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Date **11 May 2015**

Subject **The Great Public Debate Resolved (partially)**

Simply forming an opinion is a far less exhausting process than absorbing the knowledge required to defend one. Often times we resort to anecdotal evidence, in some cases, we go as far as to reject new information that contradicts our preferred narrative. Nowhere is this more visible than in the current public debate surrounding the unequal nature of our society. The debate attracts heated responses from all segments of society; the stakes are high for everybody. Each and every one of us approaches the debate with an inherent bias derived from our own financial situation. Many of the world's elites firmly believe that taxing "job creators" will reduce the incentive to invest and innovate. Others will say that investment in education financed by taxing the rich will increase social mobility, thereby reducing inequality in the long run. Until recently, we lacked the comprehensive historical analysis needed to advance the discussion.

Capital in the 21st Century is renowned economist Thomas Piketty's attempt to provide just that. Using the most comprehensive data set to date, Piketty compiled a detailed history of inequality, its driving forces, and of the public's perceptions towards its effects. Perhaps one of the core lessons policy makers can take from this work is an appreciation for the utility of data. Piketty readily admits that the available data, in particular for developing regions, is riddled with gaps and inconsistencies. The vast insight provided by the (limited) available data is a strong argument in favor of increased collection and dissemination. It can be difficult to plan for the future when one doesn't understand the past.

With detail comes length, and this piece is no different. At times it felt unnecessarily repetitive, which only contributed to an already exhausting read. This is unfortunate as the public debate could benefit greatly from the wealth of information contained in the novel. It's not very realistic to assume that the average citizen will take interest, let alone read it. It is possible that future economists and activists will find inspiration in Piketty's work, leading the creation of a wealth of resources catering to all knowledge and attention levels. Until then, Capital in the 21st Century will remain a must read for all those interested in social equality and global development.