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EMPOWERING DEVELOPMENT:
CAPABILITIES AND LATIN AMERICAN CRITICAL TRADITIONS



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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

JANUARY, 2016.

ABSTRACT

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This thesis theoretically and critically examines the move towards people-centred approaches to development. It offers a critical examination of the work of Amartya Sen using theoretical resources emerging from Latin American traditions.

Amartya Sen's calls to understand *Development as Freedom* (1999) have significantly influenced mainstream development thinking and practice, constituting the clearest example of people-centred approaches to development today. Overcoming the limitations of previous state-centred notions of development articulated around ideas of economic growth, in Sen's Capability Approach (CA) development is seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. In this understanding, the agency of development shifts from the state to individuals and the analytic focus moves from economic growth to individual capabilities. In this manner, this framework is structured towards the central goal of empowerment, wherein the expansion of capabilities is seen both as the means and end of development. Since its inception, the widespread support for the CA has allowed for the expansion of ethical considerations within mainstream development thinking.

Even while the remarkable advances offered by Sen's work should be praised, this thesis argues that these have come with new limitations. These limitations stem from, what is termed here, a "Paradox of Empowerment" that effectively encloses Sen's approach within Western notions of development. While Sen's approach is poised to provide a theoretical framework that is built on the expansion of freedom and individual agency, there is little agency here to move beyond the ideas of development fundamentally linked to liberal democracies and market economies. This thesis engages with several critical traditions from Latin America, recovering their often undervalued insights for development thinking. Crucially, this engagement provides the critical framework to illustrate the aforementioned paradox and explore multiple dimensions of empowerment central for contemporary development thinking and practice. In this, the thesis engages Sen's work with the Liberation Theology of Gustavo Gutierrez, with Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy and with the contemporary discussions of 'Buen Vivir' associated with Indigenous philosophies of the Andean region. Throughout its chapters, it uncovers the conceptual baggage within the Paradox of Empowerment in Sen's work and examines the ethical challenges and boundaries of this approach in relation to the collective dimension of development processes, the possibilities for structural transformation and concerns for sustainability. Progressively engaging the different dimensions of this paradox, this thesis advances the recovery of the transformative potential of the ideas of empowerment for development.

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ABBREVIATIONS

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BV - Buen Vivir

CA - Capability Approach

CBC - Christian Base Communities

CELAM - Latin American Episcopal Conference

DAF - Development as Freedom

ECLAC - Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

HD - Human Development

LT - Liberation Theology

PLA - Participatory Learning and Action

PRA - Participatory Rural Appraisal

SK - Sumak Kawsay

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

WB - World Bank

WC - Washington Consensus

ISEB - *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The writing of this thesis has led me down a long and eventful path, and I have been fortunate to transit it in the company of others. These others, whose companionship I would like to now acknowledge, have made this experience not only an academic but also a personally enriching, inspiring and illuminating one. For that, I am deeply grateful.

I would first like to acknowledge the guidance of my supervisors, Ricardo Blaug and Farhang Morady. Without their support, advice, encouragement and confidence, this thesis would simply not exist. I am grateful for the patience and effort devoted to reading, commenting and constructively criticizing every piece of writing that I have sent them. Yet, my gratitude goes well beyond how they have enriched this thesis. I would like to thank both of them for providing me with an inspiring illustration of the most wonderful aspects of academic life. In their mentorship, I have seen the clearest examples of academic kindness. Along these lines, a special mention goes to Ricardo: thank you for so boldly embodying the ideals of academic honesty and for all the times you unwaveringly defended what you believed it was right.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial support I received from the University of Westminster. I was fortunate enough to receive an ambivalent full Research Studentship which assisted me in the financial difficulties that every PhD student endures, and without which life in London would have been distinctly more difficult. More importantly, I would like to acknowledge the support of many wonderful people at the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Westminster. To Dibyesh Anand, Maria Holt and Dan Greenwood, goes my gratitude for their assistance, guidance and encouragement. Your patience and willingness to help were crucial in keeping me on track, and a source of inspiration for academic life. To Frands Pedersen, Tassilo Herrschel, Aidan Hehir, Rob Macmaster, Graham Smith, and again to Ricardo Blaug and Farhang Morady: thank you for trusting me enough to allow me to enter in the wonderful world of teaching in higher education. Your support and guidance has made teaching a wonderful and enriching experience, both personally and academically. To the many undergraduate students who had to bear with me in countless hours, I thank you for your patience, and for offering challenging and new inputs to my research. To Suzy Robson, Thomas Moore, Liza Griffin and Jamie Allinson goes also my gratitude for their support. I have always felt academically and personally welcome in the Department that has hosted me so many years. It has been a wonderful place to grow in so many dimensions, and for that, I am very grateful.

I was also fortunate to spend some months as a Visiting Fellow at the Graduate School for Socio-Ecological Research at the University of Kassel, Germany. I would like to thank the Deutsches Akademischer Ausländer Dienst (DAAD) for the financial support received in their Fellowship program. More importantly, I would like to thank Aram Ziai, Christopher Scherrer, Christian Möllman, Stefan Peters, Hans-Jürgen Burchardt, Veronica Romanowski, Lucía Suau Arinci, Friedrich Bossert, Jongkil Kim and all of the PhD students in that department for making my stay in Germany an intellectually challenging and personally enjoyable one. My thesis project has benefited enormously from the time in Kassel.

If a PhD is meant to offer an original pathway into the fascinating world of academic inquiry, I must acknowledge that mine has been particularly enlightened by my friends and colleagues at

Alternautas. Finding like-minded young researchers, similarly inspired by the voices and debates of Abya Yala in the global world and together creating a virtual space from which to join them has been a constant source of inspiration and knowledge for my thesis. I am especially grateful to Johannes Waldmüller, Adrián Beling, Julien Vanhulst, María Mancilla García, Eugenia Giraudó, Anne Freeland and Juan Loera Gonzalez for their digital (yet none the less real) companionship in this journey.

I have been fortunate to share my PhD days at the University with a wonderful group of people. Their friendship has brought me through the most difficult aspects of a thesis and has made me enjoy and celebrate more the bright ones. My personal and academic life would have been distinctly poorer without the company of friends like Pol Bagues, Elisa Randazzo, Richard Neve, Jessica Schmidt, Rob Cowley, Tom Mills and Mustafa Menshawy. A special mention should go to Pol, who has managed to accompany me in this journey from the very first day to the last one.

My life in London provided me with more ‘academic’ friends than the ones that gathered in room 406 or occasionally at the Yorkshire Grey. Their friendship provided me with a much needed solace beyond the walls of the University of Westminster, and an important source of intellectual inspiration. I must here thank Tara Mulqueen, Maria Fernanda Quintero, Hannah Franzki, Matthias Ebenau, Simon Kaye and Sue Iamamoto. This thesis project has distinctly improved from conversations with them, but more importantly, my life has been forever marked by their friendship. I am especially indebted to Tara and Simon, whose help and friendship was fundamental in the last closing weeks. For reminding me that there is a world outside academia, and for their patience and encouragement, go my thanks to Soraya Insignares, Kate Collins, Marina Mansilla Hermann and Simon Fitzpatrick.

I would like to thank my family. I would not be who I am nor this thesis would have come to fruition if it wasn’t for their unwavering long-distance support and encouragement. Beyond this, however, in more ways than I can express, I have learned and drawn intellectual inspiration from them. I would like to thank my parents, Julio Rafael Carballo and María Inés Bergoglio, as well as my siblings, Jerónimo Rafael, Juan Martín and María Mercedes who have set an impossibly high (yet wonderfully inspiring) example. I also would like to thank my grandparents, who, in learning to overcome technological barriers to contact me across oceans, have offered me more support than they can imagine. In particular, this thesis is dedicated to Remo Bergoglio, a doctor, a professor, a hospital director, a trade unionist, a writer, my grandfather, and above all, a wonderful human being. He was the first to believe I should one day follow in his steps and become a doctor; here I dedicate to him my most sincere attempt in fulfilling the ambitions of his encouragement.

Yet, above all the contributions that this thesis has benefitted from, I am lost for words to thank Clayton Chin, without whom none of this would have been possible. He, who has made all the houses I have inhabited while writing this thesis in the UK, Germany, Belgium and Australia a real home, has been the most important source of academic and personal support. I am grateful for his invaluable help in the intellectual discussions of its ideas, the tireless proof-reading and editing, his intelligence and for providing such an inspiring academic example, but above all, for giving meaning to the days spent in its completion.

Finally, I must acknowledge that while this thesis has been enriched by the help of so many, its mistakes and shortcomings are my sole responsibility.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

»»

I hereby confirm that this thesis is the product of my own work. All sources used are referenced.



Ana Estefanía Carballo

Melbourne, January 28th, 2016.

Leí con incomprensión y fervor estas palabras que con minucioso pincel redactó un hombre de mi sangre: *Dejo a los varios porvenires (no a todos) mi jardín de senderos que se bifurcan.*

-

Eagerly yet uncomprehendingly I read the words that a man of my own lineage had written with painstaking brushstrokes: *I leave to several futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths.*

Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones.*-

INTRODUCTION



In 1979, Monseñor Oscar Romero wrote from San Salvador his fourth and last pastoral letter exhorting the church to continue its struggle to become the Voice of the Voiceless, 'a defender of the rights of the poor, a promoter of every just aspiration for liberation, a guide, an empowerer, a humanizer of every legitimate struggle to achieve a more just society'.¹ At that moment, Monseñor Romero was the archbishop of San Salvador, capital city of El Salvador, and a supporter of the movement of Liberation Theology that emerged from the Medellín meeting of the Latin American Bishops Conference in 1968. In linking churchwork with an active claim for an improvement of the living conditions of the peoples of Latin America, Liberation Theology began an involvement with national politics which led to ground-breaking discussions in the promotion of development centred on grassroots work and the empowerment of the poor. Their understanding was that development should be seen as 'liberation', a liberation that was not only spiritual, but had its fundamental material roots in the transformation of the living conditions of the poor.

Romero's pastoral letters were part of a large body of works from theologians and critical theorists produced in Latin America in the 60s and 70s that addressed issues of development and envisioned a central role for the individual and their communities in escaping underdevelopment. These combined a radical critique of the living conditions of millions of the poor in the region which drew on ideas of individual empowerment, participation and political involvement in a proposal that significantly moved away from the previous discussions of development in the region.² In denouncing the extreme conditions under which most of the population of the region was confined

¹ Romero 1979, 24

² The priests of the Liberation Theology put forward an understanding of 'development as liberation' that conceived individual empowerment and engagement (in particular that of the poor) as the only road to material and spiritual transformation. See Gutiérrez 1970; Gutiérrez 1988; Boff and Boff 1987; Boff 1981; Camara 1971; Camara 2009. The contributions of the Liberation Theology, as we will discuss further in Ch.1, have not participated in global discussions of development, yet they have set an important precedent to contemporary people-centred approaches to development. We will address this literature, its claims, and its relation to development in detail in Ch. 4.

to live and, in particular, in highlighting the centrality of individuals and their communities as a means to achieve development, the work of these theologians and thinkers was deemed revolutionary and dangerous, their ideas of promoting empowerment, of engaging in grassroots works to achieve the '*conscientização*' of the poor, subversive.³

Two decades after that pastoral letter, the World Bank (WB) began the implementation of a project that reproduced almost verbatim Monseñor Romero's claims in what was known as the *Voices of the Poor* initiative. This project, which sought to provide empirical grounding for the World Development Report 2000/1, was a major international research initiative that sought to engage those who were normally on the receiving end of development policies. Following these ideas, the WB launched a two-year research project that involved 60,000 participants from 60 different countries, in an unprecedented effort to give voice to the voiceless, to inform policy institutions at the international and regional levels of the needs, aspirations and expectations of the poor.⁴ The main aim of this project was for the WB to become an actor that would make poor people's voices heard, working to make them active elements in strategies of poverty alleviation. This involved grassroots movements and the building of 'bottom-up initiatives' of development to be tailored, designed and implemented in cooperation with the poor. The final report stated,

'The challenge for policy and practice is to empower the powerless in their struggles to find a place of dignity and respect in society. ... It is to enable them to take more control of their lives and to gain for themselves more of what they need. Given the web of powerlessness and voicelessness, the questions change: How can development policies increase poor men and women's access to opportunities and resources and their freedom of choice and action?'⁵

The focus on giving a 'voice to the voiceless' and to 'empower the powerless in their struggles' resonates with the pastoral letters of Monseñor Romero, and many other Latin

³ Paulo Freire's notion of '*conscientização*' has been translated as 'conscientisation', a process of consciousness-raising that, as we will discuss in detail in Ch. 5, is fundamental to enabling the individual's active involvement in development processes. See, Freire 2005; Freire 1977; Freire 1972.

⁴ The publication of the World Development Report 2000/1 was preceded by other reports and initiatives that understood development along similar lines, most notably the UNDP work in Human Development, based in Amartya Sen's theoretical work which is the focus of this thesis. In general, as we will discuss subsequently, these reports and documents are clear signs of the shift towards people-centred approaches to development that have dominated mainstream policy and academic discussions on the topic.

⁵ Narayan et al. 2000, 260

American critical discourses concerned with the socio-economic and political situation of the 60s and 70s. Policy institutions like the WB appear to have moved their focus, in devising strategies that include a larger space for the active involvement of poor people, grassroots movements and their communities in the achievement of development. However similar, the connections between the WB's initiative and the pastoral work do not extend to their ultimate fates: on March 24th 1980, Monseñor Romero's grassroots work, writings and sermons in favour of a Church that would fight to empower the poor ended abruptly, as the archbishop was assassinated in the middle of the celebration of mass in a small chapel in San Salvador. Romero's terrible fate was not an isolated case in Latin America, where many of the members of various social movements that advocated for the empowerment of the poor, the expansion of grassroots work and the increase of political participation ended up murdered, in exile, or in prison. The World Bank's research initiative, on the contrary, was praised for its inclusiveness and for increasing the 'ownership' of development processes. Further, it had lasting effects, redirecting the work of the bank, tying the empowerment of individuals to poverty reduction strategies.⁶ In mainstream discussions of development, initiatives that, as the 'Voices of the Poor', sought to shift from state-centred projects to the promotion of the empowerment and participation of people have been quite successful in framing their efforts in the promotion of 'human development'. The shift towards a more individually empowering strategy for development - without the Christian elements of liberation theology - has become the backbone of the good governance and human development agenda promoted in the past few decades in Latin America and the rest of the world.

As we will discuss in this thesis, the emergence of the discourse of Human Development (HD) has become the clearest example of the shift of development strategies towards people-centred approaches to development. Fostering participation and organizing grassroots movements of citizens that claim a further involvement in policy making is no longer perceived as a subversive practice, but the best ally of a strengthened democracy, in the promotion of good governance. The creation of NGOs that organize such activities has been welcomed by states and supported by international corporations through their tax-deduction schemes and by the international aid flowing from cooperation agencies to every developing country. Words like "empowerment",

⁶ Pender 2002; Narayan 2002; Mansuri and Rao 2012; Cornwall and Fujita 2012

“participation”, “income distribution”, “inequality” and “injustice” are now part of the regular reports of international development agencies, and no longer cause any alarm among the corporate-financial and political elites of the world.⁷ The search for a just, sustainable development, that incorporates every member of society in the construction of a better future, is no longer the embodiment of a revolutionary spirit. Rather it is perceived as the common goal of those working in the development field all over the world, from international financial institutions in Washington DC to volunteers and poor people working in every corner of the globe. Is it simply the case that this shift represents a 'triumph' of those revolutionary projects from the 60s and 70s - those who dreamed of a development process that included the poor and the oppressed as fundamental actors of their own development? Is it the case that the political and economic practices of empowerment that currently shape mainstream practices of development are directed at fundamentally shifting the structures of development, to overcome the injustice of the situation in which millions of poor people live in around the globe?

The emphasis of contemporary academic and policy discussions on the empowerment and expansion of the agency of individuals as the ends and sustainable means to achieving development has successfully displaced previous notions of that concept. In the past few decades, development agencies, national governments and civil society organisations have embraced the spirit of human development as a truly liberating work, understanding, as Amartya Sen would put it, 'Development as Freedom'.⁸ People-centred approaches to development now dominate discussions and projects of development across the globe. They appear to have sided with the revolutionary projects of Monseñor Romero and others that advocated for the empowerment of the poor and dispossessed to escape from the material oppression of under-development. Yet, as we will see in this thesis, the advance of development thinking and practice that has evolved from a state-centric vision of the process of development and a narrow economic view of its results to people-centred approaches emphasising empowerment and participation, has come with new limitations.

⁷ Several works have highlighted this trend that incorporated the use of these once controversial words as a normal part of development discourse in recent decades. See, for example Cornwall 2007; Cornwall and Brock 2005; Leal 2007; Mohan and Stokke 2000; Bebbington et al. 2007.

⁸ Sen 1999a

This thesis stems from a desire to recover the transformatory potential of development practices, strategies and projects that feature the empowerment and engagement of the individual as a fundamental mechanism. It seeks to challenge the theoretical ideas that currently underpin the shift to people-centred approaches to development in order to clarify and overcome their limitations, and it does so from a theoretical engagement with the work of Amartya Sen. As will become clearer in the following sections (and explored in depth in the following chapters) the work of Sen has been of fundamental importance for the practice and theory of the aforementioned shifts in development thinking. Thus, a critical engagement with his work allows us to unpack and challenge the often hidden assumptions that these people-centred approaches sustain. In exploring the issues and limitations that contemporary, people-centred approaches to development entail, this thesis will take a regional perspective, engaging those sources with a critical lens derived from theoretical contributions specifically from Latin American traditions of thought. In the following sections we will give more shape to the main elements that compose this project, which will be developed in depth in the following chapters.

Development of What? People-centred approaches to development

The discussion of ideas of development took shape in academia after the Second World War. It was that apocalyptic scenario of devastation in different regions of the world, following the war and the great depression, that gave rise to the first series of systematic analyses of the conditions and strategies to allow for the recovery of some nations, and for the 'take-off' of newly independent ones. Development theories, then, emerged from the desire to academically and theoretically construct plausible solutions to the new challenges that the world was facing. As such, development as a discipline started from an ambivalent space between policy work and traditional ivory-tower-enclosed academic disciplines, receiving input from both. It is perhaps because of this dynamic relationship that theories of development have evolved and shifted so rapidly in the last sixty years.

The focus of discussions and policies of development shifted from a promotion of the advance of States *for* the development of their people, to the construction of an idea of development centred on people as both the main goal and the main means to achieving it, from the 1990s onwards. As Goran Hyden and Julius Court put it, ideas of development have gone from being understood as development *'for the people'* in the

1950s and 1960s, to move to an idea of development *'by the people'* after the 1990s.⁹ This very succinct distinction captures an essential movement in the focus of development. The Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Europe post-WW2 is an example of the former, consisting mainly in the adoption of national development plans and projects, implemented mainly by national governments with the support of international organisations. The Human Development (HD) initiative, launched by the United Nations in 1990, is an example of the latter. The HD Report of 1991 states this shift very clearly in arguing that 'development has to be woven around people, not people around development. It has to be development *of* the people *by* the people, *for* the people'.¹⁰ Progressively, theories of development have moved from an understanding of development that centred around the state and the national economy as its main goal and means, to one focused on the individuals not only as mere recipients of the benefits of the advances of development, but as the fundamental means to achieving it.

We will discuss the consolidation and evolution of the earlier theories of development in detail in Ch. 1, yet to contextualise the emergence of people-centred approaches to development, certain elements need to be highlighted. In the decades that followed the end of the Second World War, theories of development were mainly formulated around ideas of transfers of knowledge and resources from the developed West to the developing nations of the Southern hemisphere, to assist them in 'catching up' with the Global North. These theories, emerging in the 1940s and 1950s, shared an evolutionist view of the history of development, and assumed that advanced Western societies were the standard and model for development strategies.¹¹ In general, these developmental paradigms, which shaped the emergence of development studies, shared a series of problematic assumptions about the nature of underdeveloped countries, political and economic progress, and the role of the state.

The first critiques of these ideas emerged in Latin America in the late 1950s, where some pointed out the inability of these early theories to account for the difficulties inherent in any attempt at development presented by the colonial legacy and the

⁹ Hyden and Court 2002, 3–5

¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme 1991, 13

¹¹ These first theories of development, as we will see in Ch. 1, were known as 'Modernization theories' as they understood development as a process of achieving the dream of modernity. Some clear examples of these theories of development include the works of Rosenstein-Rodan 1961; Rostow 1960 [1960]; Nurkse 1961; Lewis 1954.

international structures of trade. The path dependency that was created by the social, political and economic structures of colonization and the resulting unequal structures of world trade were identified as the main reason behind the underdevelopment that was afflicting the nations of the Third World. Hence, these theories came to be grouped under the heading of *Structuralism*. The focus of the structuralist theories of development (and the subsequent discussions of *dependencia* which evolved from these) shifted the analysis from the endogenous conditions necessary for the 'take-off' of development to the 'structural' external conditions that were holding these countries back in the development path.¹² However, and while we will review the challenges and radical differences between these early theories of development in Ch. 1, these ideas continued to share several characteristics with the previous viewpoint, around the nature of progress, the role of the state, and the role of natural resources in fuelling development.

By the end of the 1970s *Dependencia* theories and different readings of the Structuralist position had become central positions in debates around development. Both in receiving fervent support and vehement criticism, development was understood in relation to these ideas, and the debate was slowly leading to exhaustion both at the theoretical and at the policy level. By the mid-1980s, the idea that development studies as a discipline was becoming stagnant and its discussions sterile, was captured by David Booth in what he termed a theoretical 'impasse'.¹³ At the same time, the increasing awareness that the material conditions of existence of millions of people in the Third World were not improving and the gap between rich and poor countries, far from closing, was becoming more profound, presented a strong challenge to the framework of existing development theories.¹⁴ At an academic level, since the early 1970s, new theories that expanded on the visions of development beyond economic growth had started to offer alternatives to widen the focus of development and argue for the inclusion of more ethical considerations in the debates around it.¹⁵ Adding to these claims both from the policy and the academic side of development, the rising neoliberal agendas

¹² Some of the main examples of these theories are Prebisch 1949; Cardoso and Faletto 1974; Furtado 1964; Frank 1969; Frank 1966; Dos Santos 1970; Marini 1972; Bambirra 1974.

¹³ Booth 1985. We will explore this 'impasse' in more detail in Ch. 1.

¹⁴ See Ch. 1 fn. 68.

¹⁵ We will explore some examples in Ch. 1.

also favoured a reduction of the centrality of the state in the promotion of development, opening a larger space for markets together with individual action.¹⁶ It is in this context that we can understand the emergence of people-centred ideas of development, a set of ideas that would build on the challenges and limitations identified during the ‘theoretical impasse’.

The Human Development (HD) paradigm, articulated mainly around Amartya Sen’s theoretical contributions, has become the clearest example of the people-centred ideas of development that have become mainstream since the 1990s. While certainly the HD paradigm was not the only response to the development ‘impasse’, its capacity to offer plausible responses to many of the criticisms raised in the development scholarship at the time contributed to making it the most successful approach. For Gilbert Rist, the emergence of HD was a move whose ‘point, of course, was to rehabilitate a largely discredited concept by giving it a spiritual boost that it would be in bad taste to refuse’.¹⁷ Shifting the goals of development to the individual (and thus expanding the goal of development beyond economic growth) and seeing the individual as the main agent of development, ideas of human development became associated with strategies of political and economic empowerment of individuals, as well as with the measurement of development achievements in multidimensional indexes, rather than ones based solely on GDP ratios. It is the expansion of the role of individuals as the main means and ends of development – if we may recall the reference above, HD was directed to achieve ‘development *of, for, and by* the people’ – that significantly transformed the view of people-centred development theories. The HD paradigm, in shifting the locus of development to the individual and expanding the goals of development beyond economic growth, has been welcomed as a quasi-revolutionary project that opened a long overdue space for the ‘voiceless and the powerless’. For many, the centrality of individuals in development and the idea of the multi-dimensionality of development were a major breakthrough from previous development thinking.¹⁸

¹⁶ The rise of neoliberalism and the consolidation of the Washington Consensus, pushed for a global agenda of market-based development policies that eroded the centrality of the role of the state and expanded the role of the individual and markets. See, Harvey 2007; Williamson 1990.

¹⁷ Rist 2008, 205

¹⁸ See, for example, K. Haq and Ponzio 2008; Ki-moon 2010; Gasper 2011.

As we will examine in Chapters 2 and 3, this shift towards this people-centred approaches in general, and the establishment of the HD paradigm in particular, have been highly influenced by Amartya Sen's work. His *Capability Approach (CA)* has offered a conception of development based on the expansion of the freedom of the individual.¹⁹ Putting individuals at the centre, rather than nation states and economic measurements, Sen's influence both in the policy and academic discussions of development in the past few decades has been remarkable. In Sen's perspective, development should be understood as a process of 'expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy'.²⁰ These freedoms, articulated in the construction of individual capabilities, are both the ends and means of development. In this way, the expansion of freedom is seen to provide the space for individuals to exert their individual agency. The political and economic empowerment of the individual is seen as fundamental to achieving development. Development is here understood as the removal of certain 'unfreedoms', barriers that prevent the individual from exerting their individual choice and agency to transform their reality.²¹ In its articulation of the 'free' space for the individual in the construction of development, Sen's work is assumed to have broken new ground, overcoming the limitations of previous views of development. It is this reading of development that has enabled the emergence of the HD paradigm which has become the mainstream in contemporary practices of development. While the CA has expanded well beyond Sen's work (so, we cannot simply equate his philosophical work with the implementation of practices of development on the ground in every context), it is the normative framework that his CA offers that permeates the HD development ethos, strongly influencing the conceptualisations of development used and providing the theoretical background to ideas of empowerment.²²

For all these reasons, Sen's work offers a unique opportunity to engage in a theoretical analysis of the recent turn to people-centred approaches in development

¹⁹ Sen's work has been particularly prolific in the construction and refinement of this approach. Perhaps the clearest exposition of his CA has been provided in Sen 1999a. An in-depth engagement with Sen's work and its relationship in grounding the HD paradigm will be undertaken in Ch. 2 and 3.

²⁰ Sen 1999a, 3

²¹ Sen 1999a

²² The literature focused on the CA has expanded at a remarkable rate. While we will engage with this in later chapters it is worth mentioning some authors that have been highly influential in the expansion of the CA. See, for example, Nussbaum 2000; Nussbaum and Glover 1995; Nussbaum 2011a; Alkire 2002; Comim, Qizilbash, and Alkire 2008; Robeyns 2005; Deneulin 2006.

thinking. Hence, in this thesis project, his work will act as the main critical object, a site to explore the theoretical backdrop that structures the real opportunities and limitations that mainstream contemporary practices of development offer to achieving 'development as freedom'. His work provides a unique opportunity to examine these assumptions that underpin the manner in which the turn to people in development has been understood and pursued. Rather than engaging in an empirical analysis of the limitations and strengths of such an approach, this thesis engages in a theoretical discussion of the normative framework that underpins the recent move to people-centred approaches to development, focusing on the work of Amartya Sen.

As it will become clearer in the analysis developed in Ch.2, Sen's earlier work in economics and later contributions to development thinking stem from a genuine interest in the expansion of the ethical considerations of development. His calls for understanding development 'as freedom' resonate as a profoundly transformative approach to conceptualizing development processes, and his focus on the empowerment of individuals as the means and ends of development can be seen as a systematic effort to expand the emancipatory potential of such practices.²³ Furthermore, the extent to which this conceptual framework has spread to become the most central approach of development strategies illustrates an unprecedented support for a change in the readings of development; one that emphasizes the need of constructing a more 'humane' approach, where the ethical considerations exceed those of the economic ones. Nonetheless, the implementation of the HD paradigm does not seem to have brought any revolutionary changes to the conditions of life of millions in the Third World. The calls for achieving 'Development as freedom', for achieving a truly liberating level of development, have become a common strategy for development, a matter of experts and professionals working with the poor to organize participatory stances for development. Far from becoming a motto for popular or grassroots movements of resistance and radical transformation, such ideas of empowerment are now articulated by central policy institutions from all over the world. The empowerment of people as a

²³ In fact, as we discuss in the last section of Ch. 2, Sen's earlier works draw on Karl Marx's work, when arguing that development had 'to do, in Marx's words, with 'replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances'. (Sen 1983, 754) These early references stand in stark contrast with his later remarks when he refers to Marx as a 'no longer popular author' (Sen 2002b, 82), but offer a clear insight into the evolution of his work.

fundamental step to achieve development has become a commonplace, domesticated language in development strategies.²⁴

Yet, as we will discuss in Ch.3, these efforts have become entrapped in a paradox: while they stem from a desire to expand the ethical considerations of development and to advance in the pursuit of ‘development as freedom’, their implementation significantly constricts the possibility of doing this. Rather than becoming spaces to radically transform and overcome the limits of underdevelopment, these people-centred approaches to development end up reproducing specifically Western ideas of development. More concretely, they link ideas of economic and political empowerment with market economies and liberal democracies in a manner which constrains the emancipatory potential purported. Framed within the Paradox of Empowerment, development becomes only for a certain sort of predetermined freedom; a much less catchy phrase if there was one. This thesis argues that this paradoxical nature of people-centred approaches to development can be clearly seen in the work of Amartya Sen. Thus, a theoretical engagement with his work will allow us to question the limits and opportunities that contemporary people-centred approaches to development entail, and in doing so, an engagement with Latin American theoretical resources will prove of essential value.

Why Latin America?

While we will devote Ch. 1 to discussing the relevance of Latin America for a theoretical analysis of development, it is necessary to give a broad account of the rationale here. Latin America provides many examples of development failure and has been a fertile ground for the implementation of the most varied projects and strategies in the name of development, discussions of development have had a particular strength in the region. As Aníbal Quijano pointed out, the regional fixation with ideas of development (either to embrace, reject or devise alternatives to it) has produced one of the richest debates in the intellectual history of the region.²⁵ Throughout its history, the region has been the geographical locus where some of the most innovative notions and projects of development took place, some of which have remained at the margins of academic

²⁴ Mansuri and Rao 2004; Mansuri and Rao 2012

²⁵ Quijano 2000a

debate. Others, however, in particular those associated with the ideas of the structuralist school of development and the *dependencia* school, as we have briefly mentioned in the previous section, fuelled global debates on development. Yet, some theoretical and practical experimentation in the Latin American context remains underutilised within mainstream discussions of development; in particular, work on conceptual approaches and practical strategies for individual empowerment. It is this work this thesis brings to contemporary academic debates, with the aim of probing the boundaries and overcoming the limitations of mainstream notions of people-centred approaches to development.

As we have already briefly seen, it was in the articulation of an alternative vision of development, opposed to the Modernization imperative, that the Structuralist school of development and the *Dependencia* school began to shape the critical voice that Latin American scholars presented to mainstream readings of development. The works of Raul Prebisch, André Gunder Frank, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and others in these schools have become widely incorporated into the debates of development theory throughout the world, and their ideas have been echoed, discussed and criticized. Yet, other important voices remained on the margins of the development scholarship.²⁶ The radical movements that followed the ideas of both *Dependencia* and Structuralists theories continued a systematic analysis of ideas of development, albeit with significant divergences. In Latin America, the questioning of alternative paths to development was done by the priests and theologians active in the movement of Liberation Theology, and by those who, from a more secular perspective, expressed similar ideas in the implementation of what was called Critical Pedagogy. The ever-increasing awareness of the urgency of responding to the needs of their underdeveloped societies framed the emergence of the first considerations of individual agency in development in Latin America, forecasting some of the responses and ideas later to be developed by Amartya Sen. As we will see in Ch. 4 and 5, the pursuit of socio-economic emancipation that both the Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy advocated saw a fundamental role for the individuals in the achievement of their own development, and these present several, yet to be reflected upon, convergences with and challenges to the work of Sen.²⁷ Both

²⁶ See Ch. 1, particularly section three.

²⁷ Both the analysis of Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy will play a central role in this thesis. We have briefly referred to some of its central literature in fn. 2 and fn 3 of this Introduction. Their analysis will be left to chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

these elements - their similarities and differences - have been side-lined in past and present theoretical debates on development; yet, they will prove fundamental for the analysis developed in this thesis.

The contributions from Latin America that this thesis will engage are not only found in the region's fertile intellectual history, but also in an engagement with contemporary practices of and debates on development. As we will discuss in Ch. 6, the revival of indigenous philosophies in the national politics of the Andean countries has elicited a wide range of responses within development policies and discussions. In contemporary practices in Latin America, the indigenous movements of the Andes have perhaps gone furthest in exploring alternative avenues to the Western mainstream notion of development, an idea that appears to follow proposals to advance de-colonial projects from the region.²⁸ The ideas of the *Sumak Kawsay*²⁹(SK), currently being incorporated in some policy discussions, speak of an alternative vision of development, one that articulates the idea of development in a 'cosmovision' that includes the individual, society and the earth, and that underpins an integral vision of development. Yet, both in policy and some academic discussions, efforts have been made to positively connect these ideas to Amartya Sen's work, in a rushed and insufficiently reflective attempt to 'incorporate the lessons' that these indigenous philosophies bring to development thinking and practice.³⁰ In this thesis, rather than focusing on highlighting the similarities between Sen's work and the SK framework, we will take the opportunity to reflect on the ethical challenges that these novel Indigenous discussions bring to contemporary people-centred approaches to development.

Overall, this thesis aims at bringing certain Latin American critical traditions into conversation with Amartya Sen's theoretical framework. This allows us to fill a gap in the literature that has not sufficiently addressed significant scholarship coming from Latin America. Revisiting historical sources and engaging with contemporary ones allows us to feature some of the vast and rich critical traditions emerging from the global South,

²⁸ See, for example, Gudynas 2014a; Walsh 2010; Walsh 2012; Quijano 2006; Quijano 2000b; Escobar 2010b

²⁹ As we will examine in depth in Ch.6, Sumak Kawsay is a notion in Quechua that has been translated into Spanish as 'Buen Vivir', and this in turn to English as 'Good Living' or 'good life'. However, Sumak Kawsay has analogous notions in different indigenous languages of the región. See, in particular, fn. 13 of Ch.6.

³⁰ These issues will be discussed in depth in Ch. 6. See particularly section two.

within a discipline – development studies – that has largely prioritised those traditions emerging from the global North. It is here that this thesis makes an original contribution to development theory: it brings to the fore perspectives that, emerging from Latin America, present fundamental challenges and contributions to mainstream notions of people-centred approaches to development, engaging the work of Amartya Sen as its most representative theoretical core. This results in both new possibilities for development theory, notions of human empowerment and people-centred approaches, derived from these under-utilised Latin American traditions, while offering new critical insights into both the strengths of Sen’s particular model and the possibilities of advancing beyond its weaknesses.

Overview of thesis chapters and main arguments

This thesis is divided in two main sections that are formed by three chapters each. In the first section (which includes chapters 1, 2 and 3) the main theoretical foundations are established and the broad arguments of the thesis are introduced. Here, the relevance of the approach undertaken, as well as its theoretical and regional focus are further clarified. Moreover, the argument that contemporary people-centred approaches to development are entrapped in a paradox is made clearer and refined. This section demonstrates the centrality of Amartya Sen’s work for development thinking and practice, and its connection to the HD approach. In the midst of the vast literature that uses Amartya Sen’s CA and seeks to extend its framework either through empirical or theoretical work, this thesis takes a more critical, yet sympathetic, approach to his work.³¹ The theoretical analysis that is deployed in this section allows us to unpack the conceptual baggage that is associated with Sen’s CA, in order to later challenge its boundaries and overcome its limitations, through a recovery of some of Latin America’s critical traditions in this thesis’ second main section. These challenges, as we will see

³¹ The literature that has followed Amartya Sen’s work is exceptionally vast, especially for an author that still produces a prolific work each year. On theoretical work that expands Sen’s CA see, among others, Nussbaum 2000; Nussbaum 2011a; Robeyns 2003; Robeyns 2006; Robeyns 2008; Drydyk 2013; Crocker 2007; Crocker 2008; Deneulin 2008; Deneulin 2006; Alkire 2002; Ibrahim 2006. While efforts to apply Sen’s valuable insights to empirical research are too many to be accounted for, initiatives worth mentioning are those of Alkire and Ibrahim 2007; Rauschmayer, Bauler, and Schöpke 2015; Pelenc, Bazile, and Ceruti 2015; Pelenc and Ballet 2015; Fukuda-Parr 2003b; Voget-kleschin 2013; Nayyar 2012. The literature on the capability approach is so vast that the Human Development and Capabilities Association publishes a yearly compendium that recollects the bibliography published on the matter. See, for example Ibrahim 2009; Vigorito 2010; Vigorito 2013.

below, are associated with the different dimensions of the process of development, particularly for the consideration of collective issues, of the potential for structural transformation and for the inclusion of sustainability concerns.

Chapter 1 provides an evolutionary overview of development thinking where both the move to people-centred approaches to development and the Latin American contributions to development thinking, are brought to the fore. The chapter develops two main arguments: (1) that Amartya Sen's *capability approach* to development is the clearest example of the shift towards people-centred approaches to development and, (2) that Latin American critical traditions offer valuable resources to challenge mainstream notions of development which have not been sufficiently explored in development theory. Chapter 2 builds on the discussions of the previous chapter, and offers an in-depth engagement with Amartya Sen's work as the theoretical site from which this thesis will discuss the limitations of the HD approach. Here, the argument of Sen's paramount importance as the clearest example of people-centred approaches to development is substantiated through a critical engagement with his vast work, demonstrating how this has opened an unprecedented space for reflections on individual empowerment in development thinking. Chapter 3 delves further into Sen's work and argues that while he seldom explicitly uses the notion of empowerment to speak of the process of capability expansion that he associates with development, this notion is a key element of his analysis of the individual's role in the actual achievement of development, and is thus central to Sen's own work. Furthermore, in this chapter, the contradictory nature of the quest for empowerment within mainstream development thinking and practice is unveiled. It is this 'Paradox of Empowerment' that is identified in Sen's approach and its narrow boundaries that will be problematized in the remaining chapters - the second main section of the thesis - , through different Latin American theoretical perspectives.

The second main section of the thesis (which comprises Chapters 4, 5 and 6) is dedicated to engaging Amartya Sen's work with different critical traditions emerging from Latin America. Each chapter will progressively focus on different aspects of Sen's Capability Approach and its embedded notion of empowerment, in order to challenge its boundaries along a variety of dimensions and offer alternatives that may help overcome its limitations. Chapter 4 will engage Liberation Theology (LT) in order to generate a new perspective on processes of empowerment within Sen's work. The

chapter argues that, while often overlooked in discussions of development theory, the critical tradition espoused by intellectuals within the LT that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s offers a unique opportunity to reflect on issues of collective empowerment. Here, the analysis of ‘Development as Liberation’ put forward by Gustavo Gutierrez and others within the LT serves to expose and challenge the comparatively individualistic nature of the project of empowerment within Sen. The role for communities that LT envisions as a source for individual empowerment and a means to social transformation confronts the limited ideas of ‘social embeddedness’ in Sen’s and HD’s projects of empowerment for development. Importantly, this analysis also recovers LT as a valuable resource for development thinking, where often it has not been significantly reflected on.

Chapter 5 offers an innovative analysis of the work of Paulo Freire for development thinking and uses its framework to engage with Amartya Sen’s work. The chapter argues that Freire’s analysis of ‘Development as *Conscientização*’ presents clear parallels with Sen’s perspective on empowerment. However, while similarities can be traced between their works, if we connect Freire’s political project together with his pedagogical perspective and emphasis on the promotion of political participation, then his framework appears as fundamentally distinct. In reading Freire’s participatory method of literacy together with his political project of empowerment and social transformation, the chapter illustrates how his framework offers a vision of empowerment and political participation as a transformatory force. Importantly, it is this vision of participation as a transformatory force what allows us to partially resolve and advance beyond Sen’s Paradox of Empowerment. The chapter argues, thus, that while there is a similar understanding of the role of political participation in achieving individual empowerment and ultimately development, there is in Freire a fundamental opposition to the ideas of institutionalized participation that serves to shed light on the limitations of the mainstream understandings of political empowerment. Notably, through this reading, the chapter also rescues Freirean reflection from the methodological fixation to which his contribution has been reduced in development thinking. In this way, it recovers his transformatory and novel potential within the literature.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, turns to contemporary trends in Latin America, to engage Sen’s framework for development. However, understanding ‘Development as

Sumak Kawsay' allows us to reflect not only on the boundaries of Sen's framework but also on the shortcomings shared by all the perspectives discussed up to this point. The chapter explores the ethical contributions of the indigenous philosophies of the Andean region and the connections that have been made between these perspectives and mainstream policy and academic discussions of development in the region, particularly associated with HD and Amartya Sen's work. The chapter argues that rather than rushing into tracing their parallels and similarities, understanding 'development as *Sumak Kawsay*' gives us the opportunity to push against the boundaries of HD, particularly on two aspects: (a) the role and the understanding of the community in pursuits of development and the good life, and (b) the space of the Earth and nature in considerations of sustainability and in challenging a vision of development as a unilinear, unlimited process. These indigenous philosophical resources are used here to question the boundaries of understanding empowerment as a means to development, both within and beyond Amartya Sen's thinking, in an attempt to advance an understanding of development beyond the human.

The thesis then concludes by re-examining the major questions and conclusions of all the chapters. After the critical revision of Sen's CA for development and its engagement with different LA critical traditions, the thesis draws its conceptual closure in examining the potentialities of the latter to advance beyond the limitations of the Paradox of Empowerment, and its multiplicity of dimensions. It then situates the perspective offered here within contemporary debates with the purpose of outlining the future potential of this research and how it can be carried forward on several fronts.

Some methodological remarks

Having reviewed the context and main arguments of this thesis, as well as its structure and organisation, it is necessary to make some remarks regarding the methodology employed in this analysis. As it has become evident, this thesis undertakes a theoretical analysis of the work of Amartya Sen, engaging it from the perspectives of different Latin American critical traditions. In this sense, the methodological approach is that of a textual analysis that engages primarily with the written work of Sen and other traditions of thought within development theory emerging from Latin America. As such, this theoretical analysis is focused on the engagement of concepts and ideas in critical analytic frameworks, but it is not focused on analysing the consequences of those ideas within

practical, empirical contexts. This is a particularly important distinction to make, as the study of development is so inextricably intertwined with the implementation of development practices. This thesis does not wish to directly extrapolate its conclusions and observations to the ‘real world’ of development policy, nor does it seek to imply that the connection between the work of Amartya Sen and the implementation of HD initiatives is a direct and unequivocal one.

While there is no doubt that employing a theoretical methodology neglects the necessary empirical analysis of the implementation of people-centred approaches, it can, however, provide us with important theoretical tools and findings to address the shortcomings of these approaches. It can certainly be argued that a critique that is based merely in academic discussions - in a field so embedded in the practical implementation of ideas and strategies for the material transformation of the lives of people as it is development studies - will forever lack the kind of transformatory potential that these practices of development seek to attain. Yet, it is the presumption of this study that it is only through an initial reflection on the theoretical limitations of the normative frameworks that inspire everyday practices of development that such a transformatory potential can be reached. Nonetheless, the reflection that this thesis undertakes does seek to problematise empirical trends within development - referred to in the various chapters - that elicit theoretical reflection, in the hope that these too, could potentially inspire and affect future empirical applications of development ideas and practices.

Another methodological concern arises with the use of the term *Paradigm* to refer to the Human Development approach. While in common parlance, the notion of a new ‘paradigm’ is often (ab)used to generally refer to overarching processes that in one way or another disrupt established orders, in scholarly discussions it unmistakably recalls Thomas Kuhn’s usage of this term to describe self-enclosed and incommensurable lenses for scientific understanding and practice.³² The question of whether the ideas of Human Development can be described as a new ‘paradigm’, in this sense, in development thinking has generated some discussion. Christopher Kuonqui, for example argues that, in Kuhn’s terminology, the Human Development approach constitutes a paradigm shift within economic thinking not a new paradigm in itself.³³

³² Kuhn 1996 [1962]

³³ Kuonqui 2006, 28

Others refer to it as a paradigm, highlighting the differences with previous notions, understandings and approaches to development.³⁴ Engaging in an in-depth discussion of the term *paradigm* in Kuhn's terminology and clarifying the Human Development approach's status within it falls outside the scope of this thesis. Thus, this thesis will not try to elucidate or clarify the extent to which Amartya Sen's *capability approach* or the development policies and analyses stemming from it fall or not under these criteria. Rather, attentive to the theoretical and methodological unity that can be identified from the various theoretical, empirical and practical analyses that have been labelled as following a 'Human Development' focus, this thesis will broadly use the term Human Development approach or paradigm interchangeably without the Kuhnian connotations and simply to denote this broad sense of unity.

The final methodological issue pertains to the relationship of this thesis with the projects of *decoloniality* and similar initiatives that are emerging from the global South in general and from Latin America in particular. In recent decades, the work of many post-development theorists, post-colonial and de-colonial authors and critical authors in general has turned to initiatives that - rightly - seek to recover some of the epistemological, cultural and philosophical ideas that have been historically silenced in the constitution of the hegemonic narrative of Western superiority and its colonial project.³⁵ Particularly in Latin America, the strength of their critique and the challenges they have posed to universalistic ideas based in Western traditions of thought cannot be underestimated. It must, therefore, be acknowledged that this thesis is largely sympathetic with these efforts, and these ideas have been a constant source of inspiration, as will become clearer in the use of some of these works throughout the thesis. However, it must also be clarified that this thesis project does not follow a *decolonial* approach in its analysis, nor it is its intention to claim that it has advanced in the de-colonisation of knowledge, nor in the articulation of post-development alternatives. The aim here, rather, while not incompatible with these approaches, is much more modest, and seeks only to bring part of the vast and rich traditions of thought emerging from Latin America into conversation with global, mainstream ideas of development, recovering their valuable lessons to overcome the limitations of

³⁴ Fukuda-Parr 2003b; Goulet 1997; Alkire 2010; Jolly 2003

³⁵ See for example, Walsh et al. 2003; Walsh 2011; Walsh 2010; Mignolo 2005; Mignolo 2011; Quijano 2000b; Quijano 2006; Quijano 2005; Dussel 1977; Dussel 1985; Escobar 2010a; Escobar 2010b; Gudynas 2014a; Sousa Santos 2006; Sousa Santos 2010; Sousa Santos 2009.

contemporary people-centred approaches to development. Further engagement between this work and such frameworks is of course highly desirable, and is one of the potential future avenues of this analysis, though it is not attempted here.

Conclusion

My personal experience provided further pieces to the puzzle that gave birth to this thesis project. Growing up in Argentina in the 90s, in the middle of a process of personal and democratic reconciliation with a past scarred by the human rights violations of a military dictatorship, the importance of promoting citizen participation was a central element in national politics. The neoliberal years of government in the consolidation of a constitutional democracy in Argentina, from 1983 onwards, were marked by the expansion of a language that connected individual empowerment to the possibilities to achieving a democracy effective in pursuing development, where the State had historically failed.³⁶ In a country where the consequences of underdevelopment and material deprivation were visible in everyday life, in a grotesque landscape where extreme luxury coexisted with extreme forms of urban poverty and shantytowns, I grew convinced of the necessity to engage in the promotion of human development, and joined the Argentine Youth Organisation for the United Nations. As a volunteer, I devoted many hours over several years to the organisation of educational projects that promoted the empowerment of young people, to advance human development. I coordinated projects where thousands of participants, young people like myself, ‘committed to the promotion of human development’ and engaged in projects that fostered democratic participation. These projects gave me some of the most inspirational experiences of my life, and a belief in the transformatory potential of the practices of individual empowerment for development. Yet, the vagueness of the rhetorical remarks that accompanied these approaches, coupled with an increasing empirical awareness of its lack of effectiveness in transforming the conditions of lives of many in Argentina, left me with a bitter taste. Understanding the connections between processes of individual empowerment and the possibilities for social and material transformation in processes of development, became then, a quest that transcended my social and political activism, taking eventual form in my academic interests. I engaged in

³⁶ For an overview of Argentina’s increasingly neoliberal governments see Svampa 2005; Panizza 2009.

the development of this thesis project as an opportunity to further reflect on and understand the potentialities, limits and dangers of these dynamics and processes which have proven so captivating but so problematic for all those seeking to transform and break free from the conditions of material oppression and achieve ‘development as freedom’.

CHAPTER 1
THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEVELOPMENT: LATIN AMERICA
AND THE SEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES*

❧

Introduction

Contemporary calls for *Buen Vivir* that have emerged from the Andean region have prompted a revival of interest in Latin American contributions to development thinking. Together with efforts to de-colonise knowledge, and to expand our understanding of the ‘Epistemologies of the South’, Latin America appears to have suddenly burst into the development field.¹ Policy and academic initiatives have multiplied in the last few years, in a reinvigorated interest in alternative notions of development, as well as in the struggles of social movements from across the region and their impacts on national and regional politics. They appear to have tilted the political paths of the region to the Left, shifting the attention to discussions of development that, to inexperienced eyes, may appear as entirely novel. This renewed interest in Latin American development thinking is most welcome in a field that has largely prioritised a Western/Eurocentric lens in its focus. However, this new opportunity to engage with Latin American thinking should not be dissociated from the past wealth of experiences, academic and otherwise, that this region has seen in the field of critical development thinking.

From the onset of global discussions of development, Latin American scholars, activists, educators, politicians, priests and theologians have been actively engaged in the

* I would like to acknowledge that this chapter has benefitted from extensive peer-review in the course of its preparation for publication. Abridged versions of this chapter have been published or are in print. In English, it has appeared as ‘The Opportunity of Latin American Critical Development Thinking’ in *Alternautas*, Vol. 1, p. 6-16 (2014). In Spanish, it is in the process of publication as a book chapter entitled ‘Pensando el desarrollo: Una genealogía latinoamericana’ (*Thinking development: A Latin American Genealogy*) in ‘Pluralismo y Multiculturalidad en América Latina en Tiempos de Globalización’, Luna Bravo, J.L.; Beling, A.E., Bonet de Viola, A.M. (Eds.), Buenos Aires: Grama, forthcoming, 2016.

¹ While these efforts are by no means new (we can see early works in this line from several Latin American intellectuals, most notably in the works of Anibal Quijano and Enrique Dussel), current debates on issues of de-colonial thinking appear to have gained considerable strength at the global level, with the work of Walter Dignolo and Boaventura de Sousa Santos as the clearest examples. See, in particular, Dignolo 2011; Sousa Santos 2009.

collective exercise of reflecting on the possibility of advancing the path of development, broadly conceived. Thinking development - and at the same time thinking alternative paths and detours to development - has occupied generations of Latin American intellectuals. Perhaps precisely because the region has seen contrasting political, social and economics projects being implemented in the name of development - more often than not with despairing results - discussions of the ideas of development hold a particular sense of urgency in Latin America. As a result, the region has given birth to particularly fertile forms of critical development thinking.

One of the most powerful contemporary ideas, the project of development has shaped human lives all over the world, with projects and strategies to achieve it implemented by national governments, international organizations and the most varied civil society organisations across regions and decades, mobilising innumerable resources of every kind.² Yet, at the beginning of the 21st Century, ideas of *Development* remain ambiguous and controversial. For some, they represent the articulation of the hopes for the progress and betterment of society, and the structured efforts to achieve it. Along these lines, ideas of development, inextricably linked to those of progress and a golden dream of universal welfare, have been in the realm of political and philosophical debates for several centuries.³

² A simple glance at recent statistics on development work can give us some insight into the intensity of the 'quest for development' in the contemporary world. For example, the OECD Official Development Assistance stood at over 134 billion USD for 2013, while the UNDP had an estimated budget of 765 million USD for 2014. At the level of NGOs, BRAC from Bangladesh had an expenditure of 640 million US dollars in 2013, while OXFAM international had one of 915 million Euros for the same period. These numbers give only a hint at the amount of monetary resources allocated for development at the international level, showing just a few of the main actors in development. This of course excludes the myriad of NGOs that work at the national and local contexts and the government projects, programs and institutions at the national, regional and local levels and all of the other resources that cannot be quantified in financial budgets.— Data from: OECD 2015; BRAC 2014; OXFAM 2014a; UNDP 2013.

