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## PAPER

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### THE CAPABILITY APPROACH AND COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PURSUIT OF WELL-BEING AS JUSTICE AND EQUITY. THE ROLE OF NON PROFIT SECTOR

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**Abstract**



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In “Development as Freedom”, Amartya Sen affirms that we may not notice the protective power of democracy in giving people the chance to express their capabilities until a particular problem arises. However, when things go wrong the absence of a system that provides justice for everybody can loom extremely large and put a considerable strain on people’s lives (Sen, 1999). In this paper we set out to analyze the extent to which the absence of what Sen defines a “system of justice” plus a fair and equitable allotment as well as distribution of resources can affects people’s well-being. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2009) have made a remarkable case on this account when they showed that in most developed Countries across the world an unfair distribution of the richness, which is mainly expressed by the gap that separates the rich from the poor, wreaks havoc on people’s well-being. However, the connection between justice, equity and well-being has been, despite many evidences such as the one just mentioned, largely overlooked so far. In terms of well-being, researchers rarely, if ever, invoke justice and the equitable allotment and distribution of resources in their explanations. In most cases, culture, age, marriage, social support, unemployment and adaptation figure prominently on the list of well-being predictors (e.g. Fredrickson 2009; Lyubomirsky 2008; Seligman 2002, 2011). And yet, although it might be true that some people, endowed with intelligence and empathy, can, with appropriate support, overcome adversity, they remain nonetheless a minority (Prilleltensky, Nelson & Peirson, 2001). For the vast majority of those who face oppression and injustice, however, life becomes a constant struggle (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010), which is why it is so surprising that psychologists have not yet explored in depth the connection between fairness and wellness. As we are well aware of, this is not the case in other disciplines such as political economy (Sen 2009), and political philosophy (Nussbaum 2006).

This is the reason why, in this paper, we will refer both to the Capabilities Approach and Community Psychology Approach. Specifically, by integrating Amartya Sen’s and Marta Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach with the Ecological model proposed by Isaac Prilleltensky, we hold that individuals, groups, communities and society at large are all deeply intertwined with one another; hence, individual and social well-being are intrinsically linked with the promotion and achievement of underlying human necessities, such as freedom, equity, environmental respect, equality, and social justice for everyone. In fact, consistent with Isaac Prilleltensky’s ecological vision, well-being is understood as a positive state of affairs brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of diverse objective and subjective needs of individuals, relationships, organizations and communities (Prilleltensky, 2012). Thus, we ground our discussion on a novel vision of well-being that is a multi-faceted and complex construct linked to manifold levels of analysis (Arcidiacono, 2013; Di Martino 2013). The vision we set out to propose shows a new understanding of this phenomenon, which is not merely the outcome of personal efforts and achievements but is also the fruit of the interrelations between numerous other factors, (equity and justice being at the top of them) which have thus far seldom been connected to this concept.

Finally the aim of the paper is to analyze the role of third sector inside the society in term of contribution to well-being and quality of life.

**Keywords:** justice, critical community psychology, equity, social enterprises

## 1. Introduction

The burgeoning interest placed on well-being in recent years has allowed many definitions and conceptualizations of this phenomenon to gain a certain currency and also to spread throughout the scientific literature. Whereas many of them are overly based on an individualistic perspective (Seligman, 2012, Keyes, 2007, Lyubomirsky 2008; Diener et al., 2009) others are particularly focused on public-oriented policy making (Veenhoven, 2007, Layard, 2005, Bok, 2010).

In this article, consistent with Isaac Prilleltensky's ecological vision, well-being is understood instead as a positive state of affairs, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of diverse objective and subjective needs of individuals, relationships, organizations, and communities (Prilleltensky, 2012). Thus, the idea that we put forth here is that well-being is a multi-faceted and complex construct linked to manifold levels of analysis. Contrary to Diener's standpoint - namely, that people have well-being only when they believe that their life is going well, regardless of whether that life has pleasure, material comfort, a sense of meaning, or any other feature that has been specified as essential for well-being (Diener et al., 2009) - we hold that objective indicators of well-being can actually make a great deal of difference when it comes to assess the way someone is leading his/her life.

