

THESIS – AS PART FULFILMENT OF  
MASTERS IN APPLIED ETHICS – ERASMUS MUNDUS

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# **The Capability Approach, Poverty and Development**

A thesis by

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## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The credit for completing this thesis and the programme goes to:

- The Erasmus Mundus Masters Applied Ethics Consortium
- Dr. M. Verweij
- Dr. M. Van den Hoven
- Prof. M. Duwell
- Dr. B Bovenkerk
- Dr. I. Bolt
- Dr. L. Ursin
- Dr. R. Nydal
- Dr/ S G. Carson
- Dr. M. Thorseth
- Prof. G. Collste
- Prof. J J M. Van Delden
- R. Bernabe
- T. Rosier
- F. van Asperren
- D. Breslau
- Oust
- J. MacDougall
- M. Espinoza
- Nadezhkina
- Vander Zande
- All the staff of the three universities
- All the students in the programme
- To my family, friends and acquaintances for always enduring
- To all those who have laid down all the knowledge before us
- To the next generation of young people all over the world

SPECIAL THANKS TO **YOU** FOR YOUR PATIENCE & SUPPORT

I WOULD NOT HAVE COMPLETED THIS PROGRAMME WITHOUT **YOU**

In thanking all of the above and those I have not mentioned, I thank the Almighty for His Grace on them and on me. May the knowledge we gain be beneficial for the *lives we value*.

This thesis, minus its imperfections, is dedicated to all the people with good will for  
Surviving another day.

CONTENTS

	Page#
List of Abbreviations	6
<u>GENERAL INTRODUCTION</u>	7
<u>CHAPTER 1</u>	
Understanding the Capability Approach (CA)	12
<u>CHAPTER 2</u>	
The CA's Development Framework	25
<u>CHAPTER 3</u>	
Critical Examination of CA	33
<u>CHAPTER 4</u>	
The Resourcist Approach	42
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	49
References	51
Selected Bibliography	53

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **DFID:** The United Kingdom's Department for International Development
- **MDG:** Millennium Development Goals
- **GBS:** General Budget Support
- **PRSP:** Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
- **DBS:** Direct Budget Support
- **CBS:** Capacity Building Strategies
- **CA:** The Capability Approach
- **RA:** The Resourcist Approach
- **HDI:** Human Development Index
- **MPI:** Multidimensional Poverty Index
- **NGO:** Non-governmental Organisation

## **General Introduction**

### **The Context**

In 2011, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) published its technical report on its bilateral aid review. The report mentioned a number of recipient countries that DFID supports to help alleviate poverty. To give a concrete example, the DFID earmarked £94<sup>1</sup> million per year for poverty reduction in Ghana. However, this DFID involvement is not an isolated case; in fact, it is part of a raft of strategies and initiatives which have also seen the disbursement of \$368.90 million in 2005 to Ghana under the General Budget Support<sup>2</sup> scheme. The aim of Budget Support mechanism is to support poor countries' pursuit of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), on the basis that "key economic policy decisions and development assistance activities take place at the level of individual sovereign states. Virtually the entire development assistance process—including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, donor-country negotiations, and debt relief—is designed at country level."<sup>3</sup>

In this development assistance scheme, poor countries are required to assume leadership. They are supposed to define their own priorities and to take ownership through what is called Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). It is within this mechanism that certain instruments such as Direct Budget Support (DBS) find their relevance. This instrument enables poor countries to generate their own budget and donor countries to contribute funds to support the financial management systems and strategies as devised by the former. In the case of Ghana, DBS constitutes 25% of total aid<sup>4</sup> provided. Other aid instruments are used to provide assistance to Ghana, however in the DFID's view: "Poverty Reduction Budget Support (PRBS) (also known as Direct Budget Support) is the aid instrument most likely to support a relationship between donor and developing country partners which will help to build the accountability and capability of the state."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Bilateral Aid Review: Technical Report"; DFID, 2011

<sup>2</sup>Knoll, M., "Budget Support: A Reformed Approach or Old Wines in New Skins" – Policy Discussion Paper non 190, UNCTAD, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Millennium Project Report to the UN-Secretary General; UNDP, 2005

<sup>4</sup> 'Budget Support to Ghana: A Risk Worth Taking?' - Briefing Paper 24, ODI report; 2007

<sup>5</sup> "Poverty Reduction Budget Support – A DFID Policy Paper"; DFID, May 2004

DBS is part of the new approach in development assistance. According to Killick (2005): “The dominant form of financial assistance in the earlier years of British aid was to finance discrete development projects, to which was commonly linked the provision of technical assistance.”<sup>6</sup> The new emphasis on instruments such as DBS is based on the idea of capacity building for development, a rethink of development approach that stresses the poor country’s ‘commitment and autonomy’<sup>7</sup>. The DFID’s development assistance to Ghana, by means of DBS, is thus premised on the idea that by supporting the budget produced by the Ghanaian Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, it would be: “strengthening the capacity of these organisations to define policy objectives, reach policy decisions, design policy instruments and implement them effectively.”<sup>8</sup>

## The Issues

Poverty and underdevelopment are two major global issues. Developmental assistance and the aid mechanism are seen as a means of addressing these issues. The shift from *financing discrete projects*<sup>9</sup> to DBS is essentially centred on questions of effectiveness and autonomy. Capacity building, in this context, is seen as an adequate approach to ensuring effectiveness and respecting autonomy. This approach, it is thought, would leave the recipient country to develop its own policies. Deploying DBS is seen as respecting autonomy and allowing the poor country to assume responsibility for its development, which, as a strategy, would be more effective in reducing poverty. In the case of Ghana, the use of DBS, whether from bilateral or multilateral sources, allows the local government the freedom to design its own developmental agenda and priorities. The imperative for tackling poverty and underdevelopment is seen as an obligation which is best fulfilled by the country itself on account of its autonomy. In this scheme, the underlying principle is this: respecting the autonomy of poor countries to decide for themselves heightens the probability for effectiveness of poverty reduction strategies. It is my view, however, that respecting autonomy is not a sufficient condition for poverty reduction.

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<sup>6</sup> Killick, T, “Understanding British Aid to Africa: A Historical Perspective”; *Development Policy Review*, 23(6), 2005

<sup>7</sup> DFID, “Developing Capacity? An Evaluation of DFID-Funded Technical Co-operation for Economic Management in Sub-Saharan Africa – Synthesis Report EV667”; *Oxford Policy Management*, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Henceforth, concepts and expressions are italicized to denote they are borrowed from the referenced literature



There are questions that can be raised regarding this paradigm of addressing poverty and underdevelopment. The first relates to the extent to which effectiveness of assistance is related to autonomy. Laudable as the idea of autonomy may be, the second question concerns the extent to which a poor country, such as Ghana, one with inadequate structures or mechanisms and afflicted by deprivations, is able to essentially develop a capacity for reducing poverty. As globalisation increasingly brings people together, it is questionable how respect of autonomy of a poverty-ridden state can be made a driving factor of development.

The discourse of development is a matter of social justice in which Capacity Building Strategy (CBS) has become an important strategy connected to respect of autonomy. In the global context, ‘sovereign’ states are seen as communities who have to assume responsibility in building capacities for poverty reduction. The premise of these strategies appears to be that poor countries and poor people are able to design their strategies to effectively reduce their poverty. Capacity building, as an emphasis on autonomy, “is not something which can be maintained from outside communities, or sought after in top-down initiatives. Governments must be prepared to cede power and to create the political space for communities to take greater control of their own empowerment”<sup>10</sup> The problem, however, is whether creating *space* can avoid a paternalistic approach.

Because “Community capacity building can make an important contribution to community well-being”<sup>11</sup>, the approach adopted by the DFID through Direct Budget Support (DBS) and based on the notion of capacity building might be seen as a *ceding of power* to the recipient country or community. However, considering that poor states may “not have the same power to convert the means at their disposal into valuable outcomes (in other words, into functionings)” and that a “political space for communities to take greater control of their own empowerment”, it is still problematic how such strategies would change their position of disadvantage. The most basic question that arises is the following: To what extent can respecting autonomy of the poor and their self-determination be reconciled with the imperative of reducing poverty?

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Community Capacity Building: Creating a Better Future Together; eds. Noya, A, Clarence, E and Craig, G.; LEED Series; OECD, 2009

DBS and capacity building strategies, in my view, are consistent with the principle of self-determination which conforms to fundamental features of the “Capability Approach”. This is the approach originally conceived by Amartya Sen. Development in his Capability Approach (CA) is based on a different conception of poverty. It adopts the *perspective of freedom* as a fundamental condition of development and, in its framework, it seems reasonable to allow poor people and countries to take responsibility and choose their own strategies according to their circumstances and values.

## **The Core Problem and the Key Question**

By advocating respect for autonomy, capacity building strategies rest on the CA’s particular conception of poverty in term of freedom. On account alone of the connection between Capacity Building Strategies (CBS) and the CA, a critical examination would be required to evaluate the extent to which this perspective on development is tenable. My focus is therefore on the development framework, particularly of the CA, in which the exercise of freedom is central to development and poverty reduction. My main concern relates specifically to the assumption that giving responsibility and choice to the poor, as a respect of autonomy, is paramount and sufficient for development and reduction of poverty.

