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The Capability Approach through the lenses of German development NGOs

A case study of NGOs in the German development cooperation sector

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Abstract

The Capability Approach (CA) has been increasingly gaining popularity amongst scholars and policy-makers, offering an alternative to the so far predominant position of the GDP as the primary measure of human development. The CA is a normative framework which can be used as a basis to conceptualize and evaluate socio-economic and political phenomena such as inequality and human well-being. One of the core strengths of the CA is its focus on the individual's capabilities and well-being while taking into consideration the surrounding socio-economic context. While a growing number of papers are being published, using the CA as a conceptual framework to assess human well-being and evaluate and critique socio-economic policies, there remains little to no mentioning of the CA in reports of German development organizations on the CA. With a focus on NGOs in the German development cooperation system, this thesis thus assesses (i) how widely known and applied the CA and the underlying idea of 'development as freedom' are amongst a small sample of NGOs in German development cooperation and (ii) how development experts working in these NGOs assess on the one hand the challenges to implementing the CA into the working processes of their respective NGOs and on the other hand the CA's potential to become an alternative framework to guide the conceptualization and evaluation of development projects. The findings of this study show that the CA is hardly known amongst this study's respondents and while some features of the CA appear to be reflected in the NGOs' guiding principles and working processes, they cannot with full certainty be traced back to the CA. The identified challenges and obstacles to an implementation of the CA in the German development cooperation system include amongst others the lack of communication between academia/research and development practice, the respondents' perception that the CA is too abstract for reality, and a number of issues such as inflexible hierarchical structures, complex bureaucracy and lack of time and staff capacities etc. which can be traced back to organizational structures within the German development cooperation system. The thesis concludes with a call to raise further awareness of the CA amongst development practitioners and to strengthen the exchange between development scholars and practitioners to join forces in searching for ways of how to best operationalize the CA.

Keywords: Capability Approach, German development cooperation, NGOs, Human development and well-being

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List of abbreviations

BNA	Basic Needs Approach
CA	Capability Approach
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation <i>Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung</i>
DCS	Development Cooperation System
DEval	German Institute for Development Evaluation <i>Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit</i>
DIE	German Institute for Development Politics <i>Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik</i>
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HDCA	Human Development and Capability Association
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ISEW	Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TA	Thematic Analysis
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VENRO	Association for Development Politics and Humanitarian Aid <i>Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe</i>

1. Introduction

Human well-being. Upon asking around 100 people about their understanding of human well-being, one might get around 100 different answers. Some people might focus on the term on an individual level while others might extend it to a larger part of the society, some might refer to such things as being fed, having shelter and feeling protected/safe while others might highlight financial or material aspects and even others might put an emphasis on mental well-being, or refer to political freedom, the compliance of human rights or participation in community life etc. This variety of different understandings of what to take into account when measuring human well-being is similarly reflected in the discourse around human development on a macro-level.

“The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material and financial wealth.” – Mahub ul Haq, 1990 (Nussbaum, 2009)

This quote from Mahub ul Haq from 1990 marks a shift in the development discourse from the until then dominant economic paradigm of human development to a more people-centered approach to human development and well-being which has at its core the focus on people’s opportunities and choices. This perspective is reflected amongst others in the latest United Nations Development Programme’s (UNDP) Human Development Report (HDR), stating that “human development is about empowering people to identify and pursue their own paths for a meaningful life, one anchored in expanding freedoms” (UNDP, 2020, p. 6). The origin of the idea of enhancing people’s freedom to live a life they value and to provide people with opportunities but leave the actual choice up to them, can be traced back to the mid-1980s and the development economist Amartya Sen (1985, 1992, 1993, 1999). He coined the concept of capabilities and thus developed the foundation for what is today known as the Capability Approach (CA).

The CA is a conceptual framework which can be used as a basis to conceptualize and evaluate socio-economic and political phenomena such as inequality, human well-being etc. regardless of the geographic or economic context, as they are relevant phenomena worldwide (Robeyns, 2006). In line with the CA, Sen (1999), Martha Nussbaum (2003, 2009, 2013b) and a number of other scholars (Alkire, 2002; Clark, 2005; Northover, 2014; Robeyns, 2003, 2005, 2006) argue that the primary end, the principle goal and purpose of development is freedom. The

freedom to have a wide set of capabilities and to be able to choose to live a life that one considers to be valuable.

The CA has been applied to a wide array of aspects related to human development and well-being, broadening the perspective on human well-being beyond the focus on economic growth. However, while a growing number of researchers apply the CA as a framework to their studies, there remains a big gap in the literature when it comes to recommendations, guidelines or shared experiences of how to implement the CA in the everyday work of institutions of development cooperation. Thus, while the CA keeps gaining in popularity amongst researchers in academia and sporadically in the context of some praxis-oriented projects, it remains unclear how widely the CA has already been and generally can be implemented into the everyday working processes of institutions working towards the aim of fighting inequality and improving the well-being of people, e.g. development cooperation organizations. This identified research gap motivates this thesis' research aim.

1.1. Research aim and questions

The overall aim of the thesis is to give an insight into the discourse around the CA in the specific context of German NGOs in the sector of development cooperation. The two key objectives of this thesis are thus (i) to get an understanding of how widely known and applied the CA and the underlying idea of 'development as freedom' are amongst NGOs in German development cooperation and (ii) to get an insight into how development experts working in these NGOs assess on the one hand the challenges to implementing the CA into the working processes of their respective NGOs and on the other hand how they assess the CA's potential to become an alternative framework to guide the conceptualization and evaluation of development projects. In line with this, two research question have been developed which will guide this thesis:

- (1) How widely known and applied is the CA amongst German NGOs working in the sector of development cooperation?
- (2) Which challenges and advantages do German NGOs in the field of development cooperation see in implementing the CA into the working processes of German development cooperation?

The specific research interest in German NGOs is motivated with their interface position between the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) which shapes and manages German development policies on the one hand and the local implementing partners in the respective targeted countries on the other hand. Due to this

position, German NGOs face the challenge to find the balance between meeting the formal criteria expected from the BMZ's side as well as other financial donors while at the same time staying true to their statutes and having the best possible impact in cooperation with their local implementing partners (Bohnet, 2019).

1.2. Outline of thesis

The present thesis is structured around seven main sections. After this first introductory chapter, the second chapter encompasses a literature review, giving an overview over some of the previous research that has been done on the CA as well as with the CA as a theoretical framework over the last two decades. The third chapter first provides the reader with background knowledge on past and present conceptualizations of understanding and measuring human development and well-being and thereafter introduces the reader to the German DCS in order to clarify the role of NGOs in the German DCS, being the only data source for the empirical analysis of this thesis. The fourth chapter is then dedicated to giving an insight into the CA as the theoretical framework guiding this thesis, starting with the origin and core concepts of the CA and then presenting how the capability approach has been criticized and further developed by several scholars in the field of development studies and development economics. Thereafter, the research methodology applied in this thesis is introduced in chapter five. The sixth chapter presents and discusses the interpretations of the findings of the data analysis while linking them to the literature review and the theoretical framework. The last chapter of this thesis then draws a conclusion and formulates recommendations for further research on the topic.

2. Literature review

Over the last decades, the number of papers and books on the CA or working with the CA as a framework has significantly increased. This is reflected amongst others in the regularly updated bibliography on the CA, provided by the HDCA, the Human Development and Capability Association (HDCA, 2021a). The HDCA was founded in 2004 with the purpose of creating an exchange platform for scholars and practitioners interested in the CA (HDCA, 2021b). Aside from organizing lecture series and conferences, the HDCA regularly publishes the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities and annually uploads an overview of key publications that have been published in that year on the topic of the CA. This overview is getting more extensive each year, thus reflecting the increasing interest of scholars and practitioners across several disciplines in the CA (HDCA, 2021a).

Sen (1985, 1992, 1993, 1999) and Nussbaum (2003, 2013b) as the two most influential scholars in setting the scene around the CA, as well as authors such as Robeyns (2005, 2006, 2017), Alkire (2002, 2005), Stewart and Deneulin (2002), Meeks (2018), Clark (2005), Corbridge (2002), Frediani (2010) and many others have published several papers and books telling the story of the evolution of Sen's original idea of seeing development as the enhancement of people's substantive freedom from their own perspective and discussing the CA's theoretical implications as well as issues around its operationalization (this will be more extensively discussed in chapter 4). Furthermore, a growing number of researchers have taken the CA as a framework to conceptualize specific issues in their expertise area, some of which will be briefly outlined in the subsequent paragraphs.

In 2006, Robeyns published a paper where she reviews the spread of literature on applications of the CA across disciplines. Robeyns (2006) differentiates nine areas of application of the CA: (i) the general assessments of the human development of a country, (ii) the assessment of human well-being and the identification of the poor and deprived in developing countries as well as (iii) in more advanced economies, (iv) analysis of deprivation of disabled people, (v) the assessment of gender inequalities, (vi) theoretical and empirical analyses of social policies, (vii) critiques on social norms, practices and discourses, (viii) the use of functionings and capabilities as concepts in non-normative research and lastly, (ix) the assessment of small scale development projects. Since the publication of this paper, the amount of literature on the CA has significantly increased, thus also expanding the variety of areas to which the CA has been applied. However, I would argue that most of the published literature on the CA could still be categorized into the above listed categories.

Based on the available amount of literature on this topic, one of the areas in which the CA might have made the biggest impact so far is the area of education and education policies (HDCA, 2021a). Some authors focus on the role of education for children's agency, participatory rights and overall development and well-being by arguing that education enhances children's capabilities and significantly increases their opportunities and abilities to have a freedom of choice with regards to living a life they have reason to value, at a later point in life (Hart & Brando, 2018; Walker, 2005). Other authors such as Bonvin and Laruffa (2019) point out the more general importance of education for people's well-being through the lenses of the CA. In line with the CA's vision to see human development as the expansion of people's real freedom to lead a life they have reason to value, Bonvin and Laruffa (2019) point out that the CA allows to emphasize how focusing on education contributes to enhance people's capability set and thus

their chances to live a life they have reason to value, rather than focusing on education as an investment into social capital to increase economic growth. In particular, Bonvin and Laruffa (2019, p. 35) argue that rethinking education policies from a perspective of the CA instead of focusing on the “economic returns of investing in education”, highlights the importance and potential of education in strengthening democratic citizenship. From the CA’s perspective, education can thus be viewed as a conversion factor of democracy, as it largely contributes to enhance people’s autonomous thinking, which in return forms a crucial basis for achieving a large number of other capabilities (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2019).

While much has been written on education from a CA perspective, Biggeri et al. (2011) highlight that there is still a gap in terms of how little the CA has yet been applied to other issues around children and youth. Originally having been developed with a focus on adults, the CA as a framework for evaluating the well-being of individuals and the effectiveness of policies offers an immense potential for the application to the issue of children’s well-being (Biggeri et al., 2011; Domínguez-Serrano et al., 2018; Hart et al., 2014). Biggeri et al. (2011) attempt to contribute to bridge this gap, by inviting several researchers to contribute to their book with chapters on issues such as children’s agency, child poverty as a capability deprivation and the role of emotions and parenting style in developing children’s capabilities (Biggeri et al., 2011). By drawing on case studies from Peruvian, Ethiopian, Italian and several other communities worldwide, Biggeri et al. (2011) show the vast applicability of the CA, regardless of the geographical location of the target group. While Biggeri et al. (2011) focus on children in impoverished contexts, Domínguez-Serrano et al. (2018) emphasize the usefulness of applying the CA to children’s well-being regardless of the financial and material setting they grow up in. Using the framework of the CA, Domínguez-Serrano et al. (2018) perform a study where they include children’s voices in developing a set of capabilities crucial to the achievement of children’s well-being in a non-marginalized context. Their study shows how children prioritize aspects of well-being distinct from the ones associated with adult life and concludes with a call for further needed research in this area (Domínguez-Serrano et al., 2018).

Apart from offering a helpful framework to conceptualize the well-being of children, de São José et al. (2019) demonstrate how the CA is also applicable to assess the well-being of older generations in society and evaluate and design social policies accordingly. With their work, de São José et al. (2019) call for a re-thinking of how older people’s needs and preferences are being approached in current policy making. Instead of designing policies which view

population aging as a burden to society, de São José et al. (2019) argue that older people should be seen as agents who have a diversity of needs and preferences as well as varying capabilities.

On a different note, Drange (2018) discusses how the understanding of the concept of well-being differs according to the cultural and religious context by comparing the perspectives of Andean indigenous people and Western aid workers of church-based organizations in the Andes. While Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2013c) have also reflected on that issue, Drange (2018) takes this one step further by asking how those differences of the conceptualization and understanding of well-being affect the performance and results of development cooperation initiatives. He concludes that in order for development cooperation initiatives to be successful, development workers must be aware and take into consideration the variety of their target groups' worldviews at all stages of planning, implementing and evaluating the respective projects (Drange, 2018).

To conclude, over the last three decades, the CA has been applied to a variety of issues related to human development and well-being, broadening the perspective on human well-being beyond the focus on economic growth. However, while the HDCA regularly updates the list of newly published literature on the CA, the applications of the CA are so divers regarding the thematic areas and the ways in which the CA is applied, that is difficult for newcomers to the CA to grasp the core ideas of the approach (Robeyns, 2005). Given this contradictory notion that on the one hand, the basic idea of capabilities has been around since the 1990s and ever since, annually been referenced in the UNDP's HDR, and on the other hand there is an increasing interest in the CA but only scattered and comparatively scarce literature on the application of the CA as a normative framework, this thesis aims to assess on the example of German development cooperation, how widely known and applied the CA is amongst NGOs as key stakeholders in German development cooperation and how development experts in those NGOs assess the strengths and challenges to the implementation of the CA in their guiding principles and everyday working processes.

3. Background

This chapter provides background knowledge on two different aspects relevant for the further understanding of this thesis. First, a variety of different understandings of the meaning of development and the measurement of human well-being will be outlined, while embedding them in their historical and philosophical context. This is deemed important for this thesis, as

the CA originates from a critique of traditional notions of development (i.e. measuring human well-being in terms of opulence or utility) (Clark, 2005). Moreover, I believe that only by reflecting on past understandings and measurements of human development and well-being, currently prevalent discourses on the topic can be fully understood – and this in turn forms an important basis for understanding how and why alternative perspectives have emerged. Second, this chapter will provide an overview of the German DCS and specifically the role of NGOs in this development apparatus which serves as background knowledge for the further analysis of the data.

3.1. Human development and well-being

For many years, the most prevalent perspective of development economics has been one promoting economic growth and income maximization (Clark, 2005; Stewart & Deneulin, 2002). The focus of this debate largely lay on the growth of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)¹ and the Gross National Product (GNP)² (Lawn, 2003). These two metrics are the most common tools to assess the economic strength of a country (OECD, 2021). However, while GDP and GNP provide a reasonable measure for assessing the overall economic situation of a country in terms of its production and the nation's income, it is important to keep in mind that neither of these two measures are and were ever intended to be a measure of human welfare (Aitken, 2019; Kapoor & Debroy, 2019). Nevertheless, both measures keep regularly being used as such, thus, as suggested by Aitken (2019), perhaps reflecting the obvious need for an alternative conceptualization and measure of human well-being. Further shortcomings of the GDP and GNP are (i) that they are not suited for comparisons over time, as they are not solely a reflection of real economic growth, but also influenced by changes in prices etc. (OECD, 2021), (ii) that positive or negative effects created in the process of production and development of goods and services are not taken into consideration, (iii) the failure to capture the distribution of income across society, thus excluding the notion of inequality (Kapoor & Debroy, 2019) and the lack of consideration of socio-cultural, political and environmental factors such as health, education, participation in political life, environmental degradation etc. (Nussbaum, 2003).

Utilitarian welfarism offers an alternative approach to evaluate human well-being, by focusing on dimensions such as people's happiness, pleasure and desire fulfillment (Clark, 2005). While the goal of an utilitarian approach to human welfare is to maximize the sum of individual

¹ The calculation of the GDP includes the value of goods and services produced within a country's borders over a certain period of time (Aitken, 2019).

² The GNP includes the total worth of production and services by citizens of a country during a certain period, whether they live within the national borders of the respective country or abroad (Aitken, 2019).

utilities, it leaves aside the question of how equally those utilities are distributed amongst a society. Thus, as the idea of utilitarian welfare is that no one's well-being, i.e. happiness, should be increased if it leads to reducing someone else's happiness, it actually reinforces the status quo of existing inequalities (Corbridge, 2002). Furthermore, utilitarianism does not manage to adequately take into consideration the issue of adaptive preferences when assessing people's happiness (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2019). This refers to how people's desires and expectations usually adapt according to their respective living situation. For instance, people who are financially well-off might feel unhappy by not being able to afford a certain luxury car, Bonvin and Laruffa (2019, p. 24) refer to this as the "problem of expensive tastes", while an impoverished person might feel immensely happy to have managed to have earned enough money to afford a small portion of rice and thus not having to starve. In other words, utilitarianism risks to mix up "the tolerance (or even pride) that exploited and consistently deprived people might express about their daily lives with the notion that they gain (or even maximize) utility from this suffering" (Corbridge, 2002, p. 188). By adjusting their desires and expectations to the circumstances they live in, often due to sheer lack of opportunities, assessing those people's level of utilities distorts the informative value of the measure of utility (Bonvin & Laruffa, 2019; Corbridge, 2002).

To conclude, neither monetary metrics as GDP or GNP nor utilitarian welfarism as an alternative approach to economic measures manage to capture the heterogeneity, incommensurability or the dimension of inequality of human development (Nussbaum, 2003). With rising criticism on monetary and utilitarian measures of human well-being and development over the last three decades, numerous approaches have been developed in an attempt to offer more inclusive and holistic measures.

One of the first alternatives to the GDP was the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW), developed in 1989 by Herman Daly and John Cobb, adding social and ecological factors to the GDP (Lawn, 2003). Originally developed to assess the benefits and costs of economic growth in the US, the index was over the following years modified and applied to a number of other countries, mainly in the northern hemisphere (ibid). Those modifications of the ISEW have become known under names such as the Genuine Progress Indicator or the Sustainable Net Benefit Index (ibid.).

An other approach to assess human development and well-being which goes beyond the role of economic growth in human development is the Basic Needs Approach (BNA). This approach was already developed in the early 1970s and reached its peak in influencing development

agencies' agendas in the mid and late 70s (Hoadley, 1981; Weigel, 1986). The BNA defines as the primary goal of development the aim to provide all people with a certain minimum standard of basic needs. The basic needs included in the BNA encompass (i) minimum requirements of a family for consumption of food, shelter, clothing, and household equipment, (ii) essential services provided by and for the community such as water, sanitation, public transport and facilities for health, education, and culture, (iii) the aspect of freely chosen employment and (iv) participation of the people in making decisions which affect them through organizations of their own choice. Furthermore, the BNA emphasizes the importance of basic needs policies strengthening peoples' dignity and enabling them to have the "freedom to chart their destiny without hinderance" (Hoadley, 1981, p. 150).

One of today's most widely known and applied approaches to measure human development and well-being is the Human Development Index (HDI). The HDI was introduced in 1990 by Mahub ul Haq and Amartya Sen under the umbrella of the UNDP. The index revolutionized the until then dominant paradigms of development economics by offering a measure of human development and well-being that covers three dimensions: longevity, education and living standard (UNDP, 2021b). Thus, the HDI allows to rank and compare countries by something other than solely economic growth. Similar to the criticism that has been raised about other indices attempting to measure human development and well-being, the HDI has been criticized for being too simplified and for only allowing an assessment of a very limited number of factors influencing human well-being (Kovacevic, 2010). Indeed, the HDI is, as all other previously presented indices, a crude simplification and generalization of reality. However, the HDI has never been claimed to be capturing all dimensions of human development and well-being (Kovacevic, 2010). On the contrary, ul Haq and Sen were/are well aware of the sheer impossibility to reflect the rather complex reality of human development and deprivation in one single number. The primary motivation behind the HDI was rather to create an alternative index to economic measures, which has "the same level of vulgarity as GNP – just one number – but [...] is not as blind to social aspects of human lives as GNP is" (Sen, n.a.). Furthermore, the HDI is meant to catch people's interest to then direct their attention to the annually published HDR, which contains an extensive collection of tables and written analyses on a variety of social, economic and political features that influence the nature and quality of human life (UNDP, 2020). However, while the UNDP's approach to human well-being as stated on their website and in the HDRs is based on Sen's concept of capabilities and the notion of freedom, Nussbaum (2013b, p. 17) notes that "these reports [the HDRs] use the notions of capabilities as a comparative measure rather than as a basis for normative political theory". Thus, while

advocating for a constant re-evaluation and when deemed necessary reorientation of the development and policy debate, the UNDP does not promote a systematic economic or political theory on social justice and inequality (ibid.).

To conclude in the words of Aitken (2019, p. R14), “measurement matters”, because how and what we measure affects what we do. Different types of measurement of economic welfare and human well-being affect policy choices in different ways. Choosing to focus on the economic development of a country, promoting the increase of income and material prosperity of a society might lead policies along one pathway, while focusing on a rather utilitarian approach might inform and shape policies quite differently. Thus, consciously, or not, the ‘glasses’ people wear when planning, implementing, and evaluating development initiatives strongly shape the world they live in. Thus, it is of major importance to reflect and be aware of one’s own glasses in the process of mingling in development cooperation and to stay open minded to switch the glasses according to the given socio-political and cultural context and the respective communities’ and individuals’ needs.

3.2. The German development cooperation system

With a total budget of 12.43 billion euros for the fiscal year of 2021³, Germany is a global leader in the sector of international development aid and cooperation (BMZ, 2021b). In 2019 for instance, Germany was the largest government contributor for UNDP funding (UNDP, 2021a). Over the course of the last century Germany developed from being a recipient of international aid programs itself to being listed as the second largest bilateral donor of Official Development Assistance in 2019 (BMZ, 2021a). Yet, given the multitude of governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in shaping policies, setting agendas and implementing, monitoring, and evaluating projects of development cooperation, concerns about transparency and accountability have been on the rise throughout the last years.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the agencies involved in Germany’s development cooperation and depicts how they influence the German Development Cooperation policy and where the main funding flows. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), founded in 1961, is the primary federal authority shaping Germany’s

³ Almost half of the budget is being spent in the context of bilateral official development cooperation. The remaining budget is split up between civil society and business groups and institutions, the European Development Fund, UN and international institutions, the World Bank, regional banks, for international food security and global environmental protection, for research, evaluation and training in development cooperation and to cover the ministry costs.

long-term development cooperation policy⁴. The actual implementation of development projects is outsourced to a number of implementing organizations. These implementing organizations comprise amongst others the Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), the German Development Bank (KfW), and a number of political foundations, church aid organizations, NGOs and other agencies. Each of these implementing organizations in turn has then either own organizational structures in the respective targeted countries and/or cooperates with local partner organizations. The German development cooperation system places a lot of importance on the local NGOs in the target communities of German development projects, as they are seen as on-the-ground experts (NGO-Monitor, 2019).

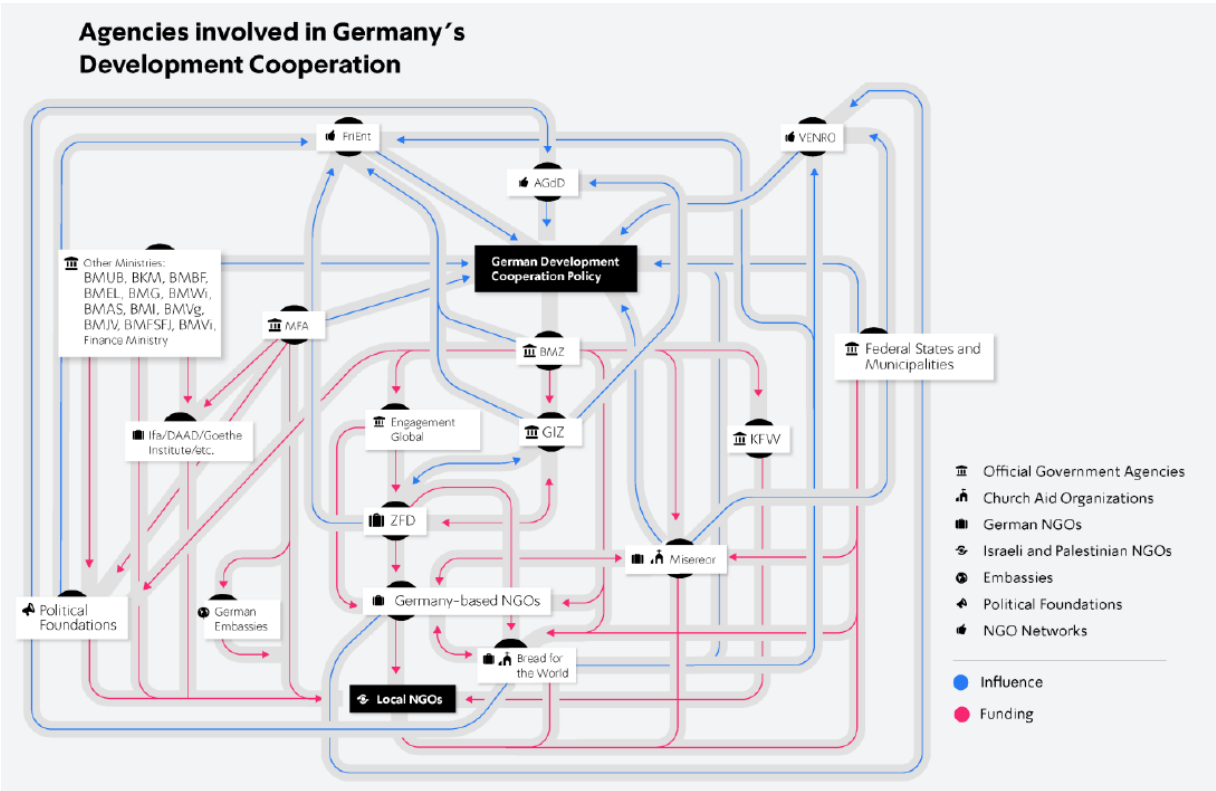


Figure 1: Agencies involved in Germany's development cooperation (NGO-Monitor, 2019)

NGOs are per definition non-profit groups that function independently of any government and are organized on community, national and international level to serve a specific social or political purpose often related to humanitarian causes or the environment (Folger, 2021). Given their non-profit characteristic, NGOs rely on a variety of sources for funding. These can include private donations but often also comprise government funding. NGOs can largely vary in size and regarding the budget they run each year (ibid.).