³ In 1920 British historian J.B. Bury wrote 'To the minds of most people the desirable outcome of human development would be a condition of society in which all the inhabitants of the planet would enjoy a perfectly happy existence'. Bury 2008, 5. His early systematic study of the origins of progress as the aim of humanity's transformation traces the appearance of ideas of growth back to the medieval period and argues that it was not until the Enlightenment that the possibility of the improvement of humanity became a part of the philosophical and political imaginary of the world. Robert Nisbet, in his 'The idea of Progress', goes back even further tracing the discussions of progress all the way back to ancient Greece. Even while none of these works engages development theory in itself, the analysis of the idea of progress is framed in what could presently be understood as the space of development thinking-ideas that give 'substance to the hope for a future characterized by individual freedom, equality, or justice' Nisbet 1979, 7. While they remain Eurocentric in their focus and limited to an informed genealogy of the term, both works clearly trace back many centuries ideas of development, intertwined with discussions of progress.

For others, far from a view of development as a project that seeks the improvement and the ‘catching up’ of the developing world with the West, development represents a project that, in the words of Gustavo Esteva, ‘gave global hegemony to a purely Western genealogy of history, robbing peoples of different cultures of the opportunity to define the forms of their social life’.⁴ Like Gustavo Esteva, many have offered critical readings of the ideas of development arguing that, in particular after the Second World War, they have served as instruments of domination for the Western world over the Third World⁵. Others, as we will see below, have questioned different aspects of the development ideal, challenging its goals, strategies or main actors.

However, the uncertainty in the definition of development has been no obstacle to the central role that it has played in framing national governments, international organisations and activists’ efforts in the second half of the twentieth century. The living conditions of billions of people around the globe have been transformed to one degree or another by strategies designed and implemented under different readings of this politically loaded term. While questions like ‘What is the meaning and goal of development? How is it best achieved? Who undertakes the task of pursuing development? Is development a worthy goal?’ are still unsettled today, different responses have been attempted in the last six or seven decades. Development studies as a discipline - both in its policy and academic discussions - has undergone a tumultuous evolution since its often assumed ‘origin’, President Truman’s ‘Four-point speech’ in 1949.⁶ In this process, as we have briefly described in the introduction, a people-centred approach to development has superseded the state-centred focus, and a multi-dimensional understanding of the notion has somewhat displaced purely economic considerations. In fact, as we will see in this chapter, the focus on individual empowerment for development is quite distant from the ideas and strategies of development that emerged after the Second World War.

This chapter thus explores the emergence of people-centred approaches of development and Latin America’s contributions to development thinking, explicitly connecting the central literatures of this thesis project. In developing an evolutionary

⁴ Esteva 2010, 5.

⁵ See, for example, Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1998; Sachs 2010a.

⁶ Many pinpoint Truman’s speech as the birth-place of the notion of Development, as it is understood in the present. See for example, Escobar 1995; Sachs 2010a; Rist 2008; Nederveen Pieterse 2010.

overview of development thinking, this chapter makes two main arguments. In the first instance, the discussions of the evolution of development thinking illustrate the nature of the move towards people-centred approaches to development thinking. The chapter argues that Amartya Sen's *Capability Approach* to development (and its implementation within the Human Development initiative) offers the clearest example of such a move, and becomes a fundamental tool with which to engage in a theoretical discussion of its implications. In the second instance, as the regional focus of the theoretical resources used makes explicit, the chapter argues that Latin America offers valuable resources for challenging and discussing mainstream understandings of development which have not been sufficiently acknowledged and explored in more mainstream development theory. In particular, it will argue that the critical literatures that have emerged from the region have been characterized by paradigms of resistance to mainstream ideas of development throughout their history. These are essential to exposing and overcoming the limitations in the people-centred conception of development that dominates the mainstream today.

Together with presenting the emergence of Amartya Sen's development approach, this chapter will highlight the emergence of the social movements of Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy as an important step in the discussions of development, one that has remained mostly unaccounted for in the literature. The omission of these ideas in books of development theory is a constant.⁷ With the notable exceptions of Peet and Hartwick's book where their mention occupies a few lines but does not receive significant attention, the ideas of Paulo Freire or the Liberation Theologians are not included in the analysis of development discussions of the majority of books that review development theory.⁸ Even specialised work on development theory and Latin American reflections often omit to include them in their discussions.⁹ Cristobal Kay's book, arguably the most comprehensive work on Latin American contributions to development theory merely states that in his book these theories would not be addressed, despite acknowledging their contributions to an empowering understanding of development.¹⁰ In this chapter, the contributions of the ideas of Paulo

⁷ A similar point, yet not exclusively focused on Liberation Theology and Paulo Freire, but in general to Latin American contributions to development theory, is presented in Nixon 2006.

⁸ See for example, the works of Kiely 1995a; Leys 1996; Rapley 2007; Potter et al. 2008; Peet and Hartwick 2009; Rist 2008; Nederveen Pieterse 2010; Willis 2011.

⁹ See, for example, Kay 1989; Chilcote 2003.

¹⁰ Kay 1989, 14

Freire and the Liberation Theology to development theory will be briefly reviewed, while a deeper analysis and engagement will be left to chapters 4 and 5. This chapter will also include an initial account of the contemporary contributions of Indigenous philosophies from the Andes that have been the subject of some focus in the last decade. These will be later examined in chapter 6. In developing these arguments, this chapter will outline a clear problematic of development, one that serves as an introduction to the emergence and consolidation of the ideas of Amartya Sen, and contextualises the theoretical discussions that will follow in the rest of the thesis.

With this aim, this chapter will first sketch an overview of the various schools of thought that dominated development studies over various decades and discuss the particular perspective of Latin America. It will further discuss the theoretical void that emerged in the discipline during the 1980s, what David Booth termed the 'development impasse', and the implications for the search of development alternatives.¹¹ Following this, the chapter will briefly contextualise the emergence of the ideas of Amartya Sen's approach to development and argue that it has become the most successful response to Booth's theoretical 'impasse'. The chapter will finish by offering a brief overview of contemporary alternative notions of development from the indigenous peoples of the Andes and the next steps that will be taken in later chapters.

The Emergence of Development Theory and the Modernization Imperative

The initial stages of development as a discipline emerge in the late 1940s - early 1950s, tied to the effects of the Second World War. Both the need for the reconstruction of the devastated countries of Western Europe, and the need to ensure the 'take off' of the newly - independent countries that followed the decolonization of much of Africa and Asia, boosted the systematic academic and policy reflection and discussion of ideas and theories envisioning development strategies.¹² This urge to 'reconstruct' and create networks of international cooperation was famously summarised by President Truman in 1949 whose 'Four Point Speech' is considered the birth landmark to the contemporary intellectual and policy efforts to achieve development. There, Truman argued for the need of 'a program of development based on the concepts of democratic

¹¹ Booth 1985

¹² See Worsley 1984; Hettne 1983; Cypher and Dietz 2008; Leys 1996.

fair-dealing. All countries, including our own, will greatly benefit from a constructive program for the better use of the world's human and natural resources'.¹³ Truman's speech represents the inaugural point of an international project of development, with a modernizing imperative, that aimed at strengthening the Western world against the 'threat of communism'.

In line with Truman's imperative, the first theories became associated with the idea of Modernization as development.¹⁴ Modernization theories of development, emerging in the 1940s and 1950s, shared a linear, evolutionist view of development, an adamant belief in the unlimited possibilities of progress and the assumption that advanced Western societies were the standard for development strategies. Further, they shared the belief that the situation of underdevelopment was simply a stage in the evolution of these societies, and that with the modification of endogenous characteristics of their states and economies, there was a real possibility for the 'take-off' of these nations, which would eventually lead to the 'catch up' of the Third with the First world.¹⁵ The path to development was one of industrialization, the one undertaken by Europe, but there was a need for an initial contribution from the developed nations to take this path.

In general, these theories offered a homogeneous understanding of the cultural, social and economic characteristics of the 'Third World', essentialising them as backward or under-developed societies that would eventually evolve away from these primitive states.¹⁶ Therefore, uncovering the similar trends and deficits in Third World countries would enable the establishment of clear development strategies, often divided in stages that culminated in the modern developed stage. These strategies, constructed as 'one-size-fits-all' strategies of development, shaped policies directed at the improvement of the endogenous conditions of states. Economic growth was understood as key to promoting the advancement of these societies and the State was conceived as the main actor providing these strategies of industrialization, in a model of economic growth influenced by British economist John Maynard Keynes.¹⁷ The role for the

¹³ Truman 1949

¹⁴ Some clear examples of Modernization theories of development include the works of Rostow 1990 [1960]; Nurkse 1961; Lewis 1954.

¹⁵ Kiely 1995a, chap. 3

¹⁶ Schuurman 2000

¹⁷ Cypher and Dietz 2008, chap. 5

developed nations was, then, to assist these underdeveloped countries in the initial stages of this process, through the establishment of international programs and institutions for development cooperation.

Perhaps the most paradigmatic expression of the *naïveté* of Modernization theories is the famous work by Walt Rostow published in 1960, *The Stages of Economic Growth: a Non - Communist Manifesto*. Here, Rostow describes a 'universal model' of development, one that was clearly staged and could be reproduced in every traditional society by modifying their social structures to become modern and developed. His theory explained, through a linear evolution of societies in five stages, the change and progress of human societies, which evolve from a traditional form to the age of mass Consumption - the goal of development. The second stage of the evolution to modernity was a key element that many other Modernization theorists aimed to describe and explain in detail: the achievement of the 'preconditions for take-off'. These 'preconditions' included the emergence of rational, scientific ideas and the consolidation of an elite that chooses to reinvest capital, very much in line with the historical path of the West towards development.¹⁸ While we will not review them in any detail in this thesis for reasons of space, several other authors explored these 'preconditions' in more detail, clarifying the role of the developed world in setting up the conditions and institutions for development cooperation that would facilitate such a take-off.¹⁹ The characterization of under-developed societies that these theories shared was, unfortunately, not very distant to those views of the noble savages in need of enlightenment, which inspired Kipling's *White Man's Burden*. Overall, these theories shared an optimism on the possibilities of development which was dependent on economic growth and industrialization, and where the agency of the process would lie with the national states: the international system was mainly seen as assisting the developing countries in creating the internal conditions necessary for the 'take off' of these countries, especially focusing on the role of labour, capital and technology.

¹⁸ Rostow 1990, 17–36

¹⁹ Rosenstein-Rodan and Ragnar Nurkse in their theories of the 'Big Push' and the 'Balanced Growth theory' respectively argued for the need of an initial high investment in social capital, which would then pave the way for the positive evolution of national economies. See Rosenstein-Rodan 1943; Nurkse 1961. Arthur Lewis's staged development theory was instead focused on the 'surplus of labour' of under-developed societies. See Lewis 1954.

Many of the theorists of the Modernization school of development, coming from the US or Europe, played a fundamental role in national and international policy circles, contributing to the emergence of development studies as a discipline in constant interaction with the 'real world' of development policy. The Modernization ideas, together with the central role of these international policy institutions contributed to the consolidation of a normative understanding of the discipline that saw the West as the role model.²⁰ This prescriptive view of development became mainstream in academic and policy development circles immediately after the Second World War. By 1960, the faith in progress and development was so overwhelming that the United Nations declared with great furore the first “Development Decade” with an optimism that would shortly be curtailed. The first theoretical (and sadly empirical) challenges against the Modernization school would come from Latin America.

Latin America and the resistance to mainstream paradigms of development

The starkest contrast to the ideas of a smooth and staged evolution towards progress that the Modernization school offered came, unsurprisingly, from the ‘developing’ world. The recipients of hundreds of pages of economic models and policy strategies ensuring the 'take-off' of their economies and the improvement of the quality of life of their populations were also the providers of the most despairing statistics of life expectancy, health standards, poverty and inequality measurements; not to mention the disheartening numbers that could be obtained in relation to education, access to water, highways, technology or any of the 'modern' wonders in the developed world.²¹ While the quandaries of underdevelopment in the ex-colonies of Africa and Asia could be partially explained - in the view of Modernization theorists - as a result of those nations

²⁰ Ragnar Nurkse worked for the League of Nations between 1934-1945; Paul Rosenstein-Rodan joined the World Bank in 1947 until 1953, Walt Rostow worked for the US State Department during World War II and in 1947 joined the Economic Commission for Europe in the same Department, until in 1961 he would join the Alliance for Progress, the US Development agency for Latin America that would later become a powerful tool in the support of the anti-communist struggles for many Latin American dictatorships. Arthur Lewis would become the Director of the Caribbean Development Bank in 1970.

²¹ The gap between the developed and underdeveloped world was growing. For instance, the average life expectancy in Europe was 65.1 years between 1955-1960, while it was only 52.4 in Latin America. The differences in the performances of individual countries were even higher: in Germany it was 66.6 years for the same period, France 66.1, Norway 71.4, United Kingdom 67.7 and United States 66.6. In the case of Latin America, in Bolivia it was 39.9 years, Brazil 51.5, Ecuador 50.1, and Nicaragua 43.9. Source: United Nations 2012a.

remaining in an early stage in the development process, due to their only recently acquired independence, this explanation wouldn't work in the cases of countries that had been independent for over a century, as was the case in Latin America. Thus, the empirical contestation came from former colonies, both from newly and 'old' independent countries alike, but it was the 'old' independent countries that represented the strongest theoretical challenges to the modernization school.²²

In Latin America in the 1950s a new set of development literature appeared, constituting the first strong contestation of ideas of mainstream development and setting the region onto its pendulum swing between the resistance to or the quest for alternatives, on the one hand, and the wholehearted support of ideas of development, on the other. Anibal Quijano - one of the most influential intellectuals of Latin America - pointed out that development's 'promises engaged and dragged all the sectors of society, and in some way lighted one of the most dense and rich debates of all of our history'.²³ Chasing the development dream down the rabbit hole has put the region through its most interesting and challenging intellectual debates and policy programmes, shaping the history of its governments and peoples.

While the early critiques of the Modernization school shared some characteristics in their discussions of development - mainly their view of the state as the main agent of development, their teleological vision of history, and their perception of the natural endowment of the region as resources to fuel development - they criticised their readings of the *causes* of underdevelopment and their incapacity to account for the colonial legacy and the international structures of trade in their perpetuation.²⁴ The focus of the analysis shifted from the endogenous conditions for the 'take-off' to development to the 'structural' external conditions that were obstructing these countries in the

²² Leys 1996, chap. 1

²³ Quijano 2000a, 73. Own translation.

²⁴ The critique of the colonial legacy had a strong focus on economic and trade issues more than other political or social aspects. The social structures that were put in place during the colonial period to produce an export surplus - orientated mainly to trade with the colonial *metropolis* - led to the formation of powerful local elites, educated in the ideas of the Enlightenment, with a strong admiration for Europe, who believed that the place of Latin America in the world was that of the producer and exporter of natural resources. This 'colonial legacy' led to deep structural imbalances both within the countries themselves and globally in world trade and development that were not accounted for in Modernization theories and opened the space for a comprehensive critique of these theories. For a detailed overview of the colonial legacy in the land ownership structure of the region and the early influences in the governments post-independence see Furtado 1988; Florescano 1997; Bulmer-Thomas 2003; Peeler 2009; Munck 2003a.

development path. As we have already pointed out, some of these debates participated actively in global discussions of development, while others remained at the margins. In the following sections, we will briefly discuss both, with a focus on introducing the latter excluded discussions and their potential to provide for a critical perspective on Amartya Sen's approach.

REVISITING THE ACKNOWLEDGED LATIN AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT THEORY

The first Latin American contributions to global discussions of development emerged as a challenge to the central tenets of the Modernization school of development. This is a common element that the vast scholarship exploring issues of development from Latin America shares, though the responses to this critique have varied deeply, from more reformist to more revolutionary ones.²⁵ However, as we have already argued, not all these theories received the same attention from anglo-saxon scholarship in development, and many of them, thus, did not partake in global discussions of development. The most well-known theories of development, the ones whose contributions we will analyse in this sub-section, are those emerging from the Structuralist school of development, and its later evolved form, the *Dependencia* theory, often named 'Theories of underdevelopment'.²⁶ These provide a necessary context to those which remained at periphery of global development discussions, and will play a significant role in this thesis.

The Structuralist school of development emerged in Latin America, after Raul Prebisch's seminal work published in 1949.²⁷ Here, Prebisch presented the main arguments that would later have a vast influence in the emergence of the World Systems Theory, the *Dependencia* and the Neo-Structuralist theories of development.²⁸ In what came to be known as the *Prebisch-Singer Thesis*²⁹, Prebisch demonstrated that the

²⁵ Kay 1991

²⁶ Evans and Stephens 1988; Kay 1989. Cristobal Kay identifies four main strands in the Latin American theories of development, adding theories of Marginality and Internal Colonialism to the analysis of *Dependencia* and Structuralism. We will not review the former theories in this section as their works have not participated to the same extent in global discussions of development, nor do they present a comprehensive reading of development.

²⁷ Prebisch 1949 [1949]

²⁸ Wallerstein 2006, 11–12

²⁹ The unplanned and coincidental collaboration between Hans Singer and Raul Prebisch (who worked unaware of each other's work in different countries collating similar empirical evidence) was vital to advancing the empirical evidence that sustained what would later be called the *Theory of Unequal Exchange*, or the *Prebisch-Singer Thesis*. They later worked together on the development of the idea,

evolution of the conditions of international trade presented deteriorating terms of trade, contradicting earlier tenets of neoclassical economics.³⁰ In a constant cycle, developing countries were found to be forced to export more and more of their natural resources-based production in order to achieve a lower level of manufactured products. At the same time, as the manufactured products were being imported, the development of national industries in the developing countries was low or almost negligible. Thus, the specialization on the production and export of agricultural products and natural resources of the Third World was not, the Structuralist view argued, a stage in the development process that would later allow these countries to 'catch-up' with the rest of the developed world. Rather, the structure of the international system and the processes of *outward* development followed by the economies of the Third World were considered responsible for leading these countries, located at the *periphery* of the world, into further underdevelopment, increasing their economic dependence on the countries located at the *core*.³¹ The use of the notions of *core* and *periphery* to discuss development dynamics is perhaps the most lasting legacy of Prebisch's analysis.³² Together with Raúl Prebisch, the work of Celso Furtado and Aníbal Pinto, the ideas of Structuralism took shape and prominence in international policy and academic circles during the 1960s.³³

The central challenges of the Structuralists' critique of Modernization theory are clear. Primarily, the focus of the analysis of development shifted from the *endogenous* conditions to development to the *exogenous* ones, opening the space for a structural critique, well beyond the modernization analysis.³⁴ At the same time, Structuralists demanded a different understanding of history, linking the emergence of underdevelopment in the Third World to that of development in the West for the first

but it was Prebisch's international prestige (as he became the director of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and later of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) which would contribute to the widespread dissemination of the idea. Iglesias 1994; Love 1980.

³⁰ Particularly, Structuralism challenged David Ricardo's work on the expansion of Adam Smith's principles of Free Trade to the international level (also in turn later expanded by Eli Heckscher and Bertil Ohlin). These models were used to justify an international division of trade that saw the *periphery* focused on the production of primary products for export. Ricardo 2001 [1817]; Ohlin 1933.

³¹ Prebisch 1949; Cardoso, Prebisch, and Green 1982

³² Nixon 2006, 976

³³ Furtado 1988; Szmrecsányi 2005

³⁴ Chirot and Hall 1982, 83

time. Celso Furtado argued that "The advent of an industrial nucleus in eighteenth century Europe disrupted the world economy of the time and eventually conditioned later economic development in almost every region in the world".³⁵ Many of the theorists of the structuralist school, and later the theorists of the *Dependencia* school, assumed a vision of development as a zero-sum game that challenged the vision of universal progress. The Third World, it was argued, was not stuck in one of the stages of development that would later evolve and catch-up with the Western world; the Third World was following another path, the path of dependency from the core - Western - developed nations. Yet, the structuralists too, shared several elements with the modernization school: they still heralded a teleological view of history and, as their perspective on development was focused on economic growth, assumed that industrialization was the path to development, which was framed within a nationalist perspective that assumed the state as the main driver of development. Yet, as their ideas made their way into mainstream development theory and their structural critiques were being watered down in the implementation of policy programs to promote industrialisation in the region, a new school of development emerged in the region.³⁶ In criticising both the Modernization and the Structuralist schools, they extended the analysis of the *core-periphery* to examine specifically capitalist development.³⁷

The *dependentistas* intellectuals shared the main assumptions and analyses of the Structuralist school - some of them were associated with it at the beginning of their work - but they arrived at much more radical conclusions.³⁸ The development path of the Latin American countries appeared to have revealed a critical contradiction. As Theotonio Dos Santos argued,

'Everything now indicates that what can be expected is a long process of sharp political and military confrontations and of profound radicalization which will lead these countries to a dilemma: governments of force which open the way to fascism, or popular revolutionary governments, which open the way to

³⁵ Furtado 1964, 128

³⁶ In this process, many of the Structuralist economists worked in the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). ECLAC's influence was extending across the region, promoting a structuralist response to economic problems, mainly through the implementation of Import Substitution Industrialisation strategies (ISI). Ocampo 2001; Bresser-Pereira 2006.

³⁷ For an overview of the continuities and differences between the structuralist and *dependencia* schools, see, Lehmann 1990; Vernengo 2006.

³⁸ See, for example, Dos Santos 2011 [1978]; Dos Santos 1970; Cardoso and Faletto 1974; Marini 1972; Bamber 1974.

socialism. Intermediate solutions have proved to be, in such a contradictory reality, empty and utopian.³⁹

In combining the structuralist approach with Marxist orthodoxy, they emphasised the *dependency* aspect as an unavoidable characteristic of the economic and social processes being pursued for development: as a result, only a confrontation with the capitalist system would allow the countries in the periphery to actually develop. That is, they argued that development was a goal that would require an initial confrontation and break with the current set of relations. Fundamental to the ideas of *dependentistas* was the work of Paul Baran and Paul Sweezy who argued that Western development was based on the extraction of an 'economic surplus' from underdeveloped countries, an argument that Andre Gunder Frank extended in an empirical study of Latin America focused on Chile and Brazil.⁴⁰ The process of development, as understood by the *dependentistas*, would only lead to socialism, and any intermediate solution would be a deterrent from the achievement of development, a concession to the oppression of the structures of dependency. Beyond the work of Theotonio Dos Santos and André Gunder Frank, the work of Ruy Mauro Marini and Vânia Bambirra was central for the formation of the *Dependency School* of development.⁴¹

While the *Dependentistas* attempted to present a breakthrough in the understanding of development from previous schools, like the Structuralists, many of the elements of the theories they opposed remained embedded in their analyses.⁴² The assumption of the state as the main actor for development remained as did the construction of a meta-theory that would articulate the evolutionary teleological and unilinear vision of development. The notion of Socialism as the unavoidable end of development became the *dependentistas* 'ideal of modernity'.⁴³ In both Structuralist and Dependency theories there remained an essentialisation and homogenisation of the Third World not far from the previous visions of development. The contrast between *core* and *periphery* implied a broad generalisation of the histories and development paths of these countries, and often assumed a homogeneous vision of both the First and the Third Worlds. The notion of development as intrinsically an economic process,

³⁹ Dos Santos 1970, 236

⁴⁰ See Baran 1952; Baran 1957; Baran and Sweezy 1966; Frank 1966; Frank 1969.

⁴¹ Marini 1972; Marini 2015 [1978]; Bambirra 1974; Rada Aragol 2014

⁴² Schuurman 1993, 10–12; Munck 2010, 38

⁴³ Grosfoguel 2000

mostly related to the expansion of a broad industrial basis to which the natural endowments of the countries were the fundamental resource, did not break with the visions of the Modernization school as much as it was suggested. Furthermore, the belief in the possibility of unlimited growth and progress was maintained throughout the decades and the different schools of thought.

The pessimism and radicalism of the *dependentistas*' perspective of development was opposed to that of the economists of the ECLAC that would eventually evolve into the *Neo-Structuralist* school of development some decades later.⁴⁴ However, the strength of the *dependentistas* critique became a key part of the agitated political universe of Latin America in the late 1960s and 1970s, and their far-reaching influences in development debates opened up a questioning of the categories of development and underdevelopment that shook the discipline for decades.⁴⁵ The convulsed decades of the 1960s and 1970s saw an emergence of radical projects and social movements aimed at the contestation of the status quo all over the world. In Latin America, this took the shape of several utopian, leftist movements that foresaw a different future for the region, and these were inspired by the readings of Frank, Dos Santos and others; the ideas of the *dependencia* school soon spread to many academic, political and policy circles.⁴⁶ Two of the strongest examples of the reception of these ideas can be seen in the social movements linked to Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy that spread across Latin America in the 1970s and explicitly engaged in discussions of development. Yet, the ideas of development that these social movements constructed remained at the margins of both policy and academic discussions of development. Here we will only hint at their fundamental value for discussions of people-centred and empowering

⁴⁴ Vernengo 2006. We will not engage Neostructuralism in any depth in this thesis. See fn. 71 in this chapter.

⁴⁵ Evans and Stephens 1988, 718

⁴⁶ In 1965, Mexican sociologist Rodolfo Stavenhagen published in one of the main newspapers of Mexico, *El Día*, one very celebrated article entitled *Siete Tesis Equivocadas sobre América Latina* (Seven Erroneous Theses on Latin America) bringing to the wide public the ideas sustained by the *Dependencia* school radicalizing and criticising the version of the Structuralist school. Building on a strong critique of the Modernization assumptions, on the validity of the ideas of industrialization and economic growth as the main vehicles of development for Latin America, Stavenhagen would call for the social mobilization of the people, to engage in political action and, thus, coinciding with the focus of the rest of the critical grassroots movements, such as Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy. What is remarkable is the expansion of these ideas to a mainstream publication such as a newspaper, and of course, the immediate remarks and strong reception of such a publication, which is indicative of the political environment of the period. Stavenhagen 1974; Zapata 1995.

understandings of development in the following section. Their fuller contributions will be explored at length in Ch. 4 and 5 through engagements with Amartya Sen's work. Presently, it is only necessary to bring our attention to these theories of development which remained at the periphery of global discussions.

THE PERIPHERY OF DEVELOPMENT THEORY: INTRODUCING LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT

A sense of despair and hopelessness with the ever more evident lack of improvement in the conditions of life in Latin America and the disillusionment with the ideas of progress accompanied the emergence of these more active social movements.⁴⁷ Increasingly, the disappointment with the results of democracy and development were leading people in the region to believe that it was an either/or situation: either liberation and social justice or capitalism and liberal democracy.⁴⁸ The disillusionment with the state, the dichotomised readings of the world fuelled by the cold war, combined with a belief in human solidarity and a renovated sense of the strength of the political mobilizations of youth and people from all over the world, accompanied the emergence of some of the first theorizations of individual agency in the consideration of development. Yet, these challenges to the State-centric view of the process of development did not come from established academic or policy practitioners. In Latin America, the questioning of alternative paths to development came from the priests and theologians active in the movement of *Liberation Theology*, and from secular social activists and educators in *Critical pedagogy*.

In the perspective of these social movements, the search for liberation and social justice was closely linked to notions of development, yet it transcended the ideas of economic growth and modernization usually associated with the latter. The aim of

⁴⁷ While reliable statistics can only be found for a later period for the Region, some of the estimates provide an account of the level of material deprivation of the region. Estimations of poverty rates in Latin America in the 1960s, indicate that 51% of the population was under the poverty line, around 110 million people (Lagos and Arraigada 1998, 25; Leff 2005, 265). According to the World Bank Development Indicators, the average GDP per capita for the region was only 2,124 USD in 1960 (and these included huge differences, such as Argentina with over 5,000 USD, Brazil with around 1,500 USD and Ecuador, Bolivia, Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti and Paraguay with below 1,000 USD per capita per year). This, compared to an average GDP per capita of 8,421 USD for the OECD countries in 1960 as well, shows the difficulties that these countries were facing in economic terms, and the huge debts in terms of social deprivations that the governments were facing. Data from the World Bank 2015 Development Indicators.

⁴⁸ Lehmann 1990, 31–32

development (of effective development) was seen as a process of the emancipation of the individual from material forms of oppression, which was necessary (but not sufficient) for economic growth. Both Liberation Theology and Critical pedagogy explicitly called for a stronger involvement and mobilization of the people, rather than conceiving the state as the unique driver of development. This view of a process of development that exceeds mere economic growth, together with the emphasis on the necessity of exerting individual agency in its achievement, presents clear parallels to Amartya Sen's work, and the ideas that would later shape the Human Development paradigm as we will see in detail in Ch. 2 and 3. Yet, as we will explore in Ch. 4 and 5, Liberation Theology and Critical Pedagogy understood the process and ultimate goals of development in a fundamentally different manner from what later Amartya Sen would articulate as 'Development as freedom'. The latter, as we will see in further chapters, depends upon a notion of empowerment that takes the individual as the primary site of agency and the primary unit of moral value. Understanding 'development as liberation' or 'development as *conscientização* (conscientization)' were, thus, early theoretical challenges to the notions of empowerment that have become so central in contemporary practices of development.

Liberation Theology emerged from a particular section of the Catholic Church in Latin America. While the name derives from the work of Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez's ground-breaking work *A Theology of Liberation*, first published in Spanish in 1971, this movement began earlier within the Church in the general meetings of the Latin American Episcopal Conference (CELAM). According to the CELAM, the role of the church was very different than traditionally assumed; it identified the mission of the Church with the fight against poverty and underdevelopment, a fight against the structures of injustice and oppression, a fight against capitalism and imperialism, that would reject the traditional hierarchies and opulence that the Catholic church had been displaying for centuries.⁴⁹ Priests from the Liberation Theology advocated for the Latin American Catholic Church to take a stronger political stance in the fight against injustice, a 'Preferential option for the poor'.⁵⁰ This included, in some more extreme cases, priests joining guerrilla movements; but in general it was directed towards the organization of small grassroots groups, known as *Christian Base Communities (CBCs)*. The

⁴⁹ Chaouch 2007, 429

⁵⁰ CELAM 1968

‘preferential option for the poor’ that some sections of the Latin American Catholic Church embarked upon was built together with the poor people of the local communities, to coordinate political responses to their urgent needs: organising political mobilization, protests, solidarity campaigns and more concretely oriented projects related to health or education.⁵¹

The striking element about this movement and its extensive influence in the region is perhaps its combination of faith, political action and an economic reading of their times (highly influenced by the *dependentistas*), that articulated for the first time in Latin America a notion of development that put individual agency at the centre. In contrast to previous schools of development, the priests and theologians of the Liberation Theology responded to the sense of social injustice found in the underdevelopment of their communities with an urge to act upon it from the people’s level, as they called for ‘Humankind to become the agent of its own destiny’.⁵² The role of Christians was understood as one that would contribute to the development of their societies, rebelling against, challenging and transforming the oppressive social structures responsible for the underdevelopment of their communities. Importantly, the transformation of these structures would have to be done by the people themselves, not articulated through state programs or projects that would perpetuate the structures of oppression. This project, in line with the universalist claims of the Christian faith, would cross national borders, and shift the view of development as a state-led project to a focus on the individual, a position that would later be echoed by Amartya Sen’s search for the expansion of individual capabilities as a means and ends of development.⁵³ Understanding development as liberation connected the criticism of the *dependentistas* with the political struggle of grassroots movements, in a process that focused on the empowerment of the poor and the oppressed as the means to achieve social transformation. As we will examine in depth in Ch. 4, Liberation theology’s analysis of their social reality is linked to the discussions of development in the period. Yet, in highlighting the agency of poor people and their communities as a central element, it significantly drifted away from previous understandings and became an early precedent

⁵¹ We will return to the work of the Liberation theologians in Chapter 4. For a more detailed evolution of the Theology of Liberation and its work in the region, see Chaouch 2007; Dussel 1977; Lehmann 1990; Sigmund 1990; Smith 1991.

⁵² Gutiérrez 1988, 32

⁵³ We will discuss Sen’s perspective in more detail in Ch. 2 and 3.

to later discussions of people-centred development. In pursuing this particular vision of the process of development, Liberation Theology was not the only project that understood the process of individual empowerment as being a fundamental one. Grassroots movements and individual emancipation would also be understood as a fundamental step in the process of development by the *Critical Pedagogy* that stemmed from the work of Brazilian thinker and educator Paulo Freire.

In a context of extremely high poverty rates and illiteracy in the 70s, Paulo Freire developed a theoretical framework to establish a concrete approach towards the emancipation of local communities in the south of Brazil that involved an essential shift in education paradigms. 'Education for critical consciousness' was the main aim of a strategy to enable the highly impoverished and uneducated members of these communities to critically understand the realities in which they were subsumed, and effectively transform the social structures that were responsible for their oppression.⁵⁴ In his approach, pedagogical discussions of literacy involved a reflection on the material conditions of life and the possibilities of political and economic emancipation that provided a novel articulation of discussions of development.⁵⁵ From his most well-known work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) onward, Freire devised a project of moral philosophy and development that, through a pedagogical process of literacy, would contribute to the 'secular' liberation of the individual.⁵⁶ Here, Freire saw the engagement of the individual in their community as a fundamental step in the process of achieving their own consciousness - the process of *conscientização*, which was key in the transformation and development of their communities.

With this unorthodox pedagogical perspective that framed a concrete program of adult literacy and community organisation, Freire effectively constructed a revolutionary political project that transcended education on its own, and left valuable lessons for discussions of development.⁵⁷ As we will see in Ch. 4, while the focus of Freire's Critical Pedagogy was not on providing a concrete discussion of development processes, its understanding of development presents it not only as a process of the

⁵⁴ Freire 2005

⁵⁵ We will not delve deeply into Freire's pedagogical approach and its connections with development discussions here. This is the focus of Ch. 5 of this thesis.

⁵⁶ Freire 1972 See also Freire 1977; Freire 1974; Freire and Macedo 2005; Freire 1985a

⁵⁷ Aronowitz 1993, chap. 2

transformation of the material conditions of the communities in which they take place, but as a revolutionary process of transformation. Further, it is one that occurs both at the individual and community levels, and which results in the material transformation of their societies. The process of mastering literacy for adults, of educational engagement, became, in Freire, an instrument for the political organization of the oppressed in their struggle to humanize the societies they were in and liberate themselves from the forms of material oppression and deprivation that their communities were subsumed in. The educational approach that Freire constructed represented a vehicle of political empowerment, linked to a revolutionary project for the transformation of their societies. Education, thus, becomes a politically empowering instrument and enables individuals to become involved in and transform their societies. Conscientization, Freire's educational project, is linked at the same time to both a genuine involvement of citizens in the transformation of their societies through engaging in concrete forms of participation and to a process by which individuals develop their consciousness and are inherently empowered as humans. It is in this understanding of individual empowerment as a requisite for development that Critical Pedagogy, in a similar way as the Liberation Theology, offers a break with previous visions of development. Similar to the analysis of Liberation Theology, Freire understands the process of development as necessarily focused and dependent on the individual's and their communities' empowerment and participation, forecasting Amartya Sen's move to people-centred approaches to development.

Both projects, inspired by the *dependentistas'* analyses of development, led to an early emergence of reflection on the link between the role of the individual and development in Latin America. The individual and their societies started to be seen not only as those who benefit from development but as the agents to make development happen, what we will discuss below as people-centred approaches to development. In many cases outside the structures of the state, the grassroots movements that were initiated in Latin America are early predecessors of the ideas of individual empowerment and citizen participation as paths towards development that would only enter mainstream development discussions significantly later. It is perhaps because of their deep commitment to practice, that these ideas did not participate in mainstream discussions of development. At the same time, the rise of dictatorships in most Latin American countries was a major deterrent for the implementation of these projects of development, or even for their academic discussions. In the late 70s and through the

80s, the ideas of *Liberation Theology* and *Critical pedagogy* were subjected to a plan of systematic elimination, by the 'counter-insurgency' plan organized by the National Armies across the region, with the financial and logistic support of the United States, in what it came to be known as *Operation Condor*.⁵⁸ During a period of almost two decades, the military governments of Latin America - in particular in South American - would coordinate their actions to stop these revolutionary projects in the implementation of a cooperative plan characterised by widespread human rights abuses (with thousands of the supporters of these ideas being abducted and 'disappeared') and the closure and prosecution of academic institutions and scholars in this field.

The plans for the eradication of these ideas had sadly, a big impact on the extent to which they were explored outside Latin America. With many of their representatives prosecuted by the military, and often lacking membership of formal academic institutions, the ideas of development that these movements discussed remained largely at the periphery of academic debates. While the analysis of the *dependentistas* were also subjected to a similar opposition (although to a smaller scale), the readings of the *Dependencia* school and of the Structuralist school became the main Latin American contributions to the theoretical debate of development. In particular the *Dependencia school* became increasingly dominant in the discussions of development in the 70s.⁵⁹ In fact, it is this predominance of the *Dependencia school*, that led to what David Booth termed the 'Development impasse'.⁶⁰ By the 1980s, both theoretical and empirical conditions led to the exhaustion of much of the hope for development studies. From the decline of the communist bloc, to the debt crises in the Third World, from the criticism of the *Dependencia school* and its application of Marxist readings of development to the post-modern critiques of the understanding of development, by the 1980s, many argued that the field of development theory had come to an impasse. It is in the exploration of this impasse that we can understand the success of Amartya Sen's approach to development and the emergence of the paradigm of Human Development. To this, we will now turn. However, the aim will be to merely contextualize the

⁵⁸ In the late 90s, 25 years after being produced, the US Government declassified the documents that stated and organized the implementation of the political genocide that took place in the region in what came to be known as the *Dirty Wars*. For a detailed analysis see, McSherry 2005.

⁵⁹ Booth 1985; Evans and Stephens 1988; Schuurman 1993

⁶⁰ Booth 1985, 761

emergence of Amartya Sen's approach, as a detailed analysis will be left to Ch. 2 and 3 of this thesis.

The Theoretical and Empirical Contestations of Development Theory

While reflection on Liberation Theology and Critical pedagogy continued at the margins of mainstream academic and policy discussions of development, the latter were slowly arriving at exhaustion by the 1980s. The *dependencia* theories had drawn great attention in global discussions of development, yet, both empirical and theoretical contestations of development were calling for a deeper reflection on the understanding of development. In 1985, in a seminal article entitled "Marxism and Development Sociology: Interpreting the Impasse", David Booth asserted the existence of a 'Theoretical Impasse' in studies of development. In his analysis of the state of the discipline, he argued that,

'At the theoretical level the most influential positions of the past are now strenuously rejected by many of their former adherents, few of whom pretend to see a clear way forward. Bold and heterodox proposals have not been lacking, but they have failed to establish themselves as a widely accepted alternative, showing an equal and in some ways parallel inability to generate theoretically informed research on fundamental issues of Third World development. Apparently promising discussions about basic concepts have proved inconclusive, with related empirical work becoming increasingly arid and repetitive. Large areas remain under-researched and untheorized; and even the strongest sections of the literature lack the cumulative quality that one expects of a healthy field of enquiry in the social sciences.'⁶¹

Here, Booth offered a strong criticism directed in particular at the ideas of the *Dependencia school*, which he considered the dominant ones in the discipline. He argued that it was the underlying characteristics of Marxism that led these theories of development to fail in providing for effective development strategies. Booth's critique of the Marxist-inspired school of development can be summarised into three different dimensions: their economism, their essentialism and their epistemology.⁶² For him, the economism of the *Dependencia* theories (or of Marxist inspired theories in general) failed to account for issues of cultural or political struggles, on top of being overly

⁶¹ Booth 1985, 761

⁶² Corbridge 1990, 624

deterministic. This leads to the second dimension of his criticism. Booth argues that there is a 'metatheoretical commitment that what happens in societies in the era of capitalism is not only explicable but also, in some stronger sense *necessary*'.⁶³ The combination of a functionalist understanding of the world structure, together with these teleological assumptions, was criticised for its tautological construction of the concepts of underdevelopment and dependency. Finally, the third dimension, the epistemological one, built on the previous two criticisms. Booth criticised these theorists for deliberately 'closing their minds' to empirical challenges to their assumptions, which had led to the non-cumulative character of development studies, compromising the advance of development theory as a discipline.

This article attracted much attention in academic debates, with many contributing to the expansion of the idea that there was in fact, a theoretical *lacunae* in the discipline.⁶⁴ However, while Booth's article remained central, in general it was argued that the elements that Booth identified were not only applicable to Marxist-inspired theories, but could be traced to most mainstream development theories. Ray Kiely, for example, described all development theorizations until the 1980s (at least the ones that were engaged in mainstream academic debates) as falling under four interconnected levels leading to this impasse: (a) evolutionism, (b) functionalism, (c) dogmatism and (d) the inability to account for changes in the world order.⁶⁵ The evolutionist elements assumed by the modernization school were not overcome by the *dependentistas*, but replaced by a different account of this evolution, one that was largely dependent on the functionalist element present in these theories. It is clear that the modernization school also fell into this functionalism, as well as the Structuralist theories of development. Extending Booth's criticism of the *dependentistas*, the dogmatism that Kiely identifies is also shared by different theories. He argues that 'each particular theory tends to be sheltered from empirical material that challenges some of the theory's key features'.⁶⁶ The last element that Kiely highlights echoes many scholars in the criticism of development studies. At this stage of development discussions, the focus on both the

⁶³ Booth 1985, 763

⁶⁴ Contributions to the reflection of this 'development impasse' can be found in Mouzelis 1988; Sklair 1988; Corbridge 1990; Kiely 1995b; Booth 1994; Schuurman 1993; Kay 1991; Kay 1989; Munck and O'Hearn 1999.

⁶⁵ Kiely 1995a, 4–7

⁶⁶ Kiely 1995a, 6

state as the main driver of development strategies and the Third World as an homogeneous entity that could be theorized were no longer justifiable features of theories of development.

The delegitimisation of the socialist project and the expansion of a faith in the market that the fall of the Soviet Union engendered, were also elements that contributed to the weakening of the development debates, and the rise of neoliberal agendas of development.⁶⁷ At the same time, the ever more increasing awareness that the material conditions of existence of millions of people in the Third World were not improving and the gap between rich and poor countries, far from closing, was becoming more profound, presented insurmountable challenges to development theories in the 1980s.⁶⁸ Development theories were failing in the articulation of responses, as the situation of the poor and suffering inhabitants of the world was worsening. Frans Schuurman reads this 'impasse on development studies' in association with the *fin-de-siècle* pessimism that was a result of the fall of the main elements of development theory: faith in unlimited progress, the centrality of nation-state, and the understanding of the Third World as a homogeneous entity.⁶⁹ In Latin America, the debt crises and the crumbling dictatorial governments were causing even more doubts around the possibility of States effectively intervening in the implementation of development strategies. More clearly, these strategies of development were associated with the expansion of neoliberalism underpinning processes of uneven development. The rising ideological hegemony of neoliberalism was articulated within calls for an expansion of freedom, both in terms of

⁶⁷ Harvey 2007

⁶⁸ To contribute with some broad statistics, by 1985, the average life expectancy for the OECD countries was 74 years, while in Latin America it remained in 66 years (with low peaks of 52 years in Haiti, 55 in Bolivia and 59 in Guatemala and El Salvador). The GDP per capita remained one of the clearest examples that the gap was becoming wider: in 1985, the OCDE annual country average was 18,489 USD per capita, while Latin American countries average was only 3,532 USD per capita (again, low peaks of as little as 872 USD for Bolivia, 1,043 for Honduras and below 1,500 USD per capita for Guatemala, Honduras and Salvador). Finally, the statistics of infant mortality rates remained disheartening, in particular in comparison to the possibilities that science and welfare states had given to the Western world. The average of child mortality at birth in 1985 was 10 children for every 1,000 live births in the OECD countries. In Latin America, for the same year, it was 50 children for every 1,000 live births. This average, of course, hides the extreme disparities in the region, in which Bolivia had 97 children deaths for every 1,000 live, Guatemala 69 and Peru 67. The economic crises of the region, trapped in the debt crises of the 1980s, and the extreme hyperinflation rates also brought clear examples of the difficulties to assume that Latin America was 'closing the gap' with the Western world. (Data from the World Bank 2015).

⁶⁹ Schuurman 2000, 8–12

market and individual freedom.⁷⁰ In this context, the call for a reformulation of the understanding of development or the emergence of development alternatives gained particular strength from the 1990s onwards. As such, it is here where we can understand the quest for alternative notions of development, and particularly, the emergence of people-centred approaches, implemented by international agencies of development throughout the world and in Latin America in particular.

The people-centred strategies appear as the most successful in overcoming the development ‘impasse’ of the 1980s, offering empirical and theoretical alternatives to an exhausted universe of development alternatives. As we will discuss below, in these approaches development is woven around concepts of individual agency and empowerment, both in political and economic terms. Amongst the different people-centred approaches, we will particularly focus on Amartya Sen’s work, which underpins the Human Development (HD) paradigm. We will examine in Ch. 2 and 3 how Amartya Sen’s theoretical framework has shaped the HD practices and discussions that dominate mainstream development theory and practice, and particularly, its embedded notion of empowerment. In the next section, we will present the first elements of the shift towards people-centred theories of development, arguing for the centrality of Amartya Sen’s work in the process.

Overcoming the Impasse: The Search for Development Alternatives

By the late 1980s, the urgency for a revision of development was clear and many alternative positions were attempting to tackle the challenges that the critiques of the impasse had identified. From arguments for a further integration to world trade for national economies, to discussions of sustainability and on the need to expand the measurement of development beyond economic growth, the responses were multiple and varied.⁷¹ It is necessary to mention here, perhaps the strongest challenge to

⁷⁰ Harvey 2007. In Latin America, this was particularly visible in the consolidation of what was called the ‘Washington Consensus’, which promoted an ostensibly neoliberal agenda of reforms, reducing the role of the state and deregulating markets. See, Williamson 1990; Panizza 2009; Munck 2003b; Munck 2003a; Saad-filho and Johnston 2005.

⁷¹ It goes beyond the scope of this chapter to review the full breadth of responses that attempted to overcome the ‘development impasse’. Yet, it is necessary to point out that they were varied in scope and aim. As we mentioned, ECLAC’s focus evolved into what would be called Neo-structuralism, following broadly the Structuralist position but arguing for a stronger integration of national economies

development discussions that emerged in the aftermath of the ‘impasse’, that of the so-called post-development critiques. Under the label of ‘post-development’ a series of intellectuals began questioning development as a project in itself.⁷² In mainly post-structuralist inspired analyses of the processes of development, post-development theorists construed development as ‘an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World’.⁷³ While the strength of the arguments of post-development certainly gained much attention across theoretical discussions (particularly in the 1990s), many objected to such basic contours of these radical critiques of the project of development. Objectors saw in post-development’s early ideas a blanket rejection of the project of development that entailed ‘the last refuge of the noble savage’; for them, it offered an unhelpful romanticised vision of the ‘pre-modern’ era, that lacked any viable alternatives for the present.⁷⁴ At the same time, the vast range and internal diversity of the critiques raised by post-development theorists made it difficult to engage with the post-development literature as a whole. However, these critiques have been particularly influential in Latin America, where the groundbreaking work of Arturo Escobar was focused. Importantly for this thesis project, post-development critiques have joined the efforts to advance post/de-colonial epistemological projects, and have united the quest for what has been termed ‘alternative modernities’ in the indigenous philosophies of the Andean region, that we will explore more in Ch. 6.⁷⁵

into the world market. After the 1990s, these strategies included discussions of democratic institutions and the focus on equity in participation in labour markets. See Cardoso, Prebisch, and Green 1982; Furtado 1988; Sunkel 1991; Bielschowsky 2010; Guillén Romo 2007. The idea of sustainable development was also gaining strength in a response to the critiques of pure economicism, including ecological considerations as well as a further involvement of individuals in the pursuit of development. This, for example can be seen in the publication of ‘The Limits to Growth’ by Meadows et al. 1972 followed by the Bruntland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 1987. In Latin America, Manfred Max-Neef argued for the necessity of considering the individual’s role in the pursuit of development in what he termed ‘Barefoot Economics’. See, Max-neef 1982. In the same period, the critiques of purely economic views of development gave birth to what it was known as the *Basic Needs Approach* that we will revisit in Ch. 2. See, International Labour Office 1976; Streeten et al. 1981; Stewart 1985.

⁷² See, for example Escobar 1988; Escobar 1992; Escobar 1995; Sachs 2010a; Rahnema and Bawtree 1998; Esteva 1987; Ferguson and Lohmann 1994.

⁷³ Escobar 1995, 9

⁷⁴ See, among others, Kiely 1999; Nederveen Pieterse 1998; Nederveen Pieterse 2000; Rapley 2004; Corbridge 1998.

⁷⁵ Escobar 2010b. It is beyond the scope of this project to provide an in-depth review of post-development theories that have multiplied since the late 1980s. In Latin America, many post-

At the mainstream level, however, the most significant contribution to discussions of development after the ‘impasse’ has been that of the aforementioned ‘people-centred’ approaches. These have made the distinctive move from state-centric visions to offering an increased space for the individual both in considerations of the agency and goals of development processes. In this shift towards people-centred approaches of development, the most successful case has been the emergence of the Human Development (HD) paradigm, launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1990, and which has been widely embraced by international institutions and national governments since then.⁷⁶ As Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, claimed on the 20th anniversary of its first publication,

‘Twenty years ago, the first Human Development Report stunned the international community with the simple premise that people are the true measure of a nation’s wealth. Not GNP [gross national product]. Not FDI [foreign direct investment]. Not ODA [official development assistance]. Just – people. It was a radical concept at the time. And it overturned conventional thinking.(...)Some economists at the time viewed the poor as proof of failure – but Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq saw them as the key to success. The idea of people-centred development is so widely accepted now it is hard to remember that we used to measure progress in such limited terms.’⁷⁷

Re-focusing development onto humans rather than states became a powerful symbol of the much-needed reconstruction of the notion of development that became clear during the preceding ‘impasse’. The emergence of people-centred development, with a focus on the individual as the ‘means and ends’ for development, offered the possibility to combine the critiques raised regarding the content and agency of development policies

development theorists have focused on the emergence of the indigenous reflections on development that we will discuss in detail in Ch. 6. However, it is important to note that it is not the goal of this thesis project to produce a ‘post-development critique’ of Amartya Sen’s project. Consequently, we will only engage post-development ideas insofar as they have productively engaged contemporary indigenous philosophies of the Andes in the quest for alternative understandings of development. For a comprehensive overview of post-development, together with the main critiques and debates surrounding it, see Ziai 2004; Ziai 2007.

⁷⁶ The initiative was launched with the publication of the first *Human Development Report*, by the United Nations Development Programme 1990a. We discuss these trends in detail in Ch.3, section four.

⁷⁷ Ki-moon 2010. Mahbub ul Uq role was, at the moment of the publication of the first report, the Director of the newly created UNDP project in Human Development. While his own work as an economist has been important in the establishment of the approach, it was mainly his role as a policy advisor working for different international organizations for development that brought the work of Amartya Sen to the construction of the *Human Development Reports* and the *Human Development Index*.

and thinking. The word ‘human’ became ‘a timely epithet which gave the impression that something new was happening under the sun of development’.⁷⁸ The HD sought to provide an approach that saw ‘development *of* the people *by* the people, *for* the people’.⁷⁹ Drawing upon the theoretical work of Amartya Sen, HD aimed at escaping the narrow economic understanding of development that dominated previous schools and to include a central role for the people in the development of their countries.⁸⁰

However, HD included not only a shift in the measurement of development achievement, but, centrally, it aimed at redefining the *agency* of development. Amartya Sen’s *capability approach* provided the theoretical framework for HD in which the individual could be seen as fundamental for development, both as means and ends, thus offering a comprehensive response to the main critiques of the development ‘impasse’. This importantly addressed associated calls to expand the ethical considerations of development thinking and practice.⁸¹ Sen’s perspective and his arguments for the centrality of the individual in development, articulated concisely in his *Development as Freedom*, provided a response to the growing critiques of the undeniable failures of previous strategies of development.⁸² The ‘radical’ contribution of the HD was twofold: it moved away from a pure economic understanding of development – the one measured in GDP – and it moved away from a purely state-centred understanding of development to one where people become the agents of development. The people, not only the economy, thus, became the goal of development, and the people, not only the state, became the agents of development. The HD approach, articulated in Amartya Sen’s theoretical work, has become the clearest example of these people-centred approaches, with its influence expanding well beyond the UN to international development organisations, national governments and civil society organisations.⁸³

The HD agenda has expanded at a remarkable rate in recent decades, in the promotion of strategies of development that create new channels for people’s participation, in economic and political terms. More than purely a responsibility of the

⁷⁸ Rist 2008, 205

⁷⁹ United Nations Development Programme 1991, 13.

