What can the capabilities approach add to policy analysis in high-income countries?

Richard Brunner and Nick Watson

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1. Introduction

The overarching purpose of WWS is *to use evidence to transform public services for all of Scotland's communities to flourish*. We seek to do this by bringing together evidence on the effectiveness of interventions and evaluating their ability to promote local change, both in Scotland and beyond, adopting a cross-disciplinary and action-oriented approach. The aim of the WWS Capabilities and Outcomes Workstream is to utilise the capabilities approach, originally developed by Amartya Sen, as a conceptual framework to assess what communities want from their public services, and to evaluate the role and function of public services in promoting and safeguarding people's wellbeing and social justice.

This initial document sets out our early thinking on this element of the WWS Program and explains why and how Capabilities is a useful approach to evaluate public service reform in Scotland. After a brief overview of context, the capabilities approach is explained, including its advantages over competing approaches to evaluation of social justice. We then show how Capabilities conceptually maps onto the four principles of the Christie Commission (2011). The paper then identifies four methodologies of capabilities assessment of policy in high-income countries, analysing two case studies for each, empirically demonstrating the compatibility of these with the Christie principles. The conclusion crystallises the distinctive contribution made by Capabilities to policy evaluation as demonstrated in the paper.

This paper will demonstrate not only how the capabilities approach can help further the Scottish Approach to Public Service Delivery but also when we say 'what works', the bases on which we are evaluating this.

2. Context: public service reform and What Works Scotland

Scotland faces a number of challenges in the years ahead including how it is going to respond to demographic changes (Appleby, 2013), economic and fiscal challenges (IBR, 2010, 2.23) and what the Christie Commission termed endemic long-term 'wicked issues' (Christie, 2011). Included in the latter are widespread inequalities in terms of income, employment, health, learning, and public safety. Inequalities in these areas are far wider in Scotland than in many other European states (Mair et. al., 2011). The failure of public services to meet and to tackle these challenges has led to recognition that there is an urgent need to reform public services. In response to this call the Scottish Government-commissioned Christie Report (2011, p.72) recommended that the key objectives of public service reform must be as follows:

- **public services are built around people and communities**, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience;

- public service organisations **work together effectively to achieve outcomes** – specifically, by delivering integrated services which help to secure improvements in the quality of life, and the social and economic wellbeing, of the people and communities of Scotland;

- public service organisations **prioritise prevention, reduce inequalities and promote equality**; and

- all public services constantly seek to **improve performance** and reduce costs, and are open, transparent and accountable.

The Christie report acted as a "call to arms" and a consensus has now emerged in Scotland recognising that public services ought to be delivered differently in the future. This developing Scottish Approach to Public Service Delivery is evolving and places a strong importance on partnership working, with a focus on asset-based approaches and co-production underpinned by improvement.

However these approaches are techniques and describe ways of working, and whilst useful do not offer a framework that enables both a way of thinking about social justice and equality combined with a practical metric for assessing the position of individuals and communities. The capabilities approach combines both a methodology with a metric for justice, allowing us to explore the question "what should we look at, when evaluating whether one state of affairs is more or less just than another?" (Robeyns and Brighouse, 2010, p.1)

3. What is the capabilities approach?

Conceived by an economist (Amartya Sen) and a philosopher (Martha Nussbaum), the capabilities approach is an explicitly normative philosophy with the aim of increasing social justice for oppressed groups (Sayer, 2009; Sen, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). Sen originally developed the concept of Capabilities to counter what he saw as an over-reliance on reductionist, top down, economic evaluations, and the subjectivist utilitarian basis of much traditional development research and welfare economics (Sen, 1992; 1999; 2002). Instead of focusing on resources such as income, wealth or legal rights, Capabilities seeks to replace this with an emphasis on understanding on what people *are actually able to do and be* through what Sen terms functionings and capabilities.

The capabilities approach is an exceptional philosophy in that it has been operationalised to engage "abstract concepts of human well-being and development with the values and experiences of the poor" (Clark, 2005, p.8). It is theoretically illuminating and compatible with notions of human flourishing, also central to the work of WWS. Perhaps most importantly, it is politically practical (Sayer, 2011). The ideas behind it underpin the work of a variety of organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme and have been applied to a range of different activities including education, equality, employment

initiatives, economic development, child development and policy development (Deneulin et al., 2006, Kuklys Robyns, 2004). For Orton (2011, p.358), Capabilities has the ability to offer:

> an alternative conceptualization of the *very purpose of public policy* … [It] is best thought of not as offering a detailed road map for policy, but as providing fundamental principles that guide policy development. (our emphasis)

Capabilities is different from other dominant approaches to evaluating social justice. The approach is participative, deliberative and democratic. By assuming a role for public services in intervening to support the achievement of threshold domains and social justice, it achieves an analysis beyond **neoliberal** 'equality within the market', and **human capital** or supply-side understandings which focus analysis on personal attributes such as skills or qualifications only. Its focus on social justice distinguishes it from **positivist** analyses that measure without further purpose.

