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## Technology and Human Development (The Routledge Human Development and Capability Debates)

*Ilse Oosterlaken*

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**Ilse Oosterlaken : Technology and Human Development (The Routledge Human Development and Capability Debates)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Technology and Human Development (The Routledge Human Development and Capability Debates):

This book introduces the capability approach – in which wellbeing, agency and justice are the core values – as a powerful normative lens to examine technology and its role in development. This approach attaches central moral importance to individual human capabilities, understood as effective opportunities people have to lead the kind of lives they have reason to value. The book examines the strengths, limitations and versatility of the capability approach when applied to technology, and shows the need to supplement it with other approaches in order to deal with the challenges that technology raises. The first chapter places the capability approach within the context of broader debates about technology and human development – discussing amongst others the appropriate technology movement. The middle part then draws on philosophy and ethics of technology in order to deepen our understanding of the relation between technical artefacts and human capabilities, arguing that we must simultaneously ‘zoom in’ on the details of technological design and ‘zoom out’ to see the broader socio-technical embedding of a technology. The book examines whether technology is merely a neutral instrument that expands what people can do and be in life, or whether technology transfers may also impose certain views of what it means to lead a good life. The final chapter examines the capability approach in relation to contemporary debates about ‘ICT for Development’ (ICT4D), as the technology domain where the approach has been most extensively applied so far. This book is an invaluable read for students in Development Studies and STS, as well as policy makers, practitioners and engineers looking for an accessible overview of technology and development from the perspective of the capability approach.

Ilse Oosterlaken has been at the forefront of developing insights on the role and importance of technology in the capability approach. *Technology and Human Development* is a major contribution to the literature on the capability approach, and it also illuminates the importance of the capability approach for anyone working on technology. – Ingrid Robeyns, Utrecht University, the Netherlands  
Engineers are commonly committed by their professional codes of ethics to holding paramount public safety, health, and welfare in their design, construction, operation, and management of a progressively engineered world. The standard engineering education curriculum, however, involves little learning about public welfare. Ilse Oosterlaken's good book on *Technology and Human Development*, by engaging with the capability approach to welfare economics pioneered by Nobel Prize economist Amartya Sen, is a valuable contribution to enhancing the welfare regarding capabilities of engineering and engineers. – Carl Mitcham, Colorado School of Mines, USA  
With a remarkable interdisciplinary approach, philosopher and engineer Ilse Oosterlaken discusses how technologies could contribute to expanding the capabilities and agency of people. In a very intelligent manner, she studies the technology–capability relationship in two ways: a “zooming in” on the design details and “zooming out” to the embedding of technical artefacts in society. The result is a compelling book essential for those interested in approaching technology from a social justice perspective. – Alejandra Boni, Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain  
Technologies have a key role to play in human development as envisioned by the radically pluralist capability approach. This insightful book is a milestone contribution in this rapidly expanding area of enquiry, skilfully connecting the conceptual spaces of the capability approach with design studies, science and technology studies and philosophy of technology. Based on carefully chosen case studies, Ilse Oosterlaken convincingly explains how the analysis needs to include both an examination of the design details and an account of the socio-technical networks in which they are embedded. Significantly, she points out that the capabilities approach is a useful lens to examine technology use not just in the global South, but globally. – Dorothea Kleine, University of London, UK, and author of *Technologies of Choice: ICTs, Development and the Capabilities Approach*  
For years, Ilse Oosterlaken has been doing cutting-edge research that brings together two important strands of theory that typically are only addressed by separate communities: philosophy of technology and the capabilities approach. *Technology and Human Development* captures her central insights and presents the most mature articulation of them to date. It is essential reading for both academics and practitioners interested in the topic. – Evan Selinger, Rochester Institute of Technology, USA  
Oosterlaken succeeds admirably in making the capability approach accessible to engineers and designers as well as development scholars and other non-technologists. She addresses the first group by showing how the capability approach can come to play a central role in engineering design, especially how it ties in with value sensitive and participatory design. She shows development scholars and non-technologists how the capability approach embraces the slow race because it avoids the extremes of the fast race and the race to the “universal fix.” Finally, she strategically chooses case studies in community development to show how the capability approach can provide development scholars with a normative framework based on agency, well-being, and justice. – William J. Frey, University of Puerto Rico for the *Journal of Human Development Capabilities*  
About the Author  
Ilse Oosterlaken is a post-doctoral researcher in the Department of Philosophy at the VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands.