Rethinking Development Management Methodology: Towards a "Process Freedoms Approach"

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ABSTRACT *Despite the change in development thinking towards a multidimensional concept of human development, the fact is that this paradigm shift has not found its parallel evolution in the practice of development planning, monitoring and evaluation. Logic model-based methods, such as results-based management and project-cycle management, are still prevalent independently of the scale or instruments used on development. This paper critically assesses how the capability approach challenges current development management methodologies, based on the results of three case studies constructed as a participant observer under an action-research perspective. Building on Sen's concepts of principles and process freedoms, and on Alkire's core objectives of human development—real freedoms, process freedoms, plural principles and sustainability—we present the possible foundations of an alternative methodology for development interventions, a "Process Freedoms Approach", aimed at better mainstreaming the capability approach within development policies, programmes and projects.*

KEYWORDS: Development planning, Development management, Learning process approach, Participation, Empowerment, Capability approach, Process freedoms

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1. Introduction

Development thinking has evolved substantially since the 1950s. Different approaches and disciplines have been progressively contributing to development economics, raising the profile of sustainable human development as the core vision of development assistance efforts in the 1990s and, especially, following the Millennium Declaration agreed in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals.

Development projects—the "privileged particles of the development process", as pointed out by Albert Hirschman (1967, 1) in *Development Projects Observed*—have been essential in translating development theory into action. Due to their nature, development projects have been the instrument *par excellence* for channelling the bulk of international development assistance. Owing to their prominence, projects have helped advance not just development thinking into practice, but also the methods and tools used in their design, planning, managing, monitoring and evaluation by the funding development aid institutions.

However, the wider shift from one-dimensional economic growth to a multidimensional comprehension of human development in theory and on policy practice has not found its parallel evolution

in the methodology of planning, management, monitoring and evaluating development interventions. The majority of development theory has assumed that "how" development interventions are prepared, implemented, monitored and evaluated has little or no influence on development outcomes. Not surprisingly, current approaches and methods are based on the same foundations as those used when development projects were massively focused on infrastructure and, progressively, on fulfilling the basic needs of "targeted" beneficiaries. It is in the context of critical development thinking and practice emerging from Paulo Freire's emancipatory discourse of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970) where alternative views on development planning emphasizing empowerment, participation and learning (Korten 1980) have grown, spread and influenced the mainstream approaches.

Unfortunately, and compared with other important dimensions, the capability approach (CA) literature still scarcely addresses the relationship between planning and management methodology and the outcomes of development programmes. Furthermore, the core literature on development planning, management, evaluation or public administration lacks well-established bridges with CA thinking, and *vice versa*.

However, this relationship is highlighted by Sen when he introduces the concept of process freedoms alongside the notion of opportunity freedoms (capabilities) to emphasize the importance of "how" are people involved in shaping their own future:

> Freedom is valuable for at least two distinct reasons. First, more freedom gives us more opportunity to achieve these things we value, and have reason to value […] Second, the process through which things happen may also be of fundamental importance in assessing freedom … There is, thus, an important distinction between the "opportunity aspect" and the "process aspect" of freedom. (Sen 2002, 585)

Agency and empowerment are two core requirements of process freedoms. Empowerment is related to mobilization, participation, agency, autonomy, self-determination, self-confidence and liberation (for a comprehensive account of the concepts of agency and empowerment from the CA perspective, see Ibrahim and Alkire 2007). Empowerment may be described as a set of two components (Narayan 2005, 3): the expansion of agency, and the institutional environment that conditions the opportunity structures for exercising agency effectively—what relates to power, accountability, participation, political structures and local organization capacities.

However, the process dimension of human development had not received as much attention as outcomes until recently. The work of Alkire (2002) in *Valuing Freedoms* contributed to these efforts, followed by several scholars within this research line of work (Ferrero and Zepeda 2007; Crocker 2008; Frediani 2009). In 2010, Susan Pick and Jenna Sirkin's work represented an important milestone when proposing a "Framework for Enabling Empowerment" as a specific application of Sen's CA in the development methodology, based in social psychology (Pick and Sirkin 2010).

The inclusion of principles is another essential element of Sen's work on capabilities and freedom, conceived as "considerations that help set priorities or judge society-wide distributions of capabilities—such as poverty reduction, efficiency, equity and resilience" (Alkire 2010, 28).

Alkire has proposed to position the "process aspect" of freedoms at the centre of the CA (Alkire 2010) as part of the four core objectives of human development: the expansion of real freedoms (capabilities), people's empowerment to engage in the development process (agency, process freedoms) and justice (based on plural principles) on a shared planet with current and future human beings (sustainability):

> What is proposed […] is that the core conception of human development regularly include process freedoms in addition to capability expansion, and that principles such as poverty reduction, durability, sustainability and support for human rights be integral to human development. (Alkire 2010, 37)

Are the planning and management approaches, methods, instruments and tools used in development interventions independent of the outcomes? Are they influential on the actual impact on human development? In other words, does the CA need specific methodological approaches in development management?

This paper draws on the lessons learnt from our own action research work as insiders and practitioners of development projects and organizations. The analysis follows Chambers' (1994a) and Apthorpe's (1986) idea about the need to understand the bureaucratic processes and procedures of project implementation in development agencies from within the organizations themselves.

We explore how some of the core elements and normative values of the CA—agency, empowerment and participation—illuminate the way in which planning and management methodology may adapt for better translating the CA into practice, with the aim of identifying key principles and a methodology suitable to infuse the requirements of the CA into development methodology.

In the next section we describe the current state of the art on development management methodology—approaches and methods—as reflected in the literature. In Section 3, we describe the case studies on which this paper builds, discussing how the different approaches and methods interacted with the human development dimensions. Finally, in Section 4 we describe elements of an alternative methodology.

2. Development Interventions: Approaches, Methods and Instruments

The term "development project" is often used too loosely. Commonly it includes a wide variety of activities supported by development organizations in the context of development assistance: "A set of inputs, activities and outputs, agreed with the partner country, to reach specific objectives/outcomes within a defined time frame, with a defined budget and a defined geographical area" (OECD-DAC 2009, 6).

