Introduction

There is greater dependence of governments on the governed who need to be highly motivated if a complex state-society is to function well. . . . Even if the pressure is diffuse, the sentiment of the mass of the population . . . is today a stronger factor in the power balance of a state society than ever before.

– Norbert Elias 1984 [1939]: 229

1. THE THEME: FREEDOM RISING

From the dawn of our species until recently, most people lived in poverty and insecurity, and their lives were short. Worse, with the onset of civilization, people were subjected to overlords. Ever since, state organization was tailored to perfecting human exploitation and, for millennia, growing state capacities meant increasing oppression of freedoms (Diamond 1997; Nolan & Lenksi 1999). Indeed, abandoning original freedoms was the very definition of civilization (Elias 1984 [1939]). Only recently did this trend begin to reverse itself. The first signs occurred with the English, Dutch, American, and French revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Grayling 2007). These liberal revolutions brought a game change in history: tyranny, although it continues to exist, is no longer safe; in fact, it is receding at an accelerating pace (Modelski & Gardner 2002).

That ordinary people stand up against oppression and enforce freedoms was initially an exclusive feature of the West. Yet, multiple failures of authoritarianism in other parts of the world encouraged several waves of democratization, the breakdown of communism, the Color Revolutions, and the Arab Spring (Huntington 1991; Markoff 1996; McFaul 2002; Weijnert 2005; Kalandadze & Orenstein 2009; Gause 2011). Mass pressures by people who claim freedoms were the driving force of all these revolutions (Karatnycky & Ackerman 2005; Schock 2005). Of course, as some striking cases of authoritarian resilience and revival remind us, people’s freedoms do not always carry the day (Bunce & Wolchik 2010; Levitsky & Way 2010). Nevertheless, people’s desire for
freedoms has never been voiced so powerfully, so frequently, and in so many places as today – both inside and outside democracies (Clark 2009; Tilly & Wood 2009; Carter 2012).

This book is about the human quest for freedoms and its inspirational source – the desire for emancipation: an existence free from domination. Wherever and whenever this desire awakes, it is visible in what I call emancipative values. These values constitute the motivational source of a broad process of human empowerment. The human empowerment process is pervasive. It transforms the contemporary world in multiple and yet coherent ways, some of which will be outlined on the following pages. Since emancipative values represent the “spirit” of the human empowerment process, this book focuses on the rise of these values, examining their content, drivers, and consequences.

Emancipation, the idea of existing free from domination, is a universal desire (Sen 1999). As self-aware beings with the gift of imagination, humans have an inherent wish to live free from external constraints (Deci & Ryan 2000; Haller & Hadler 2004; Fischer & Boer 2011). Even if such a thing as “free will” does not exist in an absolute sense, as some authors suggest (Harris 2012), believing in free will is part of the human psychological makeup and when this belief is shattered, several negative consequences follow: people feel less happy, and they exert less control over their selfish impulses (Ryan & Deci 2000; Baumeister, Masicampo, & DeWall 2009).

The desire for freedoms is so fundamental that all major religions address it by advocating the idea of salvation. Salvation is an inherently emancipatory idea because it promises an existence free from domination in the afterlife (Dumont 1986; Lal 1998). The difference with emancipative values is that they aim at emancipation in this life. Emancipative values constitute a secular version of the desire for freedoms.

Emancipative values adapt to existential constraints beyond people’s control. These values grow strong wherever external pressures on human life recede. Conversely, where existential pressures persist, emancipative values remain dormant. Hence, emancipative values develop in response to the variable utilities of freedoms. Where fading pressures increase the utility of freedoms, people begin to value freedoms accordingly. This utility-value link is instrumental to human livability: it keeps our values in touch with reality and helps people to adjust their life strategies to changing opportunities.

Over most of history, ordinary people’s conditions were dire and miserable (Maddison 2007; Morris 2010; Galor 2011). As long as this was the case, there was no mass basis for emancipative values. Yet, since the Industrial Revolution growing proportions of humankind experience higher living standards, longer lives, and other improved conditions. With these improvements, life transforms from a source of threats into a source of opportunities, shifting from a struggle to survive to a drive to thrive. As life becomes more promising, how people act changes from what external pressures force them to do to what inner desires encourage them to do. Thus, entire populations ascend the utility ladder of
freedoms. As this happens, practicing and tolerating freedoms becomes increasingly instrumental to taking advantage of the opportunities that a more promising life offers. This sea change in the nature of human lives does not only happen in rich Western societies. Millions of people in China, India, and other rapidly advancing societies are leaving behind poverty, oppression, and other miserable conditions (Simon 1996, 1998; Goklany 2007). As a result, the human quest for emancipation awakens; emancipative values grow strong.

