



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

Extending Capabilities Conception of the Individual in Economics: Relationality and Responsibility

Erasmus, Valentina

"The Economy of Francesco Academy" Research Fellow

27 June 2021

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/108487/>
MPRA Paper No. 108487, posted 04 Jul 2021 14:26 UTC

Extending Capabilities Conception of the Individual in Economics: Relationality and Responsibility

Valentina Erasmo¹

0. Abstract

This paper tries to extend the Capabilities Conception of the Individual developed by Davis (2003, 2009), understanding capabilities as relationships. Firstly, I will introduce the main concepts which are useful towards this extension, namely those of agency and capabilities. For this purpose, I will avail of Ricoeur (2004) analysis of Sen's earlier works. Thanks to his analysis, I will show how agency refers to a rational and responsible exercise of capabilities. After this introduction, I will develop the concept of capabilities as relationships, availing of the distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (Giovanola 2005, 2009): in this framework, self-scrutiny and relationality respectively become the leading capabilities of these two relationships. Since this extension of capabilities conception of individuals, two concepts arise with a certain strength, namely those of responsibility and relationality. In contrast, this extension of capabilities conception of individual in economics also in terms of interpersonal relationship emphasizes how this social conception of individual is characterized by relationality. This point is relevant because enables further extensions of Sen's works, for example, in civil economics.

KEYWORDS: agency; capabilities; responsibility; relationality; relationship (intrapersonal, interpersonal)

JEL CLASSIFICATIONS:

1. Introduction

¹ PhD in Ethics and Economics and History of Economic Thought, Università degli Studi G. d'Annunzio, Chieti-Pescara, Italy, valentina.erasmo@unich.it.

Acknowledgments- I would like to thank all those provided suggestions and comments on the previous versions of this paper: Luca Alici, John Brian Davis, Muriel Gilardone, Jimena Hurtado Prieto and Benoit Walraevens.

Complying to the general understanding of capability approach, this is a realistic framework for studying human life, in particular, individual welfare and social states. Sen's capability approach's core ideas are those of functioning and capability: the first refers to "an achievement of a person: "what he or she manages to do or to be" in his/her existence, as well as <<a part of the "state" of that person>>, but it ought "to be distinguished from the commodities which are used to achieve those functioning" (Sen, 1985a, p. 10). In contrast, the second is about "those beings and doings that constitute human life and that are central to our understandings of ourselves as human beings", like Robeyns (2017, p. 39) pointed out. More specifically, capabilities is the set of alternative functionings who individual owns which represents his/her concrete freedom to choose between different possible combinations of functionings in order to improve his/her well-being. Capability approach was born as an alternative perspective compared to those prevailing in philosophy and economics, like utilitarianism and Rawls's theory. Sen has mainly focused on "how to remove" those obstacles for the expansion of capabilities for the largest possible numbers of people at the aim to reduce inequalities in a certain community (Erasmio, 2019b). This similar purpose has undoubtedly a social value.

During these years, several have been the extensions of capability approach, like the works of Alkire (2002), Alkire and Foster (2011), Comim, Fennell and Anand (2018), Déneulin and McGregor (2010), Déneulin (2014), Gasper (2020), Kuklys (2004, 2005), Robeyns (2017), just to mention a few. Among these works, I would consider Davis (2003, 2009) conception of 'capabilities-based' individual. Quoting his words:

A capabilities conception of the individual is a social conception of the individual. In contrast, then, to how the preferences conception of the individual explains individuals atomistically apart from society, a capabilities conception of the individual explains them in terms of social relationships. (Davis, 2009, p. 414)

Differently from preferences-based conception of individual and his/her neglect of social dimension who characterizes, for example, mainstream homo economicus (Mahieu, 2016), a capabilities conception of individual becomes a *social conception of individual in economics*. The reason why I prefer to compare with Davis's capabilities conception of individual is that preferences-based one forgets to consider social elements concerning individual in economics. In turn, through the extension of Davis's capabilities conception of individual enables to reach two further concepts which are seminal in a social understanding of individuals in economics, like that of responsibility and relationality.