In this study, the term "intervention" is used for referring to projects, programmes and policies aimed at achieving a desired development objective,[1] completely or partially supported by Official Development Assistance. Hence, an "intervention" as a unit of analysis includes a wide range of development practices across different levels, sectors and scales,[2] whose development management methodology is strongly influenced by the corresponding financing agencies' guidelines.

"Development management" is both a theory of planning and a way to describe the contents and manner of planning (Gulrajani 2009, 5). It includes all phases of the cycle from design to evaluation. We propose to consider three core methodological dimensions of development management methodology, present in every development intervention: methodological approaches; methods; and instruments. Although these dimensions have been used in practice as interchangeable or even synonyms, there are important differences in these categories.

The term "methodological approach" refers to the set of principles and ideas focused on developing the best procedures, strategies and methods to solve a problem. Thus the "method" forms part of the methodological approach. It includes the phases and steps undertaken to define a specific intervention from its outset to its finalization, as well as the specific techniques or tools used. Finally, the term "instrument" describes the administrative arrangement used to channel the resources required for the implementation of the intervention. Consequently, the concept of a methodological approach links up paradigms and theoretical assumptions (both in terms of development theory and in terms of epistemology) and the methods, tools and instruments chosen to practice development interventions.

2.1 Approaches: "Project", "Process" and "Participatory"

Some influential authors in the field of development management consider that the different approaches to development management respond to opposed epistemological paradigms (positivism/post-positivism vs. constructivism/critical research): Euclidean versus non-Euclidean (Friedmann 1993, 189); enlightenment versus romanticism (Gulrajani 2009, 14); neoliberalism versus insurgent planning (Miraftab 2009); or, simply, objects versus people (Chambers 1994b, 14). According to this

interpretation, a simplified model of two categories is commonly used to define development management as either the "managerialist", "blueprint", or "project approach", versus "process" approaches (Dale 2004, 44). However, this two-fold model is insufficient to describe the variety of approaches and methods.

"Managerialism" is often used to refer to approaches which assume that the nature of social processes is linear and predictable. Hence, this idea assumes that social change can be designed and engineered with cause–effect prediction processes of change models and optimized by using management experts, universally applicable management knowledge, methods and techniques. It has been defined as the application of technocratic ideas and practices that promise control, stability and progress (Cooke and Dar 2008, 6–11).

One of the main approaches reflecting a managerialist vision of development has been the "blueprint" or "project" approach'. When the scope of development projects widened from infrastructure to social sectors, public policy in general or institutional reforms (including through the extension of Peter Drucker's Management By Objectives), the project approach evolved to become "the application of the principles, methods, techniques, documents, ways of organizing and instruments that are part of engineering design and project management at all levels of intervention and in every sector (policies, plans, programmes and projects)" (Ferrero and Zepeda 2007, 9).

Within a project approach, an *ex-ante* detailed design of the intervention and of its implementation procedures is essential. This assumes that it is possible to predetermine the set of relations of cause–effect that convert resources, knowledge and technology in a desired and sustainable human change. The formal deviations from the original design during the project implementation are associated with bad management or with a poorly designed project.

Under the second paradigm, authors proposing alternative "process" approaches include a severe critique of the project approach, emphasizing the non-linear and complex nature of development and social change, and thus its unpredictable nature. On its nature, the project approach and its methods are criticized for being weak in their theoretical foundations (a "lack-frame"), simplistic ("logic-less frame"), rigid ("lock-frame") and reductionist (see Gasper 2000). Regarding how the project approach is used, it is repeatedly acknowledged that it tends to induce standardization, routine and an obsession with indicators. In addition, it is also perceived as undermining local institutional capacities while also setting wrong and contradictory incentives due to conditions imposed by donors.

The "process approach" to development is a wide concept, characterized (Mosse 1998, 3–30) by underlining: the importance of context and the relationships between the environment and development interventions; the importance of idiosyncratic, dynamic and unpredictable elements in interventions; the necessity of highly flexible design and management in interventions; and, consequently, the relevance of learning—individual, social and organizational—as a core dimension. While sharing these core elements, at least two large streams of thinking can be found within the alternative "process approach".

The first stream emphasizes the importance of participation as an essential element of the development process (Chambers 1997), and its roots may be traced in the foundational thinking of Freire or Goulet (1989)), amongst others. This stream is articulated within participatory learning and action (PLA), which has been defined as "a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act" (Blackburn, Chambers, and Gaventa 2000). As an approach, PLA includes behaviour and attitudes of outsiders and the people as a core influential element (Chambers 2005).

More recently, participation and learning have been seen as means for exercising rights within rights-based approaches to development. Here, power imbalances are regarded as the basic cause of poverty and inequality (Gaventa 2006). This approach focuses on political issues such as inequality, rights, exclusion, power, accountability and relationships in general amongst individuals, groups, organizations and governments (Groves and Hinton 2004; Eyben 2006).

The second trend strongly questions the relevance of participation, and the use of participatory methods. It considers them as part of the "new orthodoxy" and not essential to the process approach.

Kumar and Corbridge (2002) refer to the term "participation" as the "new rhetoric", as do Cooke and Kothari (2001) when they talk about a "new tyranny".

2.2 Methods and Instruments

Logic models are at the core of the "project" approach. They can be defined as representative models of change, programme theory or theories of change (Scriven 1991, 286), and they include the prediction of causal relations between the components of the intervention. In this way they explain how project activities will deliver planned outputs, and how those will contribute to the achievement of the designed outcomes and impacts. The more traditional form of logic model-based method has been the logical framework approach (LFA), recently integrated within results-based management (RBM). The output of the planning process generally takes the form of a "logframe matrix" or a "results framework".

Combined with the sequence of project design and management phases, the LFA/RBM is integrated in the project cycle management methodology (Eggers 1994), and continues to be the most extensively used methodology in the management of development interventions. In this way, the project phases (appraisal/design/feasibility; implementation and monitoring; evaluation) are operationalized through the steps of the LFA method: analysis (stakeholder analysis, problem analysis, objectives analysis, strategies analysis) and planning (logframe matrix design) and activity, resource and cost schedule.

Process approach authors emphasize the need for extensively experimenting and piloting small scale initiatives before scaling up to larger programmes at sector, sub-national or national levels.

Progressive adaptation to people's needs and organizations' capacities is conducive to effective and efficient programmes. Korten (1980) proposed a three-phase structure of the learning process approach (learning to be effective; learning to be efficient; learning to expand). Similarly, Rondinelli (1990) proposed an adaptive approach structured in four stages (experimental projects; pilot projects; demonstrative projects; scale-up). Amongst the CA scholars, Pick and Sirkin (2010) propose a set of stages for operationalizing the CA in line with a learning approach: needs assessment and problem definition; design and piloting of programme, materials and evaluation instruments; formal implementation of the programme (local level); and scaling-up the programme.

The learning process approach has widely influenced development management within non-governmental organizations. The Accountability, Learning and Planning System is one of its most complete applications on organizational management,[3] translating the learning process approach into a comprehensive method. However, and in sharp contrast to logic models, learning approaches and PLA have failed to popularize a method comparable with project cycle management. They have been subsumed as complementary methods or claims to learning or to empowerment within donor's rhetoric. PLA does not provide a sequencing of stages and steps for its implementation either. Moreover, PLA promoters explicitly reject such efforts, appealing to the creativity of facilitators for an adequate sequencing.

Some authors (Mosse 1998) focus on the lack of reliability of participatory tools as research methods. More importantly, others argue that participatory approaches hide conflicts within communities under the apparent consensus of group discussions, as most of the participatory methods are workshop based. As noted by Cornwall and Jewkes (1995, 1673), it is often assumed that local communities are small entities, homogeneous, well defined and integrated, undervaluing differences on wealth, gender, age, religion and ethnicity and therefore power.

The question about the cross-fertilization of methods and tools between different methodological approaches is contentious. Scholars associated with critical development thinking within the participatory approaches reject the possibility of combining participatory methods with managerial approaches. In fact, some scholars describe these practices as intent to neutralize the radical emancipatory message of the former by capturing them within the rhetoric of donor managerial practices. In this regard, Hickey and Mohan (2005) propose to relocate participation within a radical politics of development, but others scholars (Aune 2000) argue that PLA and logframes should be fit together.

However, there are relevant eclectic methods that have been proposed in the past decade. Mosse (1998, 31–53) proposes a set of alternative methods for a monitoring development processes: process monitoring and process documentation research. One of the most successful alternatives to the LFA

that is being increasingly used is outcome mapping (OM; Earl, Carden, and Smutylo 2001). This method defines outcomes as the changes in the behaviours, relationships or actions of the people, groups and organizations with whom the intervention interacts. Therefore, it focuses on mapping the behavioural and relationship change that occur in the programme's participants as a direct result of the intervention. It proposes three phases, the first of which ("intentional design") focuses on defining a development vision, the intervention mission, the intended changes in the partners to which the intervention seeks to influence and the "progress markers" or indicators of this change. "Outcome and performance monitoring" focuses on assessing change during implementation, and "evaluation panning" closes the cycle. Smith, Mauremootoo, and Rassmann (2012) report how the method has spread in the last 10 years and how it has been used with and without the LFA, in some cases "by stealth", avoiding making explicit references to OM in their reporting to donors. The temporal logic model (TLM; den Heyer 2002) builds on the same core elements of the traditional logframe matrix, while proposing to register in the monitoring matrixes the changes in the project context and subsequently adapting the logframes.

With regard to the issue of the "instruments", and following the critiques to this instrument in development aid as a part of the reaction of donors to the critiques to aid ineffectiveness, programme based approaches such as general budget support or the sector-wide approach have emerged as alternatives to the use of projects as the predominant instrument for aid management. However, the associated methods (which are essentially RBM and project cycle management) make it more of a different instrument rather than a different approach to development management.

3. Development Management in Practice: Project Planning, Learning Process or Empowerment?

This paper takes stock of the results of an action research process (1995–2010), following a qualitative and triangulated research strategy combining long-term participant and non-participant observation, in-depth interviews with participants and professional staff of development projects and documentation research. The action research process was carried out being part of the staff of development interventions' teams implemented in two cases in Morocco and Nicaragua, in different positions and with different schemes of aid actors, while a third case study in El Salvador was carried out in a non-participant observation scheme. A complete in-depth analysis of these case studies is presented in Ferrero (2004, 405–495) and Ferrero and Zepeda (2007). We tried to follow Gasper's proposed six criteria for orienting the evaluation of development planning methods (Gasper 2000, 20), once they were published,[4] to the extent possible. We were inspired by Mosse's contribution to ethnography as applied to development research (Mosse 2005), where he builds an interpretation of how development projects behave based on long-term participant observation, as an insider of the intervention.

3.1 Case Studies

The Integrated Rural Development project in the Beni-Snasssen, Berkane (Morocco) took place from 1995 to 1997, involving three municipalities and their authorities. The programme began as the initiative of one of the local majors and involved two international non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs), financed with ODA resources provided by a bilateral donor. The project included actions in health, education, agriculture, rural tourism, small enterprises, infrastructure, renewable energy supply, local participation and decentralization and women's empowerment. However, the CA was not explicitly considered.

The PCM and LFA methods were used combined with PLA workshop-based methods and semi-structured interviews during the project design field mission that lasted 10 days, when all of the components and specific activities of the project were outlined. The detailed design and the development of the logframe matrix were finished in headquarters. A local development group was constituted for overall coordination of the process, which included the three majors, local leaders, religious authorities, government officials and representatives of the population.

Almost all of the designed outputs were delivered and performance indicators were achieved after implementation. However, conflicts rose in the implementation process—related to political issues, caused by decisions made during the design phase: the number and the location of the limited number of mosques and schools planned to be provided with access to energy, of the clinics and of the rural roads to be rehabilitated—already defined in the project document. There was a strong opposition to participation once the project began, and especially that of women who suffered in some cases from gender violence for their engagement. The use of PLA was essential for revealing their struggles, views, priorities and aspirations during implementation.

