

# The human development and capabilities approach as a twenty-first century ideology of globalization

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## Abstract

While many scholars have analysed neo-liberalism (i.e. market globalism) as an ideology of globalization, much less is known about alternative and emerging ideologies that challenge neoliberalism on a global scale. Addressing this gap, I critically examine the ‘human development and capabilities approach’ (HDCA) as a counter-ideology to neoliberalism promoted by the United Nations. Applying morphological discourse analysis and incorporating critical insights from recent work by Manfred Steger and Paul James, this study demonstrates how the HDCA (i.e. capabilities globalism) functions as a well-developed ideology steeped in a global imaginary. Yet, despite having multiple strengths, HDCA morphology and deployment have limited its potential global resonance. In response, I propose that an ideology committed to global human development should take more seriously four pivotal factors: state capacity, solidarity, spirituality, and the role of intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations.

**Keywords:** Capabilities approach, discourse analysis, globalization, human development, ideology, neoliberalism

In their impressive new book titled *Globalization Matters*, Manfred Steger and Paul James (2019) compellingly argue that ‘globalization’ has been occurring for thousands of years, is still happening now, and that we should not let it disappear from our public consciousness. Moreover, as they astutely note, many scholars have been analysing neo-liberalism (i.e. market globalism) as an ideology of globalization paraded by multinational corporations and international capitalist institutions like the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund whereas much less is known about competing globalization counter-ideologies. Addressing this lacuna they carefully examine two prominent ideological alternatives (justice globalism and religious globalisms) as well as nationalist populism (Steger & James, 2019, pp. 86–92) which nominally rejects globalism but as a ‘mounting anti-globalist wave is itself a globalizing phenomenon that is sweeping across all continents’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 257; cf Steger, 2009). Contributing to this important research agenda, this study analyzes another important ideological competitor to neoliberalism – the ‘human development and capabilities approach’ (HDCA) – a globalization counter-ideology that has at times had significant influence due to its affiliation with the United Nations (UN) over the post-Cold War period.

As previous studies have documented, the HDCA has been able to gain notable support by many reputable academics including Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen.<sup>1</sup> With intellectual roots in liberalism, the HDCA has carved out its own unique identity and gained institutional affiliations that are distinct from both market globalism and justice globalism (Nussbaum, 2011).<sup>2</sup> These affiliations include its prominent association with the UN as exemplified by annual Human Development Reports (HDRs) issued by the UN since 1990.<sup>3</sup> The HDCA has likewise given rise to the ‘human development index’ (HDI) as a widely used barometer of national well-being while fostering increased attention towards new international policy objectives like enhancing ‘human security’.<sup>4</sup> The HDCA has also played a pivotal role in the development and promotion of the highly ambitious and resource-intensive worldwide 2000–2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and 2015–2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>5</sup>

The rest of this article analyzes how the HDCA functions as an ideology of globalization. In the next section, I apply a morphological discourse analysis (MDA) to the HDCA (i.e. capabilities globalism) to identify its underlying conceptual structure. I then conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of introductory HDCA texts to identify how capabilities globalism is exemplary in championing a global imaginary, transdisciplinarity, multidimensionality, normative commitments, and an integrated framework. I then discuss how the HDCA underemphasizes four key factors – state capacity, solidarity, spirituality, and the role of intergovernmental bodies like the United Nations. Lastly, the article concludes by arguing that by more thoroughly incorporating these missing components and being more self-critical, the HDCA would likely have even greater global relevance, appeal and impact.

(A) HDCA Morphology : Aiming to present a more holistic picture of globalization and to combat ‘globophobia’, Steger and James (2019, pp. 78–105) have developed a sophisticated conceptual framework for studying both objective (material/technological) and subjective (mental/ideological) aspects of globalization. For the latter they recommend analysing subjective processes of globalization across four different levels: (1) empirical-patterns of social ideas, (2) conjunctural-patterns of social ideologies, (3) integrational-patterns of social imaginaries, and (4) categorical-patterns of social ontologies. This present study takes place at the conjunctural level focusing on ideologies.<sup>6</sup> Steger and James have already analysed the ‘ongoing ideological confrontation between the market globalism of dominant neoliberal forces, the justice globalism of alterglobalization activists, and the religious globalism of jihadist Islamists’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 187). In their view, these ‘three currently dominant ideologies of globalization – make up an ideological family that translates a generalized global imaginary into competing political programmes and agendas’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 104).