There are other approaches to development, in particular John Rawls’ Resourcist Approach<sup>12</sup> (RA) which, in my view, emphasise different principles as critical to development. On the question of appropriate instruments or strategies for development, both the CA and the RA may, of course, overlap i.e. with no clear-cut demarcation between them; for instance, it can be argued that DBS fits in with both approaches. For the CA, DBS is consistent with respect for autonomy of the poor country; whereas for the RA, it would fulfil an essential requirement of the principle of justice. However, given the CA’s emphasis on freedom and its particular conception of poverty, it is questionable whether it can avoid the issue of paternalism which, in my view, the principle of justice addresses for the RA. I also believe there is a serious problem of circularity in the exercise of freedom insofar as the CA’s development framework requires the poor, in their autonomous capacity, to assume responsibility for poverty reduction in choosing their own model of development. It is in this regard that the thesis is directed to ask: is the CA’s development framework tenable?

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<sup>12</sup> This characterization of Rawls theory is borrowed from Thomas Pogge from his paper “Can the Capability Approach be Justified?” accessed at: <http://mora.rente.nhh.no/projects/EqualityExchange/ressurser/articles/pogge1.pdf>

The objective of this thesis is therefore to critically examine the CA with a view to determining whether it offers a strong framework for developmental work aimed at poverty reduction. My thesis is that the CA is particularly challenged by the circularity of social choice and the problem of paternalism which it can avoid only by complementing its framework with the RA's principle of justice.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will be devoted to establishing the essential features of the Capability Approach. The focus will be its conception of poverty and underdevelopment. The second chapter will explain some fundamental requirements of the CA's development framework. The third chapter will focus on the critical examination of the CA. This examination will also consider the connection between the CA and instruments of CBS. In subjecting the CA to a critical examination, the main goals are to consider the arguments for and against the CA and to firmly identify its limitations and the specific problems of the thesis. In the last chapter, there will be a brief outline of the RA and a defence of the thesis.

## Chapter 1: Understanding the Capability Approach

### Introduction

The object of the thesis being the Capability Approach (CA) and its framework for development, it is essential to explore what the CA entails and to establish how development is seen in the CA. My task in this chapter is to outline key features of the approach in a way that would allow its framework for development to be identified. The analysis is confined to Sen's theory as expounded in *Development as Freedom*<sup>13</sup>. This methodological limitation finds its justification in the fact that the essential ideas of the CA, elaborated in various articles, are contained and re-affirmed in this work. Sen presents a comprehensive view of the CA and, even though others, such as Martha Nussbaum<sup>14</sup>, have attempted to develop extended versions, it is my opinion that the cornerstone of the approach rests on the ideas of Sen. His theory provides the core underlying principles of the CA which are relevant to this thesis. In other words, the fundamental features of the CA as presented by Sen will serve as the basis for the examination of the framework as it pertains to development.

Three concepts are crucial to understanding the CA, namely *wellbeing, freedom and diversity*. Freedom is primarily seen as a person's expression of agency. This agency or freedom of the person is defined by an *interconnection* of various factors. Diversity is also significant, not only because it encompasses the complexities of interconnections, but also because it relates to the variety of ends and values that people are free to have. Both freedom and diversity play a role in determining the state and agency of the person and, as such, are connected to wellbeing. This connection of agency and wellbeing, specifically in the social context, provides the CA with a different perspective on what constitutes poverty. I will therefore present the CA's principles, in relation to poverty and underdevelopment, using the notion of wellbeing. Important concepts such as *social choice* and *democracy* will also be explained in this chapter.

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<sup>13</sup> Sen, A., "Development as Freedom"; Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> See Nussbaum, M, "Creating Capabilities: the Human Development Approach"; Belknap Press of Harvard University Press; Cambridge, 2011.

## 1.1 Wellbeing

In the CA, the various factors that affect human wellbeing can be defined in relation to the role they play in enhancing the agency of the person. Insofar as this wellbeing is characterised by the choices the person makes or can make, these factors are determined in relation to how they *constitute* human freedom as a whole. There is a relation of reciprocity whereby a person's wellbeing is determined by her being or state and the latter in turn having effect on her wellbeing. This is why the nature and constitution of a person's agency is central for the CA. The constitution and exercise of freedom, as basis of agency, is connected to wellbeing since it defines how *means* are *converted* into *ends* that the person values and chooses. This *conversion* is also a complex relation between the *constitution* of the person, as *beings* and *doings*, already attained (which Sen calls *achievements* or *functionings*) and the space for further constitution or achievements the person is *capable* of attaining for her wellbeing (which Sen calls *capabilities*). This conception of a person's wellbeing takes into account their state (which encompasses circumstantial conditions, activities they are engaged in, their values, the space they have to exercise choices and achieve their ends or goals) and the limitations in the exercise of freedom "to choose the lives they have reason to value"<sup>15</sup>, these limitations thereby becoming their *unfreedoms*. Capability is thus seen as the *ability* or *substantive freedom* a person has to make *real* choices that enhance her wellbeing.

Freedom to achieve the ends that one values is therefore considered the basis of wellbeing. That which enables the *conversion* of means into chosen ends is no more than the person's *capability*, hence the Capability Approach. If a person is poor, in one way or the other, it is because of a deprivation in her capability, the latter being determined not only by her actual *achievements* (*functionings*), but also by the *real opportunities* (*as alternative achievements*) she is able to choose in her life.

For the CA, focus on capabilities represents a *perspective of freedom* which allows various aspects of the person's freedoms and unfreedoms to be considered in the evaluation of her wellbeing. This evaluation stands in relation to her agency insofar as her state of being and the exercise of choice are determined by her achievements and values. In this respect, the CA sees the wellbeing of a person in terms of *interconnections* of her freedoms that constitute her

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<sup>15</sup> Sen, A., "Development as Freedom"; Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2000; page 63

*achievements* and *capabilities*. Society has a role in this, in that the states or activities of the person are constituted in the social environment and, as such, determine the choices she makes or can make for her wellbeing.

This perspective of freedom suggests that the suffering caused by poverty is expressed in and by a socially constituted agency. A lack or deficiency in instrumental, substantive and constitutive freedoms is an unfreedom that hinders effective agency and exercise of human freedom. It is a condition of deprivation that affects the very *being* and *doing* of the person. In this sense, removing any form of unfreedoms, in whatever dimension, will contribute to enhancing wellbeing. Whilst these freedoms (resources, institutions, states, activities, opportunities) and unfreedoms (lacks), in their various dimensions, affect the agency of a person and consequently their wellbeing, their manifestations must be located in the context of interpersonal relations of advantages and disadvantages between people, according to Sen. On this account, where the freedoms of a person are inseparable from the social context of their life, the choices she makes for her wellbeing are somehow connected to the exercise of freedom in the society she lives in. In Sen's words, "Individual freedom is quintessentially a social product, and there is a two-way relation between (1) social arrangements to expand individual freedom and (2) the use of individual freedom not only to improve the respective lives but also to make the social arrangements more appropriate and effective."<sup>16</sup>

## 1.2 Interconnections and values

Capability deprivations can occur due to a deficiency in opportunities, choices and valuations. What sort of activities people are involved in, the *lifestyles* they value i.e. being or doing, the *alternatives* available, and *opportunities* they can create, these are factors that also define people's wellbeing. The social condition of agency means that the function of valuation also determines wellbeing to the extent that there are "*realized* functionings (what a person is actually able to do or be)" and "the *capability set* of alternatives ... (her real opportunities)"<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. page 31

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. Page 75

There is also a certain level of reciprocal effect between *functionings vectors* (combinations of activities) and *capability set* (alternative combinations of functionings open for choice) mediated, not only by the exercise of freedom, but also by the values people have. In the CA, the distinction between the achieved states/activities and potentials (in the sense of what is practically open for choice) is crucial as an evaluative tool because it emphasises the relation between values and choices in the space between realized functionings and capability sets. Here, not only does Sen identify *capability sets* as *substantive freedoms*, but also places valuation (the making of values and the exercise of choice) in the constitutive process of freedom. Agency may be a cornerstone, but so are values which, in a sense, direct the use of freedoms and connect its different dimensions in the society, viz. instrumental freedoms (means), activities or states (functionings), substantial freedoms (capability sets or real opportunities that are open for choice), and ends (as exercise of choice based on valuation). Interconnection of freedoms may determine the constitution of agency, but its effect on wellbeing is directed by the values that people have.

### **1.3 Evaluating wellbeing and Poverty**

The connection between freedoms and values also implies an evaluation of the wellbeing of people that focuses on their achievements and capabilities in their own society. In concrete terms, this means only the people themselves would know what is *valuable* for their lives. In general terms, this also means taking into account *diverse* elements that are *instrumental* and *substantive* to a person's freedom. In addition, it must also take into account the *constitutive* nature of her freedom insofar as various interconnections of freedoms affect and determine her being. For instance, while her own state of health and level of education would be substantive, her conversion of any instrumental freedoms at her disposal, such as income, into *valuable good* for her wellbeing would depend on the social context of the interconnections of freedoms.

In view of the fact that the living environment and institutions would be constitutive both of the person's freedom, judging the condition of the person must consider and give *weight* to different *contingent* factors; it must also rest on their own values and judgment. By making people and freedom focal points of evaluative judgment, the CA not only expands the array

of factors affecting human agency, but advocates this *diversity* also as basis for an evaluative framework. In practice, quality of life is determined by people themselves on the basis of how freedoms are hindered or expanded by and through the exercise of freedom in their lives. In this sense, through freedom, the CA moves resource-based evaluations of poverty from mere means to capabilities and choices of individuals within the societies they live in.

By virtue of the fact that people are members of societies, the CA suggests that an objective picture of human poverty is best indicated by reflecting the multiple dimensions of freedom in the society; this is the basis of the Human Development Index' (HDI) inclusion of *long and healthy life, knowledge and decent standard of living*<sup>18</sup> and the World Bank's assessment of governance using *Voice & Accountability, Political Stability and Lack of Violence/Terrorism, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption*<sup>19</sup> as important indicators of deprivations. The broadening of *the informational base* also allows for poverty to be assessed by such instruments as Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) which "measures deficits in health, education and living standards, combining both the number of deprived people and the intensity of their deprivations"<sup>20</sup>. The idea of capability deprivations and multiple indicators of lack are supposed to place the persona and the whole society at the centre of poverty evaluation. The CA shifts the focus from one-dimensional indicators to an all-inclusive approach based on various factors constituting people's capabilities.

The exercise of freedom in the social context becomes a major catalyst in people's capabilities, conversion of resources and creation of opportunities. Yet, because of its social context and the various contingent factors, a meaningful evaluation of capability deprivations or poverty must also be considered as a *valuation* that is inseparable from both the activities of the people and the *alternatives* available to them. Unfreedoms are manifested directly and in different degrees in the lives of people, with poverty or capability deprivations represented not only in the choices they make, but also in the values they have. The condition of poverty must be aligned not only with various kinds of achievements, but also with the *real opportunities* (alternatives) available for people *to choose what they have reason to value* in their community. Thus, even though freedom is the core element in the CA's evaluation of

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<sup>18</sup> "Human Development Report 2011"

<sup>19</sup> "Worldwide Governance Indicators – Country Data Report for Ethiopia 1996-2010", World Bank Institute; report accessed at: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c72.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> "Human Development Report 2011" page 45



wellbeing, its relation to people's values, their activities and their social condition is crucial. These factors are also central in the conversion of *means* into valuable *goods* for chosen *ends*, but critically their manifestations or actualities are important indications of what is required for improving the quality of life or, which is the same, expanding freedom itself. In this perspective, poverty must stand in relation to people's achievements and the extent to which the social interconnectedness of freedoms are *converted* into real opportunities that people value.

Poverty therefore must be seen in terms of interconnectedness of freedoms and choices that hinder the wellbeing of a person. It is not enough to focus on the resources (or means) at the person's disposal to adequately determine the level of poverty. This determination is an evaluative exercise which, besides being itself subject to valuation, must have as its object all the various factors that affect the person's wellbeing. Means alone are not sufficient for the wellbeing of the person; means or resources alone are not sufficient to determine poverty, and since people are diverse and have different ends which *they have reasons to value*, the extent to which they are poor can only be established by taking into account the interplay of various types of means, the diversity of ends and those factors that mediate between the availability of means and their use for set ends.

The CA advocates a very *broad* evaluative framework that focuses on the space of human activities or as Sen calls them, *functionings*. In this regard, individuals and communities become both *actual agents* of poverty, *living subjects* of poverty and *objects* of their own chosen ends or purposes. Poverty is *capability deprivation* and is directly connected to how much a person is free in being or doing what she *has reason to value* in her society.

Ethiopia, for instance, is not poor only because it lacks resources; it is not poor because per capita income of its citizens are below a certain average; in fact, if it is poor, it is in relation to itself, the living, achievements and opportunities of Ethiopians, how, in their social arrangements, their exercise of freedom affects their wellbeing: "These considerations require a broader informational base, focusing particularly on people's capability to choose the lives they have reason to value"<sup>21</sup>. Different elements that affect human freedom and flourishing of Ethiopians must be given *weight*. Thus, for the Capability Approach, it is essential to

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid. Page 63

consider a broader *informational base* and give *weight* to the different dimensions of freedom existing in the country, namely instrumental, substantive and constitutive. This new approach must encompass the very *contingent conditions* which affect the capabilities of the people to live and exercise freedom. This, therefore, implies that only people living the Ethiopian lives would appreciate the capability deprivation they suffer. The extent of their deprivations is connected to the limitations of their freedoms in achieving what they themselves value in their own society.

The CA attempts to present a view of poverty that incorporates all factors at play in the human exercise of freedom. If a person's wellbeing is impeded or their standard of living is inadequate, the resulting suffering and its causes are not disconnected from the society and the exercise of freedom itself. The person suffers poverty insofar as her states, achievements, opportunities and values are interconnected in such a way that she is deprived of capabilities for genuine agency. The interconnectedness of these features defines her ability to convert resources and create opportunities required for her goals and her flourishing. At the same time, being a social entity, the extent to which she is able to flourish cannot be disassociated from the society's own choices. Whilst the choices are one that she contributes in making, the interconnectedness of factors that define her agency is further extended to include the choices of others and the resulting social arrangements. Consequently, the capability deprivations that she suffers are determined by her choices, achievements, opportunities and values which, together, are also constituted by the exercise of freedom in her society.

#### **1.4 Underdevelopment, Development and Ownership**

The most important aspect of the CA, in relation to poverty, is its perspective on freedom and its deployment of human agency as a social product. Such a perspective allows the CA to view poverty, through its multiple dimensions and interconnections, both as personal capability deprivations and as social disadvantages. However, to understand its conception of underdevelopment as is applied to a country, it is first essential to consider what development is.

For Sen and the CA, *development* is a process the purpose of which is to expand freedoms and remove unfreedoms. In light of the general approach to poverty as capability deprivations and social disadvantages, it makes sense for the CA to consider *Development as Freedom*. Whilst development is the process of expanding freedoms, underdevelopment would, technically, denote conditions of capability deprivations with prevalence of unfreedoms. Development would therefore be a remedy for the condition of underdevelopment.

At another level, in conceiving development as removal of unfreedoms, underdevelopment of a country can be construed as the social equivalent of personal capability deprivation. Because people are at the centre of both conditions, underdevelopment cannot be separated from prevalence of capability deprivations. In this regard, development would be a people-centred process of addressing capability deprivations. However, such is the connection between a society's underdevelopment and personal capability deprivations that what is required to address these issues is a particular exercise of freedom called *social choice* (which I will consider below).

It is worth noting, at this stage, that human *diversity* is an important factor because it invokes different circumstantial conditions, different value systems and one might add differences of *conversion* or *capabilities*. This diversity would be reflected not only in the multiple dimensions of capability deprivations, but also in the different estimations of underdevelopment. This being the case, diversity would imply different degrees and types of poverty for individuals and for societies. This would also suggest that different development models are required for different cases of underdevelopment just as different combinations of alternatives would be required by people with different capability deprivations. These characteristics also place the burden of determination on the person or society itself to make the development process meaningful. Notwithstanding these characteristics, the CA still identifies some features of development, such as social participation, social choice and democracy, as essential for a *good* process development.

## 1.5 Approach to Development

For the CA, development as a practical process would require an implementation model that is consistent with its perspective of freedom. Decision-making in the social arena would consist of evaluation of achievements in a way that involves *active social participation*. Information and decisions must necessarily be subjected to public deliberation. Even though “some capabilities are harder to measure than others, and attempts are putting them on a “metric” may sometimes hide more than they reveal”<sup>22</sup>, these challenges are superficial insofar as their concrete experience is concerned. The legitimacy and relevance of capability specifications, listings, measurements and indexing must be located in the social exercise of freedom itself. The process of development would also rest on the social participation and the *use of information*. This means that, no matter the *measurements* and *aggregations* of poverty, what is essential is the *ownership* by the people concerned. Development per se is practical only to the extent that it is initiated through people’s practical exercise of freedom. Accordingly, the CA would consider the social exercise of freedom and its attendant principles as constitutive of the process of development.

In general, the framework for development is necessarily *people-centred* and not value-neutral. For the CA, attempt to evaluate and address the issue of underdevelopment, as a manifestation of poverty, is legitimate only if it involves people concerned and *respects* autonomy. Such an approach is indicative also of a social justice theory based on people’s exercise of freedom in their choice of social arrangements consistent with their own conditions and values. By adopting this perspective on development, it stands to reason that the CA emphasises people’s *real opportunities* in doing or being what they value through social choice. *Development as Freedom*, therefore, requires a model of development that reflects people’s values and is based on their own choice.

## 1.6 Significance of Social Choice and Democracy

The social context of agency and the interconnections of various freedoms somehow justify the conception of wellbeing as a manifestation of *social choice*. However, for the CA, this

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid. Page 81

requirement of social choice is neither a pursuit of unanimity nor a ground for uniformity of values, pleasures or goods. Social choice finds its meaning both in individualities and heterogeneities. Social choice, bolstered by democratic principles, is a whole people's exercise of freedom, which recognizes injustices and determines its process of development. The process becomes an *opportunity* on which other *opportunities* can be created for people's capabilities. Social choice is seen as a social *achievement* that also constitutes and creates opportunities for people's achievements and wellbeing.

As expression of people's freedom *to choose what they have reason to value*, social choice is more than a simple *aggregation* of interests and judgments. First, social choice is seen as vital tool, constituted by democratic principles, through which the development model acquires practical significance. The active participation of individuals ensures that decisions and policies reflect their circumstantial conditions. This is a perspective that allows for concrete evaluation of advantages and disadvantages that reflect people's values. In this respect, it is to be distinguished from the process of *majority rule*, since this rule can quite easily aggravate the condition of poverty of some people.

According to Sen, to advocate social choice is to emphasise active social participation of people who represent themselves the broad *informational base* of capabilities. If unanimity represents total consensus or objective determination of deprivations, then it is not necessary for social choice because "The recognition of evident injustice in preventable deprivation, such as widespread hunger, unnecessary morbidity, premature mortality, grinding poverty, neglect of female children, subjugation of women, and phenomena of that kind does not have to wait the derivation of some complete ordering over choices that involve finer differences and puny infelicities"<sup>23</sup>.

