Well-being for all
Concepts and tools for social cohesion

Trends in social cohesion, No. 20

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Foreword

Well-being is a fashionable topic today, seen on advertising billboards as well as in numerous philosophical or scientific writings on the subject. This seems natural in a society seeking to procure complete satisfaction for all its members. Thus, after a period of strong economic growth granting easy access to mass consumption, citizens' concerns are shifting towards the purpose that it arguably defeats: well-being.

A distinction should now be drawn between individual well-being, as presented for example in advertisements, and well-being for all people. The latter concept, introduced by the Council of Europe in its revised Strategy for Social Cohesion as the ultimate goal of modern society, emphasises the fact that well-being cannot be attained unless it is shared. The well-being of one part of humanity is unattainable if another part is in a state of ill-being or if it is to be achieved at the expense of future generations, who thereby inherit an uncertain world stripped of resources.

This truth is increasingly obvious in a globalised world characterised by interdependence between peoples and generations and springs from the expression of the citizens themselves. Thus, in projects developed between the Council of Europe and certain municipalities and local players giving residents, workers, secondary-level students and others the opportunity to talk about their own well-being, some key dimensions of this concept invariably turn out to be the relationship with others, social balance and forms of responsibility and commitment.

Four years after the adoption of the revised Strategy for Social Cohesion and its development by a High-Level Task Force on Social Cohesion in the 21st Century, it is plain to see that the pursuit of common well-being in consultation and participation is an essential avenue for consolidating a society based on right and shared responsibilities. The present volume in the series "Trends in Social Cohesion" provides an overview of this question, grounded both in the results of the work conducted by the Social Cohesion Development Division and in research carried out elsewhere.

Alexander Vladychenko

Director General of Social Cohesion
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Introduction

In its Strategy for Social Cohesion[1] the Council of Europe defines social cohesion as the capacity of a society to ensure well-being for all its members, minimising disparities, and accentuates the importance of "social actors" joint responsibility for its attainment.

Four years after the adoption of this strategy (and one year after it was outlined in the conclusions of the High-Level Task Force on Social Cohesion in the 21st Century[2]), the current issue of "Trends in social cohesion" presents an initial appraisal of the worth of the key concepts fundamental to the strategy, particularly well-being for all and joint responsibility. The first two articles deal with some of the results of the work of analysis and research conducted by the Social Cohesion Development Division.[3] The other five are the outcome of reflections pursued elsewhere in various contexts, which the Council of Europe has collected together in order to make them known and to proclaim the importance for our Europe of well-being, construed as everyone's right.

The first article by Gilda Farrell, Head of the Social Cohesion Development Division at the Council of Europe, examines the implications of the concept of "well-being for all" as a societal goal. She demonstrates in particular how it differs from the concept of individual well-being and adds a new dimension to the concepts of freedom, choices and preferences. She clarifies the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity and also points to opportunities for mobilising each individual's potential and for learning to appreciate the value of intangible aspects in the evolution of official policies on social cohesion.

A second article takes stock of research completed and in progress to define and measure well-being for all and social cohesion at local level (territorial entity or structure) in conjunction with the players concerned and the citizens; this is the work of Samuel Thirion, Administrative Officer in the Social Cohesion Development Division. He proposes an

1. Council of Europe Strategy for Social Cohesion, revised version, approved by the Committee of Ministers on 31 March 2004.
2. Report on the conclusions of the High-Level Task Force on Social Cohesion in the 21st Century, 2007.
3. Work carried out subsequent to the publication of *Concerted Development of Social Cohesion Indicators – Methodological Guide*, Council of Europe, 2005.

interpretation sequence which provides a link with the concept of societal progress and its measurement, while exploring the relationship between assets and well-being.

These two articles, the product of the work carried out by the Council of Europe, advocate an endogenous approach in understanding well-being, one which proceeds from the citizens themselves and forms an indispensable counterpart to more exogenous approaches that involve analysing well-being through specific research of a philosophical or scientific nature. Besides its relevance, given the intrinsic subjectivity and interactivity of the concepts of well-being and well-being for all, this approach has many advantages (transversal perspective, mutual learning processes, low costs and ease of implementation) and shows that the concept of well-being for all is multidimensional.

However, as Jean-Luc Dubois demonstrates in a third article in this volume, if one surveys the exogenous approaches to well-being in the various fields (philosophical, economic and psychological), one still encounters the same multidimensional quality of the concept of well-being.

These two types of approach to well-being, endogenous or exogenous, thus converge and bring out the importance of the intangible dimensions – to be more precise, the "recognition" of each person as a player in society. This recognition is the key for furthering processes conducive to well-being which are founded on joint responsibility or mutual responsibility.

The pattern of apportionment of responsibilities and, more generally, everything to do with governance and human relations, has a crucial function. This is certainly one of the factors accounting for the discrepancies observed in modern societies between the sense of well-being (commonly referred to as "subjective well-being") and the material aspects of well-being (usually termed "objective well-being"). Wolfang Glatzer examines these questions in detail in the fourth article, drawing some essential inferences from them.

The next question is how to apply approaches relying on joint responsibility and more inclusive governance in a context of globalisation which does not make it easy. In the fifth article, Iuli Nascimento identifies avenues in this direction both at European level and at that of local and regional authorities, taking the Île-de-France region as an example.

The fact remains that such approaches are often difficult to achieve, if not well-nigh impossible in certain contexts, especially where they target people in difficulties who, after undergoing successive cycles of exclusion, have developed withdrawal mechanisms sometimes constituting real inhibitions. In the sixth article, Catherine Redelsperger, relying on her coaching experience with people affected by long-term unemployment and over-indebtedness, comes up with devices for rebuilding a path of trust and inclusion and gradually stimulating the desire to share responsibilities.

All these thoughts prompt the question of the assets needed to fuel processes generating well-being for everyone. Over and above the private or public material assets which are obvious and have no doubt often gained inordinate importance in developed societies, these analyses reveal the importance of intangible assets (there come to mind, of course, human rights, democracy, rule of law and all the regulatory mechanisms that allow their existence). Bruno Amoroso's cogitations in the final article of this volume thus concern the value and the function of the common good as the mainstay of a true ethic of conviviality (in the sense of living communally or together in one world) and of a social vision of the future.

In conclusion, while this volume confirms the aptness of the concepts proposed by the Council of Europe as regards social cohesion, it also allows the efforts made elsewhere to be appreciated. Above all, it demonstrates that securing well-being for everyone, and for future generations, requires new paradigms and new perceptions shared by the players, including the citizens as individuals.

Gilda Farrell

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PART I – WELL-BEING FOR ALL AND CITIZENS' INVOLVEMENT: THE APPROACH OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

I. WELL-BEING FOR ALL AS THE OBJECTIVE OF SOCIAL COHESION

Gilda Farrell[1]

> "The notion of preferences only has meaning in the context of unanimous preferences" (De Finetti, 1952).

This paper considers the notion of well-being for all as one of the objectives of social cohesion. It is based on research conducted by the Council of Europe in several European towns and cities, a multinational firm and a senior secondary school, or *lycée*. The research consisted of inviting ordinary citizens, whether employees or students, to consider three questions from the standpoint of interpersonal co-operation: what does well-being mean for you, what constitutes malaise or discontent and what are you prepared to do to contribute to well-being?[2] The fundamental difference between this and other studies lies less in the questions asked than in the fact that they were put to "groups of citizens". Such an approach, which emphasises the inter-relationships between their individual life circumstances and the social, economic and institutional changes in their environment, has enabled us to "objectivise" individual perceptions and achieve a consensus on what is essential for everyone. Even though well-being is essentially experienced individually,[3] when it is considered jointly it becomes a social objective. The Council of Europe therefore believes that discussing well-being for all is an essential element of living in a community.

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1. Head of the Social Cohesion Development Division, DG Social Cohesion, Council of Europe.
2. The research was conducted in three European towns and cities: Mulhouse (France), Rovereto (Italy) and Timişoara (Romania), in the Strasbourg branch of a Finnish multinational firm (UPM) and in a Mulhouse *lycée*.
3. See article by Samuel Thirion.

1. Well-being and the well-being for all: the differences

> "Happiness is only real when shared." (Christopher McCandless, the young character in the film *Into the Wild*).[4]

As commonly understood, well-being is currently associated with what is ultimately good and thus, by implication, what is good for the individual. Various approaches can be distinguished, including hedonism (seeking the most positive balance between pleasure and pain), desire theory (satisfaction of preferences and the best possible life) and objective lists (of material and immaterial goods). Nowadays, we often associate well-being with products and forms of treatment capable of securing harmony between body and spirit, in accordance with certain standards of beauty. For evidence, it is simply necessary to enter "well-being" into a search engine. In this approach, individual well-being is closely linked to consumption.

We will use the term in a broader sense and refer to "well-being for all", as a concept that encompasses all of humanity, including future generations. The result of extending well-being to everyone is that the reference area, and the range and types of "goods" for achieving it, become universal and include interactions beyond purely local ones. The concept of well-being for all has to be a properly thought out construct, subject to constraints, consultations and mutual concessions. It embodies elements of equity and empathy and must be viewed over the long term.

If it is to become operational, that is subject to political intervention, the concept of well-being for all must apply within a defined area, such as a neighbourhood, town or factory. Nevertheless, in determining its components and the conditions that make it possible, account must be taken of the division of responsibilities between geographical areas and of the sometimes random elements of well-being that cannot be controlled at the level where the exercise is carried out.

Treating well-being for all as a universal right is not to deny those aspects that apply to individual well-being but simply shifts the focus of how it is perceived from the satisfaction of individual preferences to the

4. Book by Jon Krakauer, 1996, adapted for cinema in 2007 by Sean Penn.

formulation of agreed, or unanimous, preferences.[5] This approach also leads to the conclusion that individual well-being is a consequence not just of satisfaction and possession but also of sharing, and as such is the product of interactions: "Happiness is only real when shared". Here, the Greek word *eudaimonia*, or human flourishing, takes on a practical meaning in the form of a careful consideration of what constitute the fundamental aspects of well-being for all. This approach entails a quest for the answer to the question as to how to "be well" in society, involving an aspect of well-being likely to influence the formulation of knowledge and policies in areas such as creativity, expression, belonging, responsibility and solidarity.

The moral connotation of well-being, or how to achieve the well-being of others while still seeking one's own, thereby takes on another meaning, which is not that of virtue/goodness or obligation but rather that of understanding the interdependence between individual well-being and goods that are available to all. This approach is concerned less with maximising each individual's well-being than with inclusive optimisation, based on choices that are necessarily made in concert.

Finally, the aesthetic dimension and beauty – the capacity to transform the various spheres of community and personal lives – play leading parts as manifestations of human potential. "Making beautiful things" was one of the criteria of well-being identified by our groups of citizens. Beauty is one component of well-being.