In my view, capabilities globalism (i.e. the HDCA) likewise serves as an important ideology of globalization in our era. I illustrate this by applying the same methodology used by Steger and James (2019; cf Steger, 2009; Steger et al., 2013) to understand and compare ideologies of globalization. The primary method is morphological discourse analysis (MDA) which enables us to identify the underlying conceptual structure of the HDCA. MDA is premised upon the idea that ideologies consist of specific concepts whose meanings are de-contested (i.e. given a fixed range of meaning out of otherwise infinite possibilities) (Freedon, 1996, 2003). These concepts are then connected to each other in a particular web of relationships whereby key concepts fall into different layers of essentiality with core concepts most pivotal to an ideology followed by adjacent concepts and lastly peripheral concepts (Freedon, 1996, 2003). The dynamic connections between these concepts and their meaning(s) together form an ideology’s morphology which can be likened to ‘large rooms containing various pieces of furniture uniquely arranged in proximity to each other’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 82).

In conducting the MDA, I analysed texts comprising the ‘Introductory Reading List’ compiled by the Human Development and Capabilities Association, an epistemic community dedicated to developing, deploying, and promoting the HDCA.<sup>7</sup> Among 24 texts on this list, I gave highest priority to its briefing notes (short texts specifically designed as summary introductions to the HDCA) followed by its articles and lastly its books. This corpus represents texts selected by the HDCA’s own promotional association as vehicles to communicate their philosophy to the public and it includes many authors commonly associated with the human development paradigm including Amartya Sen, Martha Nussbaum, Sabina Alkire, Ingrid Robeyns, Mahbub ul Haq, and Sakiko Fukuda-Parr.<sup>8</sup> Reading through the corpus I observed considerable repetition of ideas among authors and texts suggesting a high level of codification, centralization, and agreement regarding the HDCA’s basic conceptual structure.<sup>9</sup>

Table 1 below displays the morphological layers (i.e. conceptual structure) embedded in the HDCA ideology. Briefly stated, the most central or core concepts in the HDCA can be combined in the following statement: ‘Development is and should be about individuals having maximal agency, capabilities and functionings’. The primary unit of analysis is individual human beings who ought to be treated as subjects (with agency) as opposed to objects (passive recipients of something over which they have no choice). Thus, individuals take precedence over the nation-state, household, planet, divinities, moral precepts, and non-human species, while agency refers to people acting to bring about change in their own lives. It posits the ideal that all humans should be ‘active, creative, and able to act on behalf of their own aspirations’ as opposed to being ‘forced, oppressed, or passive’ (Alkire, 2005a, p. 1). The aim here is for humans as agents to expand and enjoy their own capabilities which refers to the ability to be and do whatever one values and has ‘reason to value’ (Sen, 1999, p. 18). As Alkire (2005a, p. 1) clarifies, the idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand people’s capabilities – their freedom to promote or achieve valuable beings and doings. An essential test of progress, development, or poverty reduction, is whether people have greater freedoms.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 1. Key concepts and morphology of the HDCA ideology.**

Concept level	Key concepts	
I. Core	Individuals Agency Development	Capabilities Functionings
II. Adjacent	Multi-dimensionality Diversity/Pluralism Values	Freedom/Liberty/Liberalism Well-Being/Quality of Life
III. Periphery	Heterodox Economics Health/Longevity Education/Literacy Poverty Gender Equality Constitutions	Participation/Deliberation/Democracy Justice Human Rights Economic Opportunities/Purchasing Power Environmental/Ecological Sustainability Human Security

Source: Author’s analysis.

An important distinction among core concepts in the HDCA concerns ‘functionings’ and ‘capabilities’ with functionings referring to the valuable activities and states that make up people’s well-being – such as a healthy body, being safe, being calm, having a warm friendship, an educated mind, a good job. Functionings are related to goods and income but they describe what a person is able to do or be as a result. (Alkire, 2005a).

For example, ‘when people’s basic need for food (a commodity) is met, they enjoy the functioning of being well-nourished’ (Alkire, 2005a). Capability then refers to ‘the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another ... to choose from possible livings’ (Sen, 1995, p. 40). Thus, ‘capabilities are a kind of opportunity freedom. Just like a person with much money in her pocket can buy many different things, a person with many capabilities could enjoy many different activities, pursue different life paths’ (Alkire, 2005a, p. 1).

The concept of ‘capabilities’ refers not only to achieved end-states and well-being or ‘functionings’ but also to human potential (i.e. the ability to achieve such functionings). In this respect, the HDCA’s emphasis on capabilities bears some resemblance to realpolitik (i.e. the ‘realist theory’ of international relations) whereby each nation-state’s maximization of capabilities relative to other states is a primary objective. However, two key differences are that HDCA stresses maximizing capabilities of individual people to enhance their well-being and freedom and it seeks positive-sum (win-win) rather than zero sum (win-lose) solutions. By contrast, realpolitik concerns statesmen maximizing military and economic capabilities (i.e. ‘power’) of ‘their’ state in a putatively anarchic and competitive international system regardless of its impacts on (especially ‘foreign’) individuals.

At the second level of HDCA morphology are its adjacent concepts which include multi-dimensionality and well-being as its overarching aim is to maximize human well-being (as opposed to income) and this depends upon multiple dimensions of ‘functionings’ or a ‘set’ of capabilities, each of which is incommensurable with other capabilities. For example, both health and wealth can facilitate human well-being but neither can be substituted for the other. Imagine a woman who has lots of money but terrible health. If she gains even more money, it will not improve her well-being as much as being in better health.<sup>11</sup>

Another adjacent concept is values because HDCA insists that value judgments are inevitable and ought to be made explicit instead of hidden. Well-being, agency, and capabilities also reflect people doing and being what they value. For instance, a person may value being able to choose where to live or what kind of work they do. By implication, having many breakfast cereal choices at one's local food store while simultaneously being forced to live in the same country or work at the same job may not constitute meaningful human development if the realm of choice excludes things people truly value. As Alkire (2005a, p. 2) notes, ‘capabilities include only possibilities that people really value. Having some options matter more than others of course – it is usually more valuable that a young man is physically safe than that he can choose between rival brands of toothpaste’.

Other adjacent concepts in HDCA morphology include diversity and pluralism since people value different things. Hence, to foster human development, society should allow for and support both diversity and pluralism. Relatedly, liberty, liberalism, and freedom are adjacent concepts in the sense of both ‘positive freedom’ (ability and permission to do things one values) and ‘negative freedom’ (absence of harmful interference). These adjacent concepts reveal the aforementioned affinity between HDCA and the ideology of liberalism in its ‘developmental’ variant (Freedman, 1996) while also distancing it from the libertarian ideology of neo-liberalism.

Lastly, at the outer rim of its morphology, the HDCA incorporates peripheral concepts including specific types of capabilities or functionings such as education/literacy, health/longevity, gender equality, participation/deliberation/democracy, economic opportunity/purchasing power, human rights, human security and Constitutions. I will discuss two examples to illustrate the role of these concepts in the ideology's morphology. Firstly, peripheral concepts such as participation, deliberation, and democracy (one that is participatory and deliberative) derive from the core concept of agency. In the HDCA, ‘democracy’ refers to a complex and ideal political system entailing respect for human rights, protections of liberties and freedoms, widespread actual participation, and free discussion involving the give and take of opposing arguments with all sides having an adequate opportunity to present their case so that people are able to exercise their agency and make a difference in the world (Deneulin & Crocker, 2006, p. 1).<sup>12</sup> Secondly, education contributes to human development not only because it expands people's capabilities but also because it serves as an enabler of other functionings. Thus, education is simultaneously a cause, consequence, and constitutive of human development. Relatedly, factors such as health are indispensable for human functioning and so on.

