Electric media in rural development: Individual freedoms to choose versus politics of power and control.

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3 DEVELOPMENT AS FREEDOM OF CHOICE

The serious point of social theory which Rawls, as well as the earlier liberal theorists, would have to answer can be put succinctly: can a maximally extensive and equal system of liberties be successfully achieved without ruling out all significant inequalities of wealth and power? (N. Daniels, 1989: 281)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In my opinion, this quote, from an essay on John Rawls' A Theory of Justice (1971), points to the essence of development in general, and of rural development in developing countries in particular. Inequalities in wealth are, and for a long time have been, the focus of many development theories, but what about power? Among other definitions, power refers to political, social and economic decision-making processes in rural development and empowerment of people with respect to freely exchanging and providing information, including power over content and availability of that information. In his preface to a collection of critical essays on Rawls, Daniels argues that a system of social justice that guarantees equal liberties for everyone cannot prevent inequalities in wealth and power from creating inequalities in the ability of individuals to enjoy those liberties. In his theory of justice, Rawls addresses this issue with the concept of *worth of liberty*: the extent to which an individual can take advantage of her liberties. He ranks this good under his concept of *primary social goods* (Rawls, 1971: 204) and actually perceives inequality in the worth of liberty, as a result of inequalities in wealth and power, as acceptable under *justice as fairness*:

*The lesser worth of liberty is, however, compensated for, since the capacity of the less fortunate members of society to achieve their aims would be even less were they not to accept the existing inequalities whenever the difference principle is satisfied* (ibid, 1971: 204)

Sen does not share Rawls' perception, because his concept of capabilities stresses equality in capabilities, or *freedoms to choose between alternative lifestyles*. He accepts inequality of functionings if these inequalities are a result of an individual's voluntarily made choices. Therefore, Sen agrees with Daniels' critique and he extends Rawls' relatively restricted view of equality by shifting the emphasis from a theoretical equality of basic liberties and inequality of primary social goods to an actual equality of capabilities, or freedoms to choose.

In my perception, the concepts power, wealth, social justice, equality and liberty are essential to development. Of these concepts, the freedom to choose is at the heart of Sen's *development as freedom* concept (Sen, 1999), which also addresses equality, liberty, social opportunities and economic facilities. Theoretical approaches to concepts of power, wealth, social justice, equality and liberty are a subject of political philosophy, of which Rawls' contractarian theory of justice as fairness is an example.

However, how do concepts like power, wealth, social justice, equality and liberty relate to development in general, and to rural development in developing countries in particular? What is development actually about? The answers to these questions will in part be provided by Sen's development-related work, in particular his perception of development as freedom, and by an overview of three political philosophies: utilitarianism, libertarianism and contract theory.

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1 In his book *Inequality Re-examined* (1992), Sen discusses his capability concept in relation to an individual's freedom to choose. He defines capability as reflecting 'the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another' and as 'the person's freedom to choose from possible livings' (Sen, 1992: 40). In Sen's terminology, a 'type of life' or 'living' is represented by combinations of functionings, such as 'being adequately nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapeable morbidity and premature mortality, etc., to more complex achievements such as being happy, having self-respect, taking part in the life of the community, and so on' (Sen, 1992: 40). In a recent work, Sen, less formally, defines 'alternative functioning combinations' as 'various lifestyles' (Sen, 1999: 75). In this dissertation I will, therefore, use the more informal term of *alternative lifestyles* to refer to alternative functioning combinations. It is important to note that Sen explicitly uses the terms type of life, living and lifestyle as aspects of being alive and not live in the meaning of being alive itself.
3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF THREE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES

(...) [P]olitical philosophy is realistically utopian when it extends what are ordinarily thought to be the limits of practicable political possibility and, in doing so, reconciles us to our political and social condition (Rawls, 1999: 11)

By adopting development as freedom for this argumentation, I have implicitly made social change an important element of development. In chapter two, social change has been conceived of as a positive increase in individual freedoms for people in rural areas. Following Sen's argumentation, some aspects of democracy, such as a decentralization of State-power, participatory decision-making and basic human rights, will be defined as constitutive to development. The intention is to take the argument beyond Sen's concept by declaring social change constitutive to development and not just an end of that process. By implication a society and its formal institutions, in order to develop, will have to create an environment conducive to social change. A society will have to take care of not only the economic aspect of social welfare, but also of other aspects of welfare or well-being of people. In this dissertation, such a society is labeled a just society, with just being interpreted as egalitarian. However, what makes a society just or egalitarian is not easy to determine. Literature on political philosophy provides ample reading on what makes a society just and which goals, principles or procedures can provide guidance on how to configure basic structures of such a society, how to design just policies and on how best to achieve general social welfare. In my opinion, development of disadvantaged, or underprivileged, rural areas has to be based on basic structures of society that are just and facilitate a more egalitarian society. Current political, social and economic arrangements in societies of many developing countries are part of the situation of under-development, the status quo. Therefore, this chapter contains a concise review of literature on political philosophy to provide suggestions for the alternative arrangements of my conception of development.

A selection of only a few political philosophies is arbitrary, but, without discarding the relevance of other political philosophies, this discussion will focus on utilitarianism, libertarianism and contract theory. The intention is to determine which political philosophy offers the most useful and relevant input for arrangements of a society which favors development as freedom of choice. Only parts of the three theories will be considered and the use of any theory will be instrumental. The overview of political philosophies is by no means intended to be exhaustive, nor is any assessment of the validity of the theoretical aspects intended. The overview will highlight the following aspects of the political theories:

- its basic principle(s) determining a just, or rightly ordered, society;
- the importance it attaches to basic individual rights and liberties;
- the attention it pays to opportunities for individual members; and
- its perspective on the issue of distribution and equality.

The first aspect addresses the unjust status quo in rural areas, the second relates to the development as freedom concept and the third aspect connects with the perspective of an individual's capabilities, her personal freedoms to choose. Finally, the last aspect has been included to avoid an overemphasis on the procedural and conditional nature of the first two aspects. I acknowledge that not all these aspects may readily be distinguishable within the selected philosophies and I also accept that possibly none of the philosophies may provide a perfect fit. However, I am only interested in selecting a theory that can contribute to identifying necessary conditions for a society to be conducive to social change. Thus, there is no need to completely incorporate a political philosophy into my conception of development.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism originates in the writings of Jeremy Bentham (Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, 1789) and John Stuart Mill (Utilitarianism, 1863). The utilitarian theory of a just...

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2 The UNDP distinguishes between decentralization and devolution. Decentralization is often conceived of as de-concentration of functions through delegation of responsibilities. Devolution of authority, however, "involves the transfer of authority to elected local governments. Local bodies then have authority to make decisions independent of central government" (UNDP, 2000). I conceive of decentralization as devolution with re-allocation of funds, whereby the latter has to match the transfer of authority.
society has contributed in a major way to the long lasting emphasis on economic growth, and its various indices, in development. I conceive of this emphasis as wanting for a conception of development, at least, if development is expected to benefit the poorest people in developing countries, usually the people living in rural areas.

The basic utilitarian principle is sometimes also labeled the *efficiency principle*, since classic utilitarians consider society rightly ordered, or just, when social arrangements guarantee the maximum value of satisfactions, as aggregated over all individuals that are part of society. In essence, this idea is based on a projection of value maximization of satisfactions, or *utilities*, by a rational individual onto an entire society. Bentham provides an index of utilities and a way of calculating the value of an individual’s pleasures (1789, Bentham, In: Ryan (ed.), 1987: 86 - 89), but the degree of seriousness of his method has been subject to elaborate discussions (Ryan, 1987: 30). In reaction to Bentham, John Stuart Mill, who contributes to both utilitarian and libertarian thought, states that the quantitative measurement of pleasures is not the only important aspect of utilitarianism. However, with aggregate *value maximization* as the objective, or benchmark for assessment, of a just society, utilitarianism is less concerned with the individual contributions. An equal distribution of satisfactions is not preferred over other distributions, at least not for reasons of social justice. The economic version of utilitarianism relies on the assumption that results of economic growth will ultimately spread to all segments of society, the trickle-down concept.

In utilitarian theory, liberties and rights are important, but subordinated to value maximization. Although not desired as such, violations of individual liberties or rights can be acceptable for the sake of maximizing the sum total of happiness. In other words, disadvantages to some, e.g., a violation of their rights or liberties, could create situations for others to raise their individual satisfaction values and, as a result, increase the sum total value of individual satisfactions (assuming the loss of satisfaction through disadvantages is compensated for in overall value). Therefore, in principle, socio-economic gaps are not considered unjust and even considered just, if they explicitly contribute to an increased total value of satisfactions. Also, in principle, the wideness of such gaps is not relevant. The utilitarian view assumes that society will oppose socially destructive tendencies and obtain greater welfare in another way.

Another aspect discussed by political philosophies is the extent to which society should offer its members opportunities. From the utilitarian point of view, the principle of efficiently using existing resources is important in this respect. In assessing the extent to which society offers equal opportunities, two main philosophical perspectives can be identified. The first perspective offers all individuals the opportunity to make the best of their initial position, not compensating those in less privileged positions for their initial disadvantage. The other perspective strives to compensate for differences in initial positions, which impact the opportunities of the individual, and thus aims to create equal opportunities for all individuals to enter any type of institution in society, e.g., all types of education, regardless of the individual’s initial position. Utilitarianism does not prefer a specific perspective, but the one that maximizes total value is considered more just. Because of this tendency, utilitarianism does not explicitly support equal opportunities for education or vertical mobility in society, both possible sources for social change. Hence, the utilitarian theory does not lend explicit support to social change to achieve a more just society (just interpreted as more egalitarian), unless accompanied by an increase in the sum value of satisfactions.

Finally, concerning the utilitarian perspective on distribution, the implications of Rawls’ classification of utilitarianism as using *imperfect procedural justice* for distribution issues have to be pointed out (Rawls, 1971: 89). Characteristic of this approach to distribution is that an independent

3 Bentham claims that ‘the principle of *utility as happiness* approves or disapproves of every action, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or oppose that happiness’ (Bentham, 1789, In: Ryan (ed.), 1987: 65). Bentham leaves room for an *instrumental* role of economic in utilitarianism, but not for narrow sets of economic indicators as ends in themselves.