This paper tries to extend capabilities conception of individual, understanding capabilities as relationships. Firstly, I will introduce the concepts of agency and capabilities which are useful towards a similar extension. For this purpose, I will avail of Ricoeur (2004) analysis of Sen's earlier works which emphasized the importance of social capacities. Thanks to his analysis, I will show how agency refers to a rational and responsible exercise of capabilities. Then, I will develop the concept of capabilities as relationships, availing of the distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships (Giovanola 2005, 2009): in this framework, self-scrutiny and relationality respectively become the leading capabilities of these two relationships. Since this extension of capabilities conception of individuals, two concepts arise with a certain strength, those of responsibility and relationality.

The main result of this paper is that, through capabilities, responsibility acquires not only an ethical and moral but also an economic value, because they substitute economic preferences in decision-making. In contrast, this extension of capabilities conception of individual in economics also in terms of interpersonal relationship emphasizes how this social conception of individual is characterized by relationality. This point is relevant because enables further extensions of Sen's works, for example, in civil economics.

2. Agency and Capabilities

At the aim to extend this capabilities conception of individual, I am going to introduce the concepts of agency and capabilities through the analysis provided by Ricoeur (2004). The reason why I have considered this analysis is that Ricoeur deepened these concepts in order to speak about the most advanced form of social capacities. These latter are useful towards this extension of the capabilities conception of individual: social capacities are significant because of their social value.

In *The Course of Recognition*, Ricoeur emphasized the role of Sen's agency, focusing mainly on his earlier works (Sen 1982, 1985c, 1987). Differently from his contemporary mainstream homo economicus, where his agency is totally oriented to individual well-being, Sen points out how agency and well-being are distinct and not necessarily convergent to each other, although casually linked (Erasmus, 2019b). Sen's agency refers to that ability to form goals, commitments and values which could be "exercised at the individual level, or in groups, or through democratic participation" (Alkire, 2005, p. 219). This personal ability is defined by Davis (2009) "self-organizing" activity which derives from the idea that:

agent's action not only affects the world, but also affects the agent itself through feedback effects that specifically individualize the agent rather than dissipate its individuality. That is, the agent's nature includes a particular kind of homeostatic feedback response mechanism that processes feedback from the world in this individualizing sort of way (Davis, 2009, p. 416)

In contrast, well-being explains the quality of human life, namely "concerned with a person's achievement: how 'well' is his or her 'being' " (Sen, 1985a, p.5). Certainly, agency cannot be considered independent from individual success (understood as well-being) because they are intertwined. Quoting Sen:

a person may feel happier and better off as a result of achieving what we wanted to achieve-perhaps for his family, or his community, or his class, or his party, or some other cause. Also it is quite possible that a person's well-being will go down as a result of frustration if there is some failure to achieve

what he wanted to achieve as an agent, even though these achievements are directly concerned with his well-being (Sen, 1987, p. 43)

Since these characteristics, Ricoeur supported that the importance of Sen's agency is to assign a collective sense to individual capacities in order to become *social capacities*, such as those "claimed by collectivities and submitted to public evaluation and approval" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 134). Social capacities are extremely heterogeneous but share "the same anthropological ground, namely, the characterization of the human in general by the power to act, agency." (Ricoeur 2004, p. 135). According to Ricoeur and his philosophical perspective, the power to act which characterized Sen's agency has an anthropological value. In this regard, he was the first who advanced this hypothesis compared to Sen's thought². In contrast, their collective sense derives from Sen's distinction between agency and well-being which enables to consider further goals compared to the maximization of individual well-being.

Although his interesting reading of Sen's thought, Ricoeur had an important misunderstanding just when he was trying to analyse social capacities: " 'rights and capabilities' (or sometimes 'rights and agency'). This noteworthy conceptual pair will constitute the most fully developed form of social capacities discussed in this section. (Ricoeur 2004, pp. 134-135)." On the one hand, Ricoeur's reading of Sen's thought is useful towards a capabilities conception of individual in economics because points out that the couple rights/agency and rights/capabilities represent "the most developed form of social capacities" analysed in that Section of his essay; on the other, although this distinction is not straightforward, Ricoeur coupled rights/agency and rights/capabilities like they were interchangeable.

