



Working Paper
No. 519

**Human autonomy effectiveness
and development projects**

Mirtha Muñiz Castillo and Des Gasper

March 2011

ISSN 0921-0210

The Institute of Social Studies is Europe's longest-established centre of higher education and research in development studies. On 1 July 2009, it became a University Institute of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). Post-graduate teaching programmes range from six-week diploma courses to the PhD programme. Research at ISS is fundamental in the sense of laying a scientific basis for the formulation of appropriate development policies. The academic work of ISS is disseminated in the form of books, journal articles, teaching texts, monographs and working papers. The Working Paper series provides a forum for work in progress which seeks to elicit comments and generate discussion. The series includes academic research by staff, PhD participants and visiting fellows, and award-winning research papers by graduate students.

Working Papers are available in electronic format at www.iss.nl

Please address comments and/or queries for information to:

Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

or

E-mail: wpapers@iss.nl

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
1 INTRODUCTION	5
2 PROJECT DESIGN AND ASSESSMENT IN TERMS ONLY OF ‘THE’ INTENDED OBJECTIVES OF ‘THE PROJECT’ OR ALSO OF THOSE OF THE PARTICIPANTS	7
3 A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF HUMAN AUTONOMY	10
3.1 The determinants of autonomy	11
3.2 The exercise of autonomy	14
4 AN AUTONOMY-CENTRED APPROACH TO PROJECT ASSESSMENT	14
4.1 The Human Autonomy Effectiveness criterion	15
4.2 Essential characteristics of the approach	16
4.3 Implicit theories of change and de facto organisational practices	17
5 USING THE APPROACH	20
5.1 An autonomy-centred project assessment matrix	20
5.2 The exercise of autonomy and participation during a project	24
6 CONCLUSION	26
REFERENCES	27

Abstract

Development is about people's lives and their opportunities to use and enlarge their desirable human potentials. This article aims to switch the focus in design, implementation and evaluation of projects, from only an abstracted conception of 'the project' and the goods which it is meant to deliver, to a relevant conception of people as agents of change. Participation in a project leads to empowerment when people are self-motivated and involved in valued processes that achieve outcomes valued by them. The article proposes a 'human autonomy effectiveness' (HAE) criterion relevant for sustainable human development, that is built on a (relational) conception of autonomy and is relevant throughout the project cycle. Second, it develops an analytical approach to assess a project's influences on human autonomy, by reference to changes in the determinants (agency powers, access to resources, and structural contexts) and to relevant decision-making during the project, and suggests how to operationalise this in the form of a practical assessment matrix.

Keywords

Autonomy; empowerment; human development; project design, project management, project evaluation

Human autonomy effectiveness and development projects

1 Introduction

Development is about people, their lives and their opportunities to fulfil and enlarge their valuable human potentials. However, in development projects, evaluation usually focuses on intended tangible project outputs and their direct effects; the intentions are those of funders and managers. A linear causal logic specified for the project, such as in a 'logical framework', proposes that the achievement of such outputs and purposes leads to particular positive impacts or development goals.

Certainly, projects can support human wellbeing by providing the means for people to be healthy, well-educated, or more secure. But projects influence people's lives more broadly and in the longer term. The best way to make any gains in wellbeing sustainable and to promote further enhancements once projects are completed – in other words, to fulfil projects' meta-purpose – is to increase the capacity of people to help themselves (Ellerman, 2006).

This article develops an analytical approach to assess projects' effects on human lives, with a focus on human autonomy. A conclusion of scholars in many different fields is that we, human beings, value highly the ability to help ourselves. (For relevant literature reviews see Alkire, 2002; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ellerman, 2006.) In addition, there is an efficacy reason to focus on autonomy: the more autonomous that people are (as discussed later, we do not mean autarchy, but the ability to form and act on goals), the better they are able to choose and pursue the life they value and to enhance and use their valuable potentials and capabilities (Sen, 1999). Where needed, they can promote significant social change in coordination with others, improving their present and future wellbeing and that of their fellows.

We propose a criterion of 'human autonomy effectiveness', since for projects to more effectively promote human development, in a sustainable way, they need to expand the autonomy of project participants. Consequently, development projects should be designed, implemented and evaluated considering human autonomy as a priority goal. The focus becomes on persons as agents of change and on their values, rather than only or overwhelmingly on projects as designed to directly produce other changes set by funders and managers. The concern is to support people's abilities to act and reach goals, rather than to directly provide them with one particular type of good or only to support their ability to obtain that particular good. The experiences of social actors in their social relations come to be at the centre of the analysis.

The approach looks at project effects on autonomy from two angles: whether and how projects directly improve the determinants of autonomy, and whether projects' style of operation supports self-motivated decision-making in relevant matters by final beneficiaries and other participants whose long-term cooperation is desired.

The article draws on a study of four infrastructure projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador that were supported by the aid agency of Luxembourg between 1999 and 2005 (Muñiz Castillo, 2009a). We will use evidence here from one of the projects, to illustrate our general argument. (For parallel analyses of the other three projects, see Muñiz Castillo, 2009a, 2010; Muñiz Castillo & Gasper, 2009.) The project reached about 500 households in a rural village in the east of El Salvador. It aimed at improving the health and living conditions of the residents through the provision of stable access to safe drinking water and the improvement of environmental conditions. The project provided domiciliary water connections and it required households to have home sanitation systems to dispose of grey waters from kitchens, lavatories and bathrooms. It financed composting latrines or eco-latrines and ecological woodstoves. Moreover, it promoted diverse reforestation and soil protection activities, and supported the construction of a reservoir to water livestock. Each household financed and built its home sanitation system and assembled its latrine with the guidance of hired bricklayers, in addition to the other works. Participants attended group sessions of between 25 and 40 people, aimed at preparing them to perform project activities and change their hygiene habits.

Strengthening the community organisation was another expected project output. Project staff offered courses on organisation and management to community leaders and helped them in their efforts to legally formalise a NGO. Before the project, local community committees were managing two gravity (untreated) water systems that covered only a small part of the population. On several occasions, leaders had contacted the municipality government and the public water company to find ways to get potable water for all. Thus, when the project started, the leaders had the motivation to work in all the project activities, though their role was secondary: they mobilised residents and supervised some activities but were not so involved in relevant decision-making.

The project ran between 2002 and 2004 and was managed by a project implementation unit led by a foreign project chief, who coordinated with the public water company (co-executor of the project) and the subcontracted local NGOs and construction firms. After the project completion, the water company was in charge of the water system's operation and maintenance. An ongoing problem was the uncertainty about the authority, powers and duties of municipality governments and about reforms in the water sector. Moreover, the project was affected by governance problems within the water company, which faced accusations of corruption, internal restructuring, and high staff rotation. At the local level, the social context was marked by competition for the scarce water resource and growing insecurity from the presence of youth gangs.

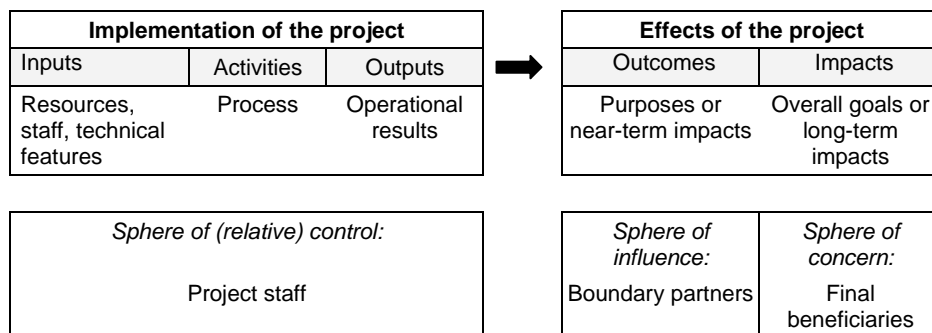
Section 2 will review current approaches in project assessment, and identify the need for a new approach that focuses on strengthening participants' autonomy. Section 3 presents a model of human autonomy and Section 4 proposes a criterion of human autonomy effectiveness, relevant for sustainable human development, which is used in an autonomy-centred approach to project assessment. Section 5 operationalises the approach in a practical assessment matrix. Section 6 concludes.