2. The benefits of the concept of well-being for all

a. A shared vision

"Vision" is at the very heart of the definition of well-being for all. For example, the concept may not be confused with the accumulation and possession of goods, even if such assets do contribute to well-being. Without a vision, society can produce goods without adding to well-being. It is not an easy task to consider the question of vision against a

5. By unanimous preferences we mean ones about which there is a consensus, while recognising that there can always be conflicts on this question, particularly concerning the objectives of well-being of different groups of the population.

background of increasing individuality and a growing distance between how public/common and private goods are viewed.

First, however, it should be borne in mind that the Council of Europe's approach to defining well-being with ordinary citizens reintroduced an ethic of mutual responsibility, in which the participants stood aside from their individuality and immediate interests and developed their perceptions through a process of exchange. This contradicts the received view that our fellow citizens are unable to subscribe to shared visions. Emphasising a negative and egotistical individuality that condemns human beings to an exclusive concern for their own interests probably reflects an ideological viewpoint that seeks to reject each individual's potential for solidarity and sharing.

b. Another view of liberty

It is agreed that individual liberty depends on the ability to make choices and exercise responsibility. However, the dominant view, borrowed from neoclassical economics, reduces this freedom to choice in the market place. This confines the discussion to characteristics of goods that reflect individual tastes or constraints, such as price, colour or composition. It is a form of constrained or specific freedom since many of the components of goods remain invisible, opaque or not open to choice. This applies to such elements as human rights, preservation of the environment or decent working conditions, whereas taking these elements into account would lead to a more complex form of freedom of choice or a capacity for overall judgment. Because the choice of goods to maximise certain forms of utility or individual preferences is only concerned with specific elements it is not necessarily transformed into a choice of well-being. Paradoxically, too much choice or excessive fragmentation of supply may actually be to the detriment of individual freedom, since no one can choose satisfactorily from an unlimited range of goods. Moreover, this freedom is exhausted in the act of buying.

Our approach to well-being for all must reconsider the question of freedom from two standpoints:

- How can market choice be transformed into a potential creator of well-being? For example, when citizens agree to abide by collective decisions to buy local or green energy products by accepting seasonal or loyalty constraints, these "reasoned" constraints actually create freedom. They enable those concerned to discover previously unexplored means of expressing preferences that enrich each individual's capacity for overall judgment, thus increasing the impact on well-being for all.

- How can the capacity for choice in the civic or democratic arena be enhanced through the exercise of responsibility? This amounts to bridging the growing gap between ever more market choice and reduced choice in the public domain.[6]

c. *Another approach to the concept of goods*

Well-being for all is not just the exercise of a complex and reasoned form of freedom but is also rooted in the preservation and production of common goods.

A distinction must be drawn between public interest goods, such as universal self-fulfilment as a political objective,[7] involving the removal of barriers to achieving this goal, common goods and public goods.

Generally speaking, common goods are ones that are non-competitive, because their use by one person does not exclude others from benefiting at the same time, and non-excludable, in the sense that once produced consumers cannot easily be prevented from enjoying them.[8] (Pure) public goods – which by definition are non-exclusive and non-subtractive – are a particular category of common goods. Nevertheless, common goods are not all public or community goods in the broader sense. Instead, human communities find suitable combined methods of endogenous management to avoid conflict.

We shall consider material and immaterial common goods to be ones that society inherits or produces and then maintains in common. Material goods include the land, the environment, public utility services and water, while immaterial ones include knowledge, security, legality, confidence in social relationships, forms of recognition, market regulations and communal life. They are critical for well-being because increases or decreases in their supply directly affect the well-being of everyone (Donolo, 1997). They therefore point to an egalitarian vision of well-being. Awareness of their

6. For the impact of the exercise of democracy on well-being, see the works of Bruno Frey, including Frey and Stutzer, 2000.
7. Article 3 of the Italian Constitution.
8. See the article by Bruno Amoroso.

value leads to a rejection of inequalities and abuses that threaten individual well-being. To have equal well-being is to enjoy the same capacity to participate in general activities (Negri, 2006) and this is only possible if common goods continue to be produced and maintained.

In contrast to studies based on data from individual surveys, which highlight the widening gap between how people perceive their own and national assets and well-being, those taking part in the Council of Europe exercise are aware that a reduced level of common goods damages well-being (though they may be less aware of the growing gap between private affluence and public squalor).[9] They were concerned by the depletion of common goods resulting from excess pollution, green belt speculation, inadequate transport and nurseries, lack of meeting places, exclusion from the exercise of responsibilities and so on. They also recognised that the value of individual incomes varied according to the availability of common goods (Arena, 2008) and supported policies to prevent their decline and encourage their growth through active citizen participation.

These reactions suggest that, as Galbraith correctly points out (Galbraith, 2004), the perceived gap between personal and national well-being is due in part to the dominant myth of two sectors, which ascribes much higher value to private than to public assets – the personal vacuum cleaner rather than the people who collect the rubbish – but it also arises from the confusion between public and common goods. This confusion leaves citizens feeling isolated from the management of their communities.

Public goods are ones administered by the state while the very notion of a common good implies active citizen participation and responsibility. In Rovereto, for example, as part of their commitment to well-being, local citizens have offered to take responsibility for a neighbourhood of the town so that they can look after common goods and public buildings, where everyone can meet. Transparency in public administration is also considered to be a key component of well-being and an essential means of securing citizen commitment to raising the level of well-being for all. Our vision of well-being therefore implies a strong link between public and common goods, but they should not be seen as identical.

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9. See the article by Wolfgang Glatzer.

d. The key role of non-material elements in the sense of well-being

The citizen studies have shown that well-being has both material and non-material dimensions and that the latter are very important.[10]

In traditional theory, non-material aspects are practically ignored and are confined to a sense of well-being or level of satisfaction. How this so-called "subjective well-being" is measured depends on the subject. Subjective well-being is therefore usually taken to mean the satisfaction of preferences and the general conditions of life that individuals obtain from their choices and includes the notion of maximising pleasure. However, since other non-material components of well-being, such as recognition, empathy/solidarity and civic spirit, are also subjective measures, we prefer to use the term "sense of", rather than "subjective" well-being.

How do traditional approaches deal with this sense of well-being?

The relationship between economic growth, individual happiness and a sense of personal peace has been examined in various contexts and countries. Most of these studies have been based on individual surveys, with a hedonistic approach – the balance of pleasure and pain – as the common thread.

Individual responses on overall satisfaction may vary according to circumstances and different factors (Kahneman and Krueger, 2006), such as the weather, the feeling of being lucky or recent press coverage of a particular crime. Various methods have therefore been proposed to measure long-term well-being. First, a distinction is made between the retrospective and the real, using the concepts of "momentary utility" and "experienced utility" (Kahneman and Thaler, 2006). Second, in order to identify particular episodes while avoiding general assessments of respondents' lives, those concerned are asked to concentrate on specific facts or events without reference to the context, for example using the so-called day reconstruction method. The resulting U-index, which measures the proportion of time that people spend in an unpleasant state, has been proposed as a measure of society's well-being (Kahneman and Kruger, 2006: 18-21).

10. See article by Samuel Thirion.

Some of the conclusions on how this U-index can be used to measure sense of well-being (*ibidem*: 22)[11] coincide with ones we have drawn from the exercises with citizens, particularly regarding the possible influence of public policies on individuals' choices:

- First is the idea that the sense of well-being may be increased by moving from policies that encourage greater consumption to ones that promote and reinforce social contacts and relationships. In the absence of "relational goods" (Becchetti, 2005),[12] citizens call for policies that encourage the establishment of meeting places and contact points, including ones with foreign nationals and migrants, and may even propose that public buildings be set aside for that purpose.

- Then there is the notion that the sense of well-being will be assisted by a switch from policies that implicitly or explicitly emphasise the importance of income to personal well-being to ones that acknowledge individuals' worth and their contribution to society. In the absence of genuine democratic forums in which each individual's dignity and contribution is properly acknowledged, citizens claim a right of recognition and to have their voice heard in the public arena.

- Finally, there is the idea that even if people are reasonably adaptable and have fairly stable levels of satisfaction, their sense of well-being is affected by changes in the use of time. People realise that inability to manage stress is destabilising and a source of discontent and therefore view cities and towns on a human scale – accessible without too much investment in time and with properly functioning public transport and reasonably flexible and efficient bureaucracy that avoids long queues – as genuine constituents of well-being. Notions such as receiving services without queuing, doing things without feeling pressurised or having the right to make mistakes show that control of one's time is a key aspect of a sense of well-being. They show how much pressure results from the time and

11. The authors speak of "maximising subjective well-being".

12. Becchetti argues that individual and collective well-being depend not just on production and consumption but also on the ability to enjoy relational and environmental goods, which are deemed to be goods in their own right and not just inputs to the productive process.

energy invested in – for example – avoiding social disapproval of mistakes ... as if there was no longer any time to rectify them.

Nevertheless, despite these areas of convergence, other dimensions of the relationship between sense of well-being and living environment fail to emerge from the individual approach. Moreover, its very significance and the conclusions to be drawn from it need to be questioned. The "reasoned and shared" approach mobilises the human potential that is essential to achieving well-being for all and at the same time requires us to formulate the preconditions of well-being as explicit rights, that is ones that are applicable to all. These two aspects are considered below.

First, however, we should consider two aspects of the sense of well-being that affect the right to privacy and the right to exercise responsibility:

- Citizens believe that outside interference in their lives is increasing, with a consequent diminution of their freedom of choice. The sources of discontent that they cite include safety measures that prevent risk taking and being under constant surveillance or subject to constant influence. One means of achieving a sense of well-being is to develop ways of improving social and personal confidence to counter the feeling that individuals' behaviour is excessively influenced by fear and/or advertising.

- Citizens' groups have also said that there is no worse form of alienation than that of not exercising responsibility. This shows just how intolerable they find it to be denied any forum for exercising responsibility in order to influence the future direction of society. Failure to exercise such responsibility creates a feeling of personal incompleteness and inability to affect the future. A combination of universal welfare policies and policies to promote active participation in public life should contribute to a sense of well-being.

To summarise, it is difficult to resolve the issue – from a policy perspective – of what constitutes an individual sense of well-being without taking account of non-material aspects such as the opportunity to take initiatives, the exercise of responsibility, the right to make mistakes and the right to recognition. This is shown by the findings of studies in which persons have been interviewed in isolation, where suggestions on how to achieve satisfaction have concentrated on the policy area, in other words the necessary changes to public life. If the areas for change are situated in the very core of public life, surely it would make sense to employ methods right from the start which allow the communities themselves to define what those aspects of immaterial well-being are? If everyone is to enjoy a sense of well-being, there have to be changes to and extensions of rights – that is, these universal forms of recognition – and common goods.

Well-being for all is therefore much more than the sum of individuals' well-being, so to think it can be achieved without the active commitment of those concerned, namely ordinary citizens, is in some ways to deny the very essence of the concept. Agreement on what constitutes well-being opens the way to a form of community preference, based on unanimity or at least potential unanimity, which is more than just the aggregate of individual goods or preferences. Citizens have a vision of well-being in which some of the "goods" that comprise it are the product of interaction between individuals and the community, between citizens and their environment. In the studies, the participants saw well-being in terms of "meaning", "lack of fear of the future", "life projects", "exercising responsibility", "recognition of everyone's worth" and "the value of participation in the public arena", thus emphasising the interactive nature of the process.