This reality demanded a slowdown of the implementation process, a complete redefinition of the project activities, and a strong investment in time for constructing collectively agreed principles and a shared development vision. However, pressures to deliver outputs in time following the project design impeded the adaptation of the intervention, which ended in an abrupt break-off in the relationships amongst local actors.

The Initiative for Rural Development in Nicaragua is a process that began in 1998 and was implemented between 1998 and 2004, promoted by the Nicaraguan government and supported by several bilateral donors and United Nations agencies with the aim of setting up a national rural development policy. It included the implementation of two pilot programmes at the subnational level for testing a territorial-based participatory planning model, and a component aimed at increasing national capacities for rural development planning.

The Initiative was articulated through two core deliberation spaces: a multi-stakeholder platform for discussing the rural development policy, and a two-year capacity-building activity in the form of a post-graduate university course. Both informal institutions integrated all of the identified political interests and different disciplines, facilitated by the academia: intermediate technical staff and senior level managers of the relevant Ministries and public institutions; representatives of small farmers and rural workers and of the bigger land tenants and industrial agriculture; non-governmental organizations; bilateral donors and multilateral agencies. Although political parties were not invited in such capacity, their interests were present indirectly through the producers' organizations and government institutions.

The intervention was deliberately managed under a learning process approach, while PCM and LFA were used for project design. OM was used in parallel for monitoring institutional change, and we simulated the use of the temporal logic model when preparing the annual operative plans.

Even though the CA was not explicitly used at the outset, it had a core role during the deliberation process. This was articulated around guiding and methodological principles and a core vision of rural development for the country inspired by and reflecting the elements of the CA. The process delivered a document called "Basis for a Rural Development Plan in Nicaragua" (IDERU 2001) acknowledging the consensus on these elements and the dissensions on some of the concrete policy measures and programmes proposed. The proposal was presented in a public discussion by senior representatives of the two main political parties three months before the presidential elections in 2001, one of which was appointed Minister of Finance in 2002 and the other as Director General of the Institute of Rural Development in 2006. The vision and principles were adopted within the policy framework of the Government of Nicaragua in 2002, and the *ex-post* evaluation carried out in 2006 (Baselga 2007) revealed that this process triggered the adoption of PRORURAL 2005–2009—the rural sector country policy and donor sector-wide approach—continued in "PRORURAL Incluyente 2010–2014".

However, the short-term expected outputs of the project (measured in terms of number of laws approved in the parliament, of officials qualified, or subsequent implemented projects at the local level) were not completely achieved and the donor interrupted its support to the process and decided to support a different more conventional development intervention with "clearer" outputs and performance indicators.

The third case study—the Bajo Lempa Group in San Vicente, El Salvador—is a local development initiative supported by several socio-economic projects integrated as a holistic unit. The Bajo Lempa Group, because of its social characteristics, was later increasingly tagged as an example of "solidarity economics" in practice and a grass-roots initiative of joint cooperation between 51 communities. It started as an experience of "survival strategies" among its people intended to develop into a sustainable

"strategy for life". Further, its mission was aimed at being an "association of associations" whereby their main focus is to put in the centre-stage the human being and its quality of life in a holistic way. This organization envisions the overall effort of its economic, social and political initiatives and projects as an integrated and comprehensive vision of development according to their own values of solidarity, cooperation, equity and justice where the well-being and agency of the people is followed above everything else (Montoya et al. 2005).

The Bajo Lempa Group set of initiatives was seen as something wider and richer than just "projects". It was entirely based on building initiatives that complied with the communities' own principles and vision. The funding was sustained in time with the help of their own "lobbying power" that their local peasant grassroots such as CORDES and CRIPDES had in representing the communities' interests when advocating for funds and cooperating with powerful donors (Escobar 2004). From the social organizational experiences, they created economic organizations that would lead them to generate a family of interrelated social and economic projects. Hence, here the key agents of change were the people themselves. A common characteristic of the family of projects that they created was that they were non-profit, community-based, long-term creative initiatives.

3.2 Learning from Action

These case studies, complemented by the in-depth interviews with people and practitioners carried out during the observations, generated substantial insights about how methodology influences human development processes. A comparison between the case studies of the Initiative for Rural Development in Nicaragua and the Integrated Rural Development project in Berkane are particularly useful to illustrate how methods influence agency.

In the Initiative for Rural Development, the importance of the process took precedence over the initially planned design, which allowed the LFA to be adapted during implementation (as proposed by the TLM), even redefining the goal and purpose level of the project and detailing the outputs and indicators once they emerged. This use of the logframe was only possible after a high degree of trust between the project staff and the donor was achieved. Understandably, this trust was dependent on personal relationships, but it also meant a high personal risk for the project staff and local entities who took the responsibility of such changes before the donor agency.

In this way, we were able to adapt activities and expected results as necessary in a highly unstable environment. Unintended positive results emerged, and collective agency was enhanced in the long term. Articulating a shared vision of Nicaraguan rural development, and agreeing on a set of principles (where the CA core elements where reflected), played a catalytic role.

However, once the first phase of the project concluded, the donor considered that the project had not delivered the initially expected outputs and hired an expert LFA consultant with the task of "properly" implementing the PCM-LFA methods for the planning of the second phase. The local Nicaraguan actors were opposed to this shift and clearly communicated to the donor agency that they wanted to continue with the intervention. The subsequent LFA workshops never took place, but the donor redirected its resources to finance a "Rural Development Plan for the Country's dry lands" without the local stakeholders. Impressively, this was designed in no more than a month, by a team of external consultants—with a perfect logframe and following a strict PCM sequence. The impact evaluation we carried out compared this second phase of "parallel" donor plan with the original Initiative for Rural Development process, finding no evidence of impact of the former, beyond the implementation of a few isolated activities.

