

# Applying the Capability Approach to career counselling

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# What is the Capability Approach?

Introduced by economist  
and philosopher:

**Amartya Sen**



# Sen places emphasis on...

Social justice

Freedom

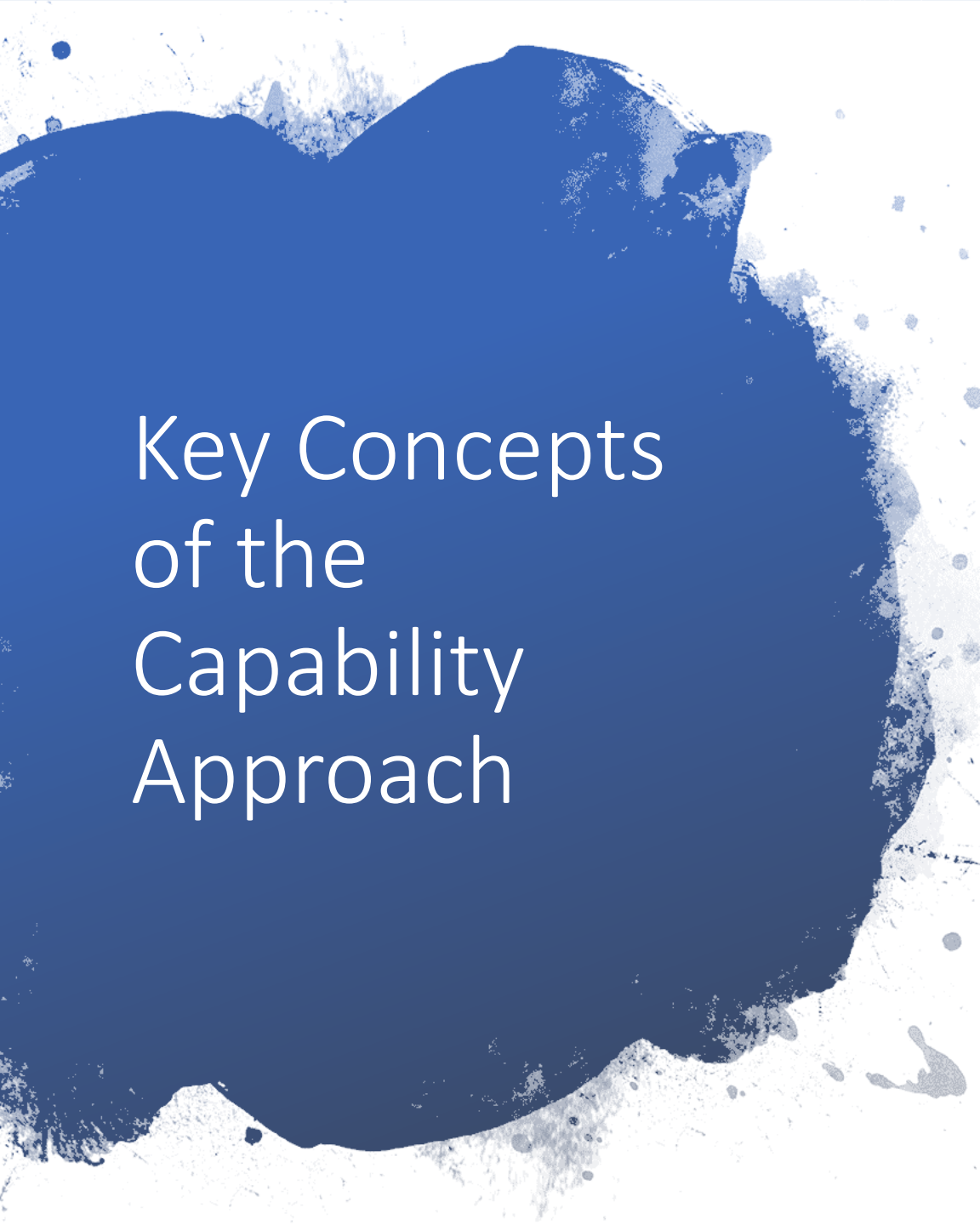
Genuine freedom

Autonomy

A good life as one with meaningful choices



Possession of a resource is not sufficient to guarantee being able to enjoy the lifestyle it might afford