2 Project design and assessment in terms only of ‘the’ intended objectives of ‘the project’ or also of those of the participants

There are two main types of approaches to plan developmental change: blueprint or orthodox approaches and process approaches. Process approaches emphasise the need for ongoing learning and broad-based commitment, since development typically involves uncertainty, complexity, rapid contextual changes and ignorance in advance about specific dynamics (Ferrero, 2008). Thus stakeholders should be involved in goal-setting, design, implementation and monitoring, which in turn implies a redistribution of power and influence over decision-making (Mosse, 1998; Bond & Hulme, 1999). Participatory learning and action (PLA) tools are examples of process approaches. Such approaches require a flexible and phased implementation, a learning-from-experience philosophy, understanding of the psycho-dynamics of participation, and strong institutional and management support (Bond & Hulme, 1999).

The logical framework approach (LFA), operationalised through the ‘logframe’ matrix, is the most used blueprint tool (e.g., EC, 2004). It defines in advance a series of linear causal links between a project or programme’s actions and its objectives, organised in an explicit hierarchy. It makes the design and implementation more conceptually transparent. The LFA has been the standard project design tool in development cooperation, under this or other names, but has important limitations. Figure 1 shows the causal links between a project and its objectives (from left to right, not in the usual ‘vertical logic’ layout). The outputs are the foreseen and intended results of the project activities carried out with the respective inputs. The arrow in the figure represents the most contestable part of a logframe matrix because it reflects the expected causal link between the operational results and their effects on people’s lives.

FIGURE 1
The cause-effect relationships in the logframe matrix



Source: Muñiz Castillo (2009a), Crawford (2004).

Project staff can secure outputs, to a certain extent, but the realisation of the intended effects (‘Purpose’) depends on other people’s behaviours. In our water project case, an expected output was: ‘a drinking water network is

created and put into operation', and this was reasonably secured by technical staff. However, fulfilment of the outcome or 'purpose', 'to provide a stable access to drinking water service', depended also on other social actors such as the public water company and the community organisation, whose behaviours are outside the control of the project managers and can change over time.

Reaching the overall goal, 'to contribute to the improvement of the health and living conditions of local inhabitants', was more complex still. To pass from having access to safe drinking water at home to enjoying good health requires affordable water bills, good hygiene habits, adequate sanitation systems and solid waste collection, good maintenance of water systems, and more. These sorts of requirements (for each level of result) are supposed to be included as *assumptions* or risk factors in the logframe, related to aspects external to the project. However, the assumptions are usually poorly analysed (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005) and their validity is rarely reviewed over time (see e.g. EC, 2002, p.84). In sum, project outputs (operational results) may not translate into the foreseen and intended outcomes (near-term effects) and impacts (longer-term effects). Change is nearly always influenced by non-project factors, complex interactions of several factors, and unforeseen effects.

The LFA is also easily and often misused (Gasper, 1999, 2000a, 2000b) resulting in, for example, production of a 'lack-frame' that is overly simple or a 'lock-frame' that is too rigid to reflect changes after its design. Nevertheless, if the institutional setting is favourable, the LFA can be used as a participatory tool to help in the understanding of projects (Bell, 2000; Dearden & Kowalski, 2003), and perhaps even to recognise multiple views and differences in priorities.

The LFA has been used especially for monitoring and evaluation: the logframe matrix centrally includes for each intended result an objectively verifiable indicator (typically stated in the form of a performance target) and a source/means of verification. However, some commentators argue that, for this aim, the logframe has to include the time dimension. Crawford and Bryce (2003) propose a 3D-logframe, which replaces indicators by timelines and combines several management tools with a focus on reasons for the variance between planned and actual implementation. Heyer (2002) proposes a 'temporal logic model' with several monitoring stages, in which stakeholders can reflect on 'sustainable strategies', to ensure the permanence of positive effects after the project completion, and on unintended effects. She extends the logframe to record changes in the context, interim assessments, and changes in the (project) design. Lampis (2005) warns, however, about the difficulties to record process information in a single format and to carry out process evaluation by stakeholders within short project timelines (cf. Crawford & Bryce, 2003).

Large aid agencies have tried to complement or enrich use of the LFA during the project cycle in other ways too. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) developed a tool called 'outputs-to-purpose review', for instance. At each review, project staff, partners and other stakeholders reflect on the project progress, whether the outputs are likely to achieve the intended outcome or purpose and why, and overall risks to

achievement, thus giving recommendations. The reviews can lead to changes in logframe matrices (e.g., Messerschmidt et al., 2004).

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) introduced 'outcome mapping' (OM), in which outcomes are defined as changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, and activities of people and organisations (Earl *et al.*, 2001). Acknowledging that single projects cannot control complex development processes and ensure the achievement of overall goals, OM focuses on *contributions to* outcomes, not on impacts. It monitors changes in the behaviour of 'boundary partners' (actors whom the project directly works with and can influence) whose actions importantly affect the attainment of desired impacts, and also the projects' strategies and organisational practices. It is suitable when projects are run in partnership or when they aim at capacity building, learning or influencing policy (Jones & Hearn, 2009) as it encourages stakeholders to reflect on several ways to reach outcomes.

However, OM might still constrain partners to achieve predefined outcomes; and felt ownership could decay if changes in behaviour are required in order to receive the help despite the supposed 'devolution of planning, decision making and other elements from external to internal actors' (Earl *et al.*, 2001, p. 8). Felt ownership by 'recipients' cannot be taken for granted; when participants are subject to conditionality to produce certain results, the aid relationship turns instead into a subject-object relationship (Valk, 2010).

So, these revised tools overcome some limitations of the LFA; but, they can still promote change that was solely externally planned and not a result of the internal motivation of project participants. Correspondingly, they may not sufficiently respond to the problems of medium- and long-run sustainability and evolution. Certainly, many NGOs and agencies include stakeholder analysis and participatory tools when using the LFA. But, however participatory the process for developing the logframe, project managers often subsequently continue acting in accordance with the theory set out there, instead of reviewing the theory itself, and how project features relate to the overall goal, in light of new experience (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005).

In sum, there are several reasons why conventional project design and assessment approaches often fail to strengthen intended beneficiaries' autonomy, even though that is central to sustainable human development, and why the approaches can instead often undermine it, and therefore why new approaches are required (Ellerman, 2004, 2006). Both the motivation and the capacity of intended beneficiaries are undermined by organisational imperatives and procedures which lead to overriding or substituting for the self-motivated actions of the supposed beneficiaries. The notion of 'the' objectives of 'the project' can sideline the objectives of the beneficiaries and privilege the objectives of funders. Frequently this specification of objectives is backed up by systems of indicators and conditionalities to enforce the objectives and targets, seeking to obtain certainty and security for the funders. It may be further rigidified by incorporation into a contractual agreement between funder and recipient. One negative effect is that rather than focus on strengthening capacities for dealing with the inevitable changes that will make the original plan outdated, and for being able to deal with challenges after the end of the project, low degrees of trust lead to a focus on implementing and policing a

project blueprint. A second negative effect is that the imposition of will by funders, however well intended, inevitably induces some resistance, for it forms a threat to participants' felt autonomy. Alternatively, insofar as funders seek certainty by substituting for local efforts, using their own staff instead, this provides a motive for local recipients to remain (or appear) incapable and needing help. A third negative effect is that local motivation and capacity wither. Externally provided 'carrots and sticks' crowd-out the internal motivation of local agents, and undermine their skills of analysis and self-determination.

Social change is not the same as herding sheep along some pre-defined path, observes Ellerman (2006, pp. 98-9). Human development is more sustainable when people become better able to improve their own lives and when the strategies devised with this aim are internally motivated, instead of imposed and control-oriented. A new approach should rely on a conception of individuals as agents of change, with projects as a means for them to improve their own lives.

3 A conceptual model of human autonomy

We adopt a conception of autonomy as a person's ability to make reasoned choices in significant matters, authentically motivated (in contrast to coerced or conditioned), and, in addition, to thereby achieve some positive results in his or her life (Muñiz Castillo, 2009a; 2009b). Autonomy does not mean freedom to do whatever one wants to do, freedom from all constraints. Rather, to be considered as autonomous, individuals must, first, rely on their own judgement about how to act. Autonomy includes making meaningful decisions on significant aspects of life (Taylor, 1979; Doyal & Gough, 1991; Kabeer, 1999), decisions which cohere with one's own values and personality and for which one is self-motivated. Such decisions result from reflective evaluation (Frankfurt, 1989), a capacity that develops in contexts where people can be reasonably informed and well-educated and experience choice. Secondly, in line with normal usage, our conception includes not only ability to form and act on goals but also ability to attain valued outcomes. This is of course a matter of degree.

