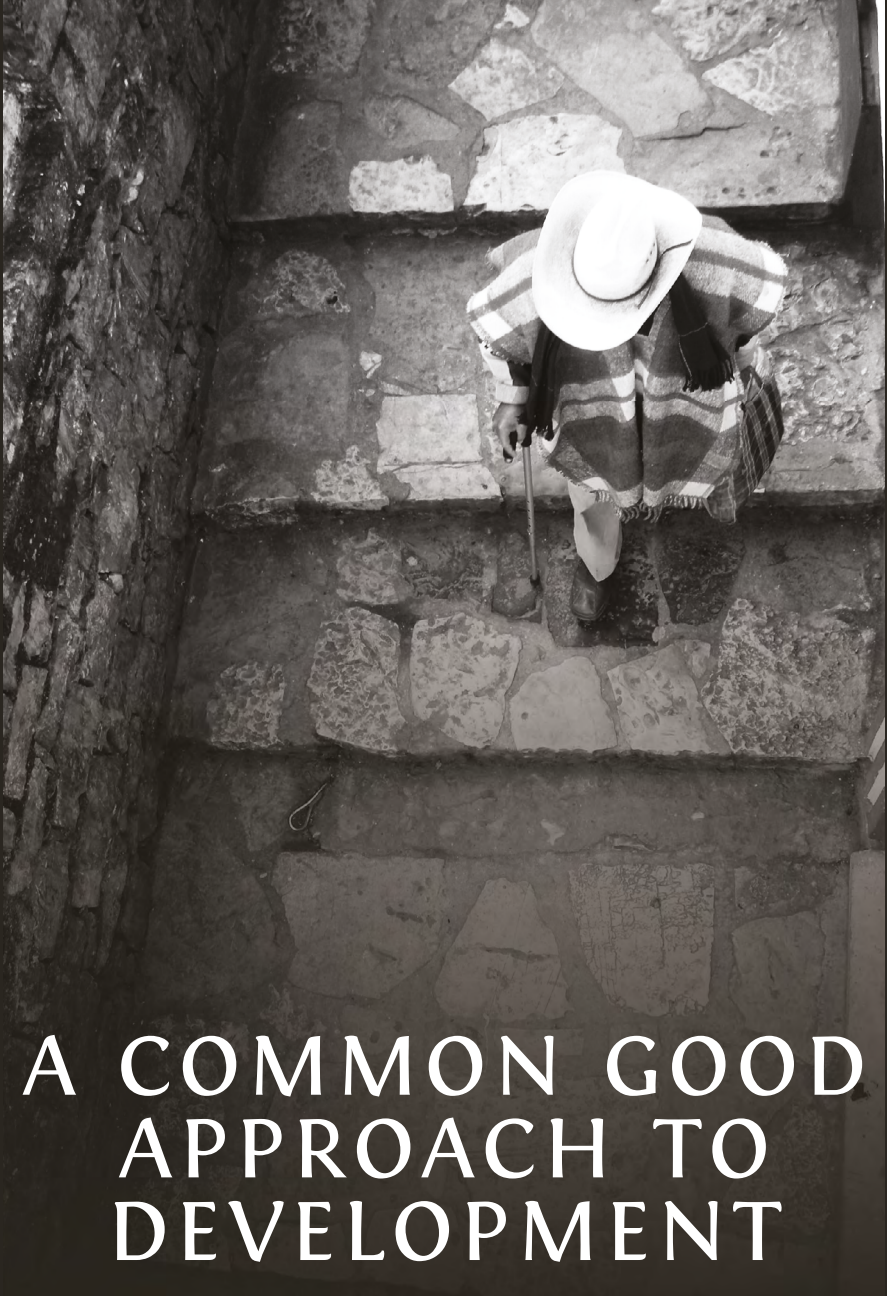


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# A COMMON GOOD APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

Collective Dynamics of  
Development Processes



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# Introduction to Part I

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## Aim of Part I

This first part aims at clarifying the common good vocabulary we will use throughout the book and outlines a common good approach to development (Chapter 1). We will claim that a society can be approached and described as a *dynamic system of common goods*. This system may be arranged in different ways according to the specific history, culture, and circumstances of its people.

It is this concern for common goods that separates our discussion from mainstream development theories, which focus on individuals' entitlements, achievements or capabilities and analyse societies as an aggregation of the same. A common good perspective of development focuses on two elements. First, what are the *basic common goods* a people *must share* to live together as human beings? Secondly, what are the *normative key drivers of the dynamic equilibrium of common goods*? Therefore, our approach does not focus so much on actual achievements of development goals. Rather, we place an emphasis on the *quality of development process*, which makes these goals sustainable.

Hence this first part proposes a theoretical framework that identifies basic common goods and shows how they may combine to create a dynamic system conducive to development. Chapter 1 deals with the concept and vocabulary of the common good. Chapter 2 presents a matrix of common good dynamics. Chapter 3 then elaborates on the two previous chapters and proposes a metric of common good dynamics for municipalities.

## To Whom Is it of Interest?

This first part will be of interest to social philosophers, political scientists, and development thinkers. In the following pages, they will find the

theoretical backbone of a common good approach to development, one, however, which is carefully grounded in action. Chapter 2, from theory to practice, reinstates operationality to the concept of the common good and offers an original way to deal with development questions. Academics will find it useful for understanding the precise conditions under which development goals may, when combined, trigger a development process. They may also find it convenient as a means to address development questions that can't be solved at the level of individual rationality (game theories) and require an understanding of group or community behaviours (social choice theory). In turn, students will find this part useful for its explanation of the concept of the common good in a modern and straightforward way. In contrast to the widespread impression that this concept is outdated, largely rhetorical, and even dangerous for democracy, they will see that it more accurately describes the *real* functioning of societies, sustains rather than undermines democracy, and is downright practical. Finally, practitioners will find in this first part a roadmap for triggering common good dynamics in development projects.

### Why Does it Matter?

Most development theories are based on a conception of society as an aggregation of individual characteristics. This can be an aggregation of will, of interests, of rights, of entitlements, functionings or capabilities, and so on. But in all cases, the rationality of the social system is said to be grounded in the rationality of individuals. Accordingly, most development data are based on information that refers to individuals. Data on income, years of studies, adequate housing, access to health systems, and social mobility, among others, are all based on some kind of aggregation of individual characteristics. Our approach is different. It starts with the commons we create and share together; it seeks to understand a society through the commons that effectively bind individuals together as a functioning whole. Our approach refers therefore to a different informational space and addresses some of the blind spots of more conventional approaches to development, namely the structural and systemic dimensions of development.