Senite role sheet

**Core Beliefs**

You are a proponent of the philosophy of Amartya Sen as it is outlined in Chapter 12 of “The Idea of Justice”. This text is the foundation of your beliefs. At some moments in the game, it may be obvious how Sen’s arguments oblige you to speak and act. However, at other times it will likely be unclear how to apply the chapter’s abstract principles to current political issues. In such instances, you will need to decide for yourself what to say or do. So long as your speech and actions do not contradict your foundational principles, you will be living up to your role.

You believe that in order to judge the advantages that different people have compared with each other, we must consider the overall capabilities they manage to enjoy. This is because the *means* of good living (such as wealth) are not themselves the *ends* of good living. Instead of considering only the resources available to a person, we should focus also on the actual opportunities that person has. Differences in resources can be compounded by differential abilities to convert resources into good living. For example, disabled people typically earn less than the able-bodied, but they also have a greater need for income than the able-bodied because their disability impairs conversion of resources into good living. This “conversion handicap” compounds the initial “resource handicap”. To avert manifest injustice, we must understand and address the nature and source of capability deprivation.

**Major Goals**

You would like to see the assembly implement distributive justice in a form that increases capabilities across society. When considering whether to raise or lower national welfare provisions, you will be inclined to vote for proposals that increase capabilities, but you will likely be disinclined to support changes to the welfare system for other reasons. For example, if you encounter a proposal that purports to increase justice by increasing (or decreasing) redistribution, you will have to decide whether or not that redistribution would actually increase the capabilities of the people concerned. Recall that you do not think resources are irrelevant, but rather that resource endowments should be considered only to the extent that they can be converted into capabilities.

Your views do not directly determine your positions on immigration policy or minority rights, making you a crucial swing voter. However, you will look closely at the justifications offered by others for particular policies. These will often involve discussions of justice, and you will be very interested to know how this concept is being defined, and whether it accommodates capabilities.

Unlike some other characters, you have a separate issue of concern. The United Nations will soon review its Human Development Index (HDI), an international ranking of countries according to their level of development. The notion of development that the HDI has traditionally employed is based on capabilities, reflecting your involvement. The review, however, means there is a real possibility that that may change. You believe that the HDI should be not be revised but rather should continue to be broadly based on the notion of capabilities. It will be a major victory for you if you can convince the assembly to pass a resolution, written by you, stating as much. The purpose of doing so will be to send a message to the UN in the hope of influence its review.

 Note that your resolution does not need to outline the particulars of the HDI in any detail: your concern is with the philosophy of its overall approach. So long as you can convince the assembly to endorse your broad philosophy as it pertains to the HDI, you will have achieved a significant personal victory. But be warned: there may be other players in the game who want the HDI to take a different approach. Remember that you can bargain with factions and other indeterminates, possibly voting to support a measure of theirs in return for their support of yours. More information on the HDI is available at: [http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev](http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev" \t "_blank" \o ). See in particular the section, “Intellectual and Historical Underpinnings.”

**Tips and Strategies**

For these reasons, you are skeptical of the Uniform Liberalism approach, particularly of Rawls’ difference principle. The full rigor of social deprivation combines conversion handicaps with earnings handicaps, and any attempt to redress manifest injustice must grapple seriously with both. Understanding the nature and sources of capability deprivation and inequity is central to removing manifest injustices. The capability metric is superior to a resource metric for this purpose because it focuses on ends rather than on means, can better handle discrimination against the disabled, is properly sensitive to individual variations in functioning that have democratic import, and is well suited to guide the just delivery of public services, especially in health and education.

Among the indeterminates, any followers of Martha Nussbaum will be your closest allies, and it is difficult to imagine a situation where your positions would diverge (except perhaps her “clusters” approach to capability). Other potential allies included advocates of Michael Walzer’s idea of complex equality (should there be any in the game), which overlaps with the capabilities approach to the extent that it seeks to create multiple distinct realms of value (though a Walzerite might be prepared to tolerate more injustice across capabilities if it were counterbalanced elsewhere). If present, you are likely to agree with luck egalitarians such as K.C. Tan that distributive justice should be luck-insensitive, but whether you agree that such justice should also be choice-sensitive is up to you.

**Primary Text:**

Sen, Amartya (2009). “The Idea of Justice,“ Ch. 12 “Capabilities and Resources,“ Harvard University Press.

**Further Reading:**

Sen, Amartya (2009). “The Idea of Justice,“ Ch. 14 “Equality and Liberty,“ Harvard University Press.

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| ***Point Value*** | ***Action*** |
| **2** | **Increase national welfare provisions with focus on the disabled** |
| **1** | **Increase national welfare provisions w/o focus on disabled** |
| **1** | **You become speaker of the assembly** |
| **1** | **A difference liberal becomes speaker of the assembly** |
| **1** | **UN HDI based on capabilities** |
| **-1** | **Minority rights increased beyond equal capabilities** |
| **-2** | **Decrease national welfare provisions** |