(B) Critical Analysis of the HDCA : Having analysed HDCA ideology ‘from within’ (i.e. on its own terms) above, I now analyse it ‘from without’ by applying a critical discourse analysis as inspired by Fairclough (2013) to identify innovative and compelling aspects of the HDCA as well as contradictions and shortcomings.<sup>13</sup>

Firstly, a signature strength of the HDCA has been its use of powerful analogies. One memorable example compares a person who is fasting [who] is in a state of undernutrition, which may seem very similar to a person who is starving. But in the one case, the fasting person could eat and chooses not to; whereas the starving person would eat if she could. (Alkire, 2005a, p. 2)

This example illustrates how people may have the same ‘functioning’ or outcome (being undernourished) but some have the choice/capability to not be starving whereas others have no choice/capability to avoid that state of being. Another powerful symbol has been the use of a champagne glass which is long and slim below but wide up at the top to demonstrate the tremendous inequality of wealth and income across the world (Joshi & O’Dell, 2017).

Secondly, within ideological space, the HDCA has actively taken the form of a ‘counter-ideology’ by challenging some of the more conservative prescriptions of neo-liberal capitalism (e.g. Nussbaum, 2011; Sen, 1999). HDCA ideology, with its ultimate goal of maximizing individuals’ agency and capabilities, distinguishes itself from ideologies aiming to maximize incomes, commodities, production, happiness, or utility (Alkire, 2005a, p. 1). This difference is clearly articulated in the inaugural 1990 Human Development Report.

The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This may appear to be a simple truth. But it is often forgotten in the immediate concern with the accumulation of commodities and financial wealth. (UNDP, 1990, p. 9)

Similarly, the introduction of Amartya Sen’s (1999, p. 3) book titled *Development as Freedom* states:

Development can be seen, it is argued here, as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Focusing on human freedoms contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialization, or with technological advance, or with social modernization.

The HDCA also matches desirable criteria for thinking about globalization as specified by Steger and James (2019). First, it offers an integrated theory at the global level steeped in a global imaginary as the HDCA aims to maximize the capabilities of all human beings around the world not just those residing in a single country. Second, it recognizes globalization as multi-faceted involving issues ranging from climate change and migration to trade and aid as vividly depicted in annual Human Development Reports which treat these wide-ranging topics with extensive data and analysis (e.g. Joshi & O’Dell, 2015). Third, the HDCA is consciously multi-dimensional and attempts to ‘adopt explicitly transdisciplinary frameworks critical of methodological nationalism’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 8) by de-emphasizing nation-states and focusing on the capabilities of individuals. Fourth, the HDCA (including its deployment within HDRs) rejects methodological globalism, incorporates transcalarity, and arguably qualifies as an engaged theory of globalization by seeking to ‘advance action-orientated interpersonal understanding while contesting various forms of domination, inequality, and injustice within contemporary social formations’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 106).

In addition to these strengths the HDCA also has certain shortcomings. Firstly, as a narrative for making sense of the world it is limited by having no clearly specified enemy (e.g. a scapegoat) for people to blame, get emotionally worked up about, and direct their energies towards attacking or eliminating. By contrast, nationalist populist movements have attracted many supporters by framing ‘outsiders’ (e.g. foreigners, immigrants, ethno-racial minorities, international economic elites, etc.) as being enemies of the ‘true’ people (Wodak, 2015). Neo-liberalism has likewise galvanized supporters by positing the ‘state’ or ‘government’, especially those governments which stand in the way of profit-seeking business entities, as an enemy to ‘defeat’.

Another lesson HDCA supporters could potentially learn is the power of using emotionally charged colloquial language and simple, easily memorable slogans that are regularly repeated to attract and sustain followers. In this respect, supporters of neo-liberalism and nationalist populisms have actively used mass marketing techniques to connect with the popular psychology of ordinary people and non-intellectuals. By contrast, HDCA texts are more often couched in intellectual (i.e. technical, philosophical, and academic) language and its promoters appear to be less conscious of what makes ideologies successful in resonating with mass publics.<sup>14</sup> In fact, HDCA contributors and adherents do not appear to view their approach as an ideology thereby inhibiting their ability to more effectively strategize on fine-tuning and amplifying their appeals, developing clever catchphrases, and gaining more converts.