While the local organizations and individuals had increased their collective agency and were empowered for dealing with rural development policies demonstrating their own strong vision about the future of the process and wanted to implement it—exercising their agency—the "project" considered that those choices were not "compatible" with the logframe blueprint. The country representative of an international NGDO, a local professional with decades of field work, described this kind of practices as follows:

> The project is extremely rigid; changes over initial design are very complex when it is financed by donors, and that breaks processes. In real life, beneficiaries are not the designers of the project, and the project ends up being the best possible intervention planners may offer "to beneficiaries".

The Director of a local mid-size Nicaraguan NGDO put it in these terms:

> The LFA is the result of Western thought. It doesn't include intangibles, nuances … processes. It is completely rigid. For example, in a project we witnessed budget cuts, but given the need to maintain the expected output we proceed with the purchase of 200 lower quality cows, which met the original target but made impossible achieving the goal.

In the case of the Integrated Rural Development project in Morocco the results and activities initially planned were "set in stone" as well. All of the progress on cooperation between the three municipalities and other public and private actors—including on opening spaces for deliberation and participation of local population, especially women—were dashed by the conflicts related to the project outputs that arose during implementation. Not surprisingly, these outputs interacted strongly with hidden local power balances. Local elites (religious and economic) were trying to capture the benefits of the project and excluding the poor from participating in the established decision-making structure, from accessing assets and social services and from their "designed" empowerment.

Again in this case, it was during implementation when the different and diverse "menus of options" for individual and collective choices emerged, not during the project design phase despite the use of participatory methods. While this emergence is arguably a valuable outcome on its own merit from the perspective of agency—especially in such a complex local environment ruled by the traditional vertical power structures—and following the grant contract with the donor, the project team had no choice but to keep the original design, outputs and locations. The originally planned indicators remained, and were actually achieved, but the process was truncated as the local development group was disrupted and the cooperative effort ended.

In both cases we witnessed a strong tension between approaches, methods and agency. We tried to combine a process approach within PCM methodology, and institutionalizing deliberation and participation besides the use of LFA. In the case of Nicaragua, a process approach remained throughout the project, but finally the donor changed the team for the second phase and the intervention resumed under a completely different project. In the case of Morocco, where we used PLA during appraisal, design and monitoring within the PCM, it was the process that disrupted but the original logframe "survived". PCM prevailed for achieving the outputs reflected in the project document and the project completed its entire cycle as expected, but people's participation and collective action collapsed. As described to us by the Director General of Programs and Policies of the Ministry of Agriculture in Nicaragua in 2003: "The project approach causes leaps in the dark".

In the case of El Salvador, there was a clear identity of a development process under a shared—yet diverse—vision, principles and values. Agency grew with people's commitment based on certain shared values they defended in the context of the 1980s civil war: justice, solidarity and equity for all to live a decent, peaceful and fulfilling human life. The grass-roots organization progressively built on these values; a small local platform gave rise to a more structured non-governmental organization that would tackle the next step: the economic organization of the grass-roots communities in the territory. Essentially, these two self-created organizations were the collective agency means for "good" or "positive change" (cf. Chambers 2005) in which the participants of the initiatives materialized their participation and empowerment. There was a high commitment from the outset with participating in the local community assemblies, discussing their problems and accepting the consequences of dealing with uncertainty. Participation through local deliberative spaces was not the application of a method, or a participatory activity for a concrete project appraisal or design: it was a permanent institution, which ultimately made an impact on increasing their agency and freedoms.

Essential to the El Salvador experience is that people and organizations were clear that their own vision would not be centred on or be dependent on narrow short-term results or outputs, and for this

reason they searched a variety of sources of donors to allocate and distribute their interests in a better way. They wanted to achieve their objectives *their way*, while being aware that each donor had "a particular perspective of how things should be done". Their letter of principles as a group served to preserve their own collective agency and vision and their bargaining power with the donors.

Deliberations about *principles* and about *visions* for development proved to be key in the three cases. In both the Nicaragua and El Salvador cases, the investment in time on this aim was considerable. It was a continuous process of adjustment and served as a basis for catalysing agency, collective action and partnerships between different stakeholders. People's participation was core in the deliberation process, projects were instrumentally used flexibly and the focus was not on outputs but on the process itself. In the case of Morocco, the absence of deliberations about principles and vision complicated conflict resolution and people's participation, even though a local committee was set up.

From a different perspective, we experienced that the use of PCM and LFA increased the probability of achieving previously designed targets or performance indicators at the output level. Project managers are only held to account for an efficient use of inputs, for implementing the expected activities, and for delivering the expected outputs when the project implementation is completed. Therefore, it is not surprising that the project approach firmly focused the attention on inputs (resources) and outputs (goods and services), while people tend to be considered as an "external factor": a customer, a consumer, a beneficiary, rather than an agent and as the end of development with control over the project.

Moreover, the project's implementation units and the PCM increased the control over expected deliverables—and over stakeholders' action. This control purpose by donor agencies, ultimately, is the force that undermines expanding the people's capabilities and empowerment, focusing all the attention on operating the project and delivering its expected outputs.

We documented how project success, defined as the achievement of the expected outputs and outcomes, may be simultaneously harmful in terms of contributing to people and empowerment, agency, and to institution's capacities. Projects delivered designed outputs, but undermined public scrutiny, transparency and accountability to local institutions and participants in the project, making possible only unilateral accountability form recipients to donors. But positive impact depended little on delivering the intervention's outputs, and relied on the changes in institutions, relationships, behaviours and power balances amongst people and organizations caused by the intervention—all of which are hidden by the LFA methods under the assumption of objectiveness and are highlighted in different ways by a process approach, by PLA, OM or TLM.

The PCM and the LFA methods proved to be functional to a vertical exercise of power from donors among recipients, from managers among people, where control is the main added value. Some flexibility on use was allowed depending on the degrees of trust, of decentralization and on the personal risks that project participants were keen and allowed to take—all of which are plausibly low in the development and aid environments.

