of data may result in a narrowing of the field. Privileging new sources and methods from private actors bypasses the complex structures of voice and accountability that have built up official systems of national and international statistics (Fukuda-Parr and McNeil, 2019, p.14).

Fukuda-Parr emphasizes how power has a firm grip in the steering wheel of indicator-choice and it is reasonable to agree with her when she says that "[a]s the field of international development turns increasingly to governance by data, greater scrutiny will be needed on the policy implications of measurement choices, and the politics of indicators" (Fukuda-Parr, 2019, p. 68). Similarly, Morten Jerven (2014b) attests that indicators are nowadays "more influential than ever before" and precisely because of that "we need to get a handle on how the numbers are produced and what kind of power they have" (Fukuda-Parr, 2014b, p. 15).

5.3
Who speaks dataspeak: Statistical capacity as a gatekeeper

As it was put by Mogens Lykketoft, President of the 70th Session of the United Nations Assembly, the 2030 Agenda is an "unprecedented statistical challenge" (Lykketoft). Such opinion is highly supported by the fact that "not only do the SDGs require a staggering amount of data, but they also need data that are high in quality, broad in coverage, frequently available, and spatially disaggregated" (Bergh and Ballerini, 2021, p. 1945).

All this enterprise, of course, cannot be brought to life without some obstacles: this challenge is as much expensive as it is dependent on advanced technical capacity. Power relations and inequality have a say on that matter since both the financial and technical capacities of National Statistical Offices (NSOs), the main institutions responsible for monitoring the progress of the SDGs, vary abruptly from country to country. Inequality in national statistical capacity, which has been an issue since the 19th century (Desrosières, 2002), might translate into policies that cause these inequalities to reverb. As powerful actors "have strong negotiating capacity with technical expertise and have an advantage in technocratic fora", they have all the needed instruments to push for more *comfortable outcomes* such as the inequality goal being detached from any possible questioning of the capitalist economic model (Fukuda-Parr, 2019, p. 68).

> Powerful actors are often recognized as an authoritative source of technical expertise and have the legitimacy to impose their systems of quantification. Governance by numbers leverages the power of authority (Kelly and Simmons, 2015). They are able to make skillful use of measurement methods as a strategy to pursue their agendas. And in technical fora, smaller countries with a narrower range of expertise at hand might find themselves outmaneuvered by the powerful delegations that come staffed with a broader range of experts. (p. 68).

MacFeely (2018) comments on how "[t]he Economist described their estimate of between two and three trillion US dollars per year (or the equivalent of four per cent of global GDP)" for monitoring the SDGs, which they considered "unfeasibly expensive" and reminds that "even for developed countries with relatively advanced and sophisticated statistical systems the demands arising from the SDG indicator framework are immense" (MacFeely, 2018, p. 8).

According to Jerven (2014), the costs of the MDGs were somewhere around $ 27 billion, approximately $ 1.5 billion per target. The expensiveness of the project, the author says, should have taught the development community a lesson on taking it down a notch. Instead, the SDGs have more goals, targets, and indicators than the MDGs, not only persisting on, but maximizing the mistake of "demanding more and better data". Departing from the rule of thumb of $ 1.5 billion per target, the 169 targets of the SDGs would cost $ 254 billion total (Jerven, 2014, p. 2). Moreover, Jerven (2016) argues that the MDGs delivered more "data gaps than observations" mainly because it suffered from "a mismatch between ambition in monitoring and ability in measurement" (Jerven, 2016, p. 16).

Moreover, it is indispensable to acknowledge the environmental costs of data production – especially because we are talking about a sustainable development agenda! As said by D'Ignazio and Klein (2020), "the cloud is not light and not airy". The authors mention a report published by the Greenpeace in 2017 that estimated that "the global IT sector, which is largely US-based, accounted for around 7 percent of the world's energy use. This is more than some of largest countries in the world, including Russia, Brazil, and Japan". They go on by saying that "[u]nless that energy comes from renewable sources (which the Greenpeace report shows that it does not), the cloud has a significant accelerating impact on global climate change" (D'Ignazio; Klein, 2020, p. 42).

Jerven acknowledges that one of the greatest motivations "behind the call for a 'data revolution'" is precisely "building up the capacity of national statistical offices" (2014). I had the opportunity to hear Sakiko Fukuda-Parr (leading author of the UNDP Human Development Reports and member of the UN Committee on Development Policy) saying a few times that differently from the MDGs, where indicators were selected from a shelf, the SDGs assumed the task of creating indicators, and consequently, proposing new ways of tracking social problems previously ignored or simply considered unmeasurable. From Jerven's perspective, however, the agenda should have been more cautious about proposing such a herculean task (Jerven, 2016, p. 1). "The potential benefits of more data and better data", he defends, "should be weighed against the very real cost of providing statistics" (Jerven, 2014, p. 16).

> Rather than asking: "what kind of development should we target", the question should be – "what kind of development are we able to

monitor"? If official statistics is considered a public good – then just demanding more data, without a clear idea of the cost of providing the good, and the effect it may have on the quality of the public good may cause the well-known "tragedy of the commons". Everyone wants more data to measure their own development priority, but no one is willing to bear the cost and responsibility of valid and reliable measurement (Jerven, 2014).

In fact, scholars as Kitchin (2014) have demonstrated that "vast quantities of data being fire-hosed from a thick pipe" are not necessarily being applied into the construction of a better world. According to him, "much of these data become transient and are lost, never analyzed or exploited. Others are dumped into data stores as largely 'unsupervised landfill', being held until such times as they can deliver up useful information". The point is "as the percentage of data increases exponentially, the percentage that is processed and analyzed is shrinking". In other words, more data does not mean more information. Actually, a vast quantity of data can make it harder to separate what is really useful from what is just "noise" (p. 190).

Jerven (2014a) explains the difference between pure data and actionable knowledge using the poverty indicator as an example:

One oft-discussed example of this is the world poverty headcount. We devote a large amount of resources to calculating this global number – how many people live below $1.25 a day – but it is a curious creation (Subramanian, 2012). First, the number is a global aggregate but is based on very small and sometimes entirely non-existent local samples. As is documented below […] household surveys covering a few thousand households are only conducted in some countries some of the time. Projections across time and space are then aggregated in a way that precludes the calculation of poverty statistics at anything but the global level. Thus, as an indicator, you can react to it and you can base an advocacy campaign or a media story on it, but you cannot design policy around it. This is because the information in the indicator does not contain any information about what causes a change in the phenomena that it is reporting on (Jerven, 2014a, p. 13).

In the same spirit, Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho (2022) argue that we need to "make sure the data revolution is not for data's sake but for the benefit of much-needed social transformations" (Ramalho, 2022, p. 2). In another paper (forthcoming), suggesting the existence of a "datascape", they advert that it is essential to question "how many resources are being diverted for producing data that are not for action?" and "if the tools and techniques employed are or can be largely outside of the realm of traditional policymaking, who is validating decisions about what data are generated and how?".

194

Another mark of inequality arises from the Agenda's dependence on the use of digital technologies as instruments of data collection. According to the document Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals - Report of the Secretary-General (2021), in 2019 "just over half of the world's population" was online (p. 30). This "large digital divide" is even more staggering when we notice that "while 85% of the population was using the Internet in Europe and Northern America, only 20% were connected in LDCs [Least Developed Countries]" (Ramalho, 2022, p. 2). Even amongst those who get to be counted, underrepresentation is also frequently problematized. In an Agenda that presents big data as a great source of information, these numbers certainly act as a claim for caution.

Jerven (2014b) argues that the exercise of doing development by numbers carries an intrinsic problem: "we know little about poor countries and even less about the poor people who live in these countries", which is especially serious "if you think that the main purpose of organizations like the World Bank investing in, collecting and disseminating statistics is in order to obtain actionable knowledge to alleviate poverty and aid economic development". This lack of information can be attributed to two main reasons. The first one happens at "the design level" and has to do with the fact that "statistical categories" were originally created from already developed and industrialized societies, which generates several incompatibilities when applying them to developing countries. The second one happens at "the implementation level" and encompasses the inequality in statistical capacity between developing and developed countries (Jerven, 2014, p. 3).

This inequality is expressed by Rob Kitchin when he talks of data "deserts and deluges". This mismatch, he tells us, can be attributed to the fact that "what data are captured is shaped by the technology used, the context in which data are generated, and the data ontology employed" (Kitchin, 2014, p. 190).

Calling attention to the unequal distribution of power that usually goes unnoticed in data science, D'Ignazio & Klein (2020) advocate for the need of a "data feminism", which they describe as "a way of thinking about data, both their uses and their limits, that is informed by direct experience, by a commitment to action, and by intersectional feminist thought" (p. 8). Attesting that "[t]hose who wield power are disproportionately elite, straight, white, able-bodied, cisgender men from the Global North", they propose "data feminism" as a means to unveil

and change the ways in which "standard practices in data science" reinforce these inequalities (D'Ignazio; Klein, p. 8-9).

The issues pointed out by D'Ignazio & Klein (2020) display quite clearly Sandra Harding's idea that diverse voices and minds are essential for expanding the base for knowledge production. They recount the case of the Ghanaian-American MIT graduate student Joy Buolamwini who was working on a class project that used facial-analysis software. The absurdity of the case is that the software "couldn't 'see' Buolamwini's dark-skinned face". Curiously, the software could detect a face that Buolamwini drew on the palm of her hand and a completely white mask she wore as a test, but not her *bare face*. Inspired by her own experience, the student decided to dig deeper "into the code and benchmarking data behind these systems" to find out that "the dataset on which many of facial-recognition algorithms are tested contains 78 percent male faces and 84 percent white faces" (p. 76).

Louise Amoore (2020) proposes even a new layer to this discussion affirming that algorithms' biases are prior to their education through datasets:

> Algorithms come to act in the world precisely in and through the relations of selves to selves, and selves to others, as these relations are manifest in the clusters and attributes of data. To learn from relations of selves and others, the algorithm must already be replete with values, thresholds, assumptions, probability weightings, and bias. In a real sense, an algorithm must necessarily discriminate to have any traction in the world. The very essence of algorithms is that they afford greater degrees of recognition and value to some features of a scene than they do to others. In so doing, algorithms generate themselves as ethicopolitical beings in the world (Amoore, 2020, p. 8).

This process seems to begin with the non-representative demographics of data science that they call "the man factory". They mention data released by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2018 on "computer and mathematical occupations": only 26% of these people are women of which only 12% are Black or Latin – a stark difference from US demographics which accounts Black and Latin women as 22,5% of the population (D'Ignazio & Klein, 2020, p. 27). These numbers certainly illustrate in a very material way the discussion of language as a gatekeeper pursued in chapter 2. If only a restricted group of people finds the conditions and encouragement to establish a "true intimacy" with a language, that language in question will most probably be marked by the limitations of that same restricted group. And it is probably true in the case of *dataspeak*.

The non-representative demographics are not only true in the case of data science, but of science in general. As told by Arlene Tickner (2013), "participation in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals and citation patterns suggest that the geography of social science knowledge production is characterized by an entrenched core–periphery structure" (Tickner, 2013, p. 632).

> According to Keim (2008: 28), 58% of the total literature covered by the Social Sciences Citation index is authored or co-authored by scholars affiliated with the United States, while all of Western Europe accounts for 25%, Latin America for 1%, and the entire African continent for less than 1% (Tickner, 2013, 632).

A zigzagging methodology, as I am constantly discovering while writing this thesis, offers great perils and great opportunities. In the end, both can be summarized in a simple sentence: you never know what you will find. In chapter 4, I have mentioned that while looking for participation, I ended up finding pathways that led to data – as we have seen, Bandola-Gill *et al.* (2022) argue that the greatest realm devoted to participation in the 2030 Agenda nowadays is the polycentric data governance that happens in the context of SDGs progress monitoring. Participation and data were topics previously chosen for a deeper investigation in this thesis for different reasons: the first because it was the only concept repetition in the Developmentspeak Glossary – it has been theorized both by Rahnema (2010) and Leal (2010); the second because it was the most mentioned word of interest in the 2030 Agenda Corpus. Nevertheless, they turned out to be more connected than I have assumed in the early stages of this research.

Now, reviewing the readings of feminist scholars on science and objectivity and the analyses of inequality in statistical capacity, I feel again that two previously separated branches are actually getting closer and closer. This feeling, I assume, has to do with the fact that Harding's standpoint epistemology carries a crucial similarity with the hypothesis proposed by Sapir & Whorf: As the later would defend that the limits of your thought are determined by the *language you speak*, the former would affirm that they are determined by your positionality or *where you stand*.