Nussbaum (2011, ch.3) argues that capabilities is a "necessary counter-theory" (2011, p.46) to the GDP approach, the utilitarian approach, resource-based approaches and human rights approaches. **GDP**, whilst transparent, overlooks distribution and therefore inequalities within areas, and misses aspects of quality of life that do not correlate with economic growth such as education, bodily security, political rights, environmental quality and leisure time (Nussbaum, 2011). **Utilitarian** approaches (e.g. Layard's happiness agenda, Sen, 2009, pp.273-275), whilst highlighting subjective perceptions, risk overlooking complexities and contradictions in human life; do not take account of adaptive preferences which can reinforce injustice; and misses the point for Capabilities of understanding what people actually do and can choose to do. **Resource-based approaches**, "an egalitarian version of the GDP approach" (Nussbaum, 2011, p.57) whilst focusing on the equal distribution of resources, overlook human diversity and different needs for resources to achieve similar functionings (e.g. a pregnant woman's need for nutrition); thus achieving equal GDP per capita will not represent equality. Resource-based measures also struggle to account for activity outside the market economy such as caring or parenting, which can often be a gendered issue (Robeyns, 2003, p.66). A focus on income does not resolve issues such as disrespect, discrimination and exclusion based on identity, and misses important aspects of freedom such as religious freedom and freedom of speech and association, all of which are of concern to public policy (Nussbaum, 2011). **Human rights approaches** share a lot in common with capabilities and Sen has argued that rights should be a central goal of public policy. Both capabilities and human rights approaches focus on the idea that all people have core entitlements which it is the duty of societies to uphold. Capabilities however differ from human rights approaches which focus on negative freedoms in that it has a clear focus on positive freedoms and the duty of the state to protect and enhance these (Nussbaum, 2003 p.36). Further, the Capabilities focus on what people can do and be includes the private sphere and the private sector, overcoming feminist critiques of the

human rights tradition and gender critiques of evaluations based on household income (Nussbaum, 2003, p.39, Robeyns, 2003, p.65).

In a capabilities understanding of social justice, the concepts of capabilities and functionings are fundamental. Functionings refer to states of the person or community, what they are able to do and what they are; things such as literacy, health, mobility, and the ability to appear in public without shame (Anderson, 2010). Capabilities, on the other hand, are real freedoms or opportunities to achieve functionings. They are the set of things that people can do and can be. So, for example *moving* would be a functioning and capabilities would describe *the opportunity for movement* (Robeyns, 2011). Functionings are therefore a subset of the capability set.

Capabilities focuses on what people *are actually able to do and be* and contrasts with other approaches to evaluation in which the emphasis tends to be on what people *possess or do not possess, have done, or how they feel*. In Capabilities, wellbeing is evaluated in terms of *how people are able to live* and it enables an analysis of the "actual opportunities a person has" for example in health, in education or in community engagement (Sen, 2009, p.253). For these reasons it fits well with Scotland's assets-based approach to public service reform and community planning.

Whilst not being exclusively about equality, Venkatapuram (2009, p.413) notes that it would be "antithetical … if the concept of capability was used but then aspects of equity were disregarded or violated." Capabilities assumes that theories of equality must reflect the reality of the social world as it is actually experienced by people.[1] So, unlike other dominant approaches to evaluating justice, it distinctively assumes that the social world incorporates diverse people, with different levels of power, efficiency and interests. Capabilities highlights that people differ in their ability to convert income and commodities into valuable achievements; so a disabled person may require additional resources to move equally compared to a non-disabled person (a wheelchair, ramp, lifts, human support); a pregnant woman or a manual labourer have typically greater nutritional requirements than others. But some groups may also struggle to earn an equal income to others, facing a double disadvantage in achieving social justice. So resources matter absolutely to social justice in a Capabilities analysis, since the evidence suggests that "… inadequate income is a strong predisposing condition for an impoverished life" (Sen, 1999, p.87). However, by looking at ends (lives lived) and not only means (e.g. distribution of income), Capabilities is focused on

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[1] Burchardt & Vizard (2007, p.3) suggest a capability-based definition of equality: "An equal society protects and promotes equality of valuable capabilities – the central and important things that people are able to do and to be – so that everyone has the substantive freedom to live in ways that they value and choose… An equal society recognises the diverse needs, situations and goals of individuals, and seeks to expand their capabilities by removing discrimination and prejudice and tackling the economic, political, legal, social and physical conditions that constrain people's achievements and limit their substantive freedom."

actual social justice outcomes, compatible with public policy reform in Scotland at multiple levels.