⁴ The German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (AA) is responsible for activities related to humanitarian and emergency aid. However, since this thesis revolves mainly around long-term development cooperation, the AA will hereafter be left aside.

In order to connect with each other and amplify their influence the course of German development cooperation policies, a large number of NGOs became members of multiple federal frameworks and umbrella organizations (NGO-Monitor, 2019). One of these umbrella organizations is the German Association for Development Politics and Humanitarian Aid, VENRO (Verband Entwicklungspolitik und Humanitäre Hilfe). The association was founded in 1995 and currently consists of around 140 NGOs. VENRO's main goals are (i) to represent the interests of development and humanitarian NGOs in front of the German government, (ii) to strengthen the role of NGOs and civil society in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, and (iii) to raise public awareness on aspects related to development cooperation, humanitarian issues and overall sustainable development. While the NGOs which are part of VENRO vary in their size, their founding date, the geographical and thematic focus of their projects and the deeper motivation behind their activities (e.g. driven by religious vs. non-religious values), they all share a common goal: to join forces in attempting to reduce poverty, contribute to the realization of human rights and to conserve natural resources (VENRO, 2021).

The high complexity of the German development cooperation system due to its decentralized structure and the large amount of actors involved, makes it hard to follow the flow of funding (i.e. the taxpayers' money). Additionally contributing to a lack of transparency and accountability for the public is the fact that even though they play a vital role in the German DCS, handling large amounts of partly governmental funding each year, German NGOs are not required to publish information regarding partnerships, financial statements or the use of funds, (Kessen, 2020; NGO-Monitor, 2019). The need for more transparency and accountability in the sector of German development cooperation was also reflected in a paper on opinion monitoring for German development policy, published in 2018 by the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval). The DEval was established in 2012 and is the biggest government-independent actor in the sector of evaluation of German development cooperation. The institute's main purposes are on the one hand to provide actors in the German DCS with information on how to optimize their strategies, instruments and programs and on the other hand to provide academia and the interested public with more detailed information on current projects and working processes of the actors in the German DCS (DEval, 2021).

Based on the complex structure of the German DCS, the colonial history of North-South relationships and cooperation and remaining post-/neocolonial structures⁵ and a large number of other factors, there remain a large number of highly contested questions in not only the German, but the international development cooperation discourse. Is there a way, and if so, how, to ensure that the development cooperation projects and programs that are being developed and implemented best meet the needs of the targeted population? How do we ensure that projects are being developed, implemented, and evaluated based on an equal footing between all involved stakeholders? How do we measure and evaluate the success of a project and who gets to decide that?

While none of these questions will be further pursued and answered in this thesis, their purpose is to emphasize the challenge for and responsibility of actors in (German) development cooperation to find a balance between learning from past lessons and staying open-minded about new approaches to find the best fit for each individual project and each individual within the target group of those projects. In line with this perspective, the next chapter will give an insight into one such approach that focuses on the individual while being highly perceptive and considerate of the respective socio-cultural and economic context.

4. Theoretical framework – The Capability Approach

The CA is a broad normative framework for the assessment and evaluation of individual well-being, social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals about societal change (Alkire, 2002; Frediani, 2010; Nussbaum, 2003; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Robeyns, 2006). An aspect that is commonly stressed by scholars engaging with the CA is that the approach is not a theory that can *explain* poverty, inequality or well-being. Instead, the capability approach should rather be understood as a conceptual framework which can be used as a basis to *conceptualize and evaluate* these and other societal phenomena (Robeyns, 2006). The following sub-chapters give an insight into (i) the CA and its origins, (ii) different variations of the CA, especially based on the controversial debate around universally applicable capability sets and (iii) critiques and refinements of the approach.

⁵ Given the limited scope of this thesis this issue will not be further elaborated on. However, I want to acknowledge the importance of the colonial history in shaping and influencing German development cooperation to this day.

The knowledge derived from this review on the CA served as the basis for developing the interview guide for interviews with representatives of seven German NGOs in the sector of international development cooperation sector. Furthermore, the CA as the theoretical framework of this thesis served as a starting point to develop a first set of codes to analyze the interviews. More information on the research methodology and the coding process can be found in the next chapter.

4.1. The origin and core concepts of the Capability Approach

The concept of capabilities has been pioneered by Amartya Sen (1985, 1992, 1993, 1999) winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 and one of the most renowned contemporary development economists, in the 1980s and has from there been developed into what is now widely known as the Capability Approach. Over the last two decades the CA has been significantly further developed by Sen (1992, 1993, 1999) himself, the philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2003, 2013b) and a growing number of other scholars (Alkire, 2002, 2005; Clark, 2005; Corbridge, 2002; Frediani, 2010; Kuklys, 2005; Northover, 2014; Robeyns, 2005, 2006; Robeyns, 2017). With the foundation of the HDCA in 2004, a platform has been created for scholars and practitioners across several disciplines to promote research and policy implementation related to the concepts of human development, well-being and capabilities (HDCA, 2021b).

In 1999 Sen published a book, “Development as Freedom”, presenting the core values and concepts influencing his understanding of human development and well-being, which form the basis of the capability approach. The book presents an overview of Sen’s perspective on human development and well-being by drawing on some of his previous work on welfare-economics, social choice theory and economic and social justice (Corbridge, 2002). Sen’s origin from India and his experience of studying and teaching in the global South as well as in the global North provide the basis for his very powerful and insightful contributions to the fields of economics and development studies.

At the core of the CA is the idea that the assessment of the well-being or quality of life of an individual or judgements about the level of development of a community or a country should not primarily focus on material goods or financial resources (as suggested by the use of economic measure such as the GDP) or on maximizing people’s happiness (as proposed by advocates of utilitarianism) “but on the effective opportunities that people have to lead the lives they have reason to value” (Robeyns, 2006, p. 351). Sen here draws on Aristotle in arguing that

the main goal of advancing human development should be that of “providing conditions which facilitate people’s ability to lead flourishing lives” (Stewart & Deneulin, 2002, p. 62). Thus, the CA views development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy and focusses on what people are effectively able to do and to be, that is, on their capabilities (Corbridge, 2002; Nussbaum, 2013a; Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1999).

4.1.1. The notion of freedom

While Sen has a background in economics, what sets his work apart from most other economists is that he has largely contributed to moving the economics and development studies paradigm away from the common emphasis on economic growth towards more humanistic questions revolving around personal well-being, agency and freedom (Clark, 2005). One of the core strengths of the CA is the clarity about its objective: to expand people’s freedom to make choices that matter to them (Alkire, 2005).

According to Sen (1999), the notion of freedom encompasses (i) universal human and political rights which must be guaranteed to all, (ii) certain social and economic arrangements, and (iii) the notion of individual agency and choice. In clarifying his perspective on the interrelatedness of development and freedom, Sen draws on the term of unfreedom. “Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency. The removal of substantial unfreedoms [...] is constitutive of development” (Sen, 1999, p. xii).

In defining his take on freedom, Sen (1999) distinguishes between on the one hand the intrinsic importance and constitutive role of human freedom and on the other hand the instrumental effectiveness of freedom in development. In other words, he emphasizes the analytical distinction between means and ends. Whilst only the ends have intrinsic importance, the means are instrumental to reach the overarching primary end of increasing human well-being, justice, and development. Sen (1999) explicitly mentions five instrumental freedoms that he perceives as vital to promote the primary goal of human development: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. Thus, while the expansion of human freedom, the freedom to live the kind of life that people have reason to value, can be seen as the main objective of development, at the same time, instrumental freedoms of different kinds have a crucial role in terms of effectively contributing to human freedom (Robeyns, 2005). Hence, the expansion of human freedom is not only the primary end but also the principal means of development (Sen, 1999).

However, the distinctions between the ends and the means often blur, when some ends simultaneously become also means to other ends (Robeyns, 2005). For instance, the state of being well nourished is an end in itself but also a means to the capability to be in good health or to work. This distinction between means and ends also encompasses the discussion about the role of economic factors (e.g. growth of GDP or income on a household level) in contributing to people's well-being and overall human development. While Sen (1999) acknowledges the role of economic factors in expanding the freedom people enjoy he emphasizes that according to his understanding, those economic factors are mainly a means to a bigger end.

To conclude, the overarching aim of the human development and capability paradigm is to make sure that people have the freedom "to choose their own accounts of the good life" (Corbridge, 2002, p. 188). In achieving this aim, the framework of the CA distinguishes between on the one hand the primary end of development, which is to achieve the previously mentioned freedom of choice and on the other hand the instrumental means to achieve certain sub-ends which then contribute to achieve the primary end. Thus, proponents of the CA argue that one of the main advantages of the approach is how it does not only focus on the instrumental means but instead acknowledges the importance of those means in achieving something bigger: the expansion of substantive freedom (Nussbaum, 2003; Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1999).

4.1.2. Functionings & capabilities

According to the CA, the ends of well-being, social justice and development should be conceptualized and assessed based on people's effective opportunities to do what they want to do and be who they want to be (Northover, 2014; Robeyns, 2005). This idea is theorized in the CA through the concepts of functionings and capabilities. Functionings refer to a person's doings (e.g. reading, eating, cycling) and beings (e.g. being well-nourished, being in a good state of health, being able to take part in the social and political life, being able to feel self-respect) and thus to something a person actually experiences or realizes (Frediani, 2010; Northover, 2014). As these examples show, functionings can thus vary from more elementary states of doings and beings to more complex and abstract ones. The concept of capabilities on the other hand mirrors the main idea around which the CA revolves: freedom of choice. Capabilities, as presented by Sen (1999), refer to a person's opportunities or freedom to realize his/her/their functionings. In other words, capabilities reflect the effective possibilities of what people could do and be, even if they end up not pursuing this certain path. Hence, capabilities relate to a person's freedom to choose to live one type of life or another and thus implies the notion of freedom of choice (Kuklys, 2005).

In order to exemplify the difference between functionings and capabilities, Sen (1999) draws on a comparison between the unfreedom and deprivation of a starving person and the liberty of a fasting monk. At first sight, both might have a similar state of functioning regarding their nutritional state: being starved. However, while the monk is refraining from eating out of a deliberate motivation and with an underlying (possibly religious) motive, the starving person might not have any access to food and thus not have an actual choice of whether or not to starve. Thus, while the state of functioning might be the same, the two cases reflect different states of capability, the presence and absence of choice (Northover, 2014). To conclude in Nussbaum's words: "the notion of freedom to choose is thus built into the notion of capability" (Nussbaum, 2013b, p. 25).

Further, Robeyns (2005) illustrates the crucial distinction between on the one hand means, such as goods and services and on the other hand functionings and capabilities, on the example of a bicycle. Goods and services do not have any intrinsic value in themselves but become valuable because they are of interest and importance to people. A bicycle per se is not interesting to people because of its shape, color or the materials it is build from, but because it has a specific value and use for people. To some people the primary value of a bicycle might lay in using it to cycle to facilitate getting from point A to point B and to get to those places faster than say when walking by foot. To other people, a bicycle might have value because the possession of such might bring them prestige. Whatever the reason behind the value, the characteristics of a good or service enable a certain functioning – for instance cycling, being mobile, being faster, being proud, being admired etc.

In illustrating the relation between a good or service and the functionings to achieve certain states of beings and doings, Robeyns (2005) differentiates between three groups of conversion factors: personal, social and environmental. Those conversion factors help understand how a good or service can or cannot be of use and value for people. Personal conversion factors include aspects such as physical condition, sex, reading and writing skills, intelligence etc. Continuing with the example of a bicycle, if a person is in bad physical condition or disabled, owning a bike will be of limited value to that person, at least in terms of enabling the functioning of e.g. mobility. Social conversion factors encompass for instance public policies, social norms, gender roles, power relations etc. Thus, being a young woman in a society where societal, cultural or religious norms do not allow her to leave the house at all or only in company of a male family member, once again, a bike will only to a very limited extent be of use or value to her. Lastly, environmental conversion factors comprise e.g. the surrounding physical

infrastructure, the geographical location or the climate. Not having any paved roads or living in an archipelago where the main means of transport is a boat, a bicycle will be of little use for its owner.

The bicycle is of course only one of countless examples and could have been replaced by any other type of good or service in the above illustration. A pencil, books, a school, an increased number of toilets explicitly for women, a clinic with midwives – none of these or any other goods or services are a guarantee to improve people's quality of life. On the one hand, because as shown above, a number of personal and socio-environmental factors can influence how a person can convert the characteristics of the respective good or service into a functioning (Kuklys, 2005; Robeyns, 2005). And on the other hand, because apart from those conversion factors, every person might have a different understanding of what they consider valuable to lead a 'good life' (Sen, 1999). Hence, knowing what a person owns or to which services they theoretically have access to, does not necessarily result in knowing which functionings this person can achieve. Thus, the CA concludes that in order to assess and evaluate human well-being, justice and development much more knowledge is required on the individual circumstances of each person (Robeyns, 2005). The CA's focus on functionings and capabilities does however not imply that a capability analysis would not take into consideration the importance of certain material and immaterial resources or the evaluation of social institutions, economic growth, or technical advancement etc. On the contrary, the CA explicitly emphasizes the importance of paying attention to whether or not the context in which economic production and social interactions take place is enabling and just (Robeyns, 2005).