Another potential shortcoming is that HDCA largely takes the role of the state and state capacity for granted. HDCA, like all globalisms maintains an ‘ideological orientation towards the world as a single, interdependent place that commanded more attention than the nation-state’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 86). But the HDCA misses something essential by underemphasizing the fundamental importance of state capacity since states still have to deliver (or otherwise make widely available) public goods like education, healthcare, safety, and jobs that are so fundamental to human development. As Steger and James point out, ‘nation-states are still formidable power players. Processes of globalization may eventually undermine the sovereignty of the nation-state, but there is no inevitability about such an outcome, neither in logic nor in reality’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 129). In this respect, the HDCA's seeming ambivalence towards the state partially resembles the anti-statism of neo-liberal ideology although for HDCA it is the captured, corrupted or dysfunctional state that is problematic not the state itself.<sup>15</sup>

Another limitation of HDCA, as with neoliberalism, is that both largely fail to incorporate the spiritual/non-material (i.e. consciousness) side of human life whereas nationalist populisms and religious globalisms are comparatively stronger in this area.<sup>16</sup> As Steger and James (2019, p. 2) point out, patterns of global integration have contributed to ‘an identity crisis born of an aversion to the global’ making people ‘take refuge in their nation, locality, and god’. Thus, a compelling ideology of globalization would presumably need to incorporate a spiritual component involving some form of divine (or at least moral) validation for its prescriptions. By contrast, the HDCA fails to do so and more generally underemphasizes the consciousness aspect of motivating and sustaining collective action. Rather, its pronounced individualism, strong emphasis on diversity, and conspicuous lack of an enemy may actually inhibit the process of forging global solidarity amongst peoples from vastly different backgrounds as an essential component to achieving and sustaining global collective action.<sup>17</sup> Thus, by emphasizing capabilities over consciousness, the HDCA ideology's relative inattention to the spiritual dimension of human life and the need to collectively develop – not just unilaterally stipulate (e.g. Nussbaum, 2011) – a globally shared sense of values regrettably denudes the ideology of much of its potential moral force.

To its credit, however, the HDCA generally rejects taking a dogmatic stance and instead champions the value of deliberation, participation, and giving reasons to work towards capability enhancing solutions (e.g. Sen, 1995, 1999, 2009). This approach has great merits as inclusive processes and critical thinking have many advantages, but deliberation alone may be insufficient to stop large-scale catastrophes like global climate change and ecocide which are well under way and will be most damaging to the youth, non-human species, and those not yet born. On matters like this, there presumably needs to be shared agreement and large-scale direct action to prevent these processes from further inhibiting the development of humans and their capabilities.

In this respect, past experience suggests that such large-scale action will be heavily contingent upon both state capacity and intergovernmental bodies. Thus, another weak point in HDCA discourse to date is its relative inattention to the essential role played by intergovernmental actors like the United Nations. While in practice HDCA promoters and UN agencies often cooperate in agenda setting and formulating policy prescriptions, the theoretical importance of intergovernmental bodies is not heavily emphasized in HDCA discourse whereas in previous generations the importance of intergovernmental organizations for global cooperation was seen as a *sine qua non* for effective globalization (e.g. Claude, 1965). As Steger and James (2019, p. 39) note, earlier scholars like Inis Claude ‘considered the UN as a whole as the most appropriate model for a rationally planned globalization of international cooperation’, but ‘ultimately, the neoliberal revolution of the Thatcher-Reagan era helped turn the globalization-as-market narrative into the dominant meaning cluster’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 42).

Another potentially constraining feature of the HDCA when viewed from an ideological perspective is its avoidance of using the word power when in fact HDCA is potentially about people having more power over their own lives in the form of capabilities to be and do as they choose. Potentially advocating a tremendous shift in power away from the currently powerful to the presently powerless, the HDCA has a deeply radical potential like the idea of ‘human rights’ which seeks to guarantee all humans a long list of entitlements.<sup>18</sup> Yet, as with many ideologies, this potential is often muted by the rest of its own ideological discourse and how the ideology is put into practice.