4 Bentham also claims that the pressure of public opinion, apart from laws and legislation, is sure to keep an individual within certain moral boundaries. Mill opposes this and considers the pressure of public opinion so dangerous that there is a need for a doctrine of individuality and independence of mind to ensure social pressure does not exceed certain limits (Ryan, 1987: 49).
criterion exists for a correct outcome of the process of distribution (the aggregated greatest happiness principle), but not a feasible procedure which is sure to lead to it (ibid, 1971: 86). This implies that the level of abstraction at which the independent criterion is defined is likely to determine the outcome of the distribution process at the lower levels of abstraction. The following example illustrates this point. If the criterion is to maximize GDP growth as a macro-economic indicator, imperfect procedural justice can lead to rather uneven distributions of income and wealth as long as the aggregate result meets the criterion. However, if the criterion would be to raise each individual’s income, wealth or welfare to a predetermined level, a more egalitarian distribution would be achieved through imperfect procedural justice. However, the latter is a deceptive example, because through the detailed nature of the criterion it serves as a de facto procedure for perfect distributive justice, an egalitarian distribution. Moreover, a detailed criterion may compromise utilitarianism’s efficiency principle. Thus, the higher the aggregate level of the criterion, the more differences between individual people are ignored, hence the more inequality in rural areas.

Early utilitarians, such as Bentham and Mill, acknowledge that individuals differ strongly in their moral character, personality and intellectual abilities to actually enjoy pleasures, implying that there are different needs for happiness for different people. However, their preference for an aggregated level of happiness following imperfect procedural justice means that equality of happiness for individual people is not a real issue in utilitarianism, nor is distributive justice. The relative lack of interest in equality and distributive justice emphasizes the partial indifference of utilitarian theory towards distinct differences between people in general, and their initial positions in particular.

Libertarianism

In his essay The State, the libertarian Rothbard describes the ‘critical difference between libertarians and other people’ as the libertarian’s ‘view of the role of the State -the government’ (Rothbard, In: Boaz, 1997: 35). In his opinion, the State is the aggressor and ‘the central thrust of libertarian thought, then, is to oppose any and all aggression against the property rights of individuals in their own persons and in the material objects they have voluntarily acquired’ (ibid, In: Boaz, 1997: 35). As a political philosophy, libertarianism is indeed known for its emphasis on individual rights and liberties and many theorists have contributed to this political theory. Two important contributors to libertarian thought in the twentieth century are Friedrich Hayek and Robert Nozick5. In The Road to Serfdom (1944, 1972), Hayek argues against the collectivist nature of socialism and in favor of individual economic freedom, which he perceives as a requirement for people to achieve personal and political freedom. Hayek’s interpretation of nineteenth century liberalism has much in common with libertarianism. However, unlike Nozick’s more general approach, he specifically emphasizes individual economic freedoms over political and social freedoms. In general, Hayek is more concerned about the negative effect of coercive power, and in particular State-power, on liberty than anything else. Therefore, he focuses on the nature of the State. Nozick, on the other hand, discusses libertarianism in the context of the size, form and role of the State in society as a whole, which, according to Rothbard, is the characteristic feature of libertarianism. For the purpose of this argument, therefore, mainly Nozick’s perspective on libertarianism will be discussed, a perspective which he has elaborated in his Anarchy, State and Utopia (1974). In my opinion, Nozick’s perspective is useful in defining a conception of development in a time in which rolling back the State is a preferred approach to the role of the State in development. This approach can be attributed to a utilitarian perspective on economics (see section 4.3 on neo-liberal macro-economic policies), but I will illustrate how the libertarians arrive at a similar end by different means. Given Hayek’s influence on libertarian thought, aspects of his libertarianism will be added as a contrast to Nozick’s, sometimes extreme, points of view.

5 In his book Models of Democracy (1996, second edition), David Held, classifies both Hayek and Nozick as belonging to the New Right. According to Held, the New Right is ‘committed to the view that political life, like economic life, is (or ought to be) a matter of individual freedom and initiative’ (Held, 1996: 253). He continues by claiming that the movement advocates a laissez faire, or free market society, in combination with a minimal State, which would include ‘a strong government to enforce law and order’ (ibid, 1996: 253). In my opinion, this applies more exactly to Nozick than to Hayek, since the latter conceives of a conditions-creating and service-providing role by the State well beyond maintaining law and order. Therefore, I conceive of Hayek’s libertarianism as being of a milder nature than Nozick’s.
Nozick’s main concern is the size, form and role of the State, in particular with respect to liberties and rights of individuals. He phrases the main principle of his libertarianism as follows:

A minimal state, limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on, is justified; that any more extensive state will violate person’s rights not to be forced to do certain things, and is unjustified; and that the minimal state is inspiring as well as right (Nozick, 1974: ix).

Nozick arrives at this principle, or conclusion, after discussing at length how a State inevitably emerges from anarchy. According to Nozick, anarchy is represented by Locke’s state of nature, which conceives of rights and liberties of individuals as central to justice by describing the state of nature as ‘a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave or dependency upon the will of any other man’ (Locke, 1690, In: Laslett (ed.), 1967). Locke acknowledges problems with implementing a pure state of nature and states that civil government could be an appropriate solution to take care of those difficulties. Nozick converts Locke’s concept of civil government into the minimal State, which moves from a society of independent individuals only, to one with independent individuals and individuals organized in so-called protective agencies. The latter protect the associated individuals from infringements on, or violations of, their liberties and rights. Next in Nozick’s argumentation is the emergence of dominant (in geographical areas) protective agencies. He concludes that such agencies may violate individual liberties and rights of independent people as a result of the power in numbers of the dominant protective agencies. Therefore, he acknowledges the need for some material or immaterial compensation by the agencies to independent individuals, in his principle of compensation (Nozick, 1974: 78 - 84). However, Nozick objects to the implications of applying Rawls’ principle of fairness. In his opinion, applying such a principle would result in the need to enforce special obligations on people. The potential benefits of the resulting fairness, according to Nozick, would not necessarily outweigh the cost for those people forced to comply with the obligations. Finally, Nozick argues that dominant protective agencies will acquire a de facto monopoly -in their respective geographical areas- on enforcing its members into compliance with the agencies’ internal procedures (similar to a State-monopoly on the use of force). The monopolist agency will protect non-members in their dealings with members of the protective agency. According to Nozick, at that point the protective agencies satisfy ‘two crucial conditions for being a state: that [the protective agency] has the requisite sort of monopoly over the use of force in the territory, and that it protects the right of everyone in the territory’ (ibid, 1974: 113). The protective agencies have become de facto minimal States. In contrast, Hayek conceives of a role by the State which would include providing an ‘adequate organization of certain institutions like money, markets, and channels of information’, as well as establishing and safeguarding ‘an appropriate legal system’. Hayek acknowledges the possibility of a ‘limited spheres in which alone [the State’s] ends are supreme’, although he asserts that individuals have to agree on the limits of such a sphere by agreeing on particular ends. According to Hayek, education and health care are services which could be provided by the State (Hayek, 1994: 43).

Typically, libertarians, and Nozick is no exception, attach almost absolute importance to individual rights and liberties. Two aspects of the libertarian conception of liberties and rights deserve attention. First, the libertarian notion of liberty is a negative one, or in Isaiah Berlin’s words, ‘the defense of liberty consists in the negative goal of warding off interference’ (Berlin, 1958, In: Hardy and Hausheer, 1997: 199, italics added). The main objective of libertarians is to create as large an area of non-interference (by individuals, group of individuals or any representative institution) as possible. Since libertarians take the individual’s perspective, the ultimate consequences of individuals creating their personal areas of non-interference results in one individual violating another individual’s liberties and rights. To address possible violations Nozick introduces the concept of moral side constraints on behavior of individual people, but if one would expect something like a social institution to appear from this concept, he states emphatically that there can be no talk of any such thing:

The moral side constraints upon what we may do, we claim, reflect the fact of our separate existences. They reflect the fact that no moral balancing act can take place among us, there is no moral outweighing of one of our lives by others so as to lead to a greater overall social good.
There is no justified sacrifice of some of us for others (Nozick, 1974: 33)

Again Nozick concludes that some need exists for a minimal State, not so much to prevent violations, but to compensate individuals whose liberties and rights have been violated. A second aspect of Nozick’s libertarian conception is that liberties and rights can be transferred to organizational structures, the protective agencies, which then defend the liberties and rights of the associated individuals by proxy.

Nozick’s version of libertarianism favors many opportunities for individuals as possible, at least the ones arising from an individual exercising her liberties and rights. However, does he also favor equal opportunities, or to be more specific, equal opportunities which compensate for differences in the initial positions of people? Nozick acknowledges that people may start from different positions in that they have different resources, or holdings, when he states that ‘past circumstances or actions of people can create differential entitlements or differential deserts to things’ (ibid, 1974: 155). In general, however, little mention is made of opportunities, let alone equal opportunities. The aspect of differences between individuals is mainly addressed by Nozick’s discussion of the distribution issue.

Nozick’s libertarian contribution to the issue of distributive justice consists of a few distinctive elements, of which two will be discussed. First, his entitlement theory addresses the subject of justice of what Nozick calls holdings, a concept that roughly captures things material and immaterial which can be acquired as previously unheld, or as a result of a transfer between individuals. The entitlement theory consists of three principles and, according to Nozick, ‘if the world were wholly just, the following inductive definition would exhaustively cover the subject of justice in holdings:

1. A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in acquisition is entitled to that holding.
2. A person who acquires a holding in accordance with the principle of justice in transfer, from someone else entitled to the holding, is entitled to the holding.
3. No one is entitled to a holding except by (repeated) applications of 1 and 2 (ibid, 1974: 151)

Nozick’s concept of distributive justice is procedural in that any distribution of holdings is just if it arises from another just distribution by means of the first two of the principles mentioned above. However, if the initial distribution is not wholly just, then even completely legitimate moves from that distribution to a new one does not yield a just distribution in the new situation. To account for previously unjust distributions, Nozick introduces a third principle, aimed at a rectification of injustice in holdings. A person’s holdings are just if she is entitled to them by the principles of justice in acquisition and transfer, or that of rectification of injustice. He concludes that the distribution of holdings is just when each person’s holdings are just. As a theoretical construction this appears to be smooth and valid, but for people in rural areas it is (i) simply not feasible to apply the principle of rectification of injustice in holdings and (ii) a rather flagrant denial of the fact that personal circumstances and characteristics significantly influence, in a negative way, the conversion rate at which people can acquire and transfer holdings. Hayek, on the other hand, claims that legal principles of property and freedom of contract are not sufficient and acknowledges that for other conditions for free competition ‘we [may] have to resort to the substitution of mechanisms of a free market with] direct regulation by authority’ (Hayek, 1994: 44).