3. A better understanding of the relationship between subjective and objective well-being

Numerous works and writers refer to the disparity between subjective and objective well-being. However, it would be more accurate to speak of the difference between the material aspects of well-being and a sense of well-being. Individuals' adaptability means that material improvements have only a short-term effect on their subjective perception of well-being. In the long term, therefore, higher income or greater wealth have no identifiable effect. There are various examples to show why the rising expectations that accompany real changes in average purchasing power nullify any sense of improvement in subjective well-being.[13]

Studies of the economy of the welfare state have already shown that there is no direct or linear relationship between objective and subjective indicators of well-being. The difference is apparently the result of a disparity that is inherent in all human kind, namely that the individual standpoint may not necessarily coincide with public experience, which is objective, because it is common to all (Da Fonseca, 2001). Nevertheless,

13. For example, in China, where average income rose by 250% between 1994 and 2005 the percentage of persons satisfied fell and the percentage of those dissatisfied rose (see Kahneman and Krueger, 2006: 16).

there seems to be confusion about the difference between objective and subjective well-being. The research carried out with citizens should be considered from three standpoints:

- The actual concept of well-being is by its nature subjective, in that it is the subject him- or herself who has to define it.[14] Nevertheless, the concept of well-being for all is a social construction.
- How can well-being be measured? The material components may be measured objectively, such as average income per head or square metres of living space per person. However, most of the non-material elements are essentially subjective, particularly where they reflect perceptions, feelings, types of use, interactions and so on.
- Finally, there are the criteria of well-being. An objective criterion is one on which there is consensus, or unanimity, and which forms part of a shared vision with others. For example, there is unanimity about housing as a key component of well-being – making it "objective". However, within this heading, criteria may differ from one person to another. Roma/Gypsies see places for their caravans as criteria whereas for others a roof over their heads is essential.

As a result, the close correlation between objective and quantitative is only relevant when "objective" is defined as being independent of the subject, whereas when "objective" also corresponds to "unanimous", the measure may also become qualitative.

The feeling of well-being as the result of complex inter-relationships

The observation, noted by numerous researchers, that an increase in wealth may coincide with fewer persons expressing satisfaction and a rise in the number who are dissatisfied, thus a lower level of perceived well-being, is the result of attempts to equate a simple, quantitative and national measurement – the increase in traded goods and services as measured by their price – with a complex, qualitative and individual phenomenon – the sense of well-being.

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14. See article by Samuel Thirion.

In studies of the economics of happiness[15] – defined by Richard Layard as "feeling good, enjoying life and wanting this feeling to continue" – the measurement of well-being includes non-quantitative elements on which there is unanimity, such as security, stability and efficient public services (Layard, 2005). Other writers have emphasised the importance of other non-quantitative elements of well-being linked to public affairs, such as the exercise of democratic rights (Frey and Stutzer, 2000). All these studies point to a complex and multidimensional definition of well-being, particularly well-being for all. We will return to this question with particular reference to the problem of how to bridge the gap between changes in material conditions and the perception of well-being.

However, there are other explanations for the disparity between rising incomes and satisfaction levels, particularly ones linked to how individuals view their past and future. According to certain writers (Easterlin, 2001), individuals tend to view the past with bitterness and the future with optimism on the assumption that their income will rise, as a result of which they adjust their aspirations. Their previous standard of life is deemed unsatisfactory in the light of current aspirations. On the other hand, future prospects are seen as positive because their rising aspirations can be met. It has also been argued that the weight of past experience declines, at the expense of social comparisons – so-called relativism – particularly when a certain income level is reached. Beyond such a level, individuals are concerned not just with their absolute well-being but also with their relative position in society.

These observations are mainly based on surveys that assume a certain element of determinism in the life cycle and are guided by an ideology that gives little thought to alternative uses of resources – both time and income – and is strictly confined to rising consumption. They are also confined to individuals' own life cycles and take no account of intergenerational relationships. Thus, they do not consider the well-being that may flow from the ability to influence the well-being of future generations.

The evidence does not support such assumptions. In Italy, for example, recent studies have shown that the new generations consider themselves to be less well-off than the previous ones and that their material well-being will not be greater than that of their parents. This breakdown of

15. See article by Jean-Luc Dubois for a discussion on the meaning of happiness and well-being.

certainty about the future poses a challenge to determinist theories about how individuals view the past and what is to come.

4. Well-being for all as a means of improving life in the community

The foregoing discussions raise the issue of whether there is a hierarchy of material and non-material components of well-being for all, or in other words whether there are priorities for improving life in the community and how best to frame the question.

This is a perfectly meaningful question when well-being for all is considered in all its complexity and multiple aspects. Thus, the Council of Europe's research shows that there are numerous criteria of well-being and that they reflect various dimensions of life in society: equitable access to rights and resources; good environmental conditions (including aesthetic aspects); the conditions for legality; relations with institutions; personal and collective relationships; time management; opportunities for everyone to develop their potential for responsibility and solidarity and their competences. How possible is it to establish hierarchies of these dimensions and where is the best place to start?

We would maintain that, by itself, no material improvement can totally satisfy individuals, though consideration must also be given to individuals and groups made vulnerable by economic processes. The well-being of the poor does depend on their access to decent material living conditions, on which there is unanimous agreement, thus making them both objectives and priorities.

However, once such unanimously agreed objective material conditions are satisfied, "recognition" becomes an acknowledged priority. "Recognition" is what our democratic societies promise and focuses on individual rights. Failure to take account of this criterion of well-being demotivates citizens in all areas of social and economic life.[16]

This can be illustrated by our analysis of well-being in a firm.[17] Here, managers and other employees drew up criteria for defining well-being

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16. Our argument here is based not on material relativism but on the idea that in societies where needs are satisfied, people compare themselves in terms of degree of recognition.

17. The exercise took place in Stracel – a branch of UPM in Strasbourg.

and indicators to measure it (Table 1) and then allocated various values to those indicators in the light of the firm's policies (Table 2). Table 2 shows that the largest gap between indicators concerns employees' perception of their commitment, over and above their obligations, compared with the level of the wage or salary received in exchange for the contracted duties. Even if the salary is acknowledged to be fair in the local context, it does not satisfy the need for recognition of the efforts made. Among the priorities[18] for increasing well-being in the firm put forward at the end of the analysis, the participants identified the need for internal management policies to improve hierarchical relationships, greater recognition for employee ideas and suggestions and more transparent and efficient communication (including orders). Admittedly, they also sought a more individually tailored pay structure, in other words one that recognised individual productive effort.

As in the case of the firm, some 30 indicators emerged unanimously from the study of well-being in local areas, and the Council of Europe has grouped these into eight families.[19] This multidimensionality is a plus for social cohesion because it opens up numerous policy options and makes it clear that any government action can be assessed on the basis of its effects on well-being, rather than purely in terms of immediate impact, therefore creating virtuous circles of well-being through the operation of induced effects. Such an approach may result in the design and application of government actions themselves being revised at an early stage.[20]

a. Well-being for all as a motivating factor

Giving priority to raising average income as a means of increasing well-being ignores the social fragmentation and resulting social immobility that growing disparities bring about, whereas well-being for all is a much more motivating concept. A discussion-based approach to defining well-being for all draws on each individual's potential to contribute to community

18. Following the participative construction of indicators of well-being in Stracel, an action plan was prepared to deal with deficiencies in well-being, particularly in the non-material domain. For information/contact see: http://w3.upm-kymmene.com/upm/internet/cms/upmcmsfr.nsf/$all/AF429D46A847490FC2257069003E5287?Open&qm=menu,0,0,0.
19. These are: means of life (individual rights); living environment; institutional relationships; social relationships; perceptions/feelings; social equilibrium; individual equilibrium; participation/commitment.
20. See article by Samuel Thirion.

life. The fact that everyone can participate makes it an inclusive concept in the real sense of the term, and includes the dimension of tolerance or the right to make mistakes.

An emphasis on general, rather than just individual, well-being means that people can work together to improve it and offers a greater insight into how interaction can help to create well-being, including the element of personal fulfilment.

b. Defining well-being in terms of rights applicable to all

One of the most important consequences of the Council of Europe research is an awareness of the need for inclusivity. Such an inclusive approach requires the criteria of well-being to be expressed in terms of "rights", in other words ones that are valid for everyone, irrespective of other circumstances. It should be noted that the rights claimed by citizens in connection with well-being go beyond existing recognised and formalised fundamental rights, because the latter are primarily material in character whereas the former also include non-material aspects. They include, for example, the right to make mistakes, to privacy, to a second chance, to exercise responsibility, to take risks without fear for one's safety, to be recognised, to express oneself in public and be heard, to influence decisions affecting the community, to equal treatment and so on. They reflect people's reaction to the failure of democracy to keep its promises or its descent into bureaucratic procedures that nullify the potential of individual participation and responsibility. If well-being is to be a universal entitlement it will need public forums in which everyone's opinions will be given their due weight.

Conclusion

Well-being for all is the product of a multiplicity of personal, occupational and economic interactions that are always subject to change. It therefore often appears unstable. The Council of Europe considers that to maintain the stability of well-being for all in the long term requires not the elimination of day-to-day hazards but the production and continuing availability of common goods, including means of offering individuals recognition, as intrinsic elements of democracy and social rights. A society that enjoys well-being has a vision of common goods that serve the dual purpose of reducing individual vulnerability and fears and increasing and protecting the scope for active participation in public life. According to Hannah Arendt and Margaret Canovan (1998), there are only two ways of countering the fear of irreversibility: forgiveness, including from our point of view the right to make mistakes, and standing by promises and commitments, including recognition of each individual and his or her potential for responsibility. Common goods are a key element of keeping the promises and meeting the commitments of well-being, as means of ensuring that everyone has a stake in and can participate in the community, including its aesthetic dimension.

The research conducted or supported by the Council of Europe offers one way forward. Even so, it has its limits. In identifying criteria, citizens do not reveal the full potential of well-being for all, which may suddenly emerge from changes in their individual relationships with markets, particularly in the field of consumption. "Consumption" is nearly always seen as a factor for personal satisfaction, apart from its environmental consequences, particularly in connection with waste disposal. It will not be possible to take on board all the different dimensions of human interaction until the production of goods ceases to take precedence over well-being for all.

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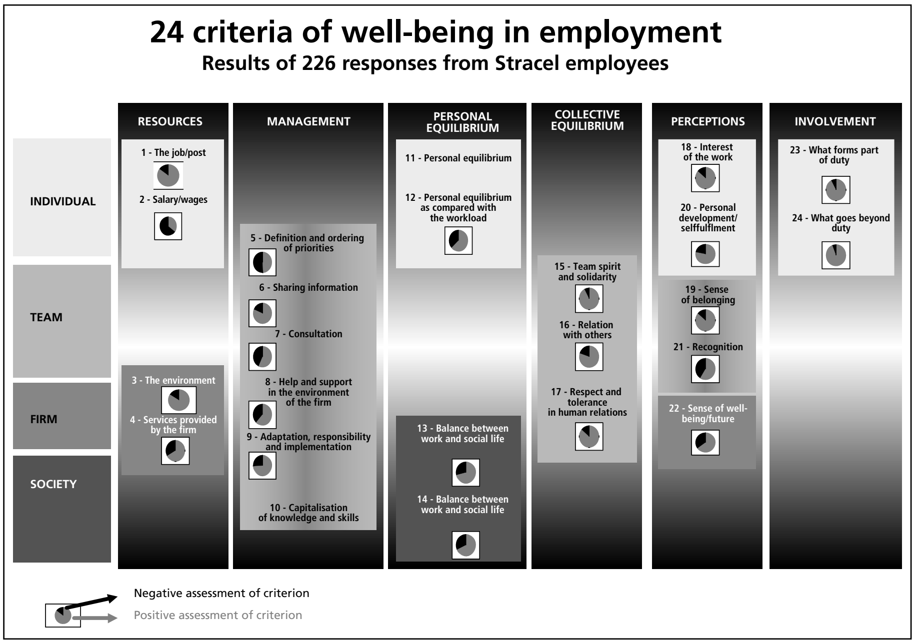
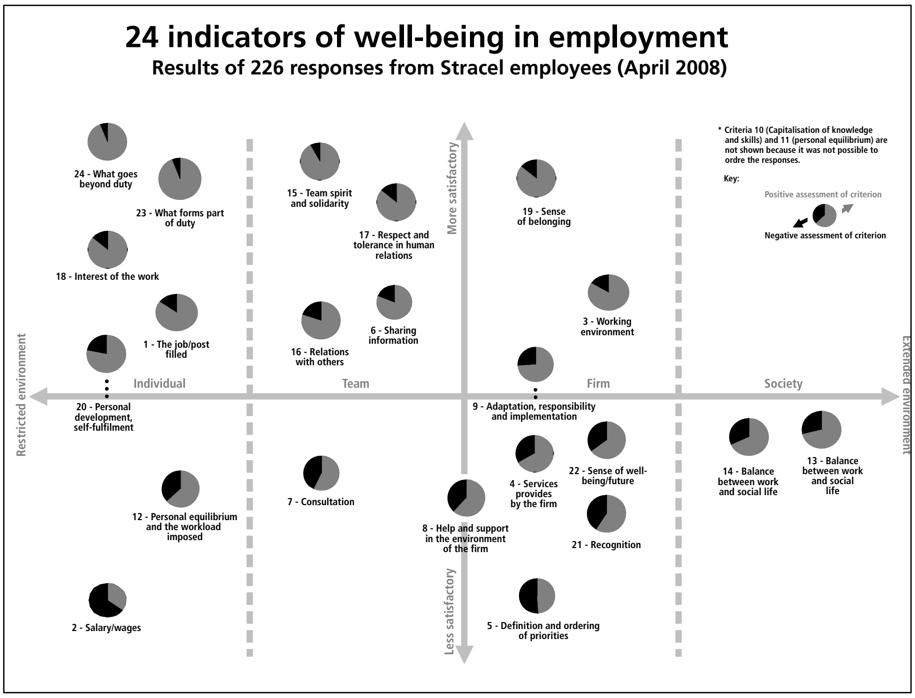
Appendix: tables

Table 1 – Indicators of well-being in employment



Source: "Indicators of Well-being in Employment", final report prepared by Cathy Fanton, consultant to the agreement between Stracel, the Council of Europe and the Strasbourg and Bas-Rhin Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Table 2 – Employee assessment of indicators of well-being in employment



Source: "Indicators of Well-being in Employment", final report prepared by Cathy Fanton, consultant to the agreement between Stracel, the Council of Europe and the Strasbourg and Bas-Rhin Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

II. Involving citizens in defining and measuring well-being and progress

Samuel Thirion[1]

Introduction

a. The need for a review of social progress indicators

Since national statistics began to be kept, gross domestic product (GDP) growth has served as the reference indicator for measuring the progress made by modern societies, chosen on the basis of a very widely accepted notion that economic growth *per se* brings greater overall well-being to humankind. This widespread belief, however, has now been cast into doubt by the realisation that growth, judged solely by this yardstick, has negative side-effects, and that populations' subjective indicators of well-being are stationary, or even in decline, as are many social and environmental indicators, while GDP continues to climb.

These contradictions necessitate a new definition of progress, making it a question for society as a whole. Thanks to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),[2] discussion of this issue has been given new impetus through the participation of a wide range of public institutions, some at international level. The fact remains that, as this is a question for society as a whole, a wide-ranging democratic debate on the subject needs to be possible, with citizens themselves as its starting point.

b. Well-being for all as a reference point

When giving thought to progress, it is quite logical to use as a reference point well-being for all.[3] Well-being is in fact defined as a reflection of the satisfaction to which all human beings aspire, as do living creatures in general. Well-being for all, future generations included (and, by a process

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1. Administrative Officer, Social Cohesion Development Division, DG Social Cohesion, Council of Europe.
2. See, *inter alia*, OECD: "Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies – Towards a Strategic Action Plan", currently in preparation.
3. See Gilda Farrell's article in this volume.

of deduction, that of the planet), is thus a reflection of society's ultimate objective in a globalised context. It must be possible for any progress indicator to refer to this objective.

The fundamental question which then arises is that of how to approach the subject of well-being: how it is to be defined, measured and used as a basis for developing social progress indicators. This question is far from banal, for it takes us into the realms of epistemology, well beyond the search for appropriate techniques to use for surveys or for composite indices. If we fail to raise the question at this level, we shall have to continue to use conventional approaches inappropriate to the nature of well-being.

This is why, once we have set out the framework of our study (part one of this article), we shall endeavour to grasp the nature of the concept of well-being, and what this implies for the way in which we define and tackle it (part two). Hence our re-examination of study methods and our devising of an appropriate approach based, de facto, on citizens themselves.

c. *The approach taken by the Council of Europe: one possible response*

This is precisely the approach that the Council of Europe decided to take in its Strategy for Social Cohesion,[4] which is based on the realisation that the developments that began in the 1970s in Europe and elsewhere and the increasing globalisation of the economy make it impossible to continue to consider human rights, especially social and economic rights, as matters for which states alone are responsible (as they are understood to be in the welfare state context), for they now have to be regarded as the responsibility of society as a whole. The shift from a welfare state to a welfare society brings with it shared responsibility for the players.[5] Therefore the Council of Europe defines social cohesion as "the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities" and places emphasis on the shared responsibility of the various stakeholders in society which is necessary to achieve this. The promotion of shared responsibility for the welfare of all presupposes that well-being can be defined as a shared objective; hence the idea of a concerted effort to devise indicators of well-being and of social cohesion.

4. Revised version of 2004.
5. See article by Bruno Amoroso.

The *Concerted Development of Social Cohesion Indicators – Methodological Guide* (hereinafter referred to as "the methodological guide") was prepared and published in 2005 (Council of Europe, 2005), and has subsequently been put to use in a number of local and regional contexts (cities, neighbourhoods, local communities) and institutions (businesses, schools, etc.), and we shall report on these applications in the third part of this article. The early results show how many dimensions there are to the concept of well-being for all. They give the concept greater meaning and enable the first pointers to be given to an understanding of its complexity. They reveal the interactive and systemic nature of the various component parts of well-being, resulting in, depending on the circumstances, either virtuous circles (generating well-being) or vicious circles (generating ill-being).

This overall, systemic view of well-being, still a very general one, is being gradually fine-tuned by the experience now being gained and through comparison with the research being done by various writers, some crucial examples of which are described in the other articles in this volume. Without making any claim to certainty about positions which are still merely theoretical, we shall, in part four, present the main conclusions and questions which emerge from our study of well-being.

1. The proposed framework of our study

a. *The key components of well-being: initial assumptions*

The methodological guide puts forward a view of social cohesion which encompasses three components (together forming a social cohesion "tree"), each with its own objective:

- the first component is the situation of individuals, represented by the foliage; the objective at this level is well-being for all;
- the second is human activities, represented by the tree trunk; the objective is shared responsibility;
- the third is social capital (trust, bonds, shared values, knowledge, etc.), represented by the tree roots; the objective is to get the tree firmly and permanently established, enabling it to withstand the conditions prevailing at any given time.

A number of key elements[6] crucial to the development of a virtuous circle of well-being have been identified (Council of Europe, 2005: 49-58) in respect of each of these components:

- component one has four: fair access; dignity and recognition of each person in his or her diversity; autonomy and personal, family and occupational development; commitment/participation of citizens;
- component two depends on responsibility being shared among the players, and on the conditions for that sharing (shared objective of well-being, citizenship, associative approach, democratic skills and an economy geared to individual and community well-being);
- component three depends on the values of citizenship (sense of justice and the common good, solidarity and responsibility, tolerance of/openness to/interest in difference), transverse links, trust and shared knowledge.

Following the research carried out by the Council of Europe in various areas and institutions in order, with the help of citizens, to produce indicators of well-being, these theories have proved particularly useful, casting light on the interaction between different dimensions of well-being (see part four of this article).

b. Well-being and (common) goods

An analysis of the factors in, and conditions of, the maximisation of well-being and minimisation of ill-being throws up the question of the resources that can be used to develop well-being, widely referred to as goods.

Bearing in mind that, by definition, a good is any resource useful to well-being for all, we need to view goods in terms of their societal function. They may be of a particular (usually private) nature, things like clothes, diaries, personal computers and so on, or they may be common goods, such as air, mutual trust, shared identities, social rights and social protec-

6. When the methodological guide was written, identification of these key elements was not based on any systematic or scientific analysis, but on general observations and thoughts which were both a matter of common sense and widely acknowledged within the Council of Europe and elsewhere; hence their status as assumptions, albeit ones which are regarded as likely and fairly logical. They cannot really be said to have been systematically verified, nor their meaning and reasons wholly understood.

tion. There are several levels within the category of common goods: a park is a common good shared by all who live nearby, whereas the air is a common good for the whole of humankind and the other creatures living on the planet.

On the basis of this definition, we shall consider six kinds of goods,[7] the first two of which take physical form, while the other four are not material goods.

The six are:

- economic goods (infrastructure, equipment, businesses, markets, etc.);
- environmental goods (soil and subsoil, water, the biosphere – namely, living beings, biodiversity and ecosystems – and air);
- human capital (population, knowledge, skills, etc.);
- social capital (human relations and bonds, trust);
- cultural capital (shared values, knowledge of history, sciences, etc.);
- institutional and political capital (democratic institutions, human rights, rules, regulatory arrangements, etc.).

Taking another look now at the social cohesion tree already referred to, let us consider the same image again, but without limiting the tree roots to social capital. We shall regard each of the six kinds of goods/capital as forming one root, with each root in turn being subdivided. What we now see is a tree depicting sustainable development, defined as society's capacity to ensure well-being for all, including future generations, in a relationship of equity, through the sharing of responsibility among the various stakeholders.