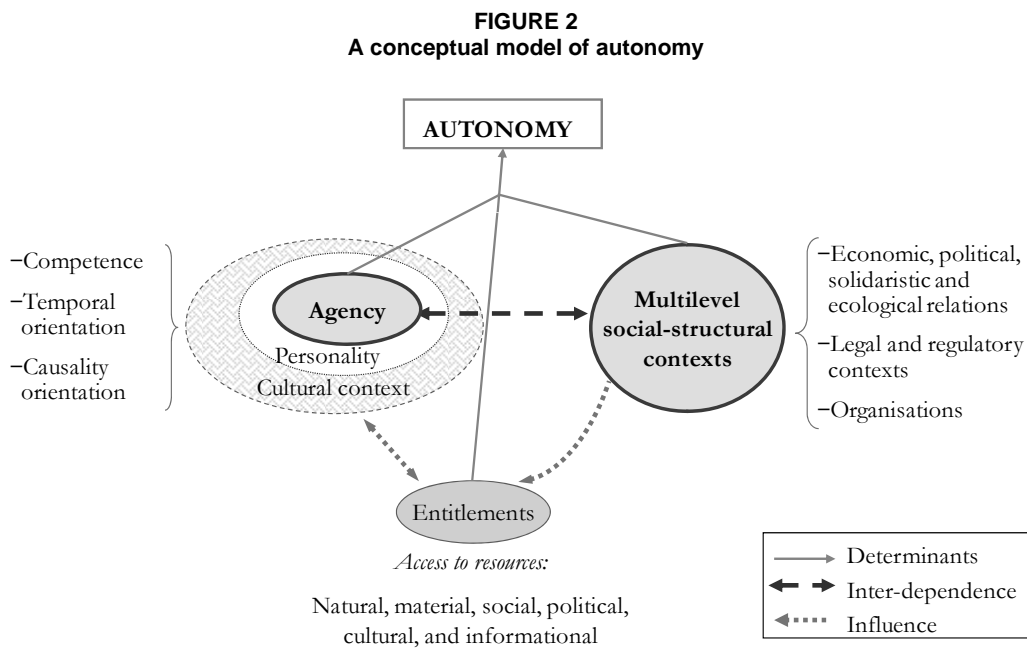
To develop and realise their autonomy, individuals require certain capacities, resources and relationships. Human autonomy does not imply pure independence, because we need others to expand our potentials and we engage in interdependent relationships throughout our lives. Human autonomy is relational because it is formed, developed and manifested in social contexts.

Autonomy can thus be defined as a generalization of Nussbaum (2000)'s notion of 'combined capability', which refers to both an internal decision-making capacity and an external context that promotes or restricts opportunities for making and implementing decisions and within which we, at best, negotiate our access to resources. In our model, autonomy can be understood as an *effective* capacity because the concept already includes the influence of contexts. It means that people can take action to advance their goals, if they so decide – this is the idea of capability as possible reachable

outcomes. Only the ability to make a meaningful difference should be called autonomy.

3.1 The determinants of autonomy

At a practical level, autonomy can be analysed in terms of three determinants: (i) the internal capacity to make reasoned choices and act accordingly, which we call ‘agency’,¹ (ii) the access to resources or ‘entitlements’, and (iii) the social-structural contexts at different levels, which are to be studied both individually and in interaction (see Figure 2). By looking at changes in these determinants we can have an idea of changes in autonomy, even if the person has not exercised autonomy or made relevant decisions.



Source: Adapted from Muñiz Castillo (2009a).

Agency relies on personal competence, that is, the physical, intellectual and emotional characteristics that influence how able a person is to act purposively and reach goals. Some sufficient degree of self-confidence is essential; how individuals regard themselves and their efficacy will influence their ability to form objectives and aspirations, their perceptions about the opportunities and risks in the external environment, and their ability to pursue their objectives (Bandura, 2000). Agency is influenced by external contexts and experiences,

¹ Sen (1999) defines agency as ‘the ability of people to help themselves and influence the world’ (p. 18). Our notion of autonomy is close to this, but we explicitly acknowledge the role of contexts; in our terms, people may have agency but, thanks to unfavourable contexts, be unable to advance their goals.

and of course by important internal contexts too (Alexander, 1992, 1993): personality (i.e., the internal socio-psychological context) and internalised cultural context. Figure 2 presents them as concentric circles around agency to indicate that these contexts influence agency in very intimate ways. Alexander explicitly criticises the tendency of considering ‘culture [as] patterns that exist outside of the actor’ (Alexander, 1992, p. 10). While our personalities give meaning to the cultural context, the latter shapes our values and our understandings of the world. And since autonomous decisions are value-laden decisions they also depend on culture (Kabeer, 1999). However, individuals within a culture may endorse the same values but to different degrees, because they have unique histories and personalities.

Moreover, agency is influenced by two forms of internal orientation, which enable and explain the initiation of action: temporal orientation and causality orientation. We will see how projects can affect these, often unintentionally. Temporal orientation (Emirbayer & Mische, 1995) concerns whether persons tend to give more weight to the past, the present, or the future when they consider their possible actions, i.e., if the person primarily acts by repeating past patterns of thought or habit, or makes judgements in response to events in the evolving situations, or imaginatively generates possible future trajectories of action, respectively. The last of these can be called a projective orientation and is related to the ‘capacity to aspire’ (Appadurai, 2004), a meta-cultural capacity that can stimulate development, when expressed in voice and participation. People combine and use the three kinds of orientation to different extents, but for one person at a given time and in a given situation one orientation prevails. However, a person’s temporal orientation may vary with the area of life to which the decision refers.

TABLE 1
Types of causality orientation

Causality orientation	Explanation
Control (external reasons)	People experience events and their environment as controlling them; they behave according to external influences or how they are told to or expected to.
Autonomy (internal reasons)	People experience a large extent of choice with respect to the initiation and regulation of their behaviour, acting on the basis of felt interests and self-endorsed values.
Impersonal (no reasons)	People feel their behaviour as being beyond their intentional control and that they cannot affect outcomes.

Source: Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000).

Causality orientation is a concept in the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000; <http://www.psych.rochester.edu/SDT>); it refers to what are the reasons used to act in a certain way, as the agent perceives them. Table 1 presents the variants of causality orientation. Individuals can consider that they are originators of events (internal reasons), that they behave as they are forced to (external reasons), or that whatever happens is inexplicable and

independent of their intentions. An orientation of the first type is called ‘autonomy’ causality orientation and is a vital element of individual autonomy.

A perception of oneself as autonomous implies more than a feeling of competence. In our water project case, the public water company requires rural households connected to the water service to have a home sanitation system in order to dispose of grey waters (from kitchens, lavatories and bathroom) and not to contaminate the environment. Project participants built these systems, felt competent and controlled this specific process (community leaders supervised the works), completing the work. However, some of them were not convinced that the systems were useful for their health, and they only built them because project staff so required (external reason). These people did not have an autonomy causality orientation here and later on they were less interested than others in using and maintaining these disposal systems.

Looking at causality orientation when analysing human autonomy is crucial because we need to understand the type of reasons that people use to make a choice. People can make reasoned choices and act accordingly (i.e., exhibit agency) even when their choices are based on externally controlled rewards or punishments, as in the home sanitation systems example. But the impacts on their feelings of self-efficacy, motivation, and commitment are likely to be very different from when the choice is based on their own selection of ends and means.

Similarly, self-confidence is not an indication of autonomy when it results only from ‘having behaved as expected’. For instance, a person could feel self-confident for having worked ‘satisfactorily’ in reforestation activities during the project; however, if he or she did so without personal conviction of their importance and only because the activities were required and in order to be applauded by project staff (control orientation), the sustainability of such actions would be fragile.

Still referring to Figure 2, *entitlements* are resources and goods accessible to the individuals, that they own or can get through market or non-market channels, for instance, working for a wage to buy food or receiving public or private transfers. This concept of entitlement goes beyond legal ownership or right, to include social legitimisation (Devereux, 2001; Sen, 1981). Entitlements are negotiated in structural contexts and their meaning is given by the use that people make of resources, which is culturally influenced.