Before introducing the main concepts of this Section, an overview about Sen's understanding of rights is required: Sen developed his analysis of rights in what he defined

² For further analysis about an anthropological reading of Sen's works, see Erasmo (2020), Giovanola (2007, 2009) and Giovanola and Totaro (2008).

“goal rights system”. This latter is an alternative ethical approach compared to welfarist consequentialism and constraint-based theories³ but share with them some of their main characteristics: in this sense, goals rights system was born like a consequentialist approach compared to rights, emptied by its welfarist contents, thanks to the intrinsic value of rights, like deontological theories. Quoting Sen: “fulfilment and nonrealization of rights are included among the goals, incorporated in the evaluation of states of affairs, and then applied to the choice of actions through consequential links will be called a goal rights system.” (Sen, 1982, p. 15) In this system, rights have a double nature: on the one hand, they are means and ends for reducing socioeconomic inequalities and improving collective welfare; on the other, they are measures, evaluative tools, for state of affairs.

Goal rights system is closely related to capability approach. “If all goal rights takes the form of rights to certain capabilities, then a goal rights system may be conveniently called a capability rights system” (Sen, 1982, p. 16). This is straightforward that the capability approach acquires also an important ethical and moral value in goals rights system: in this regard, ‘wrong’ will be any deprivation of functionings, while ‘good’ will be any achieved functionings and the opportunity to translate them into capabilities.

About agency and capabilities, they have a different meaning although they are related to each other: as abovementioned, agency explains the power to act, choosing freely and rationally between different alternatives compared to person’s preferences and values. Capabilities express “those beings and doings that constitute human life and that are central to our understandings of ourselves as human beings” (Robeyns 2017, p. 39). I think this statement is very representative because explained well how capabilities enable to better

³ The distinction between welfarist consequentialism and constraint-based deontology dated back to the Fifties in Anglo-Saxon ethics: about the pairing of rights and goals, consequentialists favoured goals, such as the results (or consequences) of individual actions; whereas, deontological theories privileged motivations behind human actions. About the first, ‘good’ are those actions able to achieve analogous consequences, while the second defines ‘good’ those actions relating to the principle it refers to, for example, rights, always regardless to consequences (Cremaschi, 1996). Though this distinction risks to seem a little bit naive, I have decided to follow it anyway because it was the same adopted by Sen (1982).

understanding individuals as human beings which is seminal towards a capabilities conception of them.

For understanding the relationship between agency and capabilities, we need to introduce a third concept, namely freedom: according to Sen (1982), freedom might be negative and/or positive. About the first, this is the 'freedom from', such as the opportunity to behave (or not) without any external obstacle in order to achieve something. Negative freedom explains the influence of the environment on individuals. In contrast, the second equals with the 'freedom to', this represents the real opportunity to be or to do what individual prefers in his/her life. On similar grounds, positive freedom is more important than negative freedom in Sen's decision-making framework because self-determination is directly involved in these mechanisms. This is why Sen privileged positive freedom to negative freedom within his capability approach, although they both have an important role: in particular, capabilities are closer to the former, instead of the latter, because they refer to what an individual can concretely do or be in his/her existence (Sen, 1980). Thus, the impact of environment on individual choices is better represented through negative freedom, instead of positive freedom.

Finally, I emphasize individuals ought to have both positive and negative freedom for achieving capabilities; while agency is that anthropological ground which creates the conditions for exercising those freedoms 'to choice rationally and responsibly' through the abovementioned power to act which does not necessarily equal with the maximization of individual welfare. Considering them as a whole, agency refers to a rational and responsible exercise of capabilities, not to capabilities themselves. This exercise of capabilities is 'rational' because Sen (1977, 1985b) claimed that also motivations like sympathy and commitment⁴ are rational. Through these motivations, individual can make a decision

⁴ About the distinction between sympathy and commitment: "The former corresponds to the case in which the concern for others directly affects one's own welfare. If the knowledge of torture of others makes you sick, it is a case of sympathy; if it does not make you feel personally worse off, but you think it is wrong and you are ready to do something to stop it, it is a case of commitment." (Sen, 1977, p. 326). According to Sen, sympathy has mainly a psychological value: "when a person's sense of well-being is psychologically

different from his/her preferences ranking without being considered irrational like it would have been in the earlier formulation of mainstream homo economicus⁵. In turn, this exercise of capabilities is 'responsible' just because this is free. But I will deepen this responsibility arising in a capabilities conception of individuals in Section 4.

3. Intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships within capabilities conception of the individual

After this introduction of agency and capabilities, I will apply the ideas of "intrapersonal" and "interpersonal" relationships to Davis's capabilities conception of individual. But we have to proceed gradually. The distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships have already been introduced in the literature about Sen (Giovanola 2005, 2009): especially, the first refers to the identity relationship an individual may establish with himself/herself; in contrast, the second refers to the relationship an individual may establish with others. My understanding differs from hers because I apply this distinction to capabilities conception of individuals in economics, rather than introducing this distinction in an economic anthropology framework like hers. Since Davis's capabilities conception of individual and Giovanola's distinction between intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, Sen's capabilities may become a suitable tool to express that relationship an individual establishes with himself/herself (intrapersonal relationship) and with the others (interpersonal relationship). In this way, we may simultaneously include and extend Davis (2009) social reading of capabilities.

dependent on someone else's welfare, it is a case of sympathy" (Sen, 1977, p. 328). Sen considered sympathy an intermediate motivation between neoclassical selfish and unselfish altruism. In particular, this leads to the maximization of individual utility but disguised behind apparently unselfish preferences, leading to an improvement of individual well-being. In contrast, commitment is a very complex notion in Sen's thought. In a nutshell "one way of defining commitment is in terms of a person choosing an act that he believes will yield a lower level of personal welfare to him than an alternative that is also available to him." (Sen, 1977, p. 327) Commitment acquires mainly an ethical and political value because this is simultaneously a recognition of the injustice beneath certain behaviours and a sense of duty to stop this justice. Thus, it enables an exit from the one-sidedness which characterized sympathy.

⁵ The question about the different formulation of homo economicus is very complex: the notion to which I refer to in this essay is the same questioned by Sen in his earlier works between the Seventies and the Eighties.

When we talk about intrapersonal relationships, we refer to a relationship a person establishes with himself/herself that individuates a kind of *relais* between the three constitutive aspects of the self (self-centered welfare, self-welfare goal and self-goal choice) and a proper development of personal identity, through a deep activity of self-scrutiny, namely the fourth aspect of the self (Davis, 2007). This activity derives directly from the reflexive dimension of commitment: when commitment does not prevail, there is a breaking down compared to a proper development of personal identity, because there is a lack in terms of reflexivity. Thus, commitment is the leading motivation in this extension of capabilities conception of individual through intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship.

Introducing these three constitutive aspects of the self, Sen (1985b) argued how sympathy and commitment involve some distinct components of 'privateness' compared to the conception of individuals employed in standard economic theory (Davis, 2007). Thus, Sen distinguished "three different kinds of 'privateness' for an agents's preference ordering", such as "self-centered welfare, self-welfare goal and self-goal choice" (Hédoin, 2016, p. 6). According to self-centered welfare, "a person's welfare depends only on his or her own consumption" (Sen, 1985b, p. 347), while self-welfare goal claims how "a person's only goal is to maximize his or her own welfare, or-given uncertainty- the expected value of that welfare (and, in particular, it does not involve directly attaching importance to the welfare of others" (Sen, 1985b, p. 347); finally, self-goal choice implies that "each act of choice of a person is guided immediately by the pursuit of one's own goal (and, in particular, it is not restrained by the recognition of other people's pursuit of their goals" (Sen, 1985b, p. 347).