Social choice would thus appear to be purposive, for the *development* of freedoms and *advancement* of social justice; it is on this account that social choice is relevant. According to Sen, social choice is not in conflict with self-centredness or self-interest either; these, supposed limitations for social choice, have not prevented people from thinking and caring for other members of the community or society. In fact, social choice finds its validation precisely in the common values that are shared by people: "Different persons may have very

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Page 254

different ways of interpreting ethical ideas including those of justice, and they may even be far from certain about how to organize their thoughts about it. But the basic ideas of justice are not alien to social beings”<sup>24</sup> In other words, social choice is possible because people have common values and share common ideas of justice.

Social choice is an active participation in the public decision-making processes that affect people’s achievements. For the CA, it is necessary for the process of development and it is possible and practical for many reasons: people can identify with others, *commit* themselves to values they share with their fellow human beings and *promote* others’ interests with which theirs are linked. The fact that people have *shared values* and *commitments*, that they *can* make choices for others, that they can pursue goals for others (which sometimes are in direct conflict with their own interests), justify social choice as a legitimate requirement of development.

In this, the CA finds a suitable medium for creating opportunities to expand freedoms. This perspective includes the very fact that social choice is essentially a process that validates autonomy, self-determination, diversity and human freedom. Through active participation in social discourse – not as majority rule per se, but as a process of *engagement*, social choice gives concrete meaning to *Development as Freedom*.

People’s exercise of freedom, their active participation and creation of social arrangements, are at the centre of the CA’s view of poverty reduction strategies. Means, both intangible and material resources (all instrumental freedoms) are there for people in whom reside both the potential and actual ability to convert them into ends they choose. To alleviate poverty and remove capability deprivations, it is necessary to have the right kind of social exercise of freedom. It is in this sense that democracy, in the traditional sense of rule of the people, by the people, for the people, is also advocated as necessary for development. If social choice is an essential requirement of development, a democratic environment is required for its actual manifestation. As such, it can also be conceived as an instrumental freedom that creates *opportunity* for development. There is, thus, a deep-rooted interconnection between social choice and democracy in as much as this interconnection is also a reflection of the freedoms required for human flourishing.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Page 262

However, the fact that democracy (which includes among other things processes of public debates/scrutiny, political liberties, rights) is important does not reduce the weight of other considerations of freedom. Rather, according to Sen, it indicates the crucial and extensive demands of freedoms of any kind. Having or fulfilling one form of freedom facilitates the achievement of others. This *interconnection* of freedoms shows the constitutive feature of each freedom, instrumental or substantive. For the CA, this means, for instance, that personal, political and economic freedoms are all valuable, necessary and connected to the process of development. A lack of any freedom would be a capability deprivation. Freedom of expression is as much a *basic capability* as right to employment, and each freedom “has to be seen as creating a set of opportunities... The opportunity it opens up has to be positively grabbed in order to achieve the desired effect. This is, of course, a basic feature of freedoms in general – much depends on how freedoms are actually exercised.”<sup>25</sup>

## Summary Note

The key concepts of freedom, diversity and flourishing enable the CA to explain poverty in terms of capability deprivations. From this perspective, the CA embraces the diversity of human states from which poverty is related to a complex interconnection of different choices, values and particularities of the society. In doing so, there is a suggestion in the CA that poverty, at the social level, is a condition of underdevelopment that rests on an inadequate exercise of freedom. Where there are capability deprivations, there is underdevelopment. Furthermore, it is possible to infer the causes of poverty as a cycle between personal capability deprivations, seen as substantive unfreedoms, and systemic deficiencies of instrumental and constitutive freedoms. The constitution of human agency, in the social context, becomes a significant factor both in terms how it is affected by the social conditions and how it determines the choices people make.

In order to address the issue of poverty and the problem of underdevelopment, the CA therefore places the onus on the choices of people in their society. Notwithstanding both historical and the global context of underdevelopment, it suggests that achievements, values

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Page 151

and the very exercise of freedom play important roles in the process of development. On one hand, it seems the development processes must be consistent with the choices of people taking their values and diversity into account; on the other hand, this emphasis on freedom and value-based wellbeing also implies that the autonomy of the people must be respected totally. Paradoxically, this perspective would also imply that there can neither be one model of development suitable for all people nor a theory of social justice fitting all societies.

It is evident that the emphasis on social choice, as an exercise of freedom based on people's values, suggests the need to respect each society's autonomy to choose its own particular model of development suited to its values and circumstantial conditions. With this perspective on freedom, the CA is challenged by the fact that *respect* for the autonomy of a poor country can be at odds with the need to intervene for the purpose of assisting the poor. This presents a particular problem where countries have to cooperate for development in the global arena. Even in the domestic realm of the autonomous country itself, without institution and adherence to certain principles as preconditions for active social participation, the CA's perspective on freedom is challenged by the ability of the very poor to engage or have an impact on the social exercise of freedom. I contend that there is already in the CA a contradiction between the necessity of social choice and the institution of democratic principles which means that the imperative of addressing capability deprivations cannot wholly be based on social choice unless certain principles are adhered to. This is where I find the CA being confronted by certain problems. Before examining these problems, a further exploration of the CA's development framework would be useful and this is the task of the next chapter.



## **Chapter 2: the CA's Development Framework**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I set out to outline the CA as Sen expounded it, by focusing on the issues of poverty and underdevelopment. It was established that concepts of freedom, wellbeing and diversity were key to its approach. I have also shown that the framework for development was built on notions of social choice and democracy. Before embarking on the critical examination of the whole approach, it is important to firmly establish its development framework. In this chapter, I will explore the key ideas related to development. In a way, some of these ideas are already present in the previous chapter, but their emphasis here will also allow for a better examination of the CA development framework. It is important to note here that, ideally, no development model is possible outside the concrete exercise of freedom by the people concerned. It must also be noted that the complexity of interconnections and the intricate nature of capability deprivations make the task of setting a development framework challenging. This chapter is important also because it raises a number of difficult questions for the CA. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the conception of development and its requirement are based on some important ideas which, together, would constitute its development framework. Some concepts would be familiar by now and I shall proceed to outline these ideas.

### **2.1 Development is a Process**

Development is seen as people-centred and freedom-driven process. In conceiving human *agency* in terms of *freedom*, *development* also becomes a purposive process with freedom as its means and ends. The *interconnection* of freedoms, particularly in the practice of democratic processes, plays a very important role in promoting quality of life. Equally significant, besides the active participation of members of the community as agents and objects of the development processes, are the choice of *alternatives* and the creation of *opportunities*. *Participation* also takes on a broader implication and encompasses social, environmental, political and economic dimensions. It is important to note at this point that, in

this approach, poverty reduction or improvement of quality of life, does not depend entirely on income, even though it is still instrumental. In this view of development, different permutations and states of freedoms are brought to the fore – either as *processes* or as *opportunities*. At this stage, it must be emphasised that development integrates instrumental freedoms, is constitutive of freedoms and depends on both the valuations (exercise of human freedom) and the various interconnections existing between the different kinds of freedoms. In this sense, ‘development’ requires having in place a number of achievements and integration of some key values or practices such as social choice and democracy.

## 2.2 Social Choice and Democracy

In the CA’s framework, the development process rests on the condition and *use* of freedoms, particularly of the instrumental freedoms of democracy. “The formation and utilization of our social values”<sup>26</sup> play an important role in determining the achievements of people. To the significance of *conversion* of means into ends is added the notion of *utilization*, by virtue of human agency being extended into the social context. Whereas individual wellbeing might depend on the conversion of means into ends, the society’s development depends on the *utilization* of freedoms and the institutional arrangements that people choose for themselves. On one hand, the nature of interconnections of freedom, grounded in local conditions and values, is determined by people’s exercise of freedom; on the other, these interconnections also direct the *uses* of freedoms. The idea of *social choice* is thus significant both for the determination of arrangements and for the use of freedoms. This means that regardless of means or resources available, the primary factor in the development process is social choice to the extent that it is the social exercise of freedom which defines *achievements* and creates *opportunities* of individuals.

In the CA’s framework, the development process no doubt requires social choice as foundation. It is at the centre of interconnections of freedom and the wellbeing of people. Its manifestation is, however, conditional, according to Sen, on the institution of democratic principles. As a social exercise of freedom itself, social choice is untenable without valuing and respecting the principles of freedom represented by democracy. Through such practices

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Page 287

as public deliberations, accountability and transparency, which lead to *recognition* and *acknowledgement of issues* and *practicalities*, social choice generates appropriate social arrangements and practical strategies rooted in the conditions and values of the people. In this perspective, social choice is the cornerstone of any initiative of poverty reduction insofar as it is ideal manifestation of *Development as Freedom*. In involving human activities and achievements, as *real* exercises of freedom, the process is an essential use of freedom for the expansion of freedom. In social choice, freedom is exercised, democratic principles are upheld, and wellbeing is genuinely connected to values and choices. Social choice allows for local circumstances and injustices to be recognized and effectively addressed.