# Key Concepts of the Capability Approach

**Resources:** Tangible and intangible (e.g. money and skills).

**Conversion factors:** Environmental and individual factors that facilitate resources being turned into lifestyles

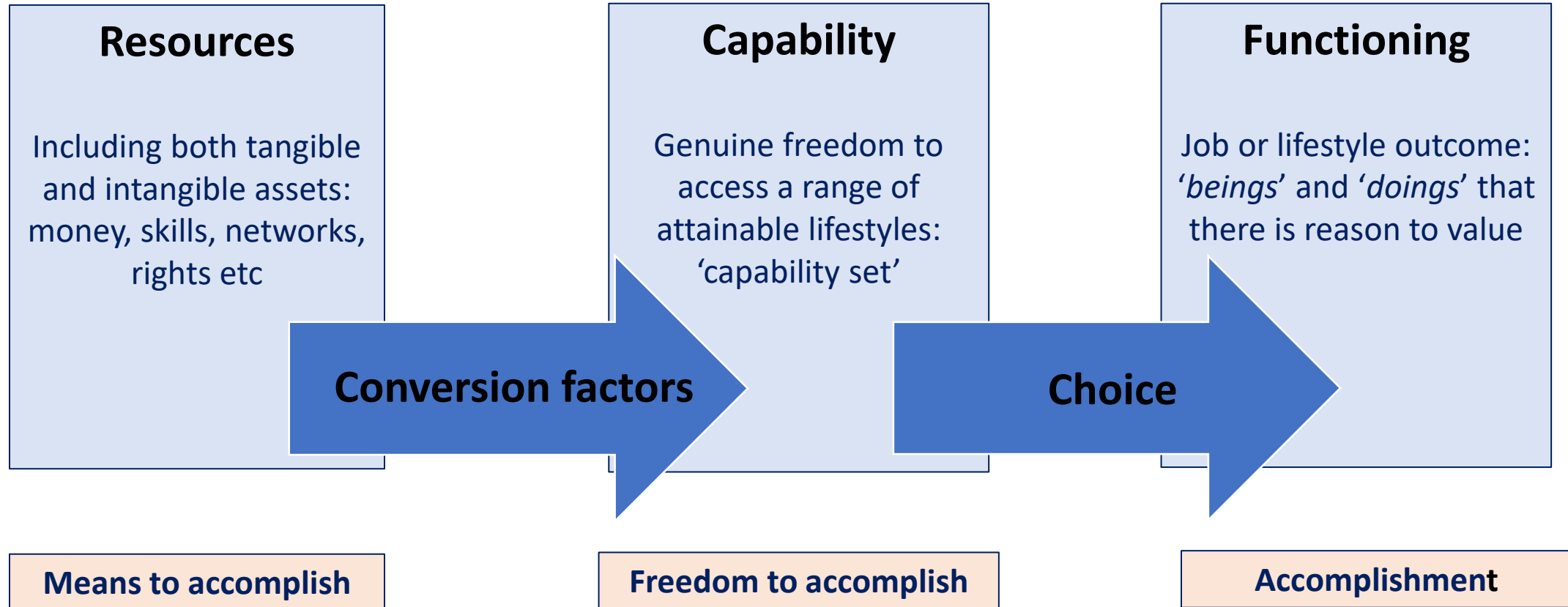
**Capability set:** All that the individual can do or be. The set of all attainable lifestyles.

**Choice:** Selection of a valued lifestyle

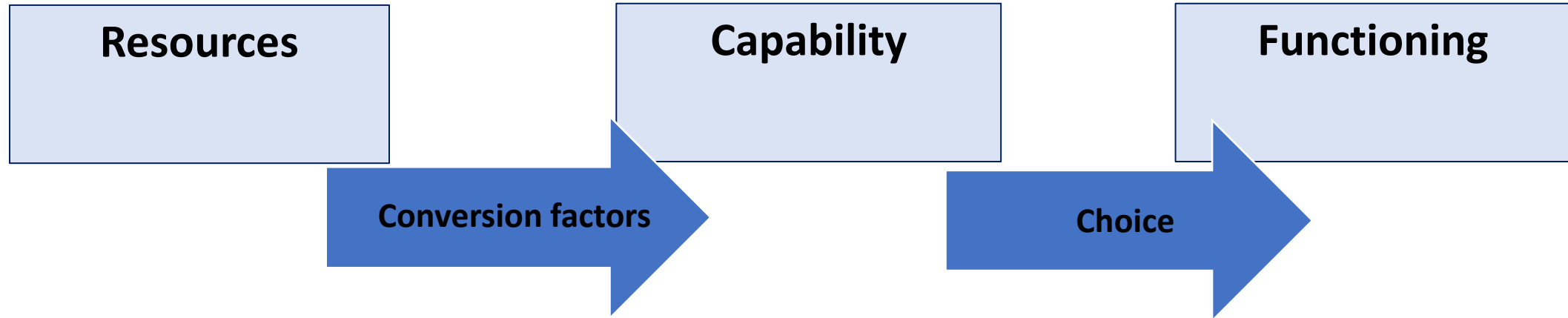
**Functionings:** What an individual is and does: their 'beings and doings'. The attained lifestyle.