Capabilities also acknowledges that the constituent elements of a "good life" may (or may not) vary across individuals and cultures. Reflecting this, the approach has an integral focus on agency, that is an individual's ability to choose and to act, to be autonomous and to make decisions on their terms and that they value towards a purposeful, goal directed activity; and also on diversity and difference. This latter concept refers not only to the protected characteristics of disability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, sexuality, belief and age but also characteristics such as social class and poverty, literacy, parental status, rurality and first language. Agency is synonymous with valued freedoms; that is the freedom to be educated, to self-expression, to association and so on, and also involves concepts such as participation, democratic participation and empowerment. The relationship between agency and difference are symbiotic. The inclusion of agency and diversity within capabilities makes for a more accurate rendering of a complex world of different tastes and values. However, this makes it challenging to compare social justice outcomes simply and fully across individuals and groups. Capabilities employs three further concepts that are applicable to analysis of public services and their role in enabling wellbeing and flourishing and securing socially just outcomes: Central Human Capabilities or domains; participation; and Conversion Factors.

Central Human Capabilities: Sen has always refused to name or list what he sees as the most central human capabilities, in contrast Nussbaum has argued for a:

> … threshold level of each capability, beneath which it is held that truly human functioning is not available to citizens; the social goal should be understood in terms of getting citizens above this capability threshold. (2006, p.71)

Thus she has developed a philosophically derived:

> … attempt to justify a list of ten capabilities as central requirements of a life with dignity… all are held to be a part of a minimum account of social justice: a society that does not guarantee these to all its citizens, at some appropriate threshold level, falls short of being a fully just society. (2006, p.75)

This overcomes concerns that Capabilities is overly libertarian in terms of agency and freedom, and overly utilitarian in evaluating justice by what people can do and be (Nussbaum, 2003). In 2006 Nussbaum listed her "current version" of ten 'Central Human Capabilities', or domains, as:

1.   Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length;

2.   Bodily Health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health;

3.   Bodily Integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place;

4.   Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine,   think, and reason;

5.   Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves;

6.   Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life;

7.   Affiliation. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others;

8.   Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature;

9.   Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities;

10.   Control over One's Environment. Political and material. (p.76)

It is notable that these domains include dimensions of life that are important to humans, such as emotions, senses, other species and play, but which are beyond analysis using resource-based or formal human rights frameworks, demonstrating the capaciousness of Capabilities. Nussbaum argues that the central capabilities are "the ones that a minimally just society will endeavour to nurture and support" (2011, p.28). They are not instrumental but have a value in and of themselves and are part of a well lived life and without them we cannot properly flourish. They are therefore not trade-offs: "all need to be secured and protected" (2011, p.35), but all are not equal in a simple way. For example for Nussbaum the capabilities of affiliation and practical reason play an "architectonic role: they organize and pervade the others" (2011, p.39). The question of equality above these domain thresholds is an issue that sociological evidence, led by Marmot (2010) and Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), has suggested cannot simply be ignored in order to achieve social justice, an issue left open by Nussbaum's concern for the threshold levels of domain. Similarly, Venkatapuram (2011) has argued that Capabilities can underplay the role of social determinants of health in explaining the patterning of social justice.

Participation: Participation, deliberation and public involvement are central to capabilities and Nussbaum has consistently argued that the list she has presented needs to be further specified within each society through public discussion (e.g. 2006, p.75), echoing Sen's call for public reasoning and participation in defining capabilities. Sen has argued that groups and individuals must themselves be actively involved in judging what are substantive and

valued capabilities: "'choosing' itself can be seen as a valuable functioning" (1999, p.76). This participatory dimension is a methodological and ethical commonality for both, concurring with participatory principles from the Christie Commission, the Scottish model of development, Participatory Budgeting, co-production, and asset-based approaches.

Conversion Factors: What Sen has called Conversion Factors are crucial to Capabilities. Conversion factors can be personal, social or structural (Brunner, 2015). Personal Conversion Factors are the resources we each hold (micro) such as our gender, literacy, education, physical condition and income. Structural Conversion Factors refer to the macro-level forces that shape social justice outcomes - the structure of capitalism, dominant social and cultural norms about what kinds of lives are socially valued, social determinants of health and so on. Social Conversion Factors are the meso-level organisations and agencies such as public services (education, health, transport, economic development, social services, tax and benefits system, minimum and living wages, policing, laws etc.), third sector organisations and private sector bodies.