All these kind of privateness are independent to each other and may be mixed in different ways in individual behaviours. An exclusive self-interested and self-regarding individual could even satisfy all these criteria (Hédoin, 2016). More complex is to explain how these components of privateness might be changed by sympathy and commitment: for example, sympathy violates self-centered welfare, given that it refers to how individual

welfare is affected by others' positions. In contrast, commitment might contradict self-welfare goal of a "person acting to remove the misery of others from which he does not suffer himself" (Sen, 1985b, p. 347) and/or violate self-goal choice, since a self-imposed restriction on the pursuit of one's own goals (for example, a particular rules of conduct). A motivation like commitment is very interesting in a capabilities conception of individuals because this causes a primacy of actions over outcomes when choices according to a certain preferences ranking.

Self-scrutiny is the leading activity of intrapersonal relationship: in particular, self-scrutiny refers to that individual ability to reflect upon his/her own self and his/her life with others (Kant, 1798) which characterized human beings only. I argue how this ability is simultaneously a typical human "capability", since other creatures are not able to reflect upon what they desire to do or to be in their lives (Mahieu, 2016). In particular, self-scrutinizing activity would have been considered irrational in mainstream homo economicus perspective, not for the activity itself, rather for its consequences. This disagreement derives from commitment which drives individuals to make consciously decisions different from their preferences ranking, considering others goals and choices until to worsening their own individual well-being. This latter behaviour is line with capabilities conception of individual, while it would have been considered irrational in a preference-based perspective like that of mainstream homo economicus.

Deepening the differences between these two different conceptions of individuals, I think is useful to avail of three different categories, namely that of subjectivity, privateness and extra-personal impact on individual decisions: as Davis (2007) emphasized, subjectivity and privateness appears to be in a positive correlation. In self-centered welfare, this couple is strongly related because individuals take into account of their own satisfaction only, being moved by sympathy (Sen, 1985b). When self-centered welfare dominates, people behave atomistically in their intrapersonal relationship, avoiding the influences deriving from extra-personal environment in their decision-making (Davis, 2009).

Differently from mainstream homo economicus and his preference-based perspective, a capabilities conception of individual enables to continuously change his/her motivations without losing his/her rationality. Subjectivity and privateness might be both erased by commitment through the violation of self-welfare goal and/or self-goal choices. Being based on an agency which refers to a rational and responsible exercise of capabilities, a capabilities conception of individuals recognize also others goals and/or choices which are often different from ours.

In turn, when commitment violates self-welfare choice and/or self-goal choice, individuals rediscover extra-personal environment impact on their decision making. Differently from privateness, subjectivity and the extra-personal environment impact on decision making are negative correlated: when privateness is maximum, like in self-centered welfare, there are no external influence deriving from others, being independent from this kind of consideration (Davis, 2007). In contrast, self-welfare goal and self-welfare choice take into account of others' subjective states. In those cases, privateness is erased. In line with Davis (2007), I agree how subjectivity is positively correlated with privateness but negatively correlated with extra-personal environment impact on decision making.

Analysing interpersonal relationships, we refer to a relationship a person establishes directly with others, rather than their goals and/or choices in his/her intrapersonal "reflexive space". However, there is a strong link between these two relationships. When self-interest prevails in intrapersonal relationship, interpersonal relationships acquire mainly an "instrumental value" and are oriented to the maximization of individual welfare, avoiding cooperative and altruistic behaviours. In contrast, when commitment prevails in intrapersonal relationship, interpersonal relationships works: on the one hand, for enriching and building both personal and social identity (while intrapersonal relationship enriches personal identity only); on the other, for establishing intersubjectivity in social interactions.

About the first, the building of personal-social identity is a never-ending process in Sen: Giovanola (2009) defined this process 'anthropological richness'. In her view, this also becomes a normative criterion for understanding social interactions deriving from commitment. I think this element could also be useful for further development of this conception in ethical and sociological studies⁶. In contrast, about the second, it is progressively emerging how the logics of possession, understood as simple research of means for goals, is unsatisfactory for explaining those needs linked to human identity: these may be satisfied thanks to that sociality that everyone establishes with others.

