



2nd Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Human Development and the Human Capabilities Approach

Reflections on Poverty, Inequality, and Democracy

October 15th, 16th, and 17th, 2008, Montevideo, Uruguay

Call for papers

The Organizing Committee of the 2nd Latin American and Caribbean Conference on Human Development and the Capabilities Approach invites academics, researchers, post-graduate students, and professionals working in diverse areas (public policy, civil society organizations, etc.) to present paper proposals.

This 2nd Conference will include three types of activities: **guest speakers, workshops and parallel sessions**. For the second two activities we invite you to present proposals that examine the way in which the Capabilities Approach (CA) can be used to better understand the problems that confront our region. Four broad topics to be addressed in the conference are: normative questions, poverty and public policy, inequality and rights, and empowerment and agency.

We welcome both theoretical works that expand the reach of the CA and applied works that focus on its adaptation to Latin America.

How to present the proposals

Paper proposals should include a summary explaining the relationship to the CA and defining the methodology and the objectives of the paper. We are accepting proposals until August 15th, 2008. Authors of papers that are accepted will be notified via email by August 30th, 2008. Final versions of accepted papers should be sent by September 30th, 2008.

To submit a paper or a paper proposal, please submit:

1. A full paper (up to 15,000 words) or an abstract (up to 500 words)
2. Three to five keywords
3. Name, affiliation and contact information
4. Request for financial assistance (if relevant).

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The conference languages will be Spanish, Portuguese and English.

Limited funds will be available to aid some presenters in attending the conference. For solicitation of funds, we will require final versions of papers to be sent before August 30th, 2008.

The conference will take place on October 15th, 16th, and 17th, 2008, in Montevideo, Uruguay. It is being organized by the Universidad de la República (UDELAR), with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI).

ALCADECA receives support from the Human Development and Capabilities Association, which was created in September of 2004 and whose first president was 1998 Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen.

**Send proposals and questions to: alcadeca2008@iecon.ccee.edu.uy
Last date for receipt of proposals: August 15th, 2008.**

The Capabilities Approach

Because of its focus on freedom, as opposed to material accumulation, the Capabilities Approach (CA) has resonated in contemporary normative thinking, social analysis and applied social science literature. As pioneers of the HCA, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum have enriched the debate by establishing an innovative normative base from which to evaluate individual and social development. The ethical and human dimensions of theories about development, well-being, equality and quality of life are being re-evaluated in light of the HCA.

In fact, according to Sen, the CA is not a theory of social justice but a normative framework with which to evaluate the wellbeing of a population. He claims that economic development should be measured by the degree of effective freedom which an individual can effectively dispose of to be and do what he values as important. The goal of economic development should be freedom. Human capability designates what a person in a given situation can be and do, as well as what they value as important. The HCA is an alternative to liberalism or utilitarianism as a way to understand human development.

The Relevance of the Human Capabilities Approach to Latin America

The committee of this conference proposes that the HCA can be used as a solid normative framework with which to examine Latin America's problems and discuss policies with which to overcome them. As is well known, this region has very high levels of inequality, not only in terms of income and access to resources, but also in terms of social stratification, distribution of political power, differences in health and life expectancy, and disparities in educational attainment. Since the failure of the neo-liberal policies of the 1990's to promote economic development, our continent has been looking for alternative paradigms from which to pursue this goal.

The CA can orient the search for alternative avenues for development of the region by:

1) Making explicit the goals of economic development.

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- 2) Framing poverty as a multifaceted phenomenon and measuring it as such by broadening the traditional informational base used by the neoclassical approach.
- 3) Evaluating the relationship between the economy and human wellbeing.
- 4) Designing and evaluating development policies from the perspective of the limitation or expansion of human capabilities.
- 5) Promoting and strengthening democratic processes necessary as an end in and of itself, and as a way to promote the development of the region. Participatory methods are necessary in order to determine and evaluate the **relevant capabilities** in each society or situation.

Areas of Investigation Within the Conference

The 1st conference of ALCADECA was held in Mexico City, Mexico, in July of 2006. For this 2nd conference we hope to hear contributions that examine the CA as a way to understand the problems of the region, focusing on four broad areas of interest:

- 1) Normative questions
- 2) Poverty and public policies
- 3) Inequality and rights
- 4) Empowerment and Agency

We welcome both theoretical works that expand the reach of the CA and applied works that focus on its adaptation to the Latin American situation.

Normative and philosophical questions related to the HCA. Because the HCA falls within the reach of both economics and philosophy, it requires a theoretical treatment of certain questions. What is the relationship between justice and recognition. Is it socially acceptable to consider everything a person values as qualifying as a life plan. How do we deal with the moral relativism that can accompany some interpretations of the CA? What are the potential requirements of a program of fundamental philosophical universalism?

Inequality, poverty and capabilities. The multifaceted conceptualization of poverty and inequality is one of the distinctive features of this approach. For this reason, special attention will be given to projects that focus on this theme in a creative way.

Economic, political, social and cultural inequality is a common feature of Latin American society. For this reason, we are especially interested in presentations regarding the analysis of economic and social inequalities, which transcend traditional approaches based solely on income, and broaden the scope to include other factors for evaluation. We would like to include more general discussions as well as specific case studies. At the same time we hope to receive contributions focused on cultural inequalities, and the cultural losses that this entails.

Public policy and capabilities. We are interested in discussions of the HCA as a tool for creating and evaluating public policies. We welcome contributions focused on education, health care, social security, participation, etc.

Rights, Empowerment and Agency. We hope to further discussion on the role of agency and structural conditions in the development process. In what way do these elements interact? What is the relevance of the HCA to this dualist vision of the region's economies? We would like to present projects that show analyses, experiences and methodological discussions of empowerment and agency.

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Organizing Committee

Izete Pengo Bagolin (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Río Grande del Sur, Brazil)

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Questions

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