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Human development and autonomy in project aid : experiences from four bilateral projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador

Citation for published version (APA):

Muñiz Castillo, M. R. (2009). *Human development and autonomy in project aid : experiences from four bilateral projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador*. [Doctoral Thesis, Maastricht University]. Boekenplan. https://doi.org/10.26481/dis.20090923mm

Document status and date:
Published: 01/01/2009

DOI:
10.26481/dis.20090923mm

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Please check the document version of this publication:

• A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
• The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
• The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

Link to publication

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Propositions

Accompanying the dissertation

Human Development and Autonomy in Project Aid:
Experiences from four bilateral projects in Nicaragua and El Salvador

by

Mirtha Rosaura Muñiz Castillo

1. For long, economists have focused on making decisions determined by (scarce) means. Why should we primarily look at restrictions when we can look at potentials and most importantly, aim at promoting human potentials to be better able to make valuable decisions?
2. The actions of human beings are not only driven by self-interest and rationality. Recognising the existence of different motivations to act opens new pathways to understanding development and the autonomy-seeking of individuals as a driver of behaviour.
3. Individuals interact within social structures that shape their values and opportunities. However, their biographies, emotions, commitments, and aspirations equally define the nature of their interactions (Chapter 2, 11 and 12).
4. Individual autonomy is intrinsically valuable for promoting individual well-being, and is instrumentally valuable for promoting human development (Chapter 2)
5. The feeling of being autonomous and, in fact, being autonomous cannot be disconnected for long. Perceived agency is not detached from the lived reality of individuals (Chapter 11).
6. A change process is not caused merely by a (project) design; it is pursued, lived and felt by individuals who trade goals, experience conflicts or reach agreements while exercising their autonomy in specific contexts. Practices and relations, not only on activities and tangible outputs, should be the focus of any development project assessment (Chapter 3 and 10).
7. Development aid projects should be evaluated in relation to a 'human autonomy effectiveness' criterion that primarily looks at how individual autonomy is positively influenced by projects, without restricting other priority capabilities (Chapter 3 and 10).
8. A project designed and implemented in order to promote autonomy (in addition to other goals) can become an 'opportunity' to fuel a change process that was underway or was temporarily frozen by the lack of financial resources (Chapter 10).
9. 'Awakening' is the first and most important step for change.
10. The richness of people's lives cannot be captured by quantifiable indicators. As Albert Einstein said: 'Not everything that counts can be counted. And not everything that can be counted, counts' (cited by Roche, 1999/2004, p. v).
11. 'Let us work as if everything depended on us. Let us wait as if everything depended on God' (Blessed Santiago Alberione, based on St. Ignatius Loyola).