The second distinctive element that deserves attention here is Nozick’s conception of patterning, which is used in the context of distributions. In short, patterning is the opposite of random distribution and any distribution that has not come about completely at random will have some strands of patterns running through it. I will not delve into theoretical details of patterning, since Nozick’s reason for

6 Nozick does not specify holdings, but since liberties and rights are claimed to be inalienable to the individual I assume they are not part of the holdings index. It could be argued (given the emphasis on individual liberties and rights in his version of libertarianism) that Nozick considers liberties and rights to be features of an individual, as physical characteristics are features. Nozick, who does not consider personal characteristics relevant to a concept of justice, appears to be comfortable with inequality in the ability to exercise rights, a feeling he shares with Rawls.

7 In a critique on Nozick’s concept of entitlement, Finnis argues that ‘if a creditor enforces his commutatively just claim, by the moral processes of law (which are themselves quite just), and thereby swallows up the wherewithal for satisfying any of the equally just claims of other creditors, the situation that has thus arisen cannot be properly regarded as itself just’ (Finnis, 1980: 189, italics added).
introducing this concept as such interests me more than its specific details. By introducing his conception of patterning, Nozick wants to distinguish the concept of distributive justice from his entitlement theory, which he claims is not patterned, from other concepts of distributive justice. The nucleus of his argument is that in a just society no principle exists on which to justifiably base a distribution of holdings, let alone there could exist in a just society institutions arranging such a distribution according to one or more principles. Patterned distributions are not random and, according to Nozick, therefore, inevitably based on one or more arbitrary principles, hence not just. This may sound rigid and arbitrary, but it is completely compatible with the libertarian emphasis on the individual person. According to Nozick, Hayek argues that ‘under capitalism distribution generally is in accordance with perceived service to others’ (Nozick, 1974: 253). Since Hayek acknowledges the potential need for some free market regulating role by the State, he implicitly argues in support of some patterning of distribution. Classifying Nozick’s approach to the distribution issue in terms of Rawls’ notions of procedural justice is a complicated and ambiguous exercise. The problem is that Nozick focuses on just holdings, instead of on a just distributive procedure. At first glance, it seems that Nozick applies pure procedural justice to distribution, in the sense that ‘there is no independent criterion for the right result: instead there is a fair procedure such that the outcome is likewise correct, whatever it is, provided that the procedure has been properly followed’ (Rawls, 1971: 86). However, Rawls points out that application of the notion of pure procedural justice to distribution issues would require arrangements of political, social and economic institutions in a basic structure of society, which are not conceived of by Nozick in his notion of a minimal State. Therefore, in my opinion, Nozick only addresses procedural aspects, without an interest in just aspects of distributions, whereby just is perceived as more egalitarian.

In my opinion, Hayek’s defense of liberalism in *The Road to Serfdom* can be interpreted as a milder version of Nozick’s libertarianism. Hayek also argues in favor of individual freedoms and against State-interference, but he does conceive of a role by the State which would go beyond Nozick’s minimal State. In my opinion, this implicates that Hayek’s variant of libertarianism is not necessarily incompatible with some kind of patterning to achieve distributive justice as advocated by Rawls’ contract theory.

**Contract theory**

The contractarian tradition of political philosophy arguably started with Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Du Contrat Social* (1762), but John Rawls is considered the most influential contemporary contractarian. His book *A Theory of Justice* (1971) is widely regarded as the most influential contribution to contractarian thought and as a major contribution to political philosophy in general. Rawls himself states that the aim of his theory is to take ‘to a higher level of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract’ (Rawls, 1971: 11). Rawls’s theory is particularly relevant to my conception of development because its primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, described by Rawls as ‘the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties, and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation’ (ibid, 1971: 7). Although the main principles of Rawls’ theory of justice apply to a society’s formal institutions, or more exactly to the basic structure of society, he also acknowledges a need for lower level principles for individuals. At the individual level, he identifies ‘principles for such notions as fairness [to account for all requirements of an individual that are obligations] and fidelity, mutual respect and beneficence as these apply to individuals’ (ibid, 1971: 111). Natural duties are complementary to obligations, in that together the two account for an individual’s requirements, and can be separated in positive [to do good] and negative.

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8 In his *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), Hayek argues that in the long run a free capitalist society raises the position of the worst off more than any alternative institutional structure. Nozick uses this claim by Hayek to argue that Rawls’ difference principle does not necessarily require a contractarian nature of the basic structures of society. However, Hayek’s statement only addresses the second condition of Rawls’ principle and he seems to prefer free competition over Rawls’ condition of fair and equal opportunity for people. Nevertheless, the statement illustrates Hayek’s concern with finding the best way to improve the situation of the worst off people. Whereas for Nozick liberty appears to be the one and only objective, Hayek conceives of liberty more as the constraint within, or the condition under, which society can best be organized. In that sense, Hayek’s perception of liberty has more in common with Isaiah Berlin interpretation of liberty than with Nozick’s.
ones [not to do harm] (ibid, 1971: 114-117). Despite the attention to lower level principles, Rawls’ principles concerning arrangements of the basic structures of society are more characteristic of his theory. The pivotal, and subsequently most widely criticized, aspect of Rawls’ theory is that of his so-called original position. The concept of the original position is at the heart of Rawls’ theory and refers to a hypothetical contract situation in which individual contractors decide on the main principles of justice for a society. That decision process takes place under what Rawls calls a veil of ignorance. The methodological aspects of political theories will not be addressed, but for an understanding of Rawls’ argumentation it is necessary to explain that the veil of ignorance is a theoretical construction which:

blocks out knowledge of who [the contractors] are, their place in history, their talents and skills, and their individual plans of life or conceptions of the good. They are rational, however, and are motivated to pursue, in a mutually disinterested, non-envious fashion, their well-being, as measured by an index of primary goods. The principles of justice they choose apply to basic social institutions, not individual transactions. They must be general and universal in form, as well as serve as public and final grounds for ordering competing claims and settling disputes about the design of basic institutions (Daniels, 1989: xiii/xiv, bolds added)

Another category of criticism on Rawls’ conception of the original position is that it implicitly presumes the presence of something comparable to a pluralistic constitutional democracy, which would render his theory impotent in cases that such a system does not prevail. Rawls’ theory differs from libertarian theory in that principles of justice are to be applied to social institutions and not to individual transactions, as is the case in Nozick’s libertarianism. A first distinction from utilitarianism is that Rawls’ main principles are procedural (means-oriented), whereas the utilitarian principle is consequential (ends-oriented).

According to Rawls, a society is rightly ordered, or just, if the principles of justice (of which he identifies two) lead to a configuration of the social and institutional aspects of the basic structure of society in a way that social and economic inequalities are arranged to the advantage of everyone, but particularly those worst off. Key to Rawls’ concept is that he considers his hypothetical construction to select the main principles to be procedurally fair to the contractants. The principles of justice are to prevent changes in social and institutional arrangements from making the least advantaged person worse off and to promote changes in improving such a person’s situation. Since the heart of the theory is formed by two principles of justice, those principles require a closer examination. The first principle addresses liberty and the second discusses opportunities offered to individual members of society.

The first principle, which according to Rawls is dominant over the second and addresses the basic liberties, originally stated that ‘each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty, compatible with a similar liberty for others’ (Rawls, 1971: 60). In response to some critiques concerning the dominant status of liberty, Rawls slightly changed the wording of this principle to read as follows:

Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all (Rawls, 1987)

By replacing ‘the most extensive’ with ‘a fully adequate scheme’, Rawls made the condition of liberty less ambitious. In fact, Rawls had always considered a different concept of liberty altogether, when he stated that ‘I shall discuss liberty in connection with constitutional and legal restrictions. In these cases liberty is a certain structure of institutions, a certain system of public rules defining rights and duties’

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9 On democratic rule by the majority, Rawls states that only if ‘various sectors of society have reasonable confidence in one another and share a common conception of justice, the rule by bare majorities may succeed fairly well’, but on the other hand if ‘this underlying agreement is lacking, the majority rule becomes more difficult to justify because it is less probable that just policies will be followed’, implying that in a pluralistic constitutional democracy a society may not meet all the conditions for his theory of justice as fairness (Rawls, 1971: 231).

10 In section 3.4, I argue that Rawls’ conception and use of an index of primary social goods may prevent changes that make the least advantaged person worse off, but that using the index does not necessarily lead to positive social change for that person. Nevertheless, Rawls’ theory addresses the issue of inequality of people in a given society more elaborately than utilitarianism and libertarianism.
(Rawls, 1971: 202). The fact that liberties are part of the first, and dominant, principle of Rawls raises the question of whether similarities exist with the libertarian view on liberties. The answer is relatively straightforward and in the negative. First, the libertarian notion of liberty and rights is a negative one, whereas Rawls prefers neither the negative nor the positive notion. Rawls intentionally avoids distinct definitions between positive and negative freedom. He perceives the debate on those two notions of freedom as one concerning only the relative values of liberties, if and when they come into conflict. The sacrifice of political liberty for the benefit of other liberties (or vice versa) is relevant for his theory, but specific definitions of negative or positive freedom are not. Instead, he assumes firstly ‘that liberty can always be explained by a reference to three items: the agents who are free, the restrictions or limitations which they are free from, and what it is that they are free to do or not do’ (ibid, 1971: 202). Secondly, in Rawls’ view, an individual’s liberties and rights have to be compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all people, while libertarians claim liberties and rights for the individual without such compatibility. Another issue is, however, whether Rawls’ first principle takes sufficient account of the fact that having equal rights may not always lead to being able to enjoy equal rights, in particular since Rawls rules out constraining effects of economic inequalities on equality of liberty.

The inability to take advantage of one’s right and opportunities as a result of poverty and ignorance, and a lack of means generally, is sometimes counted among the constraints definitive of liberty. I shall not, however, say this, but rather I shall think of these things as affecting the worth of liberty, the value to individuals of the rights that the first principle defines (ibid, 1971: 204).

Rawls acknowledges the potential effect of economic inequalities on equality of liberty, but to reconcile his first principle he introduces the concept of ‘worth of liberty, which he classifies as a primary good to be addressed by the second principle. In an essay on exactly this aspect of Rawls’ theory of justice, Daniels shows that the distinction between liberty and worth of liberty is mainly an artificial one and not tenable. He continues by stating that worth of liberty will have to fall under the first principle so that ‘a more far-reaching egalitarianism may be forced on us as a result of the two principles of justice than at first expected, and certainly one more far-reaching than Rawls’ examples indicate’ (Daniels, 1989: 280).