On the whole, the distinction between subjective and objective indicators of well-being – as well as the acceptance of their joint importance - matters especially when it comes to policy making. Indeed, if we prioritise the one or the other we are apt to misconstrue the quality of someone's life: very happy people can be living in awful conditions that are morally unacceptable while others may seem to have excellent objective conditions but if they are really miserable their lives aren't going very well (Thin, 2012). Amartya Sen has made this point very clear in volumes as "The idea of Justice" and "Development as Freedom" when he showed the limit of the Utilitarian approach. But this has also a value when we try to implement well-being oriented strategies of research and action. "Paradoxically", Prilleltensky claims "strategies that concentrate exclusively on personal well-being undermine well-being because they do not support the infrastructure that enhances well-being itself. This has been a major gap in previous efforts to sustain individual well-being through strictly psychological means such as cognitive reframing, positive thinking, information sharing, and skill building" (Prilleltensky, 2005 a). Being such a complex and multidimensional construct, for well-being to be better understood it is therefore necessary to explore its main features, starting exactly from the distinction between its subjective and objective indicators.

Again, the distinction provided by Isaac Prilleltensky between subjective and objective indicators of well-being, as shown in the table below, can be deemed to be a useful tool for orienting our understanding of this phenomenon. Moreover, with reference to an ecological standpoint, the table shows their declination along a path that goes from the personal to communal level while putting them in relation to different features such as Economic, Physical, Occupational, Psychological, Community, and Interpersonal (Prilleltensky, 2012).

Arguably, this taxonomy can by no means be deemed exhaustive since many other domains are liable to affect people's lives. On this account, Prilleltensky and colleagues have recently carried out a research activity aimed at synthesizing the central domains of well-being. Their joint efforts have yielded to conceptualizing six domains of well-being, which can be summarized in the acronym COPPE, which stands for Interpersonal, Community, Occupational, Psychological, Physical, and Economic well-being (Prilleltensky et al., 2013).

**Table 1** Objective and subjective indicators of well-being

| Level of well-being | Objective indicators  | Subjective indicators   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Personal            | Economic  | Economic  |
|                     | Money for food, shelter, clothing, medical care; savings for retirement   | Feeling financially secure, relative deprivation, pressure to spend, enjoyment derived from purchases or experiences                                    |
|                     | Physical  | Physical  |
|                     | Symptoms of pain, biochemical markers of health and disease, disability, longevity, functional assessment   | Feelings of vitality, energy, self evaluations of health  |
|                     | Occupational  | Occupational  |
|                     | Access to resources to do job, clear job description, communication channels, praise received, assets recognized, instances of conflict, absenteeism                        | Feeling appreciated and engaged, positive assessment of working climate, meaning making, positive working relationship with boss                        |
|                     | Psychological   | Psychological   |
|                     | Laughing, smiling, crying, sleeping, symptoms of anger, depression  | Life satisfaction evaluations, reports of feelings, perceived self efficacy, mastery, sense of control, spirituality, flow, meaning, growth, engagement |
|                     | Community   | Community   |
|                     | Access to education and services, social capital, volunteering, clean air, safety   | Sense of community, feeling accepted, respected, safe, pride in community   |
| Interpersonal       | Interpersonal   | Interpersonal   |
|                     | Number of friends, number of conflicts, fun activities with peers   | Feeling supported, heard, valued, appreciated, treated with respect and dignity   |
|                     | Economic resources  | Economic resources  |
|                     | Money for food, shelter, recreation, family and conjugal needs  | Mutual understanding on financial matters, mutual support in resisting consumerism  |
|                     | Health  | Health  |
|                     | Relationships that promote healthy nutrition and physical activity  | Stress free and supportive relationships that offer emotional nurturance  |
|                     | Function and meaning  | Function and meaning  |
|                     | Opportunities to practice and develop strengths, pursue meaning, and desired roles in relationships   | Feeling valued for one's role and contribution to relationship and family. Meaning making in relationship   |
|                     | Control and growth  | Control and growth  |
|                     | Exercising voice and choice in important matters and having opportunities for growth in relationship  | Feeling heard, maintaining clear boundaries, sense of growth as person and unit, feeling free to make decisions   |
| Organizational      | Equality and respect  | Equality and respect  |
|                     | Fair sharing of obligations and privileges  | Feeling valued and respected, not taken for granted, free of gender stereotypes about roles   |
|                     | Support and celebration   | Support and celebration   |
|                     | Opportunities to hear each other and rituals to celebrate each other's accomplishments and milestones in life   | Feeling appreciated and affirmed, not just in times of need, but also in times of achievements  |
|                     | Economic resources  | Economic resources  |
|                     | Sufficient human, physical, economic and organizational resources to fulfill role   | Information and common understanding of existing resources and their use  |
|                     | Health orientation  | Health orientation  |
|                     | Availability of policies, resources and opportunities to exercise, to eat well, to sleep, to prevent exposure to toxic substances, to foster occupational health and safety | Culture of health promotion, feeling that one's health is valued, feeling heard when health related concerns are raised                                 |