Through commitment, individual simultaneously establishes intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. All these refer to an intersubjective relation: capabilities become that space where social interactions can be understood as reciprocity where individual self and others are equally involved. This perspective emphasizes the value of relationality in economics, remembering that an economic agent can safeguard his/her nature of Aristotelian *zoon politikon*. If self-scrutiny is the leading capability of intrapersonal relationship, relationality is that of interpersonal relationships: this nature becomes extremely evident in those economic behaviours complying to commitment where individuals abandon their subjectivity and privateness in favour of the regaining of public dimension of human existence. In particular, those interpersonal relationships inspired by commitment are different from simple instrumental relationships, enabling a full rational and responsible exercise of capabilities. Substituting a preferences-based conception of individual with a capabilities-based one means recognizing these needs in economic agents which are, firstly, human beings. But I will better explain relationality in the following Section.

4. Extending Capabilities Conception of Individual in Economics: responsibility and relationality

⁶ Among the most recent and important studies about Sen's social perspective, see Gasper (2020).

This extension of capabilities conception of individuals brings into light two concepts, those of responsibility and relationality since a social conception of individuals. How is this possible? About the first, I would suggest a hypothesis since Ricoeur's reading: "capabilities further extend responsibility in agency". As abovementioned, Sen's agency takes into account of others' goals and choices in his/her decision-making since economic behaviours inspired by commitment. This still makes economic agents attributable of responsibility. Furthermore, Crocker and Robeyns (2009) argued that the distinction between agency and well-being is another element for economic agent responsibility in decision-making. This responsibility derives from the freedom to choose about goals and choices through the consideration of those of others, adopting behaviours opposite to the maximization of his/her individual well-being.

Through capabilities, not only acquires responsibility an ethical and moral but also an economic value, because they substitute economic preferences in decision-making. This phenomenon might be explained through the substitution of a preference-based conception of individuals with a capabilities-based/social one. In this way, capabilities become what an individual can do or be in his/her existence considering others' goals and choices in his/her social interactions. At the same time, capabilities enable to represent and justify how individual's decision making realizes since the representation of his/her intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. This is the maximum expression of this social conception of individual.

For better representing this economic extension of responsibility, I would compare two mythological figures, namely those of Ulysses and Orpheus: the first might be associated to preference-based individual, while the latter to a capabilities-based individual. As Elster (1979) emphasized, Ulysses is an interesting example of strict economic rationality, like that characterized mainstream homo economicus. Ulysses was conflicted between the desire to hear the Sirens' song but was aware of the consequences. According to Circe's advice, Ulysses decided to tie himself to the pole, ordering his men to wear caps for not listening to

Sirens' song⁷. In this way, Ulysses made a self-interested rational choice for maximizing his individual well-being. But he did not mind about the arising inequalities deriving from his behaviour: considering only his preferences, Ulysses is the only one who can hear that beautiful song. This is a typical atomistic behaviour which derives from a preferences-based conception of the individual where this latter is apart from the society, like Ulysses and his men.

A capabilities conception of individual might be represented through the figure of Orpheus: differently from Ulysses, Giasone decided to not listen to the Argonauts, embarking Orpheus alone (Zamagni, 2015). This latter is responsible enough to face the Sirens and cancel their song with his music only. Orpheus achieves the same goal of Ulysses, although the first did not lead to an improvement of his individual well-being like the second. In turn, Orpheus faced a significant risk but his expedition was successful and he did not have a worsening of his individual well-being since this decision. This is why Orpheus embodies a typical social individual who assigns a collective sense to his individual capacities, providing his ability to play lyre to his community. In this way, this ability becomes a social capability: Orpheus offers to his community his ability to do something, e.g. playing lyre in order to improve collective well-being. In his risky behaviour, Orpheus's subjectivity and privateness are erased because self-welfare goal and self-goal choices are violated by his decision to face the Sirens alone for his community.

Always about relationality, Sen has influenced the rising attention to relational goods in economics⁸ during the Eighties, especially the works of Nussbaum (1986) and Donati (1983). According to a capabilities conception of individuals, relational goods would be produced through interpersonal relationships because relationality is their leading activity. Especially, not only are interpersonal relationships characterized by identity, but also by reciprocity, simultaneity, intrinsic motivation and emerging fact (Bruni, 2006). For talking

⁷ For deepening pre-commitment strategies, see Davis (2003).