To conclude, the CA offers a framework to take account of human diversity by (i) focusing on the plurality of functionings and capabilities of different members of society, by (ii) explicitly taking into consideration the personal and socio-environmental factors influencing the conversion of commodities and services into functionings and by (iii) emphasizing the importance to reflect on the social and institutional context which shapes the conversion factors as well as the capabilities in each context (Robeyns, 2005).

4.1.3. Agency

Another aspect of the CA is the distinction between human well-being and agency freedom. Agency freedom defines "one's ability to promote goals that one has reason to promote" (Sen, 1992, p. 60). As Northover (2014) states, agency freedom as described by Sen is defined through the notion of both negative and positive liberty. Negative liberty relates to the absence from interference, while positive liberty refers to one's own power to reach a certain goal (ibid.).

Not only is it important to acknowledge individuals as entities who have different levels of well-being. Moreover, one should be aware of the agency role of each individual and thus recognize people as responsible agents who can and should be held accountable for their choices and actions. In other words, not only are people fed, in a good health condition, politically engaged or educated, but they can to a certain extent also choose to act in a specific way or refuse to act (Sen, 1999). Thus, every member in society should take responsibility for how they act and for the choices they make.

However, it is important to take into account the context of power those actions are embedded in (Northover, 2014). At least two different aspects regarding underlying power structures should be highlighted in this context. Firstly, the aspect that not all people have the same freedom to take the choices and act the way they might want to act. This might be due to patriarchal structures of a society which might hinder women or children to take empowered and self-determined decisions, due to religious, due to underlying or very explicit structural racism or discrimination of minorities etc. Secondly, one can raise the question of how to make sure and assess that people are informed about all the choices they could possibly have. Further elaborating on this would however exceed the scope of this thesis and lead the focus into a different direction.

To conclude, by focusing on the concept of freedom as a primary end and principle means of development, Sen offers an alternative development objective to e.g. utilitarianism (as claimed by welfarists) or the focus on primary goods. Sen's perspective on development highlights the importance of focusing on human well-being as the quality of life enjoyed through a specific set of valued activities.

4.2. Different variations of the Capability Approach

There is no single interpretation of the CA. While Sen introduced the conceptual and philosophical foundations for the CA in the 1980s, Martha Nussbaum and several other scholars have further developed Sen's version of the CA thus created slightly differing variations of the CA over the last decades (Alkire, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003, 2013b; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Robeyns, 2017). As the most renowned scholar amongst capability theorists and practitioners apart from Sen, I will hereafter focus on the differences between Sen's (1992, 1993, 1999) and Nussbaum's (2003, 2013a, 2013b) views on the CA.

While Sen and Nussbaum both build their understanding of the CA on the same main concepts (as described in the previous subchapter), their take on the CA differs especially in one main

aspect: the question of whether or not to give a special status to certain central capabilities. Are there any universal capabilities that are imperative to live a life in dignity, a life that one chooses upon reflection and that one has reason to value?

Nussbaum (2013b) explicitly intends for the CA to be a theory of justice and takes a moral-legal-political perspective on the conceptualization of the CA. Based on this stance, Nussbaum (2013b) indeed proposes a specific list of ten central capabilities which according to her understanding must be secured and promoted as requirements for a life with dignity⁶. These central capabilities encompass: (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, and (10) control over one's political and material environment⁷. Anticipating potential criticism on this list, Nussbaum highlights that she considers the list to be "open-ended and subject to ongoing revision and rethinking" in order to acknowledge cultural differences (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 42). Furthermore, she points out that she intentionally formulated the different capabilities in such an abstract and general way, precisely to leave to room to adjust the capabilities to the respective circumstances of the context in which the CA is applied (ibid.). In addition, Nussbaum (2003) emphasizes that she clearly distinguishes between the issues of justification and implementation. Following her understanding, it is each nation's government's responsibility to empower and enable people to pursue a life in dignity and to secure a minimal threshold of the above listed ten central capabilities for each citizen (Nussbaum, 2013b). However, while she believes that this core list of ten fundamental capabilities can be justified as a good basis to inform universal political principles, she recognizes that issues in implementation must be taken into consideration and handled individually while acknowledging the respective socio-cultural, political, and economic context.

Sen on the other hand seems to have an unclear stance on whether or not to prioritize specific capabilities over others or not (Alkire, 2002; Nussbaum, 2003). While he highlights the crucial importance of certain capabilities (such as health, education, political participation, civil liberties etc.) to exemplify his theoretical thoughts, he has been reluctant to provide a specific set of central capabilities. According to Nussbaum (2003), the reason for this originates from his liberal-political philosophy, as he pursues the idea that people should be given the freedom

⁶ Nussbaum dedicates several pages in her book to describing her understanding of the notion of human dignity. Summarizing it will thus not do justice to the complexity of this concept. However, broadly speaking, Nussbaum's understanding of human dignity is closely related to the idea of actively striving for something and can thus be related to the concept of capabilities.

⁷ For further elaborations on the meaning of these ten central capabilities see Nussbaum (2013b)

to decide on all these matters themselves. While Sen's refusal to specify on a list of central capabilities leaves space for critique in terms of policy impracticability and a lack of guidelines for the application of the CA, it allows him to circuit the thorny issue of having to judge and prioritize certain functionings and capabilities and demonstrates respect for the agency of the respective researcher/practitioner (Alkire, 2002; Northover, 2014).

Nussbaum (2003, p. 44) criticizes Sen's vague stance on the question around central capabilities and his emphasis on freedom as "a general all-purpose social good" due to several reasons. First, she raises the issue that there is no unlimited freedom for anyone. Some freedoms inevitably limit others. The freedom of rich people to take a private jet everywhere and thus polluting everything limits the freedom of other people to enjoy an unpolluted environment. The freedom of a huge company to privatize water in a certain region limits the freedom of other people to have free and unlimited access to water. Yet, Sen does not hugely acknowledge these limiting factors and neither does he consider potential conflicts arising from this issue. Furthermore, if the overall goal of human development and thus human freedom is based on the principles of social justice and equality, there must be some capabilities which weigh more than others in achieving equal opportunities for freedom amongst the whole society. For instance, as history and current political happenings show, gender justice cannot be achieved without limiting male freedom in certain areas. A man's freedom to have intercourse with his wife at any point in time with or without consent has for the longest time been unquestioned in many societies. Up until today the majority of countries still does not have any laws to protect women from marital rape (Wulfhorst, 2019). Thus, the freedom of one person or a group of people might severely limit the freedom of other people and thus include the notion of injustice.

All these examples and the debate around all freedoms inevitably limiting others triggers the debate around the issue of who gets to decide on which grounds which freedoms are good and which ones are bad and who's freedoms are thus to be cut or limited. While Sen's stance on this is that freedom per se is always good but can be used with bad intentions or consequences (Nussbaum, 2003). Alkire (2005, p. 121) similarly argues that capabilities are "limited to functionings of value; they exclude evil or harmful functionings". Nussbaum (2003) however advocates for committing to a core list of central capabilities which should be included in any society's conceptualization of social justice.

4.3. Critique and refinements of the Capability Approach

The question that is most often asked in relation to the CA is how to operationalize the approach. The biggest difficulty might be the fact that the CA is no static framework that provides clear guidelines for whoever wants to apply it to a research project (Northover, 2014). Instead, as Alkire (2002) emphasizes, engaging with the CA requires making value judgements and choices every time the CA is applied to a new project, a new region, a new scale etc. While Sen describes this assertive incompleteness as one of the inherent features of the CA (Alkire, 2002), Nussbaum (2013b) developed the list of ten central capabilities as a basic guideline to apply the CA as an evaluative tool for social and political policies. This leads back the highly contested debate around universally applicable capabilities (as discussed in the previous subchapter).

Furthermore, while its open-endedness and flexibility are two of the CA's main strengths according to proponents of the CA (Robeyns, 2005), Alkire (2002) points out that the CA must become more user friendly so that more scholars and practitioners will be encouraged to use the CA as a conceptual framework to guide their work.

To conclude in the words of Robeyns (2006, p. 373), the CA is a “radically underspecified” approach which should by no means be seen as generally superior to other frameworks as it still struggles with the question around its operationalization and can be criticized just as other evaluative frameworks. However, the CA's “ability to reconcile the universal and the particular” (Corbridge, 2002, p. 188) and its differentiation between people's substantive freedoms (capabilities) and outcomes (actual achieved functionings) can provide a valuable perspective when added as a complementary framework to more established approaches (Robeyns, 2005, 2006).

5. Research methodology

This chapter addresses the research methodology of this thesis. Firstly, the researcher's standpoint on philosophy of science is described, thus helping to identify possible underlying assumptions to the conducted research (Holmes, 2020). Thereafter, the chosen research design is presented, followed by more detailed explanations on the sampling and data collection process, ethical considerations, thematic analysis as the chosen methodology to analyze the collected data, researcher positionality and limitations of the study.

5.1. Standpoint on philosophy of science

This research is embedded in a postmodernist approach. Following a postmodernist school of thought this research thus approaches the analysis by offering *readings* of the data rather than observations, and *interpretations* rather than findings⁸ (Kitchin & Tate, 2013). Thus, the role of the researcher as an agent is being acknowledged in the research process (more on the topic of researcher positionality in chapter 5.6.). Furthermore, in line with postmodernism, this research follows the guiding principle that no single account of any reality is of more value than any other (Kitchin & Tate, 2013). No voice should be excluded within a society, and it is deemed crucial to keep in mind the multitude and variety of perspectives of individuals and different groups of people. Postmodernism highlights a pluralistic and antireductionist world view by rejecting totalizing claims of grand, overarching narratives (Agger, 1991; Kitchin & Tate, 2013).

These principles are followed throughout the overall research process of this thesis, from the choice of literature for the literature review, background and theoretical framework to the purposeful selection of NGOs (Suri, 2011) who were contacted in search for interview partners (more on the sampling and data collection in chapter 5.3.). However, while the various contacted NGOs were selected through purposeful sampling, the final set of interview partners was a matter of choice of the corresponding NGOs' decision. Thus, especially given the limited scope of this thesis, there was only limited influence in regulating/maximizing the variety of voices contributing to this research.

5.2. Research design

A research design provides a framework for data collection and analysis. The choice of a research design for a particular study highly depends on its overall analytic aim and can thus reflect decisions about the priority given to certain dimensions of the research process (Bryman, 2012; Guest et al., 2012). As the focus of this thesis is to assess the NGO representatives' knowledge, views and expertise opinions on the CA, a qualitative research strategy was deemed most appropriate for this context. Qualitative research methods are characterized by contextualizing, interpreting and aiming to understand the perspectives of respondents (Faryadi, 2019).

⁸ For the main reason of not wanting to complicate the terminology, the term 'findings' is hereafter still used.

The process of data analysis in this thesis follows an inductive approach, with a descriptive as well as exploratory orientation. This content-driven approach stands in contrast to e.g. more confirmatory, hypothesis-driven approaches to data analysis. A descriptive and exploratory analysis approach is characterized by the researcher reading and re-reading the data while trying to discover key words and recurring trends and themes in the data (Kitchin & Tate, 2013; Matissek et al., 2013).

5.3. Data collection

In order to provide data for the two research questions, a total of seven semi-structured interviews with employees of NGOs in the sector of German development cooperation were conducted. Conducting semi-structured interviews combines the possibility to develop a catalogue of questions prior to the interview with the option of reacting spontaneously to the interview process e.g. specifying questions or varying the chronology of the questions depending on the interview process (Meier Kruker & Rauh, 2005). The catalogue of questions which was prepared in advance of conducting the interviews is attached to this paper in Appendix 1.

Given this thesis' particular research interest in NGOs in the German sector of development cooperation, all interviewees are employees in NGOs which are part of the VENRO network. In order to find interview partners, a mixed sampling approach was applied; some information was gained via email, the vast majority of data was however collected through conducting semi-structured interviews. With regards to sample size, the recommendations of Braun & Clarke (2013) were followed, who suggest conducting between six and 15 interviews for the scope of a master thesis. However, the final number of interviews was highly dependent on the willingness of the contacted NGOs to participate in an interview.

Out of the 140 members who make up the VENRO network, a total of 27 NGOs were contacted via email. Those 27 NGOs were purposefully chosen (Suri, 2011) by the researcher with the aim of having a relatively wide range of interviewees in the final sample in terms of the NGOs' background (e.g. size of the NGO, founding date and faith-based vs. non-faith based) and regarding their target group and focus on geographical regions and thematic fields. This variety of NGOs was thought to best represent the overall diversity of NGOs in the VENRO network, regarding precisely those previously listed characteristics. From those 27 contacted NGOs, representatives of nine NGOs answered via email, showing interest in the research topic. However, only seven out of those nine representatives were able/willing to take the time for an

interview. The other two NGOs provided some information via email which proved to be useful for the first part of the research question of this thesis, regarding the familiarity of German NGOs in the development sector with the CA (see Figure 2). Many of the originally contacted NGOs had to decline the interview request because they had too little time and staff capacities and too much additional stress due to the whole situation around the Covid-19 pandemic. More information on the final set of interview partners and the corresponding NGOs can be found in Appendix 2.