The *social-structural contexts* at different levels are the environments in which individuals negotiate their roles, meaning systems and entitlements (Alexander, 1993). They comprise all sets of economic, political, solidaristic and ecological relations and networks (Alexander, 2002) coordinated by stable or sporadic, formal or informal rules. They are manifested in physical settings and situations. Projects take place in specific national and local contexts that imprint their character on what happens, and are further influenced by policies and practices in international contexts. It is then necessary to look at the multilevel contexts in which social actors interact.

As noted earlier, autonomy is not detached from relatedness. Social networks, as both resources and players in structural contexts, can support an individual’s actions. When relatedness (and competence) is a result of

autonomous behaviours, people display optimal engagement and psychological wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 243).

As Christman (1998) affirms, ‘the autonomous person is one who acts, chooses, and judges for herself (however complex, embedded and interconnected with others that self turns out to be)’ (p. 387). Although contexts shape values and opportunities, autonomy is an important attribute for unique human beings who have their own biographies, emotions, situations and aspirations.

3.2 The exercise of autonomy

We identify the exercise of autonomy according to: the presence of motivations to act (causality orientation), the importance of the matters which are open to decide, and the significant value of the available attainable outcomes, as judged in terms of the person’s motivations, goals and values. People possess autonomy to different degrees, depending on their agency powers and their specific circumstances, including their entitlements. Their circumstances can affect their agency powers: their self-perception and orientations of agency. Consequently, personal and contextual, subjective and objective factors together explain autonomy and its exercise.

Regrettably, the acquisition and exercise of autonomy by poor people often faces opposition from powerful actors. It is then necessary to look at the poor’s options for significant choices in specific contexts. For poor people, who have few entitlements, collective action is often the major way to exercise claims and pursue goals. However, not all kinds of collective action promote individual autonomy; only those that support human learning and cooperation will do so, argues Carmen (2000).

We have presented autonomy as not merely a reflection capacity that guides value-oriented decisions. It is also about being able to enact those decisions and change one’s circumstances, if one so chooses. Going further, people with a ‘critical’ level of autonomy have the ability to reflect on and choose their goals, not only ‘autonomy of agency’, the ability to effectively act as normal members of their society (Doyal & Gough, 1991). This critical autonomy requires a higher level of competence, intercultural knowledge and political freedom. Within our focus on autonomy, there are thus various levels or degrees of autonomy that one can look at. Sometimes one might look beyond ‘autonomy of agency’ and also ask whether a project promotes critical autonomy.

4 An autonomy-centred approach to project assessment

Based on a criterion of ‘human autonomy effectiveness’, we propose an approach to project assessment that looks at expansions in autonomy related to outcomes and processes of the project. A crucial feature is its focus on individuals as agents of change. It looks not only at the project’s activities and intended outputs, but also at its relationships and organisational practices (i.e., how things are done), for these affect participants’ motivation and autonomy in important ways.

4.1 The Human Autonomy Effectiveness criterion

Effectiveness is a standard evaluation criterion. It refers to the extent to which objectives are achieved, taking into account their relative importance (OECD, 2002). However, many objectives are difficult to quantify, and many external factors affect outcomes, so that the degree to which the project has promoted the specified objectives is often unclear. The effectiveness criterion is also often misleading, for fulfilment of specified objectives at the end of a project period, if achieved, is often subsequently unsustainable, where the activities relied on external resources and motivations.

We propose ‘human autonomy effectiveness’ (HAE) as a fundamentally important interpretation of development effectiveness to be used in project design, management and evaluation. Under this criterion, effectiveness should be assessed in relation to whether and how human autonomy has been expanded – in addition to, and perhaps even more important than, (other) formal goals. In the context of projects, we must distinguish HAE from: (1) Operational efficacy, which refers to the achievement of operational results that can relatively speaking be secured by project staff; (2) Intended impact, which refers to the achievement of predefined higher-level project goals, outside the direct control of project management; and (3) Economic effectiveness, focused on objectives expressible in monetary terms.

In addition, the HAE criterion requires that the expansion of autonomy in one way does not contract other more important capabilities (Alkire, 2002). For instance, project participants may develop their competences by working in self-construction activities and attending workshops, but these actions should not prevent them from working in their own farms to sustain themselves. In practice, it is necessary to discuss and agree on a capability hierarchy so that secondary goals that would constrain more valuable capabilities are not pursued (see Alkire, 2002; Robeyns, 2003).²

It is crucial that the change aimed for with the project is not purely directed by outsiders. It should be shared and preferably initiated by local people so that the project supports ongoing self-motivated change; only such change is sustainable (Ellerman, 2006). A pseudo-motivated change is the result solely of an extrinsic motivation. Aid recipients here behave as project staff expects; they play as ‘good beneficiaries’ in order to secure what they perceive the project can offer (Wood, 2003). Traditional end-of-project evaluations could wrongly consider such a change as sustainable. Hence, project management should instead consciously promote autonomy, and developmental change should be assessed over a term that exceeds the usual timeframe of a project.

One would not refer to only autonomy as an outcome variable (cf. Peris *et al.*, 2009). While we aim at promoting autonomy (or at least protecting and not

² HAE refers to the promotion of autonomy that supports human development (wellbeing improvement and enlargement of valuable opportunities), but not to the achievement of any and every personal goal, because participants could have many goals, not all of them conducive to human development, and some of which are opposed to each other or normatively contestable.

harming it) during a development process, clearly a water project, for example, promotes wellbeing and personal competence if participants enjoy better health. But it is also crucial that the participants can make some relevant decisions in matters they know, as well as that these decisions and related actions are efficacious to some extent. When this occurs, we can say that participants are living a process of *empowerment*; they exercise autonomy not only agency (cf. Alsop *et al.*, 2006). The term ‘empowerment’ refers to the attainment or exercise of autonomy. If we link these terms also to those of Sen, autonomy and empowerment refer to both process freedom (self-motivated and relevant decision-making) and opportunity freedom (ability to achieve valued outcomes).

We propose HAE as a criterion of development evaluation, since empowerment should be a priority. If people consider that their decisions, and corresponding (individual or group) actions, have real positive outcomes, they will feel more confident to initiate actions for their own development. In addition, immaterial benefits related to social capital (i.e., increase of trust and solidarity) spread out when the project is efficacious but shrink when it is not (Hirschman, 1984). In contrast, whatever may be the direct contributions to human development during its duration (e.g., improved health, acquisition of construction skills), a project that fails to build persons’ autonomy during and through its processes is likely to fail to lead to continuing post-project contributions to human development.

HAE requires combining local capacities, external advice and sound relations within multilevel structural contexts. Projects must be set up and implemented in an integrated way, considering local needs and values (Nordtveit, 2010). To support development effectiveness, capacity building should foster continuous learning and strengthen local institutions capable to support participants’ autonomy (Honadle & Cooper, 1990; Mog, 2004).

4.2 Essential characteristics of the approach

Based on our conceptual model, a project can increase human autonomy through improvements in agency, entitlements and structural contexts, and through providing opportunities for the exercise of autonomy during the project processes themselves. Ways we can analyse those aspects will be shown in section 5.

Three points distinguish this approach from others. First, it focuses on project outcomes related to human autonomy, which is considered a priority goal. Unlike in the LFA, there is no unique pre-defined set of causal links. Contexts, practices and relationships, not only project outputs, affect the participants’ autonomy and project outcomes.

Second, the approach requires the explicit identification of participants’ own goals and values. It examines processes that are important to project participants and the quality of their participation in decisions related to these processes, i.e., whether they were directly involved, or only through leaders, or not involved or only in a highly controlled and conditioned way.

Third, the approach focuses on longer-term development effectiveness, not on shorter-term operational efficacy, so it does not replace currently used

management tools. An efficient management, adequate resources and technical soundness are important, but this approach focuses on the further link from project outcomes and processes to human autonomy and longer-run impact.

It is impossible to evaluate changes in each person's autonomy, as a unique construct, given that autonomy has objective and subjective elements and is a latent ability that we do not necessarily exercise. Our alternative is to analyse changes in the determinants of autonomy for representative individuals within different groups. Those changes may be (partly) explained by project features, contextual factors, and participants' behaviours in emerging situations.

A project could have different effects on each determinant. Projects may affect the access to resources, individual skills and power relations, but each in a different way. For instance, if people are induced to work long hours to secure the prompt delivery of outputs but they are mistreated, their entitlements would expand but their self-confidence and agency could be undermined. Furthermore, many factors other than projects contribute to explain different human development outcomes. The particular dynamics in particular structural contexts are critically important. A project's intended positive effect would not occur if, for instance, elites concentrate resources, undermining trust, with a deep negative effect on the causality orientation of other community members. So it might be more accurate to speak of project 'influences' rather than project effects on autonomy.