⁸ For a more complete overview of relational goods, considering also positionality, see Fiorito and Vatiello (2013).

about “relational good”, we need to know the identity of others involved, while reciprocity is the value which shows how this relationship is realized. In particular, reciprocity is characterized by the absence of a good (in the strict sense of the word) and for the dialogue between the two parts. Simultaneity refers to synchronicity through which this good is consumed and produced which differs from that of market goods: indeed, relational goods are simultaneously produced and consumed (even better, availing of Bruni (2006) enlightening distinction, we might say that these goods are pro-sumed by interacting subjects). There is an interesting positive relationship between the value of relational goods and their usage, where in case of no usage, they lose also their value. About intrinsic motivation, this explains how this kind of trade represents the utility of reciprocity. Both intrinsic motivation and this kind of utility are exclusive of relational goods, becoming an emerging fact, because not instrumental, creating a relational good.

It is fundamental to emphasize how relational goods may be created also next to instrumental relationships, thanks to the emergence of a non-economic utility next to this latter (Erasmio, 2019a). This social dimension is lost in mainstream homo economicus who is mainly interested to the production and consumption of trading goods: the exchange of goods and services is the only trade he/she recognizes as useful.

I would conclude this analysis providing an example for better understanding the difference between simply instrumental relationships and relational goods, such as the interaction between a student and a teacher, where it may assist to a double dynamics (Erasmio, 2019a). According to the logics of economics of knowledge, this interaction is a simple socioeconomic relationship, where there is a transfer of knowledge from teacher to student and the learning process is a reproduction of knowledge (Foray, 2000). In this example, the teacher is paid for this service, while the student (or his/her family) pays taxes for this service. In turn, this transfer of knowledge has a usability in job market. In addition to this instrumental relationship, the abovementioned emerging fact is that the teacher-student relationship does not end with a transfer of knowledge: there may be reciprocity

between them, based on values like confidence which go beyond the economic dimension of this relationship. Finally, a relational good does not erase the asymmetry of their respective roles but leads to rediscovery of what they have in common as human beings, enriching the socioeconomic relationship, thanks to a non-economic utility.

5. Conclusions

The main result of this paper is that, through capabilities, not only acquires responsibility an ethical and moral value but an economic value, because they substitute economic preferences in decision-making. In contrast, this extension of capabilities conception of individual in economics also in terms of interpersonal relationship emphasizes how this social conception of individual is characterized by relationality. This point is relevant because enables further extensions of Sen's works, for example, in civil economics.

References

Alkire S. 2002. *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Alkire, Sabrina. 2005. "Subjective Quantitative Studies in Human Agency", *Social Indicators Research*, 74: 217- 260.

Alkire S. and Foster J. (2011), *Counting and multidimensional poverty measurement*, "Journal of Public Economics", 95, 7-8: 476-487.

Bruni, Luigino. 2006. *Reciprocità*. Milano: Bruno Mondadori.

Comim F., Fennell S. and Anand P. B. 2018. *New Frontiers of the Capability Approach*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cremaschi, Sergio. 1996. "Consequenzialismo e deontologismo." *Enciclopedia della Filosofia e delle Scienze Umane*.