**Table 1** Objective and subjective indicators of well-being

| Level of well-being | Objective indicators   | Subjective indicators  |
|---------------------|--|--|
|                     | Function, reflection, and meaning  | Function, reflection, and meaning  |
|                     | Policies and procedures for effective functioning and communication. Opportunities to acquire information and learn skills to fulfill role. Built-in opportunities to reflect and make meaning of one's role | Feeling fulfilled in one's role, having a sense of contribution to common good, perceiving one's role as meaningful  |
|                     | Control, mastery, and growth   | Control, mastery, and growth   |
|                     | Opportunities to express opinions, to exercise control, and to build and display strengths and passions  | Feeling that reward is in line with effort, and that control is in line with demands. Satisfaction with competency level   |
|                     | Equality and respect   | Equality and respect   |
|                     | Policies, procedures and practices that respect all individuals equally. Systems in place to promote fairness  | Being treated with fairness and respect. Perceiving supervisor as fair and equitable   |
|                     | Participation and celebration  | Participation and celebration  |
|                     | Opportunities to seek input from employees, avenues for engagement in work and product design. Celebration of accomplishments  | Feeling engaged and involved in work. Feeling valued and celebrated for unique contributions   |
|                     |  |  |
|                     |  |  |
| Communal            | Economic resources   | Economic resources   |
|                     | Employment opportunities, safety net, policies to promote research, development, and investments   | Feeling hopeful about economic future, feelings related to unemployment, perceptions of economic opportunities   |
|                     | Health promotion   | Health promotion   |
|                     | Access to high quality health care. Policies and programs to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Prevention of epidemics and exposure to toxic substances. Public awareness campaigns              | Stress related to access to health care and poor health services. Awareness of health policies and health information. Perceptions of fairness in health system. Knowledge of health promotion information |
|                     | Function   | Function   |
|                     | Proper functioning of government services, such as policing, zoning, and education. Timely delivery of services. Integrity and corruption  | Perceptions about government efficiency, corruption and transparency   |
|                     | Freedom  | Freedom  |
|                     | Democratic elections and institutions, freedom of expression, movement, and association  | Feeling safe and protected. Fear of reprisals by criminals, such as organized crime  |
|                     | Equality   | Equality   |
|                     | Protections for minorities, equality before the law, affirmative action policies   | Feeling respected by other citizens and government officials, perceptions of fairness in dealings with authorities and businesses  |
|                     | Participation and inclusion  | Participation and inclusion  |
|                     | Opportunities to participate in public affairs, such as referenda, and presence of services for various minorities   | Feelings of inclusion, belonging and sense of community  |

Given the distinction between subjective and objectives indicators of well-being we can now turn our attention to how Prilleltensky describes well-being's components.