Rawls’ second principle, the difference principle, concerns opportunities to be offered to individual people and to be safeguarded by society and initially stated that ‘social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity’ and in an egalitarian manner of ‘to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged’ (Rawls, 1971: 83). This principle has also been slightly modified and now reads as follows:

Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions. First, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they must be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society (Rawls, 1987).

Although the words have not changed, Rawls re-emphasizes the aspect of ‘fair equality of opportunity’ by mentioning it as the first condition. As can be derived from the assumptions, this principle is of major significance for my argumentation, since it applies to people in rural areas and thus to my conception of development to be constructed later. In my opinion, some elaboration of this principle is

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11 Rawls uses the concept of a system of liberties, which has to be assessed as a whole. That allows for juggling with the various liberties of the system, without risk of reducing the sum total of the liberties of the system as such. The consequence is that in his opinion it is perfectly acceptable that one liberty is restricted if this leads to greater other liberties, or in other words an equal or larger sum total of the system of liberty. This concept of liberty is debatable, as will be shown in section 3.3, but for now does not seem to be of major importance in determining the usefulness of Rawls’ theory of justice.

12 Applied to basic rights, or liberties, as freedom of speech and political participation, this could mean that unequal access to the media resulting from economic inequalities would not be considered unjust under Rawls’ principles. Rawls mentions as an important element of a constitutional regime ‘firm constitutional protections for certain liberties, particularly freedom of speech’ (Rawls, 1971: 223/223). However, this is still no guarantee against unequal access to the media as a result of economic inequalities. This aspect of Rawls’ theory does not seem to match with my conception of development. Rawls is more willing to defend equal liberties in the field of political participation in general, rather than the specific aspects of freedom of speech and equal access to the media, which are instrumental in processes of political participation (ibid, 1971: 225).
appropriate. The principle can be perceived as the counterpart of the principle of efficiency in utilitarianism. The first part of the re-formulated difference principle implicitly states that compensation has to be provided by society to allow those hindered by their initial position to enter into any type of institution in society, which gives the principle a potential egalitarian tendency. The principle does not explicitly mentions any means for social changes in society, but the second part of the re-formulated principle essentially states that in circumstances of clear and continued disadvantage for a part of the society, change moving in the direction of compliance with the second principle is required to arrive at a more just society.

Rawls conceives of distribution as an issue of distributing primary social goods. However, some complications with respect to those goods have to be addressed here. He distinguishes between primary social and natural goods, albeit in the sense that natural goods are a subset of primary social goods. As primary social goods, he mentions liberties and rights, opportunities and powers and income and wealth. Subsequently he refers to health, vigor, intelligence and imagination, which are to a large extent part of the individual's contingencies, as natural goods. These aspects of people living in adverse conditions, specifically their underprivileged position with respect to at least some of the natural goods, are discarded with the remark that those goods 'are not so directly under [the basic structure of society's] control' (Rawls, 1971: 62). This requires some elaboration, which I will provide below. The controversy originates in the concept of primary social goods, or rather that it is implicitly assumed that with the same set and quantities, if one can speak of primary social goods in terms of quantities, a person will arrive at the same level of achievements, freedom, satisfactions, or any other description of the ends. By taking the subset of natural goods out of the primary social goods, those goods, more or less as a consequence, become means for people to arrive at ends, however specified. In the case of people in rural areas, I consider it very optimistic to assume that people are equally well equipped, or equally endowed with natural goods, to arrive at similar levels of achievements. Criticism of Rawls’ neglect of different abilities of people to convert primary social goods into achievements has been expressed in literature before (Sen, 1992: 79 - 84).

Finally, justice as fairness follows the concept of pure procedural justice with respect to distribution issues in society. This implies that no independent criterion for an outcome of the process of distribution exists, but that the outcome is considered correct or fair, provided the procedure (which in itself is considered fair) has been followed. According to Rawls, any application of pure procedural justice has to be seen against the background of the second principle. Rawls claims that an advantage of pure procedural justice is that no need exists, at least not according to the demands of justice, to take account of varying circumstances and relative positions of particular persons, or groups. Given situations in rural areas and the fact that changes in it are amongst the most difficult and often most controversial, it seems unwise to accept this aspect of justice as fairness as part of the basis for my conception of development. This also implies that I do not consider the theory to be completely compatible with my conception of development, but I consider the two principles useful. Particularly, the idea of a basic structure of society as an agreed upon arrangement, or perhaps a set of arrangements, contributes to an understanding of the conditions a given society will have to meet to be conducive to social change.

**Summarizing**

Utilitarianism puts an overwhelming emphasis on the sum total of individual ends over the differences between individually achieved ends and is relatively indifferent to unequal individual means. Individual liberties have a relatively low priority, since in principle violations are acceptable for utilitarians for the higher objective of an increased sum total of utility in society. Therefore, I do not consider utilitarianism an appropriate political philosophical basis for a more egalitarian conception of development, which emphasizes individual freedoms. In my opinion, both how social change is achieved, by providing equal opportunities for people in different initial positions, and what is to be achieved, an increased freedom to choose alternative lifestyles, are important. Furthermore, utilitarianism has been used by and identified with development theories focusing on aggregate economic growth and the related trickle-down effect expected to spread economic growth to non-
growth centers. Whether this identification is fully justified or correct is less significant, but what remains is that a conception of development which focuses on more aspects of development than only economic ones will be difficult to conceive of in a utilitarian context.

Libertarianism has a number of appealing aspects, of which the emphasis on liberties and rights is one, particularly in the framework of Sen’s development as freedom concept. The libertarian priority on individual liberties may, therefore, not be a reason to disqualify the libertarian philosophy. However, the extreme consequences of significant and accepted inequalities between people, which result from that priority, make libertarianism, in my opinion, unsuitable as a political philosophical basis for a conception of development as freedom of choice. The role of the State in developing countries of course can be seen as an obstacle for development. However, the situation of socio-economic deprivation in rural areas and the political instability, which in developing countries often follows a collapse of the formal State do not support a claim that a minimal State would be the solution to the problem of development. At present some degree of decentralization of the State, together with devolution of power, is generally proposed in development discourse. However, the need for a strong State to monitor and safeguard both processes is also emphasized. Because, of what use are extensive rights and liberties if people hardly have the means to exercise those rights? Above all, it would stretch the notion of distributive justice to apply Nozick’s libertarian version to rural societies. History provides ample evidence to conclude that in the current situation the distribution in developing countries is unjust as a result of acquisitions and transfers that violate the two first principles of the entitlement theory. The principle that was designed by Nozick to reconcile that unjust distribution, the principle of rectification of injustice in holding, does not appear to be a feasible principle to arrive at a just distribution in rural areas. Nozick’s principle may allow for small corrections, but it does not allow for the type of individual social change which I consider constitutive to development as freedom. Furthermore, another element of Nozick’s libertarianism, the principle of compensation, also does not seem to have the capacity to support the major changes in socio-economic situations my conception of development is expected to support. It seems that Nozick’s strictly procedural libertarian approach needs more attention to consequences. On the other hand, Hayek’s milder version of libertarianism provides a more balanced approach towards balancing the individual freedoms of people and the coercive powers of the State. In fact, Hayek recognizes an autonomous sphere for the State in addition to individual autonomous spheres. However, Hayek’s insistence on the prerogative of individuals to collectively be the ultimate, and only, decision-makers on the boundary between the autonomous sphere of the State and those of individuals is incompatible with the contractarian tendency of my conception of development.

Finally, I examine Rawls’ contract theory. An element of Rawls’ theory which is not compatible with Sen’s development as freedom, is his concept of primary social goods. However, it does not appear to reduce the validity of Rawls’ theoretical concept if the primary social goods are replaced with, for example, Sen’s capabilities and functionings. Furthermore, Daniels argues that the first principle of justice as fairness cannot be said to be reconciled with the second, but his conclusion is that, as a result, Rawls’ theory appears to have stronger egalitarian tendencies than intended. Rawls’ relative indifference to the initial positions and characteristics of individuals is definitely unacceptable in the context of Sen’s concept of capabilities, but it seems possible to use the main elements of Rawls’ theory in an instrumental way without accepting Rawls’ partial disregard of initial inequalities of individuals. Recently Rawls has acknowledged that ‘citizens have different capabilities and skills in using [primary] goods’ and that he has to ‘make certain simplifying assumptions about citizen’s capabilities’ (Rawls, 1999: 13n3). Still he claims that for Sen’s capabilities concept similar assumptions are required to make the concept workable. He argues, that applying the capabilities concept without such simplifying assumptions would require more information than any society can realistically acquire and apply.

Finally, of importance to my conception of development is that of the three political philosophies which I have discussed, Rawls’ theory of justice as fairness is the only one which explicitly addresses the basic

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13 As Sen points out in his book Development as Freedom (1999), libertarianism has a “preoccupation with procedures for [individual] liberty” combined with a “deliberate neglect of consequences that derive from those procedures” (Sen, 1999: 19).
structure of society, as well as how social and economic arrangements can benefit individuals. Rawls' takes a pluralist constitutional democracy as his model for society, which agrees with Sen's claim that democracy is not only instrumental, but also constitutive to development.

3.3 A DISCUSSION OF TWO POLITICAL CONCEPTS

Unfortunately, liberty and equality often conflict: sometimes the only effective means to promote equality require some limitation of liberty, and sometimes the consequences of promoting liberty are detrimental to equality. In these cases, good government consists in the best compromise between the competing ideals, but different politicians and citizens will make that compromise differently (Dworkin, 1985: 188).