⁸⁰ The connection between Amartya Sen’s work and the establishment of the HD will be explored in detailed in Ch. 3.

⁸¹ This is key aspect of discussions of development that we will explore in more detail in Ch.2.

⁸² Sen 1999a

⁸³ See Ch.3, particularly section four.

state, social transformation is for HD - as it was for the Liberation Theology and the Critical Pedagogy - a result of the participation and involvement of people. Yet, it has been built in distinctly different theoretical roots. HD, as a people-centred development approach built on Amartya Sen's theoretical framework, has emerged together with the rise of neoliberalism across the world and particularly in Latin America, in devising a development path that does not follow the radical challenges of the Liberation Theology or Critical pedagogy.⁸⁴ Located in a middle ground, Sen's articulation of development underpinning HD incorporates elements of radical understandings of development and reconciles them with a neo-liberal reading of the process of development. It is precisely in offering an articulation of the most radical critiques of previous ideas of development without breaking with the political and economic trends of neoliberalism, that the HD - framed in Amartya Sen's theoretical approach - has become the most successful people-centred approach to development. In analysing the influence of HD in Latin America, Catherine Walsh states 'the new paradigm - *paradogma*? - of human development seems to envelop only further the human condition'.⁸⁵ The focus on people's empowerment for development that the HD has construed as central to mainstream approaches to development appears to have successfully accommodated the multiplicity of demands of projects of development in establishing a universal 'paradogma' of development.

One of the most astonishing examples of this trend can be found in a deeper analysis of contemporary discussions of development in Latin America. As we will discuss in depth in Ch.6, in recent years policy documents and initiatives have linked the ideas of HD to those stemming from the indigenous philosophies of the region. This illustrates how academic and policy discussions of development have been greatly

⁸⁴ The expansion of Neoliberalism was particularly acute in Latin America and has coincided with the launch and expansion of the HD agenda. Emir Sader, a Brazilian sociologist, argues that it was the legacy of the appalling crimes of the dictatorships that eliminated the forms of resistance and allowed for an unrestricted implementation of the free market ideas that would come to be known as the Washington Consensus (WC). See, Sader 2009, 45–54. In the region, the implementation of the reforms of the WC brought together a stronger emphasis on the individual as the main agent of development, contracting the role of the state. As Panizza stated, 'Neoliberalism's promise of a better future was upheld against a tired and failed interventionist model that, allegedly, had produced only misery and corruption. Instead, the new language of choice, competition, decentralization and the empowerment of civil society offered the prospect of a more efficient economy and a more accountable democracy'. (Panizza 2009, 29). Similar trends can be identified in the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategies, by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the region. See, Rückert 2007; Macdonald and Ruckert 2009.

⁸⁵ Walsh 2010, 17

influenced by the calls for *Buen Vivir/Sumak Kawsay* (BV/SK) that have emerged from the Andean region.⁸⁶ BV/SK focuses on a harmonic understanding of the life cycle, which not only takes into consideration the individual's wellbeing, but also that of the earth and the communities as a whole. Although the relationship between these ideas is a contested one, in general BV/SK has been understood as part of an indigenous cosmivision that seeks a harmonious life and it is fundamentally construed as akin to the Western concept of 'development'.⁸⁷ Interestingly, these notions have also become associated with the Latin American Left-Turn of the last decade, and its pursuit of post-neoliberal agendas of development.⁸⁸ In this sense, it is particularly surprising to see how this indigenous concept has, in practice, been linked to Sen's contributions and the ideas of the HD paradigm.⁸⁹ While the ideas of BV/SK speak of a profoundly different understanding of development, one that represents an integral vision of life, embedding development in a 'cosmovision' that includes the individual, society and the earth, the policy readings of these ideas still maintain a clear link to ideas of HD. Despite the shift from neoliberal to, arguably, the post-liberal projects of development of BV/SK, the HD approach constructed around Sen's work seems to present an alternative of development that can be useful for either end of the political spectrum. All of this illustrates HD's - and particularly Amartya Sen's - centrality for contemporary mainstream development discussions.

Conclusion

In presenting a narrative of the development of development theory, this chapter has provided us with the main elements upon which we will draw in our theoretical discussions in the rest of the thesis: Amartya Sen's work and Latin America's critical

⁸⁶ 'Buen Vivir' (Good living or Good life) is the Spanish translation of the indigenous concepts in which this notion has been originally conceived. This notion is referred to in has different manners in the indigenous languages of the Andean region. In that sense, *Sumak Kawsay*, in kichua (majoritarian language spoken by the indigenous peoples of Ecuador) is expressed as *suma qamaña* in aymara (spoken mainly in Bolivia) and *ñandareko* in guaraní (spoken mainly in Paraguay). Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014.

⁸⁷ This is the focus of Ch. 6, where this discussion will be developed in full. Some general overviews of the concept can be found in Acosta and Martínez 2009; Huanacuni Mamani 2010; Gudynas 2011b.

⁸⁸ Arditi 2008; Arsel 2012

⁸⁹ See for example, the SENPLADES 2009, 6. The connection between HD and SK/BV will be discussed in detail in Ch. 6.

traditions in development thinking. The chapter has presented an evolutionary view of development thinking that has highlighted Latin America's role in devising paradigms of resistance to mainstream notions of development, and has contextualised the emergence and centrality of people-centred approaches to development. In the latter, we have briefly argued for Amartya Sen's fundamental role in development thinking, an argument that will be refined and deepened in Ch. 2 and 3.

In following this perspective, the chapter has focused on providing an overview of the main elements in the evolution of development thinking that will become relevant for the analysis developed in this thesis. The discussion of the emergence of development theory as intrinsically linked to an idea of progress, and a teleological vision of the historical process, gave us the basis upon which discussions of development have been grounded in the last century. The project of Western Modernity, enthroned as the golden dream of development, has had a central role in development as a discipline, one that has a central importance in understanding the contemporary challenges of Andean indigenous philosophies that we will discuss in Ch.6. Further, in analysing the challenges that Structuralism and the *Dependencia* school of development have posed to the discussions of development worldwide, we have both highlighted some alternative perspectives on the process and structures of development and underdevelopment, and we have started to articulate the paramount importance of Latin America in discussions of development. In following this argument, we have briefly introduced the contributions of the radical movements of Liberation Theology and Critical pedagogy that will play a central role in Ch.4 and 5 of this thesis. While their contribution has until now remained largely unaccounted for in discussions of development theory, we have argued that their political projects present an early precedent to the people-centred understandings of development that have come to dominate development discussions in the last decades. The parallels and differences to Amartya Sen's capability approach that have only been sketched in this chapter, will become the theoretical foil from which to explore the limitations and possibilities of that framework and the alternatives they present.

Finally, we have contextualised the emergence of the HD paradigm as a response to the 'development impasse' and argued for its centrality in contemporary mainstream development thinking and practice. We have only introduced here the pivotal role of Amartya Sen in grounding the theoretical framework of HD but we will examine in depth in Ch. 2 and 3 his fundamental role in framing 'Development as Freedom' and

the centrality of empowerment therein. 'Freedom' has replaced 'Industrialisation' as the aim of development. The state has lost the exclusivity of its role as an agent of development, and the empowerment of individuals has become the core of development policies. The promotion of citizen involvement is perceived as the key to unlocking the development of their communities, much as the promotion of industry used to be. Economic growth is no longer seen as the only way to evaluate the outcomes of development. Yet, have we really gone that far on the path to achieving human freedom? Has the search for 'Development as Freedom' as articulated in the Human Development paradigm advanced our understanding of people's empowerment as the fundamental means to achieving an emancipatory and transformatory praxis of development? This thesis will explore the limitations of the Human Development paradigm in its attempts to provide for an effectively transformatory people-centred approach to development. Yet, rather than concerning itself with a political economy of the empirical results of HD initiatives in Latin America, it will engage in a much needed theoretical analysis and use Amartya Sen's *capability approach* - which underpins HD - as a theoretical tool. In the following chapters, exploring the limitations, opportunities and ethical challenges that Amartya Sen's has raised in mainstream development thinking and practice will allow us to shed some light on the wider implications of the HD paradigm in the path to devising an effectively transformatory development strategy. And in this process, as we have briefly introduced here and will see in following chapters, the role of Latin American critical traditions will prove fundamental for development discussions where they have previously been undervalued.

CHAPTER 2
DEVELOPMENT AS FREEDOM: MAINSTREAMING
DEVELOPMENT ETHICS

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Introduction

In the previous chapter we developed an evolutionary overview of development thinking, tracing the move from more economic-centred to people-centred frameworks while also highlighting Latin America's contributions to theorizing alternative understandings of development. As we have seen, the move towards more people-centred notions of development in great part responded to increasing demands to incorporate ethical dimensions to development analysis, exceeding the solely quantitative focus of evaluations previously centred in economic results. While the challenges to the narrow boundaries of a purely economic and state-centred view of development emerged from a variety of approaches¹, the quest for a more 'humane' approach to development has subsequently become the backbone of development thinking and policy. Here, the Human Development (HD) paradigm appears as the clearest example and, as we briefly discussed in the previous chapter, Amartya Sen's work is of paramount importance to understand its theoretical underpinnings.

The extent to which this conceptual framework has been taken up, both academically and institutionally reveals the widespread support for a change in the idea behind and evaluation of processes of development. Beyond the construction of multidimensional indices of development, we have briefly discussed how these ideas have become associated with the promotion of economic and political empowerment as the means and ends of development.² The focus on the promotion of individual empowerment grounds the move towards a more humane perspective on

¹ See fn. 71 from chapter 1.

² This argument will be specifically developed in Chapter 3.

development, one that, as some have pointed out, is deemed in 'bad taste' to reject.³ It is this widespread support and expansion of people-centred ideas of development that should be revised and critically engaged, beyond the empirical analysis and evaluations of its results. Rather, it is necessary to critically engage with the theoretical and ethical challenges that stem from these trends. Engaging Sen's work is a fundamental step in this process.

Amartya Sen's decades-long involvement in discussions of development in economics and beyond have contributed enormously to shaping both contemporary mainstream academic and policy discussions of development and in consolidating the HD paradigm. These have led, both in theory and policy, towards understanding development as a more individually empowering process, concerned with the freedoms and capabilities of people rather than the growth rate of national economies. While we will explore in the following chapter how his work was incorporated in the construction of the HD paradigm, (we should not squarely equate Amartya Sen's theoretical work with the implementation of HD practices) it is first necessary to engage Sen's prolific *oeuvre*, to comprehend the relevance of his work. The evolution of his academic project gives us a clear insight into the evolution of development theory itself, as we can see in Sen's theoretical project the same quest for the expansion of ethical considerations in development thinking that we discussed in chapter one.

For many, Sen represents the embodiment of Denis Goulet's call for reflection on the ethics of development.⁴ Sen, while not the first, has perhaps been the most successful advocate of examining the ethical dimensions of development, both from an economic and a philosophical perspective. His contributions to the fields of economics and development stem from his early work on social choice theory, growing from an early critique of the definition of the human being there – which challenged the narrow concept of the *homo economicus* in mainstream economics – to the broader project of incorporating ethical considerations in mainstream economics and development

³ Cornwall and Brock 2005, 1045; Rist 2008, 205

⁴ Goulet's groundbreaking work on the ethical and moral implications of development projects led to the birth of development ethics as a discipline. See, most importantly, Goulet's major work: Goulet 1978 but also Denis Goulet, Goulet 2006. Among others, Goulet himself has highlighted the similarities between his project and Sen's actual work. Other examples are, Goulet 1997; Gasper 2008; Gasper 2012; Crocker 1991; Qizilbash 1996.

thinking.⁵ His criticism of the approach of neoclassical economics led Sen to undertake the ambitious task of attempting to reconcile economics with philosophical considerations in the construction of his *capability approach (CA)*. It is the latter, which led him to reframe the concept of development in terms of individual freedom.⁶ In Sen's CA, the individual becomes the centre of development policy, a move away from state-led processes of development that, at the same time, shifts the focus from economic growth. It is not only economic growth that matters for development, the individual must be equipped with a set of capabilities that will free their agency to act and thus achieve development. Shifting away from the purely economic focus, Sen opened the space to put individuals at the centre of development processes and rubrics.

Critical engagement with the CA, and of its particular understanding of development, has expanded at a remarkable rate: academic reception has been seen in the establishment of numerous conferences and workshops destined to further extensions and operationalisations of the approach, in the development of journal issues dedicated exclusively to the analysis of Amartya Sen's work, and even on the establishment of the Human Development and Capability Association, which publishes a Journal with multiple issues a year. Since the publication of *Development as Freedom* in 1999, Amartya Sen has received over fifty honorary Doctorates from universities all over the world, adding to his previous thirty-six. On the policy side, as we will see in the following chapter, the reception has been no less successful. It is the *capability approach*, and its focus on individual empowerment, that is at the core of the HD approach, as presented by international institutions of development, in particular, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). While it remains heavily associated with the UNDP, the HD approach has been used directly or indirectly by countless other development agencies, national governments and civil society organisations. In general, his attempt to reconcile the world of economics and ethics, in constructing an overarching theory of development, has been considered profoundly humane and necessary. For many, it is

⁵ See, for example, Sen 1977; Sen 1984a; Sen 1987a

⁶ Originally presented in the Tanner Lecture in 1979 (published in 1980), Sen's concept of capabilities is perhaps his most lasting contribution to development, and one that has significantly shaped and transformed both theoretical discussions of development and policy practices, as we will discuss in further sections. The idea of capabilities, as we will discuss further, was Sen's alternative to overcome the limitations of the concepts of "utility maximisation" and "basic needs" that were predominant in previous theories of development. See: Sen 1980.

the essential path to achieving a more just world. As O'Hearn states, 'It has almost reached the point where criticizing Amartya Sen, like Mother Theresa, is out of bounds'.⁷ Praised by academics and policy makers at length, the work of Amartya Sen now occupies the centre of mainstream readings of development.

Despite its ground-breaking contributions to economic analysis and its commendable goals, after over two decades in which the work of Amartya Sen has had an unprecedented and widespread influence in the implementation of projects and strategies for development, the transformation of the conditions of life of the millions of the 'poor and dispossessed' remains an elusive prospect.⁸ The magnitude of the challenges to achieve development does not seem to have receded, rather, with the critical increase of some particular dimensions (climate change being one of them), few would disagree with the statement that we are currently experiencing a 'Global development crisis'.⁹ Empirical analyses of the causes of the (under)achievement of development projects and strategies are undertaken almost daily by policy institutions and academics. Reports, articles and books tracing the failures, partial successes and pending challenges for strategies of development abound, filled with statistics and case studies on the implementation of development practices, demonstrating that, for a large portion of this planet, we are still not quite there in the achievement of 'development as

⁷ O'Hearn 2009, 9. One particularly interesting example of this dynamic is the case that Ben Fine presents at the beginning of his article *'Economics and Ethics: Amartya Sen as a point of departure'* where he describes a series of complications that his article (critical of Sen's perspective) had to undergo: being invited to conferences on Amartya Sen, and then getting his invitation retracted when finding out the contents of his article, and having the same situation with its publication in a Journal, that was later rejected, after being previously accepted and peer reviewed. Fine 2004.

⁸ At the time of the publication of *Development as Freedom*, perhaps Sen's most acclaimed book by policy practitioners, Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General at the time, praised the book by claiming that, 'The world's poor and dispossessed could have no more articulate or insightful a champion among economists than Amartya Sen. By showing that the quality of our lives should be measured not by our wealth but by our freedom, his writings have revolutionized the theory and practice of development'. Sen 1999a, back cover.

⁹ Selwyn 2014. While the positive signs pointed out by the allegedly successful achievement of the Millennium Development Goals give us a hopeful note (United Nations 2015), other statistics remind us of the vastness of the material challenges still faced by millions of people across the world. More than ever, global income statistics clearly highlight the stubborn persistence and expansion of substantial inequality, where extreme wealth is coupled with the persistence of extreme poverty. See, OXFAM 2014b; OXFAM 2016; Piketty 2014. In its 2016 publication, OXFAM reported that just 62 individuals 'equal the wealth of the bottom half of the world's population (3.6 billion people)'. See, OXFAM 2016, 11.

freedom’.¹⁰ This is not to mean that all of the development practices (and their partial successes or failures) should be immediately ascribed to Sen’s work, or to the HD approach in general. Yet, the persistence of the challenges of development indicates that there is a clear need to engage in a discussion of the theoretical ideas that lie at the core of the mainstream approaches to contemporary development, examining conceptual problems that have resulted in practical failures. This thesis seeks to walk down this path, and provide a critical study of Amartya Sen’s work and its rich intersections with contemporary trends in HD.

This chapter and the following, will directly engage with the theoretical foundations of the HD paradigm, through an analysis of Sen’s work. Chapters 2 and 3 develop the argument presented in the previous chapter, in which Sen’s work is identified as the main example of the shift to people-centred approaches to development. Both chapters seek to set out a critical reading of Sen’s *capability approach* to development and explicate its implicit notion of empowerment. This chapter will also clarify the role of Sen’s theoretical work in grounding the HD approach to development and argue for its centrality to understanding the shift to and the increase of ethical concerns within development thinking. Here, we will critically engage with Sen’s CA, and demonstrate how this opens an unprecedented space for reflections on individual empowerment in development thinking. In the following sections, the chapter does this by tracing Sen’s journey from economics to development thinking, and highlighting the inclusion of ethical considerations which achieve their maximum expression in the development of his *capability approach*. In pursuing this analysis, the chapter gives an account of Sen’s relation to his own discipline, setting up the critical reading of him in the following chapter, which will more directly analyse the notion of empowerment within the CA and its relation to the HD paradigm.

¹⁰ On the policy side, clear examples include the series of *World Development Reports* that the World Bank publishes yearly, the *Human Development Reports* published also yearly by the UNDP, or the multiple reports used to keep track of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (now moving to Sustainable Development Goals), for example the United Nations 2012b. Works analysing the performance of different regions of the worlds in development trends abound in academic circles all over the world, a simple example is Fosu 2013’s edited collection that evaluates the ‘Development success’ of various countries in the Global South.

The limitations of 'positive' economics: the need for an ethical perspective

Sen's work has significantly evolved throughout the years, moving from an economic analysis of development to a broader and more comprehensive focus that incorporates political and philosophical considerations. In a sense, the evolution of Sen's work provides an illustration of the trends in development theory that we discussed in the previous chapter, progressively expanding the reflections on development, towards people-centred perspectives and the increase of ethical considerations associated to this move. In this, the main concepts that allow us to shift the focus to processes of individual empowerment are carefully crafted, urging development theories to focus on the empowerment of the individual moving away from state-centric projects. In the following sections the emergence of these ideas and the relevance to Sen's project will be discussed as a necessary step to both grasp the dimension of his contributions to development thinking and to make explicit the links of Sen's work with ideas of empowerment, central for the HD paradigm and contemporary practices of development.

The advance of modern economics, in particular the analytical dimension of neoclassical economics that resulted in the extension of mathematical and formalized models as the basis of economics as a science, presents several problematic assumptions for Sen. The logical and mathematical analysis of reality that resulted from the neoclassical perspective on economics is rooted in the understanding of the individual as a *homo economicus*, as a subject mainly adjusting her behaviour to assessments oriented to self-interest. In this perspective, the information processed by economics only accounts for human beings as *homo economicus*, and the information included is relevant only insofar as they are necessary elements for the formalization of macroeconomic models that respond to a productivity function. As Davis illustrates, in the formalisation of individuals as *homo economicus*, the concept of 'individuals' contains nothing about distinctively human beings, but considers individuals only as a necessary part of a maximising production function.¹¹ Stripped from the various moral and ethical contradictions amidst which human beings make their choices (not to mention the often narrow analysis of the structural conditions that also constrain such choices), the *homo economicus*' desires and actions are accounted only as the result of a pursuit of self-interest. Following these trends, economic analyses of growth - a

¹¹ Davis 2011, 2

fundamental element in earlier theories of development - were built assuming individual behaviour as rational, where rationality is defined in this most restricted way, as self-interest. Amartya Sen initiated his work in a critique of this neoclassical perspective on economics, a move that would further result in his later theorizations of development as the expansion of individual freedoms.

In his early works, Sen's criticised the limits of neoclassical economics to analyse individual and social interactions, and argued for the need to develop a broader and more comprehensive perspective on the motives of individual actions. This perspective was famously presented in his "Rational Fools: A critique of the behavioural foundations of economic theory" published in 1977. Here, Sen argued for the need to include more elements in the consideration of individual behaviour aside from pure self-interest, and included the concepts of *sympathy* and *commitment* to enrich the notion of individual behaviour.¹² This responded to the need to consider human action as involving extra-individual aims and therefore demanded the inclusion of new sources of information in the construction of economic models. The concepts of *commitment* and *sympathy* were Sen's first response to the need to articulate within positive economics types of action that are chosen by individuals despite the knowledge that they would lead to a lower level of individual welfare maximisation.¹³ These categories represented very clear attempts to include moral considerations in individual reasoning before action, and opened up the space for the inclusion of ethical aspects in economics. Sen's push to expand the understanding of individual rationality followed his call for 'going beyond what are often taken to be the boundaries of economics - into political, social and philosophical matters'.¹⁴ In this way, Sen argued for the need to broaden the sources of

¹² While an engagement with these concepts might not be a central aspect of the present discussion, it is useful to highlight what Sen understood by these terms. *Sympathy* is, for Sen, a motivation to act based on concerns for others, but this concern has a direct effect on the individual's own welfare. *Commitment*, on the other hand, refers to a motivation to act even under the knowledge that it will negatively affect the individual's own welfare. In that sense, *commitment* refers to the possibility of choosing a way of action, even under the expectation that it will yield a lower welfare for the individual. It will perhaps become more clear if we employ Sen's example to clarify both concepts: 'If the knowledge of torture of others makes you sick, it is a case of sympathy; if it does not make you feel personally worse off, but you think it is wrong and you are ready to do something to stop it, it is a case of commitment.' (Sen 1977, 326) In the case of commitment, Sen explains, the individual is ready to act against torture, despite knowing it might have personal costs (of time, income, etc.) that the individual will incur. Both concepts would later be incorporated in Sen's analysis of social responsibility and the necessity to become involved in political participation as we will discuss in Ch.3.

¹³ Sen 1977, 326

¹⁴ Sen 1984b, 2

information included in economic analysis as a pre-requisite to convey the necessary social, political and philosophical dimensions to expand on these analyses. He further explored this idea as a necessary step to move beyond 'engineering' economics - which merely extends logical-mathematical economic sciences - to one that gives space to ethical concerns.¹⁵

In his Royer Lectures, later published as *On Ethics and Economics* (1987), Sen spelled out the need to move away from “positive economics” to a more ethical conception of economics that gave space for the consideration of moral values.¹⁶ The key to unlock such a move was precisely to expand the information included in economic analysis to include the variety of complex ethical considerations that influence human behaviour. These clearly go beyond the idea of self-interest and utility maximisation prevalent in the concept of *homo economicus* and pick up the notions of *commitment* and *sympathy*. For Sen, the narrow focus on rationality that dominated positive economics significantly impoverished economic theory, precluding the possibility of engaging in normative analyses within the discipline. As he clearly states,

‘Why should it be uniquely rational to pursue one's own self - interest to the exclusion of everything else? It may not, of course, be at all absurd to claim that maximisation of self-interest is not irrational, at least not necessarily so, but to argue that anything other than maximizing self-interest must be irrational seems altogether extraordinary. The self-interest view of rationality involves inter alia a firm rejection of the 'ethics-related' view of motivation.’¹⁷

The view of self-interest maximisation that Sen sets out to challenge is at the core of the idea of *homo economicus*. Rationality is here understood to be consistent with self-interest utility maximisation, based on the notion that a person is 'seen as maximizing his utility function, which depends only on his own consumption, and which determines all his choices'.¹⁸ Sen identifies three distinct elements within this utility function, whose maximisation shapes an individual's behaviour: *self-centred welfare*, *self-welfare goals*

¹⁵ Sen 1987a, 7

¹⁶ Even when Sen had been exploring these issues before the publication of this book - notably in Sen 1982; Sen 1984a - it is in these lectures, delivered in 1986 at the University of California at Berkeley, that he most eloquently articulates the need to include ethical considerations in economic analysis. It is perhaps here, where his arguments and criticisms of the reductionist approach to positive economics are put to the front more clearly, and more strongly articulate the move towards the construction of the *capability approach*.

¹⁷ Sen 1987a, 15. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁸ Sen 1987a, 80

and *self-goal choice*. *Self-centred welfare* considers welfare as the result of individual consumption (and it does not include social considerations or moral values that may contribute or deter this welfare), and the maximisation of this welfare is the main goal of individual action, the *self-welfare goal*. In particular, it is this *self-welfare goal* of the individual maximisation of welfare that guides individual choice, in constructing the individual's *self-goal choice*. The result is a very constricting framework from which to analyse individual choice and rational behaviour. In fact, seeing human behaviour only as a result of a pursuit of these three elements is, for Sen, a very clear limitation of 'positive' economics, one that excludes the possibility of adding ethical considerations and other moral values that individuals might have that escape self-interest.¹⁹ 'Universal selfishness as *actuality* may well be false, but universal selfishness as a requirement of *rationality* is patently absurd'.²⁰ It is the necessity to formalise economic models that prompts the understanding of individuals as rational utility-maximisers, whose choices are dictated by the desire to expand their own individual welfare. Sen's strong opposition to the limitations of such a narrow characterisation of individual behaviour led him to argue for a broadening of the information basis included in economic analysis, a focus he expanded on his work on welfare economics.

Welfare economics is concerned with considerations of welfare both at the individual and social levels. Sen's criticism of neoclassical economics and its portrayal of individual welfare had dramatic implications for the possibilities of analysing social welfare and presented compelling arguments for the necessity to allow interpersonal comparisons leading to social choice. Social choice theory, which deals with 'the aggregation of individual interests, or judgements, or well-beings, into some aggregate notion of social welfare, social judgement or social choice' became the area of economics in which Sen consolidated his previous criticisms of neoclassical Economics.²¹ Here, Sen argued once again for broadening the information used in economics, in particular in

¹⁹ Later, he would call these as 'features of the self from a self-interest pursuit' perspective, in traditional considerations of rational behaviour. Since the first three are only concerned with the individual own's welfare, Sen proposes to add the notion of 'Commitment' as a fourth feature of the Self to create a broader framework that 'can allow the acknowledgment of goals that are not exclusively reduced to one's own welfare and the recognitions of values of appropriate social behaviour'. Sen 2002a, 36 In this framework, Sen also highlights that the notion of commitment is linked to a 'discipline of self-assessment' that allows for the reflection and self-scrutiny of individuals in choice making. Davis 2015.

²⁰ Sen 1987a, 16. Emphasis in the original.

²¹ Sen 2008, 579

contesting Kenneth Arrow's *General Impossibility Theorem* originally published in 1951.²² Arrow, analysing the conditions required for the achievement of social choice, concluded that it was impossible under 'even some mild-looking conditions that would seem to reflect elementary demands of reasonableness'.²³ His argument asserted the impossibility of achieving genuine collective social choice through utilitarian principles of individual welfare maximisation, while complying with principles such as non-dictatorship, universality of preference and efficiency. Arrow's compelling analysis of the impossibility of achieving social choice consistent with individual preferences became a strong limitation for the inclusion of political and ethical considerations in the construction of formalised models of economics. In discussing Arrow's contribution, Sen pointed to the problem regarding the consideration of individual welfare in social choice theory, common to 'positive' economics. The narrow utilitarian principles of individual maximisation that had dominated economics needed to be expanded, particularly in relation to the collective process of value formation. For Sen, the processes of social value formation that are required for the achievement of social choice had been largely neglected from considerations of aggregated social preferences.²⁴ Thus, he calls for an expansion of this informational basis to include value formation processes. This expansion follows Sen's ultimate goal of increasing ethical considerations in economics and development, introducing an explicit space for the procedural and political aspects of collective decision making processes. As he would later summarise,

'Most of the mechanical procedures of political choice (like voting and elections) or economic assessment (like the evaluation of national income) can accommodate rather little information, except in the discussions that may accompany these exercises. A voting result, in itself, reveals nothing much except that one alternative got more votes than another. Similarly, the economic procedure of national income aggregation draws only on information of what was bought and sold at what prices, and nothing else. And so on. When all the information that we can put into the system of evaluation or decision making takes such an emaciated form, then we have to be reconciled to those pessimistic results. But for an adequate understanding of the demands of justice, the needs of social organization and institutions, and the satisfactory making of public policies, we have to seek much more information and scrutinized evidence.'²⁵

²² Arrow 1963

²³ Sen 1995, 1

²⁴ Sen 1995, 18

²⁵ Sen 2012, 264

Broadening the information basis was Sen's main response to overcome Arrow's *Impossibility theorem*. This allowed Sen to enter into the realm of democratic and political considerations in the formation of economic policy, an aspect that was crucial to the construction of his *capability approach* to development.²⁶ By introducing the possibility of social choice into economics, he injected questions of decision-making processes, of political and democratic considerations aside from the economic output of policies, which gave a space for public discussion and individual agency within economic analyses.

From his early objection to the considerations of rationality within the notion of *homo economicus* to the challenges of narrow considerations of individual welfare through the pursuit of utility maximisation, Sen's response was directed to expanding the sources of information considered in economic analysis. The inclusion of normative resources, allowing for political, philosophical and social considerations followed his quest for an ethical perspective in economics, a quest that would ultimately result in a broadening of the considerations of development economics. His critiques of the utilitarian principles of moral judgements and the methodological choices of positive economics led him to develop a new conceptual framework to overcome these limitations. It is here, as a response to this need to expand the information basis, that he develops the idea of *capabilities* that would later become central in the *capability approach* to development. As such, it is to this concept, and the rationale behind its formation, that we turn in the next section.

Capabilities as fundamental elements for an ethical consideration of economics

With this framework in mind, it is now possible to understand the fundamental shift that Amartya Sen represents for mainstream economic analyses of development. While he was certainly not the first to identify the need of a more ethical approach to economics, his calls for an ethical perspective on economics that gave space to the *capability approach* in development thinking have perhaps been the most successful in reaching mainstream policy practitioners and academics.²⁷ As mentioned above, the impact of

²⁶ Evans 2002, 20

²⁷ The list of economists concerned with ethical considerations is endless, but there are however, a few elements that must be highlighted to qualify this claim. Sen himself traces the need for an ethical understanding of economics back to Aristotle and argues that classical economists such as Adam Smith

Sen's work is so indisputable that it is not surprising to read statements such as 'Sen is our best contemporary example of the move from (development) economics to (development) ethics in which both economics and (philosophical) ethics are undergoing a long overdue transformation.'²⁸ Sen's decades-long calls for the widening of the information basis and the inclusion of ethical considerations of economic analysis have had, at the very least, the merit of injecting these concerns into mainstream discussions of economic development, and, as we will see later, development policy and practice. Central to this move, is the concept of *capabilities* and its particular role in the achievement of freedom and individual empowerment. Sen used this concept to overcome the limitations of other principles of moral judgement used in economics, in particular the utilitarian one and those more focused on basic needs (e.g Rawls' idea of primary goods).

As we have briefly seen, it was Sen's work on social choice theory that laid the groundwork for the construction of the *capability approach*.²⁹ It was in this particular space where he included the possibility of making interpersonal comparisons between individual welfare and, at the same time, provided an analytical tool that portrayed individual agency as a fundamental element in development strategy and economic growth. Sen shifted the attention towards a concept of social choice that moved the 'focus from problems of aggregating individual preferences to participation and inclusion in democratic decision-making.'³⁰ In his plight for a consideration of broader sources of information for social choice, Sen re-directed the focus towards fair procedures and democratic stances of participation. These, in turn, required a stronger consideration of the agency of individuals in processes of choice. It is in his efforts to expand the limited view of social welfare and to assert the possibility of social choice that he opens up the

and Karl Marx were also concerned with ethical considerations in their analyses of economics (an argument made in several cases, for example, Sen 1987a; Sen 1989, 42; Sen 1999a, 14). At the same time, as argued above, Denis Goulet's lifetime project was also clearly concerned with ethical issues. His main aim was to 'thrust debates over economic and social development into the arena of ethical values' (Goulet 1978, vii). It is worth noting that it is not my aim to provide an exhaustive list of ethical analysis of economics that preceded Sen's work, but mainly to highlight how powerful Sen's ethical concerns have been in shaping mainstream development policy and thinking.

²⁸ Crocker 1991, 466

²⁹ The connection between Sen's work in Social Theory and the construction of the capability approach has been pointed out by many. See, for example, Agarwal, Humphries, and Robeyns 2003; Alkire 2005; Evans 2002; Peter 2003; Robeyns 2005B.

³⁰ Agarwal, Humphries, and Robeyns 2003, 5

two central elements of his contributions to development thinking: (1) individual agency - translated into empowerment strategies in policy documents - and (2) participation - taken as the tool to do so - which leads to a praising of participatory practices of democracy and development.

The way in which Sen articulates his concerns within social choice theory expanded beyond economics to become the backbone of mainstream development theory.³¹ In increasing the considerations involved in the possibility of social choice, Sen encountered the necessity to evaluate social welfare. For this, following his early critiques of the limited notion of rationality and of the moral principles that were used to articulate and value individual preferences, Sen set to examine the valuation principles used in considerations of social welfare. In his famous Tanner Lecture, delivered in 1979 and published as "Equality of What?" Sen examined the morality of different principles used by egalitarians to ensure equality in a society.³² Here, he exposed the limitations of the two dominant principles: the utilitarian approach - analysed in two variants - that sees equality in terms of total welfare (utility maximisation) and the basic needs approach (including the Rawlsian understanding of primary goods) that sees equality in terms of equality of resources. The objections that Sen makes to these two approaches are developed throughout his work as he returns often to the limitations of these two approaches to justify the need to adopt his *capabilities* reformulation.³³ While an in-depth engagement with Sen's criticism of these other moral principles as articulated in economic analysis is not our present concern, we will very briefly summarize the limitations that Sen sees in these frameworks in order to contextualize his concept of *capabilities*.

Utilitarian principles of welfare judgement - which go back to Jeremy Bentham's work and were more recently articulated in the work of Alfred Marshall, Arthur Pigou

³¹ In fact, while Sen was generally concerned with the social evaluations of welfare, and incorporated moral principles into his studies of poverty and quality of life, it was in 1983, with the publication of his "Development: Which way now?" that Sen started the discussions of the application of his theories of economics to a more systematic approach to development. And it was from here onwards that most of his works would address issues of development, leading him to engage in the construction of the Human Development approach, and that would perhaps reach the highest systematisation in his *Development as Freedom*, published in 1999.

³² Sen 1980

³³ See, for example, Sen and Williams 1982; Sen 1985; Sen 1987b, chap. III–IV; Sen 1989; Sen 1999a, chap. 1–3; Sen 2002b

and Francis Edgeworth - evaluate social welfare in terms of utility maximisation. The latter is derived from desire fulfilment and individual happiness.

‘The utilitarian notion of value, which is invoked explicitly or by implication in much of welfare economics, sees value, ultimately, only in individual utility, which is defined in terms of some mental condition, such as pleasure, happiness, desire-fulfilment. This subjectivist perspective has been extensively used, but it can be very misleading, since it may fail to reflect a person's real deprivation’.³⁴

Sen's in-depth engagement with utilitarianism illustrates the limitations that arise from this subjective conceptualisation of welfare, both in terms of happiness and desire fulfilment. Utility maximisation, at a social level, does not ensure an equality of distribution.³⁵ More importantly, it also does not offer the possibility of accounting for the adaptive expectations of individuals, which might display a higher level of happiness even in the most deplorable conditions. For Sen, if by some mental conditioning (which may include religion) 'a starving wreck, ravished by famine, buffeted by disease, is made happy' then the utilitarian principle would not account a difference.³⁶ If, in fact, an individual has given up on her own expectations for conducting a satisfactory life, and thus her expectations are fulfilled with an unacceptably low level of material conditions, then Sen warns us, this exposes the limitations of utilitarian principles for the moral judgement of social welfare.

And what happens if we focus exclusively on the resources necessary to develop a satisfactory life? Then, Sen warns us against another type of reductionism, a clear parallel to what Marx termed 'commodity fetishism'.³⁷ In analysing the possibility of evaluating social welfare along this line, Sen discusses Rawls' concept of social justice, and others (such as the Basic Needs approach) that also focus on the equality of resources as a foundational moral principle. The danger here is that their focus on Primary Goods (as in Rawls' Theory) or in Basic Needs fulfilment does not provide enough information for an adequate moral principle.³⁸ Sen does not discard the necessity of fulfilling these material needs, but argues for a further step that includes an analysis of *what* this person can do with her basic commodities fulfilled. As he states, '[W]hile

³⁴ Sen 1989, 43

³⁵ Sen 1980, 208–210

³⁶ Sen 1984a, 188

³⁷ Sen himself would signal this parallel, for example in: Sen 1984c, 510.

³⁸ See, among other works, Sen 1980; Sen 1984a; Sen 1987b

goods and services are valuable, they are not valuable in themselves. Their value rests on what they can do for people, or rather, what people can do with these goods and services'.³⁹ Sen analyses thoroughly the ideas of primary goods, and those focused on the equality of resources, and while he finds several connections with his own interpretation of the principles upon which equality should be constructed, he still rejects their reductionism. Even when two people might be equipped to the same extent with resources that fulfil the requirements of primary goods or basic needs, this fails to tell us anything of what individuals can actually achieve with these goods.

It is here that Sen offers his idea of *capabilities* as overcoming these two approaches' limitations. This is an idea that Sen presents for the first time in the Tanner Lecture, and becomes the central contribution of his approach to development. Further, it is fundamental to understanding the role of the empowerment of the individual within the HD paradigm. In presenting the idea of *capabilities* as a possibility to overcome the limitations of the other dominant approaches to social welfare comparison, Sen states,

‘Last, the bulk of this lecture has been concerned with rejecting the claims of utilitarian equality, total utility equality, and Rawlsian equality to provide a sufficient basis for the equality-aspect of morality - indeed, even for that part of it which is concerned with needs rather than deserts. I have argued that none of these three is sufficient, nor is any combination of the three. This is my main thesis. I have also made the constructive claim that this gap can be narrowed by the idea of basic capability equality, and more generally by the use of basic capability as a morally relevant dimension taking us beyond utility and primary goods.’⁴⁰

Indeed, it is in the concept of capabilities, which focuses on what a person can do or be with the resources available - the capability to function in a particular manner - that is the basis of Sen's *Development as Freedom*. The idea of *capabilities* expands the focus on resources to include the actual possibilities of the individuals to make use of them. The notion of *capabilities* artfully combines all of the previous criticisms that Sen had previously constructed. They respond to the necessity to broaden the sources of information included in economic analysis, going beyond the limitations of the *homo economicus* vision of neoclassical economics and at the same time allowing for an ethical valuation of social welfare, beyond the focus on utilitarian returns or resources and

³⁹ Sen 1984c, 510

⁴⁰ Sen 1980, 220

material goods. As he himself stated, 'Primary goods are means to freedoms, whereas capabilities are expressions of freedoms themselves'.⁴¹ The concept of *capabilities* became, for Sen, the key to fully enter in discussions of development. It wove together his main arguments into a new normative framework for discussions of development that would underscore his claim for expanding the ethical dimensions considered. The expansion of these capabilities is here seen as the end of development which also broadens the focus of the discussion to account for considerations of individual agency in the process of development. While not explicitly discussing it, with this Sen lays the basis of a notion of empowerment that would shape HD and mainstream practices as well as academic discussions of development in the last decades.⁴² It is in the idea of capabilities that Sen ties together his critiques of neoclassical economics and the calls for a more ethical economic analysis, one that broadens the information basis to articulate moral judgements and ethical principles. As we will see in the following section, the idea of capabilities - and its particular conceptualisation as the freedom to enjoy a kind of life that we value - is at the core of Sen's framework for development. It is these capabilities that free individual agency from constraints to act, giving the individual both the choice and the possibilities to exercise it. In this, Sen moves towards his virtuous circle where individual freedom is *both* the means and ends of development, one that rests in the empowerment of the individuals.

Capabilities as freedom:

The capability approach as an ethical consideration of development

Entering in discussions of development, Sen built his analytic framework around the concept of *capabilities*. This, as we have briefly pointed out in the previous chapter, allowed Sen to move beyond the narrow economic view of development as economic

⁴¹ Sen 1989, 45

⁴² Only several years after the construction of the idea of capabilities, Sen would refer to development explicitly linked to the notion of empowerment. In 2009, in his *The Idea of Justice*, Sen states: 'Development is fundamentally an empowering process, and this power can be used to preserve and enrich the environment, and not only to decimate it.' (Sen 2010, 249) We will make explicit the connection between the capability approach and empowerment in the next chapter, and we will use this understanding to clarify the connection of Sen's work with the HD and the contemporary practices of development.

growth, to a people-centred development, and, at the same time, gave space to his claims for the need of ethical considerations within development thinking. In his "Development as capability expansion", he argued for seeing development as a process articulated around the connection between capabilities and freedom, an approach that he would refine and clarify in further works. Sen begins this seminal article by calling for the need to follow Kant's precept of 'seeing human beings as ends in themselves, rather than as means to other ends'.⁴³ In following that maxim, Sen argues for a people-centred understanding of the ends and goals of development, but also states the need to recognize that human beings are, at the same time, the means through which these ends can be achieved, an element we will explore further in making explicit Sen's implicit notion of empowerment. He argues for the need to consider the richness of human lives, as the ultimate measure with which to evaluate social change. Economic prosperity, he argues, should not be considered more than a means to achieve other ends: 'It is a foundational confusion to give it [Economic prosperity] the status of an end'.⁴⁴ These two elements - taking human beings as means *and* ends, and the argument for the necessity to evaluate social change in more complete ways than merely economic growth - would turn out to be fundamental elements in the Human Development project pioneered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It would also become central for mainstream development practices.⁴⁵

The capability approach sees development as 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy'⁴⁶ and it is through this same process that development is achieved. The focus on economic growth as a prerequisite for development, common to previous theories, is widened in this perspective to include the conditions that make the achievement of individual capabilities possible; the process of individual empowerment becomes its fundamental element. While Sen would not neglect the importance of the achievement of economic growth, he would only argue for it as a means to accessing the objectives of development, those connected to the expansion of

⁴³ Sen 1989, 41

⁴⁴ Sen 1989, 42

⁴⁵ In particular, it is the language of *capabilities*, tied to that of empowerment and the expansion of choice that has become a catch-all phrase, used by development programs and institutions all over the world. We will come back to this discussion in the Ch.3.

⁴⁶ Sen 1999a, 3

individual capabilities:

'I believe the real limitations of traditional development economics arose not from the choice of means to the end of economic growth, but in the insufficient recognition that economic growth was no more than a means to some other objectives. The point is not the same as saying that growth does not matter. It may matter a great deal, but, if it does, this is because of some associated benefits that are realised in the process of economic growth.'⁴⁷

The richness of human lives is, in Sen's perspective, given by the *capabilities* that a person enjoys. These capabilities are, intrinsically, the individual freedoms to live the life they value. In building the *capability approach*, Sen gives numerous definitions of what *capabilities* entail. Succinctly, he states, capability 'reflects a person's freedom to choose between different ways of living'.⁴⁸ It is this understanding of freedom, and of the enjoyment of individual capabilities as the means to achieve such freedom, that he articulated as the means and ends of development, unveiling an unprecedented space for the consideration of the individual in mainstream development theory, in pursuit of a strategy to achieve a more meaningful empowerment of the individual.

In discussions of individual freedom as the means and ends of development theory, Sen adopts a perspective that echoes Isaiah Berlin's distinction between positive and negative freedom. Berlin distinguishes between the absence of barriers or constraints (negative freedom) and the possibility of actually exercising our decisions and taking control of our own lives. Positive freedom 'derives from the wish on the part of the individual to be his own master'.⁴⁹ Sen takes Berlin's account - in fact, he recognizes his indebtedness to Berlin in his approach - and expands on the idea of positive freedom as an intrinsic element in the consideration of human agency.⁵⁰ The concept of positive freedom is located at the centre of the capability approach, where freedom is understood as the means and end of the development process. Individuals are constrained by the obstacles to achieve the capabilities to choose freely the type of life that they value - 'unfreedoms' in Sen's terminology. The major sources of unfreedom that development should remove include: 'poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over

⁴⁷Sen 1983, 253

⁴⁸Sen 1989, 43

⁴⁹ Berlin 1969, 160

⁵⁰ Sen 1999a, 349

activity of repressive states'.⁵¹ From this perspective, Sen articulates an idea of development as a process that frees the individual from the constraints that are holding them in a life that they cannot choose to change. The space of capability, then, gives the individual the possibility of choice, a choice of a particular lifestyle. In an early exploration of the link between capabilities and development, Sen argues that '(t)he process of economic development is best seen as an expansion of people's capabilities, and development is best seen as a process of emancipation from the enforced necessity to live less and be less'.⁵² In these early discussions, Sen made clear reference to Marx when arguing for the process of development to achieve the emancipation from circumstances that prevent individuals to freely enjoy the capabilities to choose the lives they value.⁵³ However, while his early analyses brought him closer to a Marxist analysis of emancipation, he progressively moved away from this, shifting the focus of his notion of capabilities towards Berlin's more liberal conception of positive freedom.⁵⁴

In Sen's vision of the *capability approach*, the expansion of freedom is not only seen as the removal of substantial unfreedoms, but as providing the space for the individual to exert their individual agency. Thus, while not making explicit reference to the idea of empowerment, Sen speaks of development as conducive to and mediated by processes of individual empowerment, in terms that we will discuss in the following chapter. Freedom is central to Sen's perspective of development for two very distinct reasons: the *evaluative* reason, that allows the assessment of social change in terms of the improvement of access to freedoms (a clear improvement from the assessment in terms of merely economic growth) and an *effectiveness* reason, as the 'achievement of development is thoroughly dependent on the free agency of people'.⁵⁵ In explaining them, and the resulting interconnection between capabilities, freedom and development, Sen states,

'There are two distinct reasons for the crucial importance of individual freedom in the concept of development, related respectively to *evaluation* and *effectiveness*. First, in the normative approach used here, substantive individual

⁵¹ Sen 1999a, 3

⁵² Sen 1984c, 509–510

⁵³ Sen 1983, 754; Sen 1989, 43

⁵⁴ In fact, in an article from 1996, Mozaffar Qizilbash discusses Sen's perspective under the heading 'Capabilities 1: Development as Emancipation', and traces the links that Sen's perspective has with a Marxist understanding of a fulfilling life. Qizilbash 1996, 1210.

⁵⁵ Sen 1999a, 4

freedoms are taken to be critical. The success of a society is to be evaluated, in this view, primarily by the substantive freedoms that the members of that society enjoy. (...)The second reason for taking substantive freedom to be so crucial is that freedom is not only the basis of the evaluation of success and failure, but it is also a principal determinant of individual initiative and social effectiveness. Greater freedom enhances the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world, and these matters are central to the process of development. The concern here relates to what we may call (at the risk of some oversimplification) the "agency aspect" of the individual'.⁵⁶

Importantly, for Sen, the expansion of capabilities is a 'two-way relationship' whereby capabilities are expanded by public policy and at the same time, influence public policy and decision, by individual participation in defining the societal arrangements.⁵⁷ The expansion of individual freedom is thus the main aim and at the same time the principal means of achieving development. Development is seen as the removal of several forms of 'unfreedoms', of barriers that prevent the individual from exerting their own individual agency and choice, in order to transform their reality. On these lines, for Sen, the expansion of individual freedom is *constitutive* of development. The removal of unfreedoms will set the individual free to exert their own agency that will, in turn, become the means to achieve development.⁵⁸ The concept of empowerment, then, becomes embedded in this framework, in which individual agency is the fundamental element for development.

The concept of capabilities as articulated by Sen includes a combination of what he terms *functionings*, the effective outcomes of beings and doings that an individual achieves. This is differentiated from the opportunities available to achieve freely these beings and doings, that is, the combinations of being and doings that an individual *can* attain that are termed *capabilities*. 'Capability is thus a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations (or less, formally put, the freedom to achieve various lifestyles)'.⁵⁹ Thus, the idea of capabilities has a special emphasis on the notion of individual choice. While the functionings are the achievements that an individual has already chosen, it is the possibility of *choice* of these distinct options that accounts for the individuals' capabilities. This idea of choice will

⁵⁶ Sen 1999a, 18. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁷ Sen 1999a, 18;31

⁵⁸ Sen 1999a, xiii

⁵⁹ Sen 1999a, 75

become a central tenet of the ideas of Human Development, as we will later observe. The development process is then seen as providing for and mediated by the removal of unfreedoms, endowing individuals with the choices that their capabilities allow them to enjoy and setting the individuals free to advance in their own development and that of their societies. It is in this process of the endowment of choices that individuals are empowered, and their agency becomes absolutely crucial for development.

Sen is aware that the capabilities of each individual are a result of different circumstances, and therefore, provided with the same set of means, individuals can enjoy different levels of freedom, an element that we discussed earlier around the limitations of the utilitarian principle. He identifies a variety of reasons individuals can enjoy different sets of capabilities, even with the same set of individual goods. For example, this can be the result of physical or mental heterogeneities (such as particular disabilities or illnesses), of differences related to the natural and social endowments of their home country, or they can stem from being in different relative social or cultural positions and therefore having different demands associated to these particular positions.⁶⁰ It is precisely here, in expanding and refining his concept of *capabilities*, that his perspective overcomes the limitations from other approaches to development: the idea of capabilities escapes and enriches at the same time the basic needs and primary goods approaches, the GDP growth centred approach to development and the pure utilitarian notion of welfare. It is not enough to have opportunities or primary good endowments. There is a need to be able to have the capability to enjoy them to constitute actual freedom. That is the equality that the development process should aspire to and it is, at the same time, the condition for achieving it.⁶¹

This novel articulation of the role of the individual in the construction of a development strategy is combined in the capability approach with Sen's previous discussions of economic theory. In particular, it is connected with the ones regarding his views on economic preference, social choice and the critiques of the rationality perspective on individual actions. It is in the elaboration of the idea of choice and capabilities for freedom that Sen returns to his old criticism of rational behaviour. He argues for the need to incorporate *commitment* as a source of individual action and as

⁶⁰ Sen 2005, 154

⁶¹ Sen 1999a, 233

a constitutive element of development. The idea of social commitment is coupled to the enjoyment of individual freedom in an indivisible relationship of responsibility.⁶² The freedom of individuals to act and choose their capabilities is coupled, in his approach, with a need for political subjects to enact their human agency, and thus, to get involved in the process of development. Sen recognises 'the force of the claim that people themselves must have responsibility for the development and change in the world in which they live'.⁶³ Seeing freedom as choices requires the inclusion of a responsibility of the individual to engage in committed action, understood as individual behaviour that is not necessarily in pursuit of self-interest.⁶⁴

Here, Sen overcomes the limitations of the rationality straitjacket of the *homo economicus*, and argues in favour of including the idea of *commitment* as a source of individual behaviour, and as a guiding principle for the achievement of social choices. Further, public participation in the pursuit of social choices becomes a fundamental arena for the exercise of individual agency, and it becomes a central step in the empowerment of individuals. 'Such processes as participation in political decisions and social choice cannot be seen as being - at best - among the *means* to development (through, say, their contribution to economic growth), but have to be understood as constitutive parts of the *ends* of development in themselves'.⁶⁵ For Sen, the enjoyment of political freedoms safeguards the social opportunities for the individual to ensure 'more effective participation in economic and political activities'.⁶⁶ The process of individual participation in political life is seen as a process that increases the effectiveness of participation stances, in a virtuous circle of reinforcement of each. Individual freedom, coupled with a social responsibility to act for the betterment of society, become the two necessary elements in the notion of capabilities as an ethical understanding of development. Together, they are intended to empower the individual, but also require the genuine involvement of the individual in public life.

What is important to extract from this analysis of the *capability approach*, as we

⁶² See, in particular, Sen 1999a, chap. 12. Here Sen explores the links and interdependence between the enjoyment of individual freedom, and the commitment to a social responsibility to act and intervene politically in the formation of social choice.

⁶³ Sen 1999a, 283

⁶⁴ He would later discuss this idea of responsibility and commitment of individual action, making it a central element of his theory of justice, developed in his *The Idea of Justice*. Sen 2010.