According to Prilleltensky well-being consists of (a) sites, (b) signs, (c) sources, and (d) strategies. There are three primary sites of well-being (personal, relational, and collective), each of which has specific signs or manifestations, sources or determinants, and strategies. (Prilleltensky, 2005 b).

Sites refer to the location of well-being. Here we concern ourselves with "where" well-being is situated. While we can distinguish among the well-being of a person, a relationship, or a community, they are highly interdependent.

By signs we refer to manifestations or expressions of well-being at the different sites we mentioned above. Signs answer the question “how do I know that this site is experiencing well-being?”

Each one of the sites of well-being and its corresponding signs has particular sources or groups of determinants.

In this light, the key to successful strategies to promote well-being is that they must be specific enough to address each one of the sites, signs, and respective sources of well-being at the same time.

To conclude, we can integrate sites, signs, sources, and strategies in the following formulation: The well-being of a site is reflected in a particular sign, which derives from a particular source and is promoted by a certain strategy. (Prilleltensky, 2005 a)

Table I. Examples of interdependence among personal, relational, and collective domains in sites, signs, sources, and strategies of well-being.

|            |            | Sites of well-being                |  |   |
|------------|------------|------------------------------------|--|---|
|            |            | Personal                           | Relational   | Collective  |
| Signs      | Personal   | Control                            | Affirming partners                                 | Health and longevity  |
|            | Relational | Satisfying relationships           | Enduring friendships                               | Affirmation of diversity and lack of envy                     |
|            | Collective | Sense of community                 | Norms of mutual support                            | Support for poor and universal healthcare                     |
| Sources    | Personal   | Experiences of self-efficacy       | Developmental needs met                            | Personal contribution to commonwealth                         |
|            | Relational | Nurturance                         | Prior experiences of respect and affirmation       | Appreciation of interdependence                               |
|            | Collective | High-quality health and education  | Norms that promote collaboration                   | Culture that understands and fosters interdependence          |
| Strategies | Personal   | Empowerment                        | Empathy and social skills                          | Collective and political intelligence                         |
|            | Relational | Voice and choice in partnership    | Conflict resolution and growth orientation         | Social support and rewards for participation in social change |
|            | Collective | Participation in political process | Norms that affirm mutuality and oppose competition | Social movements that fight injustice                         |

## 2. Well-being as justice

In “Development as Freedom” Amartya Sen affirms that we might not notice the protective power of democracy in giving people the chance to express their capabilities until no particular problem arise. But when things go wrong – as in the classical example of famines – the absence of a system that provides justice for everybody can loom extremely large and put a considerable strain on people’s lives (Sen, 1999). Transposing this concept from political economics to psychology, we notice that a preoccupation with intrapsychic dynamics and a misplaced emphasis on resilience have led researchers such as Seligman (2002) to ignore contextual factors in well-being, such as income, education, and opportunities in life (Ehrenreich, 2009). In other words, a certain branch of psychology maintains that no matter what are the external conditions or the context in which we live as long as we lever on our inner strength to enhance our well-being. This is one of the reasons why Positive Psychology has provided so many tools, techniques, and practices geared to improve flow, character strengths, meaning, and the like (Frederickson, 2009; Seligman, Peterson, 2004; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, Schkade, 2005), while almost completely ignoring the paramount presence of the surrounding environment and its effect on the latter. In dealing with the phenomenon of post-traumatic growth Seligman makes almost the case that anybody, once provided with the right psychological endorsement, can not only overcome their personal difficulty but even gain a new sense of life (Seligman, 2011). Incidentally, this beg the question “What if someone’s level of well-being does not