Lastly, as typical of ideologies, the HDCA has a number of ambiguities stemming from the fact that it elaborates no hierarchy of priorities. For instance, Nussbaum (2011, pp. 33–34) speaks of human development enablers and ten central human capabilities that are essentially universal, but no guidance is given as to which one(s) should take precedence under conditions of scarcity or in cases of possible conflicts among these enablers. Relatedly, seemingly all individuals' capabilities equally matter but the HDCA allows for people to have different levels of income which in practice will result in differential purchasing power and hence differing capabilities for individuals and especially for their children in a market-based society. Life expectancy is also a component of the HDI with the HDCA taking no explicit stance on the value of a given person's life compared to another person. Yet, critical analysis reveals that preference is given to the already born over the unborn in the HDI which de-contests 'life' by using life expectancy at birth (LEB) instead of total life expectancy (TLE) also known as life expectancy at conception.

(C) Conclusions : As discussed above, capabilities globalism (i.e. the HDCA) represents an important but largely under-examined ideology of globalization, one that contests the supremacy of the national imaginary while simultaneously offering an alternative vision inclusive of global humanity. As demonstrated here, the HDCA is normatively grounded, explicitly critical of real world injustices, and represents a distinct and conscious effort to establish a new paradigm for global policy-making in contradistinction to market globalism (i.e. neo-liberalism). 19 Authors of its core texts also include men from the Global South and many women thus reflecting a more diverse (and global) composition of authors than many competing ideologies of globalization.

As Steger and James (2019) compellingly argue, approaches to globalization should be critical and engaged which requires 'actual on-the-ground dialogue and deliberative debate between individuals, communities, peoples, philosophers, and agents on behalf of others – dead and alive, still to be born, and other than human' (Steger & James, 2019, p. 249). In this respect, the HDCA is indeed critical and engaged with a focus on justice, values, deliberation, and agency. However, it may come across as only moderately critical as opposed to critical in a radical sense as it places less emphasis on the non-human and those yet to be born. Another concern is the HDCA's relatively high level of abstraction, reliance on intellectual terminology, and demands for people to apply reason to justify their choices and preferences. While the latter criterion has obvious merits, it may inadvertently create an excessive barrier against many people's participation given that reasoning well is actually quite difficult as it may depend on advanced academic training and most people rely on short cuts in their thinking. Thus, seen from an ideological perspective, the HDCA's intellectually sophisticated and technocratic approach may help it to gain audiences among certain circles of intellectual and policy elites, while simultaneously constraining it from having a broader mass appeal if perceived to be incomprehensible or irrelevant to people's every day struggles.

As noted above, HDCA is self-consciously multi-disciplinary, but it could also be enriched by drawing more from relevant fields such as history, political science, and psychology. This would help in developing a more thorough understanding of (a) why so many people have truncated functionalities and capabilities in the first place and (b) how to motivate people to stand up against these injustices. In this respect, supporters of capabilities globalism might be advised to take a lesson from competing ideologies such as neo-liberalism and nationalist populisms which have been able to last so long not only because their financial backers continue to funnel sufficient resources to raise them from the dead every time they cause ruin or are otherwise discredited, but also because these ideologies are relatively easy for ordinary people to grasp and flexible in being able to adopt different guises.

To conclude, the HDCA admirably represents a 'critical' and 'engaged' approach to globalization as advocated by Steger and James (2019), but it could also be even more 'open to the perpetual intellectual demands for change and reflexive alteration' (Steger & James, 2019, p. 110). Being more critical of status quo injustices might also help its cause. By having greater rhetorical force, emotional appeal, and desire to achieve victory over its competitors, it might attract more ardent supporters resulting in a stronger impact on the real world. Lastly, the HDCA would likely be more impactful in the future by better incorporating and stressing the pivotal roles of state capacity, spirituality, solidarity, and international organizations like the United Nations for solving global collective action problems to advance human development.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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## Notes