In order to make it clearer, I propose us to envision the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis as an analogy of language as a toolbox: If tools are instruments designed to perform specific tasks, the set of tools one has in their toolbox (their language!) will determine which tasks they can perform whether they use each tool alone or in

combination. Standpoint epistemology seems to propose a quite similar idea as it considers that every perspective is "partial". Therefore, one's tools – their "personal experiences", "loyalties" and "privileges" (Harding, 1993, p. 69) – determine how far they can see. In other words, both language and standpoints share this specific ability of *framing and constraining our thought*.
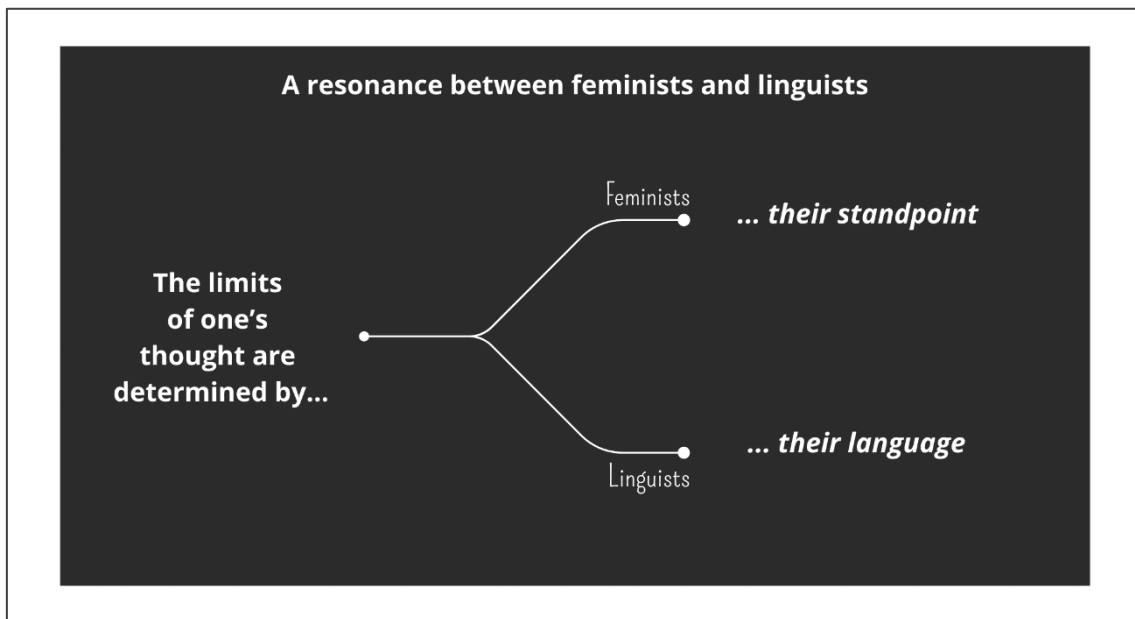

Figure 15 - A resonance between feminists and linguists. Elaborated by me.

Jasanoff (2004) speaks of a "objective, tractable language of numbers" in which the state has converted "the messy realities of people's personal attributes and behaviors" (Jasanoff, 2004, p. 27). Moreover, we have seen previously that Porter (1995) proposes an analogy of data as a language. When speaking of how social problems can be presented in the form of data, he attests that "almost any issue can be formulated in this language" (Porter, 1995, p. 5-6). Similarly, Bigo *et al.* (2019) speak of data as a "language with performative force" meaning that data "enacts that which it represents". In their words, "[t]o collect, store, retrieve, analyze, and present data through various methods means to bring those objects and subjects that data speaks of into being". Furthermore, Bigo *et al.* (2019) stress that data practices have not been naturally established for purposes of human curiosity about the world around it, but because they have been proved "useful" in the task of bringing certain objects and subjects into being (Bigo *et al.*, 2019, p. 4).

Analyzing the case of Palestinian refugees, Monika Halkort (2019) presents a great example of counting as a strategy to exist. She attests that socio-demographic records has become "one of the few resources left to affirm their existence and to enforce the commitment of the international community to find a fair solution for the conflict over Palestine" (Halkort, 2019, p. 321). The act of measuring something pulls it out of the unknown, it gives that something a shape, materiality, and weight. Inspired by their analogy of data as a language and the connections built between data, standpoint and language, I would like to call attention to the fact that the effervescence of data-intensive activities (described by many scholars as "data revolution") has been establishing its own niche language, which I propose to call *dataspeak*. With a clear intersection with developmentspeak, *dataspeak* can be conceived as a specialized form of communication and expression unique to the realm of data analysis, information technology, and data-driven decision-making – which has been potently explored by the development community.

Like developmentspeak, *dataspeak* operates (as well but not only) as a "lingua franca of the International Development Industry" (Cornwall, 2010, p. 2) sanctioned by the everyday practices of the "major institutions of global governance" (Eade, 2010, p. viii). In *dataspeak*, shared data practices work as symbols that not only communicate meanings, but also invoke authority through their universality and replicability; as we have seen in the discussions of data as narratives, it can "enlighten or obscure" as well as create "artificial barriers to understanding" (Buiter, 2010, p. 223) working as both a bridge and a barrier, uniting experts, keeping laypeople out of the conversation. Andrea Cornwall (2010) discusses how developmentspeak's exclusory nature can also be attributed to how much it is based on English language. Similarly, *dataspeak* as well holds truths and categorizations that have been conceived from the experience of industrialized countries (Jerven, 2014, p. 3).

It is important to notice that the gravitational force of data is so strong in the universe of the SDGs that talking of a SDG-speak would only scratch the surface of this whole movement. My point is that as much as *dataspeak* has been crucial for the communication of development in the 2030 Agenda era, it has also established an indelible amalgamation to the practices and logics of data science to a point that it can only hardly be detached from the global phenomenon of

datafication. As we have seen in the colonial underpinnings and scientific façade explored in chapter 2, development has from its early days revolved around promises of a better future. In the case of the SDGs, however, a great part of these promises seems to be repositioned outside development's commonplace. In that, we can find the result of decades of criticism being incorporated in the shape of a different language that will never again openly advocate that a better future is synonym to the achievement of the American way of life in global scale mainly because this system has learned that it is disrespectful and colonialist but also because it has internalized the environmental consequences of such enterprise. Instead, this system and its language will try to elaborate ways of reconciling economic growth and ecology and they will make it seem plausible and achievable. Because development's eternal promises are crumbling, the next great thing, the possible salvation has to come from somewhere else. Data have been incorporated in development in a structural renovation that is not only changing the methods practiced in the field, but also the very substance guaranteeing its sanctity. Data is development's new fiat, a breath of life in its injured lungs and dataspeak is how it communicates this new lease of life.

Integrated by technical jargon, statistical notations, data visualization techniques, and other expressions *dataspeak* also presumes the existence of a specific rationality or a "distinctive style of reasoning" (Ferguson, 1994, p. 259) that ties them all together. As every other language, especially if observed through the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that that "the particular language one speaks influences the way one thinks about reality" (Lucy, 2001), it frames and constrains speakers' thoughts.

I know that I am not a linguist and proposing the speculative construct of *dataspeak* might sound out of my reach as an IR scholar. However, neither Andrea Cornwall and Deborah Eade (2010) or Carol Cohn (2006) were linguists when proposing developmentspeak and Nukespeak as ways of framing the rationality circulating in the communities they were analyzing. The propositions of developmentspeak and Nukespeak are efficient in clarifying what it is that members of the development and nuclear weapons communities have in common and what set them apart from outsiders. In the same spirit, I believe that speaking of *dataspeak*, we gain a strategy to circumscribe the variegated set of practices, beliefs,

assumptions, and expectations going on in the hyper-expanding field of data science.

What I mean by dataspeak is no groundbreaking discovery. It refers to a system of thought that has already been theorized by several scholars (Porter, Scott, Desrosières, Bigo *et al.*, Merry, Kitchin, Bandola-Gill *et al.*, Tichenor et a., etc.). However, my decision for categorizing this system of thought as a niche language has the intention to emphasize the shared lexicon, the most obvious sign of the "true intimacy" shared by this group who know exactly what the buzzwords and fuzzwords mean and where they fit the best. Moreover, picturing this system of thought as a language implies two ideas that resonate profoundly with the discussions brought up throughout this thesis which are:

i. *Language is a frame: dataspeak* imposes limits on its speakers' thoughts. Envisioning social problems in a tabulated, categorized, sanitized and trimmed form, dataspeak in the 2030 Agenda imprisons the community to a datafied rationalization of development that might cause several pitfalls such as exorbitant financial costs, inequality in statistical capacity, non-representative datasets, intensification of greenhouse gas emission, etc.; and,

ii. *Language is a gatekeeper: dataspeak* operates as a bridge and a barrier. And as such, it produces an environment much less diverse than those of other instances in which developmentspeak is spoken. As we have seen, the 2030 Agenda was forged on a preoccupation with righting the wrongs of the MDGs towards expanding participation and the diversity of voices and perspectives, which actually happened in the first phase. However, these voices were pushed away from the conversation when data became the centerfold, an occurrence that can also be attributed to the non-representative demographics of *dataspeakers*, i.e., data scientists or statisticians. In this sense, if Developmentspeak is a gatekeeper, *Dataspeak* can be contemplated as a new frontier in the development field. Consequently, development-oriented *dataspeak* is more complex and more technical-oriented than Developmentspeak. It is narrower, it can be spoken by a small parcel of the population.

In sum, *Dataspeak* makes part of the 2030 Agenda inaccessible for most of the world's population. It imposes a great divide between those who can be active "subjects of development"[12] and those who cannot. It has been decades now since the discussions of participatory development gained momentum and recognition. The MDGs were openly criticized for ignoring this. The SDGs, proposed by a Latina woman in a conference held in a South American country, seemed to offer a new possibility. Still, this Agenda that intends to "leave no one behind" has been structured around a system unequal in its core.

5.3.1 Populating data production with alternative actors: Where data meets participation

Data practices are mainly envisioned nowadays according to two different tropes: one of them is "Promethean" and takes data as an instrument for justice and liberation; the other is "Orwellian" and focuses on problems adjacent to data as an instrument of social control. Reality, nevertheless, seems to stand somewhere in between these poles (Crooks and Currie, 2021, p. 205).

Desrosières (2014) tells us that a "classic line of reasoning" perceives statistics as "a tool of power", and considers that "dominant classes orient statistical production to suite their own interests". However, it does not always have to be like this. According to him, Porter suggests "that the hegemony of traditional classes is often founded on implicit, unchallenged evidence, lived as 'natural'". In this sense, "statistical argumentation" can be used to "break the old order and render the injustice visible" (Desrosières, 2014, p. 349).

In the same spirit, Crooks and Currie (2021) attest that quantitative practices have been applied by minorities for a long time as a means to "argue for desired policies, draw public attention to socioeconomic inequality, and foment institutional

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[12] This expression appears in Portuguese ("sujeitos de desenvolvimento") at the Plano Santa Cruz 2030 document, which is a plan to enhance sustainable development in the district of Santa Cruz located in the West zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro. It seems to comprise the idea that some (usually marginalized) people are not expected or even allowed to play an active role in development. Apparently, the literature on this expression is scarce and does not seem to articulate the term with the same meaning implied in the cited document. I translate here an excerpt to clarify the point: "Living in Santa Cruz is dealing with many challenges. Throughout its 453 years, the right to come and go and the right to life are constantly denied, in several situations, such as: time-consuming commuting, floods, violence, that are still obstacles to the full exercise of citizenship. [...] Santa Cruz has never seen its fundamental social rights being universalized, nor its inhabitants have been considered subjects of development" (Casa Fluminense, 2020, p. 10) [free translation].

change". However, the effervescence of datafication has intensified drastically the expectations around this kind of project (Crooks; Currie, 2021, p. 202).

Citizen Science Data (CSD) or Citizen-Generated Data (CGD), is a "burgeoning" movement that propose "to complement the official statistics used for SDG reporting with unofficial and alternative sources of data" (Bergh; Ballerini, 2021, p. 1946). These data are voluntarily produced through the application of "a wide range of technologies and participatory collection methodologies, such as community-based monitoring, crowdsourcing online platforms, and digital sensors (Crooks; Currie, 2021). These projects "state the need to racialize and territorialize all data to bring to the fore what has been hidden by official data-collection methodologies" and usually do so by combining "the power of numbers with down-to-earth and emotion-driven narratives" (Rocha de Siqueira; Ramalho, 2022, p. 8).

Currently, most of the data used to monitor the SDGs come from official national sources such as ministries, government agencies and national statistical offices (NSOs). To make it clearer, I will break down the process of data collection for indicator 6.4.1 – Change in water-use efficiency over time. Data from Brazil are collected by the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment. Data from Germany are collected by their Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). Data from Nepal are collected by their Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation. And so it goes. Because each international agency is the main responsible actor for reporting data related to their topics of interest, all of these data are, then, received and organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which manages data related to water-use. Similarly, data on poverty are organized by the World Bank and data on access to basic services in households are organized by UN-Habitat. These agencies, then, transmit them to the United Nations Statistics Division (UN-Stats) who analyzes and assess the progress for each target and SDG. These data can be found at the Global SDG Indicators Data Platform. Together, data for 242 indicators integrate a huge patchwork quilt, painting a scene of the state of development worldwide, but not without several blind spots.

According to Bergh and Ballerini (2021), the limitations of official sources can be technical as it "require[s] costly and lengthy collection processes" while offering "limited spatial variation and coverage", which can cause "in infrequent data collection cycles, huge data gaps, and unrepresentative samples, from which

marginalized populations, such as indigenous people, and delicate issues, such as women's sexual and reproductive health rights, are systematically excluded" (Bergh; Ballerini, 2021, p. 1945-6).

Another limitation is political and has to do with the "firm grip" of state on official data. The authors argue that sometimes authorities might try and "hide contentious information, gloss over their countries' problems, or artificially boost their performances with respect to the SDGs". Furthermore, official data, usually purely quantitative, and willing to transmit "objectivity and neutrality" are considered by the authors "often epistemically ill-suited to capture contextual information and local knowledge" as they "tend to conceal precious qualitative details, turning local politics and ideologies into abstract statistics and averages (Bergh; Ballerini, 2021, p. 1.946). The qualities of CGD resonate quite obviously with the discussions on the standpoint nature of data we have examined in the previous sections of this chapter, especially in their ability to offer "fine-grained resolution" over usually underreported populations (p. 1947).

Bergh and Ballerini (2021) affirm that CGD projects are usually conducted with three main purposes: community, public governance and science related. On the public governance-related purpose, they mention that these projects can increase "collaboration between citizens and public officials", enhance "government accountability and transparency", and raise "public officials' awareness of certain issues". On the science-related purpose, they include the fact that CGD "are often produced to inform scientific research and advance scientific progress". However, the most intriguing purpose must be the community-related one that considers that CGD is capable of producing "engagement and empowerment" of local communities with individuals acquiring "improved skills and deeper scientific knowledge" during the process (Bergh; Ballerini, 2021, p. 1948).

Reading from them, I believe Bergh and Ballerini (2021) would say that *Dataspeak* (its practices, beliefs and system of thought) can be learned by outsiders through the dissemination of data-collection methodologies amongst society and especially vulnerable people. Departing from this belief, the 2030 Agenda could regain its participatory aspect fostering, incentivizing, and investing in citizen-generated data.