improve despite the use of these so valuable instruments". It is possible to think that the weight of a failed happiness must be shouldered by the person himself. This is what Barbara Held defined The Tyranny of the Positive Attitude (Held, 2004). Although it is quite true that human mind has great capacity for adaptation, and the human spirit has great endurance, it is nonetheless a mistake to presume that most individuals can overcome adversity unscathed, or that external factors can be overcome by internal pirouettes of the mind. There is no question that some people, endowed with intelligence and empathy can, with appropriate supports, overcome adversity, but they remain a minority (Prilleltensky, Nelson, & Peirson, 2001). For the vast majority who face oppression and injustice, life becomes a constant struggle (Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2010), which is why it is so surprising that psychologists have not explored in depth yet the connection between fairness and wellness. Researchers studying subjective well-being rarely if ever invoke justice in their explanations. In most cases, culture, age, marriage, social support, unemployment, and adaptation figure prominently on the list of well-being predictors; justice, however, does not (e.g., Fredrickson 2009; Lyubomirsky 2008; Seligman 2002, 2011). This is not the case in other disciplines such as political economy (Sen 2009), and political philosophy (Nussbaum 2006), but in psychology and behavioural economics justice is conspicuously absent. (Prilleltensky, 2012).

However the Capabilities Approach has mainly been discussed within the economic field and political philosophy. When we try to apply the concept of capabilities to a well-being enhancement-aimed strategy we engage with methodological and theoretical issues (Zimmermann, 2006). Moreover, although the Capabilities Approach can serve as an important constituent for a theory of justice, as Sen (1995, p. 268; 2004a, p. 337) argues, this does not amount to a theory of justice. Sen stresses that a theory of justice must include both aggregative considerations as well as distributive ones, whereas the capability approach does not specify an aggregative principle. Moreover, a theory of justice also requires procedural components, such as the principle of non-discrimination, which the capability approach is not designed to deliver. (Robeyns, 2005).

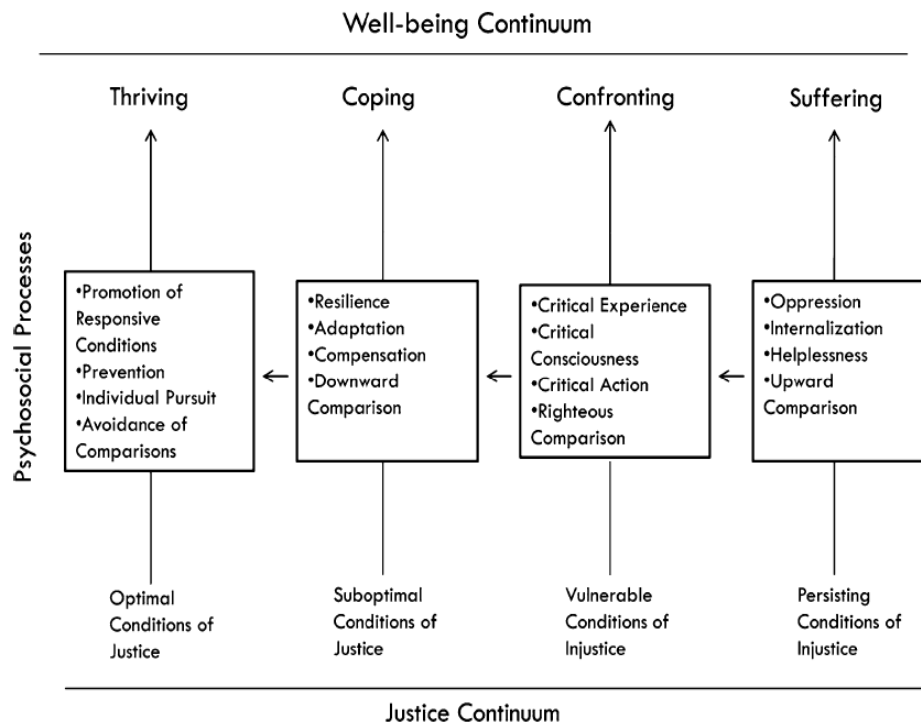
A good way to overcome these limits could be to refer again to Prilleltensky and, specifically, to his theory of justice. Paralleling to the afore-mentioned definition of well-being, Prilleltensky's approach to justice is also ecological. According to this author groups, organizations, communities and nations should be part of the scope of distributive and procedural justice. Thus, it is not sufficient to think about his or her due in the definition of distributive justice. We need to include their due, in the case of other human or animal groups, or its due in the case of institutions, nations, and the planet. We owe respect to people, animals, communities, and the earth. This leads us

