

# FROM SCIENCE AS 'DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE' TO 'GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY'

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Hebe Vessuri

# A Science for Development

- From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards science as development assistance compounded with philanthropy was embraced by western powers as the royal road leading to the growth of non-western country capacities.
- In the waning of the colonial era in the 1930s and 1940s, the idea of development had actively engaged the attention of leaders of both imperial metropolis and colonial outposts. In the interwar period imperial markets were seen as important sources of replenishment for the metropolitan economies depleted by the WW1.

# From International to Global Governance in Development

- In the decades following WW2, a dizzying array of international organizations connected to development were founded or revamped, including the WB, IMF, UNICEF, FAO and UNDP, numerous NGO), humanitarian and advocacy movements, research institutes, private foundations, business groups, and so on.
- As part of this complex and variegated setup, many people from LDCs studied economics, development and applied science in universities of Europe and the U.S. and were hired by governmental and non-governmental organizations in their home countries, trying to apply the organizational “blueprints” defined in the North.

# The evolution of Philanthrocapitalism

- Business models have proliferated in the development field.
- In models of corporate philanthropy **social responsibility** appears as a sort of add-on.
- Companies operate “normally” in pursuit of profit, and once profit has been generated, a percentage of the gains is then reinvested in charitable causes, for example, in the communities the Northern consumers live in or indeed in poverty-reducing projects in the Global South.

## Two examples: Rockefeller and Gates

- The Rockefeller and Gates Foundations are two remarkable examples of the nature of philanthropy in the contemporary world and their role in accompanying, supporting and/or confronting the nation-states to which they belong.
- Both have focused their actions on generating and applying new knowledge.
- The former appeared when the international field of science assistance for development in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was still in gestation; the latter in a very different setup of neoliberal globalization and fading hegemony of the U.S.

# The RF

- The RF was probably the major influence upon international health's 20th century agenda, approaches, and actions.
- The League of Nations' Health Organisation, founded after WWI, was partially modeled on the RF's International Health Division, active since the early days of the RF in 1913, and shared many of its values, experts, and know-how in disease control, institution-building, and educational and research work, even as it challenged the RF's narrow, medicalized understandings of health.
- With the creation of the WHO in 1948, the IHD was subsumed into the larger RF in 1951, discontinuing its overseas work.

# The new business philanthropy

- The current infusion of profit making in philanthropic ventures has reached entirely new dimensions.
- The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) efforts appear to be emblematic of an overall trend towards for-profit style management, leadership training, and goal setting in global development and health, as well as the privatizing of public activities.
- PPPs have been among the key levers of BMGF influence through a global health funding and operations modality enabled by the massive entry of private capital into the health and development arena at the end of the Cold War.

# The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

- Today the BMGF is by far the largest philanthropic organization involved in global health.
- Its primary aim in this area is “harnessing advances in science and technology to reduce health inequities” through the innovation and application of health technologies, encompassing both treatment (via diagnostic tools and drug development partnerships) and prevention (through, for example, vaccines and microbicides).



# The broad adoption of the model

- Other donors, including the Canadian and South African governments, are adopting the Grand Challenges approach, originally launched by the BMGF in 2004 to accelerate the pace of research (*The Grand Challenges in Global Health initiative aimed to catalyze scientific and technological innovation to achieve major breakthroughs in global health*).
- In 2014 a consortium of partners including Brazil, Canada, India, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States decided to fund a new phase of Grand Challenge initiatives, around three main actions: infant health, gender inequality and new scientific and technical interventions for global health.
- The BMGF is central to this effort.
- Obviously, the importance of public scrutiny grows.

# Blurring the boundaries between public and private

- The need for philanthropy to become more like the for-profit capital markets is a common theme among the new philanthropists, especially those who have made their fortune in finance.
- However, whether their promotion of capitalist approaches as superior to the public sector in regulating and delivering services is correct or not does not seem substantiated.
- In the global health arena of more recent decades, there has been a full-fledged assault on public spending and infrastructure on the part of international financial institutions' conditionalities and structural adjustment programs of the 1980s and 1990s, not to mention the wave of predatory private bank lending, unfair trade practices, and hegemonic leverage over the WTO by powerful countries.

# Tapping knowledge globally: the new markets for policies

- Since the 1970s there has been an explosive growth of 'policy intermediation' institutions (such as **think tanks**, policy networks and centres, reform advocates and consultants), whose *modus operandi* is defined in terms of the generation, circulation and implantation of potentially agenda-shifting ideas models and strategies.
- A basic ingredient of development assistance today can be broadly described as the 'importation' of 'innovative policies developed elsewhere' by the national elites, and the imposition of policies by multilateral agencies, and/or processes of structural convergence.

# Think-tanks and consultants

- It is all part of a broader set of processes that include new modes of philanthropy and assistance for scientific development and education, the market processes of capital growth and expansion, and the search by business of new opportunities for profit.
- The modalities of research internationalization that led to new forms of collaboration in North America and the European Union fostered the creation of international research networks, and a new wave of internationalization of higher education.

# Intellectual authority and vested interests

- **In the new institutional set-up, think- tanks together with consultants and educational firms, deliver policy assistance (for a potential profit) developing local policy infrastructures, instilling the discourses of prevalent western policy directly or as spillovers in the local policy systems.**
- They often have specific and effective points of entry in the political systems nested as they are in networks of relationships.
- Their authority and legitimacy are not natural but are cultivated through management practices and intellectual activity.
- The ‘aura’ of intellectual authority and independence may be misleading for ideas are often harnessed to political and economic interests.

# How transnational philanthropy works

- An understanding of how transnational philanthropy works in the interstices of state-private networks, both as quasi-market and quasi-state, is critical in understanding how it is related to geopolitical projects.
- The collaboration between state and private agencies increased through joint-supported institutes and researches.
- But there are differences.
- In the past profit-making in connection with the public sphere was denounced for being self-serving and a violation of the principle of separation of public and private interests that should be avoided as problematic and unethical.
- Today it is viewed by private capital—and rationalized by a disquietingly quiet public—as a desirable outcome that ought to be encouraged.

# By way of conclusion

- As the world globalizes and becomes more integrated more opportunities emerge for collective action.
- There is a whole series of global public goods, such as world peace, global health, the protection of environment, global knowledge. If the global community does not provide them collectively, it is likely that they will be insufficient.
- While the existence of an adequate balance between private and public sectors continues to be unsolved, the provision of some system for funding public goods is obviously required.
- The contemporary large philanthropic foundations concentrate an important portion of the wealth of the world that might be devoted to global public goods.

# By way of conclusion

- In their rhetoric business philanthropies are devoted to them, and in fact they could set in motion huge resources, spread more advanced technology and increase human wellbeing in an exponential way.
- However, the tenet that such business models can solve social problems—and are superior to redistributive, collectively deliberate policies and actions employed by elected governments remains unconvincing.
- This presentation reflects my judgments and values.
- I have tried to present some of the streams of the debate under way and I remain sceptical about the validity of the general statements made about the true role of philanthrocapitalism.