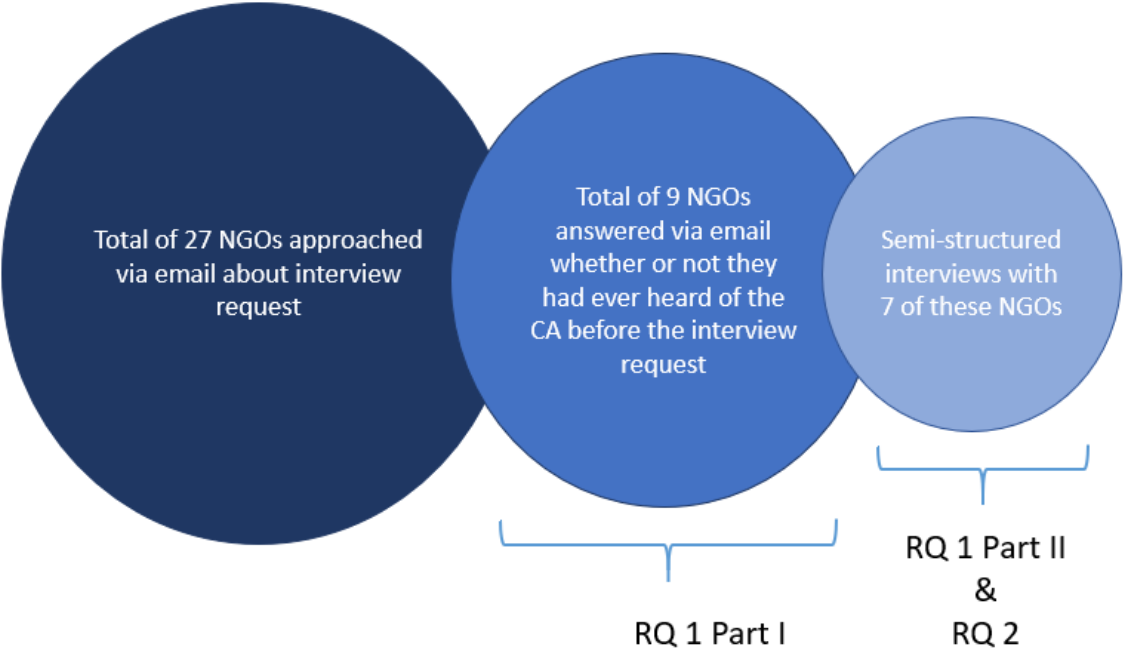


Figure 2: Sampling of interviewees

The interviewees had already been given a rough outline of the purpose and aim of the thesis in the email sent out to them when they were first contacted. Some of the interviewees requested more information on the CA beforehand, in order to be better prepared for the interview (the implications of this for the research process and findings are further discussed in chapter 5.7.). The interviews began with a short introduction of both parties and a quick outline of the thesis project. As a second step the respondents were asked to provide a short insight into their position in the respective NGO and the organization’s mission and vision. The actual interview was then initiated and roughly guided by a set of previously prepared questions. Depending on the individual interview process the chronology of the interview guideline was changed and the questions were adapted to the respective interview setting.

The duration of the interviews varied between 32 and 67 minutes, mainly dependent on the respondents' timely availability. All of the interviews were conducted in German, thus, quotes used in the analysis were translated by the author. The interviews were recorded with a recording app on the researchers' smartphone and transcribed by uploading the audio recordings to the online version of Microsoft Word, where the transcription tool then automatically transcribed all the interview recordings. However, since this does not work with full accuracy due to e.g. the respondents' intonation and dialect or the poor internet connection resulting in fragmented and incomplete sentences, the transcriptions were thereafter manually double-checked according to their accuracy and adjusted wherever it was deemed necessary. According to Strauss (1987), the transcription of qualitative interviews allows to transcribe only as much as is needed from the recorded interviews. This acknowledges that there are parts in every interview that are off the topic and that reduce the information uptake and readability when transcribed (Strauss, 1987). This type of transcription is called a selective transcription. Parts that were not transcribed verbatim are kept in the transcription protocol through summaries of touched themes that are off topic.

5.4. Ethical considerations

This chapter addresses ethical considerations that arise during the process of conducting qualitative research and collecting data from research participants.

Already while first reaching out to the NGOs in search for interview partners, one paragraph in each email provided the respondents with information on aspects such as informed consent, the right to withdraw the consent at any given point in time and the confidentiality of data including the storage of the data as well as the anonymity of the respondents and the corresponding organizations in the end product of my studies.

The verbal consent of each respondent is recorded on the audio record. Following the principle of providing confidentiality and anonymity, the interview partners are referred to as IP1, IP2 etc. according to the order in which the interviews were conducted. Furthermore, throughout the data collection and processing phase, the recommendations of Bryman (2012) to store interview tapes, transcripts and participants' contact details separately were followed. Moreover, committing to upholding the ethical principle of not harming the participants, the collected interview records were maintained as confidential data (Bryman, 2012). The interviews were recorded with an app on the researcher's mobile phone and were then transferred to the researcher's hard drive for secure and confidential data storage. The audio

records will be not kept for longer than is necessary in the context of the thesis writing and its evaluation process.

5.5. Data Analysis

Based on the research aim of this thesis, thematic analysis (TA), a pattern-based qualitative analytic approach was deemed most appropriate. The collected data was thus analyzed following the analytical framework of TA and contextualizing the findings in the literature review and the theoretical framework of this thesis. The following two subchapters give an overview of TA as a method in general and its advantages and implications for this thesis as well as the coding process.

5.5.1. *Thematic Analysis*

The main advantages of applying TA are that it offers a qualitative method to identify patterns of meaning across a data set and that it is compatible with a set of tools and techniques which are theoretically flexible and thus easily adaptable to the theoretical framework of the respective research project (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

Braun and Clarke (2020) differentiate between three main branches of TA: (i) coding reliability approaches, (ii) reflexive approaches, and (iii) codebook approaches. The approach deemed most appropriate in the context of this thesis is that of reflexive thematic analysis. The main differences to the other two approaches can be found in the structure of the coding process and in how the researcher's role in research is acknowledged. In comparison with the other two approaches, reflexive thematic analysis allows for the coding process to be "unstructured and organic, with the potential for codes to evolve to capture the researcher's deepening understanding of data" throughout the analytic process, whereas the other two approaches require a more structured coding process, usually centered around a coding frame or codebook (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 39). Regarding the researcher's role and subjectivity in the research process, reflexive thematic analysis acknowledges that code and theme development involve considerable interpretative work on the part of the researcher. The other two approaches on the other hand perceive the researcher's subjectivity as a potential threat to coding reliability and suggest involving multiple researchers in the analytic process to balance the subjectivity levels by having to find a consensus when coding and developing themes (Braun & Clarke, 2020).

The analytic process of thematic analysis, as according to Braun and Clarke (2012) and Terry et al. (2017) involves six recursive phases: (i) familiarizing with the data), (ii) generating codes, (iii) constructing themes, (iv) reviewing potential themes, (v) defining and naming themes, and

lastly (vi) producing the written report. These phases are not to be understood as a strictly linear process but instead as iterative and recursive. The first phase encompasses the researcher's familiarization with the data, a process which already naturally starts during the data collection and provides an entry point for the analytic process. Familiarization with the dataset is not only limited to re-reading all textual data and/or re-listening conducted interviews. It rather comprises active engagement with the data by asking questions about certain patterns or inconsistencies in the dataset and generating first provisional analytic ideas. The second phase involves generating a set of codes based on the initial observations made during the phase of familiarization. Generating codes requires a systematic and thorough working process in order to identify data segments which are meaningful for the research question(s). Based on these two first phases follows the step of constructing a first draft of themes. Here, the previously developed codes are combined and clustered together into bigger and more meaningful patterns by identifying features of similarity and relationship between the variety of codes. During this process, the research questions serve as the main guidance, as these determine the relevance of certain clusters and patterns. The themes developed during this stage of the analytic process are also referred to as provisional or candidate themes; "imagining them as candidate themes gives the researcher the opportunity to discard them, to explore other possibilities, before eventually settling on a final set of themes" (Terry et al., 2017, p. 28). As Terry et al. (2017) emphasize, it is of crucial importance at this point in the analysis, that in order to make sense of the data, certain patterns and recurring themes must be identified not only within a single data item, i.e. one interview transcript, but *across* the given dataset. Phases four and five revolve around reviewing and defining the final set of themes. Most important to consider during this phase is whether the developed themes provide meaningful material to discuss the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thus, especially during the reviewing phase some themes might be renamed or even discarded, which consequently might lead back to phase three. The final set of themes developed throughout the above described process can be found in Appendix 3. After the final set of themes has been decided on, the sixth and last phase starts, where the researcher writes down and discusses the results from the analysis (Terry et al., 2017). During this phase, the analysis of the collected data is connected to the bigger picture of the respective project.

What remains important to emphasize is that the analysis and interpretation of the data are steered into a certain direction based on the guiding research questions of the respective study. Furthermore, the researcher's academic and personal background are highly influencing the analysis as well as the final presentation of the data (more on the researcher's positionality and further limitations in chapter 5.6. and 5.7.). Thus, the codes and themes do not *emerge* from the

data but are *being developed* based on a number of influencing factors. The end product of the analysis, the written report and discussion of the analysis results therefore tell “the analyst’s story of the data” (Terry et al., 2017) rather than being an objective analysis. However, in the context of thematic analysis, the subjectivity of the researcher is not perceived as an obstacle to valid and good research but rather as an integral part in the process of data analysis (Guest et al., 2012; Terry et al., 2017).

5.5.2. Coding

The basic idea of TA is to allow for certain themes and patterns to be developed through repeated immersion in the collected qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Terry et al., 2017). In order to develop these themes, the entire data set was coded three times, following a combination of an inductive and a deductive approach. In other words, while some codes were already developed prior to the data analysis process, based on the theoretical framework (deductive coding process) it was also allowed for new codes to arise throughout continuous engagement with the data set during the data analysis process (inductive coding process) (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Coding is here understood as a “process by which a qualitative analyst links specific codes to specific data segments” (Guest et al., 2012, p. 50). In accordance with the underlying ideas of more qualitative versions of thematic analysis, the quality of the coding and thus the overall data analysis process is thought to get better the more the researcher immerses in the data (Terry et al., 2017). Therefore, the process of coding is treated as an organic and flexible process and in the case of this thesis covered three coding rounds. This was to make sure, that every transcribed interview was analyzed with the same codes and thus, to have a thorough and consistent analysis of the data set.

Following the idea of reflexive thematic analysis there are no right or wrong codes (Terry et al., 2017). The codes generated throughout the analytic process reflect the researcher’s interpretation of the data in relation to the guiding research questions of this thesis. Codes can be short summarizing labels of a certain data segment, but they can also already include a certain level of analytic interpretation (Terry et al., 2017). The overall aim of coding is to reduce the collected data by singling out the most relevant data segments and labeling them. The labels must be general enough to be applied to other data segments while at the same time providing sufficient information about the content of the corresponding data segment so that there is no need to refer back to the data (Terry et al., 2017).

In the context of thematic analysis, coding and theme development are recognized to be part of a highly subjective and interpretative analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Terry et al., 2017). Thus, applying this method allows to acknowledge the academic/disciplinary and personal background and experience of the researcher(s). As pointed out by Terry et al. (2017, p. 20), the analysis “is seen as something created by the researcher, at the intersection of the data, their theoretical and conceptual frameworks, disciplinary knowledge, and research skills and experience”. They further emphasize that the results of the analysis are explicitly not seen as something “waiting ‘in’ the data to be found”, but instead acknowledge the researcher’s part in reading and interpreting the data from a certain angle and developing codes based on his/her understanding and the study’s aim (Terry et al., 2017, p. 20).

To conclude, the coding process in this thesis follows a combination of an inductive and deductive approach, thus developing themes based on the theoretical framework and through repeated immersion in the data. As previously mentioned, it is of crucial importance for me as the researcher in this thesis to reflect on my own positionality and on how and to which extent my disciplinary knowledge, research skills and personal background and experiences influence the data analysis and the overall study.

5.6. Positionality

Reflecting on positionality requires the acknowledgement of the researcher’s views, values and beliefs potentially influencing the research design, conduct and results. This is particularly crucial in the context of choosing TA as the analytic method, as the subjective experiences of the researcher and of the research participants are not seen as imperatively disruptive factors but rather as a part of the knowledge gaining process (Braun & Clarke, 2012). While ontological and epistemological assumptions have already been formulated in an earlier subchapter, this subchapter serves the purpose of acknowledging and addressing the implications my position as a German female researcher with an academic background in human geography and development studies might have had on the research process.

Holmes (2020) distinguishes between two categories of factors which influence the researcher’s positionality. On the one hand this encompasses some aspects that are either culturally ascribed or generally regarded as being fixed such as gender, race, skin-color and nationality. On the other hand, it includes aspects which are considered to be more contextual and subjective, for example political allegiance, religious faith or personal life-history. This chapter thus serves the purpose of emphasizing that I am aware that how I locate myself about the research context

and process, the research participants and the overall topic will necessarily somehow guide and influence this research project.

Having done an internship at the BMZ before starting my research gave me a certain amount of inside knowledge which has proven to be helpful to understand the complexity of the German DCS in the context of this thesis and while searching for literature and interview partners. Furthermore, being familiar with certain terms and working processes in the NGO sector due to my own work experience in a non-profit organization under the umbrella of the BMZ provided me with solid background knowledge to enter the interviews with the NGOs. In addition, being part of the master's program of Development Studies at Lund University might have given me enough of an outsider status in the eyes of the interviewees to stand out and arouse their interest to answer to my interview request.