Beneficiaries interact with project staff and other stakeholders in specific contexts, which affect the change processes and outcomes. The contexts can change for reasons other than a project and can in turn affect certain project elements. To avoid the misuse of so-called 'best practices' to manage projects without regard for their specific circumstances, contexts must be carefully analysed (cf. White, 2005). In particular, the interactions depend on stakeholders' previous experiences of autonomy, so project planners and managers have to understand local culture and institutions, the participants' livelihoods (Chambers, 1995) and aspirations, and 'to find where positive change is underway on its own to address pressing problems' (Ellerman, 2004, p. 163) in order to support this change. It is hard to build partnerships with local people in the presence of power imbalances. In some cases, project staff could facilitate the participation of otherwise excluded people who are already motivated to improve their lives. The role of staff should not be to impose values that people 'accept' only as result of conditionality (i.e., incorporate in practices only in order to secure a tangible benefit from the project), but instead to identify internal motivation and to encourage local people's efforts to exercise voice (Appadurai, 2004).

4.3 Implicit theories of change and de facto organisational practices

Logframe matrices make explicit a project's intended effects, its official logic. In addition to this, a theory of change or impact theory includes the posited causal mechanisms that would lead to the expected changes (Leeuw, 2003; Rossi *et al.*, 2004; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). These mechanisms are usually not

explicit or even articulated by the people involved; instead they are taken for granted. Further, the term ‘mechanisms’ may sometimes mislead us, since what we refer to consists in part of human practices and relationships (cf. Eyben, 2010). Such behaviour has a more complex conditionality and a more ambiguous fluid character than suggested by the mechanical term.

‘Practices’ are the forms of interaction and practical strategies carried out by social actors; they evolve in and reflect specific contexts and are manifested in several ways (Long & van der Ploeg, 1994). Practices often deviate from the original project design, notably by adapting to the local realities. They affect project participants in various ways that may not be anticipated in the project’s design, but are fundamental to its prospects, especially for the long-term.

Identifying project practices helps us to understand how a particular project works, how different it is from others, and what makes it work in a given way (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). They can explain the emergence of unintended or unexpected effects, outside the scope of the LFA as traditionally used. For example, project staff, not necessarily from only one organisation, may hold values and promote social practices different from the local ones, with diverse effects on local participants. So, a project’s full *de facto* logic – the project logic not as written in documents but as lived and felt by participants – is jointly constructed by formulators, beneficiaries, project staff, and other stakeholders. Any activity can be carried out in different ways, for instance, the monitoring of construction activities could be input-based (e.g., number of work hours) or output-based (e.g., number of houses built); and the ‘same’ activity can have different meanings for people in the same locality and stimulate different (sometimes opposite) responses, depending on each person’s capacities, cultural context and personality.

Practices will reflect the power relations in specific communities and between local stakeholders and project staff. For example, a practice of hierarchical management may reflect assumptions – conscious or tacit – that project participants will do as they are told, and that they have no independent objectives or no ‘exit’ options. Such practice is more dangerous when institutional contexts are uncertain and stakeholders have competing interests. In our water project case, hierarchical management of the project resulted in the alignment of village leaders around project staff and the separation of the municipality mayor (the political authority that governs several villages, not only this one) from project activities, which led to many problems.

We can distinguish at least four spaces of project practices: selection, design, conditionality and coordination. *Selection* and *design* decisions are made throughout a project. Usually, participants are not able to share in all these decisions due to lack of technical skills, but there are aspects in which they can express their opinions. In our water project case, experts led a ‘participatory formulation’ workshop, but oriented the discussion toward the expected project benefits as designed beforehand. This caused some dissatisfaction amongst beneficiaries, who had raised other issues such as lack of agricultural credit or basic infrastructure. Instead, the experts could have asked directly in which ways the design could be improved in issue areas that they knew and could adjust (e.g., alternative sanitation systems, or variety of plants for reforestation).

Conditionality refers to whether aid recipients are induced to act in a certain way to receive the aid. Looking at the roles of different groups during a project, their commitments, the nature of their participation (whether forced or voluntary), and the existence of co-payments and how these are defined, helps one to judge whether practices are (i) controlling, when they exert pressure or condition behaviour toward specific outcomes, or (ii) autonomy-supportive, when they instead encourage the process of choice (Deci & Ryan, 1987).

Control-oriented practices could externalise motivation. In our example, villagers could work in the reforestation activities for the community welfare (to protect the watersheds) and also receive a minimum payment. However, if they became too busy to do anything else as new tasks appeared and they accepted reforestation work only because they were paid to do so, they could have felt they were working for others and not for themselves. In fact, the project included many more elements (latrines, ecological woodstoves, a reservoir, soil protection activities, workshops and cleaning campaigns). Those who did not value reforestation activities felt that they were ‘a waste of time and money for *the project* [italics added]’, in the words of one of them, even though the people themselves were paid. People own a project when its activities reflect their genuine motivation, not necessarily when they work in everything related to the project. Conditionality is an ineffective way to build local project ownership (Guimarães *et al.*, 2003; Valk *et al.*, 2005; Ellerman, 2004, 2006).

The home sanitation systems were perceived by many solely as a tiresome condition to get water. However, participants could have internalised this part of the project as important to reach a more valued goal (i.e., good health) if, for example, they had not been so busy with other things or project staff had welcomed their ideas to modify the systems so that they would work better. As we saw earlier, the degree of felt autonomy depends on how people understand their motives to act: what is their causality orientation. Participants need to understand why certain project components and activities are important and not to feel only that they ‘have to do as told’ in order to secure a benefit. If their felt autonomy is low, and they have not internalised a commitment to the project activities and purposes, then the project effects will not be sustainable. Efforts will dissipate.

Coordination practices at the micro-level may resemble those at the macro-level, especially for high-profile projects, in large localities or hosting important population groups (e.g., migrants, former guerrilla fighters, etc.) that attract large numbers of donors. In our water project case, there was poor coordination at the national level, which affected the relationships at the local level. As we noted, the municipality government stayed out of the project, while the public water company (official counterpart and co-executor) entered into a period of reorganisation, with many changes in personnel. The technical design was revised a few times, the project’s rhythm was slow, and on-site coordination could have been better. An engineer from the water company supported the promotion team, but the pressure to complete the many activities in such a difficult context led the team, for instance, to put more emphasis on how to build the sanitation systems and less on why and how to use them, thus harming the local residents’ motivation. In sum, it is important

to look beyond the formal organisational structures, see how stakeholders share information or other resources and carry out joint actions, and discover the informal relations and practices that make things work or that instead hinder them (Honadle & Cooper, 1989).

5 Using the approach

We have seen that practices and relationships affect the autonomy of participants and the effectiveness of a project. If project managers and evaluators are genuinely committed to support the valued goals of project participants and to act as catalysts to help them realise their existing capacities and develop their own potentials during a project, they must consciously develop practices that promote choice and trust among participants. They must be accountable to the intended beneficiaries for the project outcomes and processes.

Identifying (feasible) autonomy-supportive practices for each context and promoting them while respecting local partners and understanding their motivations is complicated. But it is precisely in cases where interactions among different actors are frequent and complex that a project can substantially affect the participants' autonomy. So, our approach applies to projects that include an important participatory component. We do not claim that all projects should be participatory, but do assert that at least this kind of project should not constrain the autonomy of participants. Thus the approach is perhaps less relevant for large infrastructural projects and more relevant for local development projects (cf. Brinkerhoff & Ingle, 1989).

For project assessment, we suggest a kind of 'realistic evaluation' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997), examining the project theories (not only a single one) that stakeholders form, their assumptions and values. We must look at conditions requisite for autonomy and felt competence. When using participatory tools, we must be aware that group dynamics and pre-existing power relations could make the voice of the most powerful participants prevail in those public spaces (Cooke & Kothari, 2004). Therefore, data triangulation should be ensured. Since the influences are of diverse nature and since autonomy has both objective and subjective dimensions, use of a combination of standardised data collection and of methods with interpretive lenses is preferable (Muñiz Castillo, 2009a).

This section presents a new type of project assessment matrix and explains how it can be used to evaluate project influences on autonomy seen as a combined capability.