⁶⁵ Sen 1999a, 291

⁶⁶ Sen 1999a, 39

have mentioned before, is an element that will be fundamental for our further engagements with the Human Development paradigm: Sen's understanding of *empowerment*. While Sen seldom speaks of empowerment in itself, the ideas of individual agency and of the necessary capabilities to enable the individual to act are fundamental elements in his framework for development. Further, they necessarily entail a process of empowerment that, as we see in Sen's analysis, focuses on the individual level.⁶⁷ And it is this view of capabilities as intimately connected to processes of empowerment (as we will see in the following chapter) that has been taken by policy institutions to ground strategies and projects centred on the individual. In the introduction to *Development as Freedom*, Sen states

"This work is particularly concerned with the agency role of the individual as a member of the public and as a participant in economic, social and political actions (varying from taking part in the market to being involved, directly or indirectly, in individual or joint activities in political and other spheres)."⁶⁸

From the discussion of the idea of capabilities as freedoms, we can see that it is these capabilities that enable the individual to choose and exert their agency. In other words, the enjoyment of these capabilities (and the removal of unfreedoms) can be seen as a process by which the individual is empowered, one that enables them to act and participate economically and politically in their society. And it is this empowerment of individual agency, and the freedom of choice associated with the enjoyment of capabilities, that has been taken up by the policy implementations of the HD paradigm, one that has become so central for mainstream practices of development throughout the world. While Sen has not directly defined this idea, and a large part of the scholarship focusing on the capability approach has overlooked this element, it is necessary that we devote some space to make explicit the connection between empowerment and capabilities.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ In fact, mostly Sen directly talks about the idea of empowerment in relation to women's agency. See, for example, Sen 1999a, chap. 8

⁶⁸ Sen 1999a, 17

⁶⁹ Most of the literature linking Sen's work with discussions of empowerment does so in reference to ideas of gender empowerment. Exceptions can be found, as we will discuss in the next chapter, but in general, the trend of analysis of empowerment and development focus on the delimitations of empirical accounts and measurements of discussions of empowerment. This is, however, a topic we will explore in detail in Chapter 3.

Conclusion

Perhaps the most lasting legacy that Amartya Sen has contributed to both the policy and academic considerations of development is precisely his wholehearted support for the expansion of ethical considerations in development. This, as we have seen, has been at the centre of Sen's theoretical concerns and has had an enormous impact in their incorporation in mainstream policy programmes and development thinking. While of course it is not only Sen's work that can be solely credited with the shift to the people-centred visions of development that have displaced purely economic and state-centred earlier approaches, we have argued in this chapter that Sen's work has been instrumental in the process.

In this chapter, we have discussed Sen's early work, setting it within discussions in his own discipline and demonstrated how it has opened an unprecedented space for reflections on individual empowerment in development thinking, ingraining ethical considerations within mainstream visions of development. We have shown how his unwavering efforts to expand the ethical considerations of economics and overcome the limitation of the neoclassical perspective have driven Sen to the construction of one of the most influential frameworks for development thinking, the *capability approach*. This framework, beyond granting him an overwhelming level of recognition at the academic and policy world, has provided the theoretical basis for the consolidation of the Human Development paradigm as the most successful people-centred approach. Sen's contribution to the promotion of empowering practices of development, while not always overt, has given us the opportunity to reflect in theoretical terms on contemporary practices of development that are directed towards the individual. Processes of individual empowerment, both in their political and economic dimensions, have become a central element for development policy all over the world. Beyond the acknowledgment of its praiseworthy aims and significant advances in respect to previous, more narrow ideas of development, it is necessary to question what are the limits and boundaries that such an approach to development brings. It is necessary, then, to see what the limits of these people-centred processes of development are, which can be found, as we will see in the following chapters, particularly connected to the idea of empowerment that has become a buzzword in development thinking and policy.

CHAPTER 3
THE PARADOX OF EMPOWERMENT IN SEN'S CAPABILITY
APPROACH

❧

Introduction

Sen's efforts to expand the ethical considerations within development economics have been a trailblazer for much of contemporary mainstream development thinking and practice. Perhaps the most evident example of this is the expansion of the Human Development (HD) approach and its efforts to go beyond using economic growth as the single, catch-all dimension to measuring development advances through the construction of the multidimensional HD index (HDI). The HDI has not managed to completely 'dethrone' GDP as the ultimate measurement of development, as WB former President Robert McNamara would have wanted, but it has certainly become a major reference point for global discussions of development.¹ What the HDI underscores is the success of people-centred approaches in articulating a notion of development centred on the individual, incorporating a multiplicity of dimensions (and hence of measurements) that go beyond the overall economic growth of a context. This is a central aspect to Sen's work that, as we have seen in the previous chapter, understands the means and the ends of development to be the expansion of individual freedom. We have anticipated in the previous chapter that it is this aspect, the understanding of individual freedom as constitutive of and instrumental to development at the core of ideas of individual empowerment, that has become a centre-piece of the people-centred approaches to development. In this chapter we will expand and clarify this connection, by specifically focusing on a discussion of the notion of empowerment embedded within the HD approach generally and Sen's thought specifically.

¹ Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank in 1968-1981, was an early advocate to shifting away from measures of development exclusively based on GDP metrics. McNamara 1973.

In contemporary development thinking and practice, most agencies, civil society organizations and state-sponsored strategies for development speak, to some extent, of the fundamental role of individual empowerment in processes of development. Highlighting the role of individual agency for the achievement of development has become the norm in both development thinking and practice.² The notion of empowerment, essential for the expansion of the agency of individuals, has been tied to ideas of participation, poverty reduction, and of increasing the ‘ownership’ of the process of development; ideas that are intuitively difficult to disagree with in the present global political context. As Cornwall and Brock point out, these words ‘epitomise this feel-good character: they connote warm and nice things, conferring on their users that goodness and rightness that development agencies need to assert the legitimacy to intervene in the lives of others’.³ The idea of empowerment has thus manifested in a set of words used by development agencies following the turn of development practices towards a greater focus on people. In this chapter we will connect these trends to the theoretical framework given by the *capability approach* (CA) and clarify Sen’s role in the expansion of the Human Development approach. While Sen seldom explicitly uses the concept of empowerment to speak of the process of capability expansion, the chapter will argue that it is essential to understanding the role of the individual in mainstream development thinking and practice.

As such, the chapter clarifies the CA connection with the HD paradigm and explores and spells out the understanding of empowerment embedded within these frameworks. It further argues that it is this notion of empowerment that reveals a paradox within development thinking which is suggestive for some of the recurrent problems of development practice. The centrality of individual agency and the notion of empowerment as a result and means of development processes emerges from a desire to expand the ethical boundaries of development thinking and practice. Expanding the ethical considerations of the previous, quite narrow, notions that associated development exclusively with economic growth has been a necessary and worthy endeavour. The calls for removing the deprivations and unfreedoms that

² For research that analyses the growing understanding of empowerment in development policy, see, for example, Moore 2001; Cornwall 2007; Alkire and Ibrahim 2007; Bebbington et al. 2007; Pender 2002; Cornwall and Brock 2005; Mohan and Stokke 2000; Mansuri and Rao 2004; Mansuri and Rao 2012.

³ Cornwall and Brock 2005, 1045

underdevelopment brings by empowering people and thereby enhancing their individual freedom, call for the transformation of our societies to more humane and just ones, to ones where human life is worth living to its maximum, where individuals are free to follow and lead the kind of lives they value, and have reason to value.⁴ Yet, as it is framed within mainstream practices of development associated with the HD approach, this quest for the expansion of the agency of the individual and for their resulting empowerment narrowly encloses the debate within a liberal, Western conception of development. As a result, the strategies that promote ‘development as freedom’ then appear enclosed within the institutions of liberal democracies and market economies. The mantra of development as freedom and the associated project to expand the role of the individual within mainstream development thinking and practice are thus two sides of a process of empowering individuals solely within the frame (and limits) of liberal democracies and capitalist economies.

This paradoxical understanding of empowerment that emerges from a desire to expand ethical considerations but which effectively constrains such considerations will be problematized from several different angles in the remaining chapters. The conceptual baggage that accompanies the ideas of empowerment will be unpacked throughout the thesis and its multiple dimensions clarified and challenged, through an engagement with different Latin American theoretical perspectives. Yet, it is necessary first, to clarify this “Paradox of Empowerment”, and how it is linked to Sen’s framework and the HD approach. This chapter is, then, a fundamental step in this thesis, bringing together the insights developed in the previous chapters and arguing that it is necessary to clarify the paradoxical nature of empowerment as framed within the CA and the HD if we are to advance beyond it. This chapter sets itself to this task by clarifying in the first section the notion of empowerment embedded within the CA, and arguing in the following section that it has resulted in what is termed here the “Paradox of empowerment”. In the final section, it illustrates how this paradoxical understanding of empowerment has become deeply embedded within the HD paradigm and thus heavily influenced mainstream development. The chapter then concludes with an overview of

⁴ Sen uses the expression ‘to live the life they value and have reason to value’ as one of his main recurring arguments for the superiority of the capability approach in relation to other conceptions of development. The expression, which highlights the scope and centrality of individual freedom within the CA, is included in several of his works. See, for example Sen 1999a, 18; Sen 2010, 231; Sen 2013, 10.

the following chapters and how the use of Latin American critical traditions will allow us to analyse different aspects of this paradox, seeking to overcome their limitations.

Understanding Empowerment in the capability approach

Broadly, ideas of empowerment refer to strategies that promote the increasing role of the individual in society, in which constraints to act (whether social, economic, cultural or political) are removed and the individual is left with both the increased opportunity and, perhaps more importantly, a greater capacity to effectively intervene in public life. As such, the notion of empowerment is linked to the perspective of ‘freeing’ the individual, and has often been connected to ideas of emancipation, of individuals assuming a more active role in their lives, and taking stronger control of how economic and political processes impact on them. In discussions of development (both in academic and policy debates), empowerment has been associated with a push to increase the ‘ownership’ of processes that lead to social change, giving the individuals a larger space from which to shape them.⁵ This has been presented as a distinct move away from previous ‘paternalistic’ ideas of development, where the state was conceived as the main driving force. Empowering practices of development are presented, in contrast, as a requisite for (and consequence of) long-lasting development processes, featuring innovative economic and political practices destined to allow and boost the individuals’ engagement in such processes. In the rise of participatory development, micro-entrepreneurial ventures and bottom-up projects bringing together the efforts from involved citizens, these practices seek to create a virtuous circle of reinforcement between individual empowerment and development, where one enables and increases the other which in turn continues the progressive movement. While the (over)use of the term empowerment in mainstream development has been criticised from many angles - not least for its depoliticising nature in mainstream policy initiatives - it certainly both demonstrates the contemporary turn towards people-centred approaches to development and is one of its key aspects.⁶

⁵ Kapoor 2008, chap. 4; Cornwall 2007; Dar and Cooke 2008 See, for example Bonfiglioli 2003; Narayan 2002; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2012.

⁶ See, for example, Cornwall and Brock 2005; Cornwall and Eade 2010; Moore 2001; Bebbington et al. 2007.

The development field's contemporary fixation with ideas of empowerment has had a prolific effect on policy documents and academic analysis. Many international agencies have explicitly incorporated it as part of their development strategy and language.⁷ Recognizing the centrality of ideas of empowerment, many have engaged in a critical analysis of these trends, challenging the use of the notion or the impacts of the strategies designed for its promotion. Many of these critical engagements with notions of empowerment in development have taken into consideration the policy strategies of different development agencies, and have articulated powerful questions and analyses; mainly, these stem from and focus on their implementation.⁸ These analyses, drawing from the growing empirical evidence of the effects of such strategies, clearly outline empirical problems and limitations but do not advance theoretical debates to the same extent.⁹ Further, in these cases, the connection between ideas of empowerment and the work of Amartya Sen, and his influential *capability approach*, has seldom been made, or has remained a mere example.

Yet, while in these critical analyses Sen's work has not had a central role, his work in this area has not been unnoticed. Some empirical studies have explicitly found Sen's framework at the core of ideas of empowerment and used his work as the basis for its operationalization and measurement. This is particularly the case both in studies of gender empowerment and in the construction of indexes and indicators to evaluate and measure agency and empowerment.¹⁰ These empirical applications of Sen's work on empowerment are generally highly supportive, building upon the widespread assumption that Sen's framework is the fundamental contribution to effectively achieving *Development as freedom*. Here, Sen's work is highly praised, celebrated for its

⁷ Clear examples from development agencies can be found on Blackburn, Chambers, and Gaventa 2000; World Bank 2001b; Narayan 2005; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2012; Narayan 2002; World Bank 2000; United Nations Development Programme 2009; United Nations Development Programme 2006; Department of Economic and Social Affairs - United Nations 2005. A critical overview of these trends can be found on Mansuri and Rao 2012.

⁸ That is the case of the analysis by Moore 2001; Pender 2002; Cornwall 2007; Eyben, Kabeer, and Cornwall 2008; Biekart 2008; Bebbington et al. 2007; Enns, Bersaglio, and Kepe 2014. All of these cases draw on empirical case studies to analyse different aspects of these trends and compellingly point out their limitations. It is important to note that an empirical analysis of the implementation of empowerment strategies goes beyond the scope of this study, but perhaps would be a good avenue to explore in future research.

⁹ Bebbington et al. 2007, 601

¹⁰ See, for example, Alkire 2002; Alkire and Ibrahim 2007; Robeyns 2008; Alkire 2008; Hill 2003; Iversen 2003; Peter 2003; Hicks 2002; Samman and Santos 2009; Cantón 2012.

fundamental contribution to development theory, bringing the work of development agencies closer to the poor, voiceless and dispossessed. The capability approach is understood in these analyses as a tool to conceptualise development strategies that further advance human development and the role of individuals therein. Overall, however, Sen's conceptualisations of agency and capabilities and their connections to idea of empowerment, rather than critically challenged, are either perfected and 'improved' in the implementation of empirical accounts and measurements, or remain unaccounted for in the more critical approaches engaging concrete policy implementations, as we discussed above. Consequently, it is necessary to embark on a more in-depth analysis of the theoretical implications of Sen's work for understanding the role of empowerment within contemporary development practice. This thesis seeks to advance on this direction: the use of Latin American resources for development thinking will allow us to explore the ethical boundaries of Sen's project and begin overcoming its paradoxical nature in the following chapters.

Sen's quest for the expansion of individual freedoms moves beyond a negative conception of freedom (as non-interference) and presupposes an active and engaged individual, closer to the republican ideal of a citizen.¹¹ This focus on individual freedom as the means and end of development has given a paramount importance to processes of individual empowerment and shaped the HD approach and much of contemporary development practices. While the concept of empowerment is seldom explicitly discussed in Sen's work, it plays a central role in the conceptualisation of individual agency within the *capability approach* where 'people have to be seen, in this perspective, as being actively involved - given the opportunity - in shaping their own destiny, and not just as passive recipients of the fruits of cunning development programs'.¹² This 'active involvement' in processes of development is a key element in his approach, one that requires the enjoyment of capabilities to enable the exercise of an individual's agency. The expansion of individual freedoms in the form of capabilities has, therefore, an intimate connection with processes of individual empowerment, built on the notion of agency that Sen's discusses and clarifies throughout his work. We have argued previously in this analysis how Sen's moral valuation of the notion of *commitment* connects

¹¹ Alexander 2010

¹² Sen 1999a, 53

individual freedom with a sense of social responsibility that is intrinsic to the active role that individuals are expected to assume to articulate development ‘as freedom’.¹³ It is necessary to now explore in more detail the role that individual agency plays in Sen’s framework, which will allow us to understand its connection with notions of individual empowerment.

While we will subsequently illustrate in this chapter how Sen’s framework has been incorporated into the HD paradigm, at the moment, it is necessary to identify the notion of empowerment implicitly conceived within Sen’s framework. This, as we have previously anticipated, is connected to the role of individual agency for development and its distinctive contribution to Sen’s theoretical framework. Sen refers to *agency* as ‘what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important’.¹⁴ The focus on individual agency is counterpoised to the idea of individuals as mere recipients of development strategies: the individual as ‘agent’ for development is contrasted with the idea of the individual as ‘patient’.¹⁵ The centrality of the role of individual agency has led Sen to describe his own perspective as an ‘Agent-oriented approach’ to development. Importantly, agency occupies both a descriptive role (it is necessary for development) and a normative one (it is valuable in itself and as a result of development).¹⁶ Crocker and Robeyns argue that it is the notion of *agency* that ultimately allowed Sen to overcome the limitations of the rationality straitjacket in providing an explicit space to understand freedom and responsibility beyond a narrowly defined self-interest.¹⁷ The focus on agency as instrumentally and intrinsically valuable for development endeavours is differentiated from that of well-being and provides an evaluative space that it is not exclusively linked to the maximisation of individual self-interest, but calls for an ethical valuation of the processes of change as well. Thus, it is key to that expansion of development concerns that Sen initiated in his earlier work and which was discussed in Ch. 2.

While individual *agency* and individual *well-being* are both linked and necessary

¹³ We will come back to this connection further in the chapter. For more references, see fn. 12 in Chapter 2.

¹⁴ Sen 1985, 206

¹⁵ Sen 1985, chap. 3; Sen 1999a, 11; Sen 2013, 18

¹⁶ Sen 1999a, 191; Crocker and Robeyns 2010, 75–77

¹⁷ Crocker and Robeyns 2010, 76

to living a fuller life for Sen, it is important to distinguish them as their difference allows us to focus on the normative valuation of the processes to achieve wellbeing, and becomes essential to understanding the importance of the notion of empowerment within the CA.¹⁸ Further, Sen distinguishes *well-being achievement* from *well-being freedom* and connects them to the concepts of *functionings* (well-being achievement) and *capabilities* (well-being freedom) that we discussed in Ch. 2.¹⁹ Well-being achievements are the *functionings* that an individual can enjoy (that is, if we recall, the different combinations of beings and doings that a person has decided to achieve), whereas *well-being freedom* implies the capabilities to choose, that is, the existence of a variety of possible functionings that an individual can achieve through the exercise of her own agency. Although Sen would also analyse the possibility of the achievement of the outcome desired by an individual without the exercise of her own agency (what he calls *realized* agency success, as opposed to *instrumental* agency success), for our analysis it is not necessary to split hairs over these details. It suffices to say that Sen differentiated between the achievements of an individual's aims through the exercise of their own agency and those that simply occur without the individual's effective intervention. The ownership aspect of the process of exercising agency is key to understanding it as empowerment, as we will see below. It is only in the first case, *instrumental agency success*, in which we can speak of an effective process of empowerment, and it to this idea that we will be devoting our attention.²⁰

It is in the difference between *achievement* and *freedom* that the concept of *agency* becomes relevant. In this context, the expansion of freedoms gives the individual more opportunities to exercise their agency and, thus, the possibility to effectively achieve further capabilities. Agency is thus instrumental to the achievement of capabilities as freedoms, but remains intrinsically valuable in itself. Hence, in Sen, empowerment can be understood as an expansion of the agency of the individuals.²¹ While Sen's remarks on this matter are scattered, Crocker (2008) has summarised the conditions that agency requires in Sen's framework as follows: (a) the person must

¹⁸ Sen 1985; Sen 1992, chap. 4

¹⁹ For a useful distinction and in-depth engagement with the differences of these concepts see Crocker 2008, chap. 5.

²⁰ See, Sen 1992, chap. 4

²¹ Alkire and Ibrahim 2007, 384; Crocker 2008, 156; Crocker and Robeyns 2010, 80

decide to act for themselves; (b) the action must be based in reasons (these are in no way limited to utility maximisation, but Sen explicitly speaks of the necessity to engage in reasoned agency²²); (c) the person must have a role in the action that is exercising agency (see fn. 20) and (d) the action must have an impact on the world.²³ Jay Drydyk further argues for the necessity to also consider the effects that expanding agency have on wellbeing, and only understand empowerment as an expansion of the individual's well-being freedoms.²⁴ Empowerment can thus be understood, in Sen's *capability approach*, as the expansion of the agency of an individual, given by the expansion of her set of capabilities (well-being freedoms). These, as we have seen before, are explicitly connected to the existence of the fundamental freedoms that Sen identifies as the ends and means of development (or, as he often refers to them, the removal of unfreedoms).

The different freedoms that Sen articulates both as instrumental and constitutive of development give us an insight into the different aspects of the process of empowerment that are implicit in his capability approach as well as their central and unifying role therein. He explicitly speaks of the interaction between the different 'kinds' of freedoms that individuals ought to enjoy and that are essential for expanding individual agency for development. It is worth quoting the following passage from *Development as Freedom* at length where he states,

'Freedoms are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means. In addition to acknowledging, foundationally, the evaluative importance of freedom, we also have to understand the remarkable empirical connection that links freedoms of different kinds with one another. Political freedoms (in the form of free speech and elections) help to promote economic security. Social opportunities (in the form of education and health facilities) facilitate economic participation. Economic facilities (in the form of opportunities for participation in trade and production) can help to generate personal abundance as well as public resources for social facilities. Freedoms of different kinds can strengthen one another.'²⁵

Following this passage, Sen goes on to specify the connection of the different kinds of freedoms with each other in ensuring a greater extent of freedom for individual agency. The expansion of these interconnected freedoms is, in this way, responsible for and a

²² Sen 1999a, xii

²³ Crocker 2008, 157

²⁴ Drydyk 2013

²⁵ Sen 1999a, 10–11.

result of expanded agency. Empowerment, as the expansion of individual agency, appears as the connecting link, the central reinforcing principle, in the aforementioned virtuous circle of development ‘as freedom’. What this argument gives us, however, is a clear indication of the framework of reference in which the expansion of individual agency occurs (and should lead to as the ultimate goal of development) and of the different dimensions of empowerment that Sen’s takes into consideration and which have been adopted by HD practices and strategies. It is in these ‘interconnected freedoms’ where Sen sets up the elements that eventually result in the Paradox of Empowerment.

The Paradox of Empowerment:

The political and economic dimensions of empowering practices

For an approach that so carefully has sought to expand on the limitations of a narrow concept of development, Sen’s efforts to justify the centrality of individual freedom as the means and ends of development, in the end, leave us with a paradoxical understanding of empowerment. In following this call to widen the ethical aspects and role for individuals in development, Sen has sought to construct an emancipatory understanding, something he himself made explicit in his early writings, and which others pointed out in that period.²⁶ *Development as freedom* is a call for individual liberation and emancipation from the material (and symbolic and cultural) deprivations that underdevelopment brings about. Understanding empowerment as the vehicle and goal of development processes emerges as a result of a quest for a profoundly humane and transformatory notion of development, one in which the individuals, empowered, are able to transform the material conditions associated with underdevelopment. The empowerment of the individual is the vehicle through which development is achieved. Development, is understood as the process whereby the agency of the individuals is freed and expanded, that is, empowered. Understanding development as

²⁶ As we briefly mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, in his earlier works, Sen often noted the influence of Marx’s work on his own analysis and conception of human freedom. In a famous article in 1983, where he directly discussed development thinking (rather than economic theory) he would summarize development as a process that ultimately has to do ‘in Marx’s words, with ‘replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances’. (Sen 1983, 756) .See also Qizilbash 1996; Sen 1985; Sen 1989.

empowerment, Sen appears to have devised the virtuous circle that allows us to achieve, *Development as Freedom*.

Yet, in spite of these ambitions, in the elaboration of this approach, where Sen discusses the framework in which empowerment occurs, the understanding of development ‘as freedom’ is distinctly constrained and channelled in a manner that compromises the agent-led emancipation he touts. This is the paradoxical nature of empowerment. It is born from a desire to expand and transcend the limits of narrow, economic notions of development through making space for a greater involvement and determination of what that means by the individual. Yet, the construction of the capability approach has constrained its scope and content, effectively precluding this achievement. This constriction is born out of the political and economic dimensions of processes of empowerment as understood within the CA that are fundamentally linked to liberal understandings of democracies and market economies. The paradox of empowerment in Sen’s work, stems from its work remaining firmly framed within a Western ideal of development that effectively constrains the possibilities of empowerment. Sen has often been criticised for leaving the capability approach ‘underspecified’ (most notably by Martha Nussbaum) and thus creating little space for scrutiny on the contents and limitations of individual freedom.²⁷ Yet, despite Nussbaum’s calls to offer more concrete recommendations for the understanding of development (a task she took upon herself in the construction of a list of central human capabilities), it is the position of this thesis that Sen’s capability approach in fact remains already too overdetermined, framed within a liberal, Western understanding of development, in a manner that restricts the possibilities of effectively understanding *development as freedom*. These restrictions become clearer if we analyse the political and economic dimensions of processes of empowerment, as framed within Sen’s work.

In political terms, the process of empowerment is implicitly understood within the capability approach as a result of effective democratic participation, an element which for Sen is constitutive of development. Democracy, he argues, is a universal value, and the virtues of political freedoms are instrumental and constitutive of development.²⁸ In one of his noted earlier works, Sen argued that the existence of a functioning liberal

²⁷ Nussbaum 2000; Nussbaum 2003; Nussbaum 2011b

²⁸ Sen 1999b

democracy with regular elections and a free press was the central element that effectively avoided famines.²⁹ Further, Sen's argument for the 'pre-eminence of basic political and liberal rights'³⁰ is that they have constitutive, instrumental and constructive roles to play in development and wellbeing.³¹

These liberal, political rights are crucial for the exercise and expansion of political agency, that is, the political empowerment of the individuals, for three main reasons. First, they have a *constitutive* role that relates to their importance in enriching human lives.³² Political freedoms, as we discussed in Ch.2, are inherently (not just instrumentally) valuable for human lives, and thus are *constitutive* of development. That is, they have intrinsic value and are part of the *ends* of development themselves. They have, in Sen's words '*direct* importance in human living associated with basic capabilities'.³³ Second, the *instrumental* role of political freedoms refers to the possibilities of 'enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention'.³⁴ The individual's ability to intervene in the public domain requires individual engagement and political empowerment, or in other words, the capability of the individuals to actively participate in the construction of social choice. These freedoms are, in this way, fundamental in shaping the actions of governments, including those associated with the expansion of well-being. Further, the political empowerment of individuals and their engagement as active citizens pushes for government accountability and the strengthening of political institutions.³⁵ Third, to participate in the process of democratic deliberation, the political empowerment of the individual is instrumental for development, but it also 'gives citizens an opportunity to

²⁹ Sen 1981. The conclusion of the study, where Sen stated that 'Famines do not occur under democracies' has been a central element and motivating insight in Sen's further discussions of the value of democratic institutions for development.

³⁰ Sen 1999a, 148

³¹ Sen 1998a; Sen 1999b; Sen 1999a, chap. 6; Sen 2010

³² Sen 1999a, 36

³³ Sen 1999a, 148. Emphasis in the original.

³⁴ Sen 1999b, 9

³⁵ Sen's capability approach has been associated to the rise of the 'New Accountability Agenda', whereby political empowerment is an essential link in the Good Governance circle. See Goetz and Jenkins 2002; Goetz and Jenkins 2005 Sen himself also has connected the expansion of individual agency with an expanded accountability, which emanates from the ideas of commitment from which he draws for his CA. See Sen 2010, 19.

learn from one another, and helps society to form its values and priorities'.³⁶ This construction of social choice and values through the exercise of the political agency of individuals denotes the *constructive* role of democratic political freedoms for development. Highlighting the centrality of these three roles of political freedoms for development, Sen advances his argument for the indivisible connection between democracy and development that underlies his CA. Beyond its instrumental value, Sen argues for the centrality of democratic values as a constitutive, instrumental and constructive element of development.³⁷

The freedom of the individual to participate in political life is of paramount importance, both as an instrument to further the expansion of interconnected freedoms (for example, individuals that are able to participate can demand economic, cultural or social changes) and as an end in itself, since political and civil freedoms are constitutive of development. Politically empowered individuals are able to participate in public discussions and deliberations, and through these they further increase their agency-freedom. In furthering their political participation, they become involved in shaping their individual lives in the social context, expanding their capabilities to live the 'lives they have reason to value'. This implicit understanding of political empowerment is thus embedded in strategies that focus on the increase of the political participation of individuals that have led Sen to claim for the universality of democracy. The political dimension of individual empowerment is, in this, tied (and restricted) to a liberal view of democracy that underscores the importance of free media, multiparty and legitimate opposition and regular elections as the key elements which provide for all these dimensions of freedom.³⁸ This highlights the procedural basis here that assumes that the presence of participative mechanisms for inclusion within decision-making structures is sufficient for empowerment. The participation of individuals in the political lives of their communities is, thus, associated with the existence of a procedural conception of democracy that values the existence of free elections together 'with the protection of liberties and freedoms, respect for legal entitlements, and the guaranteeing of free discussion and uncensored distribution of news and fair comment'.³⁹ The problem here

³⁶ Sen 1999b, 10

³⁷ Sen 2010, 345–347

³⁸ Sen 1999a, 53; Sen 2010, chap. 15

³⁹ Sen 1999b, 9–10

is Sen's assumption that this particular understanding of democracy is both necessary to and sufficient to achieve empowerment. Just as in *The Idea of Justice*, where Sen delves into a deliberative conception of democracy (seen as the instrument to achieve public reason),⁴⁰ his emphasis on the procedural aspects of democracy illustrates its liberal bias, which is further expanded in his defence of the market mechanism. It is not surprising, then, to see the increase in 'participatory democracy' practices of development - a fundamental step in the promotion of good governance - , that we have referred to as associated with the HD paradigm, and that we will further engage in the following section.

We can find in the capability approach an implicit understanding of ideas of economic empowerment that are similarly linked to the expansion of individual agency. In the case of economic empowerment, however, the expansion of people's capabilities is tied not to the presence of liberal democratic institutions and freedoms but to the existence of regulated markets. While Sen makes explicit attempts to distinguish himself from more extreme defences of the market and criticises the narrow understanding of freedom that has characterised them, he understands individual freedoms as inherently linked to functioning (albeit regulated) markets.⁴¹ Sen views the freedom to participate in markets as effectively empowering individuals as 'part and parcel of the basic liberties that people have reason to value'.⁴² Economic liberties, thus, are deemed central to development. These include the consideration of poverty as 'capability deprivation' which goes beyond income thresholds to ensure that people are endowed with the adequate capabilities to live valuable lives, but also, the freedom to participate in the market.⁴³ The process of expanding individual agency, for Sen, must address the possibility of effectively participating in markets. Since markets are, in his view, a fundamental way in which human beings relate to each other to be '*generically against* markets would be almost as odd as being generically against conversations between

⁴⁰ Sen 2010, chap. 15

⁴¹ While Sen addresses the issue of the market on several occasions, perhaps his clearest exposition can be founded in Sen 1993. Here, Sen criticizes Hayek and Friedman's view of the link between freedom and markets and argues for the necessity of evaluating the functioning of markets in relation to their possibilities to expand individual freedoms, particularly for the expansion of the real opportunities that people have to engage them. Other systematic discussions on the matter can be found on Sen 1999a, chap. 5; Sen 2002a, chap. 17.

⁴² Sen 1999a, 6

⁴³ Sen 1999a, chap. 4

people’.⁴⁴ While Sen is clearly aware of the negative possible outcomes of markets (like in the case of ‘foul’ conversations), he warns us that, in fact, being constrained *from* the participation in the market is often one of the biggest obstacles to overcome deprivation in developing countries and is the more primary object of concern from the standpoint of empowerment.⁴⁵ In particular, he discusses this claim in relation to the case of women (and other people under conditions of forced labour) who are marginalised from formal economic markets, both in terms of participating in open labour markets as well as in product markets. In these instances the possibility of participating in markets can have positive effects in terms of the political, cultural or social empowerment of the individuals.⁴⁶ The need to exercise their individual agency in the market, which remains unquestioned and assumed here, requires that individuals are equipped with the capabilities necessary to participate effectively, which are, in turn, seen as instrumental and constitutive of development. ‘These capabilities are also associated with improving productivity and employability of the persons and the possibility of people to interact with each other and with the world’.⁴⁷ They are necessary to overcoming the limitations of deprivations associated with underdevelopment (e.g. to overcome poverty). However, importantly, for Sen they are also intrinsically valuable: the freedom to participate in markets is intrinsically valuable in and of itself.⁴⁸

While Sen is careful not to endorse a free market mechanism (acknowledging once more the limitations of neoclassical economics) and argues for the ‘need for critical scrutiny’ of markets, he assumes the freedom to actively engage in markets as a fundamental element in the expansion of individual agency and, thus, *as constitutive of development in itself*.⁴⁹ Acquiring the adequate capabilities to participate in the market is as fundamental for development as the removal of other sources of unfreedoms. The role of markets, while in need of control and oversight from states (and of the social choices achieved through public discussion), expands beyond the economic sustenance

⁴⁴ Sen 1999a, 6. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁵ Sen 1999a, 7

⁴⁶ See Sen’s analysis of gender empowerment in terms of economic participation in Sen 1999a, chap. 8; Sen 1998b; Sen 1992, chap. 8. An earlier examination of the issues related to the gender inequality gap can be found in Sen 1984a, chap. 15 & 16

⁴⁷ Sen 2001, 185

⁴⁸ Sen 1999a, 112

⁴⁹ Sen 1999a, 123–126

of individuals to their individual agency through the promotion of their entrepreneurship and interaction with other people. Understanding development as freedom requires that we examine ‘the persistence of deprivations among segments of the community that happen to remain excluded from the benefits of the market-oriented society’.⁵⁰ Sen casts a positive light on the existence of functioning markets understanding them as realms of freedom, or as Benjamin Selwyn calls them, as ‘Spheres of Freedom’.⁵¹ Here, individual lives can flourish and the virtuous circle of freedom as means and ends results in the expanded agency of the individual. That is, in their empowerment. As in the case of women, every individual that was formerly deprived from the possibility of effectively engaging the market is expected to see their individual agency expanded by the process of economic empowerment that an effective participation in the market would entail. It is this assumed vision of markets as a realm of freedom that effectively constricts the understanding of empowerment in its economic dimension. For Sen, regulated markets should be seen as a fundamental element of development, and thus, strategies of empowerment should be directed at improving markets (regulating the fairness of the distributions and exchanges) and the effective engagement of individuals therein. It is not surprising, then, to see that many strategies that contemporary practices of HD implement foster the economic capabilities of individuals, and pursue the promotion of individual’s economic empowerment.⁵²

The paradoxical nature of this conception of empowerment appears when one examines the contours of the political and economic dimensions that Sen ascribes to processes of development. For Sen, political empowerment is sufficient if it entails the free institutions of Western liberal democracies, participative decision-making, and liberal sets of rights. Further, economic empowerment similarly requires inclusion in pre-existing markets and the absence of barriers that prevent an effective participation therein. Both of these claims, importantly, assume that empowerment is found in the sets of institutions that happen to already structure contemporary liberal democratic

⁵⁰ Sen 1999a, 7

⁵¹ Selwyn 2014, 180

⁵² For example, one of the first HD reports specifically focused on ‘Financing Human Development’ and argued for the need to increasing financial services to the poor, as ‘Access to credit is another means of access to power.’ (United Nations Development Programme 1991, 9) Further, these can be associated with the expansion of other initiatives that foster the capacities of individuals to get more effectively involved in market economies, such as the expansion of micro-finance initiatives. See, Bateman 2010.

societies and that these are sufficient means to empower all the peoples of the developing world to live the types of lives they value and seek in pursuing development. Despite the critiques of under-specification that his approach has been subjected to, the paradox of empowerment lies, precisely, in its over-specification, in the over-determination of social and political life: while Sen employs an argument for empowerment based on conceiving development as an expansion of agency for people to live the lives that they value, he restricts that expansion to what fits within a pre-determined set of political and economic institutions, relations, and principles; essentially, the structures of contemporary liberal democratic life. Beyond this failure to take diversity seriously, this restricted notion of empowerment also leaves us with limited theoretical resources to address collective and social concerns, to include considerations of the Earth and of Nature beyond their instrumental role, and to address and transform social, political and economic outside of the ones we have just discussed. All of these dimensions, associated to Sen's ideas of empowerment will be problematized in this thesis. The Paradox of Empowerment stems from the conceptual baggage attached to these ideas that confines its virtuous circle within the existing liberal democratic institutions and market economies of the world. And it is this understanding of empowerment, and more generally, the perspective of the capability approach that has shaped HD since its implementation.

Freedom as Empowerment:

The theoretical core of Human Development Policies

We have seen up to now how Sen's work progressively encompasses an expansion of the notion of development exceeding narrow economic considerations and how this has been built around a progressive focus on individual agency. In this analysis, we have rendered explicit the often overlooked concept of empowerment embedded within Sen's framework. While this notion has not taken such a prominent space in the CA, we have argued that it is this implicit idea of empowerment that has been assumed by the HD approach. In this section, we will now clarify the connection between these two frameworks.

The appearance of the idea of HD in the early 1990s, as we have briefly discussed in Ch. 1, represented a significant advance from earlier understandings of

development, one that accompanied the call for an 'Adjustment with Human Face'.⁵³ In addressing both the theoretical challenges of the 'development impasse' that development theory had reached, and, the empirical challenges that a decade of Structural Adjustment Programs had left in the developing world, the UNDP pioneered a shift that has since become mainstream - the shift towards HD.⁵⁴ The idea of HD, launched together with the first Human Development Report (HDR), was based upon a very simple principle - one that follows Sen's claims - spelled out on the opening section of the first HDR. Here, the shift towards a people-centred understanding of development was made explicit, in stating,

'People are the real wealth of a nation. The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth.'⁵⁵

The link with Amartya Sen's calls to construct a people-centred approach to development is here clear and direct, and it becomes more so in the further development of these ideas since this first HDR was published. This connection, however, should not come as a surprise, as Sen was one of the leading voices behind the project of constructing the first Human Development Report, and has ever since contributed almost yearly.⁵⁶ Mahbub Ul Haq, director of the UNDP Human

⁵³ In 1987, UNICEF published *Adjustment with a Human Face* that analysed the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programs in health and education in developing countries. (Cornia, Jolly, and Stewart 1987). Since then, the phrase has become a call to move beyond the pure economicism of development theories.

⁵⁴ As we discussed in Ch.1, at the end of the 1980s the void of political alternatives that many read in a crumbling Soviet Union hit hard in the field of development theory, adding to the ever more clear deterioration and failure of the development programs in place. For David Booth, these elements, accompanied by epistemological questionings of the assumptions of development theory, in particular the Marxist ones, entailed an effective 'development impasse' in the discussion of development theory and a pessimistic view of the possibilities of development. In this context, at least from the practitioners' side, the ideas of Human Development were welcomed with much hype as a quasi-revolutionary project in which the mainstream development discourse had finally opened up a space long overdue for the 'voiceless and the powerless' in the policy making and implementation process. See Booth 1985.

⁵⁵ United Nations Development Programme 1990a, 9

⁵⁶ Amartya Sen, on top of participating in the original team that developed the first HDR in 1990, has often contributed in the development of background papers in general, or to the yearly background papers of the annual reports. See, for example United Nations Development Programme 1991; Anand and Sen 1994; Anand and Sen 1995; Anand and Sen 1998, vi; United Nations Development Programme 1999; United Nations Development Programme 2004, 13–27. Further, the centrality of his role in the construction of the HD project has been widely recognised, and Sen is credited with giving the theoretical framing to the policy project coordinated by Mahbub Ul Haq. See, for example: United

Development project and responsible for the creation of this UNDP initiative, was one of Sen's closest friends during their studies at Cambridge University and asked Sen to join him in a 'vitaly important crusade' to develop the new approach that the UNDP was going to undertake.⁵⁷ The need to engage in more significant practices of development, that envisioned a stronger role for the individuals, was at that stage clear both in the academic and policy circles, as we observed in Ch. 1. The CA, with its focus in the expansion of freedoms and capabilities and a focus on people's agency, became an essential component of the HD initiative in conceptualising this move.

Ul Haq's 'crusade' was, in fact, going to shape the mainstream understanding of development for the following decades, as the HD reports became one of the central measurements of development for mainstream policy institutions and academic scholars to analyse the persistence of problems and advances on issues of development. In this initial report, development was understood as a process of expanding people's capabilities and choices, and thus, intertwined with the idea of the expansion of freedoms. As it was stated in the first HDR in 1990,

'Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. (...) Human development has two sides: the formation of human capabilities such as improved health, knowledge and skills - and the use people make of their acquired capabilities - for leisure, productive purposes or being active in cultural, social and political affairs. (...) Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people.'⁵⁸

Sen's work is clearly traceable in this first guiding definition of the report and, as well, in the further understandings of the concept in the following annual reports.⁵⁹ Beyond the

Nations Development Programme 1990b; Fukuda-Parr 2003a; Fukuda-Parr 2003b; McNeill 2007; Ki-moon 2010

⁵⁷ Sen 2000. Both Sen and Haq recognise the central role of each other in the process of constructing the Human Development approach within the UNDP in different stances. At the same time, they both point out how this process, which has become mainstream and is now seen as barely controversial, was at the time, a move that was considered audacious, and to which many governments and institutions objected. See K. Haq and Ponzio 2008, 91–110; Sen 2000, 17; M. U. Haq 1995, 61

⁵⁸United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 1990*, 10.

⁵⁹ For the sake of brevity, we will not engage in a detailed discussion of the modifications that the concept of Human Development has undergone in the 25 HD reports that have been released yearly since the launch of the project. It is worth noting, however, that Sabina Alkire has provided a clear

explicit incorporation of further sources of information that exceed the economic focus, the HD initiative can be seen as following the two main reasons argued by Sen for the centrality of freedom to development – the reasons of *evaluation* and *effectiveness*.

In Ch. 2 we made reference to the two reasons that Sen stated for the ‘crucial importance of individual freedom in the concept of development, related respectively to *evaluation* and *effectiveness*’.⁶⁰ If we recall, for Sen, the expansion of people's freedoms should be seen as the central element of development, both because it enables the assessment of development beyond a purely economic assessment (*evaluation* reason) but also because it frees people's *agency* to act and pursue development (*effectiveness* reason). Both elements have been taken up by the notion of human development, but it is perhaps the *evaluative* reason that has become more easily identifiable in the work of the UNDP. The Human Development Index (HDI), initiated in the first HD report in 1990 and published annually ever since, ranks countries in a table that measures the level of Human Development through the construction of a composite index measurement including statistics of education, health, poverty and growth. The HDI has become the main quantitative source for evaluating development and has been extremely successful in widening policy-makers’ restricted focus on development as economic growth to include other dimensions - those that are expected to reflect more accurately the enhancement of people’s *capabilities*. However, as Sakiko Fukuda-Parr observed, there is a risk of oversimplification in the mainstream readings of what the HD paradigm entails when it is merely seen as the HDI composite index.⁶¹

overview of the evolution of the understanding of Human Development, in her background paper for the HD Report in 2010. Here, she discusses the different definitions used throughout the first 20 years of reports and links them to Sen’s work. In analysing the different dimensions and modifications of the idea she concludes with constructing an overarching definition, taking into consideration the minor variations that have occurred in the successive reports as follows; ‘Human development aims to expand people's freedoms - the worthwhile capabilities people value - and to empower people to engage actively in development processes, on a shared planet. And it seeks to do so in ways that appropriately advance equity, efficiency, sustainability and other key principles. People are both the beneficiaries and the agents of long term, equitable human development, both as individuals and as groups. Hence Human Development is development *by* the people *of* the people and *for* the people.’ Alkire 2010, 40. In her analysis, Alkire explicitly identifies the links of the Senian perspective of development in the evolution of the concept from the first to successive reports, highlighting that the main elements that the HD understanding highlights are the focus on capabilities as freedom as the objective of development and agency and empowerment as the means to achieve it. Further analysis of the incorporation of Sen's work on the *capability approach* and its relation to the HD paradigm can be found in Alkire 2002, chap. 1–2; Fukuda-Parr 2003b; Deneulin and Shahani 2009.

⁶⁰ Sen 1999a, 18

⁶¹ Fukuda-Parr 2003a

While the expansion of the HDI has no doubt been a clear sign of the consolidation of the HD paradigm as the mainstream understanding of development, it is certainly not its only aspect.

While the assessment of development in terms of the HD initiative has expanded at a remarkable rate, perhaps the *effectiveness* aspect of the HD focus has become even more successful and widespread. While it is not the exclusive approach to people-centred notions of development, as we have argued in Ch. 1, the HD can be seen as the most successful one. And it is its understanding of the centrality of human agency and of the expansion of *capabilities* - and thus, as we have seen of the empowerment of individuals - that has become one of the main characteristics of the HD perspective, and it has spread well beyond the UNDP programmes of development. In his *Reflections on Human Development*, published in 1995, Mahbub Ul Haq described some of the main components of the HD paradigm, and made explicit its embedded notion of empowerment. The connection between HD and processes of empowerment was stressed as one of the four components of development, along with equity, sustainability and productivity.⁶² Elaborating on this idea, Haq argued,

‘A comprehensive concept, empowerment means that people are in a position to exercise choices of their own free will. It implies a political democracy in which people can influence decisions about their lives. It requires economic liberalism so that people are free from excessive economic controls and regulations. It means decentralization of power so that real governance is brought to the doorstep of every person. It means that all members of civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations, participate fully in making and implementing decisions.’⁶³

The connection of processes of empowerment with the political and economic dimensions that we discussed in the previous section is explicitly addressed by Haq here, and it should not be surprising to see the effects of these ideas in the implementation of practices framed within the HD paradigm. As seen by the HD paradigm, and in line with Sen's project, the process of development requires the empowerment of individuals and the acquisition of capabilities coupled with the individual responsibility of acting and participating in society. For example, the HD Report 2004 stated that 'freedom, in addition to being the objective, is the best way to achieve development: a citizen, male

⁶² M. U. Haq 1995, 16

⁶³ M. U. Haq 1995, 20

or female, must not only be the beneficiary of the options or the ultimate recipient, but he/she must also be a full participant.⁶⁴ The focus on the expansion of capabilities as the means for empowerment and freedom of choice, coupled with the extension of the responsibility of the individuals to act and achieve their own development has become intrinsically associated with the paradigm of HD and can be traced to Sen's emphasis on the interweaving relationship between freedom and responsibility, which is both connected to his notion of *commitment* as well as with the idea of individual accountability.⁶⁵

In following this implicit notion of empowerment from the capability approach, as we have examined earlier, the HD Reports have highlighted the importance of fostering the empowerment of individuals, both in the political and the economic sphere as a central element for development. In the political sphere, the reports have associated participatory democracy and good governance with the promotion of development and individual empowerment. In its economic dimension, empowerment is associated with initiatives that improve people's access to the market and foster individual entrepreneurship.⁶⁶ Tracing this relationship, the 2014 HDR stated,

‘Resilience underpins any approach to securing and sustaining human development. At its core, resilience is about ensuring that state, community and global institutions work to empower and protect people. Human development involves removing the barriers that hold people back in their freedom to act’.⁶⁷

In a nutshell, in the HD approach the expansion of freedoms and individual capabilities are inherently linked to the political and economic empowerment of people to pursue

⁶⁴ United Nations Development Programme 2004, 30

⁶⁵ We have discussed this issue before (Ch.2), but see, for example Sen's discussions of these ideas on Sen 1998a; Sen 1999a, chap. 12; Sen 2010.

⁶⁶ The different editions of the HDR have expanded on different aspects of the political and economic dimensions of empowerment and their relationship with development. For example, the 1993 HDR, entitled 'People's Participation' discussed specifically the connection between the different forms of individual participation (in the political, social and economic arenas) and their potentiality to advance people's empowerment. (United Nations Development Programme 1993, chap. 3). The 2002 HD Report focused on 'Deepening democracy in a fragmented world' and argued that 'countries can promote human development for all only when they have governance systems that are fully accountable to all people—and when all people can participate in the debates and decisions that shape their lives.' (United Nations Development Programme 2002, 3). Other examples can be found on the 2000 HDR discussing the connections of Human Rights and HD or the 20th Anniversary Edition of the HDR in 2010 that specifically discussed empowerment as a core element of HD. United Nations Development Programme 2000; United Nations Development Programme 2010a.

⁶⁷ United Nations Development Programme 2014, 5

development and mainstream practices of development seek to advance this relationship. The scope of the HD approach, both in pursuing the *effectiveness* and *evaluative* reasons that Sen stated as intrinsic to a freedom-oriented notion of development, has expanded globally. As we have discussed previously, it is this theoretical framework that has become the most significant exponent of people-centred approaches to development and underpins mainstream development practices all over the world. The extent to which the idea of individual empowerment has spread includes not only HD reports, but other policy work and projects, by the UNDP and other international institutions for development and national governments.⁶⁸

At the centre of development projects associated with issues such as the promotion of good governance, of participatory democracy and of microfinance and the promotion of fairer and wider access of poor people to markets, lies the idea of individual empowerment most systematically articulated by the HD paradigm. While it would be incorrect to assume that the HD initiative from the UNDP or Sen's CA are the only theoretical and empirical roots for these trends, it is safe to state that both are intrinsically linked and have been instrumental in the expansion of people-centred approaches to development. And while it would be even more problematic to unequivocally link Sen's contribution to every mainstream practice of development implemented under the broad HD approach, it is also clear that his calls for ethical considerations of development that put individuals at the centre of the understanding of development have resonated widely within the UNDP and in general, in development policy all over the world. Ideas of individual empowerment have mushroomed in the last decades, both connected to the political and economic dimensions of the promotion of individual agency.

⁶⁸ While it is not the intention of this thesis to build an exhaustive consideration of all the reports and policy initiatives that have followed these trends- which would be an endless task - some elements can be given as significant examples. The World Bank explicitly incorporated the ideas of *individual empowerment* and capability-building in its struggle against poverty after the publication of its *World Development Report 2000/2001*, for which the *Voices of the Poor* study was conducted. Since these two publications, the World Bank has kept a focus on the empowerment and expansion of individual capabilities as part of its publications focusing on development strategy. Many institutions have followed this emphasis, as well, in an expansion of the influences of the HD paradigm well beyond the original UNDP source. See, for example: World Bank 2000; Narayan et al. 2000; World Bank 2002; Narayan 2002; World Bank 2004; Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development 2012; Narayan 1999; World Bank 2012; Alsop, Bertelsen, and Holland 2005; Narayan 2005; Chase and Anjum 2008; Bonfiglioli 2003.

Conclusion and next steps

In this chapter, we have expanded on Sen's pivotal contributions to development thinking and practice, and clarified how his efforts to expand the ethical considerations within them are tied to an understanding of empowerment. It is this idea of empowerment that has expanded the role of the individual in development theory and practice and marked the shift to people-centred approaches and the expansion of the HD. We have built this analysis on a recognition of the importance of Sen's framework to understanding the shift towards people-centred notions of development, and to expanding the notion of development to include a consideration for the flourishing of human lives. The chapter has illustrated how the project of 'Development as freedom' is construed on an emancipatory vision of development, one that sees the need to overcome the 'unfreedoms' and deprivations that under-development brings about and recognises the central role of human agency in achieving it.

The project of development, in Sen, and later in its practical implementation in the HD approach, stems from a compelling desire to overcome the limitations to human freedom. It is a project that ultimately seeks to liberate human agency, to free it to pursue the kind of lives that people 'value and have reason to value', as Sen reminds us often. Along these lines, it is necessary to recognise the benefits that such an approach has brought to development theory and practice, and to the goal of the transformation of the millions of 'poor and dispossessed' that still inhabit this world.⁶⁹ Sen's and the HD's move to consider individuals as the means and ends of development, and to construct measurements that exceed the narrow economic focus of previous theories of development, should be praised. Yet, it is also necessary to embark on a quest to separate the wheat from the chaff in development theory if we are to arrive at a deeper understanding of why development practice so often fails to deliver, and to do so by engaging in a much needed discussion of its theoretical grounds. The recognition of the paradoxical nature of Sen's notion of empowerment (and its articulation on what we have termed the 'Paradox of Empowerment'), that this chapter has advanced is only the first step in such a project.