Conversion Factors at all three levels may act positively or negatively, either constraining or enhancing the likelihood of individuals and communities experiencing social justice. If public services and the third sector are to work as they are intended they should be positive social Conversion Factors, supporting those with least personal resources to convert those resources into socially just outcomes (cf. Le Grand on health services and class; Steven Ball on education and class). The private sector can work both as a positive or a negative social Conversion Factor. For example through the generation of economic wealth it can aid the achievement of threshold domains, acting as a positive social Conversion Factor. Conversely it can reproduce social injustice in who it values, who it employs and who and how it chooses to reward those it employs. These two faces of the private sector as a social Conversion Factor will be influenced in turn by positive social Conversion Factors from the state at its various levels acting to enhance social justice (e.g. equal opportunities laws, subsidies for employing less profitable people, tax credits and so on).

There are clearly strong links that can be drawn here between Capabilities and asset or strength based approaches. The key difference however are the possibilities afforded by a capabilities approach to link a commodity, a good or an asset to a functioning or capability. Assets only gain meaning for social justice when they are transformed into a functioning or open up a wider capability set, impacting on what people can actually do and be. It is the ability to focus on this conversion that makes Capabilities such a potentially useful theory. Capabilities allows exploration of how assets are used and what it is – the Conversion Factors - that enable or constrain their use. The concept of social Conversion Factors gives a key role to public services and the third sector in supporting people to turn their resources into better social justice outcomes.

The capabilities approach is, then, an explicitly normative philosophy, aiming to increase social justice for oppressed groups (Sen, 2009; Nussbaum, 2011). By evaluating how people

are actually able to live, what they can actually do and be, capabilities develops an objectivist account (Sayer, 2011, pp.233-234), yet incorporating resources and also some dimensions of subjectivity. It pulls analysis away from market system-focused analyses, avoids interpreting humans as being 'rational agents', and reminds us what we want our public services to achieve: real social justice outcomes for people. The assets that a person or social group have are only the start of evaluation of the evidence to transform public services for all of Scotland's communities to flourish.

Having broadly outlined the capabilities approach this paper now moves on to apply it to the Scottish approach to public service reform and in particular the ideas developed by the Christie Commission (2011),

4. How does Capabilities map onto the Christie principles?

In terms of applicability to the Christie Commission (2011), the key objectives of public service reform are as below, with capabilities concepts mapped on:

Christie Commission principle	Capabilities interpretation
Public services are built around people and communities, their needs, aspirations, capacities and skills, and work to build up their autonomy and resilience.	**Capabilities** has a focus on achieving social justice above a threshold, recognising peoples' agency and diversity. It therefore evaluates not only what people do but what substantive alternatives people can achieve. Participation in defining social justice goals by those experiencing social injustice is inherent.
Public service organisations **work together effectively to achieve outcomes** – specifically, by delivering integrated services which help to secure improvements in the quality of life, and the social and economic wellbeing, of the people and communities of Scotland.	**Capabilities** can be applied to evaluate how public services and partners work together as positive social Conversion Factors to transform social injustice into social justice outcomes. Capabilities evaluates wellbeing and quality of life in terms of what people can actually do and be, whilst acknowledging that well-being is inherently multidimensional. It is interested in both individuals and social groups securing social justice.

Public service organisations **prioritise prevention, reduce inequalities and promote equality.**	**Capabilities** analysis includes an equality ethic. Its integration of diversity and agency means that it avoids oversimplification of the measurement of equal outcomes. It persistently highlights the role of public services in preventing social injustice (e.g. through universal healthcare and the GB Equality Measurement Framework). Capabilities has an increasing focus on evidence on social determinants (e.g. Venkatapuram, 2011) and gross inequalities (e.g. Marmot, 2010) and their contribution to understanding social justice outcomes.
All public services constantly seek to **improve performance** and reduce costs, and are open, transparent and accountable.	Transparency and accountability are compatible with the participation principle in **capabilities**. If improved performance is understood as achieving outcomes in the first three Christie principles, wider evaluative principles such as efficiency and sustainability are also compatible with a capabilities analysis.

5. Four methodologies of capabilities analysis of public policy in high-income countries, and their compatibility with the Christie principles.

As suggested above, Capabilities seeks to widen the analytical lens by judging real opportunities and substantive freedoms, and evaluating ways in which action may be taken to enhance these. It enables the identification of the "social institutions, processes and values" (Venkatapuram 2011, p.152) that are required to secure social justice within and for particular communities and groups.