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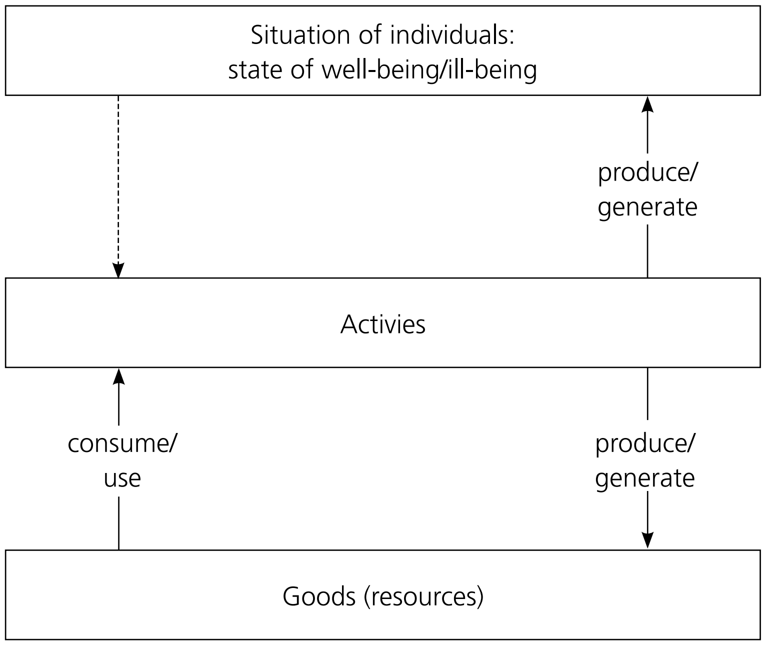
7. It should be noted that the word "capital" may be preferred to "goods" (especially when referring to non-physical aspects). "Capital" is a word which suggests something useful that accumulates and remains over a period of time to be put to good use. As we shall see from our analysis of the interaction between different dimensions of well-being, this is the characteristic which provides the fundamental distinction between good and well-being, so that they are no longer regarded as the two ends of a linear chain of cause and effect, with goods at one end and well-being at the other, but as two kinds of element interactive in a non-linear system.

The main feature of this image to be borne in mind is the three-stage structure, which is extremely helpful to anyone wishing to grasp the interrelationship between goods and well-being (see Diagram 1).

Each of the three stages is of a different kind (state, action, resources) and it is the relationship between the three and the activities in the centre that reveals the relations between goods and well-being. We see that, to a greater or lesser degree, every human activity of any kind (manufacturing, creation, services, consumption, leisure activities, etc.) leads to the consumption of some goods and the generation of other goods and well-being. The other side of the coin is that, clearly, well-being/ill-being has its own effect on activities.

Diagram 1 – The three stages of the "sustainable development tree"



c. *Well-being, goods and progress indicators*

The concept of progress bears within it the idea of drawing closer to a goal, a state that one is endeavouring to achieve. Progress along a road, for instance, is impossible to imagine unless the destination is known. Someone who is walking along may have no other ambition than to go for a walk, in which case he or she will not speak of progress, but of moving along, and of the pleasure given by the activity of walking. Even if the whereabouts and exact appearance of the objective are unknown, there must at least be some awareness of its existence and a desire to get there, before we can refer to progress. And the more precisely the objective, the direction of travel and the available paths are known, the more possible it will be to assess and to measure progress and to create appropriate indicators.

If we apply the same argument to society, we can see that, unless we have agreed on society's ultimate objective, any effort to create progress indicators is likely to be unsuccessful and unclear, or even misleading. It would be rather like picking up a tape measure to establish the distance covered without knowing which direction to take the measurement in. And the ease with which a measurement can be taken in a given direction does not make that one the right direction!

Looking back to our earlier thoughts, we could say that society's ultimate objective is to be able to ensure the well-being of both present and future generations. If we link this up to goods, we might say that it is society's ability to ensure well-being for all and the production and preservation of the requisite goods.

In order to measure progress towards that objective, therefore, we must establish the extent to which society is capable of engaging in (and effectively engages in) activities (in terms of production, consumption, leisure activities, etc.) which ensure well-being for all, while generating and preserving the necessary goods. The question arises not only of the knowledge of the situation at a given time – t (progress indicator) – but also of the knowledge of the action taken in the direction of progress: what needs to be done, in a given situation, so that society effectively engages in activities which ensure well-being for all, while generating and preserving the requisite goods.

We might therefore subdivide these questions as shown below (Table 1), highlighting the logical relationships between six questions relating to the progress of society.

Table 1 – The six questions relating to the progress of society

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Knowledge of the situation in terms of progress (progress indicators)</th><th colspan="2">Knowledge of what still needs to be done</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">1. To what extent do human activities ensure:</td><td>1.a. well-being for all?</td><td rowspan="3">2. What needs to be done so that human activities ensure:</td><td>2.a. well-being for all?</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.b. the production of the requisite goods?</td><td>2.b. the production of the requisite goods?</td></tr>
<tr><td>1.c. the preservation and beneficial use of the goods, and thus at least a balance between goods lost (e.g. through use) and goods regenerated?</td><td>2.c. the preservation and beneficial use of the goods, and thus at least a balance between goods lost (e.g. through use) and goods regenerated?</td></tr>
</table>

These questions make it easier to grasp both the benefits and limitations of GDP and the additional progress indicators that need to be developed. GDP, a measurement of economic activity in monetary terms, is in fact an indicator that can be applied only to question 1.b, and only in part: in practice it measures the goods produced that can be traded on the market, the price of which can therefore be measured, to the exclusion of all other goods (such as non-physical public property in the form of human rights, social protection, social capital, etc.). This is not the only limitation: measuring a good by its price brings several different angles into play (no account is taken of domestic or voluntary work; prices vary in the light of supply and demand; productivity improvements are not taken into account and so on), and GDP remains an overall performance indicator relating to the production of goods (annual quantities produced), thus providing indirect information about the capacity to produce goods (only those measurable in terms of price).

The progress of society measured solely in terms of GDP is subject to a great imbalance in respect of the questions already referred to where well-being for all is concerned: while considerable progress has been made in terms of the production of tradable goods (as reflected in dramatic productivity gains and the quantities of material goods available in the modern world), performance in terms of preservation is very poor, jeopardising the supply of environmental, but also other equally important, goods essential to the well-being of future generations. Performance in terms of the generation of well-being also remains well below what would be achievable with the goods available. We shall come back to this later.

There are a number of ways in which GDP can be adjusted to make it a more appropriate progress indicator, one being the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), while other new indicators have also been introduced, such as the Human Development Index (HDI).[8] As Takayoshi Kusago (2007: 89) points out, however, it is impossible to build up a system of progress indicators without reference to the question of overall satisfaction. It would also be difficult to create a satisfactory system of progress indicators simply by making a series of adjustments to GDP, without taking as the starting point some new thinking about the objectives.

Several conclusions have been drawn.

Firstly, if we give thought to the objectives, we come up with a number of questions and knowledge needs. The objective for society proposed above implies six questions, each of which arises at two levels:

- at the level of each human activity: to what extent does an activity contribute to well-being, generate goods (beneficial to well-being) and help to preserve goods, and what needs to be done in order for it to make such a contribution?
- at the level of society as a whole: to what extent do all activities make it possible in general terms to ensure well-being for all and the production and preservation of the requisite goods and what needs to be done to achieve this? A fundamental subsidiary question is how the players share out responsibility for this overall performance.

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to:

- know how to define well-being;
- be able to identify the goods that are necessary to well-being.

An overview of this "cascade" of logical relationships appears in Table 2 below.

8. See article by Wolfgang Glatzer.

Table 2 – Relationships between the objective for society, the questions raised and the knowledge needs for progress

Objective for society		**Society's capacity to ensure well-being for all and the production and preservation of the requisite goods**
Six questions	Three questions to measure progress vis-à-vis the objective for society	1. To what extent do human activities ensure i. well-being for all, ii. the production of the requisite goods and iii. their preservation?
	Three questions to find out what must be done to achieve the objective for society	2. What needs to be done so that human activities ensure i. well-being for all, ii. the production of the requisite goods and iii. their preservation?
Two levels at which these questions arise		– at the level of every human activity – at the level of all activities.
Basic knowledge needed to answer these questions		– definition of well-being – identification of the goods necessary to well-being – knowledge of the conditions of their production and preservation.

The result is 12 kinds of knowledge that need to be built up for progress:

1. definition of what constitutes well-being for all (objective of the society);
2. knowledge of current situations of well-being/ill-being (overall contribution of human activities);
3. knowledge of the contribution made by existing activities;
4. knowledge of the possible improvements of existing activities;
5. knowledge of the overall improvements to be made;
6. identification/choice of the most relevant/efficient new actions to be implemented for progress towards well-being of all;
7. knowledge of the goods necessary for well-being;

8. knowledge of existing goods (overall contribution of activities to the production and preservation of goods);
9. contribution of existing activities to the production and preservation of goods;
10. knowledge of what should be done to reconcile the generation of well-being with the production and preservation of goods for existing activities;
11. knowledge of the overall improvements to be made to reconcile the objective of well-being of all with the production and preservation of the requisite goods;
12. identification/choice of the most relevant/efficient new actions to be implemented for progress towards well-being of all and production and preservation of the requisite goods.

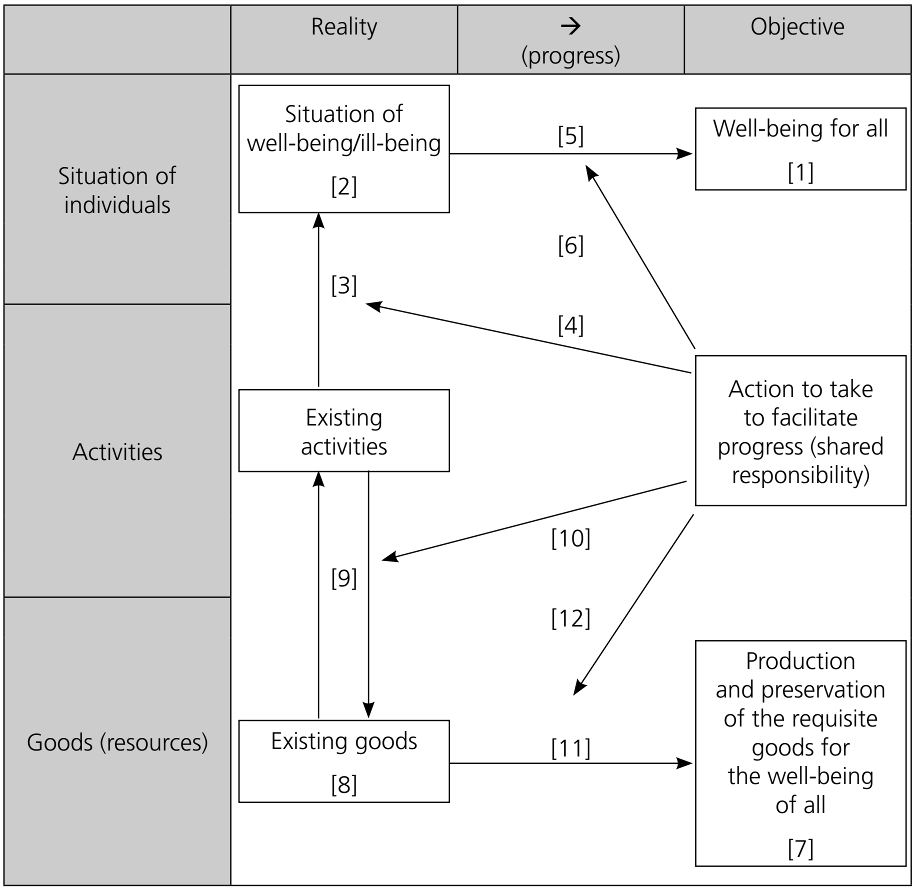
Thus it is possible to define 12 kinds of knowledge for the progress of societies. Numbered 1 to 12, these are shown in the diagram below.