Sen acknowledges the conflict between liberty and equality in its essence, but argues that, effectively, there need not be such a conflict. According to him, ‘liberty is among the possible fields of application of equality, and equality is among the possible patterns of distribution of liberty’ (Sen, 1992: 22/23). Sen’s perspective is elaborated in the section on equality. In Ronald Dworkin’s view, the politics of democracies recognize ‘several independent constitutive political ideas, the most important of which are the ideals of liberty and equality’ (Dworkin, 1985: 188). Dworkin claims that his interpretation of liberalism does not demand an equal distribution of ends, which means he does not claim ‘that citizens must each have the same wealth at every moment of their lives’ (Dworkin, 1985: 206). Instead, he ‘insists on an economic system in which no citizen has less than an equal share of the community’s resources’ (Dworkin, 1985: 206, italics added). In the introduction to this chapter, I have already mentioned the criticism of Rawls’ perspective on liberty regarding the influence of wealth and power on real individual liberties. For people in rural areas the influence of differences in wealth and power on the opportunities to exercise liberties is very relevant. Therefore, Rawls’ notion of liberty appears to be wanting. Contrary to Isaiah Berlin, whose analysis of two notions of liberty will shed some more light on the concept of liberty below, Rawls does not use such theoretical perceptions as negative and positive liberty14. With respect to equality, Rawls focuses on society and arrangements of the basic structures of society. Rawls expects those structures to be arranged in such a way that the undeserved advantages of some work to the benefit of the least fortunate individual. He also states that no one ‘deserves’ his greater natural capacity nor merits a more favorable starting place in society’ (Rawls, 1971: 102, italics added), but takes differences between people for granted and stresses that ‘it does not follow that one should eliminate these distinctions’ (ibid, 1971: 102). Rawls recognizes the need for some form of redress, as a result of an individual’s undeserved inequalities, and admits that neither of his two principles is a real principle of redress. As a result, Rawls’ perspective on equality can be considered somewhat halfhearted, in particular in the context of people in rural areas. In Sen’s opinion, both Dworkin and Rawls focus too much on means (resources and primary goods, respectively), which ‘undoubtedly enhance the freedom to achieve’, but he claims that as a result of intrinsic differences between individual people ‘there can be significant variations in the conversion of resources and primary goods into freedoms’ (Sen, 1992: 33). Nevertheless, contrary to Rawls, Dworkin emphasizes the equality of individual rights. Therefore, instead of Rawls’ perspective on equality, I use the alternative views of Dworkin and Sen, the former for its focus on equality rights and the latter for its stress on interpersonal diversity and the influence of that diversity on defining equality.

Liberty

The conception of liberty is broad and I do not consider it necessary for the purpose of the dissertation to enter into a deeply philosophical discussion. The discussion in this section will mainly revolve

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14 Rawls does not want to adopt a positive or negative conception of freedom, or liberty, claiming that the controversy over that distinction mostly takes place in the realm of definitions. He continues by stating that ‘liberty can always be explained by a reference to three items: the agents who are free, the restrictions or limitations which they are free from, and what it is that they are free to do or not to do’ (Rawls, 1971: 202). However, in the light of recent developments, for example in the UK (the introduction in September 2000 of a bill of (positive) rights for individuals in addition to the negative rights of common law) where exactly a distinction between negative and positive rights has led to a measure of empowerment of individual people, Rawls’ position seems to be untenable.
around writings by John Stuart Mill and Isaiah Berlin on liberty. In On Liberty, Mill concerns himself with the extent to which the State can interfere in the private spheres of individuals. He objects mainly to interference into any business an individual conducts, i.e., free market mechanisms, in her individual mental education and to State-interference which in general adds ‘unnecessarily to [State] power’ (Mill, 1858, In: Collini (ed.), 1989: 109/110). However, Mill argues that the issue of State-interference is not the essential aspect of a conception of liberty. This argument is in contrast to Hayek, who conceives of State-interference through the use of coercive power as the main threat to liberty, including individual liberties. Like Rawls, Mill focuses on the political domain and, in particular, on the political freedom of opinion. He argues that by and large societies have evolved from situations of competing interests between ruler and ruled to situations of coinciding interests. In the former situation, liberty served to protect the people from possible tyranny by means of political liberties. In democratic societies, those in power are accountable and removable, but liberty should be used to protect individuals against a democratic tyranny of the majority, as well as against ‘the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them’ (Mill, 1859, In: ibid, 1989: 8). Mill presents two maxims for a conception of liberty:

1. the individual is not accountable to society for his actions, in so far as these concern the interests of no person but himself;
2. for such actions as are prejudicial to the interests of others, the individual is accountable, and maybe subjected either to social or legal punishment, if society is of opinion that the one or the other is requisite for its protection (Mill, 1859, In: ibid, 1989: 94)

Establishing a clear line between the private sphere of an individual and the public sphere of society is difficult. However, the importance of Mill’s ideas on liberty is ‘not that Mill’s principle enables us always to draw a hard and fast line: it is, rather, that his principle puts the burden of proof on those who propose to restrict the liberties of others’ (Collini, 1989: xvii). In chapter five of On Liberty, Mill acknowledges some difficulties in bringing ‘into greater clearness the meaning and limits of the two maxims’ (Mill, 1859, In: Collini (ed.): 94). What is important, however, is that Mill, as well as Berlin, stresses the inviolability of liberty. An individual has a substantive right to liberty and States have to justify taking away liberties. Mill’s defense of liberty can be characterized as an argument in favor of an autonomous private sphere for each individual, but he adds no real elements of a positive notion of liberty in the sense of empowerment. The distinction between negative and positive notions of liberty has been analyzed by Berlin in his essay Two Concepts of Liberty (1958).

Berlin’s analysis of the conception of liberty is thorough and he explores the extreme consequences of a negative and a positive notion at the level of an individual and a nation-state. Although I do not necessarily agree with Berlin’s ultimate conclusions on liberty, the analytical quality of his essay is useful in defining an interpretation of liberty for my conception of development. First, Berlin’s ideas on the two notions of liberty have to be introduced, where Berlin uses liberty and freedom interchangeably.

The first of [two out of many] political senses of freedom or liberty, which I shall call the negative sense, is involved in the answer to the question ‘What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that? (Berlin, 1958, In: Hardy and Hausheer (eds.), 1998: 194, boldface added)

The first aspect of Berlin’s analysis is a distinction between notions of liberty from the perspective of a person and of a nation-state, respectively. First, the individual’s perspective is elaborated before the extreme consequences, which can result from applying negative or positive notions of liberty to the social and political arrangements of a nation-state, are addressed.

At an individual level, Berlin interprets a negative notion of liberty as ‘freedom from [interference by the State]’ and a positive notion of liberty as ‘freedom to [act and choose freely]’ (Berlin, 1958, In: ibid, 1998: 191 - 206). The distinction is not merely an academic one as the following
example illustrates. The negative notion of liberty guarantees for an individual an autonomous sphere, in which she can act and choose without restrictions imposed by any outside force, but does not include active involvement in society. Essentially, this interpretation of liberty coincides with the first of Mill’s two maxims. In theory, therefore, voting rights are not part of a negative notion of liberty and ‘there is no necessary connection between individual liberty and democratic rule’ (Berlin, 1958, In: ibid, 1998: 202). A positive notion of liberty conceives of an individual acting as a member of society in interaction with other individuals or with institutions and in that sense provides guarantees for a certain degree of empowerment. This notion of liberty does include voting rights and the discussion on a positive notion of liberty would be about the depth and scope of an individual’s involvement in decision-making processes and power. Berlin sums up this distinction as follows:

The desire to be governed by myself, or at any rate to participate in the process by which my life is to be controlled, may be as deep a wish as that for a free area of action, and perhaps historically older. But it is not a desire for the same thing (Berlin, 1958, In: ibid, 1998: 203)

For my conception of development, I am interested in autonomy and empowerment of individuals in rural areas. Therefore, I will include both negative and positive conceptions of individual liberty.

In Berlin’s view, an interpretation of liberty at the level of nation-states does not necessarily have to lead to a specific theory on the arrangements of society. He illustrates the contrary by discussing the possibly extreme consequences of adhering to one of the two specific notions of liberty. He argues that, by linking liberty to an ultimate principle on how to organize a society, any notion of liberty can have disastrous consequences for individuals in a society. This view is particularly true for a positive notion of liberty. He argues that political philosophical theory on the positive sense of liberty has moved from a positive ‘wish on the part of the individual to be his own master’ (Berlin, 1958, In: ibid, 1998: 203) to rationalism’s positive doctrine of liberation by reason. The relevance of the shift is that the emphasis on the existence of reason at the individual level has at societal level often been replaced by the various doctrines governing people in the name of rationality and people’s own interest, e.g., communism, nationalism and authoritarianism. The rationale for advocates of such doctrines is typically that an individual may not know what is in her best interest and, therefore, the State has to enlighten the individual. According to Berlin, the danger does not lie in a positive notion of liberty at the individual level, but in the metaphorical use of interpretations of such a concept at the level of nation-states, a perception to which Hayek subscribes.

The perils of using organic metaphors to justify the coercion of some men by others in order to raise them to a higher level of freedom have often been pointed out. But what gives such plausibility as it has to [metaphorical] language is that we recognize that it is possible, and at times justifiable, to coerce men in the name of some goal (let us say, justice or public health) which they would, if they were more enlightened, themselves pursue, but do not, because they are blind or ignorant or corrupt (Berlin, 1958, In: ibid, 1998: 204, boldface added)

What about the extreme possible consequences of the negative notion of liberty at the nation-state level? This notion has a negative goal of warding off as much interference with an individual’s liberty as possible. The ultimate negative notion of liberty would be total non-interference. Implementation of the ultimate notion inevitably leads to conflicts among individuals, since one individual exercising liberty at some stage will infringe upon the liberty of other individuals. Another extreme element of a

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15 Berlin’s theoretical position is in direct contrast to Nozick’s, which explicitly links Nozick’s concept of (individual) liberty to arranging the basic structures of society as in a minimal State. Hayek argues that arranging the basic structures of society on the concept of a free (market) society is almost inevitable if liberty is to be fully guaranteed. However, unlike Nozick, he does leave some room for compromise, as long as that compromise serves ‘both to preserve competition and to make it operate as beneficially as possible’ (Hayek, 1994: 43).

16 Another example is what Dworkin labels a conservative’s perspective of society: the virtuous society. Assuming that a society’s members share a sound conception of virtue, that is, of the qualities and dispositions people should strive to have and exhibit (Dworkin, 1985: 198), a member’s conception of virtue should serve at least as a moral guideline for society, if it is not to be imposed on all members of the community. The latter could be justified, because ‘the conservative’s virtuous society’, is a virtuous society for the special reason that its history and common experience are better guides to sound virtue than any non-historical and therefore abstract deduction of virtue’ (ibid, 1985: 199).
negative notion of liberty is indifference to the possibility that, due to specific physical characteristics or economic circumstances, an individual may not have the capabilities to take complete advantage of her liberty, which may lead to inequalities between individual people. I have to stress that the adverse consequences of a notion of liberty, in this case the negative one, are mainly caused by implementing the notion as a principle to organize society.