- 1 The United Nations as the most global and comprehensive intergovernmental organization in recorded history has adopted many ideas from the HDCA and has given it fairly strong institutional backing despite the fact that none of the world's most powerful states (i.e. those who mostly finance the UN) actively endorse this ideology (e.g. Thérien, 2012, 2015; Joshi & O'Dell, 2013, 2017).
- 2 Core concepts of the HDCA differ from those of justice globalism. The latter include 'distributional justice, equity, rights, transnational solidarity, sustainability, and diversity' (Steger & James, 2019, p. 86; cf Steger et al., 2013).
- 3 These reports published by the Human Development Reports Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have been popular with public audiences as measured by global mass media coverage and academic scholarship (Joshi & O'Dell, 2015, 2017).
- 4 According to the UNDP (1994, p. 22), 'human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons - it is a concern with human life and dignity'.
- 5 Scholars and practitioners have argued that the MDGs and SDGs would have either not existed or taken a very different shape were it not for the HDCA motivating and legitimating their globalized adoption (e.g. Fukuda-Parr, 2011, 2016).
- 6 Steger and James (2019, p. 80) define ideologies as 'patterned public clusters of normatively imbued ideas, metaphors, narratives, and concepts, including particular representations of power relations. These conceptual maps help people navigate the complexity of their political universe and carry claims to social truth'.
- 7 The 'HDCA Introductory Reading List' was available at: <https://hd-ca.org/publication-and-resources/introductory-recommended-readings> (accessed on February 21, 2017).
- 8 Amounting to over 2000 pages of text, the list combines 7 briefing notes (Acuña-Alfaro, 2006; Alkire, 2005a; Anonymous, 2007; Deneulin & Crocker, 2006; Frediani, 2006; Martins, 2005; Vizard, 2006), 9 articles (Alkire, 2002a, 2005b; Nussbaum, 1993, 2003; Robeyns, 2005, 2011; Sen, 1988, 1989, 1993), and 8 monographs (Alkire, 2002b; Deneulin & Shahani, 2009; Fukuda-Parr & Shiva Kumar, 2009; Nussbaum, 2000, 2011; Sen, 1995, 1999, 2009).
- 9 As Robeyns (2005) notes, there are differences among certain authors such as between Sen and Nussbaum regarding how one ascertains which capabilities are most essential but overall these differences pale in comparison to a greater overlapping consensus.
- 10 In the HDCA, 'progress', 'development', 'poverty reduction' and 'freedom' are all de-contested and defined with reference to the expansion of people's capabilities.
- 11 While some people can use money to buy better healthcare, many people are excluded from healthcare systems or specific treatments due to rules governing 'eligibility', 'citizenship', or 'pre-existing conditions'.

- 12 From this perspective, democracy has intrinsic, instrumental, and constructive value (Sen, 1999; Drèze & Sen, 2002).
- 13 According to Steger and James (2019, p. 132), ‘critical’ analysis ‘signifies a discerning mode of thought capable of judging the quality of a thing or a person by separating its constitutive form from mere attributes’.
- 14 An interesting working paper by Alkire and Ritchie (2007) on what makes ideas spread is an exception.
- 15 In this respect, the HDCA seems at times almost like a kind of soft neo-liberalism. As Jolly (2003) points out, the HDCA and neo-liberalism diverge in certain respects but also share certain commonalities.
- 16 Relatedly, HDCA ideology’s concomitant rejection of nationalism(s) might limit its diffusion given the continuing appeal of the national imaginary and various sub-national imaginaries in much of the world.
- 17 Regrettably, such under-emphasis on building trans-local and trans-national solidarity may contribute to scapegoating or hate-mongering against racial minorities, women, immigrants, or other marginalized groups.
- 18 HDCA ideology is also potentially radical in the sense that it steers ‘development’ activity and thinking away from states’ maximization of GDP towards individuals’ maximization of agency and capabilities.
- 19 HDCA supporters can be seen as ‘para-makers’ as opposed to ‘para-keepers’ (Steger & James, 2019, p. 12).

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