Capabilities has been applied internationally by the U.N to conceptualise the Human Development Index and move analysis beyond the limits of GDP. It has been applied in Britain in the Equalities Review (2007) to set out where public services might best target interventions to achieve their statutory equality duties. It has been applied using quantitative methods to measure differentials in capability by population group, for example freedom by gender in India, and by empirical researchers in health-based quality of life-type scales (e.g. Anand, Lorgelly, Coast etc.).

There is no agreed, single means of operationalising capabilities to guide policy development and for this review we carried out multiple literature searches to find examples of how capabilities have been applied in the analysis of public policy in high income countries. We have identified four typologies:

- primary research with groups experiencing social injustice (Dean; Hodgett and Clark);

- identification of social justice outcomes using primary research with groups experiencing social injustice alongside the domains framework (Benbow; Wolff and deShalit);

- secondary analysis of data especially affecting groups experiencing social injustice (EMF; Burchardt and Vizard 2014); and

- primary and secondary evaluation of the role of public authorities as Conversion Factors (Hodgett; Kim).

The cases we discuss below were selected using research quality evaluation methods informed by Spencer et al (2003) and DFID (2014). The analysis identifies the methods used by each study and their findings; specifies their compatibility with the Christie principles; and identifies what taking a capabilities lens added to dominant competing frameworks, and the difference this made to policy analysis. Despite their different methodological approaches there are commonalities, the studies each identify social injustices in terms of what different social groups are able to do and be, and find expressed or implied gaps in the role of public services as Conversion Factors.

a. primary research with groups experiencing social injustice

Dean et al (2005) interviewed 50 jobseekers in England with multiple problems and needs, including addictions, homelessness and experiences of prison about their strategies for seeking work. In their analysis of the interviews they used a Capabilities framework and found that official approaches driven by welfare-to-work policy gave none of the group space to address their needs. The needs they described included complex support to work, and needs to care and be cared for. Dean et al argued that in order to reach those most at risk of social injustice, a 'life-first' rather than the predominant 'work-first' and 'human capital' approach to welfare-to-work policies would be more likely to support the capabilities of this group.

'Work-first' policies, such as that pursued by Welfare to Work pushed people into frustration by forcing them into unsuitable and often insecure jobs and a no pay-low pay cycle. These policies promoted human capital and focused on qualifications and training avoiding the real needs of the group, denying their heterogeneity (2005, p.19):

> The depressing reality was that nobody in this group was being allowed
> the space to deal with their problems or address their needs.

By taking a 'capability intuition' (Farvaque 2000) to employment policy they argued that giving a greater 'voice' to jobseekers, with jobseekers able to formulate, argue for and realise their life plans, a more successful outcome could be achieved. This transparent study

(see also Dean et al, 2003) used capabilities to demonstrate the lack of fit between policy and those with very complex lives, and how ignoring 'voice', or agency, is not only detrimental to social justice for those most in need but also unlikely to achieve a successful outcome. By taking a 'capability intuition', they showed that support for those with the most complex needs is best provided in a way that is both enabling and nurturing; with an expanded notion of work-life balance suggested as a more fruitful approach for those most distanced from social justice. Human capital approaches they argue miss the complexity of life beyond qualifications, while liberal-individualist human rights approaches when interpreted for policy have led to 'the right to work' becoming the obligation of paid labour. Applied to **Christie**, the study indicates gaps in policy achieving the first three principles in relation to this social group (services built around people and communities; services working together effectively to achieve outcomes; prioritise prevention, reduce inequalities and promote equality).

Hodgett and Clark (2011) achieved a comparable outcome from their qualitative study of the wellbeing of different migrant groups in Canada, aiming to guide multiculturalism and social cohesion policies. Through open-ended, capabilities-informed interviews with twelve migrants recruited through a Housing Association, they highlighted subjective experience of exclusion; qualifications not leading to jobs; and the benefit of Co-operative Movement to integration. Their study, whilst small, suggests the ability of capabilities-informed studies to distinguish unique and common problems across ethnic groups and to take account of diversity. It also showed services working well for some groups, so informing policy positively and negatively. Using capabilities they were able to highlight, as did Dean et al, the weaknesses of taking a one size fits all, human capital approach, and were able to identify barriers, drivers and understandings of subjective wellbeing beyond the reach of resource-based and utilitarian measures. In relation to **Christie**, the study identified gaps and achievements, from the perspective of migrant groups, in terms of the first three principles (services built around people and communities; services working together effectively to achieve outcomes; prioritise prevention, reduce inequalities and promote equality).

b. identification of social justice outcomes using primary research with groups experiencing social injustice alongside the domains framework

Wolff and deShalit (2007) interviewed vulnerable groups using welfare services in the UK and Israel, and professionals working with these groups, focusing on people experiencing multiple and complex social injustices. Following the capabilities participation ethic, they consulted participants on Nussbaum's domains framework in order to identify their relevance and meaning to this group. They brought together political philosophy with this empirical data to reconceptualise disadvantage using capabilities. They found that lack of some domains could create either 'corrosive disadvantages' or the opposite, 'fertile functionings', demonstrating a capabilities explanation of how injustice happens.