The first six kinds relate to progress in terms of well-being and the remaining six to progress in terms of goods.[9] It should be noted that these are kinds of knowledge for progress rather than stages in the process of progress, since the development of these kinds of knowledge is partially iterative. For example, immaterial goods required for progress are considered throughout the process. In addition, these kinds of knowledge do not concern the implementation and follow-up to new activities.

Secondly, these questions and challenges lead to a rethink of the very functionality of the progress indicators. Because of its complexity, progress implies several kinds of regulatory action, each dovetailing with the others. In order to be feasible, each of these forms of regulatory action needs at least one indicator. A single progress indicator is thus inadequate and can only indicate the overall result; it cannot help in respect of all the interaction needed to obtain this result.

9. Without claiming to know the answer in every case, we shall endeavour to show how the research exercises conducted with citizens are casting light on the appropriate approach and on the important answers to these questions (see parts three and four of this article).

Diagram 2 – Schematic representation of the 12 knowledge requirements for progress



NB: The figures in square brackets are the numbers of the 12 kinds of knowledge referred to above.

On the other hand, a single indicator performs a vital service by showing overall performance and drawing attention to any advances or regression. It functions as a confirmatory or warning indicator.

This leads to the conclusion that, for society to progress towards its ultimate objective, an indicator of overall progress is needed, accompanied by a series of more specific indicators for each of the requisite kinds of regulatory action. By way of comparison, a good overall indicator in the health sphere would be the life expectancy of the population born in good health (health-adjusted life expectancy). This indicator gives an overall result, but provides no information about the various contributory factors. In order to make progress in the health sphere, another set of indicators is needed to point to strengths and weaknesses, so that appropriate action may be taken.

The third conclusion relates to the very nature of the progress indicators used. Progress towards an objective cannot be measured solely in terms of an open-ended quantitative indicator (such as GDP or the more appropriate GPI), without reference to an evaluation scale not based solely on relative progress (one country is more advanced than another because its GDP is higher and a country is progressing if its GDP grows and regressing if it falls). It must be possible to assess it in relation to the desired (ideal) objective and, on the other hand, in relation to the worst-case scenario, which the aim is to avoid. The United Nations' HDI, on a scale limited by a maximum and a minimum for each of its three components (income, education, health), comes closer to the concept of progress, but the figure obtained (of between 0 and 1) remains fairly abstract, for it, too, is essentially used to compare countries or make comparisons over a period of time.

In order for progress indicators to become genuine tools for detection, reflection and joint responsibility, we propose that they should be linked to a scale of evaluation which is discussed as widely and democratically as possible. In order to devise such a scale, we need to define for each indicator the ideal, good, fairly good, fairly poor and poor situation. Such a scale (in this case based on five levels, but the number of levels could be reduced or increased at will) offers the advantage of being applicable to all kinds of indicators, quantitative and qualitative. It also makes possible the adoption of qualitative indicators, each based on a number of criteria, which are vital for taking account of progress in its various dimensions. And, by using such a scale, "benchmarks" of progress in fields such as governance can be expressed as indicators.

In this article, we shall put forward a few examples of experimental application of the scale, especially in the context of work with citizens on creating indicators of well-being. Looking beyond the specific nature of each example, some transverse reference points emerge in relation to what is generally called an ideal, good, fairly good, fairly poor or poor situation. An ideal situation, for instance, is one in which not only the objective, but also its permanence (and thereby future security/sustainability/peace of mind) is achieved, whereas a poor situation is one in which not only is the objective far from being achieved, but a very high risk exists of steady deterioration and/or irreversibility of the situation. Intermediate situations involve combinations of several variables.

Taking this general principle as the starting point, we obtain a very rough impression of a possible progress indicator reflecting the general position vis-à-vis the desired objective:

- an ideal situation is that of a society capable of ensuring well-being for all, in every dimension and over the long term, meaning that it has the capacity to produce/generate and preserve the requisite goods;
- a good situation might be one in which the capacity exists to produce/generate and preserve the goods required for well-being, but without yet having achieved the ideal in terms of well-being for all;
- a fairly good situation might be one in which a certain well-being is ensured, but with the goods available neither expanding nor deteriorating;
- a fairly poor situation might be one in which well-being is obtained at the cost of deterioration/destruction of goods and resources, the renewal of which cannot be guaranteed, but without the point of irreversibility having been reached;
- a poor situation is one entailing deterioration in which irreversibility is a strong risk and the long-term costs to future generations will be high.

This definition must of course be regarded as a very general example illustrating what an overall indicator might be like. In view of its importance, such an indicator would require a more accurate and more detailed scale and, in particular, would need to be supplemented by other indicators.

2. How to approach the question of well-being (epistemological issues)

As we have already said, the definition and analysis of well-being encompasses aspects which go well beyond technical and methodological questions. The very nature of the concept invites us to take our thinking into the epistemological field. Without engaging in complex considerations, let us look at three key ideas which will point us conclusively in the right direction to deal with well-being.

The first of these ideas is that well-being is by definition a subjective concept which only the person concerned can define.

Well-being is not an ordinary item that might be studied in the same way as others through a conventional scientific approach and unless the specific characteristics of the concept are taken into account, the whole enterprise may get off on the wrong footing.

Firstly, well-being is an intrinsically subjective concept in that only the person concerned can define and assess it. This does not mean that it cannot be measured objectively, for it can if a person claims to be in a state of well-being because his or her house is large enough for his or her whole family – the amount of space being quantifiable in square metres. A distinction has to be made, however, between well-being as a concept and well-being as actually measured. That measurement may be objective or it may be subjective, depending on whether the criteria are measurable objectively (especially those relating to access to material resources) or subjectively (whenever it is a matter of somebody's opinion and especially in relation to non-material criteria, such as trust, recognition, etc.). The concept of well-being itself, however, is subjective by nature.

It is in fact impossible to say on somebody else's behalf whether he or she is in a situation of ill-being or well-being, in the same way as it is impossible to know whether somebody is in pain or not, or whether he or she feels pleasure or not. Even if it were possible to identify the specific area of the brain where pleasure or well-being is felt, and to measure the corresponding activity by electroencephalogram,[10] and even if what the person says is contradicted by evidence from the part of the brain that is active, it would not be possible to say that the person is wrong about his or her pleasure, well-being or lack thereof. At most he or she could be suspected of telling a lie. And if he or she is telling the truth, the inevitable conclusion is that well-being sometimes manifests itself in unexpected ways, for well-being is by nature a personal experience which

10. The University of Wisconsin, for instance, has come up with a series of clinical tests involving study of the different areas and intensities of brain activity, using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to measure the degree of happiness of the persons subjected to the tests. Clearly, the underlying theory relates to the areas of the brain which are usually active and the intensity of that activity, established in advance on an experimental basis (statistical repetition of the results of the experiment). If the actual feeling expressed by a test subject conflicts with the theory, it is the theory which needs to be revised or adjusted and not the subject's judgment, provided that he or she is telling the truth about his or her feeling.

cannot be described independently of the person. Thus it is impossible to define well-being from the outside and the fact that only the person concerned can define his or her own well-being has considerable implications, both scientifically and politically.

On the scientific level, it has to be recognised that all knowledge of well-being has to emanate from what the individuals concerned (citizens) say about the concept. Any attempt to predefine well-being in principle, even partially, is an intellectual exercise based on a misconception. That is what occurs whenever people's well-being is measured through their answers to specific questions about their satisfaction level in various predefined categories (housing, education, income, health, etc.).

In the political sphere, if we consider that well-being for all, society's ultimate objective, must originate with citizens themselves, it becomes obvious that they must be involved in the definition of objectives before policies are devised. It is as if a new Copernicus had announced his findings and revolutionised governance, for policy can no longer be considered and devised in terms of pre-set categories, but must have its objectives thoroughly revised and achieved on the basis of parameters defined with citizens themselves.

The second idea is that subjective does not mean irrational. Reason may be applied to the subjective.

There are nevertheless many reasons why well-being is not studied in this way, but more on the basis of predetermined definitions which impose an exogenous framework (that is, produced by the research scientist, statistician or politician) on research subjects.

The main reason for this is the tendency, often an unconscious one, to regard well-being as a momentary feeling, a variable depending on the conditions at the relevant time. This is clear, for example, in certain approaches, as in the U-index[11] method, which divides the day according to type of activities and asks the research subjects whether or not they feel well-being as they engage in each one.

This conception of well-being is based on the principle that well-being, as a subjective matter, is not connected with reason and is merely an overall response to a set of immediate endogenous and/or exogenous stimuli,

11. See article by Gilda Farrell.

comparable with a light that burns more brightly if the electric current is stronger.

From our own experience, all of us know that well-being is something far more complex, determined by a wide range of factors. Neurologists highlight the fact that satisfaction level does not depend solely on conditions at the time, but also derives from a process in which not only feelings, but also memory and reason play their part. Some findings cast interesting light on the interaction between feelings, memory, reason and satisfaction level.[12]

It is a dangerous mistake to regard well-being as unconnected with reason, for this entails a passive conception of the subject, as found in the idea of the subject as consumer (of goods for the sake of his or her well-being), leaving aside all the endogenous processes whereby we create our own individual well-being, as well as the active and collective processes whereby citizens work for well-being for all.

This tendency to dissociate well-being from reason probably stems from a degree of amalgamation between the subjective, feelings and the irrational. This very common short cut itself stems from the distinction made between, on the one hand, the objective and rational, subject to reasoning, and, on the other, the subjective and irrational, as if there could be no reasoning about what is subjective.

We shall not, in this article, detail the deep-rooted cultural and historical reasons for the highlighting of this distinction in contemporary thinking. It is enough to say that the distinction is made, albeit without any justification. Quite the contrary, for philosophers, followed by psychologists and neurologists, have demonstrated that the subjective, our feelings and emotions are completely bound up with our reason. Thus the satisfaction level beyond which individuals consider themselves happy or feel happy is often established, or at least strongly influenced, by their own reason.

Control through reason of our satisfaction level and feeling of happiness is something that every individual can try out, as suggested by Matthieu Ricard, a Tibetan monk of French origin shown by neurological tests to be

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12. See, for instance, Klingler and Théodule (2008).

"the happiest man in the world". His advice to anyone seeking happiness is to change his or her "own base line" through mind training.[13]

Reason, which plays its part in our relationship with the world in which we live, is crucial to the feeling of well-being (happiness) or ill-being (sadness).[14] It is, to some extent, what determines the rules of the game and acts as the referee, like a teacher awarding marks to pupils' test papers. The teacher, too, may decide to mark more harshly or less, or to raise or lower his or her expectations, in the light of many factors which play a part in his or her reasoning: for example the level of the test, the pupil's previous record, whether or not encouragement needs to be given, progression and so forth. The parallel drawn is a striking one, for in the same way that a teacher's character influences the decision taken on degree of harshness and tolerance, all of us as individuals have a natural tendency to react with our own level of positiveness (feeling of well-being) or negativeness (feeling of ill-being) to a given situation.

In both cases, the person's own history plays a crucial role. In the same way as the teacher can change his or her outlook (applying reason, sensitivity, etc.), the individual can work on his or her reaction level ("own base line"). In the same way as every teacher tends to apply personal criteria when marking and may assess the pupils that he or she regards as best differently from another teacher (within the bounds of certain basic common parameters), individuals will take different views of the situations which give rise to well-being, despite the points common to (almost) all individuals, which correspond to human characteristics in general (few people, for instance, would take the view that a situation of great physical suffering or constant stress gives rise to well-being).

The third idea is that well-being as an objective of society must be the subject of a reasoned democratic debate.

It is very important to take account of the fact that reason plays a vital role in well-being, as it has numerous consequences, starting in the economic field.

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13. "The important thing with mind training – probably a more useful term than meditation – is that you change your own base line. This is very different from the temporary sensation of feeling good that you might experience when you watch a Marx Brothers film. What you have to do is raise that base line". Extract from Robert Chalmers' interview with Matthieu Ricard: "Meet Mr Happy", 2007.

14. See article by Jean-Luc Dubois.

Reason casts some doubt on the assumption, expressed more explicitly by some economic scientists than others, that there is an intrinsic correlation between standard of living (and therefore purchasing power and consumption capacity) and well-being. If we take the view that reason plays a vital role in well-being, we need to rethink our economic theories, restoring reason to its proper place as a factor which generates well-being, like any other factor that plays a part in production or growth. Several fundamental facts, set out below, emerge from this.

Firstly, it places the use of progress indicators in addition to GDP in an interesting light. Whereas GDP takes account quite specifically of just total and average per capita income, and therefore purchasing power and consumption capacity (to the exclusion of public activity), it is clear that account should also be taken of individuals' capacity to reason about their own well-being and therefore to live well, individually and collectively. Growth in this capacity is in practice a fundamental criterion of progress which goes beyond GDP on its own. We shall return to this subject.

Secondly, we need to take a different view of human intelligence. If, from the economic viewpoint, we consider that only purchasing power is really important and therefore the productive capacity which enables it to progress, human intelligence – meaning the ability to meet humankind's needs – is regarded primarily in terms of technical and technological intelligence or economic intelligence in the conventional sense. If we start to consider that reason applied to well-being is also part of the economic cycle leading from resources (goods) to well-being, human intelligence will no longer be viewed solely in terms of knowledge and know-how, but also in terms of interpersonal and practical skills.

Thirdly, and probably most importantly, the application of reason to well-being cannot be solely at individual level, but must take place in a collective and societal dimension. It is all the more important to be aware of this because there is currently a new crop of reasoned approaches to well-being which are mainly of an individual nature; while these are very useful, they are certainly inadequate. One example is the "positive psychology" which offers a certain amount of advice, together with principles, rules and practices, to help each and every person to achieve happiness. Devised by Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson, this approach saw a list drawn up in 2004 of six virtues and 24 character strengths which contribute to happiness.

To consider that well-being can be achieved through individual thinking is to ignore the role of the thinking done in interaction with others. There are, however, several reasons why it is vital to go beyond a purely individual to an interactive approach when producing a formal definition of well-being:

- Firstly, for the sake of accuracy, well-being has a very strong interactive dimension and to ignore this would give rise to an extremely incomplete vision, as shown by all the research carried out on the subject. Happiness is "only real when shared", as the young hero of the film *Into the Wild* concludes after leaving his own family, where he was unhappy, to go and live in the wilds of nature in quest of true happiness.

- It brings certain direct advantages and especially contributes to the well-being of every individual: discussions of well-being cast light on each person's position relative to others, as well as being extremely helpful in terms of distinguishing between the objective and the subjective and re-establishing some degree of consistency between the two.

- Finally, there is a political reason, as part of an essential process of clarification of the objectives of society, enabling a shared vision of well-being to be created and changes to be made to short-term visions, which are often influenced by clichés or immediate impressions, without reason being applied. In this respect, what takes place is a fundamental exercise in concerted action and democracy in order to affirm a single shared and reasoned vision. So well-being for all, as an objective of society, must be able to be discussed in an open and democratic manner.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the specific nature of well-being makes it impossible to define and grasp completely other than through a two-dimensional reasoned approach that is both individual and interactive between different individuals. If statistical and neurological approaches are taken, or an approach based wholly on individual reflection, only one aspect of well-being can be dealt with, giving results which are partial, or even truncated and misleading. In other words, well-being is a subjective concept which must be able to be grasped not just by each individual, but also by all the members of a group (living in a given territory, working in a given firm, etc.).

The definition of well-being for all is thus fundamentally democratic in nature. It must be possible for citizens to play their part in the definition process.

The conventional scientific approach, for its part, will produce material relating to additional aspects, such as comparative analysis of the criteria for well-being according to context or social category, any correlation that exists between the criteria and other matters which may cast light on the factors which play a crucial role in well-being and ill-being.

3. Working with citizens to develop knowledge for societal progress – First findings from research

a. Defining well-being

On the basis of the concept of well-being described above and the shared responsibility of the relevant stakeholders for well-being for all, the Council of Europe has drawn up a method to develop, in conjunction with citizens, well-being criteria and indicators. This method has been piloted and fine-tuned in a number of areas[15] with the municipalities and local players concerned.

The fundamental principle behind this method (described in greater detail in the Appendix) is to give citizens total freedom in defining their own well-being criteria, with a link being made between individual and interactive reflection:

- individual, so as to uphold everyone's right to self-determination;
- interactive, so as to ensure a shared approach and include the social dimensions of well-being.

Application of this uncomplicated method revealed a wide range of criteria for well-being (and ill-being), highlighting the many dimensions of well-being (see below).

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15. These include Mulhouse in France, Timişoara in Romania, Rovereto in Italy and the 14th *arrondissement* in Paris, in a variety of environments (companies, schools, etc.).

b. Understanding situations of well-being/ill-being

These criteria give an idea of what constitutes well-being in an ideal situation and therefore make it possible to define the objective of well-being for all, where each criterion is fully satisfied.

The next stage is to be able to measure the differential between the actual situation and the objective, which is why it is essential to have indicators showing progress towards reaching this objective.

In view of the fact that the ideal situation (the objective) is one in which all the criteria are satisfied, the worst situation would be one in which none of the well-being criteria are met. Of course, there would also be a number of intermediate situations in which some of the criteria were fulfilled and others not at all or only partly fulfilled. For example, the criterion of having friends could be fulfilled (having many friends), not fulfilled (having no friends) or partly fulfilled (having just a few friends). In the case of well-being criteria, the focus will be on the satisfaction aspect, breaking this down into two positions: "having a sufficient number of friends" (positive position) or "not having a sufficient number of friends" (negative position).

These combinations of fulfilled and unfulfilled criteria presuppose a correlation between them. In some cases, these correlations are obvious, for example the correlation between "having a place to live" and "having access to running water" (it is not possible to have access to running water at home if you do not have somewhere to live). In other cases, the correlations are linked to local contexts. They may also be based on priority choices.

In any event, the criteria must be grouped together according to subject matter. There would be no sense in seeking to establish correlations between criteria relating to different spheres (for example, there is no intrinsic correlation between a housing criterion and an employment one). This is why the criteria have been grouped together in indicators (for example an employment indicator with all the employment-related criteria) and for each indicator there is a five-level progress scale: the ideal situation is one where all the criteria have been fulfilled, the worst situation where none of the criteria has been fulfilled and lastly the various intermediate situations in which some criteria have been satisfied and others not, bearing in mind the logical or contextual correlations between them.

Table 3 – Example of progress indicator for well-being: employment indicator

Criteria expressed in the meetings and corresponding variables for developing the indicator	Value scale for the indicator to describe the situation:					
	0 – Zero (for reference)	1 – Very poor	2 – Poor	3 – Average	4 – Good	5 – Ideal (objective achieved)
• equity in employment • fulfilling employment → Variables: 1. Job security 2. Possibilities of career advancement 3. Quality of employment (fulfilling employment – suitable working hours, fair remuneration)	Those permanently excluded from employment	Long-term unemployed having little chance of finding a job	Insecure jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment with no opportunities for career advancement – poor quality employment	Lack of job security: temporary or part-time employment but fairly easy to find other jobs and to develop professionally – poor quality employment	Permanent job but few opportunities for career change or advancement – average quality employment	Permanent job with varied work, fulfilling, suitable working hours, well paid and good opportunities for career change or advancement

Source: results of the trial carried out in Mulhouse.

This example shows the advantages of a well-being progress indicator geared to an assessment scale:

- It provides a more accurate picture of the actual situation by taking several criteria into account (for example, in the case of employment, several criteria come into play in order to assess well-being and not just a single criterion such as the unemployment rate in conventional indicators).

- It makes it possible to analyse the full range of diverse social situations without being limited to the average situation, by identifying who or what type of people correspond to each of the situations in the steps of the scale.

- It defines a progression which is readily understandable and usable by citizens and other players.

- It makes for democratic debate and consensus on the choice of steps.

The development of these indicators also makes it possible to reduce the number of well-being indicators from 100 or several hundred to some 30 or 40, broken down among seven or eight categories, as can be seen in the following example, showing the list of indicators drawn up in Timişoara (Romania).

Using these indicators, it is possible to take a snapshot of the well-being situation. The main problem at this level is the availability of data, of which there are generally very little at local level. To offset this, it is necessary to canvass citizens themselves, using a range of tools.[16] The participation of citizens and local stakeholders in general in data production has a threefold advantage: it is a means of collecting and turning to account existing knowledge (both subjective and objective), it helps reduce costs and, perhaps most importantly, it generates a common pool of knowledge which in turn contributes to social cohesion and shared responsibility.

16. These techniques will be explained in greater detail in the future methodological guide on involving citizens/communities in measuring and fostering well-being and progress: towards new concepts and tools (focus groups, surveys carried out by the stakeholders involved, etc.).