### 2.3 Recognition of injustice

Since the choices people make also determine the choices they have, the wellbeing of people must also be seen as the outcome, not only of social arrangements, but primarily of the exercise of freedom through the activity of social choice. In this activity, the CA also estimates *recognition* of unfreedoms as integral both to the evaluation of poverty and the process of development. Beyond the evaluation of unfreedoms, recognition is also essential for people to mobilize themselves for active social participation, without which social choice is not feasible. In this regard, whilst the CA considers the *informational base* to be important for evaluative purposes, it also emphasises the principle of recognition of unfreedoms as another condition for embarking on processes that would remove capability deprivations. Such recognition is possible, according to the CA, because there are shared values and commitments in societies. In addition to the injustices being lived as capability deprivations, recognition of injustice is also possible because “the basic ideas of justice are not alien to social beings”,<sup>27</sup>

Whether the society is just or not, developed or underdeveloped, would depend on the empirical manifestations of human activities as exercise of freedom. Whether a person is deprived or not would be relative to the concrete social determination of advantages/disadvantages as lived by people. With this in mind, it is therefore, no surprise that alleviating poverty, as an injustice, is connected to “the emergence of a shared

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. Page 262

recognition of that “injustice” with this same recognition “dependent in practice on open discussion of issues and feasibilities”<sup>28</sup>.

## 2.4 Responsibility and Participation

With social choice being an essential part of the process of development, it is not difficult to see why people’s active participation in public and social activities is crucial. However, the effectiveness of this participation in enhancing capabilities exerts demands across the different dimensions of freedom. The process of development requires activities such as *public deliberation*, and in this view, the level of responsibility and the demand for participation are quite stringent. The notion of *society* itself, “As people who live – in a broad sense – together.”<sup>29</sup> implies a responsibility to participate which is vital for people’s wellbeing.

Participation is thus an integral feature of the process and a driver of freedom. It is also the responsibility of people themselves, and according to Sen “The people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs.”<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically and consistent with the CA, individual responsibilities cannot be defined outside what they value and beyond the capabilities they have. Yet, if “Responsibility requires freedom” and at the same time “freedom is both necessary and sufficient for responsibility”<sup>31</sup>, there is a conjecture that is not easily resolved: are all people able to participate? Do all people have the same responsibilities? How are responsibilities to be differentiated in social choice? Will extremely deprived people be able to participate in the social choice of social arrangements which will alleviate their deprivations? How is the autonomy of different people to be respected? Is it justified to leave a seriously deprived country such as Liberia to design its own strategies for development on account of its sovereignty? What kind of intervention would be required to address any deficiency? These are some of the questions that confront the *perspective of freedom* and which the thesis addresses.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Page 287

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. Page 282

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Page 55

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Page 284

## 2.5 Social Arrangements

CA's social arrangement would be the result of social choice based on recognition of injustices; it would also be a reflection of people's values, the way in which they take responsibilities and the extent to which they choose to fulfil obligations imposed on them by the contingencies of their situation. Institutions per se cannot generate effective social arrangements by themselves unless they are the result of social choice: people, in *recognising 'injustices'*, taking responsibilities, fulfilling obligations can create *social opportunities* for themselves which would define the social arrangements suited to their problems. In other words, individuals and societies, acting responsibly, can initiate social arrangements of their choice to enhance their own capabilities. This position raises again issues regarding the limits of intervention.

## 2.6 Intervention for Development

In the CA's development framework, both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of any intervention are connected to exercise of freedom and determinations of social choice. This point is crucial. Both the effectiveness and the legitimacy of the intervention must necessarily be consistent with the choices and values of the people concerned. In the context of poverty reduction, the question arises regarding the source of intervention and the kind of strategies that would meet these conditions.

In the CA, the setting of priority, just like the recognition of injustice, must be the result of active participation. Whatever the strategies for dealing with the issues, their effectiveness is not independent of their *utilization* either. Again, social choice as determinants of priorities and strategies would be the most essential factor in *creating real opportunities* that people value. It is in this context that, according to Sen, *economic growth*, while being an important achievement of certain freedoms, can still be utilised irresponsibly and ineffectively. Responsibility and social choice, thus, play significant role in the effectiveness of intervention. In this regard, the CA considers the effectiveness of any intervention, whether

initiated domestically, by Non-Governmental Organisations or by aid agencies, conditional upon social choice.

Intervention for development seems inconceivable without social choice. However, this perspective on freedom involves a potential conflict between a society's autonomous exercise of freedom as social choice, and the imperative for external organisations and agencies to intervene for the purpose of development. By attributing responsibility to people in general, the CA seems to avoid this conflict; in a sense, it would be the responsibility of all people and all governments, of all agencies and development organisations, going beyond their social systems, valuations and interests, to be involved with the process of development of all countries – autonomy or not. At a glance, this perspective resolves any conflict. On the other hand, by emphasising freedom, diversity and choice based on what 'people have reasons to value' in their own society, by positing social choice as a primary condition of development, the CA appears to discourage intervention in other societies' affairs from external parties. This is the grounds for Sen's rejection of "cunning development programs"<sup>32</sup> in favour of "being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny"<sup>33</sup>. This potential conflict is also the ground for the central problem of this thesis, which is reformulated thus: with the imperative to reduce poverty and some people suffering serious capability deprivations, is any form of paternalistic intervention justifiable in the CA?

## Summary Note

So far, my aim has been to outline some of the fundamental principles of the CA's development framework. Social choice, as a concrete manifestation of agency in society, can be identified as a vital element of the process of development. I have also raised a number of questions with which this thesis is concerned. The CA does not seem to leave room, in making development a freedom-driven process, for evaluation or intervention to set aside the autonomy and exercise of freedom in particular societies. It is even inconsistent to conceive of an effective or legitimate development process that does not stem from social choice. The CA considers this notion, not only as the practical embodiment of freedom itself, but also as the only genuine determination of priorities and strategies for the purpose of addressing

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Page 55

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

recognised and lived social injustices. The development is the responsibility of people and it ought to reflect their values and activities.

Social arrangements, and their corresponding relation to freedoms and unfreedoms, are also seen as the responsibility of individuals and their societies. With the notion of interconnections constituting the cornerstone of the CA and Sen claiming that “The process of development is crucially influenced by these interconnections. Corresponding to multiple interconnected freedoms, there is a need to develop and support a plurality of institutions, including ... mixed structures...”<sup>34</sup>, there is even a difficulty in instituting one particular social arrangement as a model for development. Nonetheless, the CA attempts to posit a holistic view of development requiring democratic principles as basis of social choice.

From the exposition above, the following propositions can be stated as fundamental for the CA’s development framework:

1. The purpose of development is to expand freedom and reduce unfreedoms; this means development is a process that involves human activities which can effectively be enhanced social choice as exercise of freedom itself.
2. Social choice, however, requires taking responsibility to actively participate in the making of social arrangements; at the same time, certain conditions are considered to be essential preconditions of social choice.
3. The conditions conducive for the exercise of freedom as social choice require the recognition of injustices based on shared values and ideas of justice
4. The environment in which social choice can lead to the most appropriate social arrangement must be grounded in democratic principles.
5. If people are suffering poverty, as capability deprivation in its various dimensions of unfreedom, responsibility for intervention rests primarily on themselves as people living the concrete manifestations of their freedoms.
6. Only through the institution of democratic principles, integrated into the social choice manifestation, can a development process expand freedoms and overcome capability deprivations

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Page 55

In view of Sen's claim that "The people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved – given the opportunity – in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs."<sup>35</sup>, there are serious challenges for any development strategy that does not arise from the choices of the people concerned. If the CA's development framework is to be tenable, it needs a different justification for assisting the deprived through interventions that are extraneous to social choice.

Whether the CA's framework is strong or not, at this stage it is clear it faces some challenges. The question for the CA then focuses on how its framework, involving the perspective of freedom, would fit with current strategies and how it deals with the problems. In the next chapter, these questions will be addressed and CA, in general, would be subjected to a more critical examination.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid. Page 55



## Chapter 3: Critical Examination of the CA

### Introduction

In the previous two chapters, my aim was to explore the key ideas of the CA. The demands of development framework were also discussed. This approach was necessary in order to make explicit the premises and challenges of the CA. Only by ascertaining the grounds and the nature of the CA's framework for development is one in a position to subject it to a critical examination. The primary focus of this chapter is the formulation of two core problems of the thesis, which I will call Problem of Circularity and the Problem of Paternalism. I will also discuss the connection between the CA's development framework and capacity building strategies. Before embarking on such an exercise, however, it is important to explain some of the justifications of the CA.

### 3.1 Justification of the CA

If people that are deprived ought not to be 'passive recipients of cunning programs', then how should their conditions be addressed? This question cannot be justifiably addressed unless one considers Sen's qualification that "people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved". If there is any ambiguity in these claims, it is because Sen believes that human life is itself ambiguous. He makes no qualms about the CA reflecting these ambiguities in its framework: "In so far as there are genuine ambiguities in the underlying objects of value, these will be reflected in the characterization of capability"<sup>36</sup> because "if an underlying idea has an essential ambiguity, a precise formulation of that idea must try to capture that ambiguity rather than attempt to lose it."<sup>37</sup> That being the case, it would seem that a *pluralist approach* to development is quite consistent with the CA.

The perspective on freedom also allows Sen to consider people as "ends in themselves" and, by so doing, to view the right development framework as one that emphasises *variations* and

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<sup>36</sup> Sen, A, "Development as Capability Expansion", Oxford Economic Press, 32 (1980), page 45. Accessed at: [http://www.economia.unimore.it/Picchio\\_Antonella/Sviluppo%20umano/svilupp%20umano/Sen%20development.pdf](http://www.economia.unimore.it/Picchio_Antonella/Sviluppo%20umano/svilupp%20umano/Sen%20development.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

choice of ‘states of being or doing’. For practical purposes, a development framework must have policies and policy-making processes that treat people as ‘ends in themselves’ and allow exercise of freedom by agents defined by their own activities and values. The viability of the outcome would thus depend on the recognition that the evaluative framework cannot concretely be disconnected from the practical framework. If poverty is to be properly addressed in a way that respects human beings as ‘ends in themselves’, development framework must respect their agency. Such an approach would inevitably have to reflect the diversity and *interconnectedness of freedom*.