The research pointed to the role of public services and policies as positive social Conversion Factors for those at most risk of experiencing injustice. Wolff and deShalit came up with policy-focused recommendations including: a priority for public services in tackling clustering of corrosive disadvantages such as drug addiction, homelessness and uncontrollable debt (2013, p.161); public services considering how to secure functionings over time for people at risk of social injustice above a 'minimal' level of domain threshold; and, reflecting the importance of 'affiliation' to vulnerable groups and their advocates, public services' role in creating wider opportunities for social interaction for people experiencing social injustice. Their empirical analysis was made less conclusive in terms of the 'voice' of those experiencing injustice due to their also interviewing service providers and not distinguishing responses between the two; and their policy recommendations used no wider evidence. Their (2013) follow-up paper applied Marmot (2008) on male longevity in Glasgow as an example of why in the health domain, functionings rather than capabilities may be a more vital focus for public services in supporting social justice. Using the domains concept from capabilities allowed them to get beyond resource-based and GDP analyses by exploring wider issues in relation to quality of life (e.g. affiliation) and providing an active role for public services in securing this. They were also able to get beyond utilitarian subjectivism into how to best secure justice and positive freedoms. In relation to **Christie**, the study identifies ways in which public services may be organised to prioritise prevention and work together to reduce inequalities for those most at risk of social injustice.

Benbow et al (2014) in Canada used participatory methods to understand the experience of social exclusion and poverty among psychiatric survivors in Ontario. This was part of a larger longitudinal Community University Research Alliance study on poverty and social inclusion with the ultimate aim of creating positive and sustainable change (2014, p.4). They interviewed 380 mental health service users to evaluate whether Nussbaum's domains were being breached for this group. 75% of their sample was unemployed and most had experienced homelessness. They found multiple breaches of domains such as access to adequate housing, income and transport. Four key themes emerged from their data: poverty, 'You just try to survive'; stigma, 'People treat you like trash'; belonging, 'You feel like you don't belong'; and the benefits of advocacy (broadly mirroring Dean et al, 2005).

Through using primary data and the capability domains to analyse quality of life Benbow et al were able to demonstrate that not only income or formal rights matter in evaluating social justice. They used secondary literature to show how it is possible to refocus policy at multiple levels to address these injustices, and in so doing placed the focus back on public services and their potential to act as positive social Conversion Factors (although they do not use this term). Whilst achieving policy relevance, their recommendations do risk overlooking structural Conversion Factors which act against justice, for example in relation to employment (Orton, 2011; Sayer, 2012). In terms of **Christie**, the paper shows how participatory research methods can be applied to identify needs and aspirations (however, unlike Hodgett and Clark (2011) not revealing capacities and skills), and then be interpreted

to identify how public services should be addressing barriers to social justice for an excluded group.

c. Secondary analysis of data especially affecting groups experiencing social injustice

The Equality Measurement Framework (2007 Equalities Review; 2010 Triennial Review; Burchardt and Vizard, 2011) developed and employed an adapted version of Nussbaum's domains framework which was established through a process of consultation with protected groups, so respecting the capabilities participation ethic (Burchardt and Vizard, 2011). The aim of the EMF was to monitor how public authorities are fulfilling their statutory equality duties towards protected groups (gender, ethnicity, age, belief, sexual orientation, disability). The statutory duties are implicitly social Conversion Factors enacted by public authorities. By using capabilities as a framework they were able to conceptualise the domains in terms of outcomes, processes and autonomy: what do protected groups actually achieve in each domain in, for example health outcomes; how are they treated do they seem to experience discrimination or indignity in health treatment; and how much choice and control people have in decisions affecting their lives, in other words autonomy. Whilst they acknowledged the value of autonomy (or capabilities rather than functionings) they recognised that the data on these is weak (2010, p.58), taken further by Burchardt & Vizard (2014), below. The method they employed (2010) brought together secondary quantitative and secondary qualitative data from each domain disaggregated by protected group. Data was further disaggregated within each group where (usually qualitative) data was available, enabling a focus on intersectional inequalities. They were thus able to identify where actions needed to be targeted in order to address for example high need for high numbers and vice versa, enabling prioritisation of public service interventions.