- Crocker, David and Ingrid Robeyns, 2009. "Capability and Agency", In Christopher Morris, ed., *Amartya Sen. Contemporary Philosophy in Focus*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 60-90.
- Davis, John Brian. 2003. *The Theory of Individual in Economics. Identity and Value*, London & New York: Routledge.
- Davis, John Brian. 2007. "Identity and Commitment: Sen's Fourth Aspect of the Self" In Fabienne Peter and Hans Bernhard, eds., *Rationality and Commitment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: 313-335.
- Davis, John Brian. 2009. "The Capabilities Conception of the Individual", *Review of Social Economy*, LXVII (4): 413-429.
- Déneulin S. and McGregor JA. 2010. "The capability approach and the politics of a social conception of well-being", *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13 (4): 501-519.
- Déneulin S. 2014. *Well-being, justice and development ethics*, Routledge, London.
- Donati, Pierpaolo. 1983. *Introduzione alla sociologia relazionale*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Elster, Jon. 1979. *Ulysses and the Sirens: studies in Rationality and Irrationality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Erasmus, Valentina. 2019a. "Beni relazionali e impresa editoriale." *Società Italiana Filosofia Politica*: 1-13. <http://www.sifp.it/pdf/1%20beni%20relazionali%20e%20l'impresa%20editoriale.pdf>.
- Erasmus, Valentina. 2019b. "Homo Capabilitiensis. Un paradigma antropologico per il futuro ispirato alla riflessione di Amartya Sen" In Luigi Alici and Francesco Miano, eds., *Etica e futuro*, 455-464, Salerno: Orthotes, pp. 455-464.

Fiorito, Luca and Massimiliano Vatiere. 2013. "A Joint Reading of Positional and Relational Goods", *Economia Politica*, 1: 87-96. <https://www.rivisteweb.it/doi/10.1428/73101>.

Foray, Dominique. 2000. *L'économie de la connaissance*. Paris :Edition La DECOUVERTE.

Gasper Des. 2020. *Amartya Sen, social theorizing and contemporary India*, International Institute of Social Sciences, Working Paper, n. 658.

Giovanola, Benedetta. 2007. "La 'svolta antropologica' tra etica ed economia. Identità e relazionalità a partire da Amartya Sen." In Antonio Da Re, ed., *Etica e forme di vita*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero, pp. 221-229.

Giovanola, Benedetta and Francesco Totaro. 2008. "Razionalità etica, razionalità economica e ricchezza antropologica" In Benedetta Giovanola and Francesco Totaro, eds., *Etica ed Economia: il rapporto possibile*, Padova: Editore Messaggero, pp. 165-201.

Giovanola, Benedetta. 2009. "Re-Thinking the Anthropological and Ethical Foundation of Economics and Business: Human Richness and Capabilities Enhancement", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88: 431-444.

Hédoin, Cyril. 2016. "Sen's criticism of revealed preference theory and its 'neo-samuelsonian critique': a methodological and theoretical assessment", *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 23 (4): 349-373.

Kant, Immanuel. 1798. *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique*. Paris : Garnier-Flammarion.

Kuklys W. (2004), *Measuring Standard of Living in the UK - An Application of Sen's Functioning Approach Using Structural Equation Models*, [Measuring Standard of Living in the UK - An Application of Sen's Functioning Approach Using Structural Equation Models | Semantic Scholar](#)

Kuklys W. (2005), *Amartya Sen's Capability Approach: Theoretical Insights and Empirical Applications*, Springer, Berlin.

Mahieu, François-Régis. 2016. *Une Anthropologie Économique*. Paris :L'Harmattan.

Nussbaum, Martha. 1986. *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ricoeur, Paul. 2004. *The Course of Recognition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Robeyns I. (2017), *Well-being, Freedom and Social Justice: the Capability Approach Re-examined*, Open-book Publishers.

Sen, Amartya. 1977. "Rational Fools: A Critique of the Behavioural Foundations of Economic Theory." *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 6 (4): 317-344.

Sen, Amartya. 1980. "Equality of What?." *The Tanner Lecture on Human Values*, 1: 195-220, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sen, Amartya. 1982. "Rights and Agency." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 11 (1): 3-39.

Sen, Amartya. 1985a. *Commodities and Capabilities*. Amsterdam: North Holland.

Sen, Amartya. 1985b. "Goals, Commitment and Identity." *Journal of Law, Economics & Organization* 1 (2): 341-355.

Sen, Amartya. 1985c. "Rights and Capabilities", in Ted Honderich, ed., *Morality and Objectivity*, London: Routledge, pp. 130-148.

Sen, Amartya. 1987. *On Ethics and Economics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Zamagni S. (2015), *Beni comuni e economia civile*, "Beni comuni e cooperazione", Le Giornate di Bertinoro, 2015, pp 1-29