Furthermore, not only the researcher him-/herself but also authors of the reviewed literature and interviewees – everyone involved in a research project has a subjective perspective on situations and a different understanding of certain issues based on personal experiences and the overall socio-cultural context. Thus, I considered it important to remove myself as much as I could from my personal views while conducting the interviews, while at the same time acknowledging during the analysis process that there is no such thing as full objectivity in qualitative research. A seemingly objective view of reality can never be really objective, since one will only be able to perceive given information from a perspective based on one's own previous experiences (Mattissek et al., 2013). It is thus necessary to keep in mind the possibilities as well as limitations of human comprehension in order to understand what we can and cannot achieve with scientific methods (ibid.).

5.7. Limitations

This chapter outlines a number of limitations of the research process related to the scope of the study and thus its generalization and representativity, technicalities regarding the interviews and certain limitations given the choice of methods.

It is of utmost importance to me to emphasize that I do by no means claim to paint an objective picture of the presented topic, nor do I claim to depict a full picture on the here discussed matters. On the contrary, I am highly aware of the limitations of this study regarding its representativity and generalization. As the data acquisition for this study is based on a literature review and only a small number of interviews, this research only represents a very small fraction of the large variety of perspectives on, and experiences with the CA in the context of German

development cooperation. While none of the interviewees of this research was familiar with the CA, if I had ended up interviewing a total of 15 or 25 representatives of different German NGOs in the sector of development cooperation, the findings might have differed largely. Therefore, this research should by no means be understood as being generalizable to the larger network of NGOs in the German DCS. On the contrary, this study's aim is to gain an understanding of how actors on NGO level in German development cooperation understand and practice the CA by taking the individual perspectives of each organization as a starting point for this understanding.

Closely related to this is the limitation of this study naturally given through the specific choice of a method of data collection and an analytical framework. For instance, if I would have chosen to take an anthropological approach to answer the first research question, thus conducting participant observation and fieldwork over a specific timespan, I might have gotten a much more insight into the actual working processes and values guiding an organization's work than the analysis of a number of approx.-one-hour-interviews and the information on the corresponding NGO's website could ever provide. These interviews are only very punctual and limited insights into the working structures of partly very complex organizational structures from a single person of the respective NGO. In addition, there are countless factors such as the respondent's own academic and personal background, working experiences, position in the NGO, years of experience in this specific NGO and thus the level of knowledge on the organization's doings etc. which determine the content of the interviews.

Further limitations of this thesis relate to the interview process. Four of the seven interviewees (IP1, IP2, IP4, and IP5) had specifically asked for more information on the CA before the interview to have some basic knowledge on the CA before the interview. Thus, they received a short summary of the main idea and core concepts of the CA via email in advance of the interview. However, since this summary was composed by myself based on the research I had done on the CA so far, the information the interviewees were given was rather biased. The outcomes of this thesis might have been different, had the interviewees had more thorough knowledge on the CA or had they been given a summarized version of the CA composed by someone else.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and a limited time scope to conduct my research, I had to conduct the interviews via the digital platform Zoom. Poor internet connections at times led to a margin for error in interview transcriptions. Furthermore, as pointed out by Blommaert and Dong (2010, p. 45), interviews are often best understood as some form of conversation and can thus be "messy, complex, often containing contradictions and statements that are made of the

top of one's head, with people shifting topics and getting lost in details, losing the line of their argument, not finding the exact words for what they wish to say and with silences, hesitations, pauses". This was reflected in all interviews. Not only did my respondents struggle in finding the correct words now and then, but it was sometimes difficult to make sure we were talking about the same thing. I learned that only because my question was clear to myself and even previous interviewees did not necessarily mean that the next interviewee would understand it the same way. Nevertheless, and most importantly, I had the impression that I managed to create an environment in which the interviewees could open up and were willing to share their thoughts and opinions with me.

6. Discussion of data interpretations

This chapter presents the findings obtained through data interpretation during the previously described process of data analysis while at the same time embedding those results in the literature review and theoretical framework of this thesis. The discussion is divided into the two main research questions guiding this thesis. Thus, the first part of the discussion will revolve around the question of how widely known and applied the CA is amongst German NGOs in the sector of development cooperation. Thereafter, the second part of the chapter discusses the challenges and advantages which German NGOs in the field of development cooperation see in implementing the CA into the working processes of their day-to-day work.

6.1. Familiarity of German development NGOs with the Capability Approach

The CA seems to be hardly known amongst development practitioners in German NGOs. Out of the seven interviewees, only two respondents (IP1 and IP4) had vaguely heard of the CA before the interview request. Furthermore, two of the organizations who had declined my interview request due to lack of time and staff capacities, agreed to do a quick assessment of their colleagues' knowledge on the CA. While one of the two NGOs reported back that none of their colleagues had heard of the CA before, the other organization wrote that some of their employees had a vague idea about the CA. However, it is deemed important to highlight at this point that these findings are by no means generalizable and representative for the entire German development cooperation sector. With a different choice of method (e.g. developing a questionnaire for only two or three NGOs and aiming to get responses from all employees of those few NGOs) the findings might have significantly differed. The findings presented in this discussion are just a snapshot in time of a small sample of respondents.

Given the lack of knowledge of the respondents on the CA, I reason that the CA itself is not directly implemented in neither of the corresponding NGO's project work. Since only two of the interviewees had ever heard of the CA before the interview request and none of them had more specific knowledge on the CA, it could not explicitly be assessed how the CA is applied in the context of the respective NGO's work. Thus, a different approach was chosen to answer the second part of the first research question. It was assumed, that while the respondents might not be directly familiar with the CA, their NGOs might still have some of the main characteristics of the CA incorporated into their work, although not explicitly running these under the label of the CA. The interview questions were therefore structured in line with some of the main principles of the CA (i.e. the notion of freedom as the primary goal of development, the differentiation between means and ends and the subjectivity of the idea of a 'good life'). The data analysis showed that indeed, some of the principles and underlying ideas of the CA appear to be reflected in the answers of the interviewees and thus in the work of the corresponding NGOs. However, it should be highlighted at this point that while there can be made a connection between the CA and some of the respondents' statements about guiding principles and their approach to assess and evaluate human development and well-being, those features could also be attributed to other approaches such as e.g. the BNA. This will be further discussed along with the presentation of the findings in the following paragraphs.

6.1.1. Primary end of development

When asked about the primary end of development according to the guiding principles of their organization⁹, the respondents named several aspects which I categorized into the following four core groupings: (i) independence, (ii) providing people with new perspectives, (iii) providing people with the opportunity to live a 'good' life and (iv) transfer of power.

The aspect of independence appeared to be related to the thought of the target groups' independence from any external help in terms of development aid and cooperation programs. IP7 stated that the ultimate goal of his organization's work is to not be needed anymore. At the same time however, IP7 acknowledged that only the minority of development cooperation institutions might have the privilege of allowing themselves to pursue this guiding motivation, due to a certain level of responsibility for their employees and thus a resulting interest in self-

⁹ The here outlined primary ends of development according to the organizations' values and guiding principles are partly referred to in the mission & vision sector of the respective organization's website, thus confirming the respondents' statements.

preservation. This aspect is further discussed in the next subchapter, discussing development organization related obstacles to the implementation of the CA. The idea of independence appeared to be closely linked to one of the guiding principles of German development cooperation, “Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe”, which means as much as helping people to provide for themselves (BMZ, 2020). IP3, IP4 and IP6 emphasized that the main goal of their projects is to provide their projects’ target groups with the structural framework, knowledge and/or financial support to build up a solid enough base for the target groups to not need a further continuation of the respective project after the timeline of the project is finished. IP4 (pos. 9) connected the principle of “Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe” to the overall aim of the target groups managing to achieve “a better or a good living standard”.

IP3 and IP6 mentioned as another facet to the end goal of development the aim of providing (young) people with new perspectives on life and encouraging people to stay open minded to lifelong learning experiences. In accordance with their main target group, IP6 highlighted the aim to offer the youth support to realize ideas which they would otherwise not be able to realize by themselves. Giving young people the possibility to find their own place in society and giving them the space to figure out their strengths and interests in life (IP6).

Five out of the seven interviewees linked their organization’s main purpose to the aim of providing people with the opportunity to live a ‘good’ life (IP3, IP4, IP5, IP6 and IP7). The term ‘good life’ is deeply rooted in the CA. Following the core idea of the CA, every person should have the freedom to live a life they consider valuable according to their own understanding of a ‘good life’ (Corbridge, 2002; Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1999). Upon being confronted with the question of what constitutes a ‘good life’ according to their organization’s understanding and guiding principles, the respondents faced a similar struggle as scholars who are engaging with the CA: What exactly is a ‘good life’ and how to best possibly conceptualize the idea of a ‘good life’ in a sufficiently broad way while yet acknowledging the individuality and subjectivity of the term? The answers to this question encompassed aspects such as improving the physical and mental health of people (IP3), economic aspects such as building financial reserves for emergencies or investment etc. (IP4) to more generally formulated aspects such as wanting to improve the living conditions of people (IP5 and IP7). While all other respondents tried to somehow define the concept of a ‘good life’ according to the values and guiding principles of their organization, IP6 pointed towards the impossibility of defining this concept, if one would not want to fall into the trap of paternalism. “What constitutes a ‘good life’ can only be assessed by asking one individual at a time” (IP6). This line of argumentation

is in line with the CA's liberal philosophical approach to the issue around defining a 'good life'. Robeyns (2005, p. 101) points out that even if two people had the exact same capability set, they would be likely "to end up with different types and levels of achieved functionings, as they make different choices following their different ideas of the good life". The notion of choice was also brought up by some respondents as part of the end goal of development. IP3, IP4 and IP6 spoke of self-actualization and self-determination as main components determining a 'good life'. This closely connects to notion of power and ownership, which was reflected in the fourth category.

The fourth category identified in relation to the question behind the primary goal of development according to the respondents' NGOs is that of transfer of power. In this context, IP1 brought up the idea of "Teilhabe" vs. that of "Teilnahme". While both those term would be translated as participation in English, there is a crucial difference between the meanings of the two terms. The equivalent of "Teilnahme" in English would be indeed participation, for instance, to take part in decision making processes and the development of certain projects. "Teilhabe" adds a certain layer to this, implying not only participation but a level of ownership. According to IP1 the primary end goal of development should thus be to ensure the respective target groups' "Teilhabe" in life and not only be restricted to "Teilnahme". This is similarly reflected in statements of IP2, IP3 and IP6 highlighting the importance of promoting ownership in order to achieve actual sustainable changes and improvements in human development and well-being.

To conclude, while none of the respondents explicitly mentioned the word "freedom" when asked about the primary goal of development according to their organization's values and guiding principles, I argue that all four categories, independence, (ii) providing people with new perspectives, (iii) providing people with the opportunity to live a 'good' life and (iv) transfer of power somehow relate to the CA's notion of aiming to enhance people to be free to choose their own accounts of a 'good life' (Corbridge, 2002), as that requires all the above listed four categories.

While the above described four categories of the respondents' associations when asked about their organizations' primary goal of development can be partly connected to the CA and the notion of freedom, these four aspects could also be attributed to other approaches of assessing human development and well-being. The notion of helping people provide for themselves for instance is at the core of the BNA (Hoadley, 1981). Generally, the BNA and the CA share some

common ground as they both emphasize the concept of freedom of choice (Hoadley, 1981; Sen, 1999), this not always making it possible to draw a clear line between one approach and the other.

6.1.2. Means vs. ends

A further finding of the data analysis regarding CA characteristics in the respective NGOs' working processes concerns the differentiation between means and ends. Sen (1999) differentiates between on the one hand the constitutive role of human freedom as the primary end of development and on the other hand the instrumental effectiveness of freedom in development. In other words, while there is the overarching aim of the expansion of human freedom, the freedom to live the kind of life that people have reason to value, there are several sub-freedoms which contribute to reaching the end goal (Corbridge, 2002; Northover, 2014; Robeyns, 2005; Sen, 1999). Thus, Sen (1999) acknowledges the vital role of means as instruments to reach the overarching primary end. In doing so, Sen (1999) distinguishes five main means, or instrumental freedoms as he calls them: political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security.

In applying this construct of means and ends to the NGOs working processes I argue that the main working areas of the NGOs can be equated with the means to achieve instrumental freedoms in specific areas which then altogether add up to contribute to achieve the overarching primary end of development. The main working areas of the NGOs encompass amongst others the agricultural sector, food security, physical and psychological healthcare, water and sanitary infrastructure, housing, microcredits, rural development, spiritual guidance, youth support etc. The respondents tended to link the notion of improvement to the respective working area(s) of their corresponding NGO. For instance, IP3's organization's main goal is to improve the issue of food security and housing in the respective target areas, IP7 focusses on the improvement of health care in their target communities. Compared to the other NGOs, IP2, IP4 and IP6's organizations entail a much wider array of working areas given their bigger size and organizational structure. According to my own judgement, all of the working areas of the NGOs, as asserted by the respondents during the interview and as stated on the respective NGOs' website, could be categorized into the five instrumental freedoms proposed by Sen (1999). The NGOs' working areas are thus ends in themselves, for instance by aiming to contribute to enhance social opportunities of people by designing projects to empower women and children through education. At the same time however, these ends are simultaneously

instrumental means to other ends (Robeyns, 2005). For instance, the state of being educated can be an end in itself but might at the same time be a means to the capability to work.