to specific subtypes of justice. (Prilleltensky, 2012). This vision is particularly close to Martha Nussbaum's, who claimed more than once the importance to focus the Capabilities approach not only people, but to animal and the surrounding environment (Nussbaum, 2011).

Figure 3 depicts two continua: one of justice and one of well-being. From right to left, conditions of justice and wellness improve across both continua. Each one of the four points at the bottom is connected to a point at the top through a series of psychological and social dynamics. Different conditions of justice predispose different conditions of wellness. It is plain that in an Optimal Condition it is easier to thrive whereas in a Persisting Condition of Injustice it is more likely to experience oppression, and helplessness. This is not to say that people cannot activate their agency to transform conditions of injustice to conditions of justice and improved wellness. People can move from right to left, from suffering to thriving. Conditions

of justice predispose, but do not fatalistically determine wellness outcomes forever. Through a combination of collective agency and changing social and political circumstances, people move from oppression to liberation and thriving. (Prilleltensky, 2013). It is to see, looking at the picture, the sharp contrast between Prilleltensky's vision of well-being and Martin Seligman's flourish theory, only to give an example out of many. Perhaps it is no accident that Prilleltensky prefers to opt for the term thriving instead of flourishing.

**Fig. 3** Psychosocial processes mediating between conditions of justice and well-being states



In Sen's and Nussbaum's view, enhancing development means mainly to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of human thriving and, at the same time, to promote positive circumstance that enable people to do what they are able to do and to be.

However, removing obstacles and promoting positive circumstances it is not enough. We also need to prevent risks that might interfere with human development. As Amartya Sen claims in "Development as freedom" : "The challenge of development include both the elimination of persistent, endemic, deprivation and the prevention of sudden, severe destitution. (Sen...). In that sense, Community Psychology is very close to this vision since its concern in promoting well-being through preventing causes of discomfort to arise (Dalton et al, 2001, Prilleltensky, 2012)



#### 4. Sen-Naussbaum perspective in a wellbeing definition. The role on non profit sector

Sen's theory says that "life consists in a whole of functionings, characterized by states of being and states of doing". The relevant functionings can vary from the very elementary - such as not being deprived of food, being healthy, preventing morbidity and premature death - to more complex states such as being happy or being integrated in the social community<sup>1</sup>.

In his opinion, everyone implements functionings among those that are actually accessible to him and so he chooses the kind of life that he would like to live. The notion of capabilities is linked to the notion of functioning. The term of "capabilities" refers to "the capability of the individual to acquire subjectively valued functionings". Therefore, we can say that according to Sen and his school, functionings concretely acquired by a person represent a space's subset of available capabilities.

As far as the existence is concerned, do we have to value functionings or capabilities in equal opportunity's conditions? In Sen's opinion there's no doubt that we have to consider capabilities. In one of his essays, he talks about these problems, the Nobel Prize for Economy of 1977 fixes his attention in a case of two persons that suffer from hunger. The first because is indigent and he hasn't got the resources to buy food while the other although, having resources required to buy the food, he chooses to strike in order to defend his values because he thinks they are necessary or because they dictated by his religion. An assessment of the previous situation that focuses attention of functionings, leads to believe that the two agents are in the same situation, however an assessment that takes as a reference point the space of capabilities, considers that the situation of the first person is certainly worse.