This chapter has argued that the notion of empowerment is trapped in a paradox in Sen's CA and it is this notion that has shaped the HD approach and whose influence

⁶⁹ See Ch. 2, fn. 8

has made it the most successful people-centred approach to development. While the focus on individual empowerment stems from a desire to expand the ethical considerations and freedoms afforded to individuals in development thinking, it results in a constricted notion that effectively undercuts the expansion of democratic engagement and decision-making capacity to form pre-determined democratic outcomes, while limiting economic engagement in a similar way. There is little agency here to alter the scope and nature of economic and political life, other than following the Western, liberal understanding of development that dominates mainstream development theory and practice, albeit in its improved version of deliberative democracies and regulated markets. Even when we have clarified that Sen's project cannot be solely held responsible for development thinking's shift towards people-centred approaches, nor can it be squarely equated to the implementation of development practice all over the world, Sen's influence in shaping both the theory and practice of development cannot be underestimated. And it is precisely in taking this influence into consideration that recognising the limits that such an approach has for thinking an effectively transformatory conception of development becomes a central endeavour, one that this thesis seeks to advance. If we would like to reassert the validity of development as a socially emancipatory project, one that understands its goal and ends as the expansion of freedom, Sen's framework – and its policy implementation by development agencies – need to be questioned. In this project, the theoretical contributions from Latin America will prove essential, addressing specific dimensions of the paradox of empowerment – its transformative potential in regards to the socio-economic and political macro-structure, the vision of the community and of collective aspects of development and the considerations of the Earth in discussions of sustainability – where Sen's framework fails to provide us agency in relation to.

In the following chapters we will further examine the limitations of Sen's approach to development, particularly those linked to its embedded understanding of empowerment. We will do so from engaging with theoretical resources emerging from Latin America that will allow us to reflect on different aspects of Sen's perspective. Unpacking the conceptual baggage associated to the paradox of empowerment, will allow us to explore different dimensions where these ideas can be critically advanced or reconstructed. Accordingly, we will revisit the contributions to development thinking by Liberation Theology, Paulo Freire and Critical pedagogy and more contemporary ones, based on Indigenous philosophies from the region. All of these will allow us to explore

the collective dimensions of the empowerment process, the possibilities offered for structural transformation and the role of natural resources and considerations of sustainability within Sen's development framework. Engaging these critical resources from Latin America will allow us to consider uncharted territories in development thinking, and to reframe the considerations of mainstream notions of development, offering a critical reconstruction of ideas of empowerment.

CHAPTER 4
DEVELOPMENT AS LIBERATION:
THE COLLECTIVE DIMENSION OF EMPOWERMENT

❧

Introduction

We opened this thesis recalling the tragic history of Monseñor Oscar Romero and the connections that could be drawn between his work and those of individual empowerment - particularly of the poor and dispossessed - as a means to development. We traced lines connecting one of his famous pastoral letters with the remarkable World Bank initiative *‘Voices of the Poor’* which was an essential step in the Bank’s efforts to promote empowerment for economic growth and poverty reduction.¹ In our brief discussion, the inclusion of empowerment promotion as part of the Bank’s strategic framework to advance the Millennium Development Goals was seen as another example of the shift towards people-centred development both in development practice and academic discussions.² In the chapters that followed this introduction we clarified this shift towards people-centred development, arguing for its significant role in overcoming some of the limitations of previous, more economic and state centred notions of development.

In Ch.1, we elaborated on the space that this turn opened for ethical considerations in development and for the expansion of the role of individual agency, and argued that the Human Development initiative - pioneered by the UNDP in 1990 and built on Amartya Sen’s theoretical framework - provided the most paradigmatic and comprehensive example of such a turn. An engagement with Amartya Sen’s approach, then, was argued to be central to exploring the limitations of these people-centred approaches to development, particularly in terms of their embedded notion of empowerment. Ch.2 and Ch.3 then offered an in-depth engagement with Amartya Sen’s work, connecting his early efforts to expand ethical considerations, within economic

¹ Narayan 2002. See also the Introduction to this thesis.

² World Bank 2001a

thinking first and later into actual development discussions, to the construction of the Capability Approach. In this process, we identified what was termed ‘the Paradox of Empowerment’ within his work, which argued for an expansion of the agency of individuals in processes of empowerment while normatively restricting the scope of such agency. The notion of empowerment that was identified within Sen and was built into the HD approach to development, limited its possibilities to achieve its intended transformative potential and we identified several dimensions where these limits became more evident. In this and the following chapters, we will explore these dimensions using several Latin American theoretical resources. In this chapter, in particular, we will recover the connections between and examine the critical potential of the Liberation Theology (LT) for more contemporary notions of empowerment, with which we opened this thesis.

Monseñor Romero’s tragic story illustrated that conceiving of the process of development as an empowering one, involving the poor and oppressed as agents for material transformation, was once perceived as a subversive and dangerous strategy. LT’s efforts to recognize the role of individuals as the means to achieve development and this, in turn, understood as a process of overcoming the barriers to people’s freedom, were received with suspicion, both inside and outside of the church.³ Far from the praise and generalised support that initiatives promoting the empowerment of the poor as part of the quest for development have received in mainstream academic and policy circles, many of those who were engaged in the promotion (or theorisation) of LT met with fierce opposition. In the Latin America of the late 60s and 70s, many of the LT supporters were prosecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed for their efforts to pursue a vision of development as the liberation of humanity at the material and spiritual level. Yet, despite this strong opposition LT flourished in the decades that followed the

³ Inside the Church, the Vatican, particularly under the Papacy of John Paul II responded with caution to the reformist calls of the CELAM. Some Liberation Theologians were issued with different levels of warnings, like the case of the Brazilian priest Leonardo Boff whose writings merited the issue of an official notification and censure by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1985. In a more moderate but generalised reaction, the same Congregation had published with the Pope’s approval the Instruction *Libertatis Nuntius* the previous year, cautioning of the ‘risks of deviation, damaging to the faith and to Christian living, that are brought about by certain forms of liberation theology which use, in an insufficiently critical manner, concepts borrowed from various currents of Marxist thought.’ (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1984, 1). Not only inside the Church were supporters of the LT received with strong opposition. Numerous priests and supporters of the LT were victims of the fierce counter-insurgency plans across the continent. See McSherry 2005; Morello 2015.

creation of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) in 1955, diverting the focus of the Catholic Church from exclusive concern with spiritual liberation to more earthly matters, including the pursuit of a liberation from the conditions of material oppression that their congregation endured.⁴ As Gustavo Gutierrez, one of the central authors of LT argues, ‘Liberation theology had its origin in the contrast between the urgent task of proclaiming the life of the risen Jesus and the conditions of death in which the poor of Latin America were living’.⁵ The concerns for the material conditions of oppression that the majority of the population were enduring triggered the Latin American Church to engage with a theology that expressed not only considerations for the spiritual wellbeing of its members, but to promote solidarity with the struggles against poverty and deprivation. It is in this theological reflection (and in the promotion of its liberating praxis) that the proponents of LT, as we will discuss in the following sections, delved in people-centred discussions of development.

While in general they have not participated in mainstream discussions of development, the focus of LT on the material aspect of the process of liberation resulted in an explicit discussion of the means and ends of development that was inspired in part by the contributions of the dependency school.⁶ However, the focus of the LT discussions went beyond the narrow understanding of the dependency theories and incorporated a specific role for human agency in the achievement of development, where ‘man is seen not as a passive element, but as agent of history’.⁷ As we briefly discussed in Ch.1, these reflections and theoretical discussions should be understood as another early precedent to the turn to people-centred notions of development, one that presents clear parallels to Amartya Sen’s work. Yet, while understanding development ‘as Freedom’ or ‘as Liberation’ intuitively anticipates some of their clear points of connection, these notions are embedded in radically different theoretical frameworks.

⁴ While LT expanded beyond the Roman Catholic Church, and some of the works were focused specifically in the promotion of an ecumenical notion of Liberation, in this chapter we will focus on the writings and processes emerging from within the Roman Catholic Church. Particularly, we will focus primarily on the work of Gustavo Gutierrez and to a lesser extent on the work of Leonardo Boff. In general, we will use the word ‘Church’ to refer to the Roman Catholic Church.

⁵ Gutiérrez 1988, xxiv

⁶ See Ch.1, Introduction. While in general, most accounts of development theory do not refer to the contributions of the LT, there has been some literature that elaborates on the discussions of development of the LT. See, for example, Goulet 1974; Iguiñiz Echeverría 1993; Iguiñiz Echeverría 2003; Fretheim 2011; Scharper 2006; Martin 2003.

⁷ Gutiérrez 1970, 247

This is particularly clear when analysing the collective dimensions of processes of development, as we will discuss in further sections.

This chapter, then, will engage LT in order to generate a new perspective on Sen's 'Development as Freedom'. It argues that, while often overlooked in discussions of development theory, the radical understanding of LT that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s offers a unique opportunity to challenge Sen's perspective on empowerment. Specifically, LT and its understanding of development uncovers the limitations of Sen's notion of empowerment in relation to issues of collective empowerment and the social dimensions of development. Here, the analysis of development as liberation and its links to ideas of community empowerment serve to expose the individualistic nature of the project of empowerment within HD, and to argue for the necessity of expanding the collective gaze of the analysis of development as freedom.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. In the next section, we will contextualise the emergence of LT and particularly focus on its discussions of development as liberation and its communal dimensions. The following section will then discuss the collective dimensions within Amartya Sen's CA and point out the limitations in conversation with the LT insights. The final section will identify the elements within LT that can offer a possible contribution to expanding beyond these limits. Particularly, it will argue that the notion of solidarity that underpins LT's theoretical discussions and practical engagement in the organisation of grassroots movements serves as a theoretical foil to expand the communal and social consideration of people-centred approach.

Development as Liberation: The preferential option for the poor

The decade of the 1960s saw the expansion of the development project all over the world. The consolidation of the modernization school, together with the multiplication of international organisations and programs to promote development across the globe were commonplace in a decade that was dubbed 'The development decade' by a 1961 Resolution of the UN General Assembly.⁸ The topic of development also reached the reflections of the Catholic Church that had started to address development issues in the

⁸ UN General Assembly 1961

encyclicals *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terra* by Pope John XXIII and devoted a complete encyclical 'On the Development of Peoples' (*Populorum Progressio*) by Pope Paul VI in 1967.⁹ Processes of development, variously portrayed and understood, occupied a large portion of the policy and academic debates in the economic and political arenas. In Latin America, as we discussed at length in Ch.1, this decade saw the consolidation of the first systematic theorizations of development that transcended its regional borders, rejecting some of the aspects of the modernization schools and providing an analysis of the process of development that privileged the perspective of the Third World.¹⁰ To a different extent, both the Structuralist and Dependency school of development charged against the limitations of a vision of development modelled upon the history of European and Western development, and connected the dire situation of Latin American nations to the affluence of other parts of the world. Understanding the Third World's underdevelopment as a direct result of the path that had taken the Western world towards development, these theories had a large impact on the agitated political and economic context of the region, and the nascent LT was no exception.

Yet it was not only the prevalence of development discussions that prompted the emergence of LT, nor only the agitated political discussions in a region that was experiencing the increase of revolutionary guerrilla movements together with ferocious counterinsurgency military and paramilitary groups. In 1970, the situation of the Church was a special one in Latin America, as it was 'the only continent of underdeveloped and oppressed peoples who are in majority Christians'.¹¹ The urgency for a theological reflection rooted in the material deprivations of large sectors of the population became ever more evident in the second half of the twentieth century. Across Latin America, priests were confronted with levels of material oppression responsible for the 'premature and unjust death' of people, who turned to the Church in the quest for help.¹² The

⁹ Pope John XXIII 1961; Pope John XXIII 1963; Pope Paul VI 1967

¹⁰ See Ch. 1 for a more detailed analysis of their evolution and main elements.

¹¹ Gutiérrez 1970, 243

¹² Gutiérrez 1988, xli. We have referred earlier to the critical social and economic conditions of Latin American countries in the period, where generalized poverty, malnutrition and a lack of basic infrastructure were a common denominator across countries. See fn. 21, 47 and 68 of Ch. 1 for some concrete data. Many point out the challenges associated to the despairing conditions of life of millions of Latin Americans as the main catalyst for the Latin American Church determination to pursue a path of socio-political struggle and solidarity with the poor. See Berryman 1973; Berryman 1987; Smith 1991; Rowland 1999; Tombs 2002.

establishment of the Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) in 1955 offered a framework to bring these questions together. In the context of the renovation of the Church initiated by the II Vatican Council, CELAM organised several meetings and symposiums in Latin America that served to bring the theological reflections of the LT to maturity, and to connect its work and theological reflections to discussions of development. In the final document of the second general conference of bishops that took place in Medellín in 1968, they stated:

‘The Latin American bishops cannot remain indifferent in the face of tremendous social injustices existent in Latin America, which keep the majority of our peoples in dismal poverty, which in many cases becomes inhuman wretchedness. A deafening cry pours from the throats of millions of men, asking their pastors for a liberation that reaches them from nowhere else.’¹³

In the extensive concluding documents, the II CELAM conference made clear the necessity for the Church to address issues of material deprivation and work for a liberation of the peoples of Latin America from the oppression of underdevelopment. While they followed *Populorum Progressio*’s idea of development as ‘the new name for peace’, the Medellín documents drew extensively on dependency debates to denounce the exploitation and ‘neo-colonialism’ of existing political and economic international structures, and their push for a development agenda.¹⁴

However, rather than focusing mainly on economic strategies, the documents argued for reinforcing the Church’s commitment to the poor and dispossessed, in stating the Church’s ‘Preferential option for the poor’ and the solidarity with their struggles.¹⁵ For Dom Helder Camara, a Brazilian bishop and founder of CELAM, development should be understood as ‘the realization of man in his full human dimension and, by the grace of God, in his divine dimension’.¹⁶ Beyond economic advances of development, the documents outlined the basis of a strategy of solidarity with the social and political struggles of the poor in the region, and highlighted the necessity of the Church assuming a stronger commitment with the promotion of an integral liberation, that focused on the material as well as the spiritual salvation of Christians.

¹³ CELAM 1968, sec. Pobreza de la Iglesia, 2–3. Translation from Tombs 2002, 110.

¹⁴ CELAM 1968, sec. Paz.

¹⁵ CELAM 1968, sec. Pobreza de la Iglesia, 9

¹⁶ Camara 2009, 782

Unsurprisingly, the Medellín documents that explicitly connected issues of development with the role of the Church were drafted by Gustavo Gutierrez, considered the founding father of LT.¹⁷ Gutierrez argued in his *A theology of Liberation* in 1971 for the necessity of devising LT as a new way to do theology rooted in a transformatory action of the present: ‘This is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed’.¹⁸ He called for a theology that reflects and engages in a liberating praxis, expanding beyond the traditional spiritual focus of the Catholic theology to transform the conditions of underdevelopment.¹⁹ This liberating praxis is ‘a praxis of solidarity in the interest of liberation’ and appears connected to discussions of development.²⁰ Gutierrez recognised multiple dimensions of liberation (which include the material, personal and spiritual levels) and framed his analysis within the dependency debates of development happening in the period.²¹

Following the insights and arguments of the dependency theorists, Gutierrez criticised the notion of development being pursued by international organisations, as an agenda of ‘reformism and modernization’ that deepens the dependency and economic exploitation of the region, and called for Latin American countries to break free from their condition of periphery to the First World. Rejecting the ideas of this agenda of modernization, which Gutierrez terms *developmentalism*, he argues for the pursuit of an agenda of liberation which ‘expresses the inescapable moment of radical change which is foreign to the ordinary use of the term *development*’.²² Liberation, in this way, is understood as an expansion of the project of development, as he states

¹⁷ Scharper 2006, 56

¹⁸ Gutiérrez 1988, 12

¹⁹ Gutiérrez 1970, 244

²⁰ Gutiérrez 1988, xxx

²¹ Gutiérrez 1988, chap. 2 and 6. Later, Gutierrez explicitly recognizes the influence of the dependency debates in ‘providing a key instrument to understand the socio-political reality of Latin America’. Gutiérrez 1993, 23–24.

²² Gutiérrez 1988, 17. It is important to clarify that while some authors (for example, Martin 2003; Scharper 2006; Fretheim 2011) take Gutierrez’s position as a complete rejection of the notion of development altogether, Gutierrez does not in fact flat out reject development, but what he identifies as *developmentalism*. In his perspective, the notion of *developmentalism*, promotes an agenda of progress and reform that deepens the exploitation of the Third World by the First World, and in general focuses on the authors we have discussed as part of the Modernization school of development in Ch.1. He clarifies this in fn.18, p.182-183 of Gutiérrez 1988 where he states that ‘the perspective of liberation

‘In the first place, liberation expresses the aspirations of oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasizing the conflictual aspect of the economic, social and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressive classes. In contrast, the word development, and above all the policies characterized as developmentalist (*desarrollista*), appear somewhat aseptic, giving a false picture of a tragic and conflictual reality. The issue of development does in fact find its true place in the more universal, profound and radical perspective of liberation.’²³

Gutierrez’s argument to replace the notion of development by that of liberation becomes the key element to understanding LT’s turn to people-centred notions of development. While in the social and political analysis of the first wave of LT in Latin America the use of the dependency analysis of core and periphery is widespread²⁴, the call to replace the notion of development for that of liberation seeks to expand it along the same lines that Sen would argue for in later years.

Leaving aside the discussions of spiritual liberation that are connected with the eschatological views of the Catholic church, understanding liberation as a more radical notion of development shows a clear people-centred focus, explicit in two elements. First, for Gutierrez the idea of liberation as development implies the ‘liberation from social situations of oppression and marginalization’ that dominated the lives of Latin Americans at the period. Yet, he continues a few sentences below, ‘it is not enough that we be liberated from oppressive socio-economic structures; also needed is a personal transformation by which we live with profound inner freedom in the face of every kind of servitude’.²⁵ As in Sen, Gutierrez’s notion of liberation as development exceeds the economic focus of previous ideas of development, and has the notion of freedom at its centre. Further, the process of liberation entails a personal process of empowerment, in the achievement of inner freedom. This is a central element that becomes clearer in exploring further the connections between Gutierrez’s and Sen’s work.

Second, understanding development as liberation is not only about expanding the considerations beyond economic dimensions, it is also about understanding the

(which is opposed to *developmentalism* but not to development) undoubtedly brings greater depth and dynamism to the process in which the poor countries are involved’.

²³ Gutiérrez 1988, 24

²⁴ See for example Gutiérrez 1970; Gutiérrez 1988, chap. 6; Gutiérrez 1993; Boff and Boff 1987; CELAM 1968; CELAM 1979; Camara 2009, chap. 2.

²⁵ Gutiérrez 1988, xxxviii

fundamental role that human beings play in the process of its achievement. For Gutierrez, liberation, like development in Sen, is a process that occurs through the participation of the people (particularly the poor) themselves. It is the poor that engage in the liberating praxis that will bring about the transformation of the world, they become ‘agents of their own destiny’.²⁶ It is the commitment to the promotion of the empowerment of the poor and the oppressed, to regain their space in history that is central for LT’s pursuit of liberation. For Gutierrez,

‘Liberation theology is closely bound up with this new presence of those who in the past were always absent from our history. They have gradually been turning into active agents of their own destiny and beginning a resolute process that is changing the condition of the poor and the oppressed of this world.’²⁷

This language is important, and reminds us of Sen’s CA approach. Distinct from the notions of development rooted in paternalistic processes, LT preaches a process of liberation that goes ‘beyond two approaches that have already been tried: aid and reformism’.²⁸ Specifically, it highlights the importance of the inclusion of individuals in an active role; individual agency is fundamental to pursue development as liberation. In this, Liberation Theology’s ‘Preferential option for the poor’ moves the focus of discussions of material development away from more state-centred visions of development and advocates for a shift towards people-centred development. The recognition of the fundamental role of human beings in the pursuit of the transformation of their conditions of underdevelopment is a central element for LT, one that can directly be linked to Sen’s project of ‘Development as Freedom’. Both see in the promotion of the empowerment of the poor, and in their active engagement and participation in their societies the path to development (or liberation). It is this process

²⁶ Gutierrez’s focus on poor people’s agency in the process of liberation is perhaps the most striking element of his Theology of Liberation. His emphasis is put in the recovery of the transformatory potential that what he calls ‘the irruption of the poor in history’, as agents of their own destiny (Gutiérrez 1988, xx). This is a topic that is recurrent in Gutierrez’s work, particularly in his *The Power of the Poor in History*, in 1983. (See also, Gutiérrez 1981; Gutiérrez 1993). However, his analysis is not exclusively focused on poor people, but rather, discusses the importance of recognising the struggles for advancing ‘the new presence of those who in fact used to be ‘absent’ from our society and the church’. Here, Gutierrez includes not only the poor, but the movements of women, indigenous and racial minorities all over the world, presenting a clear precedent and parallel to more contemporary analysis of decoloniality, and particularly, to Boaventura de Sousa Santos ‘Sociology of Absences’. See Sousa Santos 2006; Sousa Santos 2009.

²⁷ Gutiérrez 1988, xxi

²⁸ Boff and Boff 1987, 4

of empowerment that ultimately leads to the transformation of the conditions of oppression or underdevelopment, and both understand it as its means and ends.²⁹

While in general, as we pointed out in Ch. 1, LT contributions to development thinking did not garner the same level of attention in global debates of development as other Latin American contributions, there are a few notable exceptions to this trend.³⁰ The most remarkable of these is the work of Peruvian economist Javier Iguñiz Echeverría, who has compared both Sen's and Gutierrez's work. Iguñiz argues that 'In general terms, and independently of that historical accent, what is meant by liberation seems to be exactly what Sen is talking about when defining development'.³¹ For him, the connection between Sen's and Gutierrez's work stems from a similar departure point, the concern with the poor as a unit of intellectual and moral social commitment, as well as a particular focus on understanding development as an expansion of freedom.³² Nonetheless, however clear the parallels between Sen and LT may be –and Iguñiz goes to great lengths to show their similarities focusing mainly on both authors' central texts –, these frameworks offer a diametrically opposed space for the communal considerations of this process. Iguñiz's perspective appears, then, constrained in its analysis of the distinctions between two approaches, an aspect that to us remains of central importance. As we will discuss in the following sections, LT understands the process of liberation to be rooted in the solidarity with the poor and dispossessed; liberation is a process that, while it happens at the individual level, is intrinsically collective. Yet, before we delve into a discussion of the collective aspects of the process of liberation, let us clarify how the issue of collectivity has been approached by Amartya Sen.

²⁹ Clearly, in the case of LT we are excluding for this analysis the process of liberation from sin and communion with God which refers to the spiritual aspect and salvation of the liberation process.

³⁰ For example, Denis Goulet was inspired by the work of the LT, whom he called the 'prophets of development' in Goulet 1974. Also, more recently, there has been some literature specifically discussing LT's notion of development, and their connections with public administration (Martin 2003) sustainability concerns (Scharper 2006), or with development policy work, connecting it to Christian Aid organizations (Fretheim 2011). However, the most significant analysis has been that of Javier Iguñiz Echeverría, who has compared the work of Sen and Gustavo Gutierrez. See Iguñiz Echeverría 2003; Iguñiz Echeverría 2002.

³¹ Iguñiz Echeverría 2002, 4

³² Iguñiz Echeverría 2003, 143–144

The collective dimension of development in Amartya Sen's Capability Approach

The communal dimension of processes of development has been a contentious issue within the CA. While the push for more ethical considerations has been very clearly associated with a people-centred focus that increased the space for more 'humane' aspects of development, the space for the consideration of collective issues within Amartya Sen's work has received comparatively less attention. As we have discussed in detail in Ch. 2 and Ch. 3, it is Sen's push for the freedom of human beings to 'live the lives they value and have reason to value' that underpins his people-centred approach to development, and in here, it is quite clear that social considerations have been included. The process of empowerment, of the expansion of individual capabilities intrinsic to his understanding of development, is a process that occurs *within* a society. Furthermore, the expansion of the individual's capabilities is understood as a process that enables individuals to actively engage in the life of their communities. In this sense, for Sen, the exercise of individual agency occurs within a society, as he understands that 'no individual can think, choose or act without being influenced in one way or another by the nature and working of the society around him or her'.³³ Individuals pursue their lives (and freedom) within communities, and they are both influenced by and influence them in multiple manners; human beings are 'quintessentially social creatures'.³⁴ However, despite Sen's references to collective and communal issues in the development process, their analysis remains a controversial topic within the CA literature. The alleged inadequacy of the CA to reflect adequately collective issues of development is the aspect that has garnered the strongest criticism of Sen's work, even from within the most fervent supporters of the CA.³⁵

In a symposium analysing Sen's *Development as Freedom*, Peter Evans pointed out the necessity to expand the focus of the CA in relation to the collective aspects of development for the first time, calling for the consideration of 'collective capabilities'.³⁶

³³ Sen 2002b, 80

³⁴ Sen 2002b, 82

³⁵ See, among others, Evans 2002; Stewart 2013; Robeyns 2008; Pelenc, Bazile, and Ceruti 2015; Deneulin 2008; Stewart and Deneulin 2002; Alkire 2008; Robeyns 2005; Longshore Smith and Seward 2009; Stewart 2005; Rauschmayer, Bauler, and Schöpke 2015; Ballet, Dubois, and Mahieu 2007. A whole issue of the Journal of Human Development and Capabilities was dedicated to discussing collective issues within the CA, edited by De Herdt and Deneulin 2007

³⁶ Evans 2002

In Evans' perspective, Sen's work is reductive, insofar it is focused on 'individuals and their relation to an overall social context, not on collectivities as the necessary link between the two'. However, he continued, 'Individual capabilities *depend* on collective capabilities'.³⁷ Evans argued that the consideration of collective capabilities and their relationship with individual aspects of development was not sufficiently taken into consideration within the CA, thus creating a blind spot to the centrality of communal aspects to development. Therefore, incorporating an explicit space for collective capabilities was a necessary step, and would allow an expansion of the CA's consideration of structural imbalances and contradictions that emerged from the growing concentration of power within contemporary capitalism.

In the same symposium, Frances Stewart and Severine Deneulin identify within Sen's framework a 'methodological individualism' and argued, like Evans, for a larger consideration of the collective dimension of development processes.³⁸ Stewart and Deneulin, rather than advocating for a consideration of collective capabilities, pointed out the necessity to consider 'structures of living together' which have both instrumental and intrinsic importance for the expansion of individuals' capabilities and their wellbeing.³⁹ In their view, incorporating the notion of 'structures of living together' taken from the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, would provide a more comprehensive framework to explore the interaction between individuals and their societies in the process of development. Sen explicitly addressed both of these critiques in a response written within the same symposium. Here, he explicitly addressed for the first time the collective aspects of his CA approach and rejected both Evans' and Stewart and Deneulin's arguments. Sen argued that the CA's focus on the instrumental role of democracy for value formation, the necessary consideration of the societal interactions and the recognition of the 'deep and pervasive influence of society' on the individuals capabilities was a clear indication that his work did not follow a 'Methodological individualism'.⁴⁰ Sen also rejected Evans' notion of collective capabilities, and, while he recognised the influence of society on individual's capabilities, he opted instead for

³⁷ Evans 2002, 56. Emphasis added.

³⁸ Stewart and Deneulin 2002, 66

³⁹ Stewart and Deneulin 2002. Both authors continued their analysis and clarified further their critique to Sen's CA and its reduced focus on collective aspects of development in Stewart 2005; Deneulin 2008.

⁴⁰ Sen 2002b, 80–81

naming them ‘socially dependent individual capabilities’, highlighting the individual focus of the analysis. He argued that ‘the intrinsic satisfactions that occur in a life must occur in an individual’s life, but in terms of causal connections, they depend on social interactions with others’.⁴¹ Rather than dissipating the criticism, Sen’s response to these early critiques reinforced both the individual focus of the CA and the instrumental view of society for processes of development.

As this thesis project focuses primarily on Amartya Sen’s work, we will not follow in detail the development of the ‘collective capabilities’ debate within the vast CA literature attempting to address its shortcomings.⁴² We will, however, focus on those aspects that have been specifically addressed by Sen and that allow us to clarify his perspective on the communal aspects of development processes, to contrast it with the LT’s perspective on the matter.⁴³ Perhaps the most important argument from this debate is the one that followed Stewart and Deneulin’s accusation of methodological individualism, a criticism that Sen addressed again explicitly on his *The Idea of Justice*.⁴⁴ Here, Sen more thoroughly argues that, as the CA recognises society’s influence on individual’s wellbeing and in the formation of capabilities, it cannot be considered as falling into a methodological individualism. As he states,

‘But the capability approach not only does not assume such detachment [methodological individualism], its concern with people’s ability to live the kind of lives they have reason to value brings in social influences both in terms of what they value (for example, ‘taking part in the life of the community’) and what influences operate on their values (for example, the relevance of public reasoning in individual assessment).’⁴⁵

To Sen, methodological individualism would imply a consideration of individuals’ behaviour, capabilities and way of thinking detached from their societies. In this way, a methodologically individualistic approach would fail to recognise the influence that

⁴¹ Sen 2002b, 85

⁴² Both Sabina Alkire and Ingrid Robeyns have produced thorough summaries of such theoretical debates in Robeyns 2005, 107–110; Alkire 2008, 34–41. More recently, Jerome Pelenc and other have offered a brief overview of more empirical analyses that discuss collective aspects of the CA in Pelenc, Bazile, and Ceruti 2015. Solava Ibrahim and John Davis have followed Evans position and argued for the expansion of the analysis of collective capabilities within the CA. Ibrahim 2006; Ibrahim 2013; Davis 2013; Davis 2015.

⁴³ This analysis will also serve as a departure point for the analysis developed in Ch. 6, in which we engage Sen’s perspective from the contemporary indigenous philosophies emerging from the Andes.

⁴⁴ Sen 2010, 243–245

⁴⁵ Sen 2010, 244

societies have in the individual lives of their members, and conversely, the impact that individuals have in their communities. As the CA is ‘quite unequivocal in not assuming any kind of a detached view of individuals from the society around them’, Sen argues that it is not based in a methodological individualism.⁴⁶ Instead, Sen’s argument follows what Ingrid Robeyns, calls ‘ethical individualism’.⁴⁷ When analysing the criticisms that the CA received in relation to its consideration of collective aspects of development, Robeyns distinguishes between *ethical*, *ontological* and *methodological* individualism. In her perspective, the CA follows an *ethical* not a *methodological* or *ontological* individualism. Ethical individualism, for Robeyns, does not imply a complete disregard for the structural or communal dimensions of analysis, rather, it ‘postulates that individuals, and only individuals, are the units of moral concern’.⁴⁸ Thus, the focus of analysis for the CA is the individual, and the analysis of collective and communal elements of development is ‘evaluated in virtue of the causal importance that they have for individuals’ wellbeing’.⁴⁹ Social and structural considerations are only relevant to the CA insofar they have direct or indirect effects on the individual.

This is a key element to understanding Sen’s (and the CA) perspective on collective issues; the ethical individualism that pervades the CA demonstrates its instrumentalist vision of society. Sen’s focus on the expansion of freedom as development certainly includes social considerations, but only insofar they contribute ‘to enhancing and guaranteeing the substantive freedoms of individuals, seen as active agents of change, rather than as passive recipients of dispensed benefits’.⁵⁰ While society’s influence on the individual (and conversely of the individual in their societies) is taken into consideration, the analysis of institutions or ‘societal arrangements’ is only relevant as an instrument for the pursuit of the expansion of individuals’ freedoms. This instrumentalist vision of the relevance of society and collective aspects of development reduces the space that might be given to more communal concerns in discussions of

⁴⁶ Sen 2010, 245

⁴⁷ Robeyns 2005; Robeyns 2008

⁴⁸ Robeyns 2005, 107. In a similar perspective to Sen’s, Robeyns argues that *methodological* individualism, assumes that ‘all social phenomena can be explained in terms of individuals and their properties’ while *ontological* individualism assumes that ‘society is built up from only individuals and nothing than individuals, and hence is nothing more than the sum of individuals and their properties’. Hence, according to Robeyns, the CA does not fall in either of them. Robeyns 2008, 90.

⁴⁹ Robeyns 2008, 90

⁵⁰ Sen 1999a, xiii

development. Furthermore, it confines society's intrinsic relevance for development to the valuation that its individual members may have of social life: aside from their instrumental value, societal or collective capabilities only have an intrinsic value when it is given by its members. As Sen states,

‘Ultimately, it is individual valuation on which we would have to draw, while recognizing the profound interdependence of the valuations of individuals who interact with each other. The valuation involved would tend to be based on the importance that people attach to being able to do certain things in collaboration with others. In valuing a person’s ability to take part in the life of the society, there is an implicit valuation of the life of the society itself, and that is an important enough aspect of the capability perspective’.⁵¹

Sen timidly recognises the ‘implicit valuation of the life of society itself’ but its value is determined by the preferences of the individuals, again, becoming instrumental to fulfilling the ‘lives that people value and have reason to value’. Social life, and in general, a more structural macro-analysis of the process of development and the conditions for achieving individual empowerment, are not of central concern for the CA. Their role is a subsidiary one insofar it affects individuals’ wellbeing. The ultimate moral foundation of the value of society is the value that individuals can give to social life, not of social life in and of itself, as a requisite for freedom (or liberation, as we will discuss in the next section). Aside from precluding any larger criticism of social life, Sen’s perspective makes the individual the only determining force of whether the social is a necessary part of the process of development as capabilities expansion.

Sen’s and Robeyns’ defence of ethical individualism to evaluate development stems from a similar discomfort with a possible departure from its main focus on the individual. Both authors discuss the dangers of such collective and social considerations falling into a primacy of the collective over the individual that advances over individual freedom. In the case of Robeyns, this concern is situated within her feminist analysis of development that warns against focusing on households (or larger groups) to evaluate development as they may not reflect appropriately on their internal inequalities.⁵² Therefore, Robeyns is against the focus on ‘collective capabilities’ and argues that it is precisely the CA’s ethical individualism what makes the approach so adequate to analysing gender issues in development. In a more general analysis, but following a

⁵¹ Sen 2010, 246

⁵² Robeyns 2003; Robeyns 2008

similar path, Sen is very wary of the consequences of approaching development from a more collective perspective.⁵³ In the case of Sen, however, the focus is not exclusively on the gendered aspects of development, but, more generally, with the necessary primacy of a group identity of any kind in the consideration of more collective and communal aspects of development. This is a second aspect in Sen's CA that we can encounter when attempting to incorporate a broader focus on more collective dimensions of development. Sen's rejection of incorporating the notion of 'collective capabilities' to the CA arises from the primacy of a particular collective identity that considering such a capability would entail. As he states,

'A person belongs to many different groups (related to gender, class, language group, profession, nationality, community, race, religion and so on), and to see them merely as a member of just one particular group would be a major denial of the freedom of each person to decide how exactly to see himself or herself.'⁵⁴

To Sen, there is an intrinsic danger in prioritising a collective lens in discussions of development, threatening to curtail the space for considerations of individual freedom, which remains at the centre of the CA. As individuals are formed by plural identities, to see a person exclusively as a member of a particular social group is 'based on an inadequate understanding of the breadth and complexity of any society in the world'.⁵⁵ Such an approach relies on a 'miniaturised vision of the human being' that limits the possibilities to understand the plural nature of human beings and violates the freedom of individuals to pursue their lives to the fullest.

It is worth clarifying that the danger of exalting a particular identity as an overarching one is not, however, one in which every collective analysis of development would necessarily fall and Sen does not make a blanket rejection of including them. It is, however, one that is very present throughout his work, and one that functions to prevent him from engaging in a more thorough analysis of the collective or communal aspects of development. In his quest to avoid a 'miniaturisation of the human being', Sen falls into an 'aggrandisement' of the individualistic nature of the process of development, that leaves little space for analysing the communal dimensions of development. In this way, while the CA certainly does not discuss the process of development as an exclusively

⁵³ Deneulin 2008, 107

⁵⁴ Sen 2010, 245–246. Sen has explored the issue of identity in several other works, most notably in Sen 2006; Sen 2009.

⁵⁵ Sen 2010, 246

individualistic process, it remains theoretically limited in its *capacity* to address social and collective considerations. And it is particularly here, where the fundamental distinction between the people-centred approach of the CA and that of the LT becomes clear. As we will discuss below, Sen conceives the process of development as freedom as a very distinct process from the understanding of ‘development as liberation’.

The communal dimension of liberation: Solidarity and Christian Base Communities

In general, religion has been a contentious issue in development discussions, where most approaches have neglected it as a key aspect and assumed secularism as the norm.⁵⁶ Yet, as we discussed earlier, the early contributions of LT proposed an understanding of liberation as a people-centred approach to development that can serve to expand the consideration of the necessary collective and communal dimensions involved in the development process. The remarkable parallels between Gutierrez’s vision of liberation and Sen’s CA provide a theoretical framework from which to explore the agency-role of individuals in people centred approaches to development connected to more collective concerns. Despite the multiple connections in their work, their differences stem, as we argued, from their considerations of the communal and collective dimensions of processes of development. It is perhaps the traditional focus of theology on the spiritual aspects of life that has allowed LT to incorporate a more comprehensive analysis of these communal aspects and their connection to such processes. While the CA offers an approach to development where the individual is the main unit of value and agent of action, and the communal dimensions of empowerment are only indirectly assessed in terms of their impact on the individual’s wellbeing, LT constructs the idea of liberation as a collective process.

The communal dimension and its intrinsic value for the process of liberation can be seen in three particular elements that help us clarify the space of difference between the LT and the CA. First, for Gutierrez, the process of liberation is rooted in the principle of solidarity with the poor and dispossessed, where an engagement in a liberating praxis by and with the poor people themselves is an intrinsic and fundamental

⁵⁶ Carbonnier 2013. A consideration of the influence of religion in the practice and academic discussions of development has received more attention in recent years. See, Deneulin and Bano 2009; Haynes 2007.

aspect of the process of liberation. For Gutierrez, the primacy of solidarity as a guiding principle for liberation is such that it becomes a ‘first act’; theology, only comes as a ‘second act’.⁵⁷ Second, in the discussions of the political implications of these theological discussions, the LT created an organised grassroots movement, known as the Christian Base Communities (CBCs). The expansion of the CBCs across the region in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as its central role as a political instrument in the discussions of the CELAM highlights the centrality of collective processes of struggle and the cardinal importance of the community in the process of liberation. Finally, the third element stems from the Christian ideal of communion and salvation that is followed by the LT’s in line with the Catholic Church’s mandate. Here, ‘the fullness of liberation – a free gift from Christ – is communion with God and with other human beings’.⁵⁸ For Gutierrez, the Biblical message of salvation is one that highlights the centrality of a life in communion with others and with God in the quest for salvation. Yet, in LT, this quest for salvation is rooted in a terrestrial engagement with history, an engagement with a liberating praxis in the ‘historical becoming of humankind on the way toward total communion’.⁵⁹ While this is certainly not a negligible aspect of the LT’s focus on the community, rather than the individual, we will not focus on this religious aspect to challenge Sen’s instrumentalist vision of the society. Rather, we will explore how the notion of solidarity imbues the agentic role of the individuals within the LT in a more communally oriented action, one that can be seen in the engagement of LT with the CBCs. This is a pertinent distinction to make. Since LT’s arguments do occur within a theological framework, it is important to distinguish which elements there are relevant to contemporary debates within development theory and which are not, and how we can utilise the former. Along these lines we will not engage the lines of argumentation that are inextricably tied to the Christian faith.

The engagement and solidarity with the struggle of the poor and dispossessed, is at the basis of LT’s ‘preferential option for the poor’, and central to understanding the creation of the Christian Base Communities (CBCs) in Latin America in the late 1960s. Solidarity appears as a key element grounding the political project of Gutierrez, who

⁵⁷ Scharper 2006, 62

⁵⁸ Gutiérrez 1988, 21

⁵⁹ Gutiérrez 1988, 32

names it one of the two pillars of LT.⁶⁰ It is, as we have stated, this principle of solidarity what inspires the liberating praxis upon which the political core of the notion of liberation is built. In the work of Gutierrez, solidarity acts as the normative horizon that binds together the project of liberation as a communal, social project. As Murray points out, a ‘liberating social praxis requires solidarity understood as transformative action with and for the poor, and individuals are invited to move beyond isolating individualism and join in solidarity in the building of a new society’.⁶¹ For Gutierrez, the project of liberation includes the creation of ‘a new society of solidarity’, where the different dimensions of liberation (social, political, economic, as well as liberation from sin) can be achieved.⁶² Liberation is, thus, eminently a social project, one that cannot be achieved in isolation, and that crucially depends on the transformation of the whole of the society. Solidarity, as a principle, plays a double role within LT: (1) it serves to highlight and respond to the sense of urgency and despair from the socio-political struggles of the period, and (2) it is an organizing principle of communal action, one that articulates a collective response to situations of oppression, and that can be more clearly seen in the establishment of the CBCs. We will explore both roles below, as they provide us with a more distinct and expansive vision of the collective aspects of the development process, than the one Sen offers in his CA.

First, as we have pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, LT emerges as a response to the sense of urgency that dominated political struggles in the decades of 1960s and 1970s, and the notion of solidarity provides a concrete response to this political context. We have indicated how the CELAM saw this as a clear input to be taken into account by the Church, mentioning it in the documents of the meetings of Medellin and Puebla. Gutierrez also makes explicit comments on the necessity of the Church to respond to this sense of urgency, to actively participate in supporting the struggles of the poor and dispossessed. He argues that ‘here is an urgent need for Christians to involve themselves in the work of liberating this oppressed continent [Latin America], by establishing real solidarity with the oppressed persons, who are the chief

⁶⁰ Gutiérrez 1988, 27. The other pillar is drawn from the religious aspect of the Catholic Church, stating it as a ‘profound sense of the gratuitous love of God’.

⁶¹ Murray 1998, 53

⁶² Gutiérrez 1988, 137

victims'.⁶³ In several occasions, Gutierrez makes explicit calls for the Church to 'break its many ties with the present order', and assume a radically stronger political stance.⁶⁴ Gutierrez's recourse to the notion of solidarity opens up a concern for larger, collective aspects to be incorporated to the quest for liberation, and, at the same time allowed for a support of the social struggles of the time that departed from engaging in armed violence. Arguing for the necessity to consider the solidarity with others, the ones that had been oppressed, as an intrinsic part of the process of individual liberation opens up a clear space to expand the social considerations included in the development process. At the same time, in the context of the severe political turmoil in which Latin America was immersed, where many priests had joined forces with guerrilla movements or overtly supported a call for arms, Gutierrez's emphasis on the notion of solidarity and its importance for the project of liberation appears to have hit a middle ground.⁶⁵

Yet, more importantly, Gutierrez's focus on solidarity shows how fundamentally linked the processes of individual and communal liberation for the LT are, in a perspective that stands far from Sen's instrumental vision of society. Gutierrez's insistence of the importance of rooting LT in a 'praxis of solidarity' allows for the incorporation of the communal dimension in the processes of liberation: it is not only important to achieve our individual liberation, but to stand in solidarity with those who struggle for their own liberation. Liberation becomes, this way, a social project. As CELAM would summarise in its final documents from the general meeting in Puebla, in 1979,

'The gospel demand for poverty, understood as solidarity with the poor and as a rejection of the situation in which most people on this continent live, frees the poor person from being individualistic in life, from being attracted and seduced by the false ideals of a consumer society.'⁶⁶

The principle of solidarity that underpins the project of liberation, highlights the centrality of considering the social dimensions as a people-centred approach to

⁶³ Gutiérrez 1983, 29

⁶⁴ Gutiérrez 1983, 29. See also, Gutiérrez 1970, 252–254

⁶⁵ Chaouch 2007, 448. The comparison, for example with Father Camilo Torres is quite stark. Torres, another priest involved in LT was Gutierrez's classmate in the University of Louvain and a personal friend of him, who upon return to Colombia, joined a guerrilla movement and was killed by the Colombian Army in 1966. Torres is heralded as a popular hero, and his (alleged) phrase 'If Jesus was alive he would be a *guerrillero* (guerrilla- fighter)' aptly summarises the more radical strand of the members of the LT.

⁶⁶ CELAM 1979, para. 1156

development, beyond Sen's instrumental vision of society. Understanding the process of liberation as one rooted in solidarity with others emphasises that the achievement of liberation cannot happen exclusively at the individual level, but it is intrinsically connected with what occurs at the communal level. Solidarity, thus appears as an alternative that escapes narrow individualistic understandings of people-centred approaches to development, as it can be seen in the establishment of the CBCs.

Second, solidarity serves in LT as an organizing principle of communal action located at the basis of the establishment of Christian Base Communities. The CBCs were a grassroots movement that expanded in Latin America in the 60s and 70s - particularly in Brazil - , where the LT found its most devoted supporters. These horizontal, loosely articulated communities (often very small) were not formally nor necessarily linked to the formal parish structure of the Catholic Church, but rather, constituted 'a communal response by poor Christians to a life of shared struggle and hardship'.⁶⁷ The meetings of the CBCs occurred regularly and not always included priests. They consisted of small groups of people who discussed the Bible as a political tool and linked its message to the lives of the poor people of Latin America, diverging from the traditional vision which associated its message and experiences to the lives of more affluent European and North American societies and concentrated mostly in spiritual readings. The discussions connected the Biblical message with the everyday experiences of deprivation of the people in Latin America and focused on devising alternative ways of political action.⁶⁸ To Gutierrez the CBCs constituted 'a privileged meeting place for people trying to familiarise itself with its situation of misery and exploitation, to fight against that situation and to give account of its faith in a liberating God'.⁶⁹ Insofar as their focus was skewed towards political discussions the CBCs became effectively experiments in participatory democracy, where they emerged as a new historical and political subject emerged to pursue their own liberation.⁷⁰ Edward Martin, highlighting the horizontal and decentralised nature of the CBCs, has called them 'postmodern networks', effectively by-passing the state in their pursuit of 'remedies for social justice and sustainable policies' and engaging in direct political action or working

⁶⁷ Pepper 1982, 16

⁶⁸ Rowland 1999, 7; Sigmund 1990, chap. 1

⁶⁹ Gutiérrez 1981, 115

⁷⁰ Boff 1981, 429; Pepper 1982, 17; Hewitt 2000, xvi

with civil society organisations and social movements.⁷¹ In the meeting of Puebla, CELAM recognised the importance of the expansion of the CBCs across the continent, and celebrated that they had ‘become motors of liberation and development’.⁷² The CBCs became a tool for organizing collective political action in solidarity with the struggles of the poor and dispossessed and stand as an example of socially oriented grassroots organisations for development.

Importantly, for Gutierrez, the emergence of these CBCs is a response to an ‘individualistic way out’, to an individualistic view of the process of liberation.⁷³ Instead, they become a communal response to the shared quest for liberation. In their efforts to provide for a space from which to reflect upon their common difficulties and their possible way out, CBCs engage in a communal praxis of liberation becoming a collective agent in pursuit of that liberation. To Gutierrez, it is the growth of these communities that signals the irruption of the poor, where ‘the “absent ones” make their presence felt’; they give voice to the voiceless and become spaces for political participation, an ‘active subject of revolution and the construction of a different society’.⁷⁴ In the perspective of LT, the process of development as liberation occurs and is articulated from the collective spaces that the CBCs provide: the liberation of individuals occurs in communion with others. The community is as central as the individual to achieve liberation, and neither has a moral or instrumental priority over the other, as in Sen’s work. As Gutierrez states, ‘in the final analysis, to set free is to give life— communion with God and with others— or, to use the language of Puebla, liberation for communion and participation’.⁷⁵ Leaving aside the emphasis on the connection with God that Gutierrez’s soteriological message brings, it becomes clear that it presents a radically different space for communal concerns when compared to Amartya Sen’s CA. For LT the participation in the community is not dictated by an instrumentalist need to expand the individual’s capabilities, nor considered an enabling individual freedom. Rather, the participation in the community is an intrinsic part of the process of liberation; it provides the space to articulate a collective agency in solidarity with the poor and dispossessed, where the

⁷¹ Martin 2003, 84

⁷² CELAM 1979, para. 96–97

⁷³ Gutiérrez 1981

⁷⁴ Gutiérrez 1981, 108

⁷⁵ Gutiérrez 1985, 92

liberation of the individual takes place together with that of the rest of their community. While it recognises the personal dimension of the process of liberation, for Gutierrez's LT, the primary subject of the process is the community rather than the individual.⁷⁶ By placing primary ethical value in a solidarity with the poor as a group, that is with those who are the subject of development as a community, the LT ensures that development has to take place through a communal process of empowerment. The ethical difference between the CA and the LT in this concern then leads to a methodological one that results in a space opened for the consideration of collective forms of agency, together with those at the individual level. Distinct from Sen's analysis, Gutierrez's LT offers a people-centred approach to development whose focus is decidedly a social one.

Conclusion

In a recent article on the legacy of LT, Michael Kirwan invites us to reflect on what the Catholic 'Church might now look like, if the neuralgic issue placed under the gaze of the world's spotlight in 1968 had been the so-called 'social question', and not reproductive ethics'.⁷⁷ What would the role of the Church in the contemporary world be if its post-conciliar focus had been closer to the social concerns espoused by the LT? At this point, we can only speculate, and perhaps the recent election of the Archbishop of Argentina as Pope Francis (who was himself, it should be noted, *not* a supporter of the LT movement as many seem to assume) might give us some clues, as his growing popularity appears tied to a more outspoken concern for issues of social injustice across the globe. Along similar lines, in this chapter, we have posed an analogous question to Sen's CA: What would the quest for empowerment and human development, so successful in contemporary mainstream theory and practice of development, look like if the social dimension of its analysis was more comprehensively considered? What would be the space for the consideration of structural aspects of the development process if the focus was put on the empowerment of communities rather than that of the individuals? While the parallel lines that can be traced between these two examples are quite initial, this chapter has attempted to join the questioning of the individualistic focus of Sen's CA from a novel perspective. In comparing LT's people-approach to development with

⁷⁶ Murray 1998

⁷⁷ Kirwan SJ 2012, 247

Sen's CA, the chapter has hoped to demonstrate how a similar understanding of the process of development as 'freedom' or 'liberation' can offer significantly distinct spaces for social and communal considerations.

To this end, the chapter has first engaged in a discussion of the considerations of development included in the LT movement. Here, it argued that Gustavo Gutierrez's reflections on the process of liberation tied to a material transformation of the conditions of poverty and underdevelopment existent in Latin America, offers an early example of a people-centred approach to development that forecasts many of the themes that would later emerge in HD. Considering development as 'liberation' allowed us to trace these connections with Sen's CA. Afterwards, the chapter examined Amartya Sen's perspective on the social and collective issues of development. Here, we demonstrated that while some attempts have been made within the CA literature to address social and collective aspects of development, Sen's focus on the matter remains restricted. While his defence against charges of 'methodological individualism' illustrated a clear effort to include social considerations in development discussions, we have argued that Sen's analysis still remains within an instrumentalist vision of society that fails to offer sufficient theoretical space for the structural aspects of development, or for the constitution of collective agency. Here is where we have argued that the focus on solidarity as an ethical principle underpinning individual processes of empowerment and liberation illustrated in LT opens up a necessary space for a consideration of the social and structural ties that processes of development entail. In the last section, we have argued that it is the LT's focus on this solidarity at a theoretical (theological) discussion and as a guiding principle for the formation of communal action within the CBCs that offers the most valuable insights for rethinking Amartya Sen's approach of development 'as freedom'.

While LT does not occupy a similar space in the political, social, epistemological and spiritual agenda of Latin America (or the world), the discussions occurring in Latin America in the 60s and 70s, remain relevant for the challenges that development thinking and practice confront today. As we have signalled, there is a revival of discussions of religion and spirituality in development thinking, particularly on the necessity to address the immense ethical challenges that the environmental crisis poses

to the contemporary world.⁷⁸ While the early discussions of LT upon which this chapter has focused offer limited insights on the environmental aspects of process of liberation – in his early writings, Gutierrez argues to follow ‘Genesis’ prescription to dominate the Earth’ – both Gustavo Gutierrez and Leonardo Boff have started to address these concerns in more recent years.⁷⁹ Yet, despite the limitations that can be found within the LT (most notably the ones that speak of its particular religious focus), it offers us a unique space to question the limitations of Amartya Sen’s CA approach to development. Despite the multiple parallels between understanding development ‘as freedom’ and development ‘as liberation’, it is the latter that offers a more comprehensive articulation of the communal and collective aspects of the development process. And importantly, one that may help us to begin recovering the transformatory potential of discussions of development.

⁷⁸ See, for example: Scharper 2006; Scharper 2013; Hessel and Ruether 2000; O’Brien 2010. Harvard University Press has published a ten-volume series on *Religions of the World and Ecology*, which offer another clear example of this connection.

⁷⁹ Gutiérrez 1988, 90. The more recent works that include an explicit consideration of environmental issues include Boff 2008; Boff 1995; Gutiérrez 1999; Gutiérrez and Cardinal Müller 2015.