Just so we do not miss the habit of zigzagging, let's count some words for the last time.

Year	Excerpt
2017	More **citizen-generated data** are also being used to monitor the needs and progress of vulnerable groups. However, new methodologies need to be developed to ensure the quality and reliability of such data
2022	Despite the challenges, many NSOs found new ways to get the job done. One of them was using non-traditional data sources, such as mobile phone data, satellite imagery and **citizen-generated data**, along with new modes of data collection, such as web- or telephone-based or mix-mode interviews
2022	At the beginning of the crisis, more than 80 per cent of countries indicated they would be using phone surveys to collect data to measure the impact of COVID-19, and 37 per cent said they would be using web surveys – a significant increase from the pre-pandemic level. Administrative data, model-based estimates and non-traditional data sources – including phone call detail records, scanner data, social media, remote sensing and **citizen-generated data** – were all considered by countries.
2022	A bar chart called "Proportion of countries that reported the use of innovative approaches to measure the impact of COVID-19, May 2020 (percentage)" that displays the results: Phone surveys (82%); Web surveys (37%); Administrative data (27%); Model-based estimate (14%); Phone call detail records (10%); Scanner data (7%); Social media (5%); Remote sensing/satellite imagery (5%); **Citizen-generated data/**crowdsourcing (4%).
2022	To help fill data gaps on the SDGs, the National Bureau of Statistics of Kenya initiated partnerships with civil society organizations and integrated a set of quality criteria for **citizen-generated data** in its newly released Kenya Statistical Quality Assurance Framework.

Table 19 - Mentions of Citizen-Generated Data in the 2030 Agenda Corpus.

This analysis will not take so much time. As we can see, CGD has indeed been mentioned in the 2030 Agenda Corpus, but only scarcely. The table above shows a total of 5 occurrences only.

On the one hand, the possibility of data production being populated with diverse voices is incredibly exciting, especially if we remember that this kind of knowledge has been retained by a very restricted group for centuries (mostly white, mostly male, mostly European or North American). This is discussed by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) in her seminal book "Decolonizing Methodologies":

> One of the supposed characteristics of primitive peoples was that we could not use our minds or intellects. We could not invent things, we could not create institutions or history, we could not imagine, we could not produce anything of value, we did not know how to use land and other resources from the natural world, we did not practice the 'arts' of

civilization. By lacking such virtues we disqualified ourselves, not just from civilization but from humanity itself. In other words we were not 'fully human'; some of us were not even considered partially human. […] Imperialism provided the means through which concepts of what counts as human could be applied systematically as forms of classification, for example through hierarchies of race and typologies of different societies. In conjunction with imperial power and with 'science', these classification systems came to shape relations between imperial powers and , indigenous societies (Smith, 1999, p. 25).

According to Smith (1999), traditional science has been an exercise of "appropriation of the Other". Contrarily, doing science as an indigenous person [and I believe she would argue something similar about marginalized people in general] is an act of liberation, of dislocating oneself from the role of object (Smith, 1999, p. 29). It is an act of regaining autonomy in dismantling the imperial reality in which "[n]ew colonies were the laboratories of Western science" and in which theories were "generated from the exploration and exploitation of colonies, and of the people who had prior ownership of these lands". She is straightforward in assuming that to be researched is to be colonized (Smith, 1999, p. 65).

Walter Mignolo (2009) argue that some would take Smith's work as a simple replication of standardized scientific practices. To that, he responds: "No, she is not still practicing Western anthropology: she is precisely shifting the geography of reasoning and subsuming anthropological tools into Maori (instead of Western) cosmology and ideology" (Mignolo, 2009, p. 172). From his perspective, doing science in a decolonial way requires the researcher to engage in "epistemic disobedience", i.e., "to delink from the illusion of the zero point epistemology", finding in situatedness the starting point (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160).

The United Nations frequently approach CGD as a means to "fill the gaps", however, what makes CGD stand apart from official data is precisely what makes it unfit for serving the purposes of the 2030 Agenda: its situatedness. Bergh and Ballerini (2021) mention that two of the most remarkable pitfalls of CGD are precisely the problems with **interoperability** (the hard task of harmonizing alternative and official data to integrate the monitoring system), and with **contestation** of these data for reasons of "quality and reliability" (Bergh; Ballerini, 2021, p. 1947).

Consequently, even though citizen-generated data are considered "as powerful actors imbued with the agentic capacity to make [the] uneven delivery of basic services visible", they are still made extremely fragile under the pressure of

"contestation and resistance" posed by "government officials" (Cinnamon, 2019, p. 3). Data activism (I want to say *Dataspeak*) has been articulated by local communities as an instrument to render their claims "credible", i.e., "to add weight to struggles for service delivery, as a way to situate demands on a rational and scientific plane rather than the emotional or adversarial levels of 'people power' (Cinnamon, 2019, p. 7). Investigating the case of social audits in South Africa, Jonathan Cinnamon presents the enlightening perception of a local:

> As one interviewee put it, "It is not just the people power activism, it's backed up by us knowing what we are talking about … because then when the arguments come out against what we are saying, we can say well you're actually wrong, there is scientific evidence here" (activist organization, Cape Town, April 2017). Such an approach engages the notion that governance decisions require quantitative evidence—we have had to "learn the language," as one interviewee put it (civil society organization, Cape Town, April 2017). As another explained, "It's very important when working with government to work with facts, you know" (Cinnamon, 2019, p. 7).

Just as we have seen in the case of statistics being applied for state-building, these communities borrow authority from data, which gets even clearer when we notice that CGD projects usually adopt the emblematic title of "observatories" or "laboratories". However, claiming authority does not magically bring it into life. "Sources of authority", says Peter Dear (2004), "whether they were many or few, had ultimately to reside in a mystery" (Dear, 2004, p. 219).

Differently from most of the literature written on the topic, I believe it is crucial to defy the euphoric expectations that CSD or CGD operate as a salvation for both the SDGs and the communities involved with it. As we have argued until here, the problematic around the 2030 Agenda goes much deeper than something that could be solved with just more data. In the same spirit, it is crucial to acknowledge that data-intensive practices and technologies are "embedded in the structure of domination—economic, political, and cultural" (Downing *apud* Crooks and Currie, 2020, p. 205). In fact, the maxim that Roderic Crooks and Morgan Currie (2020) use as epigraph to their paper goes a long way in revealing the pitfalls of this movement: *For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change* (Lorde *apud* Crooks and Currie op. cit., italics in original).

In the case of South Africa, Cinnamon (2019) tells that "the modus operandi of government officials has been to target the data as a weak grassroots political actor" questioning their quality and reliability. Since the data presented by communities in these social audits demonstrate "some combination of negligence, maladministration, incompetence, or corruption", it come with no surprise that governments insist on devaluing their "claims". "Almost universally, government officials have dismissed findings by making claims about the inadequacy of the data as a true representation of service delivery" (Cinnamon, 2019, p. 8).

> As one interviewee put it, "I would never go head to head with a government on data again because to me it's not what wins the battle. What wins the battle is better understanding power and your leverage over them" (activist organization, Cape Town, September 2017). For this activist, a more effective approach for strengthening grassroots power has been to leverage yet another, highly potent South African political discourse—apartheid legacies—as the primary agentic force, which is interwoven with, though not driven by, data power (Cinnamon, 2019, p. 13).

Considering his participation in the janitorial service social audit in Cape Town, scholar Jared Rossouw (2015), says:

> Given how the City of Cape Town had attacked previous audits and tried to delegitimize the findings, I believed at the time that if we could improve the reliability of the data, we would be able to improve the legitimacy of the social audit itself. We would come to learn that this was not the case at all, and the City of Cape Town attacked the social audit despite our efforts (p. 28).

Cinnamon (2019) and Rossouw what Jasanoff (2004) has observed in her reading of James Scott: "the inequality of means between the state and those it wishes to render legible". In other words, "[n]ot every actor can see 'like a state' because the wherewithal to impose such simplifying order on complex masses of humanity lies, for better or worse, outside the competence of most social actors" (p. 27). Language, says Bourdieu (1991) "is no doubt the principal support of the dream of absolute power" (p. 42).

The point of view proposed by Jasanoff left me lingering on a feeling that just as numbers have been used to legitimize state's authority, also state authority has been indispensable to legitimize numbers. Consequently, "data politics" are thicker than data science skills and numbers on their own seem to fall apart with no authority to make them hold. The language of numbers, then, seems too an environment in which power dynamics produce "the unequal distribution of

linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 57) which implies that the authority of the discourse depends on the "authority of the speaker" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 70). In this vein, we can notice that in *Dataspeak*, situatedness is like an exotic accent. It might make people praise you for your effort in learning a second language, but it still denounces you as an outsider. In Sheila Jasanoff's "States of Knowledge", Peter Dear (2004) says that "seeing the world through collective eyes, like sharing a language, requires that we share minds" (p. 221). It is probably true for *Dataspeak* as well since sharing this language requires the tacit knowledge that numbers only have value when aseptic and depoliticized. This dynamics are apparently made explicit on the ground, as we have seen in the case of social audits.

In the piece "Participatory methodologies and caring about numbers in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda" (2022), Rocha de Siqueira and I have examined the case of data_labe, "an NGO based in Rio de Janeiro, whose CGD model acts as a key example of the view from somewhere" (Rocha de Siqueira; Ramalho, 2022, p. 5). Their work, we have perceived, approaches data with a different tone: numbers are never detached or presumed universal, mainly because they are always embodied, racialized and territorialized. On the contrary, we noticed that it was "through [the act of] caring for their community that they gained important knowledge about how public policy might serve its purpose in that territory" (Rocha de Siqueira; Ramalho, 2022, p. 8).

In a conversation with data_labe's director and co-founder Gilberto Vieira, showed me a new marketing video they were getting ready for circulation that brilliantly summarize the importance of data production in marginalized contexts. It says:

> Most research projects try to discover what everybody does, what everybody thinks, what everybody knows, but you are not everybody! If you are black, LGBTQIA+, or an inhabitant of Complexo da Maré, for example, your reality does not reflect what the big research projects show. […] Better understanding who you are and where you stand makes it easier to know which changes are important for your community and how to fight for them. Data_labe, data on who matters: you.

Data_labe, is important to notice, has since its early days presented itself as a data and narratives laboratory. The video, Gilberto told me, transmitted their aspiration of focusing more on data. In his words, narratives have their own particular way of moving us, of provoking feelings and commotion. However, they

have never really succeeded in the task of generating real change. When I pose a question about their mission, he says that it revolves around finding strategies to

> generate data in a statistical, methodologically responsible manner to evidence a problem and it is not telling the story Aunt Mary… because Aunt Mary's story moved us all, moved 30 years of civil society in Brazil. It moved us, from the gate inwards, but it has never reduced inequality. Never, you see?

His point of view encapsulates one of the strongest ideas circulating in the field of development right now: there is not a lot we can do without numbers. "Numbers are gaining the center stage", Gilberto attests. There is not much we can expect to fix or enhance in the world if the facts that are circumscribed in the topic are not being expressed in the form of data.

"Expertise", Jasanoff (2004) states, "has to be generic; it cannot be truly unique. If it were, it would be no better than a kind of private language", i.e., it would serve for nothing. In this sense, data practices, the "culturally sanctioned techniques whereby credibility for experiential assertions is established" seem like the perfect substance to dilute situatedness into a generic form. Translate local stories into *Dataspeak* and they will be understandable. Turn deaths, rapes and harassments into numbers and they will be measurable. Turn poverty, lack of drinkable water and open sewage into tables and they will be readable. Turn hunger, education and lack of access to basic services into graphics and they will be legible. How to imbue them with authority to claim for change, however, is still a mystery.

5.4
Conclusion

This chapter digs deeper into data in order to question why it has not been considered as a concept in the Developmentspeak Glossary. In this exercise, we find that even though data have always been a force hovering over the field of development, the phenomenon of datafication, pushed by the popularization of the Internet, can be understood as a turning point in this timeline. At the same time that the data deluge brought up new possibilities for global governance (especially with big data being equated with uncontestable reality), it has also attracted a more

elaborated scrutiny of how data have been collected, organized, stored and applied in development policies.

Contrasting with the aura of authority statistics acquired since the 19th century – which was made possible by its tight relationship with the state imbuing it with "authority, legitimacy and legality" (Bigo *et al.*, 2019) –, S&T and feminist scholars proposed to look at data not as representatives of truth, but as human constructions, abstractions of reality that carry the standpoint of those translating social facts to numbers. Playing with numbers, we have seen, requires subjective decisions. In this sense, Kitchin (2014, p. 29) suggests that capta is a more adequate nomenclature than data. Merry's (2016, p. 2) analysis of two research projects on battered women demonstrates that a same social issue can be translated into data in very different ways.

Claiming for a data revolution for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda led the datafication of development problems to a new peak. Its ambition can be observed in its 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators and its faith in numbers is clear in its affirmation of data as the "lifeblood of decision-making" (IAEG, 2014). Proposing such a huge data-intensive project, the 2030 Agenda not only rides the wave of datafication, but gives it a definitive push as well.

The most frequent critique posed on governance through indicators is its common assumption that it is possible to make "policy without politics", i.e., that when numbers give the final answers, no political interest is interfering in it. Differently from that, scholars as Porter (1995) and Desrosières (2002) defend that numbers and statistics are political. Likewise, proposing the concept of data politics, Bigo *et al.* (2019) state that data are generators of "power relations and politics" (p. 4). According to Fukuda-Parr and McNeil (2019), governance by indicators frame a "social problem in a particular way that points to certain types of response as obvious, and others as irrelevant or unthinkable" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeil, 2019, p. 8) and as such, they bring "politics to data" (Fukuda-Parr; McNeil, 2019, p. 6).