5.1 An autonomy-centred project assessment matrix

We propose an 'autonomy-centred project assessment matrix' (APAM) to encourage and organise attention to impacts on human autonomy and their causes. Nurtured by several intellectual perspectives, it has a conceptual and theoretical basis that has been presented in the previous sections; but it provides space during the identification of possible project influences for the prevailing 'theory' of those filling in the matrix. If used on several occasions

during a project, APAM will reflect the changes in priorities, power relations and decision-making over time. Most importantly, it will help project management to make necessary adjustments in a project's design and to facilitate practices and informal relationships that lead to more support to autonomy.

Table 2 shows the matrix. It focuses on the key variable of autonomy, looking at several possible influences of a project on the determinants of autonomy for a certain group (influences will differ between one group and another). Depending on the purpose of the assessment, the grouping of participants that is used for disaggregating the picture of project influences can be by leadership role, gender, age, welfare status, etc. The first column highlights the determinants and how they are affected. As we see later, for a real case each of the determinants might require a table of its own. The matrix does not focus on detailed externally predetermined effects that do not derive from the priorities of local actors.

TABLE 2
Autonomy-centred project assessment matrix (APAM)

	PROJECT'S AUTONOMY LOGIC		ACTUAL INFLUENCE ON AUTONOMY (In all cases to be compared to original hypotheses)	
	(A) Hypothesised outcomes Expected outcomes based on the project logic.	(B) Expected situation Outputs and conditions expected in the project logic.	(C) Actual situation Intended and unintended changes in conditions, including both those related to the project and other changes.	(D) Assessment of achieved outcomes -Yes/no/ partial influence -Short or long-term influence -Sustainable influence / at risk.
<i>DETERMINANTS OF AUTONOMY</i>				
- Agency (incl. self-confidence)				
- Entitlements (access to resources)				
- Structural Contexts (e.g., community organisation, social capital)				
	(E) Project's assumptions (about external factors and actors' behaviours)		(F) Evidence on how far the assumptions were confirmed or refuted	
	(G) Practices and relationships with reference especially to: design and selection decisions; conditionality; coordination			

The second pair of columns looks realistically at the (implied) project's autonomy logic, i.e., how a project could influence the determinants of autonomy based on its objectives and processes. The 'full' autonomy logic also includes the de facto practices and social relationships, which evolve during a project cycle and have direct and indirect influences on human autonomy. This full logic corresponds to the project as lived and felt by participants. The third pair of columns looks at these results.

To use the matrix, first we identify the *most significant changes* for each determinant of autonomy, as perceived by project participants, in order to analyse changes in their lives (Roche, 1999/2004). We can use focus group discussions (cf. Schischka, 2006) assisted with group scores and rankings to prioritise changes, combined with individual interviews to understand complex causation. These changes can be positive or negative, intended or not intended by the project. The categories for considering elements that changed appear in the first column of Table 2. The changes will not necessarily last, because of the interaction of several post-project factors.

Second, we characterise the *project's autonomy logic*. This contains what were the expected or hypothesised outcomes in terms of autonomy (column A), based on the original design in the logframe, and the post-intervention changes recorded in project documents or perceived by stakeholders. The idea is to reconstruct the story of the project until the review, with emphasis on who decided changes in certain project features, why and under which circumstances, and which relationships are developing. Those expected outcomes depend on (1) planned processes (systemic series of activities leading to a defined goal) and the achievement of tangible project outputs (column B) aiming at an ideal situation and (2) assumptions regarding external factors that project staff cannot control and actors' behaviours that project staff can only influence. These assumptions must be explicit and traced in ex post reviews (comparing E to F). This analysis takes some elements of the 'outcome mapping' approach, but here project staff do not try to account for changes in actors' behaviours. The focus is instead on identifying and promoting autonomy-supportive practices that allow participants to pursue their valued goals so that the project becomes the means for them to sustain their own development.

The official project logic may not work for many reasons. We recommend to focus attention on a core set of practices (selection and design decisions, conditionality and coordination), which characterise the uniqueness of a project and are parts of its 'full' logic. APAM requires the explicit identification of those practices (row G). The analysis must go beyond a mere description, and must consider the practices' implications and understand their process of formation; these issues must be explained in a parallel narrative that accompanies the matrix. Some practices might be revealed from common discourses expressed by project staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders, but it is crucial to distinguish whether they were delivered or instructed by the project in top-down fashion or were jointly searched for and generated by participants (Ellerman, 2006).

Table 3 shows a partial matrix for non-leader participants in our water project case. The example centres on influences on the personal competence

of project participants. The project supported the agency of participants, primarily their competence, through an improvement in health conditions and skills. However, the positive effect on health was lower than expected, given the conditionality practices; participants introduced home sanitation systems only because they were a project requirement and without being convinced as to their benefits. Poor coordination and lack of local institutional support also affected the project's efficacy.

TABLE 3
A partial APAM – Illustrative example from a water project

DETERMINANT OF AUTONOMY	PROJECT'S AUTONOMY LOGIC		ACTUAL INFLUENCE ON AUTONOMY	
	(A) Hypothesised outcomes	(B) Expected situation	(C) Actual situation	(D) Assessment of what has happened
-Agency Competence	The health status of the population improves	-Residents enjoy safe drinking water -They build sanitation systems that work well	-Residents learned basic construction skills -Some sanitation systems do not work because residents did not realise their value	-Some people improved their self-confidence -Partial positive effect on health
	(E) Project's assumptions: 1. People improve their hygiene habits. 2. The public water company secures continuous access to potable water.		(F) Evidence on assumptions: - Hygiene habits improved but water is mishandled (and stored in tubs for fear of water cut offs).	
	(G) Practices and relationships: - Sanitation systems were introduced via <i>conditionality</i> . - Poor <i>coordination</i> among members of the promotion team (different messages). -The municipality government was not involved in the project activities.			

The participants felt more self-confident due to their manual work in several project activities (e.g., to build home sanitation systems, to assemble latrines, etc.) and their better personal hygiene and appearance. However, self-confidence (at the individual level) and organisational capacity (at the community level) could be either fostered or undermined, depending on the quality of the participation and cooperation of individuals within community organisations. We elucidate this more in section 5.2.

How does APAM compare to other tools? One could indeed write a logframe in which autonomy is placed as overall goal; but a logframe is not well suited for describing complex causation. In contrast, APAM recognises that project practices, outputs and social-structural contexts can each have their own influences on each determinant of human autonomy; though the

matrix cannot show the interactive effect on autonomy of different elements (Nordtveit, 2010). Likewise, the matrix focuses on separate mechanisms of change, not on the magnitude of change in outputs – regardless of whether changes in some determinants can be indirectly measured with morbidity rates, wellbeing indexes, causality orientation scales, or so on.

We propose that this sort of analysis (which exceeds what can be typed in a matrix) should if possible be made at several stages of a project: shortly after the start, during the project, at the end, and also some time later in order to screen out the pseudo-motivated changes that occurred only because of the inflow of project inputs and so are unsustainable without them. In longer and larger projects, such an analysis could be repeated a few times during the project, to support redesign where required.

5.2 The exercise of autonomy and participation during a project

Using the APAM is not a mechanical, box-filling task. To appropriately judge whether project participants exercised autonomy, we have to understand *local goals, values* and *motivations* to participate, and analyse certain project processes in steps.

First, we should identify which project processes were valued by participants and why. Reasons are diverse; for instance, some people can work in reforestation and soil conservation activities due to a true interest in their health and environment, while others might do so due to the joy of working with their peers and visiting new places. In both cases, the motivation is internal (Ellerman, 2006, p. 37), and different from if they primarily work for payment. In the case of complex projects, we need to identify *with* local people the *priority* processes and to define needs for training or supervision so that they can be better involved, taking into account their latent and current capacities.

Then we should identify the *extent of choice* that project participants can exercise (i.e., the extent of relevant and affordable alternatives). Finally, we must analyse whether they could be involved and were effectively involved. High-quality *involvement* is participation where beneficiaries are reasonably informed, and are able to speak out and share in relevant decision-making.

In our water project case, the design included the construction of a reservoir to water livestock. During the project execution, community leaders planned and started a business of raising tilapias to support their local economy. They connected the reservoir to a pre-existing gravity water system, bought fish fry and obtained donations as well. This flexibility to adapt the original design to the local needs was in a matter that was important to residents, in which leaders exercised autonomy and enrolled project staff in their own sub-‘project’. The construction of the reservoir was the last project activity; such flexibility had emerged as result of actors’ interactions through the project and was certainly not a usual attitude for project staff at the beginning. Unfortunately, the reservoir overflowed due to heavy rains and the adult fish were stolen (the area was insecure and there was no guard), which undermined local self-confidence.