To conclude, in applying part of the CA's concept, the idea of means and ends, to the NGO's structure/working processes one could say that the respective working areas of the NGOs constitute the means to achieve the overarching primary end of development, whichever this primary end might be according to each of the NGOs' mission and vision (as discussed under the previous heading).

6.1.3. The family analogy

Upon being introduced to the basic idea of the CA, the focus on the individual, its aim to enhance people's freedom to live the kind of life that they have reason to value and the concept of capabilities and functionings, IP7 immediately pointed out the similarity of this concept to the inherent structures of society's ideal conception of a well-functioning family. He further continued to explain his thought process regarding the similarity of the CA with family-like structures in the following way. On the one hand there are the parents wanting to contribute to the development and well-being of their children and to a certain extent being/feeling responsible for the children's well-being. In order to do so, the parents need a certain amount of financial and material resources to provide the children with shelter, food, clothing, education etc. However, there are also facets such as mental health, emotional intelligence and other soft factors shaping human well-being which need to be attended to and enhanced. Further, the parents identify their children's strengths and challenges in life to then invest time, care, and money into enhancing the children's capabilities to the best of their knowledge in order to raise them to be able to lead a fulfilled and self-determined life. All of this requires a lot of time, resources, and commitment in order to have deep enough knowledge on the children's personality and capabilities to adequately offer support where needed and wished. This is similarly reflected in the CA, as Robeyns (2005) highlights that in order to assess and evaluate actual human well-being, justice and development thorough knowledge is required on the individual circumstances of each person.

However, at a later point in the interview, IP7 pointed towards one crucial difficulty of the CA, once again picking up the family analogy. The more children parents have, the more difficult it gets to attend to all the needs of the children, to take the time to listen to their wishes, to fully get to know them and thus best support them to acquire and develop all the capabilities to lead a life they have reason to value. In other words, and coming back to development cooperation,

the bigger the target group of a certain project, the more difficult it becomes to attend to the needs and safeguard the interests of the singular individuals. It would either require for development organizations to have very limited target groups in terms of the number of individuals (as is the case for IP7) or to increase the number of staff to then have the adequate capacity. This aspect is discussed further in the next subchapter in the context of challenges to implementing the CA to working processes of the German DCS.

The family analogy was also reflected in IP6's description of her corresponding NGO's working processes with children and young adults being their main target group. IP6 described how the social workers, development practitioners etc. who are actively engaged with the target groups in their every-day life do indeed embody some family-like structure and relationship while in the context of their projects (IP6). Also related to this family analogy is the fact that IP4's corresponding organization calls the entities who are in charge to implement the projects in the respective communities "families".

To conclude, whether or not explicitly pointed out, the family analogy appeared to be a recurring pattern in the collected data. By acknowledging the importance of attending the individual's needs and carefully listening to their particular values and expectations to life, the corresponding organizations of IP4, IP6 and IP7 seem to inherently include one of the core characteristics of the CA into their guiding principles and working processes.

6.1.4. Conclusion

None of the respondents was particularly familiar with the CA. Only two out of the seven interviewees and one of the other NGOs' representatives who got back to me via email but did not have the capacity for an interview had vaguely heard of the CA. Consequently, I assumed that none of the corresponding NGOs are explicitly applying the CA as a framework to conceptualize their understanding of human development and well-being nor using the CA to design and evaluate their development initiatives. However, the data analysis and interpretation of this thesis allows to conclude that some characteristics of the CA are incorporated to the working processes of some of the NGOs. Out of the seven interviewed representatives of the NGOs, IP6 and IP7 reflected the biggest similarity of their organizations' guiding principles and working approaches to the CA in terms of highlighting the importance of focusing on the individual needs and capabilities of the individuals forming the target groups of their development projects and keeping in mind the overarching bigger end of development while .

However, as previously discussed, while some of the guiding principles and working processes of the interviewees' NGOs can be linked to the CA, it is out of the scope of this thesis to analyze whether (i) those features actually reflect features of the CA, thus potentially revealing that the CA might have been implemented into some overarching organizational structures by the corresponding NGOs' directors (which given the lack of knowledge on the CA of the respondents would then mean that they were just not informed or simply unaware of this) or whether (ii) those characteristics which have here been attributed to the CA would upon further and deeper research be traced back to other approaches to human development and well-being, such as the BNA which share some common grounds with the CA. Either way, this shows that there is still huge potential for further research on this topic.

6.2. Challenges & advantages of the implementation of the Capability Approach

The second research question asks about the challenges and advantages, German NGOs engaged in the field of development cooperation see in implementing the CA into the working processes of German development cooperation. The data analysis showed that the respondents see five main challenges in the potential implementation of the CA and two main strengths/advantages of the CA. However, while in sheer numbers, the challenges seem to outnumber the advantages, the few strengths and advantages were comparatively more significant in terms of their moral and philosophical implications for development cooperation. It is deemed important at this point to highlight once more that the findings must be looked at with caution, as none of the respondents had previous knowledge of the CA, let alone experience in implementing the CA. Thus, their assessment is purely based on a combination of (i) the information I provided them with before the interview, (ii) the actual thematic discussion about features of the CA during the interview and (iii) their own academic background and work experience.

In the following, the challenges will first be presented and discussed by embedding them in the literature review, to then finish the chapter on a more positive note by outlining the strengths and advantages the respondents point out in applying the CA to the German DCS.

6.2.1. *Obstacles and challenges to the implementation of the Capability Approach*

The reasons for why the CA is so little known and applied in German development cooperation and the main challenges to a potential implementation of the CA in the German DCS can be divided into the following main themes, which will be described in more detail in the subsequent paragraphs:

- (1) Gap between academia/research and development practice
- (2) Theoretical approaches such as the CA are too abstract for reality
- (3) Agreeing on universal capabilities
- (4) Development organization related obstacles
- (5) Measuring qualitative indicators

Gap between academia/research and development practice

All respondents highlighted that there is a big gap between the academic world, current research and the development practice in the German context. While other ministries in Germany have a scientific advisory board, which is in charge of providing the corresponding minister and the departments in the ministry with politically and economically unbiased information about relevant topics, the BMZ does not have such a scientific advisory board anymore. However, there are several institutions which are supposed to fulfil a similar function. The German Development Institute (DIE) for instance, is a theory-based, empirically driven and application-oriented research institute which advises ministries, governments and implementing organizations regarding policy issues (German Development Institute, 2021).

Nevertheless, there seems to be a lack of communication between academia/research and the development practice (IP1, IP2, IP4 and IP6). According to this study's respondents, there are several main obstacles for a closer exchange between academia/research and practice. Firstly, there appears to be a certain routine-blindness of especially the older staff in development organizations due to long years of work experiences and habitual working procedures (IP2 & IP3). Second, there are only extremely limited time and staff capacities on the ministries', the German implementing organizations' and the local NGOs' side (IP1 & IP6). On the one hand, IP1 pointed out that according to his experience "what the ministry [BMZ] needs is not top-quality research which often tends to be quite abstract but more concrete applicable results such as good practice examples". Good practice examples are projects which have been implemented successfully and sustainably and thus can serve as a blueprint for similar projects (IP1). On the other hand, IP1 and IP4 highlighted that many of the local NGOs which are the on-the-ground experts implementing the respective projects amongst the local communities often voice the imbalance between having to write a large number of reports to their financial donors and partner organizations in e.g. Germany, while only having very little time left to actually engage with the target groups. "So how should there be any time to keep up with the newest academic approaches, to actually apply concepts" (IP1)? Lastly, IP5 pointed out that to him, academia would often seem too removed from what actually happened on-the-ground and thus he stopped

to participate in academic lectures and discussion seminars offered by e.g. VENRO. He argued that the people volunteering for his organization would be helping out of empathy and would want to see actual changes and not care much about the concepts behind their work (IP5).

However especially regarding the last point, the data analysis shows that there are differences in the respondents' attitude towards the gap between academia and development practice. While this study is not big enough in sample size to formulate a generalized assumption on the reason for the different attitudes of the interviewees, I suggest based on this study's insides that it might be amongst others based on (i) how big the NGO is and thus their capacities to provide for further education of their staff in form of e.g. thematic workshops, (ii) whether the NGO is solely or mainly based on volunteer engagement (IP5's & IP7's corresponding NGOs) or has a set number of paid employees (all other NGOs), (iii) the background of the respondents and their colleagues (in terms of academic vs. non-academic background, type of academic background, years of experience in development practice etc.). While IP5 agreed that there is a significant gap between academia and development practice but regardless was not hugely interested in bridging this gap, IP1, IP2, IP3, IP4 and IP7 voiced serious concerns about the lack of exchange between academia/research and development practice and expressed the explicit wish for a greater exchange and cooperation between all involved parties.

Theoretical approaches such as the CA are too abstract for reality

IP2 pointed out the general difficulty of applying theories and concepts into reality. While he did not go further into detail, the difficulty of operationalizing the CA is one of the most often raised issues in literature on the CA (Kuklys, 2005; Robeyns, 2006).

While IP5 was less concerned with the details of the potential operationalization of the CA, he voiced the opinion that generally, theoretical approaches developed as frameworks for the development, implementation and evaluation of development projects are too removed from reality. He assumed that everyone who would be deeply convinced by the advantages of theories had never actually been in the field and gotten in touch with people "who just need help and not some academic who theorizes and philosophizes" (IP5). This exemplifies the need of approaches such as the CA to become more user friendly for people engaged in the everyday-life of development cooperation as already highlighted by Alkire (2002).

Agreeing on universal capabilities

Another issue raised by IP1 and IP2 which is also highly controversially discussed amongst CA scholars is the debate around whether or not there can or should be a list of a universally

applicable capability set (Northover, 2014; Nussbaum, 2013b; Robeyns, 2005). All interviewees position themselves quite critical towards this by referring to the required cultural sensitivity in adapting the understanding of human well-being and development according to the socio-cultural context (IP1 and IP2) and by highlighting the individuality of the needs and wishes of people (IP4, IP6 and IP7). The debate around the feasibility of considering cultural diversity in universalist approaches to measure human development and well-being has been similarly discussed in the context of other approaches such as the BNA (Hoadley, 1981; Weigel, 1986).

IP2 additionally criticizes the CA's overarching notion of freedom as advocated by Sen (1999) by questioning whether a maximization of the freedom of every individual is a) truly desirable and b) feasible. His line of argumentation is hereby in line with Nussbaum's (2003, p. 44) critique on Sen's emphasis on freedom as "a general all-purpose social good". Similarly to Nussbaum (2003), IP2 points out that there is no unlimited freedom for anyone as some freedoms inevitably limit others. Thus, IP2 emphasizes that according to his perspective, if the CA was to make its way into the German DCS, this would require a thorough ethical-philosophical analysis and delimitation of the conceptualization of freedom in order to not reinforce existing power imbalances.

Development organization related obstacles

Furthermore, three highly interconnected themes were identified among the statements of the interviewees, regarding obstacles for the implementation of the CA which can be traced back to the overall structure of the German DCS: (i) the high level of bureaucratization of the German DCS, (ii) hierarchical structures within some development organizations as well as between the different institutions and (iii) a certain level of self-preservation-interest of the development cooperation apparatus.

While the issues of high bureaucratization of the overall German DCS and the hierarchical structures were treated as two different codes, they appear to be highly intertwined in practice. The high complexity of the German DCS to a certain extent requires a standardized communication system in order to cope with the large number of involved actors and to demonstrate transparency and accountability to all involved stakeholders. Especially governmental donor agencies are under pressure to prove the positive impact of certain development initiatives and thus reassure the taxpayers about the impact their contributions made in development cooperation initiatives (DEval, 2018; Yanguas, 2021).

As a result of the hierarchical structures and thus the high levels of bureaucratization, IP4 and IP7 both criticized the BMZ to be far too removed from the actual development work on the ground, thus losing touch of what is at the core of development cooperation projects: the target group, the people. “I understand why we need standardization [...] but I think that this is not always useful in the field of development cooperation. I think that the big guys [donor agencies such as the BMZ] must learn to trust people on the ground. And I know that is difficult [...] because trust is often misused” (IP7).

IP4 especially criticized the very quantitative-oriented categories required in reports about project proposals, monitoring and evaluation. IP2, IP4 and IP6 all agreed that the standardized forms required by the donor agencies to report back on project progress and the allocation of funds etc. lay an explicit focus on quantitative indicators. Information which is rather based on qualitative evaluations only fits the category of ‘other effects reported by the partner organization’ and is thus treated as a mere side product (IP4).

IP1 raised the concern that these bureaucratic structures of organizations in the German DCS paralyze people’s ability to think let alone to realize and apply their thoughts. In line with this, IP2 compared the efforts to implement new approaches into the working processes of the German DCS to the futile effort to equip a old steamship with the newest technology and expect a smooth conduct. While my own knowledge on shipbuilding is too scarce to verify whether this is correct from an engineering perspective, this statement of IP2 summarizes the overall impression I got from all other respondents about the levels of bureaucratization. The German DCS has its own historically grown working processes, which have come to be seen as the standard of handling things. Given the complex structure of a multitude of actors engaged in the DCS, changes implement only very slowly, while the public and academic discourse evolves very quickly. This conveys the impression of a very outdated DCS.