This is not to deny that poverty and oppression continue to be real in parts of the world. But these parts are shrinking (Sachs 2005). Income, literacy, and longevity have never in history been at such high levels for so many people (Maddison 2007; Ridley 2010; Morris 2010). Indeed, living conditions are improving since the 1970s in most regions (Estes 1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2010; Moore & Simon 2000; Heylighen & Bernheim 2000; Lomborg 2001). Parts of sub-Saharan Africa are the exception, although recently the overall trend turns positive even there (Africa Progress Panel 2012). The same is true for the post-Soviet world: post-Soviet societies experienced deteriorating conditions after the breakdown of communism but are recovering. The three diagrams in Figure I.1 (p. 4) evidence these points with respect to ordinary people’s longevity, education, and income in regions around the world.

The incidence of war, terror, torture, and other forms of physical violence is in decline in most places since the end of decolonization (Human Security Report Project 2006; Gat 2006; Nazaretyan 2009; Pinker 2011). The global spread of democracy and the increasing prominence of human rights norms help to reduce oppression on a global scale (Huntington 1991; Markoff 1996; Moravcsik 2000; McFaul 2002; Landman 2005; Pegram 2010). The female half of the human race profits in particular from receding oppression. Patriarchy, the most enduring form of human oppression, is declining, and the status of women is steadily improving in all but a handful of societies worldwide (Walter 2001; Inglehart & Norris 2003; Strom 2003; Alexander & Welzel 2010).¹

The human condition improves even in a domain in which scholars considered such improvements impossible: subjective well-being (Easterlin 1995, 2005). As recent evidence suggests, life satisfaction and the number of “happy life years” have increased over the past thirty years in most societies for which data are available (Hagerty & Veenhoven 2006; Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, & Welzel 2008; Veenhoven 2010).²

Physical security, peace, prosperity, longevity, education, technology, democracy, rule of law, citizen rights, trust, tolerance, social movement activity, gender

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¹ Evidence for this statement is available from the United Nations Development Program’s (2011) Gender Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), which document continuous improvement in the living conditions and power sharing of women in all but a handful of societies worldwide.

² A study by Inglehart et al. (2008) shows that happiness has been increasing in fifty out of fifty-five societies worldwide for which a time series of at least fifteen years is available.
Figure I.1 Quality of Life Trends by Global Regions (1970–2010).
Trends are based on my own calculations from data for 136 countries published by the United Nations Development Program (2011). To see which country has been arranged into which region, see Appendix I (www.cambridge.org/welzel). Note that upward trends prevail throughout the past thirty years all over the world, with two exceptions: (1) longevity and prosperity in sub-Saharan Africa only rise recently; and (2) after the collapse of communism, ex-communist societies experienced a drop in quality of life, especially prosperity, but are on their way of recovery.
equality, social safety, environmental protection, and human happiness all are most advanced in postindustrial knowledge societies (Bell 1973; Toffler 1990; Drucker 1993; Florida 2002). These societies are at the forefront of the human empowerment process. People in knowledge societies experience weakening social control mechanisms, diminishing group norms, fading conformity pressures, and, more generally, individualization: a process that places behavioral control with people themselves (Wellman 1979, 2001; Beck 2002). As this happens, institutions increasingly need people’s voluntary commitment in order to function (Coleman 1990). Individualization increases the importance of people’s values as a guide for their actions. As this book demonstrates, emancipative values emerge as the psychological byproduct of individualization.

Emancipative values emphasize freedom of choice. However, the emphasis on freedom is not selfish but coupled with an emphasis on equality of opportunities. This directs people’s attention to issues of social justice. As a consequence, people become more easily upset about incidents of discrimination. The relationship of emancipative values to tolerance cuts two ways for these reasons. On the one hand, emancipative values imply more tolerance of deviant behaviors that leave other people’s personal integrity untouched. Homosexuality and other benign forms of norm deviation are more tolerated as emancipative values grow strong. On the other hand, emancipative values mean less tolerance of behaviors that violate other people’s integrity. These values make Mill’s harm principle real. Hence, sexual, racial, and other forms of discrimination are less tolerated as emancipative values grow strong. Emancipative values spawn a liberal type of tolerance. Liberal tolerance is intolerant of illiberal practices.

Understood as an orientation that emphasizes freedom of choice and equality of opportunities, emancipative values are not an entirely new phenomenon. Instead, emancipatory ideals were initially laid out in Enlightenment philosophy by authors like Kant, Mill, and Montesquieu (Grayling 2007). At the beginning of the early modern era, an ethos of emancipation inspired the liberal revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Western Europe and North America (Chirot 1994). With these beginnings, the emancipatory surge focused on such things as the abolition of slavery and serfdom and the protection of people from tyranny. Since then, the spirit of emancipation has expanded on a mass basis and no field of group discrimination is left untouched – be it racism, sexism, ageism, or other forms of injustice. Most importantly, emancipative values are emerging outside the Western world. We see them grow in Latin America, the postcommunist world, Asia, the Middle East, and, more recently, in parts of Africa. At least, as we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, this is what data from the World Values Surveys (WVS) suggest.

As emancipative values grow, they motivate a multitude of equal opportunity movements, and they make antidiscrimination norms the prime evaluation standard of the critical media and a thriving industry of “watchdog” organizations (Keane 2009). Constant public pressures from social movements and critical media confine executive power over people. In knowledge societies,
personal rights are massively expanding in what is labeled a “rights revolution” (Epp 1998; Ignatieff 2000; Franck 2001; Pinker 2011). Likewise, the protection of individuals against abuses of state and corporate power improves through a growing legislation of consumer protection, data protection, minority protection, and multiple other rights protections (Bainbridge 2000; Bagudu 2003; Freeman 2003; Switzer 2003; Carey 2004; Hibbert 2004; Long 2004; Kafka 2005; Keane 2009). At the same time, new channels of citizen participation in public policy and policy planning open up (Smith & Wales 2000; Petts 2001; Scarrow 2001; Ansell & Gingrich 2003; Cain, Egan, & Fabbrini 2003).

These trends are most advanced in knowledge societies, and the gap between them and the rest of the world is still wide. Nevertheless, other societies around the globe are catching up.

All the social changes alluded to have one thing in common: each of them, in one way or another, empowers people to exercise freedoms—including freedoms to guide their private lives and to participate in public life. But one of the most significant features of all of these changes is that their connecting theme is rarely noticed. Because of disciplinary specialization, different branches of the social sciences discuss pieces and bits of this broad change in isolation. The underlying theme that merges these multiple currents into a single stream is lost from sight. This unifying stream is a humanistic transformation of civilization that makes societies increasingly people-powered. It is best understood by what I call the human empowerment process.

Emancipative values are the inspirational source of the human empowerment process. For this reason, this book focuses on these values. The following section provides an overview of the various chapters. The subsequent section then presents a culture zone scheme and a categorization of societies along human empowerment criteria used throughout this book. The book is accompanied by an extensive Appendix, available online at www.cambridge.org/welzel. The Appendix documents every technical detail, especially as concerns measurement, and includes supplementary analyses. The Appendix also provides data for replication studies.

2. PLAN OF THE BOOK

The twelve chapters of this book are organized into four parts. Part A comprises four chapters and conveys a basic understanding of emancipative values. Part B consists of three chapters, each of which illuminates from a different angle how people’s emancipative values merge into a civic force that recreates social capital. Part C includes three chapters. They focus on a major consequence of these values’ civic force: the democratic impulse. Part D is composed of two chapters that place emancipative values in a broad civilizational perspective, examining their significance in history and their role in meeting the planetary sustainability challenge. What follows is a brief overview.

Chapter 1, A Theory of Emancipation, is conceptual. It situates emancipative values in the broader process of human empowerment. Building on Sen (1999)
and Nussbaum (2000), the chapter describes human empowerment as a process that frees human lives from external domination. Emancipative values constitute the inspirational core of this process. They empower people psychologically, strengthening their motivations to exercise freedoms. As shown in Figure 1.1 (p. 44), emancipative values complement two other elements of human empowerment: action resources and civic entitlements. Action resources empower people existentially, enhancing their capabilities to exercise freedoms. Civic entitlements empower people institutionally, widening their guarantees to exercise freedoms. Linked by emancipative values, these three elements merge into human empowerment.