People want to be *involved in valued processes* either directly (via participatory tools) or through leaders (provided these are representative and respected); the balance partly depends on cultural features. If people are not involved, these processes and activities will be considered conditions that restrict their autonomy, even though the final output was intended to expand their entitlements. Internal motivation could disappear, leaving only response to ‘carrots and sticks’. Furthermore, there could be a ‘motivational spill-over effect’ (Ellerman, 2006, p. 46), if this alienation from valuable matters related to the project extends to other community or personal spheres. For instance, some project participants may have felt that they had to work in everything without complaint, in order to secure water access. This ‘passivity’ had a purpose, but their perceived competence to initiate events and their causality orientation could be harmed, as well as their ability to express and defend their opinions with arguments in relevant debates.

Individuals’ goals are not necessarily the same as project goals. When these goals differ, the success to reach project goals with the participation of the intended beneficiaries in (non-valued) processes could yet harm their felt agency, if people were coerced; and a failure to reach those goals could lead to subjective empowerment if beneficiaries aimed at making the project fail. For instance, non-leaders could reject a project that they viewed as only suitable for leaders and could try to weaken their power in this way. This might have happened in our water case, with respect to the fish agriculture project in the reservoir.

The influence of a project on the feeling of being autonomous varies across individuals depending on their degree of individual involvement in valued project processes and the achievement of the goals related to such processes. Moreover, the higher the involvement, the lower the weight that people give to external causes of success or failure in achieving goals. Table 4 presents some possible cases.

TABLE 4
Empowerment and participation in projects: four possible cases

	People participated in valued processes	People participated in non-valued processes
If goals were achieved	I. Participants can be empowered in objective and subjective terms.	III. Participants first would gain awareness of unexpected positive effects. If their values changed, they could feel empowered.
If goals were not achieved	II. Participants could feel strongly harmed in their autonomy causality orientation because they had committed to a failed initiative.	IV. Participants could be (only) mildly harmed in subjective terms because they could reason that, as they knew in advance, the effort was not worth doing.

Source: Muñiz Castillo (2009a)

A failure in reaching valued outcomes has a larger psychological impact (including via its influence on causality orientation) when the individual is more involved in the process than when he or she is less involved (compare cells II and IV). Furthermore, if the failure is part of a sequence of continuous failures, it could slowly deactivate one's future orientation and capacity to aspire because the felt links between aspirations and outcomes would loosen (Appadurai, 2004, p. 68). Nonetheless, when reasons for failure outside the project are easily identified (e.g., a drought, misappropriation of resources by leaders, inefficient project management, rigid project design, or robberies), the negative impact of failure on individual autonomy could be lower, though still important.

This shows that causality orientation is the link between participation and empowerment. The link is fragile and subjective, although it has concrete foundations: operational efficacy and involvement in the project. Participation leads to empowerment when people are self-motivated and involved in valued processes of a project that achieves valued outcomes.

6 Conclusion

We have proposed a criterion of 'human autonomy effectiveness' (HAE), as important for sustainable human development. For projects to more effectively promote human development, they need to empower: to expand the autonomy of participants. The corresponding analytical approach centres on channels for how autonomy can be expanded. Projects can influence the determinants of autonomy (agency, entitlements and structural contexts), through project outputs and especially through project practices and relationships. Projects should aim to provide supportive contexts for participants to exercise autonomy, i.e., to make relevant decisions in valued matters during the projects, with self-motivation. To assess this, we must look at processes that are valuable or important to project participants and the quality of their participation in decisions related to those processes.

In relation to existing approaches to assess developmental change, our approach combines blueprint and process approaches. The analysis can be represented in an autonomy-centred project assessment matrix (APAM) that pays attention not only to project outcomes but also to the mechanisms of change. Certain practices shed light on 'hidden' priorities during the project that can harm local participants' autonomy. For instance, control-oriented practices such as excessive administrative controls to comply with tight deadlines, in contrast to autonomy-supportive practices, can easily be interpreted by project staff and participants to imply that tangible outputs are considered more important than positive effects on human lives. It is necessary to consciously select autonomy-supportive practices that promote choice and trust among participants, something that has been rather marginal in most international aid (Ellerman, 2006).

A step toward fostering more autonomy-supportive practices in development projects is to raise awareness of the intended and unintended project influences. Case studies that use the HAE criterion, in different contexts, can support this aim (Muñiz Castillo, 2009a; Muñiz Castillo &

Gaspar, 2009). Projects focused by such a criterion can lead to more horizontal relationships between aid recipients and funders, and to greater chances of later sustained positive effects on human development.

Project planners and managers have to understand the livelihoods and aspirations of project participants, respect their change process, not impose values that are 'accepted' only as result of conditionality, and encourage participants' efforts to exercise voice. This implies, for instance, that some adaptations to the original design of a project should be possible during the implementation. The framework that we have presented should help this. Building partnerships with local people in the presence of power imbalances remains, though, a difficult issue.

References

- Alexander, J.C. (1992) Recent sociological theory between agency and social structure, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie / Revue suisse de sociologie*, 18(1), pp. 7-11.
- Alexander, J.C. (1993) More notes on the problem of agency: a reply, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Soziologie / Revue suisse de sociologie*, 19, pp. 501-506.
- Alkire, S. (2002) *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's capability approach and poverty reduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Alsop, R., Bertelsen, M., & Holland, J. (2006) *Empowerment in Practice: from analysis to implementation*, Directions in Development Series (Washington, DC, World Bank).
- Appadurai, A. (2004) The capacity to aspire: culture and the terms of recognition, in: V. Rao & M. Walton (Eds.), *Culture and Public Action*, pp. 59-84 (Stanford, Stanford University Press).
- Bakewell, O. & Garbutt, A. (2005) The use and abuse of the logical framework approach (Stockholm, Sida/SEKA).
- Bandura, A. (2000) Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9(3), pp. 75-78.
- Bell, S. (2000) Logical frameworks, Aristotle and soft systems: a note on the origins, values and uses of logical frameworks, in reply to Gaspar, *Public Administration and Development*, 20, pp. 29-31.
- Brinkerhoff, D.W. & Ingle, M.D. (1989) Integrating blueprint and process: a structured flexibility approach to development management, *Public Administration and Development*, 9, pp. 487-503.
- Bond, R. & Hulme, D. (1999) Process approaches to development: Theory and Sri Lankan practice, *World Development*, 27(8), pp. 1339-1358.
- Carmen, R. (2000) Prima mangiare, poi filosofare, *Journal of International Development*, 12, pp. 1019-1030.
- Chambers, R. (1995) Poverty and livelihoods: whose reality counts? *Environment and Urbanization*, 7(1), pp. 173-204.
- Christman, J. (1998) Autonomy, independence, and poverty-related welfare policies, *Public Affairs Quarterly*, 12(4), pp. 383-405.
- Cooke, B. & Kothari, U. (2004) The case for participation as tyranny, in: B. Cooke & U. Kothari (Eds.) *Participation: the new tyranny?* pp. 1-15 (London and New York, Zed Books).
- Crawford, P. (2004) Aiding aid: A monitoring and evaluation framework to enhance international aid effectiveness (Doctoral dissertation). University of Technology, Sydney, Australia.
- Crawford, P. & Bryce, P. (2003) Project monitoring and evaluation: a method for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of aid project implementation, *International Journal of Project Management*, 21, pp. 363-373.