This is the reason why the same project may be judged as very successful from the perspective of donors and/or managers—those individuals or organizations with the responsibility for the design and management of the intervention's implementation—and simultaneously very detrimental when judged form the people's and local institution's (beneficiaries or not) perspective, and *vice versa*. This leads directly to the ethical dimension of development management, already populated as one of the most quoted "slogans" of alternative approaches, formulated by Chambers (1997) as "Whose reality counts?"; that is, whose perspectives, knowledge, necessities, priorities, criteria, diagnosis, analysis, plans, baselines, actions, indicators, assessments and evaluations really count?

We have synthesized in Table 1 the emerging conclusions about how the current methodological approaches and methods respond to some of the requirements of the CA outlined in Section 1, in relation to the evidence provided by the three case studies. In summary, the project approach oversimplified the reality through its associated linear logic models of predicted change, and the project approach served to maximize achievement of the pre-set objectives—but as we saw, these objectives reflected a short-term orientation, inadequate prior knowledge, and questionable assumptions of full funder understanding and rightful dominance.

Table 1. The CA's requirements, evidence and current development management approaches

CA requirements ⇨	So	Evidence from case studies ⇨	The project approach	Process/participatory approaches
Multidimensional human-centred approach.	Goods and services are not sufficient to expand capabilities. Need to embrace complexity. People's self-account of capabilities is essential.	It is very difficult to derive attention from the delivery of goods and services to agency and capabilities, once they are pre-defined as project outputs. As project outputs are scarce and limited, they were the cause of strong conflicts that undermined social cohesion and collective agency (Morocco). Outputs became a straitjacket for judging project success (Nicaragua). Considering diverse outputs related to different dimensions of human development is not enough (Morocco). Incorporated at the vision and principles level, it is a powerful compass (El Salvador, Nicaragua).	Simplifies reality. Focuses on deliverables (goods and services) as supposed to leading to outcomes and impacts. Overvalue technical "objective" data.	Are better suited to promote multidimensional people-centred development. PLA methods are more suitable than surveys for capturing multidimensional reliable information.
Unintended consequences, social relationships, power balances and unforeseen choices are important in capabilities.	Need to embrace complexity and uncertainty. Need to take into account the non-intended and non-predicted behaviours and effects.	All of the cases revealed unintended and unpredicted effects emerging early during implementation. This causes anxiety for project designers, managers and donors, who are reluctant to change initial designs. Even "good" designs defined using participatory methods require in-depth changes and adaptations once implementation begins (Morocco). Some "good" unintended effects are hidden or undervalued if not predicted (Nicaragua). OM and TLM help in adapting interventions and valuing behavioural change.	Simplifies reality as a linear-Newtonian machine-based model. Focus on prediction of effects and cause–effect relationships. Hides important effects.	Propose network non-linear approaches. Focuses on learning and valuing unintended outcomes. Learning process through action, adapting programmes, and interactions with context are a focal issue.
Non-tangible dimensions are crucial in capabilities (religion, human rights, dignity, beauty, friendship, etc.).	Need to embrace complexity, non-measurable categories and non-tangible dimensions.	Logical frameworks make it very difficult to value non-tangible dimensions and to take into account critical changes. Religion was a core dimension of power dynamics and people's choices in Morocco were hidden by the logframe. Personal relationships were critical in success (Nicaragua) and were also hidden in logframes. Community values and shared history were very important for building the development process in El Salvador.	Disregards non-tangible or subjective dimensions and focuses on objective measurable results.	Focuses on learning and valuing non-tangible outcomes, indicators are emergent and collectively constructed (especially in PM and PLA).

Reflect people's different ideas and wishes, addressing value judgements.	Hearing people's voices, especially the poorest ones.	PLA is a suitable methodology for enhancing people's voice, especially that of those excluded (women in Morocco). This was empowering especially when it was not anchored to concrete project phases and steps (appraisal or design), but when it was a continuous and open space for deliberation (Morocco, and especially El Salvador).	Not strictly necessary to include people's voice on technical designs.	Participation is enhanced through a set of appropriate methods in PLA. However, not essential in PM or TLM.
Agency and people's empowerment at the heart of freedoms.	Policies and programmes as "agency-enabling instruments". Adapt interventions to emerging people's choices. Flexibility is mandatory.	Process approaches and PLA help to put energy and attention on empowerment and on increasing people's and collective agency. When this happens, uncertainty increases and unintended effects emerge (Nicaragua and Morocco). These are part of increased freedoms—capabilities—and of increased autonomy. The project approach and the logframes tend to make interventions defensive to this increased agency and react as top-down power and control instruments (Nicaragua phase 2, Morocco). This was not the case in El Salvador.	Power issues are not central, as outputs-to-outcomes is the main focus. Participation as a tool for effectiveness in achieving outputs and outcomes.	Participation itself contributes to shape enabling environments as changing power balances. Empowerment at the heart of the development process. Participation as an end in itself (PLA).
Space for values and motivations: humanity versus *homo economicus.*	Values and attitudes have a key role in interventions.	Values and attitudes of the project participants, and staff, played a key role in adopting a process approach, in sharing decision power, in building mutual trust and accountability, and in raising people's voices (Nicaragua). In Morocco, non-respectful attitudes, rushing, and focusing on delivering outputs as a normative imperative broke trust and disrupted cooperation.	Values and attitudes have no value, and are not considered in RBA or LFA.	Values and attitudes are a central dimension (PLA).
Principles are important.	Need to consider, analyse and/or construct values.	Deliberation about guiding principles of collective action, linked to a long-term vision, proved to be critical for articulating development processes (El Salvador, Nicaragua). They served to expand agency, catalyse autonomous choices towards collective benefit and to resolve conflicts. This was not the case in Morocco.	Not considered in the project frameworks and logic models.	Principles and vision are not as relevant for process approaches, PLA, OM, TLM or PM.

The project approach and its methods tended to inhibit an adequate consideration of core dimensions of the CA that were revealed to be central to the development process. First, it excluded the consideration of values and principles, which as we experienced play a key role in expanding agency and empowering collective action, discarding all that cannot be "delivered", measured or managed. Second, it tended to impede an effective exercise of agency. Logframes and their quantitative indicators easily became "in-dictators", prescribing a narrow understanding of positive policy impacts, normatively prescribing which are the "good" and expected capabilities and functionings. It is very difficult to escape from these prescriptions, even if people are empowered to claim for changes in the course of interventions—as we witnessed in the Nicaragua and Morocco cases so clearly.