Chapter 1 posits that emancipative values rise as a psychological adaptation to receding pressures on life. As existential pressures fade, people control more action resources. Consequently, people can do more things at will: they become more capable. Hence, entitlements that guarantee freedoms become useful: capable people can do more things with entitlements; they ascend the utility ladder of freedoms. Because people are perceptive the ascension does not escape their attention and they begin to desire entitlements. Rising emancipative values are the manifestation of this desire. Since values direct people’s actions toward desired outcomes, emancipative values encourage people to claim the entitlements they desire. Participation in voicing such claims expands as emancipative values become more widely shared. Shared values and joint actions among capable and motivated people create solidarity power that is difficult to resist. At some point, rulers are forced to concede the claimed entitlements and adhere to them.

If action resources are deficient, the same logic operates in the opposite direction: freedoms have lower utility for less capable people; as a consequence, people desire freedoms less and do not emphasize emancipative values as strongly; hence, little action to claim and safeguard entitlements takes place. In the absence of claims, rulers have no reason to grant entitlements; their self-interest in power maximization remains unchecked.

According to these propositions, the three elements of human empowerment – action resources, emancipative values, and civic entitlements – are connected by a single root principle: the utility ladder of freedoms. This principle refers to universal freedoms and explains when the guarantees for such freedoms become useful and desired and when they do not. The logic suggests that the three elements of human empowerment emerge sequentially: first, emancipative values emerge as a psychological reaction to grown action resources; second, civic entitlements are granted, extended, and respected in response to capable and motivated people’s solidary action. The sequence thesis of my emancipation theory summarizes these ideas, suggesting that, if freedoms grow, they grow in a sequence from utilities to values to guarantees. Yet, as this thesis’ emphasis on universal freedoms suggests, this is a collective sequence: universal freedoms grow from joint utilities to shared values to general guarantees.

All of the subsequent chapters are empirical. They test the propositions laid out in Chapter 1 using the extensive cross-national and longitudinal evidence.
from the WVS and the European Values Study (EVS). At the time of this writing, the sixth round of the WVS is still in the field but not yet completed, and the data will not be publically available for another two years. For this reason, I decided to take the last completed round of the WVS as the end point of investigation, which is round five conducted in 2005 to 2008.

Based on these data, Chapter 2, Mapping Differences, introduces a twelve-item index of emancipative values. The index is a conceptually more concise measure of Inglehart and Welzel’s (2005) “survival versus self-expression values.” In the context of a cross-cultural analysis, a key question is whether emancipative values measure a narrow Western construct that does not apply to non-Western cultures. Alternatively, emancipative values emerge as a result of expanding action resources wherever such expansions take place, regardless of cultural traditions. In testing these alternatives, I examine whether the emancipative values of people in ninety-five societies around the world are better explained by these societies’ “Westernness” or their people’s action resources. It turns out that action resources provide a much better explanation. Consequently, emancipative values are not a Western-bound concept but one induced by the expansion of people’s action resources – as the utility ladder of freedoms suggests.

Further analyses show that people’s emancipative values cluster nationwise, with great differences between the national clusters. The analysis also documents that, in each society, people’s emancipative values distribute in a single-peaked bell curve around the mean. Hence, national scores in emancipative values indicate each society’s most common level of emancipative values. They are a valid representation of a society’s center of gravity as concerns emancipatory ideals.

Within-societal differences in emancipative values along the lines of generation, gender, education, income, occupation, religion, and ethnicity also exist. And they show a meaningful pattern: on each cleavage line, the group with greater action resources emphasizes emancipative values more than the one with fewer resources – again, as the utility ladder of freedoms suggests. Hence, we obtain a social profile of who typically emphasizes emancipative values. In each society, this profile is the same: it is people living in better material conditions and people who are more educated and more widely connected – attributes that dominate in urban settings, among younger cohorts, and in knowledge professions. However, these similarities do not homogenize the values of people across societies. On the contrary, national differences in emancipative values dwarf the within-societal differences. For instance, even though university graduates are, in every nation, somewhat more emancipatory than the median resident, we find the same cross-national differences among university graduates as we find among median residents. The reason for this pattern is that people’s emancipative values take shape on the basis of the action resources that are most common in their country, and not so much on the basis of action resources that they have on top of what most others in their country have. These common action resources still differ enormously between countries.
Chapter 3, Multilevel Drivers, analyzes how individual- and societal-level characteristics interact in shaping emancipative values. Using multilevel models that cover approximately 150,000 individuals in more than ninety societies, I examine which type of action resources strengthens people’s emancipative values more: material, intellectual, or connective resources. Moreover, I analyze whether action resources matter more for the part that (a) most people have in common or (b) the part that is unique to each individual. I find two answers: (1) intellectual and connective resources strengthen emancipative values even more than do material resources; (2) for all three types of resources, it is the common part rather than the unique parts that strengthens emancipative values more. This pattern reflects an important principle: the utility ladder of freedoms is a ladder of socially shared utilities rather than individually unique utilities. There is a social dimension involved here, visible in the solidarities that surface when joint utilities nourish collective actions in pursuit of shared values.