- Dearden, P.N. & Kowalski, B. (2003) Programme and Project Cycle Management (PPCM): Lessons from South and North, *Development in Practice*, 13(5), pp. 511-514.
- Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1985) The general causality orientations scale: self-determination in personality, *Journal in Research on Personality*, 19, pp. 109-134.
- Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (1987) The support of autonomy and the control of behaviour, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 53(6), pp. 1024-1037.
- Deci, E.L. & Ryan, R.M. (2000) The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: human needs and the self-determination of behaviour, *Psychological Inquiry*, 11(4), pp. 227–268.
- Devereux, S. (2001). Sen’s entitlement approach: critiques and counter-critiques, *Oxford Development Studies*, 29(3), pp. 245-263.
- Doyal, L., & Gough, I. (1991) *A theory of human need* (London, Macmillan).
- Earl, S., Carden, F. & Smutylo, T. (2001) *Outcome mapping: building learning and reflection into development programs* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre-IDRC). Available at <http://www.idrc.ca/openbooks/959-3/> [Accessed on May 28, 2009]
- EC (European Commission) (2002) *Project Cycle Management Handbook*. Version 2.0. (Brussels, EC).
- EC (European Commission) (2004) *Project Cycle Management. Supporting effective implementation of EC External Assistance*, Vol. 1. Aid Delivery Methods (Brussels, EC). Available at http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/documents/tools/europeaid_dm_pcm_guidelines_2004_en.pdf [Accessed on January 14, 2010]
- Ellerman, D. (2004) Autonomy-respecting assistance: toward an alternative theory of development assistance, *Review of Social Economy*, 62(2), pp. 149-168.
- Ellerman, D. (2006) *Helping people help themselves: from the World Bank to an alternative philosophy of development assistance* (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press) Paperback edition.
- Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1995) What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), pp. 962-1023.
- Eyben, R (2010) Hiding relations: “the irony of effective aid”, *European Journal of Development Research*, 22, pp. 382-397.
- Ferrero y de Loma Osorio, G. (2008) *Apoyando los procesos de desarrollo: Enfoques y métodos para una ayuda inclusiva* [Supporting development processes: Approaches and methods for an inclusive aid] (Madrid, Fundación Carolina CeALCI).
- Frankfurt, H. (1989) Freedom of the will and the concept of a person, in: J. Christman (Ed.) *The inner citadel: essays on individual autonomy*, pp. 63-76 (New York, Oxford University Press).
- Gasper, D. (1999) Problems in the logical framework approach and challenges for project cycle management, *The Courier*, 173, pp. 75-77. Brussels, European Commission.
- Gasper, D. (2000a) Evaluating the ‘logical framework approach’: towards learning-oriented development evaluation, *Public Administration and Development*, 20, pp. 17-18.
- Gasper, D. (2000b) Logical Frameworks: Problems and Potentials. At Deltagerorienteret Monitorering og Evaluering, http://www.petersigsgaard.dk/PDFfiler/gasper_logical_framework_problems.pdf
- Guimarães, J., Apthorpe, R. & Valk, P. de (2003) *Contract financed technical co-operation and local ownership*, Synthesis Report, Sida Evaluation 03/09 (Stockholm, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency).
- Heyer, M. den (2002) Modelling learning programmes, *Development in Practice*, 12(3-4), pp. 525-529.
- Hirschman, A.O. (1984) *Getting ahead collectively: grassroots experiences in Latin America*. Published as a supplement to World Development, Vol. 12 (New York, Pergamon Press).
- Honadle, G. & Cooper, L. (1989) Beyond coordination and control: an interorganizational approach to structural adjustment, service delivery, and natural resource management, *World Development*, 17(10), pp. 1531-1541.

- Honadle, G. & Cooper, L. (1990) Closing the loops: workshop approaches to evaluating development projects, in: K. Finsterbusch, J. Ingersoll & L. Llewellyn (Eds.) *Methods for Social Analysis in Developing Countries*, pp. 185-202 (Oxford, Westview Press).
- Hulme, D. (1995) Projects, politics and professionals: Alternative approaches for project identification and project planning, *Agricultural Systems*, 47, pp. 211-233.
- Jones, H. & Hearn, S. (2009) Outcome mapping: a realistic alternative for planning, monitoring and evaluation, *ODI Background Note* (London, Overseas Development Institute).
- Kabeer, N. (1999) *The conditions and consequences of choice: reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment*, UNRISD Discussion Paper 108 (Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development).
- Lampis, A. (2005) Exploring the temporal logic model: a Colombian case study evaluating internally displaced people assistance, in: J.R. Campbell & J. Holland (Eds.), *Methods in development research: combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*, pp. 177-190 (London, ITDG Publishing).
- Leeuw, F.L. (2003) Reconstructing program theories: methods available and problems to be solved, *American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(1), pp. 5-20.
- Long, N. & van der Ploeg, J.D. (1994) Heterogeneity, actor and structure: towards a reconstitution of the concept of structure, in: D. Booth (Ed.), *Rethinking social development: theory, research and practice*, pp. 62-89 (Essex, Longman Scientific and Technical).
- Max-Neef, M.A., Elizalde, A. & Hopenhayn, M. (1991) *Human scale development: conception, application and further reflections* (New York, The Apex Press).
- Messerschmidt, D., Turton, C., Bajracharya, P. & Mandal, H.N. (2004) Outputs-to-purpose review (OPR) of November 2003. Final Report. DFID-HMGN Livelihoods and Forestry Programme, Nepal. Available at <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/nepallivelihoodforestryopr.pdf> [Accessed on February 25, 2009].
- Mog, J.M. (2004) Struggling with sustainability – a comparative framework for evaluating sustainable development programs, *World Development*, 32(12), pp. 2139-2160.
- Mosse, D., Farrington, J., Rew A. (eds., 1998) *Development as Process – Concepts and methods for working with complexity* (London, Routledge).
- Muñiz Castillo, M.R. (2009a) *Human development and autonomy in project aid: Experiences from four bilateral projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador*, MGSOG Dissertation Series 4 (Maastricht, Boekenplan).
- Muñiz Castillo, M.R. (2009b) *Autonomy as a foundation for human development: a conceptual model to study individual autonomy*, MGSOG Working Paper, 2009/011 (Maastricht, Maastricht University).
- Muñiz Castillo, M.R. (2010) *Project logic, organisational practices and individual autonomy: four foreign-aided projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador*. Paper presented at the 3rd ALCADECA conference. Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brasil (November 2010).
- Muñiz Castillo, M.R. & Gasper, D. (2009) *Exploring human autonomy effectiveness: Project logic and its effects on individual autonomy*, MGSOG Working Paper, 2009/006 (Maastricht, Maastricht University).
- Nordtveit, B.H. (2010) Development as a complex process of change: conception and analysis of projects, programs and policies, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30, pp. 110-117.
- Nussbaum, M. (2000) *Women and human development* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press).
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (2002). *Glossary of key terms in evaluation and results based management* (Paris, OECD, DAC).
- Pawson, R. & Tilley, N. (1997) *Realistic evaluation* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Publications) reprinted 2000.
- Peris, J., Lopez, E., Cuesta, I. & Boni, A. (2009) *From results to agency: Exploring possibilities for an operative framework for conceiving development projects*. Available at

www.capabilityapproach.com/pubs/FROM_RESULTS_TO_AGENCY.pdf [Accessed on January 21, 2010].

- Robeyns, I. (2003) Sen's capability approach and gender inequality: selecting relevant capabilities, *Feminist Economics*, 9(2-3), pp. 61-92.
- Rossi, P.H., Lipsey, M.W., & Freeman H.E. (2004) *Evaluation: a systematic approach*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications).
- Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2006) Self-regulation and the problem of human autonomy: Does psychology need choice, self-determination, and will? *Journal of Personality*, 74(6), pp. 1557-1585.
- Schischka, J.A. (2006) Putting the capability approach into practice for project development and evaluation, *Development Bulletin*, 60, pp. 119-122.
- Sen, A. (1981) *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford, Clarendon).
- Sen, A. (1999) *Development as freedom* (New York, Anchor Books).
- Taylor, C. (1979) What's wrong with negative liberty, in: A. Ryan, (Ed.), *The idea of freedom* (1979); excerpted in D. Miller (Ed.) (1999), *Liberty*, pp. 141-162 (Oxford, Oxford University Press).
- Valk, P. de (2010) Aid taken for granted? From local "ownership" toward "autonomy" in aid projects, *International Journal of Politics and Good Governance*, 1(1-2), n.p. Available at <http://onlineresearchjournals.com/ijopagg/art/48.pdf> [Accessed on December 22, 2010]
- Valk, P. de, Apthorpe, R. & Guimarães, J. (2005) *Local ownership, co-ownership and capacity building in aid projects: the findings of a comparative study*, ISS Working Paper Series, 407 (The Hague, Institute of Social Studies).
- White, H. (2005) *Challenges in evaluating development effectiveness*, IDS Working Paper 242 (Sussex, Institute of Development Studies).
- Wood, G. (2003) Staying secure, staying poor: the "Faustian bargain", *World Development*, 31(3), pp. 455-471.