The pretense participatory aura of the 2030 Agenda is in part threatened by the technicality that dominates its discussions once it has moved to the indicators framework phase. Even though the project began with diverse actors and diverse knowledges, when *Dataspeak* took the centerstage, the number of people capable

of keeping up with the debate dropped vertiginously, especially due to the non-representative demographics that compose the data science field.

The 2030 Agenda has been considered an "unprecedented statistical challenge" for financial and technical reasons. The project is as much expensive as it is dependent on advanced statistical capacity. In this sense, inequality also brings politics to data as those who have the money and the keys to this sacred gate have the powerful skills of negotiating statistics in a direction that makes things more comfortable for them, as in the case of the inequality goal examined by Fukuda-Parr (2019). As said by Jerven (2016), the "potential benefits of more data and better data should be weighed against the very real cost of providing statistics" (Jerven, 2016, p. 16). In the same vein, Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho (2022) call attention to the fact that the Agenda must "make sure that the data revolution is not for data's sake but for the benefit of much-needed social transformations. For such, they defend the importance of questioning how much of the data being produced in the context of the SDGs can be considered actionable (Rabalho, 2022, p. 2).

Since language and standpoints are both considered to frame and constrain our thoughts, I speculate about the existence of a niche language called *Dataspeak*, a specialized form of communication and expression unique to the realm of data that has been potently explored by the development community. Like Developmentspeak, *Dataspeak* operates as a "lingua franca" in which shared practices work as symbols that not only communicate meanings, but also invoke authority through their universality and replicability. It is a bridge and a barrier. It operates as a frame and as a gatekeeper of a very much specific rationality or system of thought. It is a new frontier inside Developmentspeak.

Datafication has also made possible the spread of *Dataspeak* and local communities have learned quickly that being intelligible and credible requires claims translated into data, borrowing from numbers the authority they need to be made heard. This realization has been fostering movements such as Citizen-Generated Data (CGD), a sort of scientific data-based activism that envisions in data production an instrument for liberation. These movements apply what Mignolo (2009) once called an "epistemic disobedience", i.e., they make science from somewhere conferring value to numbers according to their situatedness. As we have seen in some cases, there is a persistent reluctance of state agents in acknowledging the credibility of CGD, which is likely suffocating the euphoria built around these

initiatives. It leads us to realize that data politics are thicker than data science skills and numbers will not stand without power and authority to hold them up. In this spirit, situatedness, the very strength of CGD sounds like an exotic accent in *Dataspeak*. Morten Jerven (2016a) is probably right when he says that "not all issues can be resolved through counting" (Jerven, 2016a, p. 11), especially because counting have issues of its own.

6
FINAL REMARKS

Starting with words and finishing with numbers, this thesis tells a story in which these are not opposed, but integrated parts of a single system. Inspired by the writings of the post-development scholars in the seminal works "The Development Dictionary" (1992) and *Deconstructing Development Discourse* (2010), this research produced a Consolidated Developmentspeak Glossary and embraced the analysis of language as an efficient instrument in the task of revealing the ideas, biases, assumptions, and logics permeating the field. Pursuing an already disseminated practice in the field of International Relations of highlighting power dynamics and politics through the examination of language, this work envisions Developmentspeak as a niche language that operates as a system of thought that both frames and constrains the insights and, consequently, the policies proposed in the scope of international development.

This thesis' theoretical framework has been mainly built around the *opacity of language*, i.e., it takes analyses of the intricacies between language and politics as a starting point to explore the industry of development. In this exercise, we unveil Shapiro's assumption that "phenomena find their way into language" by producing a reverse engineering of it. In other words, we search in language, more specifically in Developmentspeak, the traces and vestiges of development as a knowledge system. In this sense, this exploration can be understood as an epistemological contribution to Development Studies.

To the International Relations, one of the contributions this thesis offers is that of repurposing the analysis of language politics since this is a movement that locates identity far from the nation-state as Developmentspeakers are reunited in their shared beliefs about development inherited from a modernist and scientificist rationality that can be traced back to colonial times.

Moreover, the analysis of Developmentspeak also gives us some material to identify how the general perception about international phenomena is always changing. The 2000's obsession with the conceptualization of globalization (an expression that vanished from the lexicon) seems to be fading away as the

phenomenon seems to have hit a plateau. If in 2003, Saskia Sassen argued that one of the two sets of dynamics going on in globalization was the "formation of explicitly global institutions and processes", twenty years later we can take the 2030 Agenda as a hint that this kind of movement has become a sort of commonplace. In fact, the covid-19 pandemic has made explicit that global interconnectedness is a reality even when hundreds of governments take restrictive measures to contain it.

Methodologically, this thesis breaks up with the tradition of conducting discourse analysis when working with official documents analysis. Instead, we work on the mentioned reverse engineering by taking words as points of contact between language and phenomena. The quantitative analyses produced through distant reading are led back to qualitative lucubrations on power dynamics guided by feminist scholars. If distant reading allows us to find the phenomena going on in the field of development, feminist lenses help us to identify how these phenomena have been built and distributed around the world and how they produce or reinforce power inequalities. Development, we have seen, has been forged on difference. At first sight, this difference can be encapsulated in the North/South binomial. However, a careful analysis of development brings about a multitude of biases and assumptions that have been built around supposed contrasts between objective/subjective, rational/emotional, science/nature that soon or later get traced back to the male/female binomial.

In this sense, feminist methodologies are never articulated in this thesis with the purpose of engaging with "women's problematic in development", but as tools used to pull apart development's gender-biased epistemologies. This work's contribution to Science and Technology Studies is then an analysis of development as another environment in which science "is anything but gender-neutral" (Jasanoff, 2004, p. 35). If the problem investigated in this thesis is the myth that the expert knows best, a crucial movement in this investigation has been that of understanding how this supposed expert has been continually authorized as such according to **their ability** to discard "the attributes and experiences commonly associated with femaleness and underclass social status: emotion, connection, practicality, sensitivity, and idiosyncrasy" (p. 21). It is important to emphasize that I use "their ability" instead of "his ability" because I am not arguing that development's problem resides in the fact that its policies and agendas are exclusively designed by ill-intentioned men, but in a masculinist epistemology that can be learned and

distributed through the dissemination of Developmentspeak. This process is, I believe, similar to that narrated by Carol Cohn in her investigation of Nukespeak. Her words can summarize it poignantly: "I had not only learned to speak a language; I had started to think in it. Its questions became my questions, its concepts shaped my responses to new ideas" (Cohn *apud* Singh, 1999, p. 29).

One of the contributions offered to the literature on Developmentspeak has been the effort to expand its Glossary, contrasting the original analyses proposed in the mentioned books with the official discourse circulating in the 2030 Agenda as a means to understand what has persisted and what has faded away in the rationality of development now that we live an extremely datafied era. By reviewing all the concepts analyzed by the authors of *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing*, I have intended to stress how, at the same time proposing a blunt critique of development, they can also produce some contradictions. While John Samuel (2010) takes participation and empowerment as crucial elements for social transformation, Leal (2010) and Batliwala (2010) face these concepts as instruments cynically used by international organizations to depoliticize power imbalances or convince people to operate in a self-help logic.

A second contribution has been the movement to to transpose the profound analyses of Developmentspeak into a rapid and objective kind of examination. We started this journey with 48 concepts and used distant reading as a method for (a) demonstrating the subjective decisions that cross the apparently mechanical activity of dealing with quantitative methods and (b) choosing where to focus.. This exercise has led us to dig deeper into two different terrains: participation and data.

Participation was investigated as something old. From the fact that it is the only concept besides "development" that has beenprofoundly examined in both *Dictionary* and *Deconstructing*, we can apprehend its relevance. Diving into the history of participation in the development industry in chapter 4, we can conclude that it remains a powerful force in the discourse of the 2030 Agenda. Word counting and clustering of the concept, however, suggests that the participatory slogan of the 2030 Agenda might not be living up to the hype and is probably falling short in comparison to the project's early days expectations. In other words, even though the 2030 Agenda began with an enormous effort directed to a long public consultation process, we can also realize that the opportunities for participation get

scarce as the project moves towards the technicalities of indicator-choice, for example.

Data has been investigated as something new since it is the most cited word of interest in the linguistic corpus constructed from the inaugural document and the annual monitoring reports of the SDGs (from 2016 to 2022). An interesting discovery is that even though data have been a cornerstone in the development industry since its early days, neither *Dictionary* nor "Deconstruction" proposed an analysis of it as a concept. We can understand that several processes and features currently theorized under the name of "data" has been scrutinized before in Developmentspeak under the concepts of "Science" and "Technology". Nevertheless, the 21st century data revolution seems to have brought its smallest particle (data) to the centerstage of Developmentspeak.

As we have seen in chapter 5, data have been operating more than methodological miracles in development. The discourse of SDGs makes evident that the mainstream actors in the field had paid attention to the objections posed by critical scholars and civil society. In this sense, the SDGs try to accommodate 17 different issues in order to "leave no one behind" in their personal claims producing inconsistencies such as what Ariel Salleh (2016) calls a green capitalism, i.e., the "nonsense" of pursuing "sustainable development while advocating continued extractivism, rising GDP, and expanding global free trade" (p. 2). In this spirit, I argue that data have been playing a crucial role of repositioning the authority of development outside its traditional but now unpalatable promises. Wolfgang Sachs (2019) takes the SDGs as a shift from a confidence in progress to a hope in survival. This shift, of course, is produced by a certain kind of embarrassment. Under the impossibility of defending itself, development defends something else. As long as we have enough data, we can do it.

Participation and data are rich points of analysis when explored separately. However, they get even more interesting once we try to identify the fabric uniting them. So different and possibly unrelated at first sight, participation an data actually play the same role in the field: They are both instruments for legitimating development policies and agendas. If International Organizations, as we have seen, had to recalculate their routes to encompass the public claims for a participatory development in order to alleviate contestation and localize legitimacy in the fact that local communities were participants in development enterprises, data as well

has become a tool for legitimating development policies through the assumption that better data lead to better decision-making. When scholars defend that the 2030 Agenda has both a participatory and a technocratic nature, then, we can also realize that they are not only identifying logics of operation, but aspects specifically articulated with the purpose of authorizing the SDGs as a legitimate pathway to pursue development. This conclusion echoes what Bourdieu (1991) once said about politics: according to him, it "always swings between two criteria of validation: science and the plebiscite" (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 190).

Curiously, as much as these two instruments of legitimation can match, they can also repel each other. Like magnets, participation and data require poles aligned in a certain way to work in tandem. As this thesis seeks to point out, inside Developmentspeak has been flourishing a new frontier, a more specific, more technical, more qualified dialect that I have called *Dataspeak.* This movement did not go unnoticed by minorities who have internalized the idea that quantification practices push social problems out of the unknown and are, thus, indispensable for claiming for public policies. Data science skills can be learned, of course. However, data produced in the context of vulnerable communities tend to be frequently discredited. *Dataspeak*, as other languages, is populated with power inequalities that cause that discourse cannot go much further if the speaker does not hold the right type of authority, i.e., if they sound like a tentative of expertise being produced by a non-expert. The legitimacy of the language of numbers, we can notice, stand in a ping-pong game in which speaker and speech are constantly receiving and sending back the ball of authority. As long as it does not hit the ground, legitimacy stands.

Nevertheless, grounding is precisely what keeps Citizen-Generated Data (CGD) from joining the players of this game. CGD initiatives abound with signs and symbols of situatedness as, in them, numbers only mean something when localized in a context, when circumscribing struggles, when being attached to names and stories. As we have seen in the discussions proposed by feminist scholars, situatedness brings the subject out of the *nowhere* presupposed by modern objectivist science. Nevertheless, this positionality is hard to fit in a standardized, homogenized, and harmonized data system. Consequently, this unusual form of *Dataspeak* is taken as an exotic accent: praised in its effort to enter the field, but relegated to a secondary role of filling the gaps of official statistics. This and other

perceptions might produce the conclusion that the 2030 Agenda might be one more expensive dead end in the road of development. This conclusion also nods to the perspectives of post-development scholars that no refashioning of development is capable of getting it rid from its colonial underpinnings and adjacent violences.

This thesis, however, does not intend to claim that the Agenda is not relevant in other ways. Besides animating the discussion on pressing issues such as climate change, gender inequality, hunger, ocean pollution and others, the agenda also works as "civic agreement" that must not be underestimated. During Bolsonaro's government in Brazil, the national system dedicated to localizing the 2030 Agenda has been dismantled under hyper-conservative arguments that accused the project of being "globalist" and "abortist". "The Spotlight Report on the 2030 Agenda in Brazil" organized by social movements reunited under the Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda (SCWG 2030 A) became even more important in this context.

> These are the results of governments who choose to do little, or nothing. The administration which took office in 2019, has notably and publicly committed to stand in opposition to the main principles of the 2030 Agenda, refusing to care for people or the planet, and avoiding partnerships which could lead to peace and prosperity. As has been cautioned throughout Spotlight Reports since 2017, the worst that could happen, now has: 33 million people lacked access to food in 2022, and Brazil, a global power in food production, has returned shamefully to the […] World Hunger Map (CSWG 2030 A, 2022, p. 4).

The report potently argues that the fact that "Brazil SDG Panel contains no official data on 140 of 245 indicators applicable to the national context for Brazil" as a sign of neglect, or even worse, the result of an intentionally orchestrated "information blackout". Alessandra Nilo's words, a co-facilitator of the Civil Society Working Group for the 2030 Agenda (CSWG 2030A), delimitates poignantly the importance of the Agenda:

> It is hard to find rulers who are against the Agenda's basic premises…And this is something you can use in your favor. In this context, it is the best way you might have to make international complaints because while every country says that the 2030 Agenda is, more than ever, needed to deal with poverty, climate and sanitary emergencies, Brazil says the absolute opposite (Nilo *apud* Rocha de Siqueira and Ramalho, 2022, p. 7).

Nilo's perspective of producing data as a way of caring (Rocha de Siqueira; Ramalho, 2022) for social issues brings nuances into the conclusion of Gustavo

Esteva (2010) that development is a "minefield [that] has already exploded" (Esteva, 2010, p. 2).