Despite potentially negative aspects, Berlin favors a negative notion of liberty, but acknowledges its serious flaws as a principle to arrange a just society. He prefers a negative notion of liberty, because it makes clear that an interference with an individual’s liberty is exactly what it is, an interference. This does not mean that he favors non-interference, but rather he stresses the need for awareness of every infringement on the liberty of individuals. Such an awareness does not necessarily discard any advocacy for some interference, but should lead to weighing the cost of the infringement to the individual and the resulting benefit to the individual, and to the society at large. Finally, Berlin’s states that despite the benefit an infringement bestows on an individual, it can never increase freedom:

To avoid glaring inequality or widespread misery I am ready to sacrifice some, or all, of my freedom: I may do so willingly and freely; but it is freedom that I am giving up for the sake of justice or equality or the love of my fellow men. I should be guilt-stricken, and rightly so, if I were not, in some circumstances, ready to make this sacrifice. But a sacrifice is not an increase in what is being sacrificed, namely freedom, however great the moral need or the compensation for it. Everything is what it is: liberty is liberty, not equality or fairness or justice or culture, or human happiness or a quiet conscience (Berlin, 1958, In: ibid, 1998: 197)

I adopt the negative notion of liberty at the level of nation-states, keeping Berlin’s quote in mind. I will not give first priority to the State’s role in development, or how that role can be justified, but instead to liberties needed by people in rural areas to achieve development. In many developing countries this most likely implies that the State will have to give people in rural areas decision-making power over their lives. However, I do not suggest complete autonomy for individuals combined with total empowerment of the people. Both history and present events illustrate that anarchy and chaos tend to prevail when the State’s role is virtually non-existent and individuals simultaneously have obtained their, not always rightful, share of popular power. In my opinion, increased negative and positive notions of liberty for individuals and communities of individuals will have to be combined with democratic rule, in other words: autonomy and empowerment in a democratic setting.

Equality

Equality, in the sense of social arrangements supporting an egalitarian society, can be argued to oppose or to be in conflict with individual liberty. Such an argument would point at the violations of an individual’s liberties, which result from a forced redistribution of an individual’s fairly acquired political, social and economic wealth and welfare to other, less well endowed, members of society. The argument’s essence would not be the issue of redistribution as such, but rather the forced nature of that process, a point of view with which libertarians may well agree. Libertarians add the issues of a principle for redistribution and the nature of a State which would have to enforce such a principle, if an egalitarian principle that does not violate the liberties of individuals can be distinguished in the first place.

Dworkin discusses this perceived conflict between liberty and equality as a basis for a distinction between liberals and conservatives. According to him, liberty is not a quantifiable concept and liberals and conservatives both value equality. Although liberals and conservatives do not dispute the importance of equality, both have different conceptions of what equality requires. With respect to equality, Dworkin uses political frameworks and distinguishes between constitutive and derivative political positions, whereby a constitutive position is ‘valued for its own sake’ and he considers ‘any
failure fully to secure that position’ a ‘pro tanto’ loss in value of the overall political arrangement’. Derivative positions, on the other hand, are valued as strategies, ‘as means of achieving the constitutive positions’ (Dworkin, 1985: 184). In a context of individual rights, Dworkin distinguishes between two different sorts of rights with respect to the political concept of equality, which are ‘the right to equal treatment’ and ‘the right to treatment as an equal’ (Dworkin, 1977: 227). The former refers to an individual’s right to equal distributions of opportunities and resources and the latter refers to all individuals being treated with the same respect and concern. According to Dworkin, equal treatment is more fundamental, but he points at another difference by raising the question of what it means to treat individuals as equals. In Dworkin’s interpretation of liberalism, equal treatment has to be based on moral neutrality, meaning that no preference for any specific lifestyle should exist. However, according to him, liberalism based on moral neutrality requires that ‘government treat its citizens as equals, and insists on moral neutrality only to the degree that equality requires it’ (ibid, 1985: 205). Dworkin’s discussion of equality takes place mainly in the fields of rights and political theory. However, he does stress economic aspects of equality in the sense of a need for equality in resources and opportunities, but without describing resources and opportunities specifically. He also acknowledges initial differences in starting positions of people and in the way the market rewards different skills differently. Therefore, he advocates a mixed economy and stresses that ‘market allocations must be corrected in order to bring some people closer to the share of resources they would have had but for these various differences of initial advantage, luck and inherent capacity’ (ibid, 1985: 207).

Sen claims that the relevance of uniqueness and interpersonal diversity is even more fundamental, where he distinguishes between internal characteristics like age, gender, physical and mental abilities, and external characteristics, such as wealth and social background (Sen, 1992: 19 - 21). He asserts that specific social and physical aspects of the environment in which the individual lives, exert a significant influence on an individual’s freedom to choose alternative lifestyles, hence Sen’s remark that not all men are created equal. As Sen stated in his monograph on equality, it is important to answer the question equality of what? (ibid, 1992: 12 - 30). I consider the two lines, along which he develops his argument, relevant for this discussion: the concept of spaces (containing a specific variable or set of variables), in which equality is assessed, and the concept of freedoms to make choices. He argues that inequality in one space does not necessarily imply inequality in another space and the same can be said with respect to equality. So the answer to the question equality of what? largely hinges on a choice of space. Equality also comes at a cost, in that a space being more egalitarian could imply a loss of advantage to individuals previously in more privileged or advantageous positions, or lead to different distributive patterns of liberties. The extent to which such a loss is acceptable in the context of society brings in the concept of efficiency, which essentially addresses the question of how much of a society’s resources can be applied acceptably (for the members of that society) with less than a maximum (economic) effect. Libertarians would conceive of this issue as to what extent members of a society will accept that a State forces them to hand over some of their acquired resources and opportunities to be redistributed to less well endowed individuals in society. Hayek specifically discusses the central planning aspect, which is often linked to economic redistribution patterns. In his view, such central planning inevitably leads to increased coercive State-power and eventually to authoritarianism. However, in my opinion, Hayek’s analysis is rather antagonistic and he conceives of central planning in the purely communist version.

Inequality and poverty in society can be conceived of as expressions, or representations, of inequality in a certain space, or spaces, whereby the choice of space depends on how poverty is defined. From the utilitarian perspective, as well as from the economic perspective, poverty can be interpreted as having little (satisfactions or goods that can be valued in economic terms) as opposed to having a lot. However, I will define poverty in a different way and perceive it as ‘having been deprived of’ as opposed ‘to having been able to appropriate a lot’. The phrasing is deliberately chosen, since deprivation points at static situations, whereas having been deprived of mainly refers to a process, which has led to the existing situation. By introducing freedom of choice and control, I emphasize processes more than situations.
3.4 DEVELOPMENT AS FREEDOM OF CHOICE

It is characteristic of freedom that it has diverse aspects that relate to a variety of activities and institutions. It cannot yield a view of development that translates readily into some simple formula. (...) The organizing principle that places all the different bits and pieces into an integrated whole is the overarching concern with the process of enhancing individual freedom and the social commitment to help bring that about (Sen, 1999: 297/298)

In Sen’s opinion, ‘development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy’ (Sen, 1999: 3). Development as freedom will be at the heart of my conception of development, but it may be necessary to focus more explicitly on social change as a process of development. Therefore, I refer to a change in power structures, and in particular power structures related to information provision and exchange. In this necessarily limited overview of Sen’s argumentation, I elaborate the main elements of his concept which are important for development in general, as well as aspects that are particularly relevant in the context of electronic media in rural areas.

An important element of Sen’s argumentation is the emphasis he places on the interdependence between the individual and her environment. He also stresses the need for increased capabilities of an individual in order for her to enjoy her freedom to choose, i.e., self-empowerment. Furthermore, he links the feasibility of self-empowerment with the degree of autonomy a society guarantees a person. A person needs an autonomous sphere of action, demarcated by negative notions of individual political, social and economic freedom, in order to exercise the positive notion of liberty: individual agency. Sen conceives of individual agency as referring to ‘someone who acts and brings about change [for herself]’ (Sen, 1999: 19).

Indeed, individual agency is, ultimately, central to addressing these deprivations. On the other hand, the freedom of agency that we individually have is inescapably qualified and constrained by the social, political and economic opportunities that are available to us. There is deep complementarity between individual agency and social arrangements. It is important to give simultaneous recognition to the centrality of individual freedom and to the force of social influences on the extent and reach of individual freedom (ibid, 1999: xi/xii)

Opportunities for self-empowerment are often limited in rural areas. In many developing countries power is centralized, often leading to top-down orientations of development processes and top-down, sometimes controlled, one-way flows of information. Therefore, social change has in chapter two been conceived of as individual social change, a process leading towards increased individual political, social and economic freedom. At the same time, I suggest a devolution of development related decision-making power, as well as a shift from an emphasis on top-down information provision to two-way and horizontal information exchange between individual people. In that perception, social change contributes to increased individual freedom to choose alternative lifestyles. In my opinion, increased individual freedoms require the presence of democratic practices, which constitute a democratic social, political and economic context to support structural social change. However, freedom and democratic practices are not just instrumental to, nor mere ends of development, but freedom (or the removal of unfreedoms, as Sen phrases it) and democracy are constitutive to development. With this in mind, social change becomes the process of removing un-freedoms and democratic deficits. In order to give a more practical meaning to the freedom perspective of social change, I discuss the freedoms I intend to address, as well as what I understand by the term democracy. The latter also allows me to define the term democratic deficit. First I will turn to the instrumental freedoms identified by Sen:

- political freedoms;
- economic facilities;
- social opportunities;
- transparency guarantees; and
- protective security (ibid, 1999: 10).

Without disclaiming specific importance of any of these freedoms and certainly not intending to neglect the interdependence of the freedoms, my focus will be on social opportunities and political freedoms, and to a slightly lesser extent on economic facilities.
The degree of political freedom in society is a central element of my argumentation. Therefore, I have to point at the importance Sen attaches to public discussion and popular political participation. One aspect is the emphasis he puts on perceiving people as active agents, rather than as passive recipients of development support. However, a clearer statement in support of an increased political participation by people is his remark on the three considerations which ‘take us in the direction of a general preeminence of basic political and liberal rights’, where he lists the following considerations for those rights:

- their direct importance in human living associated with basic capabilities (including that of political and social participation);
- their instrumental role in enhancing the hearing that people get in expressing and supporting their claims to political attention (including the claims of economic needs); and
- their constructive role in the conceptualization of needs (including the understanding of economic needs in a social context) (ibid, 1999: 148, italics added).