CHAPTER 5
DEVELOPMENT AS *CONSCIENTIZAÇÃO*:
THE TRANSFORMATORY POTENTIAL OF DEVELOPMENT

❧

Introduction

At the same time that the priests of the Liberation Theologians were active in their political discussions and grassroots organisation, another initiative, this time from the field of education, was taking shape in Brazil. Centred on the political and intellectual efforts of Brazilian thinker and educator Paulo Freire, what came to be known as *Critical pedagogy* was growing in influence across Latin America. His work and ideas have left a long standing legacy for the field of development, particularly, as we will discuss in depth below, on the articulation of participatory methodologies. In this chapter, however, we will engage Freire's Critical Pedagogy beyond these contributions to challenge Amartya Sen's work. Matching the approach employed in Ch. 4, we will use Freire's work to focus on a particular dimension of processes of empowerment, that is, on the possibilities of structural transformation that the project of development affords. In moving beyond the traditional, methodological, use of Freire's work for development thinking and practice, the chapter argues that his pedagogical vision of development presents clear parallels with Sen's perspective on empowerment, while at the same time, overcoming some of Sen's limitations. This is particularly the case if we focus on a discussion of the specifically political aspects of the paradox of empowerment that we explored in Ch. 3, which connect the promotion of political empowerment with participatory strategies for development. This chapter will argue, however, that Freire's work moves beyond Sen's paradox, and exposes the limitations of his capability approach on issues of social and structural transformation. In reading Freire's participatory method of literacy together with his political project of empowerment and social transformation, the chapter both overcomes the narrow readings of his work that has dominated the literature in the discipline and shows how his framework has the potential to advance our understandings of empowering development.

In the Brazil of the 1970s, the political implications of Paulo Freire's project of adult literacy were self-evident. In a country where literacy was a requirement for the right to vote until the Constitutional reform of 1988, the launch of the *Plano Nacional de Alfabetização* (National Literacy Campaign) in 1964 was perceived with suspicion, deemed as a subversive and radical political movement. In fact, the aspirations of the plan, developed by Paulo Freire, were short-lived. The Military *coup d'état* of April 1964 that brought down João Goulart's presidency cancelled the initiative for which Freire was incarcerated and later forced into exile.¹ Yet, for Freire, the literacy project's political dimension went beyond the formal access to vote. In his framework, the attainment of literacy skills was connected with a process of political empowerment, of participation, directed at and designed to achieve social transformation. For these efforts, Paulo Freire has become one of the most influential Latin American thinkers and his contributions have been echoed across the globe. Yet, even while he has been so widely discussed, the political implications of his work, especially for development, have not been sufficiently explored. For this reason, a large part of Freire's radical ideas has been lost.²

While they have mostly been linked to discussions of pedagogy and participatory methodologies, Freire's ideas are rooted on a radical political project. In Freire's pedagogical process, 'men develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality but as a reality in the process, in transformation.'³ Here, literacy and praxis are fundamental for the *conscientização* of those who subsist in the Third World, at the margins of the advances associated with the developed North.⁴ *Conscientização* -

¹ The National Literacy Campaign was created by Presidential decree 53465 on January 21st, 1964 officially adopting the 'Paulo Freire Method' and directed at the vast adult illiterate population. The plan itself was built on several experiences by Paulo Freire himself and others in expanding what came to be known as 'popular education'. For an analysis of the programs see Vicente 1995; Cavalcanti 2012.

² See Aronowitz 1993; Aronowitz 2013 for a discussion of what he terms 'methodological fetishism' in the mainstream use of Freire's ideas. We will discuss the specific manifestation of this in the case of development in the next section.

³ Freire 1972, 56. Emphasis in the original.

⁴ The notion of Praxis in Freire's work can be traced to the large influences of Marx on his thought (Aronowitz 1993; Mayo 2000; Lake and Kress 2013a). Praxis, for Freire, should be understood as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it'. Freire 1972, 51. The influence of Marxist thought in Paulo Freire's work is evident throughout his work. As he himself declared in a series of interviews with Myles Horton, reading Karl Marx's work was highly influential for Freire's formative years. See Horton and Freire 1990, 244. Yet, while Marxist thought was central to Freire's own work, he avoided an overly deterministic reading of reality, which he associated with 'vulgar' or Orthodox

in Portuguese ‘conscientization’ or consciousness-raising - refers to a process by which people achieve a critical awareness of both the socio-cultural reality in which they are immersed and their own possibilities for the transformation of this reality.⁵

Literacy is, thus, conceived as a vehicle for political and social empowerment, one that, importantly, is inextricably linked to social praxis and the transformation of the conditions that brought upon the illiteracy and deprivation that Freire associates with underdevelopment. This transformation, profoundly a political act, went beyond the access to vote and aimed at the political and social empowerment of the ‘underdeveloped’ communities in which Freire spent many years of his life. In his understanding of the process of empowerment and its centrality for the processes of social and political transformation, Freire’s framework bears similarities to Sen’s *capability approach*. As we will discuss in detail in this chapter, Freire’s *Conscientization* process can be clearly understood as a parallel conception to Sen’s understanding of the role and process of the acquisition of capabilities in the realisation of development. In fact, Freire’s work has had a large impact in the establishment of participatory practices for development, and his work is widely acknowledged in the discussions of such practices. Yet, in general, the application of the ‘Freirean Methodology’ for the promotion of participatory and empowering practices, has largely neglected the incorporation of his political and radical project of social transformation. In doing so, the connections with Sen’s project of *Development as Freedom* become all the more emphasised.

While such connections do exist, this chapter will argue that Freire’s pedagogy can also be used, by way of critical contrast, to expose Sen’s limitations. Particularly if we place Freire’s political ideas in conversation with the Paradox of Empowerment we examined in Ch. 3, where the notion of political empowerment is connected to trends

Marxism (Schugurensky 2011, 44). Most of the commentators of Freire’s work point out the importance of Marx’s influence in his own thinking, as a tool to understand the class divisions of his social and political context, recognising Freire’s efforts to overcome some of Marx’s limitations. See Aronowitz 1993; Roberts 2000; Mayo 2004; Morrow and Torres 2002; Boeira Michels and Volpato 2011; Schugurensky 2011. Among the key aspects where Freire’s work departs from Marxist orthodoxy, one which is of particular importance to this thesis project is the notion of human agency which was a central element in Freire’s work, and which only was featured in Marx’s later works (Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010; Lake and Kress 2013a). For Kress and Lake, ‘Freire’s work is more consistent with the evolving perspective that saw human agency as essential for social transformation’. Lake and Kress 2013a, 32.

⁵ Freire 1977, 51

related to participatory democracy and good governance, the contrast between Sen's *capability approach* and Freire's project becomes clearer.⁶ Keeping this context in mind and reading Freire's participatory method through his radical political project of social and political transformation and empowerment, the chapter will show how Freire's framework has the potential to move beyond the previously discussed limitations of Sen's project. As we will discuss further below, Freire sees *conscientização* as a process that fundamentally transforms the status quo in the emergence of a 'new humanity'. In contrast to a vision of participation as a tool for a political empowerment closely tied to good governance, to the improvement and strengthening of political institutions and the promotion of spaces for the accountability of the state, Freire offers a vision of empowerment and political participation as a transformatory force. Freire's pedagogical project, intimately related to a transformatory social praxis, allows us to question the meaning of empowerment and how it relates to the particular social and political structures from where it emerges. The chapter argues, thus, that while there is a similar understanding of the role of political participation in achieving individual empowerment and ultimately development, there is, in Freire, a fundamental opposition to the ideas of institutionalized participation that serves to shed light on the limitations of the mainstream understandings of political empowerment.

The chapter pursues this argument in three main sections that will follow this introduction. In the first section, the chapter explores Freire's work in relation to development - in particular regarding the implementation of participatory stances, where Freire's work has been highly influential - and traces its parallels with the Human Development paradigm and Sen's work in particular. In the second section, the chapter seeks to recover the political dimension of Freire's work in discussions of development, in particular in relation to the social transformatory potential that empowerment entails for both frameworks. In the third and final section, the chapter examines how the political ideas that underlie Freire's work allow us to understand his perspective of 'development as *conscientização*'. Here, we will engage more substantially with Freire's work and discuss it in relation to Sen, particularly focusing on the relations of the 'conscientization' process to the transformation of social structures.⁷ In discussing the

⁶ See Ch. 3, particularly section three.

⁷ As we have done in Ch. 4 with the analysis of the Liberation Theology (LT), Freire's work also offers us the possibility to rethink the understanding of community in which processes of empowerment are

similarities and differences with Sen's approach to empowerment, the chapter offers a reading that helps clarify the limits and possibilities of participatory practices for empowerment and development. The chapter then concludes by examining the limits of Freire's pedagogy for discussions of development, while highlighting how the recovery of the radical political ideas behind his work allows us to move beyond the limits of the Paradox of Empowerment.⁸

Paulo Freire and the emergence of participatory development

Freire's pedagogical approach was developed during his many years of grassroots work with impoverished groups in north-eastern Brazil and was most thoroughly articulated in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published in 1968 during his exile years in Chile. Following this and later works, Freire's influence expanded within and outside of Latin America to the point he is now considered one of the founding fathers of Critical Pedagogy, along with John Dewey.⁹ Beyond his influence in the educational field, Freire's ideas have been incorporated by development practitioners, health professionals, psychologists, social workers and theatre performers.¹⁰ Freire's analysis of the conditions of development emerged from his grassroots work with some of the most impoverished populations of Brazil. His method for literacy sought to raise a critical awareness and understanding of the reality surrounding students and teachers, and issues and aspects of development were frequent topics discussed in the 'Culture Circles' through which his pedagogical project developed.¹¹ These Circles consisted of organised

embedded. However, this chapter is not concerned with that exploration, as it only draws nuanced differences with the insights that the LT has offered us. Rather, its focus is set on exploring another dimension of the notion of empowerment that Sen espouses, that is: its relation to ideas of structural change and social transformation. To explore further Freire's link to Liberation Theology see Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010, chap. 2

⁸ It must be noted that there are several relevant aspects that could be further explored in his work, in particular the notion of community in which the processes of individual and social transformation take place or the role of development practitioners and their relation with the communities in which they work. In this chapter, however, discussions will focus on the aspects that offer us the opportunity to question and advance Sen's capability approach and its notion of empowerment as embedded in his development thinking.

⁹ Muro 2012

¹⁰ Freire's impact can be seen from several disciplines. Good overviews of his work and general impact can be found in the works of Peter Roberts, Craig Mayo and Daniel Schugurensky. See Schugurensky 2011; Mayo 2004; Roberts 2000. On valuable collected volumes that discuss his work and impact see, McLaren and Lankshear 1994; McLaren and Leonard 1993; C. A. Torres 2004; Lake and Kress 2013b.

¹¹ Vicente 1995, 381; Freire 1974, 42

meetings between teachers and illiterate workers and peasants in which dialogues attempted to problematize and critically understand their social and political reality. While the immediate focus of these Circles was for the peasants and workers to achieve literacy skills, Freire's pedagogical approach went beyond this. Rather than focusing on learning to read and write as a mechanical and a-political process, the Circles offered students and teachers an opportunity to learn from each other's life experiences, and in exploring the codification of their realities achieve literacy skills.¹² Inevitably, they resulted in the questioning of issues of development and their impact on the peasants and workers' daily lives and offered the opportunity to reflect on their own role in perpetuating and confronting these same issues. The experience and the discussions held within them profoundly shaped Freire's theoretical work and became at the same time spaces of social and political participation for teachers and students.¹³

In theorizing these experiences, Freire formulated his most widely discussed contribution to development thinking and practice: the necessity of including participatory spaces for processes of empowerment and social transformation to occur. Seeing literacy as a political endeavour, Freire's pedagogical project understood the centrality of processes and practices to foster the participation of the poor and illiterate. These participatory stances had a fundamental role for their empowerment and the transformation of themselves and their communities. His reflections on the need to ensure non-elite social and political participation of the powerless and oppressed have been his most resounding legacy for development. At the same time, one of the most salient shortcomings here has been the extent to which Freire's political project has been left aside in the uses of his work. The 'Freirean Method' has largely been taken as a synonym for the inclusion of an ample understanding of processes of dialogue and participation, whether within the classroom or outside of it. 'Working within Freire's framework' has come to mean the incorporation of participatory stances to offer the opportunity for individual empowerment, whether that be the empowerment of students, or the participants of development projects.¹⁴ This narrow focus has largely

¹² Freire explains the importance of these Circles in his literacy project on several occasions. For instance, see Freire 1972; Freire and Macedo 2005. Yet, more than the theoretical importance that these Circles entailed for his pedagogical project, they offered Freire the most valuable insights into the social and political realities of those involved in his critical pedagogy.

¹³ Freire 1972, 15

¹⁴ Aronowitz 1993, 8; Aronowitz 2013 See also, Richards 2001, 6; Schugurensky 2011, 119

neglected the political roots of Freire's method and project for literacy, and in doing so, the lines that connect Freire's work to that of Amartya Sen have become disproportionately strengthened and their important differences blurred.¹⁵

While Paulo Freire's work has received attention from development thinking and practice, it is in the latter that his contribution has become more widely acknowledged.¹⁶ Regretfully, as Aronowitz has warned us, it has mostly followed a 'methodological fetishism' often found in the pedagogical approaches that adopt a Freirean framework. Illustrating this quite starkly, in a discussion of Paulo Freire's inclusion in the book *Fifty Key Thinkers on Development*, Andrés Nárman stated that 'Freire's significance is that his work has provided essential inputs to the theoretical debate on education, but at the same time the *practice* he has generated is even more important.'¹⁷ In development practice, Freire is considered one of the foundations of the implementation of participatory practices of development, which have gone hand to hand with the shift to people-centred development thinking. It is in here that the initial connections between Freire and Sen's frameworks become evident. As we have previously discussed, Sen's *capability approach* has been the clearest example of the shift in development theory towards the individual and the pursuit of their political and economic empowerment, allegedly the goal at the heart of the participatory practices mushrooming in the development field.¹⁸

In Sen's *capability approach*, the expansion of individual agency, mediated by and enabling an expansion of freedoms, is at the core of the process of individual empowerment. Particularly associated with the rise of participatory practices of development, is Sen's analysis of political freedoms.¹⁹ At a social level, enabling public discussions is fundamental to making reasoned social choices, and thus, spaces for political participation become essential to the pursuit of development.²⁰ To participate in this process of deliberation, the political empowerment of the individual is instrumental and constitutive of development. The freedom of the individual to participate in political life is therefore central, both as an instrument to further the

¹⁵ See Glassman and Patton 2013; Mazzer Barroso 2002; Tremblay and Gutberlet 2010; Ellerman 2006.

¹⁶ Nárman 2006, 98. Emphasis added

¹⁷ Aronowitz 1993, 8; Aronowitz 2013

¹⁸ See Ch. 1, section five and Ch. 3.

¹⁹ Sen 1999a, 10–11. We have discussed this in Ch. 3, see section three.

²⁰ See, in particular, Sen's discussions of 'Democracy as public reason' in Sen 2010, chap. 5.

expansion of interconnected freedoms (for example, individuals that are able to participate can demand economic, cultural or social changes) and as an end in itself, since political and civil freedoms are seen, as discussed in Ch. 3, as constitutive of development. In his attempts to ethically ground development in the individual, Sen's framework became of paramount importance to discussing and understanding the shift to participatory development.

Yet, the starting point of these participatory practices of development, whereby 'bottom-up approaches' of development would become the norm and the solution to issues of underdevelopment, can be traced further beyond Sen's work, and Freire's framework offers a clear precedent. In particular, Freire's contribution to the promotion of participatory practices has largely been acknowledged.²¹ One of the clearest examples in this regard can be seen with the emergence of the PRA (participatory rural appraisal) framework later known as PLA (participatory learning and action). These participatory methodologies, most notably developed by Robert Chambers, sought to orient development practice to ensuring a role for the poor and dispossessed in their own development. This included 'practical engagement with local communities and people, openness to complexity and diversity, a principle of decentralization and empowerment - "handing over the stick," and sharing and lateral learning and spread'.²² In articulating this framework, Chambers recognised the indebtedness of the PRA to Freire's notion of dialogue and to the opportunity that it offered to break the 'Culture of Silence' in making the poor's realities and voices heard.²³ Chambers' PRA methodologies expanded at a remarkable rate in development practice both in international organisations working for development and in civil society organisations.²⁴

For some of these initiatives, the combination of Freire's pedagogical project and the PRA participatory methodologies was seen as key to development projects that would strengthen local communities and enable their transformations through

²¹ See, for example Chambers 1983; Chambers 1994a; Mansuri and Rao 2012; Kothari and Cooke 2001. Also, the World Bank has allegedly taken Freire's work into consideration for empowerment measuring in World Bank 2004; Leal 2007; Mansuri and Rao 2012.

²² Chambers 1994a

²³ Chambers 1994b; Chambers 1983, 73; Chambers 1994a

²⁴ In 1996, the World Bank's *Participation Sourcebook* featured the work that the institution had been developing in fostering participation instances within its projects and explicitly discussed the use of PRA. Similarly, another example can be found in the UNDP's *Who are the Question-makers? A Participatory Evaluation Handbook*. World Bank 1996; United Nations Development Programme 1997.

empowerment and decentralisation. One of the most widespread examples here can be seen in the ‘Reflect’ initiative that started in El Salvador in the 1990s and expanded to over 60 countries, with more than 350 organisations by the early 2000s. According to its documents, Reflect ‘started as a fusion of the political philosophy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with the practical methodologies developed for Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)’.²⁵ As commonly expressed by most of the participatory practices that occur in the context of development, this initiative sought ‘to improve the meaningful participation of people in decisions that affect their lives’, in an approach to learning and social change.²⁶ To empirically evaluate the success of these participatory frameworks exceeds the scope of this thesis project. However, it is nonetheless important to note some of the shortcomings of the modes of implementing Freire’s framework that these projects entailed.

While the projects’ aims arguably could be understood as lying quite close to Freire’s, their implementations have generally prioritised a less radical goal. Here, the ideas of participation, empowerment and social change, central to Freire’s framework, have been domesticated into those espoused by international development organisations, which focus on their potential for strengthening liberal institutions and their accountability mechanisms. Participation, here, appears as a vehicle to promote the transparency and good governance of deliberative democracies. Empowerment is connected to ensuring an effective political and economic participation. Social change is seen through the lenses of consolidating democratic governance, promoting accountability, transparency and deliberative instances. Concrete examples can be found in some of the projects promoted within the Reflect initiative that seek to either increase the accountability of and strengthen the institutional networks available in their countries (e.g. the Social Audit initiative) or the projects linked to the establishment and improvement of people’s access to markets, through the creation of ‘small businesses’ at the time that numerical skills are attained.²⁷ Another clear example can be seen in the use of Chambers’ work for the World Bank’s colossal cross-country study that

²⁵ Archer and Newman 2003, 2

²⁶ Archer and Newman 2003, 3

²⁷ According to Reflect, the Social audit Initiative is ‘one way to turn the tables and give people an opportunity to directly hold agencies accountable, enabling them to ask questions even of powerful institutions and officials, strengthening grassroots democracy.’ Archer and Newman 2003, 50–75.

interviewed over 60,000 poor people using PRA methodologies. This study, which we referred to in the Introduction, informed the launch of the World Development Report 2000/01 and the WB's subsequent work on empowerment and participatory projects.²⁸ Far from achieving the radical transformations that Freire envisaged for his participatory processes, these initiatives have consolidated the political and economic agenda of empowerment that has accompanied Sen's work and the shift to people-centred approaches to development in general.²⁹

The disillusionment with the rise and implementation of participatory practices, in particular in regards to their use in development policy, is, however, not a novelty. In fact, numerous studies have focused on criticising these trends to the point where the urge to expand these practices has even been regarded as a 'New Tyranny'.³⁰ Criticisms thus abound, both from empirical evaluations - highlighting the meagre results that these practices have obtained, the difficulties they have in reaching the poor and their risks of co-optation- as well as from more theoretical analyses that question some of the assumptions that such practices entail.³¹ In particular, these include critiques regarding the 'dangers of localism' that question the primacy of local knowledge and the risks of essentialisation, the depoliticising potential that these practices entail and the insufficient space that these practices give to reflecting on transfers of power. All of this presents acute challenges to the possibility to recover the transformatory potential that these participatory practices hold.³² Yet, these participatory practices do represent an enormous step forward from previous merely top-down approaches, and they still hold an unparalleled transformatory potential. It is, then, necessary to recover Freire's

²⁸ Narayan et al. 2000

²⁹ Analysis of the rise of participatory practices of development abound. See, for example, Mansuri and Rao 2004; Mansuri and Rao 2012; Kothari and Cooke 2001; Hickey and Mohan 2004; Cornwall and Fujita 2012; Kapoor 2005; Cleaver 1999; S. C. White 1996; Leal 2007; MirafTAB 2004.

³⁰ Kothari and Cooke 2001

³¹ For example, Mansuri and Rao 2004; Francis 2001 reflect on the controversial space that these participatory practices have had in World Bank projects, while Mazzer Barroso 2002 discusses the use of a Freireian framework in the work of Southern NGOs. Similarly, Kidd and Byram 1982 criticise their own efforts to implement Freire's framework for ultimately only achieving a 'Pseudo-Freirian development' in which 'Freire's ideas have been distorted and used in ways which potentially could intensify the oppression of powerless groups in the Third World. [their case study] shows how progressive-sounding development rhetoric can obscure the reality of class stratification and power structures and mystify the actual impact of development programmes.' Kidd and Byram 1982, 104.

³² See, among others, the analyses of Kapoor 2002; Mohan and Stokke 2000; Leal 2007; S. C. White 1996; Cleaver 1999; MirafTAB 2004.

political project *together with* his participatory methodologies to recover the transformative potential that these practices entail. This is the task that we will set out to fulfil in the following sections.

The transformatory potential of development: Freire's work beyond participatory methodologies

Freire's contributions have not attracted the same level of attention in development theory as in their implementation in development practices. In many cases, when his work is mentioned in the former, the references do not amount to more than a footnote or a casual mention.³³ Of the few notable exceptions we can find is the work of the American development thinker Denis Goulet, who discussed Freire's fundamental contribution to re-thinking the role of participation in his analysis of development ethics.³⁴ Goulet celebrated Freire's contribution to development thinking, identifying its connection with the people-centred development that his calls for ethical development were also seeking. For him, Freire's main contribution to development resided in his attempts to further 'democratise' development policies, opening spaces for people to become involved in their own transformation and it is along these lines as Goulet's analysis that we will discuss Freire's contribution to development thinking and its connections with Sen's work. To Goulet, precisely in understanding development as 'the ability of powerless masses to begin to shape their own destiny as subjects, not merely objects, of history' Freire came closer to the normative claims of development ethics, that advocated for a people-centred development.³⁵

Goulet recognised that in his analysis of critical pedagogy and consciousness-raising, linked to a transformatory social praxis, Freire moved beyond the limitations of state-centric notions of development. In his analysis, Freire opened up a space for

³³ Such is the case, for example of the works by Escobar 1995, 227; Selwyn 2014, 24; Kay 1989, 14; Kapoor 2008; Crocker 2008, 9;339; Nederveen Pieterse 2010, 102 that merely note that Freire's work in development is important, but do not engage substantially in its discussion.

³⁴ Goulet 1995, 91–93; Goulet 1989; Goulet 2005. If we recall, the analysis of Sen's work in Ch. 2, Goulet's work has been of paramount importance in discussions of development ethics and he himself has pointed out Sen's connections to similar ideas. At the same time, Goulet was one of the few ones that connected Liberation Theology with discussions of development (in Goulet 1974), albeit in a very reduced manner, as we pointed out in Ch. 4.

³⁵ Goulet 1996, 3; Goulet 1997, 1169. This is a call, that, as we have discussed in length in Ch. 2 of this thesis, Amartya Sen also responded. In fact, Goulet himself has pointed this out, See fn.4 of Ch. 2.

individual agency in processes of development and very clearly connected it with the deployment of participatory spaces. Such spaces, more than anything, served for the empowerment of people in becoming ‘subjects of their own destiny’. In Goulet’s own words,

‘For Freire, the supreme touchstone of development is whether people who were previously treated as mere objects, known and acted upon, can now actively know and act upon, thereby becoming subjects of their own social destiny. When people are oppressed or reduced to the culture of silence, they do not participate in their own humanization. Conversely, when they participate, thereby becoming active subjects of knowledge and action, they begin to construct their properly human history and engage in processes of authentic development’.³⁶

Goulet’s celebration of the work of Paulo Freire was repeated in multiple forums, and remains an exception in the engagement of his framework for development thinking. Goulet understood, earlier than many, the importance of the changes that Freire proposed in the vision of development as a process enacted primarily by the people. Furthermore, he linked it explicitly to the ethical dimension that his work on development thinking was hoping to advance. However, even Goulet’s analysis was still focused on the practices resulting from his critical pedagogy and their implications for development. Goulet’s discussions of Freire mostly centred on an attempt to more theoretically ground the need to include participatory spaces within development and, almost exclusively, focused on Freire’s argument for the necessity to open participatory spaces in development practice.³⁷ In this sense, while his treatment of Freire’s work certainly went beyond those of the PRA and others, it still remained rather limited, focused on the methodological aspects of his approach.

In light of Goulet’s analysis, once more Sen’s and Freire’s approaches to empowerment through participatory development can still be seen as similar and their differences become blurred. Yet, if we incorporate the political project into the participatory aims of Freire, we might be able to further clarify the fundamental difference between Sen and Freire’s projects. In understanding the relation of the process of *conscientização* as empowerment, as an individual and a communal endeavour and as a project of social, political and economic transformation, we will be

³⁶ Goulet 1989

³⁷ See, for example, Goulet 1989; Goulet 1995, chap. 8; Goulet 1997

able to advance further in distinguishing them.

EMPOWERMENT AS CONSCIENTIZAÇÃO

While Freire's notion of development is limited in some aspects, particularly, in the manners we will discuss in the last section of this chapter, in his connections with the ideas of dependency theories, his work presents innovative elements that are worth considering today. Specifically, in discussing the process of *conscientização*, Freire advances an agent-centred understanding of the process of development that stands as a forerunner to other people-centred approaches to development that would come later - particularly Sen's. It is this understanding of *conscientização* as empowerment that clarifies the distinction between Sen's and Freire's framework and what this section focuses on.

Freire's reflections on development thinking did not originate within a systematic analysis of the economic, social or political conditions necessary for development nor from a desire to expand the emerging debates on development theory, stemming from the fields of ethics or economics. Rather, his work was motivated by his practical engagement with those who suffered the oppression of underdevelopment, in particular those whose political and economic role in the world was restrained for their lack of literacy skills. In this context, his reflections on development emerge from his pedagogical project, connecting educational practices with a larger project of transformation, in the quest for a 'new kind of society.'³⁸ The process of learning to read and write is thus connected to a political project of social transformation, one in which the peasants and illiterate, in raising their critical awareness and understanding of the reality in which they are immersed, engage in a transformatory social praxis. In Freire's own words,

'As an event calling forth the critical reflection of both the learners and educators, the literacy process must relate speaking the word to transforming reality, and to man's role in this transformation. Perceiving the significance of that relationship is indispensable for those learning to read and write if we are really committed to liberation. Such a perception will lead the learners to recognize a much greater right than that of being literate. They will ultimately

³⁸ Giroux 1985, xiii

recognize that, as men, they have the right to have a voice'.³⁹

The literacy project is conceived as a project in which 'Reading the word' cannot be separated from 'reading the world', in a transformatory praxis.⁴⁰ The notion of praxis, of Marxist inspiration, represented for Freire the dialectic connection of thought and action, a central aspect as we will see below of the process of *conscientização* or consciousness-raising.⁴¹ 'To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it.'⁴² Only humans can engage in such a transformatory praxis and overcome the structures of oppression. Importantly, education for critical consciousness – that is opposed to what he called the *banking system* of education – should occur through a process of *dialogue*.⁴³ This is a process which involves a profound connection of the worlds of both teachers and students, and contributes to the political empowerment of both the teacher and the students in the construction of a critical understanding of reality.

As such, in contrast to the educational process as one-way; Freire insists that it is a two-way road that 'depicts leaders as being engaged in a common plight with the people'.⁴⁴ This process rejects notions of objectivity in the construction of knowledge, and requires a deep communication and compromise of both students and teachers committed to what he refers to as a *transformatory praxis*. It is only through a true engagement in the transformation of their societies, through this praxis, that both teachers and students can go through the process of *conscientizacao (conscientization)*, that is, to become critically aware of the structures in place in their communities and thereby develop a critical consciousness and transform them. For Freire 'Conscientization refers to the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects achieve a deepening awareness both of the sociocultural reality that shapes their

³⁹ Freire 1977, 31. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁰ Freire and Macedo 2005, 30–32

⁴¹ Lake and Kress 2013a, 30

⁴² Freire 1985a, 93

⁴³ We will not discuss here the details of what Freire termed the '*banking system*' of education. Yet, it is worth noting that it refers to the traditional (liberal) approach to education in the 60s and 70s, in which students were conceived of as a *tabula-rasa* or empty account and the teachers –emotionally and pedagogically distant from the students – would simply fill them with their knowledge. For further discussion on this idea, see Gadotti 1994; Gadotti and Torres 2009; Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010; Freire 1972, chap. 2.

⁴⁴ Miller, Brown, and Hopson 2011, 1089

lives and of their capacity to transform that reality'.⁴⁵ The process of education, thus, becomes a politically empowering process that enables individuals to become involved and transform their societies. It implies and presents a way of overcoming the *Culture of Silence*, which holds students and teachers within an internalised fear of their own capacities to act and transform the conditions that sustained and created this culture of silence in the first place.⁴⁶

Conscientization is thus linked at the same time to both a genuine involvement of citizens in the transformation of their societies through engaging in concrete forms of participation and, at the same time, to a process by which individuals develop their consciousness and are inherently empowered as humans. Understanding *conscientization* as empowerment, and this in turn as a fundamental step to development presents clear parallels with Sen's notion of development and its embedded understanding of empowerment that we have discussed in Ch. 2 and 3. To both, Freire and Sen, development – broadly understood as the removal of *unfreedoms* in Sen's terminology and of *oppression* in Freire's – only occurs through this process of empowerment, of individual engagement. The necessity, thus, to enable individuals to undertake this task becomes a primary quest for both their frameworks: Sen highlights the necessity to enable individuals to develop their *capabilities*, while Freire takes literacy as a political project to achieve their *conscientização* and overcome their *culture of silence*. In similar terms, these processes of empowerment assume an increased participation of the poor and powerless to unlock the gates to development, social and individual transformation. Yet, it is necessary to clarify their differences, for a closer look to Freire's conscientization process will further clarify and move beyond the limitations of Sen's *capability approach*.

Development as Conscientização

In analysing Freire's understanding of 'development as *conscientization*', four specific elements represent a breakthrough with development thinking at the time and ought to

⁴⁵ Freire 1972, 15

⁴⁶ Freire 1972, 47–51; Morrow and Torres 2002, 101–105. This necessity of overcoming this *Culture of Silence* and to overcome not only the internalised individual fear of action (by becoming empowered) is one of the main theoretical devices that distinguishes Freire's vision of empowerment from Sen's, as we will discuss below.

be noted. They provide an important and often neglected context to the emergence of people-centred approaches to development in the trajectory of critical Latin American development thinking. More importantly, they crucially allow us to differentiate Freire's framework from Sen's, and offer a clear insight into the limitations and possibilities of advancing beyond the latter.

The first, as we have already discussed, is Freire's early move to a people-centred understanding of development. While this is not distinct from Sen's approach, Freire's analysis of the relationship between empowerment and development does stand out from other discussions of development from the period and as we have been arguing, they give us critical resources to expand on the limitations of later perspectives, particularly Sen's. In this sense, as in Sen, we can see in Freire the move towards a people-centred approach to development not only in his discussions of *conscientization* and empowerment as the vehicles for social transformation, but in the need to understand development beyond economic terms. In his perspective, 'in order to determine whether or not a society is developing, one must go beyond criteria based on indices of "per capita" income (...) as well as those which concentrate on the study of gross income.'⁴⁷ However, Freire's perspective, more than focusing on addressing the limitations of the understanding of *homo economicus* as in Sen, emerged from his discussions of the cultural reproduction of unfair social orders. Freire argued that the key to understand whether a society was developing was not to focus on growth measurements but on whether or not they overcome the 'culture of silence', that reproduces the relations of domination between societies. The term 'culture of silence' has a vital importance for Freire's framework and is used both to refer to the reproduction of relations of domination within the societies of the periphery as well as between the dependent societies of the periphery and the metropolitan - core.⁴⁸ It refers to a 'historical conditioning' imposed by social relations of power, that in this case is counterposed to a society that 'has a voice', the possibility to decide their own transformation.⁴⁹ While we will discuss further the limitations of Freire's understanding of development, which are connected to his links with the *dependentistas* analysis prominent in his native Brazil at the time, Freire's early shift to a people-centred notion

⁴⁷ Freire 1972, 130

⁴⁸ Morrow and Torres 2002, 102. We will examine the second use in the following section.

⁴⁹ Freire 1977, 57–60

of development should be recognised.

The second striking element within his development theory, which in contrast has not been introduced above, is the role of the community in the processes of empowerment as conscientization. For Freire, *conscientização* only occurs in the communion of both teachers and students who become critically aware and involved in their communities. Empowerment only takes place within a community, and it can only take place in a dialectic relationship between individuals and their society. This is understood as a process of liberation, in which both the individual and their societies are transformed. In his own words:

‘I don't believe in self-liberation. Liberation is a social act... Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom’.⁵⁰

The centrality of the community focus within Freire’s understanding of empowerment stands in stark contrast to more individualised notions of empowerment. This is particularly clear if we confront it with the discussion of social and collective capabilities within Sen’s capability approach, as we have done in the previous chapter.⁵¹ Freire offers, again, a social conception of development, not an individualistic one. Yet, in essence, the centrality of the communal aspect in Freire’s discussion of development and social transformation are not distinct from the perspective of the Liberation Theologians. Both in his practice and in his theoretical reflections, Freire’s reflections on the matter remained closely linked to that group and thus do not offer a new element for the arguments developed in the previous chapter of this thesis.⁵²

The third element is his questioning of the development industry, both by questioning the role of the development professionals and practitioners, and by challenging the ideas that justify their work. While this is not strictly related to a discussion of the process of empowerment, and thus, we will not offer an exhaustive analysis, it is worth mentioning as it offers valuable insights into the contemporary

⁵⁰ Freire and Shor 1987

⁵¹ See Ch. 4 particularly section four.

⁵² See fn. 8 in this same chapter.

development industry.⁵³ Much as Freire rejected a distinct and hierarchical relationship between teachers and students, he also warned against the dangers of the professionalization of the aid business, and the separation of development ‘professionals’ from the communities in which their work takes place. Social workers that seek to engage in transformatory development practice must abandon an ‘assistencialist’⁵⁴ approach in which the communities are the object of development, and instead embrace dialogical, horizontal practices, in which both the communities and the aid professionals are the subjects of transformation. Importantly, such practices not only necessitate faith in the capacities of these same communities to achieve their own transformation, they require lengthy commitments.⁵⁵ To Freire, such dialogical initiatives require a time commitment that exceeds the current short-term timeframes of project implementation in which participatory practices normally take place.

Furthermore, in expanding the discussions of the role of aid workers, Freire touches upon an aspect that would become central to later discussions by post-development thinkers.⁵⁶ Specifically, he foresees the use of development discourses as an instrument of ideological domination that reproduces the status-quo in which the Third-World remains dependent on the metropolis.⁵⁷ In exploring these ideas, Freire talks of the ‘conquest and cultural invasion’, of the reproduction of a discourse that justifies development in terms that posit it as ‘in the interest of the metropolitan society’.⁵⁸ In a brilliant passage, Freire discussed the way in which dominant elites ‘*mythicize* the world’ in order to preserve their dominion over the oppressed. It is worth quoting him at length on this.

‘It is necessary for the oppressors to approach the people in order, via subjugation, to keep them passive. This approximation, however, does not involve being with the people, or require true communication. It is accomplished by the oppressors depositing myths indispensable to the

⁵³ This is a topic that we will not explore in detail in this thesis, as it is not directly related to the discussion at hand, and particularly, it does not directly relate to Sen’s *capability approach*. Yet Freire’s discussion of the role of the aid industry and of the aid professionals is an enlightening one, offering a clear precedent to discussions of post-development theories, an aspect that has not received much attention from development theory but could be explored in later projects.

⁵⁴ This is the term that Freire uses to describe paternalist development policies. Freire 1974, 113.

⁵⁵ Freire 1974, 111–120

⁵⁶ See Ch. 1, section five.

⁵⁷ Freire 1977, 57

⁵⁸ Freire 1972, 130. In his analysis of development, as we will discuss in the last section of this chapter, Freire remained framed within the *dependentista* school, strong in Brazil at the time.

preservation of the status quo: for example, the myth that the oppressive order is a "free society"; the myth that all persons are free to work where they wish, that if they don't like their boss they can leave him and look for another job; (...) the myth of the heroism of the oppressor classes as defenders of "Western Christian civilization" against "materialist barbarism"; the myth of the charity and generosity of the elites, when what they really do as a class is to foster selective "good deeds" (subsequently elaborated into the myth of "disinterested aid," which on the international level was severely criticized by Pope John XXIII); the myth that the dominant elites, "recognizing their duties," promote the advancement of the people, so that the people, in a gesture of gratitude, should accept the words of the elites and be conformed to them; (...) the myth of the industriousness of the oppressors and the laziness and dishonesty of the oppressed, as well as the myth of the natural inferiority of the latter and the superiority of the former.⁵⁹

Although the argument lacks the specificity of the discussions of post-development thinkers, it clearly anticipates what would later become one of their strongest arguments: the understanding of 'development as a conservative, if not reactionary, myth.'⁶⁰ However, Freire mostly focuses these discussions on the reproduction of a *Culture of Silence* and, as a critique of development as an all-encompassing Western endeavour, they remain in an embryonic state. More importantly, it must be noted that Freire does not reject development as such – an element that is central to post-development analysis. Rather, conscientization provides a way out of the reproduction of these dangerous myths.

Finally, the fourth and most striking contribution of the Freirean analysis of development as conscientization, is the connection between processes of empowerment and social transformation. In light of the myriad of participatory practices of development that aim at strengthening existing institutions, improving access to these institutions for the poor or powerless, and making these institutions accountable to the people, Freire's perspective offers a novel perspective. As we will discuss in the section below, rather than seeing participatory stances as processes of individual empowerment that contribute to the consolidation and improvement of the same institutions that led to the emergence of situations of oppression in the first place, Freire tirelessly advocates for the need to effectively transform them. It is not enough to ensure that individuals are economically empowered if that means joining a market that is still based on the exploitation of others. Similarly, it is not enough to be 'politically empowered' if that

⁵⁹ Freire 1972, 109

⁶⁰ Esteva 2010, 23. However, references to the 'development myth' can be found across post-development analysis. See, for example, Rist 2008; Escobar 1992; Latouche 1992.

means participating in institutions that sustain or reproduce a system that is ultimately socially and politically unjust.

His calls for conscientization are thus coupled with an engagement with a transformatory praxis, one that challenges the very same practices and institutions that made the oppressions a reality in the first place.⁶¹ Thus, the empowerment that Freire assumes as necessary for the achievement of development lies precisely in participatory practices that challenge, rather than strengthen, and that transform, rather than improve, social structures. In that sense, the type of participation that the process of conscientization assumes goes beyond the processes of participatory development connected with the consolidation of the good governance agenda. It is then this understanding of empowerment that crucially conflicts with Sen's perspective, and to which we will now turn.

AN ONTOLOGICAL VOCATION FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: INDICATING A PATHWAY BEYOND THE PARADOX

For Freire, discussions of the possibility of empowerment and the achievement of development, as for Sen, are tied to a larger, normative framework. This normative framework advances, in both cases, an understanding of development linked to the achievement of freedom (or liberation) from the material constraints of underdevelopment for which processes of empowerment are fundamental. Similar to Sen's perspective on development as the removal of *unfreedoms*⁶², Freire argues for a process of empowerment as conscientization that results in the liberation from the sources of oppression.⁶³ For both, this implies a process of transformation or empowerment that is related to the possibility of enabling individuals to act. For Sen, as we have discussed in previous chapters, development requires freeing individual agency by expanding the *capabilities* of people to act.⁶⁴

If we recall our previous analysis from Ch. 2, in Sen's perspective development is understood as 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy'.⁶⁵ This

⁶¹ Freire 1972, 48. We will expand on this analysis in the following section.

⁶² Sen 1999a, 33

⁶³ Freire 1972, 68

⁶⁴ See Ch. 3.

⁶⁵ Sen 1999a, 3

involves expanding the capabilities of people to engage in social and economic life; such capabilities are then the means and end of development. In fact, for Sen, a *capability* 'reflects a person's freedom to choose between different ways of living.'⁶⁶ Empowerment, thus, entails expanding the *capabilities* that people enjoy as a necessary step for their participation in society. For Freire, a similar process occurs linked with his project for literacy: the achievement of a critical awareness and understanding of the social and political reality in which they are immersed is fundamental for people to engage in a transformatory praxis. Thus, the achievement of this *conscientização* is again a means and end of the process of social transformation. While these perspectives on the notion of empowerment appear similar, as we examined in Ch. 3, Sen's notion of empowerment appears restricted by its paradoxical nature, framing the ways of engagement and participation. Moving beyond this limiting framework, for Freire, processes of empowerment as conscientization cannot be disassociated from a transformatory praxis. Conscientization necessitates overcoming the contradiction between oppressors and oppressed that is embedded in the current social, economic and political structures, thus moving beyond Sen's paradox of empowerment. Conscientization, in Freire, entails a process of social transformation that affects both the oppressors and the oppressed and responds to an ontological vocation pursued by human beings.⁶⁷

As in Sen, conscientization entails a process of individual empowerment; however, for Freire, it also necessitates the transformation of the social structures that gave place to the oppression (or dis-empowerment) in the first place, and of the conditions for its reproduction. The oppressed, those who in Sen's conception suffer from the burden of the *unfreedoms* associated to under-development, are not only materially oppressed; for Freire, they internalise this oppression through the

⁶⁶ Sen 1999a, 43

⁶⁷ Given the centrality of the term 'ontology' for a large swath of debates in contemporary social and political theory, a clarification of the use of this term in Freire's work is in order. Freire himself uses the expression 'ontological vocation' throughout his work, without making any connection to this vast literature, which in large part, post-dated him. Rather, he is only making the more modest claim about the nature of social change and its connection with processes of *conscientization*, where social change emerges as an inherent vocation of human beings. In this way, the use of the term 'ontological', merely states that social change cannot be reduced to action-based capabilities but requires a wider social and intellectual change. Cfr. Freire 1972, 48; Freire 2000a, 5. For an overview of the ontological turn in political theory, see S. K. White 2000.

reproduction of the *culture of silence*.⁶⁸ This, too, needs to be transformed if individuals are to achieve their conscientization and development. In this analysis, the idea of the *culture of silence* doesn't respond, as we have referred in the previous section above, to the macro-analysis that distinguishes the peripheric - Third World societies from the metropolitan-First World ones. Rather, in here, the culture of silence refers to a process of the psychological internalization of the historical and cultural structures of oppression.

The quest to break with this culture of silence starts with becoming critically aware of the structures of oppression (and enabling their transformation). This is a quest for the humanization of the individuals - both the oppressors and oppressed - which is rooted in their ontological vocation to become fully human and to overcome what Erich Fromm calls 'fear of freedom'.⁶⁹ It is this fear of freedom that Freire points to as intrinsic to the *culture of silence* through which the oppressed internalise their oppression and become 'being for others'. The desire to break its reproduction is part of the quest for the 'humanization' of individuals, in Freire's words. In fact, the engagement in the transformatory praxis that breaks with the culture of silence and overcomes the 'fear of freedom' responds to the quest to become 'fully human'. Importantly, to become 'fully human' is in Freire not a teleological process (i.e. not one with a fixed goal), but one in which human beings perceive both themselves and the reality in which they are immersed as an open ended process, one that can be subject to transformation. To Torres and Morrow, 'the notion of an "ontological vocation" is not rooted in a fixed, metaphysical essence as portrayed by the philosophical anthropologist; rather, humanization is envisioned as a creative struggle for freedom through which people may regain their humanity and take responsibility for it in specific contexts of dialogue'.⁷⁰ For

⁶⁸ The idea of a 'Culture of silence' is another element that appears embedded in Freire's Marxist perspective. In some occasions, Freire relates its use with the Marxist idea of superstructure - for example following Althusser's analysis on the historical-cultural configuration that ensures the reproduction of the status quo (Freire 1977, 57; Freire 1972, 159). Here, when using it to counterpose it to the achievement of *conscientização*, and referring to the reproduction of an internalized relation of domination, 'culture of silence' comes closer to the idea of 'false consciousness'. In here, the term also serves to avoid the epistemological dichotomy between the revolutionary experts and the ignorant, because the 'assumption is that within the culture of silence there are forms of accumulated experience that potentially can take the form of critical knowledge through processes of dialogical learning' (Morrow and Torres 2002, 102).

⁶⁹ Freire did not directly reference Fromm in his discussions of the 'Fear of Freedom' and its importance for the reproduction of a *culture of silence*. However, as Freire refers to Fromm's work elsewhere, it becomes clear that the roots of his discussions of the Fear of Freedom can be found in his work. See Lake and Dagostino 2013, 103-106.

⁷⁰ Morrow and Torres 2002, 95

Freire, this *ontological vocation* is what guides the quest for a liberation that has both a material and psychological aspect, both interrelated. The material aspect is connected with the possibilities of social transformation, of the engagement in a praxis that transforms the conditions that prevented the humanization of both oppressed and oppressors.⁷¹ The psychological aspect refers to the achievement of *conscientization*, of the empowerment of the individual, which is linked to the effective transformation of the structures of oppression.

In this way, Freire connects both the achievement of *conscientization*, with a social transformation that overcomes the reproduction of the culture of silence. In his perspective, the achievement of the higher level of critical consciousness is inherently linked with engagement in the transformation of the social structures that brought upon the emergence of the oppression in the first place.⁷² Notably, this necessitates breaking with the reproduction of the *mythicized* vision of the world that brought upon the culture of silence, and the emergence of a ‘new society’, a society that does not oppress anyone.⁷³ And crucially, it is a transformation that does not imply a ‘reverse of the poles’; the oppressed, in pursuing their ontological vocation to become fully human, ought not to become oppressors but the structures of oppression should disappear.⁷⁴ Precisely because, for Freire, the oppressed are in the position of oppression as a result of their incorporation into society (not because of their exclusion) it is these structures of incorporation that should change. On this line, we can unravel the radical difference of Freire’s project of empowerment:

‘Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. (...) The oppressed are not ‘marginals’ are not men living ‘outside’ of society. They have always been ‘inside’ – inside the structure that made them ‘beings for others’. The solution is not to integrate them into the structure of oppression but to transform the structure so

⁷¹ Freire 1972, 58. As we will develop in the further section, it is important to highlight that for Freire, the pursuit of the *ontological vocation* to humanization and the achievement of conscientization affects both the oppressed (i.e. the poor and illiterate) and the oppressors. Empowerment, thus, in affecting both the oppressors and oppressed, necessarily implies an effective process of transformation of the social structures from which the oppression emerged.

⁷² Freire 1972, 20–27

⁷³ Freire 1972, chap. 2–3; Freire 1970. In here, the *mythicized* vision of the world (that we discussed in the previous section) is part and parcel of the *culture of silence* and the associated *Fear of Freedom*. The process of *conscientização* is a process of empowerment that radically breaks with all these elements, in the transformation of society.

⁷⁴ Freire 1972, 33

that they can become ‘beings for themselves’.⁷⁵

In Freire's view, the possibility of development lies precisely in the transformation of the oppressive structures that brought about the underdevelopment in the first place. At the same time, it affects not only those who achieve the *conscientização* (i.e. those who are empowered) but also those who were originally the oppressors. For Freire, empowerment is tied to a political project of radical transformation, one that brings about a ‘new society’.⁷⁶

Here, Freire highlights two elements that are central to move beyond Sen's paradox of empowerment, particularly in its connections with participatory development and the good governance agenda. These are: (a) the necessity to understand the process of empowerment as one that effectively transforms social structures and (b) the necessity to see this process as one of political struggle. Empowerment, for Freire, cannot be achieved outside of the transformation of society; if the current institutional structures caused the individual to be oppressed ('unfree' or 'disempowered') it is only a transformation of these structures what would enable the liberation of the individual. It is in this process of the transformation of societies and structures that development takes place. Furthermore, this transformation is achieved through political struggle, which must start from the oppressed themselves.⁷⁷ In this manner, the political project behind Freire's notion of conscientization as empowerment, parts way from that of Sen's and the Human Development.

If we expand on the first element discussed above, we see that, for Freire, it is essential that the process of empowerment entails the transformation of the structures of oppression in a manner that is not compatible with mainstream notions of participatory development. For Freire, the key to breaking with the reproduction of this *culture of silence* and to actively transform the societies in which the oppressed are immersed, lies in a transformation of these structures. Rather than discussing the possibilities for individuals to become active agents of change if they are given access to the proper *capabilities* to do so, Freire discusses *conscientization* (and empowerment) as a process that addresses the structures from which dis-empowerment emerged.

⁷⁵ Freire 1972, 61–62

⁷⁶ Freire 1972, 127

⁷⁷ Freire 1972, 20–24

Empowerment, for Freire, involves becoming aware of the possibilities of re-imagining the terms of relations, of rethinking the structures that gave place to the emergence of the oppression in the first place.⁷⁸ The poor and illiterate have not come to this situation because of their lack of inclusion in society; it is precisely because of their inclusion that their oppression came into being.

Different from Sen's, Freire offers a structural perspective on empowerment, one that requires questioning and challenging the systemic and structural unfairness that brought upon the 'dis-empowerment', the 'unfreedom' or the oppression in the first place. Empowerment as conscientization requires addressing the social, political and economic origins of 'disempowerment'. Even more clearly, he argues that

'the solution of their problem is not to become 'beings within' but men who liberate themselves, because they are not men at the margins of the [social and political] structures but men oppressed within these same structures. Alienated, they cannot overcome their dependency by incorporating themselves into the structure that is responsible for that same dependency. There is no other way for the humanization - of themselves and others - other than an authentic transformation of the de-humanizing structure.'⁷⁹

The process of empowerment, thus, is connected in Freire to an effective transformation of the social structures from which underdevelopment and oppression came into being. As such, it affects both the oppressed and oppressors, as it overcomes the contradiction between them. It implies a transformation of the structures, not a transformation of the position of the individuals in them. In Freire's words, 'If the goal of the oppressed is to become fully human, they will not achieve their goal by merely reversing the terms of the contradiction, by simply changing poles. (...) the authentic solution of the oppressor-oppressed contradiction does not lie in a mere reversal of position, in moving from one pole to the other.'⁸⁰ This allows us to view Sen's basic approach to empowerment in a new light. In Freire, the change through which development occurs does not happen because individuals are able to join the social structures available from a more enabled and less passive standing. Oppression emerges from these structures, and there is no possibility of empowerment that includes a better form of inclusion into them.

⁷⁸ To Morrow and Torres, this is one of the guiding moral principles of Freire's theory of conscientization: the necessity to ensure that in the structural change those who become empowered do not become in turn oppressors. Morrow and Torres 2002, 104.

⁷⁹ Freire 1979, 40 own translation from Portuguese.

⁸⁰ Freire 1972, 56-57

As we have examined earlier, the process of empowerment embedded within the *capability approach* sees the deprivations related to under-development in terms of the exclusion of individuals from social and economic institutions. Their disempowerment appears as a result of the lack of possibilities of incorporation in an active manner: because of the lack of *capabilities* to effectively participate economically or politically in their societies. This can be clearly seen when Sen urges us to understand ‘Poverty as capability deprivation’ and to understand, thus, poverty reduction strategies beyond income transfers.⁸¹ Rather than focusing on economic measurements of poverty, for Sen, policy strategies should focus on addressing the *capability* deprivations associated to poverty ‘since enhanced capabilities in leading a life would tend, typically, to expand a person's ability to be more productive and earn a higher income’.⁸² Importantly, higher income is not the central element in overcoming poverty; the focus is put on improving these *capabilities* that will grant the freedoms to actively participate in society. Without a doubt, Sen’s adamant defense of the necessity of expanding the notion of poverty should be praised in light of the fixation on quantitative indicators of income thresholds that remains the norm in policy analyses of development. However, as we noted in Ch. 3, when referring to the Paradox of Empowerment, Sen’s discussions remain too deeply embedded within an institutional framework that prioritises an understanding of liberal-democracy and the market as universal solutions. Sen understands that poverty reduction (as in his famous analysis of famines) is fundamentally linked with a ‘functioning democracy’ that ensures that the poor are included and able to participate equally both economically and politically.⁸³ Here, empowerment is seen as the possibility to be included, to participate in an equal and active standing in the institutional framework of liberal - market democracy. Empowerment implies the capability to freely choose the way to actively participate in public decisions, and overcome the deprivations associated to being incapable to do so.