From what we have observed here, it is not an exaggeration to say that the spaces and structures of the 2030 Agenda will not guide us to a rupture of the development field with its original biases, hierarchies, and stigmatizations. However, I admit that it feels like a waste not to value the tireless work done by SDG-promoters (some that I had the chance to interview) and their personal conviction (highly critical at many times) that the 2030 Agenda is at least an instrument to discuss possible paths to alleviate the most urgent problems inflicted upon humanity and, especially, upon vulnerable groups.

There are several future possibilities for unfolding this research. The most obvious is that of expanding the analyzed corpus with the annual monitoring reports to be published until 2030. Following this path, the research could point out new patterns and/or transformations being produced in Developmentspeak in the era of the SDGs. A thorough examination of the SDGs era as a whole is also crucial for providing more substance to our speculation of an ongoing shift towards *Dataspeak* proposed in chapter 5.

Another possibility would be the investigation of strategies capable of making Developmentspeak more inclusive and accessible to diverse audiences such as marginalized communities. As we have seen in chapter 5, *Dataspeak* has been articulated as a possible access point for CGD movements to enter the discussion. Asking if and which other instruments have been used to make the language of development more accessible to the non-experts throughout history could lead us to interesting findings as well.

In the same spirit, I believe we could find some rich insights comparing the language employed in official development policies with the language used in the on-the-ground implementation of these policies. Analyzing the specific lexicon used by national and subnational governments and NGOs, for example, could help us understand how Developmentspeak changes as it travels from global spaces of negotiation to local contexts and which are the results of these possible linguistic variations. This possible path could also take into account a cross-cultural perspective, investigating how cultural differences and local values might produce different versions of Developmentspeak.

A third possibility would be that of a cross analysis between the "concepts, worldviews, and practices" explored by the authors of the *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (2019) and the 2030 Agenda. As said before, *Pluriverse* seeks to break up with the idea of development and, consequently, it presents itself in a diametral opposition in relation to the 2030 Agenda. However, much of the vocabulary being used in the development industry right now has been incorporated after external criticism. We have deeply examined the case of participation – born from PAR and dismantled in the form of a depoliticized instrument brought up whenever development international agencies needed to prove their legitimacy in shaping the lives of people in the global South. It would not be a surprise if the motto of the next great development agenda – a possible predecessor of the 2030 Agenda – incorporated some of the ideas currently being used to tear development apart.

In the Foreword to *Pluriverse*, Wolfgang Sachs (2019) – editor of *Dictionary* – argues that development is dead since its great promise of progress is completely gone and all we have right now is the possibility to fight for survival (p. xiii). Another interesting path for a future research would be a specific investigation this shift from a promise of progress to the consolation prize of bare survival. Is it more pessimistic? Or is this idea of a doomed future properly hidden behind neutral and depoliticized words?

Developmentspeak has proved to be a rich access point to the analysis of phenomena interwoven in the tapestry of development. Combining different methodologies, this study has delved into the task of exploring the opacity of the language of development as an environment populated by a multitude of power dynamics that have not been exhausted by the paths here traveled. This work's main findings underscore the critical importance of language in shaping perceptions, policies, and practices in the realm of global development and, most importantly, of signaling societal transformations. Development, we have understood along this journey, has a shapeshifting quality, i.e., it is marked by the ability of keeping up with the ever-evolving economic, political and social scenarios in vogue. Developmentspeak can be a useful repository to keep track of these transformations.

7
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8
Annex I

8.1
A walk through the Dictionary continued

Gérald Berthoud discusses *market's* omnipresence as "the leading principle for guiding individual and collective action" of our time (1992, p. 74). According to him, development and markets work in tandem. In fact, considering a country as developed or underdeveloped depends a lot on how much it is integrated into national and international markets. The most important observation made by the author on this matter is that development has favored the establishment of a system in which relations are determined by usefulness. In that sense, Berthoud's reading of market complements Gronemeyer's view of helping. "If one side has nothing tangible to offer", he says,

> [...]"the other has no reason at all to pursue the unbalanced relationship. For traditional morality, this position would be regarded as self-interested, even cynical; in the contemporary spirit of utilitarianism, it appears normal" (Berthoud, 1992, p. 75).

Just as Sachs (2010, p. xvi) speaks of "perceptions, myths and fantasies" around development, Berthoud calls attention to the fact that the market has been understood as something almost mystical, a view strongly naturalized by Adam Smith's work. This understanding perpetuates the idea that results such as limitless "commoditization" (Sachs, 2010, p. 75) are just as natural. Deconstructing this perspective requires conceiving "the market as a man-made institution rather than as a self-creating, self-perpetuating order" (Sachs, 2010, p. 85).

Ivan Illich defines basic **needs** as "the most insidious legacy left behind by development" (Sachs, 2010, p. 95). Discussing the market Berthoud speaks of the establishment of a system in which "everything [can] be bought and sold" (Sachs, 2010, p. 75), this transformation of "resources" into "economic values" lead us to internalize a feeling of "scarcity". The "mind and senses of *Homo sapiens*", says Illich, has been reshaped "into those of *Homo miserabilis*" (Sachs, 2010., p. 95).

The first movement to "operationalize poverty" was made in the 1960s by the United Nations with the creation of the GNP, "a surprising mental eggbeater that compounds all goods and all services produced by all people and defines the resulting omelette as the gross value of a nation" (Sachs, 2010., p. 100). In the 1970s

it was clear that the GNP was not an efficient method for measuring development since, in the words of Robert McNamara (*apud* Illich, 2010, p. 101), President of the World Bank, it "has contributed significantly to exacerbate the inequalities of income distribution" and stood on the way of development's main goal: combating "absolute poverty". From that moment on, the World Bank began an enterprise to translate poverty into "technical measurements of disembedded, specific needs that could be expressed in monetary terms". Needs, says Illich, "became the method by which, henceforth, social scientists and bureaucrats could distinguish between mere growth and true development" (Illich, 2010, p. 101). Speaking of needs is speaking of what is unnegotiable. Therefore, fostering development discourse around the needs of human beings also serves the "interests" of those who manage these needs may they be goods or services. In this sense, "an economy based on needs" is also an instrument of "social control of 'needy man'" (Illich, 2010, p. 106)

Wolfgang Sachs reviews the idea of **one world** as a repackaged version of the salvation that legitimated the exploitation of the "savages" of the new world. The "image of the Other in European thought" had been manifested at least in two different ideas: "Whereas for Christendom heathens populated geographically remote areas, for the Enlightenment savages inhabited an infant stage of history. Europe of the Enlightenment no longer felt separated from the Other spatially, but chronologically" (Illich, 2010, p. 113). Recognizing indigenous peoples as part of the mankind required an interpretation of the "Multiplicity of cultures in space as a succession of stages in time". The savage was a child, a less developed version of what human beings were supposed to be, someone "in need of guidance by a strong father" (Illich, 2010, p. 114).

The unity of the "one world" idea, according to Sachs, can only be achieved through westernization. Twentieth century development has revamped the "savage" as the "underdeveloped" maintaining the same target: "the improvement of the backward" which ended up being stretched into the vision that sameness leads to peace. Therefore, peace can only be achieved with progress, i.e., with the "annihilation of diversity" (Illich, 2010, p. 114).

Arturo Escobar analyzes **planning** as a concept that "embodies the belief that social change can be engineered and directed, produced at will". Because it has been envisioned as the "application of scientific and technical knowledge to the public domain", planning "lent legitimacy and fueled hopes" of development as an

"indubitable truth" (Escobar, 2011, p. 145). Planning, says Escobar, is not that old as it has been established as a strategy to fight the pressure the Industrial Revolution was causing on European cities, making them "overcrowded and disordered" (Escobar, 2011, p. 146).

A great part of this strategy had to do with "the management of poverty". "Poverty, health, education, hygiene, unemployment, and so on, were constructed as 'social problems', which in turn required detailed scientific knowledge about society and its population, and extensive social planning and intervention in everyday life" (Escobar, 2011, p. 146). According to the author, that was the moment when "the state emerged as the guarantor of progress" which required a good deal of disciplining that transformed people into "governable subjects" (Escobar, 2011, p. 147).

Escobar believes that planning came of age during World War I and was "refined" during World War II. By the end of the 1940s, development gave it new fields to explore such as Asia and Latin America (Escobar, 2011, p. 148). These new bootcamps had their own necessities: "traditions" and "irrationalities" that had to be replaced by rational thought (Escobar, 2011, p. 149). As pointed out in many other entries previously explored, planning also carries an urgency for westernization. It has been, says Escobar, "one of those totalizing universals" used to affect what is one of the greatest parts of "human experience": "social change" (Escobar, 2011, p. 158).

Barbara Duden discusses how the concept of **population** has been detached from the idea of "people" to signify "a totality of objects", "a reproductive community that meets and mates with a defined probability". Being used to "refer as much to mosquitoes as humans", its central meaning was modified to presume the ability of quantification of beings or objects, acting also as dehumanizing tool (p. 163). In public policy, population also nods to the term "over-population", which denotes a crowd in need of order. Moving from "people" to "population", I would argue, is a movement quite similar to that of the "sanitization" investigated by Carol Cohn (2006) in her analysis of Nukespeak.

Like many other concepts frequently used in the field of development, population is an "immigrant" from the language of statistics (Cohn, 2006, p. 164). Population has been converted into "P" integrating the mathematical equations of demographers. According to Duden, however, it has a "special status" for "it does

not reduce things to dollars, but persons to bloodless entities that can be managed as characterless classes that reproduce, pollute, produce or consume, and, for the common good, call for control" (Cohn, 2006, p. 165), which has been more noticeably exerted through birth control policies directed to the Third World in the late 1950s (p. 166). According to Barbara Duden, at that time, it became a common sense that

> [...] [h]igh rates of population growth create unemployment faster than jobs, and increase the number of mouths to be fed faster than the productivity of rice paddies, squatters faster than people housed in modern facilities, excrement faster than sewers can be built. A population growing faster than the output of modern goods and services not only frustrates development goals; it undermines the credibility of promises made in the name of development and the political will to pay the price of progress (Cohn, 2006, p. 167).

The most insidious aspect of this kind of policy is that it acts directly onto people's beliefs and behaviors (Cohn, 2006, p. 169). The matter of population has gained even more legitimacy with the environmentalist debates going on in 1972. It was no longer about producing development, but about avoiding a catastrophe (Cohn, 2006, p. 170). This perspective remains strong today and it is mainly endorsed by United Nations' regularly released world population projections – the most recent is that the planet will reach 9.8 billion people in 2050 and 11.2 billion people in 2100[13]. This idea has been, for several times, translated into population control programs that demonize high fertility rates in the South through the "pathologization of racialized sexuality" (Wilson, 2012, p. 86).

Majid Rahnema explores **poverty** in its ambiguity. Even though "hunger and misery" are concrete to the point of driving people into "desperation", poverty can also be understood as a "myth, a construct and the invention of a particular civilization" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 174). According to the author, "the notion of 'lack'" is a sort of "common denominator for most perceptions of poverty", which are multiple. The issue originates from the fact that the definition of lacking points to a specific way of life. In that sense, he says: "Everyone may think of themselves as poor when it is the television set in the mud hut which defines the necessities of

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[13] World population projected to reach 9.8 billion in 2050, and 11.2 billion in 2100 https://www.un.org/en/desa/world-population-projected-reach-98-billion-2050-and-112-billion-2100

4

life, often in terms of the wildest and fanciest consumers appearing on the screen" (Rahnema, 2010, p 175).

The official conception of poverty by the time the book was published was the one proclaimed by the World Bank which correlated it to Gross National Product (GNP). One of the Bank's reports from 1948 defined poor and underdeveloped the countries "with an average per capita income of less than $100". Poverty migrated from the individual to the collective. It was not simply referring to "the weak, the hungry, the sick, the homeless" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 174), "for the first time in history, entire nations and countries came to be considered (and consider themselves) as poor". This conception of poverty fostered the idea that "richer nations, the richest of them being the United States", had the responsibility "to help the poor countries raise their living standards" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 178).

Before the era of development, poverty used to encompass "a holistic perception" that had been lost in the adoption of this "universalist, one-track, income-based, and totally acultural recipe for abstract 'patients'" (Rahnema, 2010, p 179). Attached to it, also came the idea that poverty expressed a sign of "personal inadequacy", it became "a shame and a scourge" that easily made the "race for enrichment […] not only a desirable goal for the economy but also a morally justified end" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 180) that has crashed "age-old moral principles of simplicity, frugality, sufficiency and respect for every human being and all forms of life" (Rahnema, 2010, p. 190).

Jean Robert examines **production** starting from its ancient meaning "an emancipation of nature". According to him, "[t]he Renaissance called a man wise if he, like Prometheus, sought to emancipate himself from the bounds of nature and to act following his free will, while the unwise remained 'nature's debtor'". The 17th century brought up a transformation on that thought. By then, production implied "the notion that certain combinations of any two elements can generate a third – something entirely new which is not reducible to its components" (Robert, 2010, p. 196).

As Jean Robert attests, production has been led to mean the opposite of subsistence, a movement which undermine the ways of life of multiple traditional societies around the world. Just as the case of poverty, production has been transported from the individual to the collective realm as the 19th century brought about the "idea that a small set of numbers could express which nations were well

off and which were lagging behind" guiding "some economists to estimate the income of a nation as if it were a single household" (Robert, 2010, p. 204). In the 20th century, Keynes's work "suggested that a country's total expenditures on final products – goods and services ready for consumption – could be the measure of its 'national product'. Three years later the League of Nations was already producing estimates of the national product of twenty-six countries" (Robert, 2010, p. 205). The development and transformation of the South, says Jean Robert, could only be achieved with the enhancement of productivity (Robert, 2010, p. 209).

Modern productivity carries two important downsides. First, it disvalues traditional ways of life; Jean Robert speaks of how his Mexican neighbor subsistence way of living cultivating corn, even though providing for an entire family, cannot be integrated into the GNP. His methods position "the 'production' of corn within a cosmology where nature is not reduced to resources but respected in its autonomy" (Robert, 2010, p. 206). "For modern production to function", he says, "the economy must first establish a system in which people become dependent upon goods and services produced for them; and to do this, it must devalue historically determined patterns of subsisting and corrupt cultural webs of meaning" (Robert, 2010, p. 206). Second, productivity is about growing. The problem is that it causes an abhorrent pressure on the environment, especially through the generation of waste. It is the agent of an "irreversible degradation" of the planet (Robert, 2010, p. 206). In straightforward terms, "[e]conomic production cannot grow forever without disrupting and destroying livelihoods and the biosphere" (Robert, 2010, p. 208).

José María Sbert delves into **progress** as an idea that has redefined time as a "vector" pointing to "a future of plenty, freedom and justice"; the world as a "resource" to be spent and consumed; and man as "unified humanity" that should be guided "by those who have already progressed, but open to all races and nations provided they jettison their tribal and traditional bonds, which are but the capricious obstacles to universal redemption" (Sbert, 2010, p. 217). With progress, "man no longer needs a creator, but constantly refashions himself" (Sbert, 2010, p. 215).

> Paradoxically, this unacknowledged faith, this false consciousness – often labelled materialistic or even hedonistic – flagrantly contradicts true attachment to the world. It is a desperate search for transcendence that, again and again, annihilates the world as it is and substitutes for any real sense of place, rhythm, duration and culture a world of

6

abstractions, a non-world – of homogenous space, linear time, science and money (Sbert, 2010, p. 222).

For Sbert, development can be characterized as a journey while progress is destiny. Losing its "prestige" in the 20th century, especially after the Great Wars and the Great Depression which made the concept sort of embarrassing (2010, p. 212). The concept carried an idea that needed to be revised. Progress had by then achieved a similar status to words such as "uncivilized, uneducated and backward" which had been revamped to "underdeveloped". Development, says Sbert, "came in handy" as a substitute. However, "[w]ithin this new development scheme of things, the idea of progress remained implicit as a crude dogma" (Sbert, 2010, p. 214).

Vandana Shiva investigates **resources** explaining the origins of the expression: "the Latin verb *surgere*, which evoked the image of a spring that continually rises from the ground". The concept, attests Shiva, emphasized "nature's power of self-regeneration and called attention to her prodigious creativity" accompanied by the idea that "the earth bestows gifts on humans who, in turn, are well advised to show diligence in order not to suffocate her generosity" (Shiva, 2010, p. 228). Colonialism and industrialism produced a 180º turn in this perspective making nature no longer creative, but something meant to serve the creativity of men, a "dead and manipulable matter", "a container for raw materials waiting to be transformed into inputs for commodity production" (Shiva, 2010, p. 228).

As nature has been transformed into "resources", the permission to exploit uninterruptedly has jeopardized its ability to self-regenerate. If before people were dependent on nature, coloniality brought about a time in which nature became dependent on people to be properly "developed". According to Shiva, this can be perceived in the two phases of nature's exploitation in the colonies: 'In the first phase, when nature's wealth was considered abundant and freely available, 'resources' were exploited rapaciously. […] In the second phase, once exploitation had created degradation and scarcity, the 'management' of 'natural resources' became important in order to maintain continued supplies of raw material for commerce and industry" (Shiva, 2010, p. 229).

"The treatment of nature as a resource which acquires value only in exploitation for economic growth", says the author, has been the beacon of development (Shiva, 2010, p. 234). As a result, the pressure caused by the "endless

growth of markets and production" pursued in development programs forced humanity to recognize "the crisis of sustainability", which in several ways does not point to a concern with "the limits of nature" but actually to guarantee the "continued supply of raw materials for industrial production, the ongoing flow of ever more commodities, the indefinite accumulation of capital – and all this to be achieved by setting arbitrary limits on nature" (Shiva, 2010, p. 240).

Claude Alvares believes that **science** and development "cannot be understood in isolation from each other" (Alvares, 2010, p. 245). In his own words, they share a congenital relationship that "can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution", when industry made a decisive push for scientific discoveries (Alvares, 2010, p. 246). Science, says Alvares, has remained in the service of Western culture to this day" (Alvares, 2010, p. 244). As such, it has "dismissed all existing processes in nature and traditional technics as inferior or of marginal value, thus enabling big industry (capitalist or statist) to substitute the blueprints supplied by science" (Alvares, 2010, p. 253).

> Backwardness was to be substituted by development, an allegedly better way of organizing man and nature based on the rich insights of up-to-date science. Science, in turn, was desired because it made development possible. If one developed its associated skills, one could have unlimited development and riches. Science and development reinforced the need for each other; each legitimized the other in a circular fashion popularly rendered 'I scratch your back, you scratch mine' (Alvares, 2010, p. 246).

Alvares's reading, like those of the other authors in this Dictionary, is tremendously pessimistic. As he says, science failed in its promise to "put an end to poverty and oppression" and has, actually "accomplished just the contrary" (Alvares, 2010, p. 246). Instead, science's real success in his point of view is that of domination, "the exercise of political hegemony". Just as it had previously been associated with "enlightenment", the association with development has been another move to propagate "racism, sexism, imperialism and colonialism" (Alvares, 2010, p. 246).

Harry Cleaver reflects on *socialism* highlighting that even though it carries the heaviest critique of capitalism, it still tried to put together some sort of "alternative socialist development". The possibility for such has been reinforced by "[t]he extremely rapid (by historical standards) industrialization of the USSR, which at the time of the Revolution of 1917 was still an overwhelmingly agrarian

society" (Cleaver, 2010, p. 260). Socialism has been proclaimed as a means to pursue the betterment of people's lives through "social cooperation and joint social action" (Cleaver, 2010, p. 263). Its reasoning was different from those of Thomas Hobbes and Adam Smith who believed that "the unrestrained pursuit of individual self-interest both was natural and would lead to an acceptable social harmony" (Cleaver, 2010, p. 266).

In the end, Cleaver attests, socialist development, as it has been applied in the USSR and China, repeated two of the most pervasive qualities of traditional development. First, it has homogenized the society by banning all the vernacular "language, religious practices and festivities" that had been "judged incompatible with socialist development" mimicking capitalist's attempt to "impose its master narrative on the world" (Cleaver, 2010, p. 276). Second, it has worked as the substitution of "one social hegemony for another", replacing "every other religious practice" with the cult of labor, which "legitimated the endless subordination of people's lives to work" (Cleaver, 2010, p. 275). In conclusion, Cleaver defends that "in their attempts to correct the injustices of capitalism", socialists "remained trapped in the capitalist practice of measuring everything in terms of labour and money" reproducing exploitation under a different flag (Cleaver, 2010, p. 274).

Serge Latouche explores **standard of living** mentioning that its most emblematic use was in President Truman's Point Four Program in which he stated the need "to assist the people of economically underdeveloped areas to raise their standard of living" (Truman *apud* Latouche, 2010, p. 279). The concept was designed to signify "the quantity of goods and services which may be purchased by the average national income". According to the author, this obsession can be traced back to the industrial era when "more and more people were turned into wage earners". However, it was only made into a "measurable index" in the founding proclamation of the League of Nations on 1919 (Truman *apud* Latouche, 2010, p. 279).

According to Latouche, the obsession with wage and standard of living has drawn people into a logic of competition. As he says, "[t]o make up for lack of time to enjoy the fruits of our labour, the greatest satisfaction can at least be drawn from the contemplation of the amount one has earned in comparison with those lower down on the scale" (Latouche, 2010, p. 281). The notion of standard of living has produced a "homogenization of individual pursuits" by generating a profound

9

connection between "well-being and well-having" (Latouche, 2010, p. 284). The standard of living, says the author, "measures itself by the level of consumption, including the amount of waste produced" (Latouche, 2010, p. 286).

Ashis Nandy comments on how what we now call the **state** is actually "the modern nation-state" inaugurated in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia and thoroughly established in the French Revolution. This modern version of the state was intimately attached to nationalism, which became the great legitimator of the state with the dissolution of the figure of the sovereign monarch. In that context, nationalism was seen as "the best guarantor of the stability of the state", a belief that pledged for homogenization and, consequently, the exclusion of minorities that could not fit the idea of the nation-state (Nandy, 2010, p. 296).

The spreading of the nation-state hit the Third World like a rock particularly because "indigenous intellectuals and political activists confronting the colonial power found in the idea of the nation-state the clue to the West's economic success and political dominance" (Nandy, 2010, p. 298). Introduced in non-Western countries through colonialism, after independence, the nation-state was adopted by local elites as a means of legitimizing their power. In this movement, the nation-state operated as a "native version of the civilizing mission" exerting control under the leitmotifs of development, security, scientific rationality and the secularization of society (Nandy, 2010, p. 302).

Otto Ullrich examines **technology** as one of the greatest tools of the development era. According to him, especially after Truman's inaugural address, science and, of course, technology have taken the centerstage in the task of leading "the countries of the world towards the sunny uplands of the future". As we have seen in the previous entries of the Development Dictionary, the belief at the time was that "greater prosperity calls for increased production, and more production requires scientific technology" (Ullrich, 2010, p. 308).

The author's main critique on the idea that other nations "could achieve the material prosperity of the West by taking over Western scientized technology" is that it is simply "untenable". Even though development carries the great flag of science and technology as the driving forces of prosperity, Ullrich defends that a lot of the achievements of rich Western nations could only be conquered with high levels of exploitation as much as of other peoples as of the planet since it operates

in a "plunder and the transfer of costs" system. Replicating the steps that generated such wealth is "no longer supportable" for nature (Ullrich, 2010, p. 316).

8.2
A walk through Deconstructing continued

Cassandra Balchin investigates **faith** and **secularism** in the development field. According to her, the first is quite credible, a true buzzword while the second is perceived as anticlimactic (Balchin, 2010, p. 81). The way faith has been handled in the field, says Balchin, nods to a racist, "Orientalist presumption about the 'underdeveloped Other'" that fluctuates from considering it "the biggest developmental obstacle" to the "only developmental solution" (Balchin, 2010, p. 83).

> In the first approach (seeing religion as the biggest developmental obstacle), 'irrational' people are blamed for their own underdevelopment (as opposed to, for example, gross global trade inequalities perpetuated by the North), and frequently custom is inaccurately conflated with religion. [...] In the third approach, it is presumed that all 'proper' Indonesians, Ugandans, Moroccans, Chileans, etc. are 'religious'; secular initiatives are de-legitimized, and the work of many local service-delivery and human-rights groups ignored (Balchin, 2010 p. 84).

In this sense, religion is seen as a problem as long as it is not instrumentalized as a piece in the big structure of development. Fundamentalism is a problem, but Bush's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) spent one third of about US$ 1 billion not on "promoting safe sex or addressing the power imbalances (especially gender-related imbalances) that mean some cannot negotiate safe sex for themselves", but actually on "programs that encouraged 'abstinence until marriage'". A highly moralistic agenda that also excluded minorities such as sex-workers or non-heterosexual people (Balchin, 2010, p. 84). In this sense, Balchin believes that faith is useful in keeping people under control. Secularism would question the belief that "hungry stomachs can be filled by morality and ideology" (Balchin, 2010, p. 87).

Evelina Dagnino reflects on how *citizenship* "swiftly became a common reference point among a range of social movements". She observes that the concept of citizenship that emerged with the Latin American social movements in the 1970s and 1980s were expanding beyond the idea of the state as guarantor of legal rights,

"it depended on citizens being active social subjects, defining their rights, and struggling for these rights to be recognized" (Dagnino, 2010, p. 101). The 1990s brought an erosion of rights (especially labour rights) and citizenship was then taken as "the integration of individuals into the market" (Dagnino, 2010, p. 102).

Danigno proposes a critical reflection on the "third sector" and, consequently, on NGOs. Operating under the façade of charity and benefaction, these organizations also represent an "attempt to implement a 'minimalist' politics and to collapse the public spaces for political deliberation that had been opened up by the democratizing struggles of previous decades". In fact, NGOs tend to be better accepted for their neutral, aseptic character in opposition to social movements "that remain combative and well organized, such as the Landless Movement (MST) [in Brazil] and some trade unions (Dagnino, 2010, p. 107). According to the author, this notion of citizenship has been transitioned from rights to solidarity and from public responsibility to management (Dagnino, 2010, p. 108).

Srilatha Batliwala tells us that even though the concept of **empowerment** has been used since the "Protestant Reformation in Europe", it has "acquired a strongly political meaning" in the second half of the 20th century (Batliwala, 2010, p. 111). By then, according to Batliwala, the word began to be adopted by "the liberation theology, popular education, black power, feminist and other movements engaged in struggles for more equitable, participatory, and democratic forms of social change and development". The 1990s brought about a transfiguration of empowerment into self-help as it was highjacked by the "corporate world", "by conservative and even reactionary political ideologies" (Batliwala, 2010, p. 112). The author explains how empowerment has also been used by governments as a tool for steering communities towards a desired outcome. Observing women's empowerment movements in India, she concludes that they "saw the state as a critical enabler of the empowerment process, even if their stance was adversarial" (Batliwala, 2010, p. 116).

> This support was not entirely altruistic, of course, but often sprang from an astute understanding that these women's empowerment processes might better enable the administration to deliver its schemes and services, outperform other states and provinces in development indicators, and lower the poverty line (Batliwala, 2010, p. 116).

One of the most important distortions provoked in this movement was the alteration of empowerment as a "socio-political process" into an individual one, mostly focused on self-improvement. The fact that empowerment required actual "shifts in political, social, and economic power between and across both individuals and social groups" has been entirely concealed with this perspective (Batliwala, 2010, p. 113). Batliwala considers that empowerment has turned not only into a buzzword, but a "magic bullet for poverty alleviation" (Batliwala, 2010, p. 116). Gone is the empowerment signifying structural change. Now, it is all about "individual power, achievement, status" (Batliwala, 2010, p. 119).