The social dimension relates to a striking pattern that is generally neglected but reemerges throughout this book: cross-fertilization. Cross-fertilization means the amplification of a personal attribute’s inherent impulse through the attribute’s prevalence in the respective society. The emancipatory impulse of education is a case in point: education tends to make people more emancipatory in their orientations but when more people in a society are educated, this tendency becomes even stronger. Hence, highly educated people are more emancipatory when there are many of them than when there are few of them. This is a matter of social cross-fertilization: education’s inherent tendency toward emancipation amplifies when more people with that tendency come in touch with each other.

The phenomenon of cross-fertilization provides an important insight: the social prevalence of values has consequences independent of individuals’ preferences for these values. Prevalence patterns are worth their own consideration for this reason. Acknowledging this is paying tribute to culture because, as a collective phenomenon, culture is manifest precisely in the prevalence of values.

Chapter 4, Tracing Change, takes a dynamic perspective, documenting and explaining change in emancipative values across the world. Change in these values, when it occurs, is driven by two moments. First, as people’s action resources grow over the generations, younger cohorts enter societies with stronger emancipative values than did older cohorts. This is true for all culture zones of the globe, including sub-Saharan, Islamic, and Confucian societies. Next, the continuing expansion of action resources elevates each cohort’s emancipative values over time.

Building on this finding, a separate analysis examines the dominant direction of causality in the relationships among the three elements of human empowerment: action resources, emancipative values, and civic entitlements. For the first time, the societal-level relationships among these three elements are examined longitudinally and in opposite directions, using long-term temporal order models. Specifically, I examine for each element whether it affects the later presence...
of the two other elements – independent of the influence it obtains from these elements’ earlier presence.

The results establish that there is a main direction of causality, operating from action resources to emancipative values to civic entitlements. Due to these results, action resources constitute the founding element, emancipative values the linking element, and civic entitlements the completing element of human empowerment. This causal order confirms the sequence thesis of emancipation theory: first, the value of freedoms grows because the utility of freedoms has grown; then, guarantees of freedoms are established, or more effectively instituted, because the utility and value of freedoms both have risen. In short, freedoms grow in a utility-value-guarantee sequence.

Parts B and C of the book reverse the perspective. We no longer look at how emancipative values emerge. Instead, we examine the impact of emancipative values. While Part B examines in broader terms how the emergence of emancipative values infuses societies with a “civic force” that builds new social capital, Part C focuses on one particular consequence: democracy.

Three things make emancipative values a groundbreaking civic force. First, emancipative values inspire people to follow their intrinsic motivations rather than being remotely controlled. Second, the intrinsic impulse comes with increased empathy for other people’s legitimate concerns. This creates a prosocial form of individualism that sees even remote others as equals, which makes it easier for people to join forces for shared concerns. Third, emancipative values infuse people with a strong urge to take action for shared concerns. In that very sense, emancipative values create new social capital. Taken together, these facets make emancipative values a civic force that encourages people to take their lives into their own hands and to shape their societies’ agenda. Chapters 5 to 7 highlight each of these facets separately.

Chapter 5, Intrinsic Qualities, examines how emancipative values affect people’s life strategies. For this purpose, we look at how emancipative values vary the life domains that shape people’s general sense of well-being. The assumption is that most people prefer to be better rather than worse off and therefore focus on those domains that have the strongest impact on their general well-being. Using multilevel models, I find that emancipative values vary these domains very strongly. Specifically, the satisfaction people obtain from their sense of material well-being drops rapidly with rising emancipative values. At the same time, the satisfaction people receive from their sense of emotional well-being increases just as sharply, leading to a complete turnover in the determination of general well-being. I interpret this turnover as a change in strategy from seeking better material conditions to seeking deeper emotional fulfillment. This signals a shift from acquisition strategies to thriving strategies. The strategy shift does not terminate people’s search for material acquisitions, yet acquisitions are no longer an end in themselves; they are sought in as much as they serve the drive for emotional fulfillment.

Any strategy makes one more satisfied if it succeeds in obtaining its goal. However, apart from the success in obtaining the goal, the type of goal at which