He subsequently convincingly refutes communitarian arguments against his emphasis on individual basic civil and political freedoms. He does so by addressing claims that freedoms and rights hamper economic growth and development, that people would prefer to have economic needs fulfilled over having political freedoms and that emphasizing political freedoms, liberties and democracy is a culturally determined bias of western nations. Sen focuses on the participatory aspects of basic civil and political rights. However, social change, as I conceive of it, also refers to independence from power structures of decision-making processes in general, and to independence from the I&c power structure in particular. Sen stresses the importance of effective news media, but mainly for the purpose of facilitating informed public discussion. However, the importance of electronic media independence for development in social and economic domains is an aspect of political freedom which seems to be slightly undervalued in Sen’s argumentation.

The final element of development of freedom to be discussed here, is Sen’s concept of capabilities. The main elements of the concept are capabilities and functionings. The two elements are closely related in that ‘capability is primarily a reflection of the freedom to achieve valuable functionings’ (ibid, 1987: 49). Sen conceives of functionings as alternative sets of achievements, or lifestyles, whereby a person’s capability identifies the real alternative lifestyles she can choose from. Sen is concerned with actual freedom, the real opportunities of a person to exercise her freedoms, or to lead the life she prefers to live. He disputes the complete priority Rawls gives to liberty over other primary social goods as insufficiently addressing the constitutive nature of freedom to a person’s development. However, he acknowledges that liberty could be more than just an ordinary primary social good or capability. A person’s capability may be reduced ‘(1) through a violation of her liberty (by someone violating her freedom over a personal domain), and (2) through some internal debilitation that she suffers’ (ibid, 1992: 87). He concludes by stating that ‘the importance of the over-all freedom to achieve cannot eliminate the special significance of negative freedom’ (ibid, 1992: 87).

Sen claims that an important drive behind the capability concept is an attempt to move ‘away from the space of commodities, incomes, utilities, etc., on to the space of the constitutive elements of living’ (ibid, 1987: 50). Nevertheless, his discussion takes place almost entirely in the economic domain. This applies to the description and elaboration of the basic freedoms, as well as to using the capability concept as an alternative method for evaluation and assessment of development. For my argument, the economic aspect of the concept is less interesting than the issue Sen addresses with his concept, namely the intrinsic differences between individual people. According to Sen, the main misconception in development theories is that people are created equal, since people differ in their various physical and personal characteristics, as well as the specific circumstances or environments in which they live. These differences are exactly what Sen addresses with his concept and which are relevant for people in rural areas. Therefore, my emphasis will be on the aspects of Sen’s capability concept which address differences between people and the consequences which those differences have on their capabilities. For now, the different meanings of Sen’s capabilities and Rawls’ primary social goods are relevant and will be discussed in the next section.
Capabilities versus primary social goods

Sen’s capabilities and Rawls’ primary social goods have different meanings. In his introduction of primary social goods, Rawls justifies his concept and rejects the utilitarian concept of happiness or satisfactions for the following reasons (using expectations instead of happiness or satisfactions):

- comparisons between people’s individual expectations, according to him, cannot be made, since accurate estimates of those expectations are virtually impossible; but
- his more fundamental ground for rejecting the utilitarian use of expectations is that he doubts ‘whether the total (or average) happiness is to be maximized in the first place’ (Rawls, 1971: 91).

He then addresses the evaluative problem of utilitarianism and states that for him it is always possible to identify the least advantaged person as long as individual positions can be ranked as better or worse. Although Rawls claims that the extent to which an evaluative method is workable is not enough grounds to accept or reject such a method, he continues his argumentation by introducing his concept of expectations of primary social goods, which constitutes a simplification for the purpose of interpersonal comparisons. He defines expectations as ‘the index of [primary social] goods which a representative individual can look forward to. One man’s expectations are greater than another’s if this index for someone in his position is greater’ (ibid, 1971: 92). For me, one of the most relevant aspects of primary social goods is that they are mostly things external to an individual, things which a rational person may desire, a major difference compared to capabilities which to a large extent represent things internal to individuals. Rawls’ primary goods may be easier to compare with Sen’s functionings, which result from an individual enjoying her capabilities. I have listed the main categories of primary social goods before as rights and liberties, opportunities and power, as well as income and wealth. However, it is more important for my conception of development that Rawls links these goods to the basic structure of society:

[The main categories of primary social goods] are social goods in view of their connection with the basic structure [of society]; liberties and powers are defined by the rules of major institutions and the distribution of income and wealth is regulated by them (ibid, 1971: 92)

This link is of interest, but the limitations of Rawls’ concept are also clear, since he considers primary social goods to be mere means, albeit necessary ones, to achieve ends. This is where the usefulness of Rawls’ concept of primary social goods ends for me and, as a result, where Sen’s capability concept becomes relevant. People are not created equal and do not start their lives from equal positions. Rawls acknowledges that, but seems to accept human inequality as a fact. The main reason he does so, is that he constructs his theory against the background of a just basic structure of society. In theory, his position is defendable, but given the disadvantaged situation of people in rural areas, as well as the intrinsic differences of people in general, his position is more difficult to maintain. Therefore, I use Sen’s capability concept to go beyond Rawls’ index of primary social goods, but without discarding or rejecting the idea of an index as such. The key issue is that Rawls’ theory is exactly that, a theory. It addresses the issue of how a just and egalitarian society should look, but not how it can be achieved if

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18 Rawls assumes that his two principles are serially ordered, fundamental liberties are always equal and there is fair equality of opportunity. He claims that the primary social goods which vary in distribution are the powers and prerogatives of authority, as well as income and wealth. He then argues that greater power and wealth tend to correlate positively, leading to his claim that individuals with the least authority tend to have the lowest income and, therefore, are worst off. According to Rawls, after identifying the least advantaged individual, he will only have to use an ordinal ranking, which means no weights have to be attributed to the key primary social goods (Rawls, 1971: 90 – 95). Since his principles are intended to improve the position of the most disadvantaged individual, he claims that no interpersonal comparisons are required.

19 Rawls later adds self-respect as perhaps the most important primary social good and states that ‘parties in the original position would wish to avoid at almost any cost the social conditions that undermine self-respect’ (Rawls, 1971: 440). Although I do not wish to reject this primary social good, I have to comment that economic inequalities and differences in enjoying liberties may very well affect people’s self-respect, so Rawls does not seem to be completely consistent on this issue.

20 In his book The Law of Peoples (1999), Rawls criticizes Sen’s capabilities and functionings as being ‘unworkable ideas’ (Rawls, 1999: 13) for interpersonal comparisons. He does acknowledge the theoretical importance of the concept, but claims that to apply it ‘calls for more information than political society can conceivably acquire and sensibly apply’ (ibid, 1999: 13a3). In the context of Rawls’ own highly theoretical argumentation, a rejection of a concept on practical grounds seems odd to me. Furthermore, it is interesting that Rawls also states that ‘political philosophy is realistically utopian when it extends what are ordinarily thought to be the limits of practical political possibility’ (ibid, 1999: 11).
the basic conditions of such a society have not been fulfilled. Therefore, my problem with Rawls’
concept of primary social goods is not with their nature and meaning, but with the fact that they do not
include a mechanism for social change towards a more egalitarian distribution of those goods. Sen’s
main problem with Rawls’ primary social goods is also that they are means to freedom within an
already just society and that primary social goods are not perceived as being constitutive to freedom. As
a result, the concept of primary social goods does not address substantive freedoms of individual people
and also does not offer any compensation for the fact that intrinsic differences between people, as well
as different individual positions in society at large, may not allow people to enjoy the same real
freedoms, despite having the same amount and number of primary social goods. Capabilities are an
individual’s enjoyed freedoms, making Sen’s concept more far reaching than Rawls’, or in Sen’s own
words:

> Since the conversion of these primary [social] goods and resources into freedom of choice over
> alternative combinations of functioning and other achievements may vary from person to
> person, equality of holdings of primary [social] goods or of resources can go hand in hand with
> serious in equalities in actual freedoms enjoyed by different persons (Sen, 1992: 81)

Based on my perception that Rawls’ primary social goods require an already just arrangement of the
basic structure of society and do not have an intrinsic mechanism favoring social change under
conditions which differ from that ideal situation, I will insert Sen’s capabilities into Rawls’ theory.
Therefore, I also assume that Sen’s capability concept covers all the primary social goods and is
intrinsically more geared to social change under less than ideal political, social and economic conditions
of a society. I conceive of Sen’s capabilities as emphasizing processes over other approaches which
conceive of development objectives as more or less static ends. This underlines my preference for
autonomy and self-empowerment in rural development, which I assume to create situations in which
people have the freedom to choose their own development objectives.

**Objectives or processes**

Despite its elusive nature, economists continue their efforts to quantify poverty, replacing poverty with
concepts as standard of living or well-being. Most efforts associate poverty with low income.
Approaches to measuring poverty use (i) a head count of the number of people below a poverty line
(converted into a percentage of the total population), (ii) income gaps, representing average additional
income needed to raise all people above the same poverty line, (iii) measurements of equality of income
amongst the poor or (iv) previous indices combined in a general poverty index. First, the focus on the
income space covers only part of the various resources available to people, which is even more valid in
rural regions with a lower degree of a money economy. Secondly, even if monetary and non-monetary
resources would be considered, not every person has similar abilities to convert resources into activities
directed at alleviating poverty. This refers again to Sen’s concept of capabilities and intrinsic
differences between people. Finally, no matter how poverty indices are defined, in my opinion, they can
never be more than evaluative instruments measuring poverty as a static entity, at a given time and in a
given place for the purpose of comparison. This static entity can subsequently be compared to other
moments in time and to situations in the same or other places. Most indices emphasize income, or other
economically quantifiable means. However, poverty could also be perceived as ‘the failure of basic
capabilities to reach certain minimally acceptable levels’ (Sen, 1985: 109).

> The basic failure that poverty implies is one of having minimally adequate capabilities, even
> though poverty is also inter alia a matter of inadequacy of the person’s economic means (the
> means to prevent the capability failure) (ibid, 1985: 111)

This takes poverty partly out of the exclusive domain of economics into a more inclusive field of all
social sciences. Defining poverty as having been deprived draws attention to more dynamic aspects,
which can be associated with poverty. In my opinion, this indicates that emphasizing processes which
cause poverty, or in a reverse situation, processes which lead to increases in real freedoms, should
prevail over focusing on objects constituting poverty by their presence or absence. I conceive of a
**process orientation** as opposed to an **objective orientation**. In my opinion, centralized power, top-
down and prescriptive development approaches, centralized decision-making, information flows
strengthening existing power structures and persisting inequalities of rights, liberties and freedoms are processes contributing to poverty. Therefore, these centralizing aspects characterize socio-political and economic contexts, which are not conducive to social change. On the other hand, devolution of decision-making power, more participation in political processes and public discussions and bottom-up oriented development approaches can be identified as processes leading to favorable conditions for improvements in well-being. All these processes are to some extent already related to the overarching process of social change and together they represent a particular subset of that process, a subset geared towards equal individual rights, liberties and empowerment of people in rural areas. Thus, a process-oriented approach leads to an emphasis on social change, aimed at increasing real freedoms enjoyed by individuals, social change as opposed to poverty, standard of living, or well-being alone.