The EMF studies applied capabilities to get beyond utilitarian judgments, and find out what it is that groups are actually able to do; and beyond resource-based analysis, looking at ends (lives lived) rather than reducing it to means, and in areas of life beyond resources. They used secondary data with clarity, and produced very clear questions for policy makers to select equality priorities. This approach may be helpful in a time of lean resources, a means to addressing the fourth **Christie** principle of Improving performance and reducing costs. It begs questions for public authorities in terms of Christie principle two, working together effectively to achieve outcomes, and focuses attention on Christie principle three, reducing inequalities and promoting equality. The data are at a GB (sometimes Scottish) level, which may make them less locally applicable, and the focus on protected groups may miss the more complex inequalities which, for example, Dean et al (2005), Wolff and deShalit (2007) and Benbow (2014) highlight. However, the Triennial Review (2010) could signpost local priorities and be combined with local Equality Impact Assessment. The studies are theory-light; as if structural Conversion Factors did not affect inequalities or potentially contradict public services' attempts at positive conversion, but shows how secondary data can be operationalised to beg normative questions in relation to equality.

Burchardt & Vizard (2014) used capabilities to evaluate the impact of funding cuts in health and social care in England in a context of rising need, qualitative evidence about poor treatment of older and disabled people in hospitals and care homes, and a 'choice' policy agenda consistent with **Christie's** first principle of autonomy. They combined secondary analysis of data from the Health Survey for England (annual survey of health conditions) and the NHS Adult Inpatient Survey (the experiences of NHS patients) and the Life Opportunities Survey (LoS), a longitudinal survey designed to identify barriers that disabled people, including people with health conditions, experience in pursuing the activities that they value. They analysed gaps in functionings (health status), treatment (discrimination or dignity) and autonomy (choice and control - involvement in decisions about health and support) and revealed discrimination in the provision of health and social care by age, disability, gender (male), and by some ethnicities, including in terms of autonomy, a data gap in the Triennial Review (2010). Their analysis included consideration of adaptive preferences, taking into account that older people have lower expectations of health and social care, demonstrating the advantages of capabilities over utilitarianism for evaluating the position of individuals and groups. It focused on issues of diversity in conversion of resources outside the market, so going beyond a resource-based analysis. The three data sources combined to highlight equality gaps that contradicted stated policy aims, so alerting policy makers to salient inequalities including intersectional (e.g. older age and disability). In this they mirrored Dean et al's (2005) focus on the potential for policy to overlook the needs of complex social groups due in part to the exclusion of their 'voice' in understanding barriers. The use of LoS ensured the inclusion of those who are normally denied a voice and provided a means for public services to understand and prioritise **Christie** principles two and three (working together effectively; prioritising prevention and reducing inequalities). The study argued "that neither objective nor subjective measures alone provide a full picture of the position of individuals and groups" (2014, p.166). It reinforced how capabilities can widen the focus of analysis to autonomy, which could be applied to other policy areas; and showed how a capabilities-based analysis of secondary data can enable critique of policy in terms of its equality obligations in the context of funding retrenchment.

d. The role of social Conversion Factors in facilitating or constraining social justice outcomes

Kim (2012) in an evaluation of Women-Centred U.S. Microenterprise Development Programs (MDP) analysed secondary studies to identify the impact of MDPs, operating as Conversion Factors, on gender inequalities. Evaluating sixty studies, she identified that MDPs operated by tackling financial, human andsocial capitals. This suggested a gap: MDPs did not reflect women's more structural Conversion Factors, for example gender roles and power relations. The study showed how Conversion Factors can be used to identify the limits of public services. By identifying that structural Conversion Factors were not reached she was able to demonstrate why MDPs had failed to address gender justice and suggest policy recommendations. This focus is replicable to a wide range of organisations including Community Planning Partnerships, Local Authorities, Third Sector Organisations, Health

Boards and other statutory bodies to evaluate whether they are reaching far enough at personal, social and structural levels to maximise the chances of achieving social justice outcomes. The approach could be applied to one social group or in one domain of social justice. This is relevant to the **Christie** objectives, in understanding whether public services as Conversion Factors are working *sufficiently* effectively together to prevent injustice, reduce inequalities, or to effectively build services around people and communities. Kim (2012) therefore provides a methodology and analytical framework for understanding the likelihood of policy and practice effectiveness in terms of these normative goals, beyond the limits of resource-based analysis or utilitarian satisfaction, capabilities being used in a way that looks at real outcomes and the normative role of public authorities.

Hodgett (2008) used capabilities to explore the impact of European Social Fund programmes on community infrastructure to support third sector organisations in Northern Ireland. She used primary interviews and evaluations of secondary data, including storytelling employed as an evaluative tool by the state. She asked whether 'human flourishing' is a helpful lens through which to explain the implementation of community infrastructure to support voluntary activity and expand freedoms, local capabilities and well-being for most disadvantaged in a divided area. She found that freedoms, local capabilities and well-being were realised "at least in part" (2008, p.172); that greater individual freedoms could improve social arrangements; and that capabilities was "fruitful to explore detailed policy interventions in specific locations" (2008, p.181). Whilst under-critical of the storytelling data, her use of mixed methods evidences practical difficulties in policy implementation, making the study more directly 'policy-engaged' than for example, Dean et al's (2005) critique. Her evidence of the use of agency by citizens and voluntary sector bodies in influencing policy makers makes the study of relevance to a wide range of settings. The focus on freedom as an indicator of development and quality of life expands her capabilities analysis beyond formal human rights, utilitarian or resource-based analyses. The focus on actualised wellbeing and agency in influencing policy is compatible with Christie's first principle. Her analysis of bodies working not only 'together' but also in conflict, highlights Christie's (2011) omission of this possibility.

6. Conclusion: what capabilities adds to policy evaluation

The above studies have demonstrated a typology of methodologies which apply the capabilities approach to public policy in high-income countries. They have had a particular focus on social groups experiencing injustice, some particularly complex (e.g. Dean et al, 2005; Wolff & deShalit, 2007). Some studies have a focus on the needs and injustices of these groups, others also draw out domains in which some group members have experienced justice (e.g. Clarke and Hodgett, 2011; Hodgett, 2008). Studies have used primary data, leading to a more participatory approach following the Christie Commission's first principle; others have used secondary data to identify priorities for policy intervention following Christie's second and third principles. They are useful in that they focus on the very purpose of public policy - to contribute to the achievement of social justice, especially

for those most distanced from it with public services acting as positive social Conversion Factors - and they are practical in that they have produced findings that are useful for policy development (Orton, 2011, p.358). The studies have shown how applying Capabilities for policy evaluation - and so implicitly policy formation - may make choices more complex, but also less reductionist and so potentially more effective. They demonstrate the operationalisation of capabilities, the question remaining being selection of the most appropriate method or combination of methods for evaluating the situation at hand.

Capabilities analyses have been historically critiqued for the complexity of operationalising the notion of capabilities as opposed to functionings; the substantive choices people have are harder to measure than what people are actually doing, and such data is less available (Walby, 2012). However, some of these studies have achieved that through the notion of autonomy (e.g. Burchardt & Vizard, 2014), whilst the methods of Dean et al (2005) and Hodgett & Clarke (2008) bring in 'choice and voice', implicit in the concept of capabilities.

The importance of partnership working to policy development in Scotland, and in particular its reliance on co-production and asset based approaches have been criticised for the danger that it can fail to address the macro-level structures that impact on individuals and communities (Mathie & Cunningham, 2013; Friedli, 2012a and b). It has also been suggested that it can appear "naive" when faced with the vast array of social determinants experienced by those living in areas of multiple deprivation (Ennis and West, 2013). The approaches documented here suggest that a capabilities approach would help to meet this charge.

It is clear from the literature that there is no prescribed way to employ a capabilities understanding or intervention. However we would suggest that any such approach should include the following:

a) recognition of the existence of socially unjust outcomes for a social group, including involvement of that group in identification of the injustice (and so evidence of injustice in a. functionings, b. capabilities, and/or c. autonomy in processes);

b) understanding the drivers of those socially unjust outcomes;

c) developing a theory of change, including an understanding of whether public services and partners as social Conversion Factors should best intervene at structural level, at national policy level, or at local policy level;

d) applying Conversion Factors: the ability to (re)configure services, campaigns, laws, regulations, resources etc. to intervene and achieve a positive and sustainable change in what people experiencing social injustice are actually able to do and be (evidence-informed policy choices), including through co-production or developing assets, and with third sector or private sector partners as required;

e) the measurement of emerging change (evaluation) over time;

f) achieving the above using research methods and policy approaches that enable and can sustain the participation of people experiencing the social injustice, and maintain the structural within the lens of explanation.

If these key themes are incorporated into a Capabilities Approach and applied to public service reform we would argue that they would help in achieving a paradigm shift in service delivery from one that promotes welfare to one that is enabling and *using evidence to transform public services for all of Scotland's communities to flourish*, ensuring that citizens and communities are shifted from object to subject.

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