I admit that Ben Fine's take on **social capital** has been so directly focused on criticizing the World Bank's defense of the concept that I could not actually grasp the meaning behind it, evident or hidden. For this reason, I went after a definition offered by Kenneth J. Arrow in his chapter for the World Bank's "Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective" published in 1999 to try and make sense of it:

> There seems to be widespread consensus on the plausibility of the hypothesis that social networks can affect economic performance. At the workshop [that culminated in this book], the most cited element was that of trust. That trust can promote economic progress has long been argued, even by economists, and given some theoretical foundation by "reputation effects" in game theory. […] There is considerable consensus also that much of the reward for social interactions is intrinsic-that is, the interaction is the reward-or at least that the motives for interaction are not economic. People may get jobs through networks of friendship or acquaintance, but they do not, in many cases, join the networks for that purpose. This is not to deny that networks and other social links may also form for economic reasons. One line of reasoning is that the social networks guard against market failure that is caused by asymmetric information; they are supplementary activities that exploit monitoring devices not otherwise available (Arrow, 1999, p. 3).

That being said, Ben Fine summarizes *social capital* with the help of a popular saying: "It's not what you know, it's who you know that counts" (Fine, 2010, p. 123). As many other concepts explored in "Buzzwords and Fuzzwords", social capital carries the ability to offer an idea of transformation that does not defy the status quo. According to Fine, it is "self-help raised to the level of the collective". In other words, "[h]owever good or bad things might be, they could be better if people interacted more, trusted one another, and co-operated". In this sense, communities are imbued with the responsibility of improving their situations by only "pull[ing] together and trust[ing] one another" (Fine, 2010, p. 125).

Offering "a bland alternative, highly conciliatory" form of neo-liberalism, social capital has been heavily promoted by the World Bank, especially in the 1990s when the Bank was facing a legitimacy crisis due to the heavy criticism "of the neo-liberal policies attached to loans" (Fine, 2010, p. 127). Social capital has been the manner the World Bank has adopted to legitimize itself while "pretty much continuing business as usual" (Fine, 2010, p. 131).

Miguel Pickard reflects on how *relationships* in the development field can happen in numerous ways. In each of them, the individuals or organizations involved receive a proper name: "recipients, beneficiaries, counterparts, clients, grantees, partners". Pickard focuses on the singularity of the term **partnership**. Usually applied to signify a relationship between equals (Pickard, 2010, p. 135), partnership has been the go-to word for describing relationships between agencies and recipients. According to him, the fact that "funding flows from North to South may, however, have important implications for the theoretical equality of standing within a partnership" (Pickard, 2010, p. 136). In other words, how could one consider these parts as equal if the "power to grant or withhold funding is unequally shared"? (Pickard, 2010, p. 137).

Even though the first years of the era of development, right after World War II, staged a "paternalistic" and even "neo-colonial" relationship between North and South, the 1970s and 1980s brought about the strengthening of "nationalism and self-determination" which lead developing countries to be recognized as "social subjects", "actors fully capable of participating in the development debate and proposing innovative and 'home-grown' solutions to structural problems affecting the majority of the population" (Pickard, 2010, p. 137). By that time, being in a partnership "required a shared vision", it was about cooperation, not imposition (Pickard, 2010, p. 138). This "greater independence" of the South came along with its responsibility to "exercise grants with professionalism, with timely and transparent accountability" (Pickard, 2010, p. 139).

In the 1990s, Northern governments (mainly formed by neoliberal parties) became the most expressive financial supporters of Northern funding agencies. In order to keep this cash flow running, these agencies embraced a more strategic approach to "demonstrate success". This has produced a change in the rationale as the agencies "distanced themselves from the previous thinking that associated poverty reduction with long-term processes" (Pickard, 2010, p. 140) to prioritize

quantifiable results, especially in the form of indicators adopting a logic that abandoned the construction of "social subjects" (Pickard, 2010, p. 141). The re-establishment of inequality between agencies and recipients collapsed the possibility for true partnerships (Pickard, 2010, p. 142).

Ines Smyth discusses how **gender** has been "mainstreamed" into the field of development in the form of a "bland talk" in which "real women and men, power and conflict all disappear" that once again pledges for a miraculous transformation that also happens not to disturb the status quo (Smyth, 2010, p. 144). One of the most intriguing illustrations of this is the absence of words such as *feminist* and *feminism*, considered too contentious to integrate the usual discourse adopted in the métier (Smyth, 2010, p. 145). According to Smyth, the talk of gender in development appears frequently in the form of "gender mainstreaming", an expression that calls attention to how gender issues can "remain marginal to the ideas and practices of development organizations". Advocating for gender mainstreaming intends to bring these issues to the center stage (Smyth, 2010, p. 147).

As good as it might sound, gender mainstreaming has actually produced the effect of depoliticizing the topic since it operates as a mask hiding "the element of power relations so essential to the original feminist understanding of the term". In practical terms, because gender mainstreaming does not recognize the "need for gender-specific activities", it has also undermined the "resources devoted to programs and projects explicitly addressing women's disadvantage" (Smyth, 2010, p. 148). Alleviating the damage produced by the gender mainstreaming talk, defends Smyth, would require a recovery of notions of women's rights, acknowledging that women still "face specific and substantial barriers to the enjoyment of their rights" (Smyth, 2010, p. 150).

Ian Scoones calls attention to how **sustainability** has been used as an adjective to nearly everything from cities to livelihoods. Its most frequent and acclaimed appearance, of course, is that in "sustainable development" (Scoones, 2010, p. 153). Building from mathematical ecology, the expression gained notoriety in the 1987 with the Our Common Future report which offered the famous description: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED *apud* Scoones, 2010, p. 154). According to Scoones, the expression

has come of age during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 when discussions about "climate change, biodiversity and desertification" gained the center stage (Scoones, 2010, p. 155).

Sustainable development, as many other buzzwords that "become mainstream, and incorporated into routine, bureaucratic procedures", did not live up to its original ambition. As "the lack of progress on targets set in 1992" became visible, those involved realized that transferring sustainable development from theory to practice was unfeasible, especially due to "the lack of capacity and commitment within governments and international organizations to make the ideals of sustainability real in day-to-day practice". Politics has sent sustainable development to a downfall (Scoones, 2010, p. 158), something that could be very well perceived in the Rio +10, held in 2022, as the movement was "more muted, more fractured, and perhaps a bit more realistic" (Scoones, 2010, p. 159). Scoones conclusion on sustainable development is quite speculative as he questions if the expression will ever experience a big come back. The fact that we are now in the age of the Sustainable Development Goals responds this question.

Peter Uvin explores the **right to development** from its origins in 1972 when it was proposed by Senegalese jurist M'Baye amidst intense debate surrounding the New International Economic Order (NIEO). The idea offered "legal and ethical authority to the Third World's request for the international redistribution of resources" as much as it "acted as a counterargument against rich countries' exclusive insistence on political and civil human rights". The right to development was first officialized in 1986 as a UN General Assembly resolution. In Uvin's words, "not a treaty, and thus without binding force" (Uvin, 2010, p. 164). In 1993, it was re-adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights that culminated in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, which Uvin describes as "vague, internally contradictory, duplicating other already codified rights, and devoid of identifiable parties bearing clear obligations" (Uvin, 2010, p. 165).

In sum, the movement produced some sort of "sleight-of-hand" (Uvin, 2010, p. 166) since it legitimized pro-development organizations such as The Word Bank, who began to pledge that it was "turn[ing] rights into reality for millions". Uniting human rights and development gave them a "high moral ground safely established" (Uvin, 2010, p. 165) and the ability to sell the idea that promoting development is

the way to promote economic, social and cultural rights as well. This movement, says Uvin, is a slippery slope for those questioning the status quo, since it reifies the quest for development (Uvin, 2010, 166). According to Uvin, "policies that were once justified by their potential to improve investor confidence are now justified for their human-rights potential" (Uvin, 2010, p. 167).

Neera Chandhoke tells us that the concept of **civil society** has arisen from two main political contexts: "in Stalinist states in Eastern and Central Europe, which had denied their citizens' basic rights, and in Latin America, where military regimes had managed to survive by employment of the same methods". In both, it carried a subversive touch: it has been the engine behind numerous "peaceful and non-violent" protests (Chandhoke, 2010, p. 175). As a child of circumstances in which people were "disenchanted with overbearing states", the importance of civil society was heavily built around the belief that "state power has to be monitored, engaged with, and rendered accountable through intentional and engaged citizen action" (Chandhoke, 2010, p. 176).

Civil society, says Chandhoke, "has been flattened out" as neoliberal practices instituted in the Washington Consensus implemented the idea of a "third sector" mainly represented by NGOs, with whom the state should "share its functions" (Chandhoke, 2010, p. 176). This movement has cooled down the tones of contestation that once populated the idea of civil society. In this new shape, civil society, or the "third sector" became "an area of solidarity, self-help, and goodwill", a depoliticization that can be attributed to the fact that NGOs in the South have been massively funded by governments in developed nations, generally bypassing the authority of governments in the third world (Chandhoke, 2010, p. 176, p. 177). According to Chandhoke, civil society in the South has been profoundly instrumentalized to serve the interests of the West. As the heavy funding directed to NGOs in the South worked as much as an advocacy for liberal democracy as a containment of socialism (Chandhoke, 2010, p. 176, p. 180). From the author's point-of-view, even though the third sector has been designed as an alternative force to the state and the market, a great part of it has been played by developed states as another kind of business.

John Samuel's approach to *public advocacy* and **people-centered advocacy** relies on a slight difference. The former, he says, "is a set of deliberate actions designed to influence public policies or public attitudes in order to empower the

marginalized". Even though, the latter is imbued with the same purpose, it takes places through actions (or tools, or means) that also "empower people, particularly the marginalized" (Samuel, 2010, p. 186). In this sense, we can understand that characterizing advocacy as "people-centered" depends not only on the achieved results, but also on the implemented processes. In other words, "people are the alpha and omega". People-centered advocacy depends quite profoundly on awareness and "communication", i.e., it is not only about guaranteeing that people have access to rights, but making it possible for them to realize that they should have access to these rights (Samuel, 2010, p. 188). As told by Samuel, the last part of this equation seems to be the harder to solve.

Even though we have been surrounded by "communication strategies on issues such as human rights, women's rights, development, and ecology", there is still great doubt on how effective these strategies really are "in terms of bringing about attitudinal change" (Samuel, 2010, p. 188) especially because they tend "to treat people as 'targets' and 'objects' that can be influenced or acted upon". The kind of communication established in the development era is "dehumanized" and, therefore, "unlikely to change people's attitudes". Samuel claims for "socially mediated communication methods" that "are rather slower and best suited for narrow-cast or community-based communication" and take place in a "creative and humanizing community-based process" (Samuel, 2010, p. 190), i.e., participation. This process, he believes, cannot be achieved through the dynamics imposed by the "highly paid experts [in development] travelling around with [their] ready-made toolkits and frameworks for prescribing the best communication medicine". People-centered advocacy can only flourish when those involved learn and embrace people's "language, symbols, and ethos" (Samuel, 2010, p. 192).

Islah Jad paints a portrait of the burgeoning of **NGOs** emphasizing two main events: first, "the weakening of ideological political parties" and, second, "the retreat of the state from providing social entitlements and services". Both, she defends, have been originated from "neo-liberal reforms" that have been "imposed on most Third World countries by the World Bank and the IMF" (Jad, 2010, p. 193) – a line of reasoning quite similar to that used by Chandhoke in her analysis of civil society. NGOs seem to be the result of an artificial force, i.e., the "creation of civil society by external intervention" (Sampson *apud* Jad, 2010, p. 193). As such, they

have not helped to strengthen, but to demobilize social movements (Jad, 2010, p. 193).

Observing the "NGOization of Palestinian social movements", especially those directed to women, the author concludes that this kind of organization are usually "regarded as donor driven, reflecting a Western agenda and representing elite women". In sum, they are seen as "reproducing rather than seeking to transform patriarchal and kin-based social structures" (Jad, 2010, p. 194).

> Not only may NGOs serve to reinforce the less 'participatory' elements of existing social and political culture, but NGOization itself has cultural dimensions, spreading values that favor dependency, lack of self-reliance, and new modes of consumption. In Palestinian newspaper advertisements, it is common to read about collective community actions organized by groups of youth, such as cleaning the streets, planting trees, painting walls, and so on, followed by a little icon indicating the name of the donor who funded these projects. It is also noticeable that many NGO activities are held in fancy hotels, serving fancy food, distributing glossy materials, hiring 'presentable' young people to help to organize the event or the activity. This phenomenon has led to the gradual disappearance of the traditional image of the casual activist with a peasant accent and appearance (Jad, 2010, p. 194).

Another effect of NGOization was the "transformation of a cause for social change into a project with a plan, timetable, and fixed budget". This has been accompanied by the necessity to demonstrate success in order to keep the financial support of donors (Jad, 2010, p. 194, p. 198). This "project logic", says Jad, favors "upward vertical participation and not downward horizontal participation" that leads to the "concentration of power in the hands of administrators or technocrats" (Jad, 2010, p. 194, p. 200).

Deborah Eade departs from her almost 30 years of work experience in development NGOs to build an exploration of the idea of **capacity building**, which she considers as "no more than a serious-sounding alternative to 'training'". According to Eade, the roots of capacity building can be found in the Liberation Theology and Paulo Freire's work but also in "Amartya K. Sen's work on entitlements and capabilities" (Eade, 2010, p. 205). Under the pressure promoted by international financial institutions such as The World Bank, capacity building turned out to be "commonly used to further a neo-liberal 'pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps' kind of economic and political agenda" (Eade, 2010, p. 206).