For Sen, this participation - and the empowering process leading to it - necessarily happens through incorporation into the institutions that ensure the maintenance of certain political, economic and civil freedoms. We discussed earlier, the role of these ‘interconnected freedoms’ in ensuring the achievement of development:

⁸¹ Sen 1999a, chap. 4; Sen 2010, chap. 12

⁸² Sen 1999a, 90

⁸³ Sen 1981; Sen 1999a

considered both as instrumental and constitutive of development, in Sen, they amount to nothing more than a well-functioning, inclusive, liberal democracy.⁸⁴ In fact, in his analysis,

‘The instrumental roles of freedom include several distinct but interrelated components, such as economic facilities, political freedoms, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. These instrumental rights, opportunities and entitlements have strong interlinkages, which can go in different directions. The process of development is crucially influenced by these interconnections. Corresponding to multiple interconnected freedoms, there is a need to develop and support a plurality of institutions, including democratic systems, legal mechanisms, market structures, educational and health provisions, media and other communication facilities and so on’.⁸⁵

Here, the empowerment of individual agency is articulated within the current social and political structures available, restricting its transformatory potential. Participatory practices build upon these ‘interconnected and instrumental freedoms’ in a self-reinforcing cycle, in which these freedoms are also understood to be *constitutive* of development. The freedoms to participate in elections, to vote, or to join the labour market, are both instrumental and constitutive of development. Development is achieved through the incorporation - or the improvement of this incorporation, if the ‘poor and dispossessed’ were only partially excluded - to these institutions that shape the social fabric of development.

In Sen, and, in mainstream practices of development, the process of empowerment appears constrained by the Paradox of Empowerment that we examined in Ch. 3. Without making a teleological claim, development is perceived as universally and unquestionably tied to the market - that Sen so vehemently defends - and to a liberal, Western understanding of democracy.⁸⁶ Empowerment, deeply embedded in the understanding of liberal democracy in this way, offers little space to challenge the structures that brought about the ‘unfreedoms’. There is no agency for empowered individuals to move beyond the normative framework that encloses this paradoxical notion of empowerment. The political project behind Sen’s *capability approach* goes hand in hand with the promotion of good governance and with a form of economic

⁸⁴ See Ch. 3.

⁸⁵ Sen 1999a, 53

⁸⁶ Ziai 2014; Selwyn 2014, chap. 7

empowerment that ensures the effective incorporation of those who ‘happen to remain excluded from the benefits of the market-oriented society’.⁸⁷ Unable to escape from the limits of the Paradox of Empowerment, participatory practices, are directed at improving - or more directly at establishing - these institutional frameworks (market-based economies and liberal democracy) that enable both the freedom of the individual and the development of their societies. It is here that we can clearly see the difference between Freire’s and Sen’s understanding of empowerment: where Sen presents development and empowerment as a process that is mediated by the social structures in place, a process of the improvement of the institutional arrangements that are responsible for the ‘unfreedoms’ of the individual to make them more inclusive, Freire sees this process as fundamentally a change and transformation of the structures of oppression. They both understand the fundamental role that processes of empowerment and participation have for development, yet the focus of what these processes entail and are directed at significantly differ: for Sen, empowerment is directed at the *inclusion* of individuals in their societies, while for Freire, empowerment is directed at the *transformation* of these societies.

Furthermore, if we focus on Sen’s understanding of empowerment and its connection with ideas of good governance we can explore its confrontation with the second dimension on Freire’s understanding of empowerment: the necessity of its articulation as part of a political struggle. For Sen, ideas of political empowerment are key to increase democratic governance, an element that is central to any evaluation of development.⁸⁸ As such, Sen’s discussions of the need to ensure political participation as a means to development, as we have examined in previous chapters, can be associated with the increase of participatory practices of democracy consolidated within the Good governance agenda.⁸⁹ Here, participation is conceived of as the essential condition for empowerment and the promotion of accountable and responsive democratic states, all of which are deemed intrinsically good. Myriads of documents from multilateral credit

⁸⁷ Sen 1999a, 7

⁸⁸ Sen 1999a, 158–159 This has been explored further in Ch. 3

⁸⁹ Jayadev discusses, for example, the connection between Sen’s focus on deliberative democracy as a mechanism for development and ‘the primacy of institutions’ in discussions of development theory. See Jayadev 2011. Further, as we have pointed out in Ch. 3 Sen’s capability approach has been associated to the rise of the ‘New Accountability Agenda’, where processes of political empowerment are deemed essential or the promotion of good governance. See Goetz and Jenkins 2002; Goetz and Jenkins 2005.

institutions, international development agencies, international donors and the like have focused on promoting participation (and the empowerment of citizens) as the new 'one size fits all' remedy to problems linked to underdevelopment, corruption, inefficiency, poverty or crime.⁹⁰

The focus on participation is expected to provide a politically enabling environment in which citizens are given a real opportunity to engage in social life and effectively transform and develop their societies, at the time that they become both economically and politically empowered. In this new - broad and ambiguous - understanding of empowerment and participatory practices, the initiatives implemented aim to channel 'bottom-up' strategies of participation that mobilise citizens and increase their involvement in the public sphere. By opening up institutionalised spaces of participation (such as participatory budgeting meetings, public audiences, neighbourhood councils or the like) the state is allegedly 'sharing' part of its decision-making power in a shift towards the empowerment of citizens. The participatory arenas in which individuals become involved are presented as neutral spaces, where individuals can become active agents of change, where they can make decisions that affect their lives directly. In many cases, this is coupled with effective transfers of political and economic decisions that give citizens the opportunity to increase their ownership over certain, limited aspects of their lives.⁹¹ However, by engaging in a continuous institutionalisation of these participatory practices, governments, international organisations and NGOs have moved away from their confrontational nature, and therefore, from its ability to challenge and question the dominant structures of society.⁹² The assumption that these initiatives have is that the transfer of power can be done harmoniously and within the current institutional framework. Consequently, where such transfers exist, the scale of

⁹⁰ For an analysis of these trends see Leal 2007; Kothari and Cooke 2001; Mansuri and Rao 2012.

⁹¹ For example, the City of New York has been successfully running a process of Participatory Budgeting since 2011. The project comprised an expenditure of \$25 million dollars in 2014, \$1 million per council, through the development of public meetings. Since its inception 46,000 residents participated and over 300 projects have been financed. These are encouraging numbers that speak of people effectively deciding and participating in public life. However, if we compare them with the annual expense budget of \$75.0 billion and capital budget of more than \$6.1 billion that the New York City's Office of Management and Budget oversees yearly, the numbers become less impressive. And so does the possibility of these participatory stances to effectively challenge the economic or social order of NYC. Data from: New York City Council; New York City's Office of Management and Budget; Participatory Budgeting Project.

⁹² Leal 2007

the transfer is so small that they do not present a threat to larger social and economic structures (and the inequalities therein). The institutionalisation of these practices implies that there is no essential problem with the redistribution of power from the state to the citizens, as it is perceived that the empowerment of those citizens can be done without conflict.⁹³

In this sense, participation ceases to function as a way to engage in ‘political struggle’ (as Freire would suggest, a participation that challenges the social and political structures prevailing) to become a way to legitimate the practices of development agencies, governments or civil society organisations. This ‘depoliticised’ understanding of participatory practices of empowerment neglects to address the possibility of posing real challenges to the structures of society, since they are already being channelled through new institutionalised structures. Rather than effectively enabling the transformation of society and the real emancipation of its citizens, these strategies serve as platforms that release socio-political tensions offering an institutionalised channel to deal with political conflict. The ‘inclusion’ in these participatory platforms thus, as White warned us, shows that ‘Incorporation, rather than exclusion, is often the best means of control’.⁹⁴ By providing these technically organised responses to the vocation of human beings to engage and participate in social life, these participatory practices neglect the political project that Freire so unwaveringly defended, and remain trapped within the Paradox we discussed in Ch. 3. If we take seriously Freire’s calls for a project of conscientization based on the capacity of the oppressed to start forms of political struggle and resistance, then we can re-think the dangers of the over-technicalised interventions of development practitioners that seek to promote ‘bottom-up participation’. While the line between a genuine and politically motivated ‘bottom-up’ participation and one that becomes an instrument of manipulation might be a thin one, it becomes a central one to reflect on if we are to understand the possibilities of devising emancipatory forms of empowerment.

⁹³ Hickey and Mohan 2004, 204

⁹⁴ S. C. White 1996, 11

Concluding remarks: Outlining the limits of Critical Pedagogy for development

Up to this point, in examining Paulo Freire's educational and political projects, we have identified the ways in which a different reading of his work offers us a critical perspective to explore the connections between empowerment and development. We have illustrated the parallels of his framework with Sen's and signalled how the differences can indicate a way forward to understand participatory development as linked to empowerment in a more radical, emancipatory way. A way that advances in overcoming the 'methodological fetishism' identified by Aronowitz and gives way to consider Freire's political project together with his methodological implications. Without focusing directly on them, Freire has made contributions to discussions on development that ought to be acknowledged beyond the participatory practices that we discussed before.

Yet, to conclude with this analysis, it is necessary to critically reflect on the limits of such contributions, in our quest to challenge the boundaries of the Paradox of Empowerment within Sen's work. Freire's work, in fact has received both fervent support and vehement criticism from several disciplines. It is not our intention to cover them all here, but merely to focus on the ones that directly challenge the use of his framework for discussions on development theory, that have further implications for our analysis.⁹⁵ These criticisms we will refer to focus on how his understanding of development is framed within a nationalist perspective that remains too embedded in the discussions of the *dependência* school, and thus suffer from the limitations of this perspective we discussed in Ch. 1.⁹⁶ Others, as we will see below, criticise Freire's work for lacking an explicit focus on development thinking, which means that some key aspects of development are left under-theorized and, for some critics, contradictory.

The first of these shortcomings is connected to Freire's involvement in the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (ISEB - Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies)* which significantly shaped his work.⁹⁷ Here, Freire developed his notion of *conscientização*⁹⁸ but also became involved within the 'national developmentalist' discussions of the period. Strategies of national - developmentalism emerging from ISEB

⁹⁵ For an impressive and systematic revision of Freire's critics and their main arguments, see Schugurensky 2011, chap. 4.

⁹⁶ Paiva 1980

⁹⁷ Valente 2009; Gadotti 1994; Holst 2006

⁹⁸ R.-M. Torres 1999, 250; Roberts 2000, 138; Cruz 2013, 177

shared with the analysis of the CEPAL and the *dependentistas*, as we discussed in Ch. 1, a core-periphery perspective and a state-centred understanding of development as based on national industrialisation policies to overcome the structural inequalities of deteriorating terms of trade.⁹⁹ These approaches were highly influential in Freire's thought and we can see some clear examples of references to development made within this framework. For example, in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he states that 'underdevelopment, which cannot be understood apart from the relationship of dependency, represents a limit-situation characteristic of societies of the Third World'.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in *Cultural Action for Freedom*, he discusses the process of conscientization at a social level as a process that overcomes the situation of dependency from the metropolis.¹⁰¹ Further in one of his earlier pamphlets, originally published in 1969, he states that 'All development is modernization but not all modernization is development'.¹⁰² In these and other discussions within his work it is possible to see Freire's analysis as a product of his time, restricting some aspects of his discussions of development to a constricted and teleological vision of national development. Building on this, Vanilda Paiva, a Brazilian scholar, has argued that Freire's perspective of development was not only constricted to a nationalist perspective, but one tied to a conservative, populist political project.¹⁰³ While Paiva's analysis has been controversial and the accuracy of her analysis is contested¹⁰⁴, we can see the limitations in Freire's early discussions of development.

However, the richness of Freire's work is precisely found in the vastness of his work and its distinct evolution. Freire's work continued to evolve after these first, earlier analyses and some of these limitations were addressed in his later works, an aspect that many of the critiques ignore focusing exclusively on his earlier, more famous works.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, even in those earlier works, the tension between a more constricted national-developmental vision and the shift towards a more people-centred, holistic notion of development that, as we have examined in this chapter, are connected to his

⁹⁹ Bresser-Pereira 2006

¹⁰⁰ Freire 1972, 75

¹⁰¹ Freire 1977, 61–62

¹⁰² Freire 1985b, 38 – own translation from Portuguese.

¹⁰³ Paiva 1980

¹⁰⁴ C. A. Torres 1996, 118; Schugurensky 2011, 137

¹⁰⁵ Schugurensky 2011

notion of *conscientização*. This is an element that, while contradicting some of the national-developmental ideas of the time, pervades his entire corpus. In fact, even within the earlier discussion of development as modernization, we can see the first moves towards the people-centred approach to development that we have discussed here, in stating that ‘the point of decision in the process of development lies within the being undergoing transformation - the process is not a mechanical one’.¹⁰⁶ Going even further, he clearly spelled out how, beyond a quantifiable measurement of development, a ‘developed’ society should be considered only when it overcame the limitations imposed by the reproduction of the ‘Culture of Silence’ that we have discussed earlier. He stated that,

‘Development is achieved only when the locus of decision for the transformations suffered by a being is found within and not outside of him. And this does not happen with dependent societies, which are alienated and, as such, are “object societies.” When the source of decision-making, including the political, economic, and cultural aspects, continues to be outside, in the metropolitan society upon which the common people depend, only a modernization process is achieved.’¹⁰⁷

While he remains within the core-periphery framework of discussing development, his analysis goes clearly beyond an economic one, towards one focused on political, social and cultural conditions, one where the agency of development moves to the people, rather than the state. At the same time, Freire revisited his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in his *Pedagogy of Hope*, published in 1992 and made a conscious effort to address some of the limitations that he himself and other critics had identified in his later work.¹⁰⁸ While, as in his earlier analyses, he did not focus directly on discussions of development, again, his reflections still offered valuable insights for development theory. In this case, his concerns with ideas of development expanded well beyond the national frontiers to initiate the exploration of a more sustainable perspective, one that he called eco-pedagogy.¹⁰⁹ Sadly, Freire left us all too soon and many of these ideas, while overcoming some of the limitations of his previous work, were not fully developed.

These connect, at the same time, with another set of limitations that we can find in using Freire’s work for development theory. As pointed out several times in the

¹⁰⁶ Freire 1985b, 38 – own translation from Portuguese.

¹⁰⁷ Freire 1970, 176

¹⁰⁸ Freire 2009

¹⁰⁹ Gadotti and Torres 2009

discussions in this chapter, Freire's work was not directed at a systematic analysis of issues of development. Rather, his discussions touched upon such issues from a pedagogical perspective. While the originality of his thinking, and the fresh perspective that this aspect might offer to discussions of development are certainly strengths that we have illustrated in the chapter, they also raise difficulties for engaging in more systematic discussions of development. In the case we have just discussed, for example, it becomes clear that the notion of what specifically development entails is less than fully worked out, beyond the ideas of social transformation and liberation from material oppression. Freire certainly discusses development in connection to processes of individual empowerment and, as such, his analysis can be clearly framed as a people-centred approach to development. Nonetheless, as we have just seen, on occasions Freire appears also linked with a nationalistic, rigid understanding of development, one that comes close to policy discussions on industrialisation. Furthermore, while in his last works his concerns for development appeared to open a space for sustainability, in general there is little consideration of the role of natural resources or the environment in his work. However, if we take Freire's project in its entirety and we see how his notion of conscientization was linked to a humanist perspective on the world, then it is difficult to sustain that his analysis remained limited to an economic understanding of development, or much less, to a conservative political project. But again, Freire's discussions of development leave these issues in a somewhat grey area that stand in obvious contrast with the highly systematic analysis that Sen offers.

Finally, several critics have pointed out contradictions within Freire's analysis that might compromise the usefulness of his theories for development thinking. These stem from Freire's attempt to combine Marxist and Catholic ideas in his framework.¹¹⁰ Freire's connections to Catholicism and Liberation Theology are well documented.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ A clear example is Rich Gibson's analysis of Freire's attempt to unite his Marxist and Catholic beliefs. While largely sympathetic to Freire's work, Gibson points out that his catholic perspective results in an 'Objective Idealism' that is impossible to reconcile with the 'Mechanistic Materialism' that stems from his Marxist perspective. Gibson 2006.

¹¹¹ References to this abound. See for example, : Lehmann 1990, 96–101; Reynolds 2013; Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010, 56; Schugurensky 2011, 97–99; Mayo 2004, 58–60 . In sum, these date back to his early life and his involvement in the Catholic Action during his youth as well as with his involvement in the CBCs (Christian Base Communities, explored in Ch. 4) in the application of his literacy project. Freire, however, throughout his life recognised that he kept his faith even while his reflections led him to alternative theoretical sources, like Marx. Horton and Freire 1990, 246 As Schugurensky pointed out,

Freire himself, in fact, was aware of the seeming contradiction that might come from his attempt to reunite his Christian Faith with a Marxist analysis, but saw no contradiction. When asked about this he famously stated, ‘my "meetings" with Marx never suggested to me to stop "meeting" Christ’.¹¹² Whether or not his efforts to unite his Marxist and Christian roots were successful are, however, not central to our analysis. Yet, to some critics, it is in his religious framework that his universal claims are rooted, bringing a problematic perspective for discussions of development.¹¹³

However, as Dale and Hyslop-Margison argued, it is ‘the harmony of Freire’s philosophical synthesis that resonates with us’ rather than its few contradictions or potential dissonances.¹¹⁴ It is true that Freire’s work has left some grey areas and some unclear aspects in discussing his pedagogical approaches, some that might be difficult to overcome fully. Yet his work offers us a fresh and original perspective to re-think the role of individual agency and empowerment for processes of social transformation. In this chapter, we have examined how, without specifically discussing aspects of development theory and practice, Freire opens up a path to reflect in a more structural and comprehensive manner what is the space for individuals in transforming not only themselves in the process of achieving development, but in transforming the world. It is this reading of Paulo Freire’s legacy what offers us a way to partially resolve the Paradox of Empowerment. Where Sen sees empowerment as *inclusion*, Freire opens the possibility of understanding empowerment as *transformation*. Crucially, for Freire, empowerment is not only an individual process but one that has the capacity to reflect on systemic and structural injustices. Further, we have examined how Freire’s project is written from a position of hope, one that firmly maintains the faith in people and in their inherent capacity to overcome the limitations of underdevelopment and to engage in a political project that leaves no one aside. While on its own, it might not be sufficient to become an alternative to Sen’s systematic analysis of development theory, without a doubt Freire offers analytical resources to expose the limitations therein and to advance in discussing a notion of empowerment within development that recovers its

‘Ironically, Freire has been criticized by some Christians for his Marxist approach and by some Marxists for his lack of Marxist interpretation’. Schugurensky 2011, 133.

¹¹² Horton and Freire 1990, 244

¹¹³ Bowers 2006

¹¹⁴ Dale and Hyslop-Margison 2010, 77

transformative and emancipatory potential. In this way, Freire opens up a pathway to move beyond the paradox of empowerment.

CHAPTER 6

DEVELOPMENT AS *SUMAK KAWSAY*: DEVELOPMENT BEYOND THE HUMAN*

∞

Introduction

Up to this point, this thesis has engaged Amartya Sen's approach to development from historical sources emerging from Latin America. Tapping into insufficiently explored historical resources for development thinking of the radical theories of the 60s and 70s, has given us the opportunity to explore the strengths and limitations within Amartya Sen's understanding of HD, particularly around its embedded notion of empowerment. In exploring the ideas of radicalised priests from Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, Ch. 4 brought forward the often-overlooked connections between the ideas of the Liberation Theologians and Amartya Sen's development framework. Here, the analysis of development as liberation and its links to ideas of community empowerment rooted in the principle of solidarity served to reveal the individualistic nature of the project of empowerment within HD, and argued for the necessity of expanding the collective gaze of the analysis of development as freedom. Ch. 5 shifted from Liberation Theology to the emergence of Critical Pedagogy in Brazil in an analysis of empowerment as *conscientização*. In signalling the parallels of Paulo Freire's literacy project with Sen's capability approach, the chapter showed how the former has the potential to advance on the latter. This is particularly the case when the political implications of Freire's project are more carefully considered, and we venture beyond the mainstream incorporations of the Freirean methodology for participatory development. In discussing Freire's political project together with his understanding of empowerment for development, Ch. 5 helped us explore the limitations of Sen's paradox of empowerment that we identified

* I would like to acknowledge that this chapter has benefitted from extensive peer-review in the course of its preparation for publication. A version of this chapter has been published in the Working Paper Series in Development and Postcolonial Studies, coordinated by Prof. Aram Ziai at the University of Kassel. The Working Paper has been entitled 'Re-reading Amartya Sen from the Andes: Exploring the Ethical contributions of Indigenous Philosophies', DPS Working Paper Series No. 3, University of Kassel, 2015.

in Ch. 3. Freire's approach allowed us to explore the connections of processes of political empowerment that reinforce aspects of good governance within development, and engage a notion of empowerment that moves beyond this connection, recovering the possibilities for structural change that participatory practices for political empowerment entail. Yet, while these historical sources have been useful to explore aspects often neglected by the capability approach, there is a further need to engage HD from more contemporary sources, in order to explore the potentialities for the present challenges that ideas of development currently face.

At the same time, even when the frameworks engaged so far have offered distinct contributions to break away from the constricted view of the capability approach and HD, each shared some aspects that need to be overcome in order to unlock the potential of ideas of empowerment to achieve transformatory development. To begin with, the perception of development as a unilinear process of progress and transformation, that does not foresee any limits - either material or normative - and where a normative distinction between under-developed and developed societies is built and maintained throughout the different perspectives analysed up to here. While they all clearly questioned and advanced beyond the simplified staged vision of development prevalent in the early Modernization school (as discussed in Ch. 1), the idea of development is still in all these cases perceived as a process with no end in sight. In these views, the 'goal' of development shifted and expanded to include a multiplicity of dimensions, yet remained understood as a unilinear process that praises the 'advance' from an under-developed (or in contemporary World Bank and UN parlance 'developing') situation to one of 'development'.

Further, they all neglect to discuss the limitations of such a process, and operate under the understanding that development is an unlimited endeavour. This aspect is very much linked to another element that Sen shares with the more radical perspectives analysed so far in this Thesis: the remarkable anthropocentrism that fails to provide sufficient space to reflect on the environmental limits that development entails. Certainly, all of these authors have addressed at some point or another - even if timidly - some sustainability concerns, but these concerns have not occupied a large space in their theories nor have substantially challenged the marked anthropocentrism of their

views.¹ While this aspect, in itself, might not be sufficient to reject these ideas altogether, it has become clear that environmental challenges are amongst the most daunting that confront contemporary development policy makers and academics. To this end, rethinking the anthropocentrism characteristic of ideas of development may offer us valuable resources to rethink development strategies in general. Reflecting on the role of nature and the environment and our relation to them may expand our understanding of development beyond merely questioning ‘the limits to growth’ and the possibility of achieving sustainability, to move beyond the paradox of empowerment in contemporary development. In order to advance on these ideas, this thesis now turns to more contemporary discussions taking place in Latin America, particularly those related to the incorporation of indigenous epistemologies.

Over the last decade, the calls for a *Buen Vivir* (Spanish for ‘Good Living’) that have emerged from the Andean region have prompted a revival of interest in Latin American contributions to development thinking. *Buen Vivir* (BV), in itself a translation into Spanish, refers to a notion emerging from the indigenous philosophies in the region, that focus on a harmonic understanding of the life cycle.² Here, the idea of a Good Living not only takes into consideration the individual’s wellbeing, but also that of the Earth and human communities as a whole. This notion has been present in the region for centuries, but it has stirred national politics and academic discussions in the last few years, particularly around policy and academic discussions of development.³ In the long

¹ Paulo Freire started to consider ecological concerns in his *Pedagogy of the Heart*, published posthumously, while Sen has recently discussed the necessity to incorporate sustainability concerns in his capability approach. See Freire 2000b; Gadotti and Torres 2009; Sen 2013. While originally Liberation Theologians did not devote large spaces for ecological and sustainability concerns, Leonardo Boff’s contemporary analysis has been exploring these issues, and joined the contemporary discussions of SK/BV. See Boff 1995; Boff 2009; Boff 2008. Along similar lines, Gustavo Gutiérrez’s latest works include an explicit (albeit reduced) inclusion of environmental issues. See Gutiérrez 1999; Gutiérrez and Cardinal Müller 2015.

² The issue of translation is, in regards to notions coming from these indigenous philosophies and used in contemporary development discussions, a hotly debated issue. ‘Buen Vivir’ (in Spanish) and ‘Sumak Kawsay’ in Quechua are only the most well-known terms, that, as we will discuss later, could be understood in English as ‘Good Living’, ‘Good Life’ or ‘Life in plenitude’ and are commonly used to refer to these indigenous frameworks. In this chapter, in general I will use either BV or SK, or more simply SK/BV to refer indistinctly to these ideas as they are used by academics and policy practitioners. This, by no means, seeks to ignore the multiplicity of debates on the issue of translation (from the indigenous languages into Spanish or English), but rather is an attempt to direct our attention to more fruitful discussions, focused on these ideas. On a clear analysis of this particular issue, see Gudynas 2014b.

³ Discussions on whether BV/SK should be better understood as an alternative to development or as a development *alternative* abound in the literature. See, among others, Vanhulst and Beling 2014;

tradition of critical development thinking emerging from Latin America that this thesis has explored, contemporary discussions of the contribution of indigenous philosophies present a novel opportunity to overcome the limitations of mainstream notions of development, questioning the ethical underpinnings of contemporary Western projects.⁴ Yet, in order to establish a fruitful engagement between the two, there is a need to first clarify their differences and implications. These stem, as we will see later, from their distinct considerations of collective and communal aspects of development that appear, in the SK/BV framework, intrinsically tied to considerations of the Earth and Nature.

In recent years, policy documents and initiatives have equated ideas of Human Development (HD) and BV. The conceptual lack of clarity has allowed both the indigenous epistemologies and the HD discourses present in the region to 'blend' into a sort of 'environmentally conscious' idea of development that virtually pervades current policy initiatives from government, international organisations and NGOs.⁵ As the mainstream understanding that guides international and national efforts to achieve development across the globe, engagement with the HD paradigm in general and Amartya Sen's work in particular remains of vital importance to advancing a transformative and emancipatory understanding of development, in Latin America and the rest of the world. Thus, the effort to connect this paradigm s with the indigenous framework and understanding of BV should be praised. Yet, it is also necessary to resist the urge to rapidly incorporate the ideas of BV into an all-encompassing idea of HD, without a necessary reflection on the challenges and opportunities that these ideas bring to discussions on development and Sen's framework.

This chapter will take this chance, and explore the ethical contributions that BV brings to an analysis of the limitations of HD, offering a re-reading of Amartya Sen's

Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014; Viola Recasens 2014; Gudynas and Acosta 2011a; Escobar 2010b; Acosta and Martínez 2009.

⁴ The multitude of socio-political changes associated with this idea, and to the Latin American 'Left turn' more generally have been heralded as an epistemological and political breakthrough variously described as a 'post-liberal project' (Arditi 2008), a quest for an 'alternative modernity' (Escobar 2010b) and a project of de-colonial thinking confronting the 'Colonial Matrix of Power' by exposing a geopolitics of knowledge historically benefiting the West (Mignolo 2011). While the potential of the indigenous contributions to rethink development is quite vast and cannot be covered on the present scope of the discussion, we will focus on this chapter on offering a novel articulation of the ideas of the SK/BV vis-à-vis Sen's Capability approach, showing how the former offer alternatives to advance beyond the limitations of the latter.

⁵ We will explore these issues in more detail within the chapter, but see as an example the use of Sen's work in the National Development Plans of Ecuador. SENPLADES 2010; SENPLADES 2013.

work from the Andean region that highlights their differences in an effort to advance on its limitations. It will thus, seek to advance the theoretical discussions already constructed in this thesis, recovering the insights of the indigenous philosophies to understand development beyond the human. These will allow us to further reflect on the communal dimension of ideas of empowerment for development to understand BV's biocentric approach and to explore other ethical dimensions that have not yet been covered by previous analysis. Particularly, the chapter will explore the ethical contributions of these indigenous philosophies in relation to two main aspects, building on the analysis of previous chapters: (a) the role and the understanding of the community in pursuits of development and the good life, as a necessary step to discuss (b) the space of the Earth and nature in considerations of sustainability and the vision of development as a unilinear process versus the cyclical ideas upon which the SK/BV framework is built. In following the first aspect, the chapter will first analyse the notion of *Ayllu* and its centrality to understanding the communal dimension of BV. Here, we will recover the communal dimension for ideas of empowerment that were discussed in previous chapters (particularly in Ch.4), and move beyond the collective and communal insights previously presented in this thesis. Discussing the centrality of the *Ayllu* and its multidimensional understanding of community will allow us to reflect on the anthropocentrism implicit within contemporary development, particularly in exploring the role of Nature and the Earth in SK/BV's framework. Connected to this analysis, the chapter will then explore the second aspect highlighted above, expanding on BV/SK's 'biocentric' turn. Here, the chapter will use the notion of *Pachamama* to challenge Amartya Sen's ideas on sustainability moving away from a more unilinear to a cyclical vision of the development process. Engaging the HD paradigm and Sen's perspective in particular with contemporary discussions rather than historical resources will allow us to go beyond the analysis developed in previous chapters and delve into an understanding of development that moves beyond its human dimension.

While the ethical questions that will be raised in this chapter cannot be exhausted in the present scope of discussion, the analysis seeks to bring to our attention the ethical issues that could and should be further considered if we are to achieve a fruitful engagement between the ideas of HD espoused by Amartya Sen and those of BV/SK. The remaining structure of the chapter will be divided in two main sections. In the next section, contemporary discussions of BV/SK will be analysed in connection to contemporary policy and academic discussions of development. Here, the connections

with ideas of HD will be made explicit. In the last section, the chapter will then explore the ethical challenges that the ideas of SK/BV make to Amartya Sen's capability approach.

Contemporary trends of Human Development in Latin America: Sen and the policy understandings of Buen Vivir

'EL RETORNO DEL INDIO': REFRAMING THE DEBATE ON DEVELOPMENT

In 1991 Xavier Albó, published his essay entitled 'El Retorno del Indio' (The Return of the Indian) in a Bolivian anthropological Journal. There, Albó discussed the rise of indigenous social movements and political groups in South America in the 1970s and 1980s. His insightful survey of the events occurring across the region gave ample evidence of a phenomenon that, while it did not originally emerge in the 1980s, experienced a significant expansion in that social and political context. The 'Indigenous problematic' recovered its strength after decades in which social and political resistance was articulated mainly around the constitution of trade unions, syndicates and peasant organisations.⁶ From that period onwards, the indigenous roots of social struggles have had a stronger presence in public spaces, confronting the exclusionary politics of modern democracies in the region.⁷

The appearance of new indigenous social movements and the consolidation of existing ones in the public sphere has been accompanied by a process of the recovery of the indigenous past and customs as central categories for the national politics of Andean countries.⁸ The struggles of these social movements have not only focused on an expansion of democratic politics, but have more largely included an attempt to recover indigenous philosophical traditions and knowledge, once seen as synonymous with barbarism and 'incompatible with civilization and development'.⁹ This irruption of

⁶ Albó 1991, 299

⁷ Rivera Cusicanqui 1990; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010

⁸ See, for example, Rivera Cusicanqui 1990; Choque and Mamani 2001; Albro 2006; Orta 2001; De la Cadena 2010; Fabricant 2010; Korovkin 2001.

⁹ Sadly, these remnants of colonial politics are not buried in the annals of history, but have very recent examples, these words being used by Literature Nobel prize Mario Vargas Llosa in 2003 in a workshop in Colombia. Albro 2006, 391; Vargas Llosa 2004.

indigenous knowledge in national politics historically dominated by social segregation – particularly built on the exclusion of the indigenous heritage – has brought forward an agenda of political, social and economic demands largely neglected in political discussions. These new concerns, perspectives and ways of knowing have been used ‘to transform the limiting political precondition of ‘pastness’ to transcend a politics of irreconcilables through a dialogue between the state’s multicultural legislation and the expressive, instrumental, and constructive potential of local cultural practice.’¹⁰ These indigenous epistemologies, institutions and traditions, historically relegated to an ‘uncivilised’ past have made a fruitful and forceful irruption in contemporary politics. Transcending the boundaries that labelled them exclusively as remnants of the past, they have significantly altered the political universe of the Andean countries, opening up spaces for an inter-cultural and inter-temporal dialogue of forms of knowledge which has profoundly shaped decision making processes and policy plans. Perhaps the most salient of these efforts to create a space for local traditions and indigenous philosophies in contemporary policy making, has been that of the *Sumak Kawsay* or *Buen Vivir* initiatives, which have spearheaded regional discussions on development. The recovery of a cultural heritage that was considered antithetical to the possibilities and projects of development – and which was displaced from the public sphere precisely in the name of such projects – and, particularly, its inclusion as an authoritative voice in recent development debates has been one of the most enriching paradoxes for the field of Latin American contemporary critical thinking.¹¹

We can understand the *Sumak Kawsay* or the *Buen Vivir* as an integral vision of life that is ‘based on the communion of humans and nature and on the spatial-temporal-harmonious totality of existence.’¹² The notion of SK can be found in other indigenous languages of the region, as its main features appeared to be shared by the

¹⁰ Albro 2006, 395

¹¹ Indigenous philosophies in the region have been historically neglected, reaching what Sousa Santos calls ‘epistemicide’. Sousa refers to epistemicide as the ‘murder of knowledge’ that is, the suppression, marginalisation or de-naturalisation of culture, forms of knowledge or symbolic universes that were distinct from the predominant ones, in these cases, those associated to the colonial, modern forms of knowledge. Sousa Santos 2003, vol. 1, chap. 3.

¹² Walsh 2010, 18

original inhabitants of South America.¹³ The most well-known of these are the terms *Sumak Kawsay* in Quechua, mainly used by the Ecuadorian government, and *Suma Qamaña* in Aymara, which is at the basis of Bolivian policy transformations. Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, an Aymara intellectual, analysed the indigenous philosophical roots of these terms and translated the idea of *Sumak* and *Suma* as ‘plenitude, sublime, excellent, beautiful’, and *Kawsay* and *Qamaña* respectively as ‘to live, or being, to co-exist’. Cautioning against a literal translation, he indicated that both terms should be understood as the achievement of a ‘life in plenitude’.¹⁴ Importantly, the idea of plenitude exceeds the consideration of humans as the exclusive centre. That is, the notion of SK is built on a cosmivision that includes the individual, society *and* the earth, underpinning a holistic understanding of development, one that leads to the good life. The ‘whole’ that these ideas of development refer to goes beyond the human, offering a multidimensional understanding of life. SK underscores the connection and the interrelation of humans with the Earth and nature and with each other, and on the necessity to achieve a harmonic co-existence, which is at the basis of the indigenous notion of a ‘life in plenitude’. This cosmivision is articulated around four different principles that highlight the relational orientation of the notion of SK/BV, and its spiritual, temporal and material dimensions¹⁵. These include the principles of relationality, correspondence, complementarity and reciprocity. The first, *relationality*, includes an ‘integral coexistence of the cosmos with all the constitutive variables’.¹⁶ In particular, it considers both the spiritual and intellectual aspects of life, together with a more material and productive vision of coexistence. The second principle, *correspondence*, refers to the correlation of the human and the extra-human, including the Earth and nature as a bearer of consideration in equal terms. *Complementarity* and *reciprocity* represent the more pragmatic side of the first two principles, and refer to the complementarity of all the aspects of our integral experience of life and the need to ensure reciprocity to every aspect of it (including the non-human sides). The four point towards a holistic vision of the life cycle, and an integral consideration of the multiple

¹³ Buen Vivir/ Vivir Bien, are the Spanish translations of the ideas of *Sumak Kawsay* in Quechua, *Suma Qamaña* in Aymara, *Ñandereko* in Guaraní, *Shin pujut* in Awajún or the *Kyme mogen* in Mapuche, among others. Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014, 26.

¹⁴ Huanacuni Mamani 2010, 7. Own translation from Spanish.

¹⁵ Walsh 2011 . See also, Macas 2014; Yampara 2004

¹⁶ Walsh 2011

dimensions, material and spiritual, that are necessary for the achievement of the BV/SK. They also incorporate a universal and comprehensive understanding of the notion of community that includes considerations for the environment and the rest of the community in the achievement of development goals.

With these principles, the SK/BV has offered a framework from which to rethink contemporary efforts to pursue development plans and projects in the region, particularly in Ecuador and Bolivia. These ideas have been incorporated into a myriad of policy and academic contexts reframing the debate on the ideas, means and goals of development. While some see in it a project that is fundamentally distinct from that of ‘development’ and others merely a notion of ‘alternative development’, at the very least the SK/BV framework certainly opens up a space to question the boundaries that the project of development - or the process to achieve a ‘good life’ - entails.¹⁷ Arguably, these ideas have been present in indigenous philosophies for centuries, yet they made international headlines and entered with unusual strength and speed within mainstream discussions of development (both policy and academic oriented ones) after the ideas shaped long-ranging national political initiatives and policy reforms.¹⁸ Most notably, Ecuador and Bolivia, reformed their National Constitutions to make reference to these ideas in 2008 and 2009 respectively. At the same time, academic discussions have been stirred by several intellectuals and the concept has figured quite prominently in recent discussions of development studies.¹⁹

Ideas of a ‘good life’ built upon the Andean cosmovision acts as critical resources

¹⁷ For a clear overview of these discussions see Vanhulst and Beling 2014; Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014.

¹⁸ While they are broadly based in the indigenous philosophies of the region, tracing the specific origin of these ideas has become somewhat a secular crusade amongst academics working on the topic. Some question the existence of the concept as such within the contemporary indigenous communities in the region, some speak of a newly-created concept, and some speak of a re-creation, or consolidation of principles that have existed for centuries. See for example, Huanacuni Mamani 2010; Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014; Viola Recasens 2014; Uzeda 2009; Altmann 2013a; Altmann 2013b for general discussions and overviews of the topic. While it can be founded in some of the indigenous organisations’ political documents already in the 1990s, the earliest systematic analysis of these issues can be found in Viteri Gualinga 2002; Medina 2001a.

¹⁹ The engagement with notions of Buen vivir/ Sumak Kawsay has expanded at a remarkable rate, not only in Latin America, but outside the region as well. See, for example, Gudynas and Acosta 2011a; Acosta 2012; Acosta 2010; Acosta and Martínez 2011; Gudynas and Acosta 2011b; Gudynas 2012; Gudynas 2011b; Walsh 2011; Walsh 2010; Mignolo 2011; Escobar 2010b; Radcliffe 2012 A more general overview of the different bibliography on the matter can be found in Vanhulst and Beling 2014; Altmann 2013a.

for transcending those of mainstream understandings of development and invite us to reframe the current development debate, to include new ethical considerations. For example, rather than pursuing an endless quest for an improvement in life conditions, the SK seeks to attain a ‘Good Living’, that is: the quest is to ‘live well’ rather than to continuously strive for ‘living better’.²⁰ This particular element clearly departs from the unilinear and unlimited vision of progress that has dominated discussions of development for decades and offers the possibility to re-question the means for development, particularly confronting the increasing awareness of the limitation of global resources. The focus is thus, put on understanding the pursuit of the good life following an ‘Ethics of sufficiency’, rather than the ‘Ethics of efficiency’, that pervades developmentalist attempts to achieve material affluence and high levels of productivity.²¹ Further, the ‘good life’ that the SK/BV seeks necessitates a ‘biocentric turn’ that goes beyond UN sustainability concerns.²² The epistemological force of these ideas, institutions and forms of knowledge (and of knowing) has made them a critical resource to rethink contemporary efforts in development thinking and practice altogether.²³

Yet, so far these ideas have been associated with discussions of ‘Sustainable Development’ or Human Development – both in policy and in some academic discussions.²⁴ Given the critical social conditions that the legacy of neoliberal governments left in the region – many of the Latin American countries experienced deep financial, political and social unrest at the turn of the millennium – the governments’ eagerness to transform these ideas into concrete policy actions is not surprising.²⁵ The connections between the ideas of HD – which have already taken a strong hold in the region – and SK/BV have been quick and swift in the planning, implementation and discussion of the new policy initiatives. In the next section we will review some of these connections before exploring the ethical contributions to the HD paradigm that could

²⁰ Rodríguez 2014; Huanacuni Mamani 2010

²¹ Acosta 2012

²² See, for example, Escobar 2010b; Gudynas and Acosta 2011a; Gudynas 2014a; Escobar 2011

²³ On different forms of knowing, see Guerrero Arias 2010 for an analysis of the verb ‘*Corazonar*’. *Corazonar* is a word-play in Spanish between the words ‘Heart’ (*Corazón*) and ‘Reasoning’ (*Razonar*) whose purpose is to ‘hearten the meaning of the dominant epistemologies, displacing the hegemony of reason and thus showing that the constitution of humanity lies between affectivity and reason.’ Guerrero Arias 2010, 81.

²⁴ Vanhulst and Beling 2014

²⁵ For an overview see Panizza 2009; Munck 2003a, chap. 4–5.

be made from a more careful and comprehensive consideration of these indigenous philosophies.

EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PHILOSOPHIES AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Indigenous social movements have come to ‘disrupt politics as usual’, and the urgency to incorporate their demands and perspectives has created one of the most fertile spaces to envision and implement novel ideas and plans for development.²⁶ These have come not just from the indigenous groups and social movements themselves, but also from International organisations, NGOs and national governments. Particularly, the governments of Ecuador and Bolivia - under Rafael Correa and Evo Morales respectively - have put forward initiatives that recover the indigenous past and knowledge in undertaking a strong transformation of the political landscape of their countries. From the Constitutional reforms of Ecuador (in 2008) and Bolivia (in 2009) to creating National Development plans in both countries or launching the failed Yasuni ITT international conservation project, as well as passing laws to protect the Rights of Nature, both countries have taken multiple steps that attempt to effectively use the philosophical resources of the SK framework to devise concrete policy measures. This move to link development discourses with SK has been a contentious one and several intellectuals have cautioned the terms of these incorporations.²⁷ Yet, while in academic contexts controversies around the definition of these terms remain far from settled, the use of these ideas in Andean national politics’ discussions has brought them significantly closer to ideas of HD and the work of Amartya Sen than expected. Below, we will review some examples that illustrate these trends in order to put us in a better position to critically assess them.²⁸

A very clear example comes from the publication of the National Development Plans of Ecuador, both of 2009 and 2013. These plans, that emerged as a result of the process of ‘Strategic Participative Planning’ envisioned in the Constitution of 2008 (arts. 279-280), were specifically designed to outline a roadmap for the achievement of the

²⁶ De la Cadena 2010, 337

²⁷ Kowii 2014; Huanacuni Mamani 2010; Oviedo Freire 2012

²⁸ As in other sections of this thesis, the account of initiatives that connect the HD paradigm with initiatives following the SK/BV imperative is not intended to provide an exhaustive empirical analysis. Rather, these examples aim to identify and illustrate a trend that requires further theoretical reflection, a project that we will initiate in the following sections.

Sumak Kaway or Good Living in Ecuadorian politics. These impressive documents, developed during the implementation of some of the most innovative participatory democracy mechanisms, intended to propose ‘(...) a moratorium of the word “development” and the incorporation of the concept of Good Living in the debate’.²⁹ Yet, throughout the document, and despite its attempts to part ways from previous notions and practices of development, several connections are made to Amartya Sen’s work and the ideas of Human Development. These reflect the desire to advance on the aspects of the Good Life that seek to ensure a ‘healthy flourishing of all individuals’ in the expansion of their freedoms and capacities. The plan puts forward the UNDP and Amartya Sen’s work as central, and states as one of the principles around which the SK is articulated, the need for ‘Complying with Universal Rights and Promoting Human Capabilities’.³⁰ In here, the multiple dimensions of the ‘good life’ are connected to the achievement of human development and the capabilities central to Amartya Sen’s framework. Even when the focus is to try and expand beyond a pure economic analysis of development, and to ensure the ‘flourishing’ of all individuals beyond concerns of basic materials needs, the SK framework becomes restricted once it is framed in the language of HD, unable to advance beyond Sen’s empowerment paradox.

Further, both in Bolivia and Ecuador the UNDP Regional offices have incorporated elements of the SK/BV into both their development programs as well as their Annual Development reports.³¹ The Bolivian case is where the UNDP has more explicitly advanced in reinforcing the theoretical connections between the HD paradigm - and Amartya Sen’s work therein - and the ideas of the SK/BV. The National Human Development Report for 2010 highlights the necessity to connect the ‘Normative Horizons’ of the UNDP research in Bolivia, built upon Amartya Sen’s project, and the BV/SK ideas. For the report, both ‘frameworks converge in an ideal of development that transcends the material scope, and above all coincide in the principles of equality, respect and social recognition’ overcoming differences in the consideration of welfare.³² In Ecuador, the BV/SK framework has been used by the UNDP in the implementation

²⁹ SENPLADES 2009, 18

³⁰ SENPLADES 2010, 21

³¹ See United Nations Development Programme 2010b; Programa de Pequeñas Donaciones 2012; United Nations Development Programme 2012

³² United Nations Development Programme 2010c, 49–51

of new projects and initiatives. Even when some of them have effectively expanded the focus of the work of the UNDP in the region to include new topics, strategies and practices of development, others simply incorporate the new terminology while continuing with previous practices.³³ The latter case can clearly be seen in the efforts to combine ideas of solidarity economics – present in the BV/SK framework – with the implementation of micro-entrepreneurial practices of development, such as the projects of microfinance.³⁴ Microfinance initiatives to alleviate poverty have been in Latin America for decades and expanded at a remarkable rate between the 90s and early 00s.³⁵ These practices have gone hand-in-hand with the consolidation of the HD in the region, in the promotion of economic empowerment based in the achievement of the individual capabilities that Amartya Sen so vehemently defends. While the success of microfinance projects in effectively reducing poverty levels is a matter of contention, it is clear that the nature of the projects relies on a marketised response that puts forward an individualistic idea of development.³⁶ The UNDP's efforts to connect these initiatives with the indigenous traditions reveal, at the very least, a shallow engagement with the ideas of SK/BV.

Other policy initiatives that trace the connections between these two frameworks are more directed to the necessity to quantify the advances made in the name of BV/SK. Frequently, these projects, which are an attempt to more clearly conceptualize and operationalize the ideas of BV, advance together with those already established measurements related to the HD. Here we can see, for example, the 'Programa SIIDERECHOS', an initiative to build Human Rights Indicators (HRI) that attempted to measure Buen Vivir policies.³⁷ Another example can be found in the collaboration between the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and the Bolivian government to implement new measurement tools to incorporate the BV/SK framework in their analyses.³⁸ The necessity to establish metrics of compliance with the National

³³ For example, the UNDP Regional office in Ecuador has included new areas of work, such as the promotion of ideas of Intercultural Citizenship or the creation of 'Biocorridors for Living Well'. See: United Nations Development Programme 2013; Programa de Pequeñas Donaciones 2012.

³⁴ United Nations Development Programme 2012

³⁵ Berger, Goldmark, and Miller-Sanabria 2006

³⁶ For an incisive analysis of microfinance as the reproduction of localised neoliberalism see Bateman 2010.

³⁷ Waldmüller 2014

³⁸ Uzeda 2009

development plans exposes a complicated relationship to liberal understandings of Human Rights that do not necessarily become easily incorporated within the SK framework. Even at a theoretical level, overt attempts have been made to provide a reading of the SK/BV in connection with HD.³⁹

These are just a handful of examples that make the continuing attempt to connect SK and HD quite evident in a variety of contexts. Even if, in general, the connections are made mostly to argue for the necessity of going beyond a pure economic understanding of development, in line with Sen's project, the risk of co-optation of the indigenous philosophies remains.⁴⁰ The work of national governments and international agencies for development that seeks to translate the indigenous mandate for a good life into concrete policies has, more often than not, rushed the incorporation of ideas into the notion of Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien for development, without a holistic consideration of their implications. In general in the region, the progressive, radical rhetoric from governments that seeks to recover the indigenous heritage so long neglected coexists with a continuation of 'business as usual' in promoting development policies that continue the extractivist focus of the past. Following on the productive agenda imposed in Latin America since the colonial times, recent decades have seen an expansion of what has been deemed 'neo-extractivist' model of development, which has deepened the economic dependence on the exploitation and export of natural resources and raw materials.⁴¹ Despite the advances of progressive governments in the region and the stress on building a post-neoliberal agenda, the region appears to have moved from the Washington Consensus to a 'Commodities Consensus' that does not challenge, but rather incorporates discussions of indigenous philosophies within ideas of HD.⁴² In

³⁹ See Deneulin 2012

⁴⁰ See, for example the discussions to expand measurements of development beyond economic growth both in the 2009 and 2013 editions of the plan. SENPLADES 2009, 21–25; SENPLADES 2013, 28–29.

⁴¹ Giarracca and Teubal 2010; Svampa 2012; Svampa 2013

⁴² The notion of 'Commodities Consensus' has been used by Maristella Svampa in reference to the increase of extractivist projects as the main revenue source for the consolidation of 'progressive' governments. These governments have expanded the social spending of their countries, following a progressive agenda focused on the expansion of economic rights and the reduction of poverty, based on revenues collected from the large scale export of primary products. However, the expansion of this social agenda has come at the partial or total expense of the environment in some regions of Latin America, giving rise to an unprecedented surge in environmental struggles. See, Svampa 2013. The trends connecting the new socially progressive agenda of development in the region with the expansion of extractive industries have been noted by many. Among others, see the edited collections on the topic by Massuh 2012; Endara 2014.

exploring these trends in the development policies of Ecuador, Catherine Walsh speaks of a co-optation of the indigenous notion of SK in the policy understanding of Buen Vivir, and this in the establishment of what she notes as the *paradigma* of HD, as we discussed in Ch. 1.⁴³

The bandwagon effect of the rising influence of these indigenous philosophies - both in the cases of Ecuador and Bolivia - appears to be a widespread success in their use for development policies by institutions that do not necessarily incorporate all of the elements of the SK. This 'selective' and problematic use of some of the elements of the SK/BV framework has allowed for the paradoxical increase of the space for environmental and sustainability concerns in discussions of development, paired with an unparalleled rise in environmental conflicts, fuelled mostly by the deployment of new extractive projects in the region in the name of development.⁴⁴

In discussing the often problematic connections that have been made between the HD and the indigenous philosophies of SK/BV, I do not wish to dismiss the possibilities of collaboration between these frameworks altogether. Rather than falling on a dogmatic defence of their separation as diametrically opposed frameworks for understanding development and their ethical underpinnings, the reception that the indigenous notions of BV/SK have had in mainstream ideas of development should be praised. However, at the same time, it is necessary to avoid the urge to rush to 'incorporate the lessons' from these indigenous philosophies into a new solution, a new one-size-fits-all development plan, and to make full use of the opportunity that these alternative frameworks offer to re-question and challenge the boundaries of mainstream ideas of development. In this sense, the possibilities that the SK/BV offers to re-think the main assumptions of the HD are extensive, and cannot be exhausted in this chapter. Nonetheless, in the following sections we will focus on recovering some of these ideas, as an attempt to overcome some of these limitations.

⁴³ Walsh 2010, 17

⁴⁴ On the increase of environmental conflicts in the last decade see Escobar 2010a; Gudynas 2014c; Petras and Veltmeyer 2011.