This is why development indicators and list of capabilities by technocrats and academics would seem unjustified for the CA unless they meet those conditions. Evaluations and interventions must be concretely connected to the concerns of people (who are diverse) and their values (which are different and subject to contingencies); otherwise it would be hard to see how they will have any practical significance for the people. Although this is an indictment of some particular type of development programs, the CA itself has been found wanting in some respects. Some of the questions raised about its implementation are echoed not least in the very attempt to list *essential capabilities* by Martha Nussbaum (2011) – for *universal* application. She argued that such a list of *essential capabilities* is possible and necessary as basic requirement of individual wellbeing.

Despite a lack of consensus and its *operational* difficulties (Wiebke: 2005)<sup>38</sup>, others have found the CA’s framework to be a “compelling alternative ... to evaluating well-being/poverty and formulating development policy” whilst insisting on guarantees and protection of *minimum requirements* (Srinivasan: 2007)<sup>39</sup>. It is argued that the institution of democratic freedoms requires minimal standards of justice to be met. In this view, “we at least need a justified basis for determining what constitutes ‘more’ support for such participation without nannyism”<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Kuklys, W, “Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach: Theoretical Insights and Empirical Applications”; Studies in Choice and Welfare; Springer, 2005

<sup>39</sup> Srinivasan, S., “No Democracy without Justice: Political Freedom in Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach”; Journal of Human Development (2007), Vol. 8, No. 3

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

Advocates of the CA, such as Alkire, are still very insistent about its operational and practical value, particularly since it offers a *broader informational base* in its use as *evaluative framework*.<sup>41</sup> As a pluralist approach, not only is it an inclusive approach, but its strength is also in the depth and scope of considerations it requires in the evaluation of *social arrangements*. It is argued that, by making real freedoms and deprivations a function of arrangements, the CA provides a stronger framework for assessing advantages/disadvantages. The CA is seen as offering clear indication of *objectives* to pursue for *developmental interventions*. Alkire also argues that the complex interconnections of freedoms is not a limitation of the CA because cases of unfreedoms are very *concrete* and do not present any challenge for identification and redress. These complexities, in fact, are illuminating insofar as they force the development process to focus on the variety of problems at different levels in different countries. Since it also allows for different other *motivations* as drivers of human agency and action, its pluralism is considered to be a positive aspect. In this sense, justifications for external intervention are possible on many grounds, including justice, disinterestedness and in Alkire's words: "A complex of other motivations, perhaps including identity, cooperation, altruism, habit, and sympathy, must also enter"<sup>42</sup>.

Alkire's defence of the CA cannot be concluded without bringing attention to her claims that: "in the abstract, the capability approach may seem unwieldy. But our problems are not abstract. The capability approach has many degrees of freedom; concrete situations have far fewer. The feasibility considerations can usually be jotted in, and the actual scope for both analysis and action narrows considerably" and the "decision to leave the prioritization of basic capabilities to others who are engaged directly with a problem, demonstrates respect for the agency of those who will use this approach."<sup>43</sup>

Alkire's position on CA's framework and *operationalisation* is supported by Robeyns<sup>44</sup> who also identifies a variety of frameworks and different areas of applications. Notably, however, Robeyns also points out that this *user-friendliness* and adaptability of the CA could also be its Achilles' hills since it is then subject to *utility* and *preferences* of the user – a situation that,

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<sup>41</sup> Alkire, S., "Why the Capability Approach"; *Journal of Human Development* (2005), vol. 6, no. 1

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* page 128

<sup>44</sup> Robeyns, I., "The Capability Approach in Practice"; *Journal of Political Philosophy* (2006), vol. 14, no. 3

perhaps, is evidence of freedom, but which might also suggest inconsistency. For Robeyns, “capability applications should in many cases not be seen as supplanting other approaches, but instead as providing complementary insights to the more established approaches.”<sup>45</sup>

### 3.2 Critical Examination

In the global perspective, the position of the CA underestimates the influence of global institutional arrangements on the scope particular societies have to exercise freedoms. Notwithstanding the imperative to reduce poverty, the implication for the CA is different development models of various social choices, a situation that would surreptitiously undermine the global responsibility to reduce poverty. The issue for the CA then is whether the perspective of freedom and its attendant principle of social choice are sufficient for fulfilling the imperative of reducing poverty and addressing capability deprivations in the current scheme.

For the CA, people are best judges of their living conditions and they ought to exercise their choices based on what *‘they have reason to value’*. In this respect, people are responsible for their own development and there are no better strategies than the full and active participation of people in the making of social choices that can address their deprivations – in their own living as individuals and in the social arrangements as a community. The people of poor countries are seen as best placed to evaluate their poverty (more pertinently in terms of capability deprivations), to identify priorities by choosing what *‘they have reason to value’*, to initiate the most appropriate development process to address needs in a way that is suited to their values, and to judge the impact of change in their own living. This perspective is the cornerstone of Capacity Building Strategies and the deployment of instruments such as DBS and Poverty Reduction Strategies.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. page 375

### 3.3 Capacity Building Strategy and the CA

There are different intervention approaches that can be seen as incorporating capacity building strategy. Whether within a country itself or in the context of international relations, my working definition of capacity building strategies are based on B. R. Crisp et al's (2000) identification of 'four approaches': "(i) a top-down organizational approach which might begin with changing agency policies or practices; (ii) a bottom-up organizational approach, e.g. provision of skills to staff; (iii) a partnerships approach which involves strengthening the relationships between organizations; and (iv) a community organizing approach in which individual community members are drawn into forming new organizations or joining existing ones to improve the health of community members."<sup>46</sup> These approaches represent different ways of respecting autonomy which are integrated in Capacity Building Strategies. It can be argued that DBS, as a capacity building strategy, respects autonomy on the basis of (ii) and (iii). By implication, however, and on the basis of partnership, this also means that responsibility for poverty reduction goes beyond the scope of one individual society.

A strict adherence to social choice would invalidate DBS at the outset. However, in my view, Capacity Building Strategies are the best attempt at promoting respect for autonomy while supporting needy communities, not least because *people are seen to be involved* in these strategies. Nonetheless, it has been claimed that there is a difference between capacity and capability. This difference is enshrined in the idea that "The underlying assumption of the Capability Approach is that in the absence of appropriate opportunities, capacity building programmes, aimed at the development of new skills and abilities, will not be sufficient to enable people to achieve their well-being values."<sup>47</sup> It is my contention the link between Capacity Building, as a concept and a practice, and the Capability Approach may not be explicit, but CBS's attempt to respect autonomy is built to fit with the normative demands of the CA. The deployment of CBS and its instrument is connected to some of the core principles of CA. The emphasis on freedom and self-determination, the requirements of democracy and responsibility justify this connection.

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<sup>46</sup> Crisp, B R, Swerissen, H & Duckette, S J, "Four Approaches to Capacity Building in Health: Consequences for Measurement and Accountability"; Health Promotion International, Vol. 15, No. 2; OUP, 2000; UK. p100

<sup>47</sup> "Planning for Freedoms: The Contribution of Sen's Capability Approach to Development Practice"; Frediani, A. A.; document accessed at: [http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317962/1/briefing\\_ca.pdf](http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1317962/1/briefing_ca.pdf)

Capacity Building Strategies, as reflection of the CA's requirements, are manifested in several initiatives. This is, of course, the basis of Alkire's praise of its wide application. The Rome Declaration on Harmonization, for instance, considers "country-based approach that emphasizes country ownership and government leadership, includes capacity building, recognizes diverse aid modalities (projects, sector approaches, and budget or balance of payments support), and engages civil society including the private sector"<sup>48</sup> to be important for the effectiveness of development assistance. In the same vein, the adoption of MDGs and the design of PRSP are rooted in the Accra Agenda's requirement that poor countries, benefiting from the partnership with donor countries, must pursue principles of democracy as well as "Make progress towards building institutions and establishing governance structures that deliver effective governance, public safety, security, and equitable access to basic social services for their citizens"<sup>49</sup> and "Encourage broad participation of a range of national actors in setting development priorities"<sup>50</sup>. Even though these requirements may be deemed *conditionalities* of development assistance, they are still consistent with some of the principles of the CA's framework.

### 3.4 The Core Thesis Problems

My primary interest in linking CBS and its instrument of DBS to CA was not to specifically criticise their use. I have used them in this thesis to simply illustrate the practical case of the limitations of the CA. Many other issues can be raised against the CA and its development framework, but the main here concern remains the circularity of social choice and the problem of paternalism. These two core problems, of course, reflect the general *ambiguity* of the CA, an ambiguity that is explicitly connected to Sen's claim about poor people that: "They cannot be seen merely as patients to whom benefits will be dispensed by the process of development. Responsible adults must be in charge of their own wellbeing; it is for them to decide how to use their capabilities. But the capabilities that a person does actually have ... depends on the nature of social arrangements... And there the state and the society cannot escape responsibility"<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> "Rome Declaration on Harmonization - 2003", page 1; OECD-DAC publication, accessed at:

<sup>49</sup> "Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action"; page 6; OECD publication, accessed at:

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Sen, A., "Development as Freedom"; Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2000; page 288

### **3.5 The Problem of Circularity of Social Choice**

Social choice, in itself and as part of the constitution of freedoms, is crucial for the CA's development framework. For capability deprivations to be removed, the CA's framework requires social choice. The immediate concerns of a poor person will be with their particular deprivation which hinders their lives, a concern that will be valued more than social choice. Social choice might be less of a priority to them than their primary need. In this respect, apart from having to value social choice itself, the person's primary concerns or immediate capabilities must be addressed in order to allow for social choice. To value social choice as instrumental to addressing one's capability deprivations would itself require that they develop that very capability to value social choice. This is the circularity of social choice that the CA's framework faces.

The problem of circularity need not be a problem if it is accepted that people must have certain basic capabilities to be fulfilled in order to value or seek other capabilities. I am suggesting that this is precisely what the Resourcist framework stands for, in its advocacy of "primary goods". Whilst social choice may be a "good", its *achievement* requires other "goods" as preconditions. For example, social choice is not relevant for a person that needs food to live. Neither is social choice possible if the person has no conception or value for social choice itself.

### **3.6 The Problem of Paternalism**

This thesis has been about the issue of poverty and the CA's framework for dealing with it. Whether domestically or globally, the CA's has been keen to emphasise the importance of freedom, which means that interventions of governments, NGOs and other agencies had to be in such a way that autonomy or sovereignty is respected. Freedom in this perspective must also be promoted and democracy valued. In advocating the need to create opportunities for the poor, however, it is obvious that those who are deprived would be the least to have the capacity to create opportunities. If a farmer is afflicted by poor harvest as a result of which she is unable to take care of herself and her family, it is unlikely that she can do much about her situation unless she gets support from other families, institutions, agencies or

government. In such situations of needs, it is unavoidable that some sort of paternalism would be required, but a direct provision to support her need or the institution of a social arrangement that allows for her needs to be met. Whether by subsidy, by loan, by direct support or other provisions, such interventions to mitigate poverty is an imperative.

The question is how to intervene to create opportunities for the deprived. The CA is confronted by this imperative to alleviate the condition of the deprived and seriously poor. In its framework, the CA cannot justify this imperative for intervention and faces the problem of paternalism as far as intervention is an external factor in the agency of the victim. One would, of course, expect such interventions to comply with a standard that respects the autonomy of the poor whilst at the same allowing for the intervening person or group to obey the imperative. In this case, the most appropriate evaluative framework of the intervention cannot rest on individual or social choice. It would have to appeal to a different standard of justification which both parties can accept. I believe this is where justice would normally be invoked by both parties. Whether by direct provisions of basic needs or by the creations of opportunities that enhance the deprived person's own capacity to satisfy the needs they choose for themselves, the CA can avoid the problem of paternalism only by invoking the principle of justice.

In Sen's perspective, however, this standard of justice cannot be independent of the contingencies of the persons, their societies and their values. If this position is accepted, I contend that it leaves no room for any kind of intervention; it can in fact lead to complacency, irresponsibility, or worst provide justification for the worst kinds of paternalism – exploitation and enslavement. If *reasons* can be given for the injustice of poverty, these reasons cannot rest on different values. Injustice is not confined only to the person experiencing it. It is unjust for anyone to experience it. Yet, if it is necessary to address it, it would be because of *reasons of justice* which one *and* the other can agree with. This universal reason is the constituent of a theory of justice which allows for a distinction between paternalistic or un-paternalistic interventions. This does not mean that a theory of justice negates contingent circumstances and people's values either. On the contrary, justice is built on the value of justice that all human beings have, transcending their particularities. This is why I believe intervention on grounds of Sen's freedoms encounters difficulties with



paternalism, whereas intervention on grounds of justice does not. The CA's framework must admit of this problem of paternalism, although its justification must be found not in the CA, but in the Resourcist Approach.

### **Summary Note**

In this critical examination of the CA, I have discussed the issues confronting the CA, the justifications its advocates have given and explored its link to CBS. It has also been shown what problems the CA faces, particularly with the circularity of social choice and the problem of paternalism. My position is that these problems can be avoided if some propositions of the Resourcist Approach are accepted. The circularity of social choice can be avoided by accepting the proposition that poor people need certain "primary goods" to enhance basic capabilities that are required to make social choice possible; such an intervention is necessarily paternalistic and cannot be avoided by the CA. However, the justification of this paternalism, in a way that respects the autonomy of the poor, can only be provided through the principle of justice, which avoids the problem by making it a responsibility to intervene as a matter of justice. The next chapter will focus on this thesis.

## Chapter 4: Resourcist Approach

### Introduction

I have so far discussed and examined various aspects of the Capability Approach. In the last chapter, I have given the CA's justifications and made explicit two of the problems it faces. The aim in this chapter is mainly to justify the thesis. First, I will briefly explain the Resourcist Approach since it is the ground of my thesis. Finally, I will make a brief critical defence of the thesis.

### 4.1 Resourcist Approach

By Resourcist Approach, I mean the positions of John Rawls and Thomas Pogge which require that social arrangements be just so as to address claims of injustice such as poverty. In my view, compliance with the requirements of justice ensures that certain "primary goods" are guaranteed. Where social arrangements designed according to the principles of *justice as fairness*<sup>52</sup>, domestically and globally, the guarantees of "primary goods" under this scheme provide for the condition that are necessary to reduce poverty and avoid capability deprivations. This perspective is lacking in the Capability Approach. My thesis, thus, depends on showing two things: how the Resourcist Approach avoids the problems confronting the CA and how the latter's framework for poverty reduction needs to be complemented by the Resourcist Approach in order to justify intervention extraneous to the agency of the deprived. I shall proceed to briefly explain the Resourcist Approach and then to demonstrate the case for my position.

Poverty is a condition of injustice insofar social arrangements deny some people what Rawls calls 'appropriate claims'. According to Rawls, these claims constitute "primary goods" that every person would be entitled to as a matter of justice. These goods are agreed as basic guarantees for all and their conception is based on *shared public understanding* of claims. In other words, a person suffering poverty would be a person that has no access to "primary

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<sup>52</sup> See Rawls, J., "A Theory of Justice"; OUP, 1971

goods”; they would claim poverty if their ‘appropriate claims’ are such that they are not consistent with what is *primary* for all. It can be lack of access to basic liberties, lack of freedom of movement or choice, lack of political or economic opportunities and lack of basic resources. The access to “primary goods” is quite distinct from ‘particular goods’ that the person may choose for herself. Their standings are determined by a *shared public understanding* which is based on the principle of justice agreed by all. The latter principle, thus, sets the standards of “primary goods” for all whilst determining the limits of ‘particular goods’ in the context of a society.

In practice, this means that all members of a society should have legitimate claims to certain goods which ensures basic minimums, and guarantees *social cooperation* and the *unity of society*. That the conception of these goods is possible is based on the very conception of social unity, according to Rawls, which makes the people members of the society. This possibility is also based on the idea that there is agreement of principles of justice and that there is a shared public understanding of claims. The whole notion of “primary goods” is therefore premised on the social arrangements of a *well-ordered society* where principles of justice are accepted.

By implication, a society that is not *well-ordered* is one where principles of justice are not agreed or adhered to; in such a society, there would be issues with ‘appropriate claims’ and no specific limits to claims of particular goods. In the context of poverty, one could argue that being poor (resource-wise) or suffering deprivations (capability-wise) is a condition of injustice due to lack of “primary goods”. In such a condition, claims of disadvantage have validity to the extent that *distribution* of goods is not consistent with the principles of justice. Addressing such an injustice, which poverty is in this perspective, would therefore simply require applying the principles of justice so as to enable people to have access to “primary goods” common to all, from which they are left alone to design and achieve their own life plans. The principle of justice does not remove inequalities per se, but there is agreement of principles of justice and there is a clear ‘shared public understanding’ of ‘appropriate claims’, qua “primary goods”. For instance, this means that where food is accepted as a primary good under the agreed principles of justice, then all people have ‘appropriate claims’ to food. In such a situation, the society would be arranged in such a way that certain basic nutritional

requirements (as *appropriate claims*) are available to all, leaving other preferences to individual choices. Lack of food, as a case of poverty, would not be an issue.

For the CA, the notion of “primary goods” is where the Resourcist Approach is deficient; in this approach, the claim to goods is problematic insofar as it does not take into account the respective differences or values of people who have different capabilities (i.e. multiple factors affecting their *conversion* of these goods). However, it is precisely this narrow view of *primary goods* and its emphasis on diversity that lead the CA into the kind of problems that I explained earlier. The contents of “primary goods” must be based on principles of *justice as fairness*. Before proceeding to demonstrate how the CA can avoid these problems by actually integrating some of the RA’s fundamental principles, it is also important to note an important feature of the notion of “primary goods”: it is generally based on a shared rational conception of what is *good* for all members of the society, irrespective of their particular individual idiosyncrasies or, to use Kant’s word, particular *inclinations*. It must be accepted that no framework, such as the CA attempts to do, can incorporate all *diverse* inclinations.

## 4.2 First Defence

Despite its insistence on people choosing what they have reasons to value, the CA’s framework still required important principles of democracy to be instituted as a preconditions for creating opportunities for the deprived. By adopting that position, it inadvertently recognises the need of “primary goods”. The problem, however, is its reluctance to admit not only that this condition applies regardless of the diversity of values, but also that the institution of these implies a degree of paternalism. If people need certain “primary goods” in order to alleviate poverty, including basic needs, rights and liberties which they themselves are not in a position to put in place, others must take the responsibility to ensure these needs are met. The only way to fulfil this obligation without infringing on their autonomy is for those who assume this responsibility to respond to the demands of justice. This position does not necessitate the deprived engaging in social choice since this notion depends, in both theoretical and practical purposes, on the principles of justice allowing for the claims of social choice.