An important note made by Eade tries to identify what is the kind of capacity that NGOs intend to build. As she says, they may be "intellectual, organizational, social, political, cultural, representational, material, technical, practical, or financial – and most likely a shifting combination of all of these" (Eade, 2010, p. 206). In sum, the whole purpose behind capacity building is profoundly attached to the now obnoxious idea that "if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day, and if you teach him to fish, you feed him for a lifetime" (Eade, 2010, p. 208). Eade's main critique seems to be the pretentious attitude of NGOs that assume that they can teach something that would enhance life conditions in a certain area when they are not usually open to learn from the local context and its specificities. She claims that, at the bare minimum, the activity lacks "self-awareness, self-criticism, and a degree of modesty" (Eade, 2010, p. 209).

Rosalind Eyben describes *harmonization* as a tentative made by donors to have "common programs and procedures, so that the recipient need communicate with only one single set of financing agencies" (Eyben, 2010, p. 215), which helps to reduce "transaction costs for the recipient organizations" (Eyben, 2010, p. 217). The author reminds us of the crucial role played by harmonization in "highly aid-dependent countries". In Mozambique, for instance, "50 per cent of the public capital-expenditure budget is donor-financed, and there are 49 official donors" (Eyben, 2010, p. 215).

As many other practices in the development industry, harmonization favors the power of donors as they unite in a sort of "cartel or monopolistic supplier". Eyden mentions pre-meetings in which donors make agreements first on their interests and expectations towards recipients. The author describes this as "competition" amongst recipients and "co-operation" amongst donors (Eyben, 2010, p. 221). Another problem identified by Eyden is that harmonization usually depends on the belief that "poverty reduction is achieved through broad-based consensus, whereby everyone in a recipient country can agree to a national poverty strategy behind which donors can line up" (Eyben, 2010, p. 218).

Willem H. Buiter argues that *country ownership* is an expression frequently abused in the development industry. Its sole purpose is demonstrating that developing countries are active parts in the programs conducted by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF or the World Bank. However, in Buiter's point of view, the only property owned by these countries are the

conditionalities imposed by IFIs (Buiter, 2010, p. 223). According to him, the concept of country ownership is usually brought up in a range of sentences that go from "the country has designed and drafted the program" to its "weaker siblings" such as "the country has had a significant involvement in the drafting and design of the program" (Buiter, 2010, p. 224).

The main critique made by Buiter has to do with the fact that the word "country" is used to refer to "a single purposefully acting agent" reflecting a sort of racial, ethnic, cultural and religious homogeneity and undermining the "conflicting views and interests" (Buiter, 2010, p. 224). In reality, says the author, the effort of "putting together a consultative process" is quite rare, which favors the interests of "unrepresentative and often repressive governments" (Buiter, 2010, p. 225). Curiously, Buiter's argument seems to stand in the opposite side from those of Chandhoke and Jad. Respectively commenting on civil society and NGOs, the authors argue that development programs undermine the state vis-à-vis the third sector, composed by organizations that promote the interests of donor countries. Buiter, on the other hand, speaks of a "weak, corrupt" public administration that does not allow "a representative cross-section of civil society to participate". In his words, "civil society tends to be weakest precisely in those countries where it is most needed" (Buiter, 2010, p. 226).

Warren Feek examines (in a very concise chapter) the idea of **best practice** in total disbelief. Besides questioning the arrogance of those who consider themselves capable of defining what is best in development practices, the author also points out the counterproductivity of the expression considering that each program encounters "different contexts, with different purposes, different population groups, and significantly different opportunities, involving challenges within widely varying cultural, political, and resource environments". The notion of best practice, he attests, undermines the importance of diversity and disempowers local actors in the task of recognizing what would work or not in their contexts (Feek, 2010, p. 232).

Tobias Denskus reviews **peacebuilding** attesting already in the title that it "does not build peace". According to him, the concept has appeared in the post-Cold War as a new manner found by the international community of "delivering" development when several violent conflicts "were on the rise" (Denskus, 2010, p. 235). The movement has originated a whole industry of "consultants, experts and

practitioners" that steered the wheel of the field towards quantitative methods and methodologies – already quite prominent and respected in the development industry – as tools to "legitimize interventions by aid organizations". One of the main problems caused by the implementation of quantitative research in the field were the "inevitable generalizations" that "erase the particularity of places and experiences" (Denskus, 2010, p. 236) and the dissemination of "managerial tools" that depoliticize the nature of violent conflicts (Denskus, 2010, p. 237).

Denskus envisions peacebuilding as a sort of development in disguise, which he illustrates with the cases of Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala. According to him, all of these had failed peacebuilding programs

> [...] because although the 'root causes' of the conflict are known (including land distribution, income inequality, and a small powerful elite running the country), the engagement of the international community, especially of the international financial institutions (IFIs), showed that imposing short-sighted liberal governance frameworks helped to stabilize existing elite structures (Denskus, 2010, p. 238).

In his interpretation, it "could never carry transformative potential" since it "often became a cover for familiar development interventions". In sum, peacebuilding has been instrumentalized in order to open up some space for "(neo)liberal democracy" even amidst conflict (Denskus, 2010, p. 238).

Jonathan Fox tells us that **transparency** and **accountability** have been dominating great part of the advocacy made by civil society, a movement especially advanced by a desire that these concepts will "empower efforts to change the behavior of powerful institutions by holding them accountable in the glare of the public eye" (Fox, 2010, p. 245). Even though the concepts can be considered highly "malleable" and can be stretched into convenient ways, they have both acquired the stamp of features of "good governance" (Fox, 2010, p. 246). One of the problems identified by Fox stands on the fact that transparency and accountability can also be used as tools of control: "one person's transparency is another's surveillance. One person's accountability is another's persecution" (Fox, 2010, p. 245). An example of that could be the "conditional cash-transfer social programs, in which states closely monitor family behavior, or the lack of guaranteed ballot secrecy, which leads voters to suspect that authorities will learn how they voted" (Fox, 2010, p. 248).

His main argument, however, surrounds the idea that not all transparency leads to accountability. Being transparent has to do with offering information. Being accountable has to do with the ability to "sanction or compensate" (Fox, 2010, p. 251). Fox defends that not every "transparency initiatives manage to influence the behavior of powerful institutions". That means that even though they have the required information, they still do not have the power to affect the structure (Fox, 2010, p. 248).

Elizabeth Harrison discusses **corruption** and the morality that surrounds its debate. Differently from "social protection, harmonization, country ownership", all buzzwords used to "describe fashionable ways of getting development done", corruption usually shows up at this scene as a killjoy (Harrison, 2010, p. 257). The "anti-corruption crusade", says the author, has been especially led by the World Bank since 1996 when its president, James Wolfensohn, talked of "the cancer of corruption" (Harrison, 2010, p. 258). The obsession with corruption has been translated into the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) that "not surprisingly" has Scandinavian countries as the less corrupt and developing "particularly African countries" as the more corrupt in the world. The CPI, says Harrison, is quite attractive for donors "seeking to justify anti-corruption efforts" (Harrison, 2010, p. 259).

It is interesting to notice that the index does not measure corruption in itself, but the perception of it, which "may in fact bear little relationship to its incidence". According to the author, the perception of corruption increases as developing countries internalize values related to "bureaucratic practices" transplanted by development programs (Harrison, 2010, p. 260). Corruption, Harrison believes, "is a word with distinctly Western origins. The ways in which it is used in different, especially non-Western, contexts will reflect a complicated mixture of interpretation, moral judgement, and opportunism" (Harrison, 2010, p. 262). Her proposition is not that of ignoring how corruption can hurt people, but actually bearing in mind that the anti-corruption discourse has also been instrumentalized as a valid reason for implementing a neo-liberal agenda in the South.

Thandika Mkandawire considers **good governance** one of the most important buzzwords of development. Her exploration of the concept brings about two usually forgotten facts: first, it was originated from African thought, more specifically

through the contributions of Claude Ake, Nakhtar Diouf, and Ali Mazrui to the World Bank's 1989 report; second, it now "diverges significantly" from the original meaning" (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 265).

> The general understanding within African intellectual circles then was that the main challenge of development was the establishment of state–society relations that are (a) developmental, in the sense that they allow the management of the economy in a manner that maximizes economic growth, induces structural change, and uses all available resources in a responsible and sustainable manner in highly competitive global conditions; (b) democratic and respectful of citizens' rights; and (c) socially inclusive, providing all citizens with a decent living and full participation in national affairs. Good governance should therefore be judged by how well it sustains this triad (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 266).

The idea was not very well received by the World Bank and the IMF as they felt that "the focus on politics was distracting attention from the task of 'getting the macroeconomic fundamentals right'. The rejection of good governance by that time can also be attributed to the fact that it undermined the role played by the World Bank since it argued for "the importance of local initiatives, political accountability to the citizens, and the need to reconcile African traditions and institutions with 'modern' ones", which "were not exactly the types of thing the World Bank could relate to in a quantifiable and operational manner" (Mkandawire, 2010, p. 266).

In the 2000s, the policies implemented in African countries (suggested or required by the IMF and the World Bank) were not achieving the expected results. As the highly defended neo-liberal recipe was showing signs of failure, it was necessary to find something to blame. The answer, says Mkandawire, "was 'institutional weakness' or 'bad governance'". In this movement, good governance left behind democratic and social values to become a simple tool for implementing "adjustment programs" (Mkandawire, 2010, 267).

Robin Luckham argues that even though the connection between **security** and development is very frequently discussed in the field, it is quite recent – with its first mentions dating from the early 1980s. The topic has been avoided as it was considered as "too political". It was only after the Cold War that security became a "development problem" (Luckham, 2010, p. 269). One of the most important aspects of this is that "security is a contested concept, with multiple layers of history and meaning, containing dark corners in which demons hide". And perhaps, one of the most important implications of this securitization of development is the power play going on below the surface. As the author reminds us, security has been,

especially since the establishment of the modern state, "a discourse of the powerful, even more than of the insecure and weak" (Luckham, 2010, p. 270).

Securitization usually promotes the "hard" agenda of security in detriment of the "soft" ones. Throughout the years, we have seen how "development problems, like extreme poverty, population displacement, or bad governance" have been "labelled as security threats". Because they acquire a sort of "crisis status", they seem like the perfect opportunity for the military action of powerful states to intervene in the South. Nevertheless, in order to be fair, we should recognize that this agenda brought about great effort in the sense of redefining and exploring the meaning of security, which "has in turn inspired a number of alternative conceptualizations of security, challenging state-centered paradigms, and beginning to re-center security around the safety and welfare of citizens and human beings" (Luckham, 2010, p. 273).

Eghosa E. Osaghae believes that **fragile states** attract a lot of attention because they subvert the Western ideal of the "powerful and overarching entity" that is the state. The concept, he says, "has gained currency in development discourses since the 1990s" as is used to refer to states that "generally lack the capacity to discharge the functions traditionally associated with them and to drive forward development" (Osaghae, 2010, p. 281) and that have in other contexts been called "weak, soft, overdeveloped, illegitimate, poor, irrelevant, de-rooted, rogue, collapsed, and failed, each description attempting to capture one or a few problematic elements" (Osaghae, 2010, p. 282). Fragile states, says Osaghae, invoke the need to be acted upon as they are considered a threat to their neighbors and the international community as a whole, mainly "through refugee flows and proliferation of small arms" (Osaghae, 2010, p. 283).

Osaghae explains that there is a remarkable recognition of colonialism as a promoter of state fragility. The colonial state was highly detached from the "indigenous or native society", it operated mainly with "violence and repression" and a means to exploit and extract from the local population in the benefit of colonizers. The state was an "alien" entity threatened by an "endemic legitimacy crisis" (Osaghae, 2010, p. 286).

Even though state fragility is usually envisioned as a result of "mal-governance", poverty and violence, the author calls attention to the fact that it can also be used as a "political instrument employed by the power holding elite" that

seeks to reproduce colonial logics of domination – something that state fragility programs tend to ignore (Osaghae, 2010, p. 283). Not rarely these countries turn into "sites of popular struggles by coalitions of citizens and civil society" trying to own the state in order "to make it an effective manager of development". The author main critique is that these internal struggles cannot be simply remedied or vanished by the IFIs' programs – mostly worried about bringing these states back into a "hegemonic global order" (Osaghae, 2010, p. 281). These programs, says Osaghae, produce a "disconnection between the evaluation of the World Bank/IMF and donors and that of the citizens and local coalitions" about what it really means to be fragile (Osaghae, 2010, 288).

Robin Broad explains that **knowledge management** has been popularized in the field of the development in the reformation of the World Bank from a lending bank to a knowledge bank. Around the 1990s, the institution "needed a clearer mission to keep it center-stage" mainly because "its central role as a lender was waning" since the "heyday of the debt crisis was over" and developing countries could get loans from commercial banks again. "Being a provider of 'aid' or 'development assistance' via project loans or even policy-based lending", says Broad, "was not going to be enough to ensure that the World Bank would remain the powerful player that it had become". The World Bank then assumed the task of producing and distributing i.e., managing knowledge on development (Broad, 2010, p. 294).

According to Broad, the World Bank became indeed the "largest development research body" in the world being also consulted by policy makers, scholars and even "other bilateral aid agencies and other multilateral development banks, which often follow the course laid out by the Bank". This knowledge monopoly comes with serious implications such as the fact that the World Bank "succeeds at controlling the definition of development 'knowledge' and at managing its distribution and projection to suit the Bank's purposes". Even though the Bank defends its research projects as "rigorous and objective", their results invariably privilege "knowledge producers and knowledge that 'resonate' with the neo-liberal globalization ideology (Broad, 2010, p. 295).

This privilege may come in the shape of promotions. Scandalously, researchers who produce materials pointing to *the right direction* have more successful careers in the institution. And, if otherwise, data and research ended up

not supporting a "neo-liberal hypothesis", the Bank solve the problem by crafting and manipulating "the executive summaries and press releases of reports" to say something different from the original conclusions offered by the researchers in their reports (Broad, 2010, p. 298). According to Broad, "the Bank seems to understand and play to the fact that most people, including most journalists, will read only the press release and summary" (Broad, 2010, p. 299).