Human Development and Indigenous Philosophies: Moving beyond Sen's Perspective of Empowerment

THE AYLLU IN THE ANDES: RECOVERING THE COMMUNAL DIMENSION OF DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSIONS

One of the strongest elements that these indigenous frameworks bring to development discussions is precisely the centrality of the communal dimensions in their analysis of what a 'life in plenitude' should entail. Importantly, the communal analysis that we will pursue in this section, distinct than from the one we developed in Ch.4 using the Liberation Theology framework, is connected to discussions of nature and sustainability. Understanding the centrality of the community for the SK/BV framework becomes an essential step to engage in the discussions of nature and the environment; a step that has not been taken by the policy interpretations of SK/BV that connect it with HD. In traditional, indigenous philosophies, SK is based on an indigenous notion of community rooted in a territory. This notion of territory, rather than being one of a limited spatial understanding, is built upon the idea that a spiritual connection between the human being, the territory and nature is intrinsic to the notion of a good life. The community, thus, becomes a multidimensional entity, whose different aspects are deeply interrelated, in what is termed the *ayllu*.

The *ayllu* plays a central role in the history of the Andean peoples. Pre-dating the colonial period, it is a social institution which has been maintained (albeit with significant changes) throughout centuries and remains a key notion to understanding the multiple dimensions that the SK/BV entails. The *ayllu* is the basic form of communal social organization that can be found in the majority of the indigenous groups present in the Andes and has been referred by indigenous intellectuals as the 'seed of the Andean political institutions and civilization'.⁴⁵ It is precisely within the *ayllu* where the 'Good life' - the SK/BV - can be achieved, and it is its multiple, interrelated dimensions that should be included in the consideration of wellbeing.⁴⁶ Within the SK framework both the human and extra-human elements included in the *ayllu* are essential to pursuing the good life, which is considered a communal endeavour. The notion thus prompts a different economic and political understanding of community allowing us to envision

⁴⁵ Choque and Mamani 2001, 202; Yampara 2004, 74; Rivera Cusicanqui 2010, 100

⁴⁶ Many have highlighted the centrality of the *ayllu* for the achievement of the *Sumak Kawsay*. See, for example Yampara 2004; Uzeda 2009; Altmann 2013a; Gudynas and Acosta 2011a.

and discuss ideas of wellbeing beyond the individual to include not only social but territorial and environmental concerns. While, as we have seen, in general the notion of SK has been incorporated into policy and academic discussions, particularly in the promotion of Earth rights and the furthering of ideas of development exceeding a pure economic focus (as in Amartya Sen's work), in general the community concept of *ayllu*, intrinsically linked to the holistic notion of SK, has remained largely neglected. Beyond a simple essentialisation of the concept, it is necessary to understand the paramount importance that the *ayllu* plays within the indigenous philosophies of the Andes, if fruitful connections with the HD are to be achieved.

The *ayllu* has intrigued scholars from various disciplines that have explored its different organizational, territorial, legal, political and spiritual dimensions. *Ayllus* have been mostly studied for their novel articulation of territoriality and spiritual life as well as for their administrative and political forms of organisation.⁴⁷ In fact, the *ayllu* plays a central role in these indigenous philosophies as a principle of organising social and economic life, both in the Quechua and Aymara traditions.⁴⁸ To some Aymara intellectuals, its principles of service, property and communal participation have served to maintain political institutions that differ from those enshrined in liberal democracies.⁴⁹ Despite the meaning of the term shifting throughout its history, two particularly strong social institutions in regards to economic organisation and production demonstrate the communal ethos that underpins the formation of *ayllus*. The first is the construction of a system of exchange upon the *ayni* or principle of reciprocity, which has been described as a Maussian gift, rather than a capitalist exchange.⁵⁰ Here, institutions like the *Minga* - a form of collective work that is not remunerated but allows for cooperation around specific initiatives - put forward an economic principle centred in the pursuit of welfare for the community, rather than the increase of productivity.⁵¹ The second, which has evolved considerably to become of paramount importance in contemporary processes of land-titling, refers to the possibility of collective ownership. Property rights within the

⁴⁷ Harris 2000; Weismantel 2006; Godoy 1986; Rivera Cusicanqui 1990

⁴⁸ See, Choque and Mamani 2001; Choque 2000; Untoja Choque 2001.

⁴⁹ Rivera Cusicanqui 1990; Choque and Mamani 2001

⁵⁰ Weismantel 2006, 94

⁵¹ Hidalgo-capitán 2012, 19; Altmann 2013a, 294

ayllu are conceived of in a communal dimension, often involving distinctive systems of ecological management.⁵²

At the same time, the notion of *ayllu* has a phenomenal evocative power, given its subsistence beyond the different historical periods, particularly the colonial domination and its subsequent legacies in the consolidation of modern states in the region.⁵³ The transformation and resilient persistence of this indigenous institution throughout the centuries has much more than the anecdotal value of the reproduction of a peculiar cultural pattern; it serves as a locus of geographic and imaginary resistance, as the collective space from which to re-think alternative processes of development. In national or regional politics, to speak of the *ayllu* goes beyond speaking of a communal property or a principle of political organisation: it refers to a communal ethos that is transversal to the indigenous cosmologies of the SK. The *ayllu* is a founding element to understanding ontological and epistemological differences that should not be lightly considered in the present scope of academic and policy discussions incorporating the SK/BV. The communal ethos enshrined in the *ayllu* is part and parcel of a *relational* ontology where the separation between human and nature and between individuals and their communities becomes much more diffused.⁵⁴ It is this notion of *ayllu* that is intrinsically tied to the role of the Earth and Mother Nature in conceptions of the good life, and as such, it adds new dimensions to the idea of community. It also emphasizes the consideration of the wellbeing of the community as a whole, rather than a perspective of atomised individualities whose wellbeing may or may not be achieved together with that of their societies. To Raul Llasag Fernández, a Kichwa researcher at the University of Coimbra, this implies a primacy of the community above the individual, as he states, that ‘in the Andean world, the human being as an individual does not exist, because (s)he exists integrated to the community, outside of it there is non-existence or an incomplete one’.⁵⁵ This is a contentious point, and some argue that *ayllus* do not

⁵² John Murra made an extensive analysis of the singularity of the Andean ayllus ecological management and collective ownership, in what he termed the ‘vertical archipelago’. See Murra 2002, chap. 3. On the use of *ayllus* traditions for processes of land titling see J. Crabtree and Chaplin 2013, chap. 2–3.

⁵³ Albro 2006; Weismantel 2006; Rivera Cusicanqui 1990

⁵⁴ Villalba 2013, 1430; Costoya 2012, 216

⁵⁵ Llasag Fernandez 2009. This is echoed by one of the interviewees conducted by Marisol De la Cadena, in her analysis of Andean politics, when citing an indigenous teacher that argues: ‘The community, the *ayllu*, is not only a territory where a group of people live; it is more than that. It is a dynamic space where the whole community of beings that exist in the world lives; this includes humans, plants,

eradicate individualistic considerations, but that these are conceived ‘through complementarity with other beings of the group’.⁵⁶ Further, often the contemporary real-life subsistence of these communities is even farther apart from these idyllic perspectives. Nicole Fabricant’s analysis is enlightening here. Beyond a simple ‘romanticisation’ of the concept, that highlights the role of the *ayllu* as an ‘imagined community’ in Benedict Anderson terms, she reminds us that the contemporary daily functioning of these *ayllus* is often prey to petty discussions of domestic politics, where individual interests take a stronger stance than what the philosophical principles of the indigenous cosmivision would indicate. Yet, she argues that it is precisely this tension between the ‘romanticised vision’ of the community and the individualistic desires of its members that pushes the transformative political agenda of the region.⁵⁷ And it is precisely what reminds us of the necessity to further reflect on the consequences of these strong-communal insights, with their emphasis on the spiritual interconnection of all beings, in discussions of development. The point is not to disregard the individuality of human existence but rather to emphasise and focus on the complementarity and reciprocity principles beyond the human that are intrinsic to the SK/BV.

Arguably, it is this interconnectedness between all beings that has been brought into the discussions of Buen Vivir in the considerations of the Rights of the Earth and other sustainability considerations. Yet, the understanding of *ayllu* goes beyond that. It merges the necessity of understanding the lives of individuals within that of their communities, and to consider the spiritual, environmental and extra-human ties of human existence. In this sense, the focus on the promotion of individual capabilities as an expansion of freedom that the HD and Amartya Sen espouse –despite its advances from narrow, economic notions of development – falls considerably short of the ideas of the ‘good life’ for the SK framework. The paradox of empowerment that restricts the scope of the capability approach restricts, at the same time, its capacity to incorporate all of the dimensions of the SK’s notion of ‘good life’. In the latter, community is understood as more than the communion of human beings, and ideas of wellbeing are necessarily expanded beyond the capabilities of individuals, even if these are based on sustainable

animals, the mountains, the rivers, the rain, etc. All are related like a family. It is important to remember that this place [the community] is not where we are from, it is who we are. For example, I am not from Huantura, I am Huantura.’ De la Cadena 2010. A similar point can be found in Fernández Osco 2005.

⁵⁶ Villalba 2013, 1430

⁵⁷ Fabricant 2010

practices. The principles that guide the SK cannot be separated from the community, cannot be achieved at an individual level. The goal of a good life, the *Suma Qamaña* or the *Sumak Kawsay*, cannot be understood outside the *ayllu*. It is fundamentally a social one.

As we have seen in Ch. 4, it can be argued that Sen's project of *Development as freedom* and the HD paradigm is not purely individualistic. Sen builds his theory of the development of human capabilities (and thus, of the enlargement of freedom) upon a critique of the idea of *homo economicus*, which considers only individualistic behaviour as rational. Furthermore, he recognises later how fundamental social reasoning is in the path to achieving justice, and endorses even more strongly ideas of social participation, embedded in participatory democracy, and has recently advocated for considerations of sustainability insofar as they affect the capabilities of future generations.⁵⁸ However, as we noted in Ch. 4, even when he affirms that society is a fundamental element in the enlargement of individual freedom, his perspective of society presents it as an instrument for achieving it.⁵⁹ In this sense, the importance of society resides mainly in its instrumental value to the individual. The source of connection between human beings is as a necessary step to individually achieve the goals of HD, and the achievement of these capabilities is an individual endeavour.

In equating freedom with capabilities (combining both social opportunities and individual capacities), Sen does not present an alternative to the individualistic liberal perspective of the human being, in which the individual remains the central focus. Of course, HD is a social project, in itself. It only happens within a society, and participation in the society is an intrinsic part of the process. Yet, the transformation, the achievement of 'development as freedom' or human development, occurs at the individual level and does not necessarily include a transformation of the communities to the same extent, nor does it open up the space for ethical considerations of the space and role of the Earth in the process and achievement of wellbeing. The achievement of these capabilities and rights, while they cannot be removed from a social context, occurs at the individual level, and the goal is still built around the assumption of the individual becoming the empowered agent of their own lives. We have discussed in Ch. 4 the different considerations and space that collective issues have in discussions of

⁵⁸ Sen 2010; Sen 2013; Sen 2002b We will come to these in the next section.

⁵⁹ Stewart and Deneulin 2002

development by the *Capability approach (CA)*. As we pointed out, the issue of ‘collective capabilities’ has been a contentious one within the CA literature, and attempts at addressing (not by Amartya Sen) have included several alternative concepts to open up these considerations and to respond to the charges of methodological individualism.⁶⁰ Yet, not even the most critical of these perspectives open spaces for the ontological consideration of the community as having intrinsic value and thus, cannot simply accommodate the SK/BV communal concerns. The use of ‘ethical individualism’, of ‘socially interdependent capabilities’, of ‘collective capabilities’ as notions to account for communal considerations within Amartya Sen’s CA, simply reduces the communal concerns of HD to a level that cannot be compatible with the SK/BV’s ethical underpinnings.⁶¹ While social and communal considerations are not absent from HD academic and policy discussions, they do not give the necessary space for communities to become a central, fundamental aspect of what wellbeing is considered, let alone for an extended notion of community that sees the Earth and the territory as bearers of rights.

Here, then, is where we see the limitations of HD to incorporate the communal ethos of the SK framework and the fundamental space between them. It is the modern ontological separation between individuals and their communities that the HD assumes and employs, that cannot be easily framed within the indigenous pursuit of the SK. In the deployment of initiatives that connect the SK with the HD, the communal dimension and focus of the indigenous philosophies sit uncomfortably with the promotion of individual Human Rights and narrow understandings of sustainability with limited space for the considerations of Nature. Reflecting and recovering the value of the notion of *ayllu* within the SK framework may thus, help us to challenge the limitations and boundaries of mainstream development and confront the co-optation of these alternative notions into policy initiatives that perpetuate ‘business-as-usual’ in the region. To further this analysis, the last section on this chapter will focus on discussing sustainability and environmental concerns together with the cyclical vision of the life cycle that the SK/BV espouses. Here, we will make explicit the links between the

⁶⁰ See, for example Evans 2002; Ibrahim 2006; Qizilbash, Alkire, and Comim 2008; Deneulin and Shahani 2009.

⁶¹ These are the notions used in discussions of collective capabilities by different advocates of the CA analysis, for example Evans 2002; Robeyns 2005; Alkire 2008; Robeyns 2008; Deneulin 2008. For a detailed discussion of the literature on this aspect see Ch. 4.

community and nature within the SK/BV framework as well as its cyclical nature that expand the ethical considerations of development beyond the human.

BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS: THE PACHAMAMA AND THE BIOCENTRIC TURN

While the communal concerns within the SK/BV framework have largely been restricted in the connections made with the HD approach, discussions of the *Pachamama* or, more directly, of the centrality of including environmental concerns are comparatively quite common. The main contribution and impact that these indigenous philosophical frameworks have had has been seen in terms of the inclusion of concerns for the “Mother Nature”. In fact, the reform of the Ecuadorian constitution in 2008 attracted international media attention across the world precisely because of its inclusion of Nature’s Rights. The new constitution, approved by popular referendum, recognised the centrality of environmental concerns for the lives of the people of Ecuador and for the achievement of the *Sumak Kawsay*. These were eloquently included in the preamble of the constitution as follows:

‘We women and men, the sovereign people of Ecuador; *Recognizing* our age-old roots; wrought by women and men from various peoples; *Celebrating* nature, the Pacha Mama (Mother Earth), of which we are a part and which is vital to our existence, (...) *Hereby decide to build*: A new form of public coexistence, in diversity and in harmony with nature, to achieve the good way of living, the *sumak kawsay*.’⁶²

Further, the constitution included a whole chapter that spelled out the Rights of Nature, starting with Art. 71 which recognized Nature’s ‘right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes’.⁶³ Even while environmental concerns in discussions of development are, of course, not exclusive to the SK/BV framework, it is the centrality that these play in the achievement of a ‘life in plenitude’ what has caught the attention of academics and policy practitioners of development. These ideas, so widely incorporated into the Ecuadorian Constitution have filtered down to academic discussions and policy implementations of development in the region, where concerns for the environment appear to have taken a stronger stance. Yet, for a large part, these

⁶² República del Ecuador 2008, 15. I have selected the relevant excerpt of the preamble and reformatted it. Highlights are from the original.

⁶³ República del Ecuador 2008, Art. 71

ideas have not come to radically challenge mainstream notions, but rather have become associated with the existing literature on sustainable development.⁶⁴ Environmental considerations, thus, have been framed within discussions of sustainability that argue we must ensure that future generations will be able to enjoy and reap the same level of welfare that current development patterns allow us. In other words, the vast implications of the consideration of Pacha Mama as Mother Nature, and human beings as inherently connected to and part of it, have been restricted and condensed into a debate over the sustainability of the development project for the future.

Without a doubt, the welfare of future generations is clearly included within the SK/BV framework. In particular, the SK/BV framework is built upon a cyclical vision of life, which connects past, future and present generations, with the past, present and future of Nature, in establishing a communal vision that transcends unilinear visions of progress.⁶⁵ However, these concerns are not new to development discussions nor exclusive to the SK/BV framework. It might, thus, be useful to explore what other elements can be brought to the analysis, highlighting the ontological differences and ethical contributions that can be made to the HD in general and to Amartya Sen's work in particular. Considerations of sustainability already were a growing concern within academic discussions of development from the mid-1960s, but it was only after the publication of the Brundtland Report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987 that they became widespread within the United Nations and mainstream discussions of development.⁶⁶ There, the Brundtland Commission brought forward environmental concerns as an issue of sustainability and care for future generations. It defined sustainable development as the process that 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.⁶⁷ The connections of the 'needs of the present' as well as those of the future with the necessity of preventing environmental degradation were clearly spelled out throughout the report, but became even more evident as a result of the discussions of the Earth Summit in Rio, in 1992. While the discussions on sustainable development have evolved well beyond the definitions of the

⁶⁴ Vanhulst and Beling 2014

⁶⁵ Thomson 2011. In general, in the indigenous communities of the Andes, social, agricultural and political institutions are often connected to a cyclical vision of life, that connects both past, present and future. See Harris 2000.

⁶⁶ Creech 2010

⁶⁷ World Commission on Environment and Development 1987

Brundtland Report and the ones happening within the UN, we will re-direct this discussion towards Amartya Sen's work.

Amartya Sen has addressed the issue of sustainability, including environmental concerns, as a matter of inter and intra-generational justice.⁶⁸ Sen argued in one of his first interventions on the topic that amongst the most important reasons for the protection of the environment, is 'the ethical need for guaranteeing that future generations would continue to enjoy similar opportunities of leading worthwhile lives that are enjoyed by generations that precede them'.⁶⁹ The necessity to ensure distributive equity between human beings of different generations, thus, is the main driver for the quest of environmental sustainability. Importantly, this quest for distributive justice is of central importance not only for future generations (inter-generational justice) but also amongst the human beings of the current generation (intra-generational justice). This point was made to highlight that the level of development to be 'sustained' ought to also be equitably distributed amongst the people of current generations as we should not 'deny the less privileged today, the attention that we bestow on generations in the future'.⁷⁰ Beyond ensuring inter and intra generational equality, Sen's main concerns with discussing environmental and sustainability issues have been related to ensuring that these are framed in the language of capabilities, rather than in more restrictive understandings of wellbeing.

In his *The Idea of Justice* published in 2010, he argued for the necessity of reconceptualising discussions of sustainability as expanding the freedoms that people enjoy (of generations today and in the future) rather than focusing on needs or living standards, an argument that he would later develop more thoroughly.⁷¹ 'There is cogency in thinking not just about sustaining the fulfilment of our needs, but more broadly about sustaining - or extending - our freedom (including the freedom to meet our needs)'.⁷² Sen advocates defining sustainability in terms of respecting the 'capabilities and freedoms' of future generations to overcome the more restricted ideas of 'needs' or 'living conditions' that other approaches sustain. The crucial importance of this

⁶⁸ Anand and Sen 1994; Anand and Sen 2000

⁶⁹ Sen and Anand 2000, 2030

⁷⁰ Sen and Anand 2000, 2031

⁷¹ Sen 2010, 248–252; Sen 2013

⁷² Sen 2010, 252

distinction lies for Sen, in the possibility of highlighting, within the concept of Sustainable Development, the central role of individuals as agents, as intrinsically able to make reasoned social choices within the realm of environmental sustainability. In other words, reframing the idea of sustainable development in terms of capabilities and freedoms, rather than needs and/or living standards, would precisely open the necessary space to include considerations of the expansion of individual freedom, of individual empowerment (both of current as well as future generations), as a central feature of sustainability.

‘In general, seeing development in terms of increasing the effective freedom of human beings brings the constructive agency of people engaged in environment-friendly activities directly within the domain of developmental achievements. Development is fundamentally an empowering process, and this power can be used to preserve and enrich the environment, and not only to decimate it.’⁷³

According to his perspective, the protection of the environment in relation to issues of sustainable development would respond: on the one hand, to the necessity of ensuring that future and current generations enjoy a sustained level of freedom to choose and make reasoned social choices; and on the other hand, to the moral responsibility attached to the possibility of making reasoned social choices. To Sen, ‘[s]ince we are enormously more powerful than other species, we have some responsibility towards them that links with this asymmetry of power’.⁷⁴ The space that Sen gives to reasoned social choices –including decisions for the conservation of the environment - within the definition of Sustainable Development, indicates a very interesting perspective.

The inclusion of specific arguments addressing the necessity of ensuring *intra* and *inter*-generational equity, illustrates his more egalitarian inclinations and reminds us to ensure that we address current development challenges together with more long-term concerns. Yet, what is perhaps more remarkable, is the clear articulation of these sustainability considerations within his concerns for the expansion of individual agency and for the consideration of development as freedom. Development should be achieved in a sustainable manner, so as not to trump future generation’s possibilities to expand their freedoms and capabilities. Rather than intrinsically assigning a valuation to sustainability considerations, these become relevant insofar as they may become a source

⁷³ Sen 2010, 248

⁷⁴ Sen 2010, 251

of unfreedom for future and present human beings. This particular aspect has been praised as a possible way out from the imposition of our normative valuations of the consideration of nature that we bestow upon future generations, what has been defined as 'Environmental Domination'.⁷⁵ To Scholtes, 'in so far as it programmatically locates the processes of valuing nature and the formulation of environmental problems in the space of public deliberation and social value formation' Sen's capability approach offers a promising base for considering sustainability issues.⁷⁶ The space for social reasoning (and inherent to it, of individual agency and empowerment processes) that the capability approach gives to considerations of sustainability becomes then, a fundamental element. Importantly, it is one that allows us to clarify its relation with the SK/BV framework. Seen from this perspective, Sen undoubtedly gives a compelling and interesting view on considerations of sustainable development, which have echoed discussions of HD across the years.⁷⁷ Yet, at the same time, it strongly illustrates the anthropocentric and instrumentalist view of the environment and of the consideration of nature within the capability approach. The relevance of ensuring environmental sustainability, in Sen's perspective, appears linked only to its instrumental value to ensuring and maintaining an equitable enjoyment level of the individual's freedom, of her possibilities for empowerment. The space given to Nature and environmental considerations in general, then, substantially differs from that conceived within the SK/BV framework, and thus, only allows for a shallow connection between the SK/BV and the HD frameworks.

Considerations of wellbeing have, within the SK/BV, a central role. In the indigenous cosmologies, these considerations are not only framed in terms of sustainability concerns, but are intrinsic to the achievement of a 'life in plenitude' on a material and spiritual level. The achievement of the Sumak Kawsay is envisioned within the *Pachamama* or Mother Nature to which all natural beings belong and in which they are connected.⁷⁸ Nature appears portrayed as a giving and caring mother, as life in-itself.⁷⁹ It thus appears as ontologically indivisible from human beings and, as a result,

⁷⁵ Scholtes defines Environmental domination as the process whereby, 'by making decisions regarding nature that have inescapable consequences for others, we exert our ideas of the good upon others and shape their options in a definitive way.' Scholtes 2010, 292.

⁷⁶ Scholtes 2010, 303

⁷⁷ See, for example, Anand and Sen 1994; United Nations Development Programme 2011; Kaul 2014.

⁷⁸ Medina 2001b

⁷⁹ Chacosa 2014

environmental and sustainability concerns cannot be understood in or argued for in an instrumental manner: they are inherent to the idea of *Sumak Kawsay*, or of a good life. The SK/BV then, cannot be articulated in a manner that is simply compatible with Amartya Sen's anthropocentric approach. Eduardo Gudynas and others have termed this view a 'Biocentric turn', whereby 'the good life of humans is only possible if the survival and integrity of the web of life of nature can be guaranteed'.⁸⁰ It is the same *relational ontology* of the SK/BV framework upon which the ideas of *ayllu* are built that advocates for a more holistic consideration of Nature as having intrinsic value, and not only in relation to the fulfilment of the needs of present and future human beings.⁸¹ It is also what allows it to distinguish it from unilinear considerations of development, highlighting the interconnectedness of all aspects of the life cycle. The biocentric turn that the indigenous cosmologies advocate cannot be simply subsumed within a discourse of sustainability that purely instrumentalises nature.

While this is certainly not meant to indicate that Nature's resources cannot or should not be used for the reproduction of human life, it does certainly indicate the need to revise the priorities of development. The SK/BV's notion of *Pachamama* should not come as an advocate for a return of a stone-age engagement with nature, but should remind us of the centrality that environmental concerns have for the achievement of a 'life in plenitude', beyond the anthropocentric considerations that Amartya Sen and the Capability approach may offer. It should remind us of the ever growing necessity to consider development processes beyond the human. The Biocentric focus of the SK/BV, thus, poses a challenge to the HD and Amartya Sen's work that can only be overcome if the connections between the two are made in a shallow manner. And it is precisely this shallow engagement that can explain the dynamics of the 'Commodities Consensus' in Latin America, where the increase of environmental concerns in discussions of development associated with the SK/BV has been accompanied by an increase in environmental conflict and degradation.⁸² If the connections between the HD and the SK/BV framework are to become meaningful in solving the pressing challenges that Latin America (and the world) face in terms of sustainable development, then

⁸⁰ Gudynas 2009a, 52; Gudynas 2009b; Gudynas and Acosta 2011a; Acosta 2010; Escobar 2011

⁸¹ Villalba 2013, 1430; Costoya 2012, 216

⁸² See fn.44 in this same chapter.

reflecting on the contradictions between the Capability Approach's and the indigenous philosophies' conceptualizations of environmental sustainability becomes central.

Conclusion

This thesis previously examined the ethical challenges that stem from prioritizing the collective dimension (Ch. 4) and the possibilities of structural transformation (Ch. 5) of development processes, and particularly directed them to engage Amartya Sen's capability approach. Following that, this chapter has examined an additional dimension: the ethical challenges that arise from considering development beyond the human. It has done so by exploring the connections that have been made between the work of Amartya Sen's and the HD to the SK/BV framework emerging from the indigenous philosophies of the Andean region. These links have been developed in the last decade upon the identification of broad coincidences and general affinities amongst the perspectives. While these have resulted in the achievement of significant transformations in the conceptualisation of development policy in the region, this chapter has argued for the need to more seriously reflect on the limitations of offering only a shallow engagement between the two. Rather than joining the growing policy and academic literature emphasising their connections, the chapter has sought to recover the valuable lessons from the recent irruption of Andean indigenous knowledge into discussions of development.

To do this, the chapter has explored the ethical dilemmas and challenges that emerge from the comparison and connection of the HD and SK/BV frameworks around two main issues: the communal and collective dimensions of the development endeavour, and the anthropocentric versus biocentric consideration of sustainability issues. In here, exploring the notion of *ayllu* has given us the possibility to further recover the communal dimension of the development endeavour and to connect this to discussions of environmental issues and to reflect on the limits of the sustainability considerations within Sen's framework. While we certainly are to celebrate the increase of such sustainability concerns within mainstream discussions of development, we have sought to identify both contradictions and potential avenues that could and should be further considered if we are to achieve a fruitful engagement between the ideas of HD derived from Amartya Sen's work and those of BV/SK emerging from the indigenous philosophies of the Andes.

In Bolivia, the *ayllus* have been given a growing space within policy initiatives (mostly as a result of the work of the National Council of *ayllus* and Markas of Qullasuyu founded in 1997). The *ayllu* has also been officially incorporated as a form of land ownership, and it has played a significant role in the process of land titling in Bolivia in the last two decades. Often, *ayllus* have been given prerogatives at the local level of government, and have played an important role in processes of justice administration.⁸³ At the same time, celebrations and references of the *pachamama* abound in Bolivia and Ecuador contemporary life and policy discussions.⁸⁴ From national laws to development programs and international projects, these have sparked the most varied initiatives across the Andes, where the revivals of Nature considerations appear to have reached new heights. Yet, it remains necessary to move beyond a romanticised vision of these concepts and engage with the ethical challenges that a consideration of the development process beyond the human brings about.

If we would like to turn to these indigenous philosophies to discuss alternatives to achieve a transformative development, then, the indigenous notions enshrined in the SK philosophy and discussed in this chapter should not be left aside. Yet, more than becoming an unquestionable element, they should remind us of the importance of the consideration of social and collective spaces of reflection in discussions of development, and its connections with the central role that nature plays in the development process. In revisiting the indigenous philosophies as a framework to advance our ethical considerations of development, they should help us reframe the debate in a more holistic manner, understanding that the ‘whole’ extends beyond its human ties.

⁸³ J. Crabtree and Chaplin 2013, chap. 2

⁸⁴ Rivera Cusicanqui 2010

CONCLUSION

❧

Soy.
Soy lo que dejaron,
soy toda la sobra de lo que se robaron.
Un pueblo escondido en la cima,
mi piel es de cuero por eso aguanta cualquier clima.
Soy una fábrica de humo,
mano de obra campesina para tu consumo.
...
Soy el desarrollo en carne viva,
un discurso político sin saliva.
Las caras más bonitas que he conocido,
soy la fotografía de un desaparecido.
Soy la sangre dentro de tus venas,
Soy un pedazo de tierra que vale la pena.
...
Soy América Latina, un pueblo sin piernas pero que camina.

*Latinoamérica, Calle 13.**

The social, cultural and political power of the idea of development has not faltered since President Truman so notably uttered the word in 1949.¹ Throughout the decades, the evolution of development thinking has led us to question many of its assumptions, its strategies, its implications, even its existence as a worthwhile project to be pursued. Yet, the idea of development has resisted, variously changing its content to summarise the aspirations of so many, whose lives remain constrained by the limitations of their existence in this world. These aspirations for a better future, for an improvement of the living situation of people across the world, for emancipation from sources of oppression and the articulation of possible responses to situations of unfreedom have guided the work of Amartya Sen throughout his now long and deeply significant career.

* Below, I have provided my own translation of the lyrics.

*I am. / I am what they left, I am the leftovers of what was stolen./
A town hidden in the summit, my skin is leather that is why it endures any weather./
I am a factory of smoke, a peasant's labour for your consumption./ .../
I am 'development', raw, in the flesh, a political discourse without saliva.
The most beautiful faces I have known, I am the picture of a desaparecido./
I am the blood in your veins, I am a worthy piece of land /...
I am Latin America, a people without legs that still walks.*

¹ Truman 1949

His compassionate and sophisticated calls to advance our theoretical and practical notions of development towards the inclusion of more ethical considerations have resonated far and wide. Understanding ‘Development as Freedom’ has articulated the aspirations of the millions of ‘poor and dispossessed’ in a compelling summary.²

In Latin America, like in much of the Global South, ideas of development have had a particularly strong impact in the lives of its peoples. Projects, strategies and theoretical discussions have been articulated across decades in the name of development. Many have highlighted the importance of discussions of development thinking in Latin America, and we have examined several of these works throughout this thesis.³ Yet, beyond academic and policy discussions, ideas of development have a profound resonance in the everyday lives of the Latin American peoples. The excerpt from the popular song *Latinoamérica*, from the Puerto Rican band *Calle 13*, that opens this final chapter gives us a clear insight into the continuous relevance of ideas of development in the collective imaginary of the peoples of the region. The song offers a political and social commentary on the identity of the region, making particular reference to the use of ‘development’ as a ‘political discourse without saliva’. The reference to ideas of development in such a popular, mainstream song (it was awarded the 2011 Latin Grammy Award for Song of the Year) serves as a useful illustration of the continued centrality that these ideas have in the region. In 1992, Gustavo Esteva, a Mexican intellectual and activist, gave a powerful account of the impact of these ideas while analysing President Truman’s aforementioned speech. There, he argued,

‘Underdevelopment began, then, on January 20, 1949. On that day, two billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, from that time on, they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others’ reality: a mirror that belittles them and sends them off to the end of the queue, a mirror that defines their identity, which is really that of a heterogeneous and diverse majority, simply in the terms of a homogenizing and narrow minority.’⁴

To Esteva, the definition of development was of paramount importance to the construction of the identity of so many in the ‘underdeveloped’ nations. While post-development theorists have been widely criticised for their blanket rejection of

² Sen 1999a

³ Kay 1989; Escobar 1995; Quijano 2000a; Gudynas and Acosta 2011a; Gudynas 2012

⁴ Esteva 2010, 2. This excerpt comes from his contribution to *The Development Dictionary*, edited by Wolfgang Sachs and commonly assumed as one of the key texts in post-development theory.

development as a project,⁵ particularly in their earlier writings, Esteva's contribution aptly recovers the importance of these ideas for the people of the Global South.

In 2010, in the preface to the second edition of *The Development Dictionary*, Wolfgang Sachs stated that 'the longing for greater justice on the part of the South is one reason for the persistence of the development creed'.⁶ Here, Sachs recognised that while development still remains inextricably tied to Western ideas of modernity and, more dangerously, to Western patterns of consumption, it is not only the West that can be credited with its persistence as a worthy project. Across the globe, and perhaps even more so in the Southern hemisphere, ideas of development still summarise the aspirations for a better, and more just, life to many of the millions that remain in the 'developing' end of the continuum. Ideas of development still have a powerful evocative power and can become catalysts for the mobilisation of innumerable resources and international initiatives.

Given the strong power that ideas of development still hold, we can easily recognise the importance of Sen's project, and his efforts to expand the ethical considerations of these ideas. This is no mere academic argument. Sen's efforts to advance on the reflections of development to truly become 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy' should be praised, in particular, in light of other narratives of development that mainly focus on the need to boost economic growth, and leave little space for the consideration of human agency, for political and ethical dilemmas or for concerns around sustainability.⁷ Yet, beyond the overwhelming support that Sen's CA framework has received, this thesis has argued that it is also necessary to cautiously reflect on these ideas, unpacking the conceptual baggage that they come with and challenging the new ethical boundaries they have established in the place of previous ones. The achievements of Sen's ethical considerations of development are overshadowed if they, unreflectively, become a depoliticised strategy, in which ideas for development, once conceived as radical, lose their transformative potential. This thesis has sought to transit this ambivalent path: beyond the recognition of the advances of people-centred ideas of development, and the fundamental role of Sen's work in shaping

⁵ Kiely 1999; Nederveen Pieterse 1998; Nederveen Pieterse 2000; Rapley 2004; Corbridge 1998. See also, Ch. 1 of this thesis.

⁶ Sachs 2010b, viii

⁷ Sen 1999a, 3

these ideas, it is necessary to question and challenge the current shape and limits of these people-centred approaches to development. The central argument that this thesis has put forward lies precisely within this ambivalent position: while recognising the remarkable advances in development thinking brought about by Sen's ideas, this thesis has taken the necessary step towards identifying the limits of such an approach, a step in which critical traditions emerging from Latin America have been fundamental. These limits, it has been argued and examined throughout its chapters, lie in the paradoxical use of ideas of empowerment within Sen's theoretical framework. The articulation of the paradox of empowerment within Sen's theory has allowed this analysis to explore multiple dimensions of ideas of empowerment in contemporary development thinking and practice (particularly those related with the collective dimension of development processes, the possibilities for structural transformation and concerns for sustainability). Engaging the different dimensions of this paradox of empowerment with critical traditions emerging from Latin America, has allowed us to advance in the recovery of the transformative potential of these ideas for development. It is necessary now, to reflect on these different dimensions, and recall the main arguments articulated in the different chapters.

Unpacking the conceptual baggage of the Paradox of Empowerment

The first chapter of this thesis examined the development of development theory, offering a necessary context to the work of Amartya Sen and its ground-breaking contributions, as well as to the main arguments to be developed in the subsequent chapters. The evolutionary account of development theory articulated there was presented highlighting the emergence of different critical traditions in Latin America. In offering this account, the chapter put forward two arguments central to the thesis. The first posited that the work of Amartya Sen has been fundamental to advance towards people-centred approaches to development, and has offered the most successful and in-depth articulation and justification of these ideas. The chapter demonstrated how the work of Sen offered the most successful response to the shortcomings identified in the 'development impasse' which preceded it and had stalled productive debates in the discipline.⁸ Here, Ch. 1 examined how, in advocating for a conception of development

⁸ Booth 1985

that shifted the focus towards the individual as means and ends of development, Sen's work addressed the strongest criticisms of development theory at the end of the 1980s.

The second argument developed in Ch. 1 introduced the central role of Latin American critical traditions for this thesis. It argued that Latin American critical traditions offer valuable resources for development thinking, particularly in devising alternatives to mainstream notions of development and the flaws that had arisen within debates there. In this respect, the chapter offered a brief account of the important tradition of critical thinking emerging from Latin America, and argued that some of these have not been sufficiently acknowledged or considered in development thinking. In tracing this narrative of development, the chapter highlighted both the importance of the work of Amartya Sen and of the Latin American critical traditions briefly introduced for the advance of this thesis.

Chapter 2 built on the insights into Amartya Sen's theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter and argued that his work was instrumental to the expansion of ethical considerations, and to the inclusion of individual agency, within development thinking. The chapter pursued an in-depth engagement with Sen's work, tracing his ethical concerns from his early works in economics to the elaboration of his *capabilities approach* to development. From his early work in Social Choice Theory, Sen laid the basis for the inclusion of political and ethical concerns in the comparison of welfare in development thinking. In moving beyond the limitations of previous considerations of development (utilitarianism and the basic needs approach) Sen articulated the concept of *capabilities* which became central to the construction of his theoretical framework for development. Understanding *capability* as a 'person's freedom to choose between different ways of living'⁹, led Sen to see development as 'a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy'.¹⁰ In engaging Sen's work throughout its evolution from the initial interventions in economics to the contemporary capabilities approach, the chapter demonstrated how his work opened an unprecedented space for reflections on individual empowerment in development thinking, articulating the most successful example of people-centred approaches to development. Further, the chapter demonstrated the real advances of Sen's efforts to expand ethical considerations in

⁹Sen 1989, 43

¹⁰ Sen 1999a, 3

development thinking, moving beyond the limitations of earlier approaches to development.

Chapter 3 further examined Sen's work and the role of individual agency in his theoretical framework and articulated a central argument within the thesis. The chapter analysed how the notion of empowerment, while seldom used by Sen himself, is a key element within his CA approach to development. In examining Sen's work as well as the relevant critical literature on the matter, the chapter demonstrated how the notion of empowerment supports the conceptualisation of individual agency as an essential element to the *capability approach*.¹¹ The chapter, however, moved beyond the existing critical literature on the matter, and argued that the notion of empowerment embedded in Sen's framework is entrapped in a fundamental paradox.

Up to this point, the thesis had focused on highlighting the significant advances that Sen's framework had produced in development thinking. Chapters 1 and 2 offered a detailed examination of Sen's work, and the ways in which the CA approach to development moved beyond the narrow limits of previous conceptions. Further, these chapters illustrated how the project of 'Development as freedom', - that has become Sen's trademark - , arises from an emancipatory vision of development, one that sees the need to overcome the 'unfreedoms' and deprivations that under-development brings about.¹² In this way, Sen's recognition of the centrality of human agency in achieving development has provided development thinking and practice with a compelling theoretical framework to articulate the need to expand the freedoms that people enjoy. Yet, while the focus on empowerment emerges from Sen's quest to expand the ethical considerations and freedoms afforded to individuals in development thinking, the framework in which these notions appear embedded effectively constricts its potential.

Chapter 3 demonstrated how in Sen's framework, the expansion of individual agency is connected, in political terms, to the existence of liberal democracies and, in economic terms, to regulated market economies. While Sen has been criticised for leaving his CA too undetermined, this thesis, in contrast, argued that it is in fact the over-

¹¹ Crocker and Robeyns 2010; Crocker 2008; Drydyk 2013; Drydyk 2010; Alkire and Ibrahim 2007; Alkire 2009; Hill 2003

¹² We have referred both in the introduction of the thesis and in Ch. 3, how Sen's early works made explicit references to Marx in arguing that development should be seen as a form of emancipation from the domination of circumstances over the lives of peoples. Sen 1983; Sen 1989.

determination of the conditions and possibilities of individual agency that constricts its possibilities to achieve its transformative potential for development processes. Sen's adamant defence of the instrumental and constitutive value of the existence of a democracy 'with the protection of liberties and freedoms, respect for legal entitlements, and the guaranteeing of free discussion and uncensored distribution of news and fair comment' for the exercise and expansion of individual agency, clearly frames the conditions for political empowerment within present liberal democratic institutions.¹³ Further, the consideration of (regulated) markets as 'spheres of freedom'¹⁴, that are both inherent and constitutive of development, gives us further insights to the crucial role that markets play for Sen's understanding of economic empowerment.¹⁵

In so vehemently framing processes of empowerment within liberal democracies and market economies, as we examined in Ch. 3, Sen effectively constrains the transformatory potential of these practices and the ability of developing peoples to empower themselves in alternative manners. The Paradox of Empowerment stems, then, from the coexistence of these two contradictory elements within Sen's framework: on the one hand, ideas of individual empowerment emerge from a quest to expand the ethical considerations of development to become effectively the means and ends of understanding 'development as freedom', yet, by normatively framing these ideas of empowerment within liberal democracies and market economies, these ideas appear constrained, limited in their possibilities to overcome the limits of this normative framework. Ch. 3 examined how in connecting ideas of individual empowerment with the functioning of liberal democracies and regulated market economies, Sen leaves too little agency to the developing peoples to alter the scope and nature of economic and political life other than through the reproduction of the Western, liberal ideas of development that have dominated mainstream development thinking. In this way, Ch. 3, clearly articulated the terms of the Paradox of Empowerment, and introduced the different dimensions associated with the 'conceptual baggage' of these ideas. In the following chapters, the thesis explored these dimensions and argued for the distinct opportunity that different critical traditions emerging from Latin America give us to

¹³ Sen 1999b, 9–10 See also, Sen 1999b; Sen 2010, chap. 15

¹⁴ Selwyn 2014

¹⁵ Sen 1993; Sen 1999a, chap. 5

recover the potentiality of ideas of empowerment, critically reconstructing some of the central aspects associated with it.

From chapter 4 onwards, this thesis progressively focused on unpacking the different dimensions of the paradox of empowerment, the different elements and concerns that Sen's constrictions to the liberal political and economic had obscured, and providing resources to move beyond it. In the first of these chapters, Ch. 4, the thesis engaged the tradition of Liberation Theology that emerged in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the work of Gustavo Gutierrez, to offer a new perspective on the collective dimension of processes of empowerment for development.¹⁶ The chapter argued that, while the ideas of Liberation Theology have not traditionally been discussed within development theory, the discussions of 'development as liberation' constituted an early precedent to people-centred approaches. The articulation of these ideas within Liberation Theology allowed us to trace parallels with the ideas of Amartya Sen, while highlighting the important differences. These were particularly relevant in analysing the space offered by both theories for the consideration of collective concerns within development processes and their links to processes of individual empowerment. Here, the chapter argued that, while some attempts by Sen himself and others to address social and collective concerns of development have been made, the CA remains restricted by its instrumentalist vision of society thus failing to offer sufficient theoretical space for analysing the social aspects of development, or for the constitution of collective agencies. Further, in the analysis developed of the ideas of the Liberation Theology, we examined the ethical principle of solidarity underpinning the discussions of 'development as liberation'. The chapter argued that it is this focus on solidarity as a guiding principle for the formation of spaces of communal reflection and action that offers the most valuable insights to expand the collective gaze of Sen's project of 'development as freedom'.

Chapter 5 moved to another critical literature from Latin America, in order to analyse the structural dimension of development processes. In recovering Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy for development thinking, the chapter argued that, again, clear parallels can be traced between Freire's ideas of 'development as *conscientização*' and Sen's CA. In Freire, education appears intrinsically connected to a process of structural

¹⁶ Gutiérrez 1970; Gutiérrez 1988; Gutiérrez 1981; Gutiérrez 1983

transformation that relies on individual empowerment and political participation.¹⁷ The attainment of literacy skills is here connected to a radical political project, in which learning to read and write is an intrinsic part of the process of *conscientização* which cannot be disassociated from a transformatory praxis. While clear similarities exist between the work of Sen and Freire, if we read Freire's political project together with his methodological and pedagogical discussions the differences between them become clear. Freire argues for a process of empowerment rooted in the political participation of individuals yet, distinct from Sen, Freire's vision of participation is associated with the structural transformation of the societies where it takes place.

In Sen, processes of empowerment are rooted in the participation of individuals, either in the political institutions of liberal democracies or in the market. As such, ideas of political empowerment appear associated with the good governance agenda and the promotion of the accountability of the state, whereas processes of economic empowerment are expected to allow individuals to participate effectively in the market. Crucially, Freire's position in this regard, examined in Ch. 5, is diametrically distinct. For Freire, processes of empowerment are rooted in the participation of people, but this participation is only empowering insofar as it transforms the structures that gave space to the oppression of underdevelopment.¹⁸ For Freire, those who were dis-empowered, those who suffered from the constraints of underdevelopment cannot overcome this situation 'by incorporating themselves into the structure that is responsible for that same dependency', the only solution, rather, is 'an authentic transformation of the de-humanizing structures'.¹⁹ Thus, where Sen understands the process of empowerment as a process of inclusion, Freire understands it as a process linked to structural transformation. The chapter then argues, that the recovery of the political project that guides Freire's work and discussions of empowerment and participation, allows us to partially resolve and advance beyond Sen's Paradox of Empowerment, recovering its transformatory potential. Importantly, the reading that this chapter presents of Freire's work rescues his contributions to development thinking, moving beyond the methodological fixation to which they had been reduced.

¹⁷ Freire 1977; Freire 1974; Freire 1972

* Portuguese for *conscientization*, a process of consciousness-raising, examined in Ch. 5.

¹⁸ As we have seen in Ch.5, Freire's language of 'oppression' is similar to Sen's ideas of 'unfreedoms'.

¹⁹ Freire 1979, 40. Own translation.

The final chapter of this thesis moved from the use of historical critical resources to an engagement with contemporary discussions of development taking place in Latin America. The notion of *Sumak Kawsay (SK)*, and its translation into Spanish as *Buen Vivir (BV)* which can be loosely understood as ‘Good Living’ in English, originated in the indigenous epistemologies of the Andean region and were used in this chapter to engage Sen’s CA to development. Here, the ideas of SK/BV were used to re-visit the social and collective dimensions of processes of empowerment, extending the previous accounts, in order to examine the sustainability dimension of development. In order to advance these ideas, the chapter first explored the connections that have already been traced between the work of Amartya Sen and discussions of development as SK/BV. Here, the chapter argued that this literature has rushed to trace the parallels between the frameworks, missing the opportunity to explore the ethical challenges that these ideas bring to contemporary notions of development. Through an examination of the notion of *Ayllu* - which can be loosely translated as community - central within the SK/BV framework, these indigenous frameworks allow us to revisit the limits of the social and collective considerations of processes of development within Sen’s CA. Importantly, the consideration of *Ayllu* also allows us to move beyond the analysis articulated in Ch.4, to include considerations of environmental sustainability, challenging the vision of development as a unilinear, unlimited process. The chapter argued that the SK/BV allows us to expand the ethical considerations of processes of development beyond the human, and thus advance over the human limits of Sen’s framework of ‘development as freedom’. Incorporating elements of what is termed as a ‘biocentric ethics’, stemming from the indigenous philosophies of the Andes, allows us to move beyond the anthropocentric vision of development that Sen offers and address issues of sustainability and considerations of the Earth to overcome the paradoxical nature of processes of empowerment.

In progressively unpacking the different dimensions associated with the Paradox of Empowerment in each one of these chapters, the thesis has advanced in the development of its central argument. While recognising the merits of Sen’s advances in providing a theoretical framework for people-centred approaches to development, it has demonstrated that significant shortcomings and limitations are structurally embedded within his work. The use of critical resources from Latin America has allowed us to understand the conceptual baggage hidden within the ideas of ‘development as freedom’ and to envision alternative frameworks to advance beyond its limitations. Further, they

have allowed us to critically recover important additional dimensions to empowerment necessary for a transformatory approach to development and which have been neglected in the construction and mainstream expansion of the CA in development thinking and practice.

The Garden of Forking Paths

Development thinking remains as it did in its origins - perhaps like no other social scientific discipline - inextricably tied to practice. As a result, as it pursues some options to be implemented while leaving others behind, it suffers from an intensified propensity to path dependency. Ideas are often lost, or their meanings are domesticated to fit the mainstream language. In its attempt to reflect on contemporary and past practices, policies and strategies, development theory must cope with this difficult critical situation. Like in the imaginary 'Garden of forking paths' from the story by Jorge Luis Borges whose extract opens this thesis, development theory must cope with the labyrinth-like nature of time and human action that inevitably limits our options, both in terms of thinking and practice, in the present. At the same time, development theory's attempts to offer new conceptualizations in the pursuit of better, more promising futures, necessarily opens new, forking paths as it moves through history. This thesis has sought to retrace the difficult and important path opened by Amartya Sen, and point out some of the multiple, alternative paths that had arisen from it and yet remained unexplored.

This thesis has demonstrated the constriction of ideas of empowerment and their transformatory potential for development within contemporary people-centred approaches. In identifying the multiple limitations and boundaries embedded in Sen's approach, different possibilities open before us. One possibility, like the earlier works of post-development theories illustrated, consists in rejecting the possibilities of development to ever become an emancipatory framework. Development, in this perspective, remains too embedded in a colonizing, Western modernizing framework and project that cannot be escaped. Similarly, since ideas of empowerment appear here so intrinsically connected to the dimensions of the Paradox of Empowerment identified in this thesis, one alternative is to reject these ideas altogether. The paralyzing nature of

such analyses is so powerful that few, if any, remain so deeply convinced of the necessity to reject ideas of development altogether.²⁰

This thesis has pursued an alternative path than the one presented by post-development. As Andrea Cornwall, in her analysis of the use of ‘development buzzwords’ (which included empowerment) pointed out, another option is to ‘make visible the different frames of reference that coexist within the fuzz of current development rhetoric, and expose the different ways of worldmaking they imply’.²¹ In attempting to expose the different dimensions of the Paradox of Empowerment, this thesis has pursued this second, more productive path. Yet, the research undertaken in this thesis, more than finished, is a mere first step towards a more emancipatory notion of development. The intellectual traditions from Latin America engaged here have revealed new possibilities for the recovery of the transformatory potential of ideas of empowerment. In articulating the limitations and challenging the boundaries of Sen’s people-centred approach, new possibilities appear to critically reconstruct the concept of empowerment, and to recover some of the radical ideas that were associated with it in its earlier articulations in the traditions of Latin America.

Yet, the critical reconstruction of this notion has only been initiated in this thesis. Further research may take us down very different potential paths, and the arguments put forward here might continue being explored from different perspectives. The insights into the CA contained within this analysis may very well be further explored in the future, in conjunction with the multiplicity of initiatives attempting to empirically or theoretically address the limitations of this framework. Perhaps, revisiting ideas of sustainability, of structural transformation and of collective/communal concerns, would allow us to refine the parameters of the Capability approach.²² On the other hand, the insights brought forward within this thesis could also be pursued in relation to a different literature, walking us down a different path to extend this research. As we have pointed out on several occasions in this thesis, there are clear connections between this analysis and the

²⁰ Ziai 2007

²¹ Cornwall 2007, 1057

²² Many have followed a similar path, albeit up to now the literature remains, as we have highlighted in several occasions across this thesis, too focused on extending what is assumed to be the merits of this approach, rather than critically confronting its limitations. See, for example, A. Crabtree 2013; Vogetkleschin 2013; Pelenc and Ballet 2015; Pelenc, Bazile, and Ceruti 2015; Davis 2015; Biggeri and Ferrannini 2014.

fertile Latin American literature focusing on advancing a ‘decolonial’ perspective, or with the ideas of recovering the ‘epistemologies of the South’. Many initiatives from both the academic and policy fields of development have postulated the necessity to articulate alternative notions of development, taking into consideration the perspectives from the Global South, particularly recovering the voice of Latin America.²³ Since this thesis has brought forward critical traditions emerging from Latin America, there is a clear connection between the topics and arguments developed in this thesis and these perspectives that could, and perhaps should, be pursued in future research. Perhaps though, in the end, the ideas put forward in this thesis may help us reconsider the merits of Sen’s approach under a new light and a new set of concerns. Endowed with a new meaning, and considering more dimensions, the critical recovery of these concepts may help us advance in the achievement, as Sen would have wanted, of development as freedom.

²³ See, for example, the works on this matter by Walsh 2012; Gudynas 2011a; Gudynas 2014a; Gudynas 2013; Lang and Mokrani 2011; Sousa Santos 2006; Sousa Santos 2010; Sousa Santos 2009; Quijano 2006; Quijano 2000b; Escobar 2010b; Escobar 2010a; Svampa 2012; Svampa 2013; Guillén García and Phelan Casanova 2012; Mignolo 2011; Mignolo 2005. Many fruitful discussions can be pursued from the connections with these perspectives that would further the development of the ideas put forward in this thesis. Yet, perhaps of all of these connections this research would benefit the most from engaging with the work that has been exploring issues of gender, a dimension that there has not been sufficient space to explore in this thesis, but remains a central aspect of processes of development. See, for example, Lanza 2012; Vega Ugalde 2014a; Vega Ugalde 2014b; Vega 2013.

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