Using the capabilities approach in ICT4D research and practice

Sponsored by the UNESCO Chair/Centre in ICT4D
Royal Holloway, University of London

and the Thematic Group on Design and Technology of the Human Development and Capabilities Association (HDCA)
The plan for this session:

11-12:45 Panel with Audience Participation

Chair: Dorothea Kleine
(Centre in ICT4D/UNESCO Chair, Royal Holloway, University of London)

Introduction to the capabilities approach

Panellists:

Caroline Figuères (IICD)
Gitanjali Sah (ITU)
Yingqin Zheng (Centre in ICT4D/UNESCO Chair, RHUL)
Paula Uimonen (SPIDER)

Discussion on
- e.g. operationalizing the CA
- e.g. view of the person in CA
- e.g. combining CA with other approaches
- e.g. funding logics vs CA openendedness
The need for a different approach to development:

- Econocentric → Holistic
- Linear → Systemic
- Top-down → Participatory
- Supply-led → Choice-led
Amartya Sen’s capability approach

Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. [...] focusing particularly on people’s capability to choose the lives they have reason to value (1999:63)
Amartya Sen
“Expansion of freedom is viewed, in this approach, both as the primary end and as the principal means of development”  
(Sen 1999:xii)

= Freedom has both intrinsic and instrumental value
the journey so far:

steps towards CA operationalisation for the field of ICT4D

Basic principles of the capabilities approach (Sen 1992)

- **Functionings**: The various things a person may value doing or being

- **Capabilities**: the alternative functionings which an individual is able to achieve

Focus of development:

to expand an individual’s capabilities set
Starving vs Fasting

**Starving:**
Functioning: being well-nourished
not achieved

Capability: ability to achieve “being well-nourished”
not achieved

**Fasting:**
Functioning: being well-nourished
not achieved

Capability: ability to achieve “being well-nourished”
achieved
Martha Nussbaum’s list of capabilities

1) Life
2) Bodily Health
3) Bodily Integrity
4) Senses, Imagination, and Thought
5) Emotions
6) Practical Reason
7) Affiliation
8) Other Species
9) Play
10) Control over one’s Environment
Do poor people really want to have the *freedom* to avoid extreme discomfort and deprivation? Don’t they simply want to *avoid* extreme discomfort and deprivation?

[...] One problem is that if we only tried to *eradicate* deprivation, we could do so by force, by coercion, or domination, or colonialism,

[DK: or by well-meaning but misguided intervention]. People and groups, rich or poor, across time have valued their freedom to shape their future not only politically but also socially and economically. (Alkire 2005:3)
Core aspects

- Not utility focus
- Not resource focus
- But freedom focus: poverty as capability-deprivation

- Pluralistic
- Beyond the economic

- Focus on the individual
- Freedom of agency constrained by social, political and economic opportunities
- Public discussion as a vehicle of social change
With Mahbub ul Haq – integration into development measurement and development of the Human Development Index (HDI) – now part of UNDP’s World Development Reports
Robeyns 2005:

**Figure 1.** A stylised non-dynamic representation of a person’s capability set and her social and personal context.
Gigler 2004:

Table 1: Empowerment through ICTs framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
<th>LIVELIHOOD RESOURCES</th>
<th>INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES</th>
<th>CAPABILITIES</th>
<th>LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic</td>
<td>Economic/financial capital</td>
<td>Existing social structures</td>
<td>Individual - Psychological - Social - Economic - Informational - Political - Cultural</td>
<td>Informational Capabilities strengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td>Natural capital</td>
<td>(&lt;=)</td>
<td>&lt;==&gt;</td>
<td>Human Capabilities strengthened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Context</td>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>(&lt;=)</td>
<td>=&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT diffusion</td>
<td>Informational capital</td>
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<td>ICT policy Framework</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Stages of ICT project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Existing Information Systems and Environments</th>
<th>Assess Information needs Informational capital</th>
<th>Community ICT Access Local and relevant content Capacity-Building</th>
<th>Local Appropriation and Use of ICTs</th>
<th>Ownership Sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION</td>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>IMPACT</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


The process of empowerment (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005)

Agency

Opportunity Structure

Degree of Empowerment

Development Outcomes
**STRUCTURE**
- institutions and organisations
- discourses
- policies and programmes
- formal and informal laws including:
  - Norms on usage of space
  - Norms on usage of time
- technologies and innovations including: access to ICTs
  - availability of ICTs
  - affordability of ICTs
  - skills needed for ICTs

**AGENT**
- ER = Educational Resources
- PsR = Psychological Resources
- In = Information
- MR = Material Resources
- FR = Financial Resources
- CR = Cultural Resources
- He = Health
- Ti = Time
- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- etc.

**DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES**
- **Primary**: Choice
- **Secondary, as chosen by individual, e.g.**:
  - easier communication
  - increased knowledge
  - better/more social relationships
  - healthy environment
  - increased income
  - increased mobility
  - more time
  - more voice
  - more autonomy
  - etc.

**CAPABILITIES**
- existence of choice
- sense of choice
- use of choice
- achievement of choice

**DEGREES OF EMPOWERMENT**
- Primary: Choice

**ACHIEVED FUNCTIONINGS**
- Ti

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**The Choice Framework**
(Kleine 2007; 2009; 2011 based on Alsop & Heinsohn 2005; DFID 1999)
Announcement:

2011 Conference of the HDCA: Innovation, Development & Human Capabilities 5th - 8th September.
The conference has been a great success, with a busy and engaging schedule. Conference information...

2012 HDCA conference to be held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 5-7th September Theme: "Revisiting Development: Do We Assess It Rightly?"

The Human Development and Capability Association promotes research from many disciplines on problems related to impoverishment, justice, and well-being. HDCA members live in over 70 countries. This website is our primary space for interaction and for building an intellectual and policy community around the ideas of human development.

Most of the material posted on the website is publicly accessible. Some, such as videos of lectures and material under copyright, is available to members only.
Good places to start reading:


Ways of applying the Choice Framework

1. Deconstructing the values embedded in technologies and technology-related policy

2. Systemic mapping of the role ICTs play in the development process

3. Action Research/Participatory Design/Planning for choice
DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Primary: Choice

Secondary, as chosen by individual, e.g.:
- easier communication
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DEGREES OF EMPOWERMENT
- existence of choice
- sense of choice
- use of choice
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ACHIEVED FUNCTIONINGS

The Choice Framework
(Kleine 2007; 2009; 2011 based on Alsop & Heinsohn 2005; DFID 1999)
The project aims to enquire whether public e-procurement can be:
- democratized
- used in the service of sustainable development

Early Findings:

Ethical Consumption and sustainable procurement in Brazil

Brazil has a growing middle class.

- The launching in 2011 of the Plano de Ação para Produção e Consumo Sustentáveis, by the Ministério do Meio Ambiente;
- Training material to support government officials in their sustainable buying decisions;
- Adoption of sustainable public procurement by the states São Paulo and Minas Gerais;
- Sustainability Plan for the 2016 Olympic Games;
- Government support to Economia Solidária (strengthening collaborative ties between producers, traders and consumers).

Some recent government actions fostering sustainable procurement in Brazil:

- Financial support to Efficient Public Procurement "Programa de Gestão de Energia, Eficiência Ecológica e Eficiência Energética (MGEEEE)"
- Social Class distribution in 2009

Brazil and Chile are former developing countries which are now classified as middle-income but suffer from some of the highest levels of inequality in the world.

What is seen as ethical is negotiated differently in different societies. In order to use buying power as a lever in democracies, we must explore what people locally see as "ethical" choices in their own buying decisions and what criteria they want the state to use when making purchasing decisions in their name.

Ethical Consumption in Chile

Since the democratic governments of the 90s, tertiary education has expanded, levels of poverty have fallen and there is a growing middle class (Tironi 2003; Castells 2005).

In Chile, the concept of sustainable consumption has more political visibility and is more centered on environmental aspects, whereas responsible consumption has gained purchase recently with civil society and government agencies. Some particular forms of consumption in Chile are considered 'ethical', for example, financial savings related to some types of resources such as water, electricity etc. This is particularly evident in income-poor families and among women in charge of the domestic budget.

In order for the capability approach to be adopted more widely, two key challenges have to be overcome.

- **Operationalisation** – how to translate the conceptual richness into practice

- **Controllability** – funders would prefer a priori predictable development impacts
Related paper:


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Book forthcoming MIT Press 2012 Autumn Catalogue

Masters in Practising Sustainable Development (ICT4D specialism)  
www.gg.rhul.ac.uk/psd/ict4d
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Thank You!
The sustainable livelihood framework (DFID 1999)

[Diagram showing the sustainable livelihood framework with key components and outcomes]