Implications in policy terms are obvious. If there are scarce resources to be allocated, the economic policy should be not directed towards someone who has chosen not to eat, but to someone who is unable to do it, due to his space of functionings.

Naturally, it is not easy take information from people about their opportunities. In practice it is difficult to restore the agent's opportunities/potentials set considering methodological and applied problems that should be addressed and overcome: from a methodological point of view, it is important to take into account the role of cultural traditions to convert a potential functioning in a concrete functioning, then regarding to application problems for example which method to follow to determine in concrete the capabilities of people (as interviews, objective observation, etc...). It is also possible to use information derived from agents' subjective perception about the type of choices that would be possible to do, and the conditions in which they are satisfactory. The last type of data is easier to be collected, but create trouble, difficulties, as highlighted by Sen, to confuse objective and subjective perspective.

In Martha Nussbaum opinion, there are "capabilities" between Welfarism and Platonism point of view. Welfarism focus on an individual's perspective; the choice depends on individual preferences to renounce or not, to any "public" intervention: if a women accepts violations to their rights, the problem doesn't exist anymore. Platonism deduces from constructed categories such as "justice", the interventions to be carried

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. l'ampia bibliografia di SEN: SEN A., *Globalizzazione e libertà*, Mondadori, 2002; SEN A., *Lo sviluppo è libertà*, Mondadori 2000; SEN A., *La libertà individuale come impegno sociale*, Laterza, 1997; SEN A., *Identità e violenza*, Laterza, 2006; SEN A., *Il tenore di vita*, Marsilio, 1993; SEN A., *La povertà genera violenza?*, Il Sole 24 Ore, 2007; SEN A., *La democrazia degli altri*, Mondadori, 2004.

out, regardless of the preferences of individuals<sup>2</sup>. The writer focuses also on “informed wishes”. Her idea, at the beginning, is presented as a development of Sen’s, on how she finds mediation between Platonism and Welfarism that her idea becomes Senian, in the justification that she gives in terms of life satisfaction<sup>3</sup> within of rights violation situation that makes Senian the argument. The space of opportunities is reduced for people who accept violence, freedom privations and discrimination.

It is not easy to reconstruct those set for different agents because of methodological and practical problems that we have to overcome for defining an objective criteria in order to build the set of capability. So that we can utilize the subjective perception of the situation that agents reveal in affirmations about their satisfaction or the actual possibility to choose. As Sen emphasis in his recent essays, there is a relevant difference between the objective perspective of capability approach and the subjective point of view emphasised in the recent stream of literature on happiness, however the same Nobel Prize’s winner considers the exchange between those two schools in a positive way. According Sen theory of capabilities approach and Prilleltensky theory of wellbeing as justice and equity, it is interesting to understand if nonprofit organizations play a crucial game in expanding capabilities and improving quality of life of an individual (D’Isanto, Fuscaldo, Musella 2013).

The reason why investigate in such type of organizations is because these organizations are inspired by principles of democracy and equity.