We found the process approach naturally better suited for dealing with the complexities and uncertainties found during the case studies, not surprisingly, as it has been explicitly linked to people-centred development and to learning since it was proposed. We tried to combine approaches and methods in the Morocco and Nicaragua cases. In the case where the project was managed with a "process perspective"— as in Nicaragua—or using participatory methods—as in Morocco—we found how people's and organizations' autonomous choices (that were different from those expected as project outcomes) emerged. However, the predominance of the project approach and the logframes led one to prioritize the latter before people's agency, reflecting the power exercised by the donors through the project as an instrument of control. This did not happen in the case of El Salvador, where "the centre" of deliberation was principles and a long-term vision, and projects were clearly subordinated to the people-led development process.

We tested how PLA, process monitoring, OM or the TLM offered very valuable solutions for some of the burdens of the project and logframe approaches, but all present limitations if considered individually. While PLA offers a solid system of principles and methods suitable to facilitate the operationalization of the CA, it lacks the consideration of the vision and principles dimension and, especially, a methodological structure. The OM may be very useful for focusing on behavioural change, but it may easily be a top-down method that avoids political and power relationships issues—limitations that are shared by the TLM and the PM.

In the next section, we propose a process freedoms-based methodology intending to put people's capabilities and agency at the centre, while trying to make it suitable to be "user-friendly" to development staff through a structure of phases and stages.

4. … And Back to Theory: Towards a "Process Freedoms Approach"

4.1 A Non-linear Approach to the Theory of Change

Development initiatives have long been embedded in the idea of "intervention", which in itself denotes a specific top-down power relation. A process freedoms approach would imply, in contrast, a different lexicon of relationships: to catalyse, facilitate and synergise with people for their empowerment. Development processes are real-life dynamics of people in everyday social relations and therefore not only do they resist one-dimensional representations, but they are permeated by issues of material, ideational, agency and social structure power across all human relations.

The logic models and the project approach focus on predefining an ideal "B" situation for all of the "beneficiaries" and prescribing how to achieve it. The process freedoms approach focuses on empowering people to collectively define, and autonomously choose from, a wider set of more flourishing "B" situations they value and have reason to value and that better contribute to the collective development vision of their communities.

This means using, first, their own *agency, their* power to drive change by themselves; and second, using an "ideational compass" that allows them to discern what they want from what they do not want considering their options in relationship to its effects on values such as poverty reduction, equity, inclusion or solidarity. That is, building a development vision and principles or values about what they regard as key for their lives and for their communities.

Unlike "goals" or "results", a development vision—essentially a narrative that includes the diversity of people's expectations, dreams and aspirations—is a wide statement that may include a higher diversity of points of view and priorities without necessarily reaching a consensus on concrete "apolitical" outcomes or targets. This role of planning as an *enabler of autonomy* is highlighted by Max-Neef when he points out that:

> What is needed is global planning for greater local autonomy. This planning should be capable of mobilizing existing groups and communities, to transform their survival strategies into life, options that are organically articulated as political and social projects throughout the national space. (Max-Neef 1991, 61)

This requires one to acknowledge that intending to "design" the development process is worthless, due to the inability to predict the values, aspirations and options of the people participating in the process, the existence of multiple interests in human beings and the inherently conflicting nature of the processes in which individuals intervene—hence, recognizing the political and complex nature of the process.

Therefore, this emphasis on process freedoms and principles implies, on the one hand, empowering people's participation and fostering their "process freedoms" and, on the other, the construction of shared values, visions and principles. In practice, development initiatives that enhance public deliberation processes and institutionalize them help to build a long-lasting compass of principles, values and vision that can guide their actions for positive change. Collective participation is necessary to deal with discussions on value judgements and it is a mechanism that has been considered the most effective way to override and filter negative or harmful functionings that may arise from people.[5]

Dealing with value judgements should necessarily address the issues of power and control in a transparent manner (Sen 1992, 64–66), so the participation implied by the CA has to be meaningful. Moreover, using participatory methods or opening formal or informal deliberative spaces may not be sufficient conditions for people's empowerment—as the Morocco case study showed. In some contexts, the intensity of conflicts or power imbalances makes difficult, or impossible, cooperation and wider participation; but even in contexts were cooperation is possible, participation is always a long-term process that must face prioritizing among conflicting interests.

In tune with the above reflections, institutionalized participation can and ought to be valued as a process of merit in itself, by building inclusive deliberative spaces, not linked to isolated events and projects or with a purely instrumental focus. Active participation not only enhances local potentialities, based on the people's knowledge, experiences and creativity but also gives way to facilitate experiential learning processes, at three different levels: within the local environment, beginning with the individual and household dimensions of learning as one of the foundations of expanding capabilities; within the interventions themselves; and within the organizations involved.

When people and organizations engage in deliberation processes, there is a greater likelihood that the outcome would be more robust and effective in time thanks to its more legitimate, accountable, shared and evolving guiding compass of principles, values and visions. Likewise, this deliberative process can result in strengthening autonomous individuals' decisions, households' livelihood strategies, communities' plans, and organizations' projects and actions. Indeed, under shared principles, partnerships between different individuals, organizations, public and private actors and civil society are more likely to flourish, creating more complex types of collective agency, which in turn reinforce inclusive development processes. In this way, the likelihood of public and private investments in productive sectors and in public services increasing the long-term expansion of capabilities is not only greater, but also improves the sustainability profile of development initiatives through better community ecosystem management.

This narrative configures an alternative theory of change for development interventions. The traditional results chain model (inputs → activities → outputs → outcomes → impact) may be replaced by one based on the interrelated dimensions of human development defined by Alkire: process freedoms (agency), principles–vision, opportunity freedoms and sustainability. Process freedoms (agency) can

Figure 1. The process freedoms approach methodology.

provide the space to develop principles and vision, which can provide a secure basis for opportunity freedoms and sustainability.