These findings correlate with the conclusion, Yanguas (2021) arrives at in his article about organizational learning in the sector of development coordination: development practitioners may learn, but it is hard to assess whether or not the organizations where they work are equally capable of learning.

The third aspect is a certain level of self-preservation-interest of individual development organizations as well as of the entire German development apparatus in itself. According to IP7 there is no single purely altruistic organization in the whole German DCS. The statutes of every NGO outline a certain primary end goal and specific means to achieve this end, resulting in the respective NGO’s original purpose for existence. However, at a certain point, usually

correlating with a growing number of staff members, the respective institution develops a specific self-preservation-interest (Hartung, 2018). Thus, organizations' actions might start to be guided not only in line with their statues but also according to their self-preservation-interest and hence a growing pressure to increase economic efficiency (IP2). IP7 points out the difference between smaller NGOs like his one and comparatively bigger organizations (such as IP2's, IP4's and IP6's) and the corresponding interest of self-preservation: "Our organization can truly say that our biggest aim is met once we are not needed anymore. We can say that without any problems and from the bottom of our heart because we only have two employees and a couple of volunteers. Other, bigger organizations cannot truly say that because it goes against their self-interest" (IP7).

Measuring qualitative indicators

A recurring theme during the interviews in terms of identifying challenges to implement the CA into the working process of the German DCS is the difficulty to measure and evaluate qualitative indicators to assess human well-being and development which the respondents immediately associated with the CA. This is on the one hand due to the sheer complexity and diversity involved in defining human well-being and developing indicators to measure human development and on the other hand due to the very limited time, staff and financial resources in most development organizations (IP1, IP3, IP4, IP6 & IP7). The latter hereby results mainly from the former, since developing and evaluating qualitative indicators is often a more elaborate process which requires more time and thus overall more staff to cover all of the work (IP3, IP4 & IP6). The performance pressure is extremely high, with positive impact expectations from all stakeholders, including donor agencies and the actual target group of the corresponding projects (IP2).

It thus appears to be much more attractive for development organizations to develop a quantitative indicator which can be measured with numbers and hard facts than to develop an indicator which tries to assess a person's actual mental well-being, a changed mindset, a wider array of opportunities to choose etc. (IP2, IP4 & IP7).

6.2.2. Strengths and advantages of the of the Capability Approach

Regardless of all the challenges the interviewees see in implementing the CA into their organizations' guiding principles and working structures, the interviewees highlighted specifically two strengths they see in a potential implementation of the CA. On the one hand, the majority of the respondents explicitly welcomed the idea of integrating an approach into

their working processes which would allow for the projects to engage more with the actual individuals of the target groups (IP2, IP4, IP6, IP7). On the other hand, and closely linked to this first point, the respondents emphasized the CA's potential to sensitize more actors in development cooperation to engage with qualitative indicators. The connection between qualitative indicators and the CA was made based on the interviewees' assumption that implementing the CA would require more indicators which assess the individuals' values, wishes, expectations for life etc. (IP4 & IP6). Furthermore, IP4 and IP6 linked the need for more long-term engagement with the target groups/individuals to the implementation of the CA, in order to actually be able to assess changes in the capability set of people.

However, since to the knowledge of the respondents, none of their organizations applied the CA, the advantages they pointed out are rather hypothetical. Furthermore, it appears that given the interviewees' limited knowledge on the CA, it was easier for them to formulate potential challenges than to explicitly point out strengths and advantages of the CA, as this would have required a more thorough understanding of the idea and the basic concepts of the approach.

7. Conclusion & recommendations

Over the course of the last decades, a large number of approaches have been developed to assess the concepts of human development and well-being and to provide a framework to develop and evaluate socio-economic policies. In the 1980s, Amartya Sen paved the way for a new understanding of human development by introducing the concept of capabilities. By focusing on people's capabilities, the focus of assessing human development and well-being shifted towards the question of what people are actually able to be and to do and which freedoms/opportunities they have to choose to live a life according to what they consider valuable. The notion of capabilities set the foundation for what is today known as the CA, a normative framework to assess and evaluate individual well-being, social arrangements, the design of policies and proposals about societal change. Since 1990, the CA forms the basis for the UNDP's current approach to human development and increasingly gains in popularity amongst researchers and policy-makers in the field of development economics.

While Germany is one of the biggest players in international development cooperation, the findings of this thesis show that the CA remains largely unknown amongst development practitioners in German NGOs in the field of development cooperation. However, some of the key concepts of the CA, such as the idea of freedom (even though slightly different formulated)

as the primary end of development, the differentiation between means and ends as well as the importance of acknowledging the subjectivity of the idea of a 'good life' appear to be reflected to different extents in some of the NGOs' guiding principles and working processes. It does however remain unclear, whether those features actually reflect features of the CA which might have been implemented on an overarching organizational structure by the corresponding NGOs, which just remained unknown to the respective respondents or whether those characteristics which have here been attributed to the CA would upon further and deeper research be traced back to other approaches to human development and well-being, such as the BNA which just share some common grounds with the CA.

Furthermore, this study identified five main reasons for why the CA might not be too widely known and applied amongst actors in the current German DCS which thus present potential challenges for the implementation of the CA: (i) too big of a gap between science/academia and development practice and thus a lack of exchange of information and experiences between both sides (ii) theoretical approaches such as the CA are too abstract for reality (iii) challenge of whether or not universal capabilities need to be agreed upon before implementing the CA, (iv) development organization related obstacles and (v) the difficulty and complexity of measuring qualitative indicators. The two main strengths and advantages that would arise from implementing the CA are on the one hand that the actual acknowledgement of and engagement with the individuals who are targeted by the organization's development projects and on the other hand CA might sensitize more actors in development cooperation to engage with qualitative indicators.

However, these findings are by no means generalizable and representative for the entire German development cooperation sector as they are based on interviews with only seven of representatives of German NGOs. This thesis is rather a call to raise further awareness of the CA amongst development practitioners and to strengthen the interdisciplinary exchange between development scholars and practitioners to join forces in searching for ways of how to best operationalize the CA. As this thesis shows, there are still many unresolved questions and doubts regarding e.g. the practical feasibility facing the CA. However, the more researchers and practitioners engage with the approach, the more questions and challenges might arise, but also the more people will be familiar with the CA to jointly search for answers and solutions and the more widespread the idea of development as freedom will become.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview guide

Interview with XXX (name of the organization) – Date

Basic Data on XXX

Founding date:

Number of employees:

Position of the interview partner within the organization:

Introductory Questions

- 1) What is the main vision and mission of XXX? What do you aim to achieve with your project work?
- 2) What are the main thematic fields of your organization's projects/initiatives?
- 3) What is the main target group of XXX's programs/initiatives?

Main Questions

Values/Philosophy:

- 4) What are the main principles/values guiding the work of XXX?
- 5) What is development according to your organization's understanding? If you had to choose one word to describe the primary goal of development as reflected in XXX's work – what would you say?
- 6) How much are certain values guiding XXX's work or the morals involved when being active in development cooperation being discussed between you and your co-workers?
- 7) How would you describe whether a certain project/initiative has been successful? What indicates success?

Capability Approach:

- 8) What is your take on the idea that development can be defined as a process to expand real freedoms and to enhance any person's individual agency?
- 9) Have you ever heard of the CA (pioneered by Amartya Sen)?
 - a. Yes
 - i. If so, in which context have you learned about it?
 - ii. What is it you know about the CA?
 - iii. What is the main idea behind the CA according to your own understanding?

- iv. What role does the CA play in the current discourse of development cooperation?
 - v. To which extent does the CA play a role in XXX's work? How is the CA being applied to the thematic and regional focus of XXX's projects?
 - vi. What would you consider as the greatest obstacle/challenge for XXX to integrate the CA into your project work?
 - vii. What do you think are the core strengths of the CA (related to other approaches used to measure and evaluate human development and well-being)?
 - viii. Do you feel supported by the German government in implementing the guiding principles of the CA?
- b. No *[in this case the core concepts of the CA are shortly outlined by the researcher in order to provide a basis for the further interview]*
- i. What does the notion of freedom encompass for you?
 - ii. What should be the primary goal and purpose of development cooperation projects? To which extent is this ideal state reflected in your organization's work?
 - iii. Which role do you attribute to the individuals adding up to the target group of your organization's initiatives?
 - iv. Based on knowledge you have on the CA – which challenges do you think such an approach could face in being implemented in German DCS?
 - v. Based on knowledge you have on the CA – which strengths does the CA have that could entice actors in the German DCS to implement the CA into their guiding principles and working processes?

Closing Questions

- 10) How important is it for you and your co-workers to regularly discuss the values and objectives guiding development work?
- 11) For which reason is XXX part of the VENRO network?
- 12) Would you be interested in having more regular exchange with other NGOs to discuss philosophical matters

Appendix 2: List of Respondents

Interview Partner	Information on the NGO	Information on the interview				
		Date	Length			
	Summary of the NGO's mission & vision	NGO's founding date	Size of the NGO (in terms of staff)	Respondent's role in the NGO		
IP 1	This NGO is an association of social scientists and practitioners from development cooperation who aim to promote the interdisciplinary exchange between these groups and people while focusing on the consultancy of development organizations in Germany.	> 1980	Only volunteers (number fluctates)	Board Member	26.05.2021	45'07 min.
IP 2	This organization focuses on selecting specialists for development programs and prepares them for their service in development cooperation programs worldwide.	< 1980	> 20	Head of the recruitment department	26.05.2021	47'24 min.
IP 3	This NGO focuses on promoting and implementing integrated development projects with a focus on housing, job creation, health care and other infrastructure programs. The measures are carried out in cooperation with local partners.	< 1980	< 10	Project Coordinator for Africa	27.05.2021	45'58 min.
IP 4	This NGO provides assistance in setting up local "self-help" associations in their partner countries. These are then thought to create the basis for the implementation of further projects in order to use the potential of the respective partner organisations to create better living conditions for the local population.	< 1900	> 20	Project Coordinator	01.06.2021	38'45 min.
IP 5	This NGO's project work primarily focuses on rural development (agricultural training centers, livelihood-creating measures), support for disabled people and building educational facilities. The measures are carried out in cooperation with local partners.	> 1980	Only volunteers (number fluctates)	Board Member	01.06.2021	40'14 min.
IP 6	The main goal of this NGO is to support disadvantaged and marginalized children and young people across confessional and ideological boundaries to enable them to lead an independent life in dignity. The main work areas of the organization include tailor-made emergency aid, education and vocational training, consistent human rights work and comprehensive structural support for the local project partners.	> 1980	> 20	Project Coordinator	02.06.2021	32'35 min.
IP 7	This organization supports people in several countries in the global South who are affected by diseases such as HIV/AIDS and leprosy. It also promotes measures that give the most disadvantaged people in these countries access to basic health care and help to improve their living conditions in the long term. The measures are carried out in cooperation with local partners.	< 1980	< 10	Managing Director	09.06.2021	67'23 min.

Appendix 3: Coding Tree

▼ ● CA features in current development cooperation	2
▼ ● Primary end of development	0
▼ ● Independence	2
● "Help for self-help"	2
● Provide people with new perspectives	2
▼ ● Good life	7
● Self-actualization	6
● Very individual	1
● Transfer of power	7
▼ ● Means to achieve ends	2
● Agriculture	1
● Food security	1
● Improve housing situation	1
● Healthcare	3
● Reduction of poverty	1
● Psychological support	1
● Spirituality	2
● Economical factors	1
● Political participation	2
● Water & sanitary infrastructure	1
● Microcredits	1
● Rural development	2
● Education	7
▼ ● How to measure and evaluate success?	1
● Visiting the field	3
● Trust in local partners	2
> ● Choice of cooperations	11
● Respect socio-cultural context	2
● Functionings	2
● Qualitative indicators	1
▼ ● Close connection to target group	5
● Participatory approaches	3
● Focus on the individual	4

✓ ● ☞ Challenges for implementation of CA	0
✓ ● ☞ Gap between science/academia and practice	7
✓ ● ☞ Obstacles for closer exchange	0
● ☞ Routine-blindedness	3
● ☞ Too little capacities	4
● ☞ Academia too abstract	4
● ☞ More exchange needed/wished for	3
● ☞ Theoretical approaches too abstract for reality	2
● ☞ Agreeing on universal capabilities	1
✓ ● ☞ Development organisation related obstacles	0
● ☞ Bureaucracy as an obstacle	7
● ☞ Hierarchy as an obstacle	4
● ☞ Self-preservation-interest	6
✓ ● ☞ Measuring qualitative indicators	0
● ☞ Too complex/difficult	6
● ☞ Too little time, personal & financial resources	8
✓ ● ☞ Strengths of the CA	1
● ☞ More qualitative indicators	2
> ● ☞ Focus on the individual well-being	8
✓ ● ☞ Critique on CA	0
● ☞ Critique on the overarching importance of indi...	3
● ☞ CA as a westernized approach	2
✓ ● ☞ What is needed to make CA feasible	0
● ☞ Distribute financial resources more fairly	1
● ☞ See target groups a equals	3
● ☞ Put more trust in locals	1
● ☞ Keep the key smaller	4
● ☞ Hire more experts	3
● ☞ More exchange with other NGOs	1
● ☞ Digitalisation	1
● ☞ User-friendly operation	1
● ☞ VENRO	7