# Overview of the Capability Approach

(Robertson & Picard, 2021)



# Capability Approach suggests different ways of helping



**Recognise resources**  
**Build resources**

**Mitigate barriers**  
**Boost facilitators**

**Increase options**  
**Raise awareness of options**

**Identify what is important**  
**Evaluate options**

**Support access to valued 'beings' & 'doings'**

# ACTIVITY 1

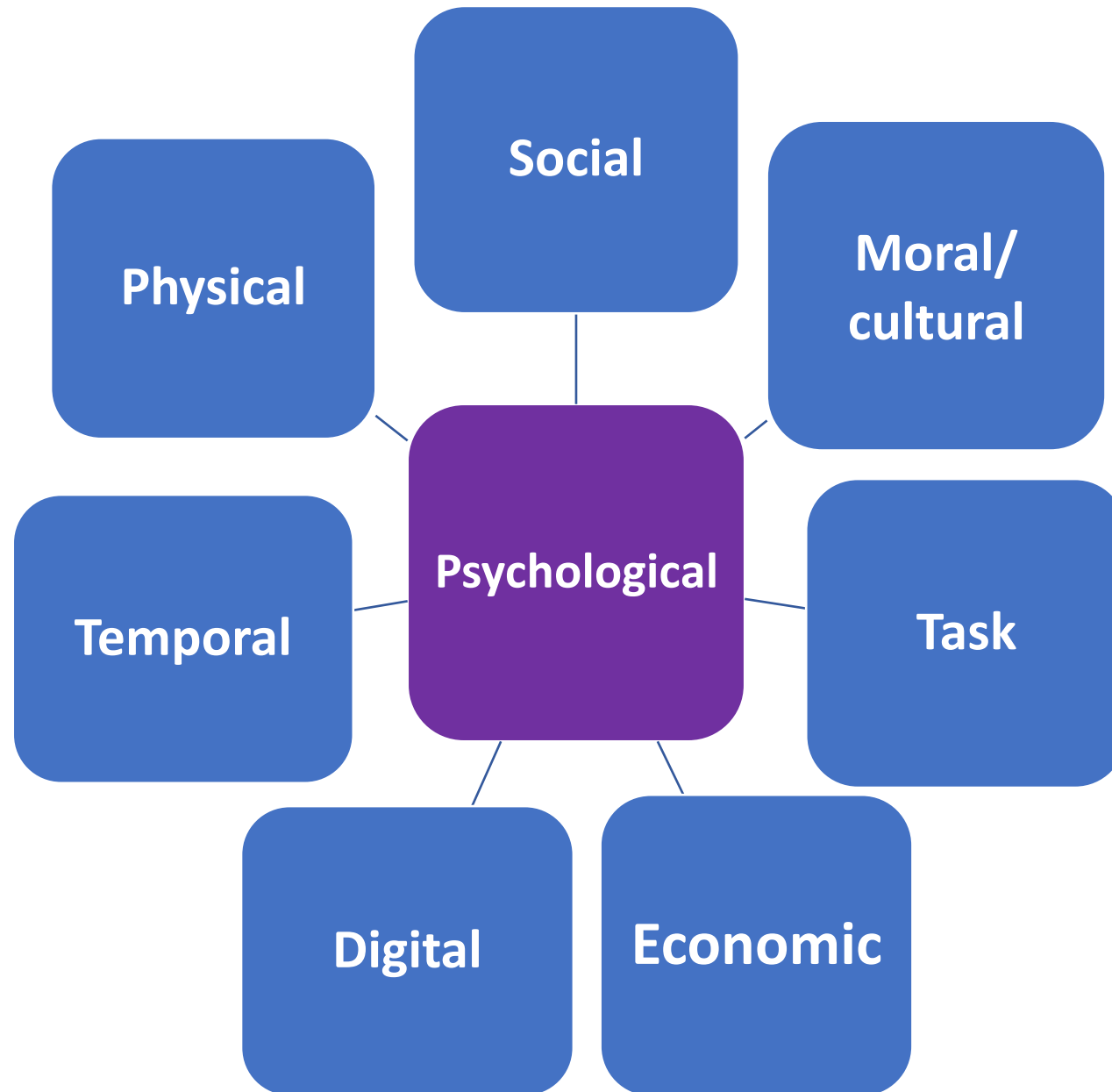
Identify domain(s) to discuss

Identify strengths

Identify barriers

How to build strengths and mitigate barriers?





# A LIFE THAT YOU HAVE REASON TO VALUE

The Capability Approach allows for people to decide what is important to them on their own criteria

What constitutes a good life is a rational decision.

In judging how someone's life is going the Capability Approach suggests that a very wide range of information is required

There are debates within the Capability Approach about who should determine what a good life outcome looks like, and by what process.

## ACTIVITY 2

What is  
important to  
you?  
Or your clients?

What kind of  
life do you  
have reason  
to value?

# Resources

Robertson, P. (2023). *Career Development as Freedom*. University of Derby, International Centre for Guidance Studies (iCEGS). <https://repository.derby.ac.uk/item/q4376/career-development-as-freedom>

Robertson, P.J. & Egdell, V. (2018). A capability approach to career development: An introduction and implications for practice. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 27, 2, 119-126.  
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Robertson, P.J. & Picard, F. (2020). Editorial: Introduction to the special section on the Capability Approach to career guidance. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 21, 2, 395 – 404.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-021-09462-7>

Sen, A. (1998). *Development as freedom*. Knopf Press.