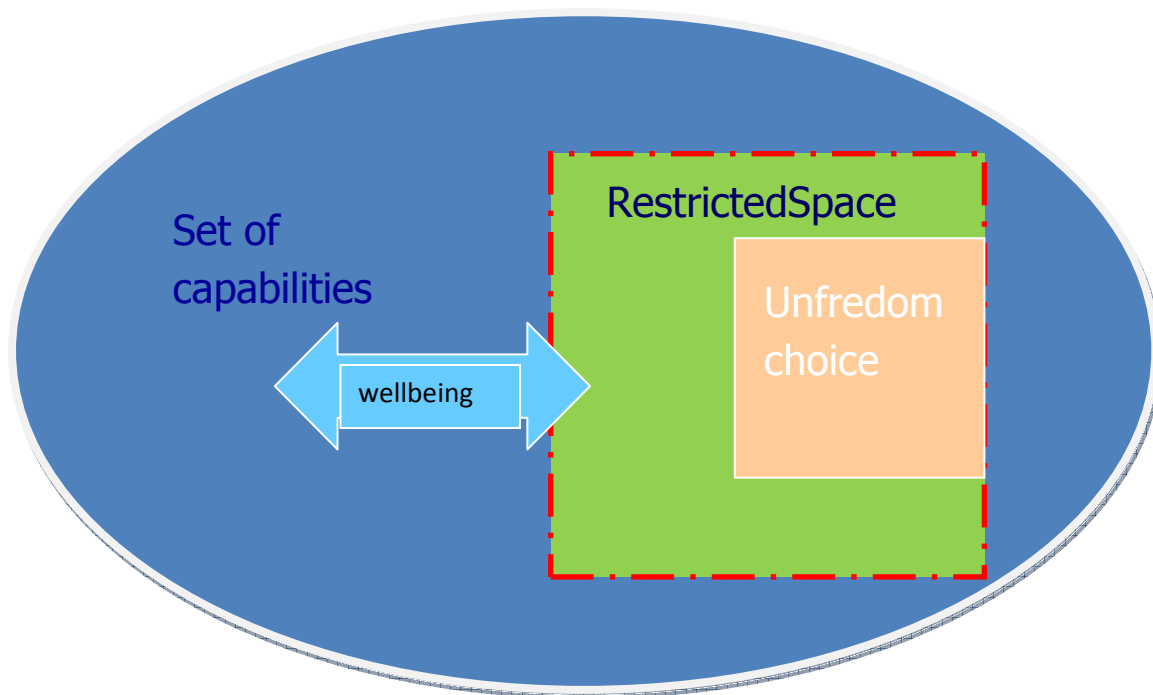
Furthermore the third sector organizations have long been associated with the provision of human services that contribute to well-being and the quality of life. In fact this role of the sector is a principal focus of what has long been the dominant economic theory of the third sector, which views the existence of this sector as resulting from a demand for services that neither the market nor government can provide due to inherent failures of these alternatives institutions- i.e., the “free rider” problem in the case of markets and the need for majority support in the case of governments (Hansmann, 1980; Weisbrod, 1977). This kind of impact has received new attention, however, as consequence of the recent Stiglitz report commissioned by French President Sarkozy (Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi, 2009). This report emphasized the need to “shift emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people’s well-being”, and called attention particularly to the role that third sector institutions play as providers of collective and individual service such as security, health, education, culture and recreation as well as civic engagement and social capital. But well-being involves more than concrete services. It also includes subjective factors, such as feeling of security, equity, sense of well-being, confidence, and a sense of belonging (Cummins, 2000), all of wich have also been associated with third sector organizations. Impact assessment related to well-being and life-quality must therefore be concerned with both of these dimensions.

The quality of life, applying as interpretative keys the teachings of Sen and Nussbaum, depends on freedom or not of the choices, and the space of capabilities affordable to an individual, and how much of choice for an individual is under freedom or not.

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<sup>2</sup> NUSSBAUM M. C., “Diventare persone. Donne e universalità dei diritti”, Il Mulino, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> NUSSBAUM, M. C. and AMARTIA S, eds., “The Quality of Life” Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993 Oaxaca, R. L., “Male-Female Wage Differentials in Urban Labor Markets”, *International Economic Review* 14(3): 693-709, 1973



This figure take into account the two hypothesis people can move in a blue space (with a wide set opportunities of choices) and people can move in a green space (restricted space of choice). Any kind of choice taken inside the restricted space is an unfreedom choice. The “wellbeing” can be defined as the agency ( the be active agent in aprocess) to move in the wide blue space in which is possible to make choice under freedom

According Senian perspective we should also evaluate the preferences of the economic agents, to examine the set of opportunity that different agents face towards. In other words, it would deal with the reconstruction of the all set of capabilities (in the sense of the all set of possible functioning among which he/she have to choose).

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