Nevertheless, there will be some need for assessments of the efforts in the field of development. If objectives are not to be measured, certainly progress in the field of processes will have to be evaluated. Some of the pitfalls of an objective-oriented approach will reappear. How to value the processes, what about the extent to which a process exists, how to measure various aspects of the processes and how to arrive at comparisons between individuals, groups, regions, or countries? I could simply answer such questions by stating that processes cannot be approached as objectives and that questions of value and measurement do not apply in these cases. That is actually part of the answer, but more important is that I assume the mere presence of specific processes in itself to already be a positive contribution to increased freedom. However, one could argue that this leaves open the question concerning the extent to which such processes are present. Now I am only left with the question concerning the comparison. It will be extremely difficult to make similar comparisons as are made by using standard of living and related concepts. However, do I want to make such comparisons? Perhaps I do, but since the emphasis is on processes, and through them on social change in general, the time factor provides a helping hand. For I will consider only comparisons over time, leaving comparisons between people in different physical spaces aside. Therefore, the purpose of evaluation will be restricted to a specific physical space, following the presence or absence of processes over time, as well as their respective development.

Despite the stated preference for processes over objectives, as well as for self-empowerment and autonomy in determining development objectives over externally defined objectives, I have been relatively vague on how I conceive of poverty. In order to compensate for that, I would like to elaborate on the basic poverty definitions used by the UNDP. In the UNDP Poverty Report 2000, Overcoming Human Poverty, two definitions are provided for poverty. The first definition addresses income poverty, which consists of a lack of income to either satisfy basic food needs (extreme or absolute poverty), or to satisfy essential non-food needs (overall or relative poverty). The second definition concerns a lack of basic human capabilities, as illustrated by illiteracy, malnutrition, abbreviated life spans, poor maternal health and illness from preventable diseases. The UNDP offers indirect measures for the degree of human poverty, which unfortunately focus on access alone rather than on access and accessibility. I conceive of access as physical availability, e.g., of public services, whereas accessibility addresses the psychological and financial ability to actually have access to public services. My perception of poverty as "having been deprived of" in section 3.3 refers mainly to access. Therefore, I will add another dimension of poverty to my perception, which I will label "having been deprived of" the ability to access. The latter refers to accessibility and, by adding the second dimension, my conception of poverty now covers both access and accessibility from the perspective of processes. However, at an abstract level I conceive of poverty as the inability to enjoy basic political, social and economic freedoms.

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21 An example of the difference between access and accessibility with respect to information may further clarify my point of view. A large part of the discussion on the potential impact on rural development of an increased availability of information focuses on establishing physical information and communication providing outlets. The rationale behind this approach is the lack of access to information and communication services in rural areas. However, the physical presence of such an outlet does not necessarily mean that people will also be able to actually access and use those services. Generally acknowledged obstacles to access are (computer) illiteracy, limited financial means, physical distances in combination with poor transport infrastructures and a lack of awareness of the potential benefits (if any) of information and communication services. In my opinion, removing some or all of those obstacles will increase the chances of actual usage, or in other words, the accessibility.
3.5 SYNTHESIS: A CONCEPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

With my conception of development, I elaborate my perception of development as a process addressing the issues of autonomy and self-empowerment in a context of interdependence between individuals in rural areas and socio-political and economic contexts of developing nation-states. The inclusion of an overview of three political philosophies is based on my understanding of a need for a broad philosophical approach, leading to an insight into principles, which, in my opinion, should be part of the foundation of the basic structures and arrangements of a nation-state, if that nation-state is to facilitate a development towards a more egalitarian society. Liberty and equality are the two main theoretical concepts I want to address with my conception of development and since I have placed Sen’s conception of development as freedom at the heart of my conception, I focus on political, social and economic freedoms.

I envisage my conception of development to facilitate a process of positive social change for people in rural areas, whereby I use my conception of social change of chapter two (see section 2.1). In my opinion, the emphasis on people in rural areas is important, because a conception of development supporting only the socio-economic elite of a country may not have led to using Rawls’ philosophy of justice as fairness. Rawls’ suggests that his original position is a starting point for organizing basic arrangements of a just society. His argumentation makes clear that the context of his starting-point is a pluralist constitutional democracy, which is not a completely neutral position. For the purpose of facilitating rural development, I consider democratic practices as the favored political option, which means that I conceive of the bias towards democracy in Rawls’ philosophy as compatible with my conception of development. I do not conceive of any specific existing implementation of democratic principles for government as the ideal situation, but I prefer to support a general conception of democracy. This implicates a preference for the more fundamental aspects of democratic practices, such as equal liberties, social opportunities, popular political participation, decentralization and devolution of power. In that sense democratic practices are perceived as being constitutive to development.

From here I can move almost seamlessly to Sen’s capability concept, which I placed at the heart of my conception of development for its emphasis on diversity of people and on actual enjoyed freedoms. Again, this is based on the initial intention to produce a conception of development aimed at creating positive social change for people in rural areas. In that context, I will pay special attention to liberty and equality in rural development, thereby stressing Dworkin’s statement that ‘politics of democracies, (...), recognizes several independent constitutive political ideals, the most important of which are the ideals of liberty and equality’ (Dworkin, 1985: 188). I consciously opt for a negative notion of liberty at nation-state level, instead of a positive notion, of which the socialized version22, in my perception, almost by definition leads to a prescriptive type of development, if not to an authoritarian State. I conceive of this negative notion of liberty as restricting the role of the State to creating conditions for rural development in the sense of political, social and economic freedoms. Furthermore, I consider combining a negative and positive notion of individual liberty appropriate for my conception of development, where I conceive of these notions of liberty as constituting individual autonomy and empowerment in the political, social and economic domains of society. This implicates that I anticipate the State to hand over some of its powers to individuals. My preference for a process of devolution of power is based on a priority for sovereignty of citizen’s interests over sovereignty of the State’s interests. In his book The Law of Peoples (1999), Rawls argues in favor of such a preference by stating that ‘[the State] is not an autonomous agency pursuing its own bureaucratic ambitions. Moreover, it is not directed by the interests of large concentrations of private economic and corporate

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22 This refers to Isaiah Berlin’s warning against the metaphorical use at nation-state level of negative and positive notions of liberty.
power veiled from public knowledge and almost entirely free from accountability’ (Rawls, 1999: 24). I also consider a negative notion of liberty with respect to the role of the State to be appropriate to prevent situations in which liberties and rights are temporarily suspended for the sake of development. The glaring inequalities in the lives of people in rural areas also demand a strong emphasis on equality and, therefore, I perceive social change not as an objective of development, but as constitutive of development. In that context, equality is not an objective, but rather a process, an egalitarian tendency to be supported by development. Summarizing, I outline the parts of my conception of development.

- Rawls’ contractarian justice as fairness as political philosophy and I conceive of his perspective on society as a sound theoretical basis for a just arrangement of institutions in society.
- Sen’s conception of democracy (partially represented by Rawls’ theoretical concept of a pluralistic constitutional democracy) as being constitutive to development.
- Berlin’s interpretation of negative and positive notion of liberty for individual rights, combined with a negative notion of liberty with respect to State-interference. I use the notions of liberty instead of Rawls’ system of liberty, but include Rawls’ emphasis on popular political participation.
- Rawls’ conception of a law of peoples to provide a political theoretical argumentation to sustain my conception of autonomous development spheres of (self-)empowerment.
- A liberal notion of equality as suggested by Dworkin, paying more attention to the situation of individuals than Rawls and including Sen’s concept of spaces of equality.
- Sen’s conception of development as freedom of choice, with special attention for a need for public discussion, and I conceive of social change as constitutive of development.
- Sen’s capability concept, in particular its emphasis on the diversity of individuals and I replace Rawls’ primary social goods with capabilities to choose alternative lifestyles.
- A process orientation to development, which implies a restriction on possibilities for comparison, but also takes the concept out of object orientated utilitarian and strictly economic frameworks.

Summarizing, my conception of development consists of (i) individual autonomy (a negative notion of individual liberty), (ii) individual empowerment (a positive notion of individual liberty), combined with (iii) a non-interventionist State. My preference to focus on individual autonomy and empowerment does not rule out community-, or network-based people-oriented development. In my opinion, including these concepts in a conception of development would make it lean too much towards a preference for a specific prescriptive development paradigm, which to some extent I want to avoid by favoring an emphasis on abstract notions of liberty for individuals. Therefore, I conceive of an abstract notion of liberty, which has at a political level been converted into human rights24 as an accepted principle underlying most presently relevant development paradigms. My non-interventionist approach is based on a negative notion of liberty at the level of nation-states. This notion does not necessarily presume a minimal State in the libertarian context, but also does not exclude Hayek’s interpretation of such a State. However, to avoid too much ambiguity in my conception, I have adopted Rawls’ contractarian justice as fairness as a theoretical foundation for socio-political and economic arrangements of society. I have found Rawls’ conception of equality wanting and instead I use Dworkin’s interpretation, which has similarities with Sen’s perception of equality in his capability theory. In chapter five, I elaborate on the reason for including a conception of democracy, as well as on three freedoms of Sen’s development as freedom. I conceive of development as a dynamic and organic process towards increased freedoms for individuals to choose different lifestyles rather than as a set of quantifiable and measurable objectives. The next chapter contains an overview of development paradigms as an illustration of how the development discourse has evolved, and I suggest an alternative along the main lines of my conception of development.

23 In chapter five, Rawls’ idea of public reason, which by and large underlies his conception of a law of peoples, is discussed.

24 I acknowledge that liberty and human rights are not identical. In my interpretation, liberty is an abstract theoretical concept with negative and positive notions at the levels of nation-states and individuals. Due to its abstract nature, liberty is also an ambiguous concept, whereas human rights, as established in the Declaration of Human Rights, are more exactly defined, although that does not mean that those rights are not to some extent considered controversial. In my opinion, political philosophical interpretations of liberty form the theoretical and ideological basis for any political, and perhaps more practical, definition of human rights.