
or not. Finally, as Ear admits, the sample is not representative, given the snowball sampling used and the underrepresentation of respondents from the Royal Cambodian Government.

Nonetheless, Ear's in-depth understanding of Cambodia has enabled him to provide valuable lessons for policy-makers working in the country as well as for other countries experiencing post-conflict reconstruction. It is clear from his analysis that the one-size-fits-all approach that donors have tended to use is doomed to failure.

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The Capability Approach: Development Practice and Public Policy in the Asia-Pacific Region. Edited by Francis Panzironi and Katherine Gelber. Abingdon and New York: Routledge. Pp. 214.

This is a very good introduction of the capability approach, a form of evaluation for public policy. Rather than asking if a policy has simply improved incomes, opportunities, or even happiness, it asks if the policy has improved the ability to do things that people themselves want to do. It is an attractive approach, particularly for those in the education sector. The idea goes back to Aristotelian ideas of human flourishing. The key distinction made by its modern proponent, the economist Amartya Sen, is between capability (the ability, resources, and opportunities) and "functionings" (the valued outcomes, which may vary between people and groups). For example, welfare policy should not simply be aimed at providing indigenous minorities with the same level of services as everyone else but should be supporting them in achieving their own particular goals, which may be quite different from those of the majority.

The edited book, which is an outcome of a conference in 2009, is divided into three parts. The first introduces the ideas, particularly those

of Sen himself, and the philosopher, Martha Nussbaum, who developed her own interpretation of them. From her work on development and the role of women in India, she devised a list of ten "central human capabilities" ranging from bodily health and integrity through the ability to form attachments, affiliate with others, and play. There is an obvious link to ideas of human rights, and similar questions arise about their universality and openness to change. The book's introduction also rehearses objections to Sen and Nussbaum's arguments but goes on to show the potential capability theory has on tackling old problems from a new perspective.

The second part of the book considers the application of these ideas to the intransigent problems of marginalization in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in: government policy towards indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand; older people and urban development in Sydney; and the living standards of Australian children generally. The authors use different methods — interviews, analysis of the law, and regression analysis — to highlight the manner in which capability theory can address these issues.

The third part turns to developing countries, particularly: Samoa; Vanuatu; Papua New Guinea; and Sri Lanka. This section shows how capability theory is being applied by researchers in the region to tackle local issues in the aforementioned countries. Case studies are hence shown to detail the impact of the applications. As such, new insight is provided by focusing on a much-neglected area and once again shows the applicability of capability theory.

The book provides a well-edited, serious-minded introduction to the ideas behind the capability approach and its application in multiple contexts. While the introduction recognizes the "limitations" of the approach, the case studies predictably endorse and confirm its value. The cases — from the Papua New Guinean youth, Taylor, whose story provided evidence of flourishing, through to the Buddhist-run ICT village in Sri Lanka — bring the text to life by providing impactful and heartwarming instances of success.

The book is self-consciously critical and partisan towards earlier non-capability approaches, which sometimes appear caricatured as straw men. This is perhaps inevitable for conferences which attract the like-minded. Many of the authors are uneasy about the liberalism in both Sen and Nussbaum's work and after their claims to radicalism, it is surprising to learn in the chapter on Papua New Guinea that the capability approach has become quite orthodox, at least within parts of the United Nations (p. 173).

A few minor issues mar the book from being stronger and more useful than it currently is. Including some critics and disappointing practical outcomes of the approach could have provided a more well-rounded analysis in order to show the extent to which the theory fails to deliver. It is also a difficult read as acronyms, legal provisions, and government policy jargon are littered throughout.

The book would have been easier on the reader and would have also fleshed out the topic further if it had taken into account the ninth of Nussbaum's "central human capabilities": play.

While there is no concluding chapter to wrap up the arguments, the volume still offers a unique analysis of the capability approach to development practice and public policy. The scope of this book should advance the application of the capability approach and is an invaluable resource for those interested in its theoretical aspects and applications. For those new to the subject, it would be wise to brush up on the jargon and legal background of the capability framework before attempting this otherwise insightful read.

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