Thus, recognition of principles of justice is required in order to guide the actions of those who would assume the responsibility of creating opportunities for the poor. The actions based on this responsibility imply that certain “primary goods” are provided as a matter of necessity to ground institutional arrangement and support both the creating and the taking of opportunities. Those actions also demand institutional reform without waiting for *social choice*, since such actions would be based on principles of justice which would be accepted by any rational person.

In this perspective, there is no doubt that people with higher capabilities, with better knowledge, in positions of power and responsibility have the burden of the task on their shoulders. In the poor country, this burden of responsibility would fall on leaders who are entrusted and expected to make institutional arrangements and take necessary actions to avoid poverty. Similarly, leaders representing the poor countries would expect their partners, with whom they cooperate for elimination of poverty, to act according to the principles of justice. From this position, development and reduction of poverty cannot solely be based on poor people’s autonomy. Whilst capacity building strategies and its instruments may be *seen to actively involve people*, their effectiveness would always be undermined as long as the arrangements at the roots of poverty are continuously unjust. That is why for Rawls, it is essential to have “primary goods” or appropriate claims upon which choice of particular goods can be built. This position is somehow vindicated by both Alkire and Nussbaum, even though they are still keen to defend the CA.

At the same time, this account also allows anyone to intervene, regardless of whether they are part of the society in question or not. The principle of justice does not limit the responsibility to governments alone. In fact, this principle avoids the circularity of social choice and the problem of paternalism altogether and even maintains the people-centeredness of Sen. It is only on the basis of universal recognition of the injustice of poverty by all people that all people have a *duty* to intervene, particularly those with higher *capability sets* and *achievements*. This duty may actually require taking actions that one would not choose if they followed their individual contingent values and inclinations.

### 4.3 Possible Objection

It might be objected, as it were, that principles of justice are themselves subject to no consensus and are constituted by different rationalities. The idea here is, for instance, that the Western conception of justice is different from other conceptions of justice, that there are multiple conceptions of justices. It is often argued, and this is the implication of the CA's framework, that the particular circumstances and values of each society determine its own idea of justice which thereby defines the kind of arrangements required to address its own injustices. This objection may not be entirely misplaced, considering the premise of the CA; however, it is a major indication of the flaw in the CA: its assumption that people are so diverse that there cannot be any common grounds for common goods. It also implies that injustice in America is different from injustice in Ghana; that just arrangements for the people of UK may not be good for the people of Saudi Arabia.

The principles of justice and the notion of "primary goods" are quite conceivable as universal claims if it is accepted, in Rawls' words, that "a *partial* similarity of citizen's conceptions of the good is sufficient for political and social justice"<sup>53</sup>. Sen's own basis on the Kantian principle of humanity, of people being ends in themselves with capacity for self-legislation or autonomy, is ground enough to reject the idea of justice as premised on different rationalities. Quite apart from confusing *rationalities* with inclinations, it also assumes that transcendental ideas imply a distance from particular circumstances; it ignores that the particular circumstance of being human, the principle of humanity is what makes transcendental ideas what they are. It may not be definitively, but certainly there is a legitimate argument to suggest that, by virtue of their humanity, ideas of justice are shared by all rational beings. It is, therefore, on the basis that people share certain ideas, including that of justice, that it can rationally be established what is required of justice for all societies. One need not await all rationalities to conjoin in social choice before taking responsibility to institute structures that respects different *rationalities*. By the same token, social choice cannot even be conceived without an assumption of universal ideas of freedom (manifested in the requirement of democratic principles) and justice. Similarly, one must note that the insistence on different rationalities, taken in its extreme individualistic and subjective aspects, is cause of

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<sup>53</sup> Rawls, J., "Social Unity and Primary Goods"; extract from "Utilitarianism and Beyond", Sen, A. & Williams, B. (eds.); Cambridge Books Online, CUP, 2012; Book DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511611964>

ambiguities which can be used to blame a seriously deprived person for their condition and to justify inaction.

#### **4.4 Second Defence**

There are many other ways the theoretical basis of the CA's development framework is inconsistent without the assumption of the Resourcist principles. I do not have the space here to go through all of them. It is sufficient to demonstrate how the Resourcist Approach can complement the CA, focusing on the example of DBS as a CBS.

To a certain extent, the limitations of this poverty reduction strategy have already been stated above. It is assumed, for instance in the relation between poor countries and wealthy countries that by adopting CBS, wealthy countries would be supporting the reduction of poverty without infringing the autonomy of their poor partners. This is also premised on the idea that development is a process. However, it is precisely this conception of development that leaves the wellbeing of poor and seriously deprived people in jeopardy. Because development is a process, it is argued, one should progressively allow poor people to build their own capacities so that they are able to take care of themselves. Whilst there is no question about this attempt to respect the autonomy of the poor, on one hand, it does ignore the fact that the process of development needs a base to build from. On the other hand, this respect for autonomy also requires that the other party has a certain degree of autonomy to begin with. Theoretically, the process of capacity building on the basis of respect for autonomy invalidates the process because there is nothing of autonomy to respect, when the person with plagued serious unfreedoms. Practically, using DBS is like giving money to a patient so that they able to buy medicine themselves, so that their autonomy is respected and they build a capacity to buy medicine for themselves; yet, the strategy ignores two possibilities: either the patient is so ill (serious deprivations) that they are unable to move, or the pharmacies are closed (unjust institutional arrangement). Based on this analogy, it would be required that DBS is complemented by domestic institutional arrangements (i.e. ensuring *appropriate claims* in the domestic context) and by a reform of global arrangements (i.e. ensuring a *well-ordered society*) to support the effective *utilisation* of this instrument. In this context, addressing the issue of poverty and severe capability deprivations cannot be confined

to capacity building programs, respect of autonomy or social choice alone; by recognising that “The worst-off are not merely poor and often starving, but are *being* impoverished under our shared institutional arrangements”<sup>54</sup>, there is an added imperative, not only to respect autonomy of people, but to also adhere to principles of justice so as to reform institutional and global arrangements. Leaders, domestic or otherwise, need not wait for social choice to initiate institutional reform. They not fear accusations of paternalism either, provided they concretely take actions that eliminate poverty. One cannot be accused of paternalism when they make just institutional arrangement that allow expression of autonomy. Whilst this is consistent with CA’s requirement of democratic institutions, CA itself cannot justify this imperative without claims of justice.

The emphasis on institutional arrangements on grounds of justice is not inconsistent with CA’s principle of responsibility either. In fact, by making people responsible for conditions of advantages and disadvantages, by locating capability deprivations in the interconnections of freedoms, the CA actually also imputes obligation on those who benefit most from the disparities. However, the CA cannot justify the responsibility for reform by those with higher *capability sets* without principle of justice and requirements of “primary goods”. In emphasising human responsibility, Sen echoes Pogge’s view “that most of us do not merely let people starve but also participate in starving them”<sup>55</sup>. Yet, the CA, by subscribing strictly to social choice and ‘reasons to value’, limits the scope of this responsibility to ‘autonomous’ societies, when in fact, domestically or globally, justice requires global responsibility that would *create opportunities* for the poor or, as it were, for those with serious capability deprivations.

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<sup>54</sup> Pogge, T, “World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms”; Polity Press, 2008; UK

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



## Conclusion

This thesis was about the issue of poverty and the corresponding issue of underdevelopment of poor countries. I have lived in poor countries and worked with NGOs engaged in poverty reduction programmes and, in my experience, the question of autonomy and the problem of paternalism are concrete ethical issues. The interest in the Capability Approach was prompted by its conceptual connection to Capacity Building Strategies. The centrality of freedom to its development framework calls for respect of autonomy; yet, in practice, this requirement to respect autonomy raises difficult problems. This is why I decided to investigate the issue and critically examine this approach.

From chapter one to two, I established that the CA defines wellbeing in terms of freedom and sees poverty as capability deprivations. In this view, not only are people responsible for the condition of poverty, but indeed the solution to poverty, capability deprivations, was seen as a development process grounded in social choice. In this concept rested its advocacy for respect of autonomy. Accordingly, intervention strategies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction depend, for their effectiveness, on initiatives arising from or supporting social choice. I consider capacity building strategies and the example of DBS as one such initiative.

I found this perspective on respecting autonomy quite problematic and my examination in chapter three showed a circularity in the social choice argument which is compounded by the problem of paternalism. In my view, intervention initiatives, whether domestic or global, are imperatives that cannot be defended through social choice or persistent claim of respect for autonomy. While respect for the autonomy of the deprived is a good thing, the condition of deprivations of a poor person or people can be such that social choice not immediately possible. This is why I have argued that, in order to apply the imperative of intervention for poverty reduction, respect for the autonomy of the poor required the principle of justice advocated in the Resourceist Approach.

The Capability Approach's perspective of freedom is not without its problems; these may be attributed to its complexities and its emphasis on social choice. An ideal implementation of its development framework must confront the challenges it faces. Within its framework and perspective on freedom, one cannot find a strong justification for development work. My

thesis suggests that the only way development agencies, civil society organisations, governments and the international community can find justification and indeed assume genuine responsibility for poverty reduction is to appeal to principles of justice as grounds to respect the autonomy. This position justifies intervention to create *immediate and real opportunity* domestically or globally for the poor. It does not undermine social choice as an ideal; nor does it denigrate the value of freedom. Rather, it affirms them in legitimising any effort and reform of institutions aimed at ensuring all people have access to “primary goods” in just social and global arrangements.

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