Interactions between all of the elements on this alternative theory of change always co-exist in time. An increase in human capabilities in the absence of an increase in process freedoms may trigger its expansion or its detraction; an exercise of deliberating a shared vision or values usually increases collective agency; some autonomous initiatives from individuals or organizations may strongly influence process freedoms in a positive or negative way. Naturally, the evolution and expansion of each process may be impeded or even reversed. For example, process freedoms can contract as well as expand. In addition, the expansion of each of the elements in this sequence may be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for development. If there are external shocks, or severe restrictions—for instance, in the exercise of rights—increased agency and principles may not lead to an expansion of capabilities. Therefore, the adequate representation of these relationships between components and phases in the development process is better represented in the form of a network.

A methodology corresponding to this theory of change can be developed for the first cumulative, simultaneous and non-linear phases, as represented in Figure 1. These activities under which development interventions may be structured would be the following: mobilizing; expanding participation capabilities; deliberating principles, values and vision; catalysing autonomy, partnerships; and learning (including evaluative activities), adapting, mutual accountability.

4.2 Practical Guidelines for Implementing a Process Freedoms Approach

According to the proposed theory of change and methodology, management ought to be oriented strategically: based on a long-term vision; managed in the medium term with maximum flexibility; and linked to the short term and action through sufficiently flexible instruments. However, the methods and instruments should contain the minimal elements so that management is both user-friendly and feasible.

Development initiatives based on a process freedoms approach conceive the activity of "design" as a continuum. This means that it is an ongoing reflective "flow" of the framework in use and should be combined simultaneously with implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes, which are also an ongoing continuum. Design does not end when implementation begins, as human beings are always engaged with designing, deciding, doing and reflecting on consequences during their lives. This allows the freedom to shape development initiatives in a flexible, non-static way. Development initiatives have no blueprint documents, but rather "evolving", participative documents to adapt and reflect learning.

From the experience of the case studies, it becomes evident that a process freedoms approach requires not setting in stone detailed long-term or medium-term results; instead, only a preliminary account of actions ought to be suggested. Moreover, only the activities and short-term results (perhaps as a maximum of one or two years) should be explicit, and always as a "preliminary outline of activities and results". This means leaving aside altogether the requirement to identify or formulate quantitative

ex-ante targets. If there are specific goals and results, they should be considered as "guiding milestones"; conceiving targets, if there are, as a motivational instrument rather than a normative goal.

The "judgement" about the value of initiatives (and about management performance) should be realized, exclusively, over the results emerging in the mid and long term, on people's capabilities, agency and empowerment including by using multidimensional poverty indicators[6] defined by people themselves. Monitoring and evaluation would benefit from the continuous assessment of the reaction of organizations, the evolution of the social structure and institutions, and stakeholder behavioural change, for which PLA, OM and process monitoring are suitable methods. This is a significant shift in development management principles: there is no intended attribution of the design or of the project effects. Rather, it is always about how to make the best "contribution to the development process" (together with the impact of other interventions and multiple external factors).

On the other hand, comprehensive development initiatives should take into account a territorial base, which may be one with different scales, according to each specific case—community, village, municipality, group of municipalities, watershed, department or state—as the organizations and institutions interacting in the process cannot be detached from the local context or environment.

Finally, the instruments used should consider fixed and variable costs in an opposite way than they are in the project approach. Fixed costs should be those associated with the resources necessary to facilitate the initiative, especially people's participation, coordination between institutions, deliberative spaces, and so forth. Variable costs should correspond to investments in infrastructure, goods or services. These are *a priori* not predictable with exactitude, except in the short term, because they emerge as the intervention advances.

5. Conclusions

Up until the present, the design, management and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects have been carried out using essentially the same management methodologies developed under the predominant managerialist paradigm.

Empirical evidence given in this paper shows instead that human development "flows" in non-linear, continuous and complex processes. We have concluded that translating the CA into practice requires an equivalent shift in development management methodologies, but unfortunately there has not been enough connections between the CA scholars, the management science and development practitioners.

The results of the three case studies presented suggest that the "process approach" to development management, PLA, OM, process monitoring or TLM offers methods and tools that are much closer to the requirements of the CA than the logic-based models, but that they have failed to provide a robust methodological structure. Moreover, dimensions that are missing or undervalued both in the project and the process approaches have proven to be key to expanding agency and autonomy, especially when combined with participation and deliberation: principles, development vision and values.

Building on Alkire's core objectives of human development as the building blocks of a process freedoms-based theory of change, we have proposed a "process freedoms approach" as a flexible methodology that should be tailored to specific circumstances, contexts, and types of interventions and processes. This paper presents the "process freedoms approach" as a proposal that has been outlined for its further improvement within the development arena. It will need new real-case applications, testing and refinement, which configure a wide scope for further research. PLA may be one of its concrete forms in some community and local development projects. Likewise, OM may be part of a concrete application in some complex political processes with multiple actors interacting, at larger scales.

In a moment when the development community is facing the last efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and is initiating the process for defining the post-2015 development agenda, it is relevant and timely to define a new management methodology for human capabilities that includes human development in all its dimensions. The "process freedoms approach" is a proposal for a first step.

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Notes

1. "An intended impact contributing to physical, financial, institutional, social, environmental or other benefits to a society, community or group of people via one or more development interventions", as defined by the OECD.
2. For example, scales include the community, local, subnational, national or global levels.
3. See Guijt (2004) for a comprehensive review of Accountability, Learning and Planning System application.
4. Avoid essentialism; combine case studies with different grades of success on using the methods; include local actors and intermediate managers in the evaluation; compare real and ideal cases; make different evaluations for different versions of the method; and evaluate with a learning approach.
5. However, CA scholars here have found significant ground to debate on this issue—for example, see the divergent positions of Clark (2005) versus that of Crocker (1995).
6. We have successfully used PLA methods for constructing participatory-based multidimensional indicators similar to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (Alkire and Foster 2011), at the community and local levels (Ferrero et al. 2013).

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