Table 4 – Summary of well-being indicators in Timişoara (Romania)

1 – Access to essential resources	2 – Living environment	3 – Relations with institutions	4 – Relations between persons	5 – Individual and social balance	6 – Feelings	7 – Participation
1.1. Employment	2.1. Environment and public areas	3.1. Institution-citizen relationships	4.1. Respect	5.1. Family	6.1. Confidence	7.1. Civic responsibility
1.2. Purchasing power	2.2. Security	3.2. Upholding of rights and non-discrimination in access to rights	4.2. Non-discrimination in human relations	5.2. Time and stress management	6.2. Fear/ calm	7.2. Involvement in civic life
1.3. Housing		3.3. Respect for and application of lawfulness	4.3. Empathy and solidarity	5.3. Personal development	6.3. Feeling of belonging	7.3. Responsibility
1.4. Health		3.4. Institutional assistance/social services	4.4. Social harmony	5.4. Social equity		7.4. Respect for public assets/the common good
1.5. Food		3.5. Civic dialogue and consultation in the decision-making process		5.5. Peace and prosperity		
1.6. Education/ training						
1.7. Culture and leisure						
1.8. Information						
1.9. Transport						

c. Understanding the contribution of each activity to well-being for all

There are two complementary ways in which the contribution of a given activity to well-being for all can be assessed:

- by analysing the impact of the activity on each indicator identified. This could be done simply by assigning a value +1, -1 or 0 depending on whether it has a positive, negative or neutral impact on each of the well-being criteria identified with citizens (this scale could be extended if greater differentiation between the levels of impact were required). The advantage in such a method, trialled in Mulhouse, is that by involving all the relevant parties it ensures that the players concerned are much more familiar with the process and, consequently, are better prepared for shared responsibility;
- by analysing the relevance of the activity in relation to the situations of ill-being identified: to what extent is the activity relevant to the criteria and groups of people for whom there are genuine situations of ill-being?

This dual analysis offers an interesting perspective since it enables the overall impact to be seen and not merely the impact in relation to a specific objective. For example, in a traditional approach, a school is assessed in terms of education, a company in terms of efficiency and economic viability, a social measure in terms of integration and so forth. Taking well-being into account highlights the multiple nature of the impact of each action.

This exercise, trialled in Mulhouse, showed, for example, how certain measures, conceived originally as social, could have equally significant effects in economic terms, and vice versa.

d. Identifying the possible improvements of each activity analysed

The other advantage in this method is that it makes it possible to find forms of improvement which go beyond the specific objective of the measure and relate to other dimensions of well-being. In Mulhouse, for example, as part of the municipal health education plan, one measure had been devised to address obesity among the most disadvantaged groups, a factor in ill-being. Basically, it involved providing support and advice to the people concerned in the choice of the food they bought and their cooking practices. The multidimensional analysis on the basis of well-being criteria highlighted the fact that it was extremely well focused on its specific objective (balanced diet) but that it made only a slight contribution to other aspects of well-being which it could otherwise have done had it been carried out in a different way.[17]

The multidimensional approach focusing on well-being for all as a societal objective therefore makes it possible to assess and devise measures in a cross-sectoral way, so as to develop linkages between different approaches which will be mutually reinforced. It is, *per se*, a factor in promoting shared responsibility between the relevant stakeholders, making it possible to go beyond sectoral policies which are often too compartmentalised in view of their predefined specific objectives.

e. Understanding the overall improvements to be made

What is the best way of moving from an improvement approach focused on specific activities to a more general approach relating to all activities?

One way would be to aggregate the impacts and relevance of the different activities that had been or were being carried out. This makes it possible to identify:

- the well-being criteria for which there is little impact and which therefore require greater attention;
- the situations of groups experiencing ill-being where no response has been provided; here new measures need to be devised or current activities adjusted.

It is in this second case that this way of proceeding is at its most meaningful. However, in the first case, two questions need to be asked:

- To what extent is it possible to amalgamate the impact of measures on each of the well-being criteria so as to assess the overall effect?
- To what extent does improvement of well-being relate solely to a balancing of the criteria?

17. For example, if instead of buying everything in a supermarket, part of the shopping had been done from alternative sources such as via collective and solidarity-based farming initiatives, the measure would have helped encourage social bonds, citizen participation, greater familiarity with local produce, etc., and would therefore have contributed to the social inclusion and well-being of those involved.

This raises the question of the independence (that is, lack of interdependence) of well-being criteria and indicators. Supposing that the various dimensions of well-being were independent of each other, it would be possible to make a linear analysis of the impact on well-being of any measure by studying it separately for each criterion and then carrying out a matrix aggregation between measures to ascertain the overall impact.

The individual impacts can be consolidated quite simply by amalgamating the values assigned at the point where each well-being criterion and measure converges, in line with the method described above. The exercise carried out in Mulhouse, based on an impact analysis of 70 measures chosen relatively randomly, helped identify the criteria for which there were insufficient measures and among these, the ones requiring urgent attention, that is, for which the assessment of the situation revealed a negative or very poor result. In this way, three critical situations were identified: insufficient equity, inadequate social mix and insufficient equality of opportunities. Accordingly, any concerted action plan should focus on remedial action.

However, this approach does not hold if we take into account the interactions between the different dimensions of well-being, where they exist. There is no evidence in these circumstances that, for example, the shortage of social mix could be filled by measures specifically targeted to this aspect, such as this criterion being taken into account in the construction of new housing units. It would doubtless have a short-term effect, but in the long term thought must be given to the interactions with other dimensions of well-being, such as recognition, non-discrimination, the creation of social bonds between social layers or dialogue.

4. Reflections on the key elements of well-being for all

It is therefore not possible to advance any further in the methods for building up knowledge for social progress without highlighting the interdependence of the various dimensions of well-being.

Accordingly, we shall focus on a comparative analysis of well-being based on the results of the research carried out.

a. Nature of the dimensions of well-being

Clearly, the exercise of developing well-being criteria and indicators will yield results that differ from one area or institution to another. Nonetheless, above and beyond the diversity of criteria and, to a lesser extent, of indicators, between seven and 10 key dimensions of well-being are seen as being constant, constituting seven to 10 categories of indicators. This would imply that they are universal dimensions of well-being, relating to the very nature of human societies. They cover very different aspects, both tangible and intangible, individual and collective, with a strong relational and social dimension. They include:

- the living environment: surroundings, living and meeting spaces, social mix and, more generally, spatial planning;
- access to the essential resources of life (socio-economic rights): food, housing, health, education, employment, income, culture, transport, etc;
- relations with public institutions: forms of dialogue and consultation, citizens' voices being heard, transparency, quality of services, etc;
- human relations, whether at a general level (recognition, solidarity, social harmony, etc.) or a more personal level (friendship, family, etc.);
- personal balance: balance between family life, working life and life as a citizen, absence of constant stress;
- social balance: equity in access to resources, social mobility, etc;
- citizen participation and commitment and manifestation of individual and collective responsibility;
- lastly, the dimensions relating to the feeling of well-being or ill-being, such as fear, calm, self-confidence, confidence in the future, etc.

In order to understand the links between these dimensions of well-being, we need to look more closely at the specific features of each one:

- The essential resources of life constitute the fundamental conditions of well-being: no one can experience well-being if they are hungry, sick, homeless, have no access to education, etc.

- The concept of balance is fundamental in well-being and is present in virtually all situations. It expresses the need for diversity and the contribution of several factors in well-being, for example the balance between family life, working life and life as a citizen, the balance between different types of activity, the balance between the level of demands made on an individual and his or her own capacity to respond, etc.
- The concept of balance goes beyond the individual level to cover the social level as well. It plays a fundamental role because the unfair distribution of resources, injustice and no possibility of upward social mobility for those on the bottom rungs are the first factors in provoking feelings of ill-being. Faced with situations in which there is no justification for certain citizens having considerably greater advantages than others, the feeling of exclusion takes hold and saps any possibility of improved well-being. This is the main explanation for the divergence that can be seen in certain wealthy countries between the increase in objective well-being (in terms of income and access to resources necessary to live) and the decrease in subjective well-being (growing feeling of ill-being).
- Social balance/imbalance encompasses relations (between persons and with institutions), governance and everything relating to each individual's participation and commitment, three other dimensions of well-being. These highlight the fundamentally societal aspect of human nature: the feeling of belonging to a community, collective responsibility and responsibility to others and practices of sharing are key factors in the ability to regulate behaviour on the basis of community interest and not merely on the individual interest which is prevalent in the animal world. Humankind has particularly developed this awareness of others, challenging the still current idea of *homo economicus* whose sole reasoning is based on self-interest.
- One's surroundings play a key role in the different dimensions of well-being, whether in terms of access to resources (housing, infrastructure, culture and information, lack of pollution), balance (towns of a manageable size, well-connected services such as the different types of transport, balanced spatial development, quality of life) or human relations (social areas, social mix, forums for meetings and discussion, etc.).

This rapid analysis throws up a number of conclusions on the significance and implications of well-being:

- An analysis in conjunction with citizens of the well-being criteria highlights the fact that well-being is not to be found solely in results but also in processes (the way things are done).

- The concept of balance illustrates the universal importance of seeking the optimum rather than the maximum. Not only does seeking maximum income no longer produce well-being but it gives rise to a feeling of ill-being because of the injustice it generates.

- Rethinking income (and the other dimensions) in terms of the optimum on the basis of the multidimensional nature of well-being leads to a reappraisal of economic reasoning. A typical example will suffice to illustrate this: viewing consumption solely in relation to its usefulness in terms of access to the essential resources of life leads one to maximise consumption in line with the income available. If other criteria were taken into account, such as responsibility, equity and the pleasure of sharing, consumer choices would no longer be geared to the maximum but to an optimum, whereby all these different criteria could be satisfied. This is what happens in daily life: in many situations we prefer to share and have less ourselves than have a great deal without the pleasure of sharing.

b. Fine-tuning the Council of Europe hypotheses in the light of the results of the research

It is therefore clear from looking at the different dimensions of well-being that the inter-relations are highly complex and can consequently be fully perceived only by approaching them as a whole rather than individually.

To this end, let us take another look at the Council of Europe hypotheses relating to the key elements of well-being. Underlying this concept is the idea that a process can develop positively or negatively depending on the "key elements" which play a decisive role. It can be seen that between these different dimensions of well-being there are chain reactions which have knock-on effects fostering either well-being or a growing sense of ill-being. We refer to virtuous circles of well-being and vicious circles of ill-being.

How can we verify that the key elements which will bring about a virtuous as opposed to a vicious circle are the ones put forward in the Council of Europe guide? Knock-on effects may occur between different dimensions of well-being, in particular between access to essential resources, the relations set up by the relevant players to guarantee everyone such access, the resulting personal and social balances, the feeling of well-being or ill-being to which this gives rise and the readiness for commitment and participation fostered in consequence, which in turn can improve relations between persons and with institutions and the personal and collective balances.

These interactions are represented (as virtuous or vicious circles) in Diagram 3.

Two key ideas emerge from this diagram:

- the central role of the relations in the interactions between the components of well-being, linking the tangible (access to essential resources and living environment) and intangible dimensions;

- the fact that there may be a virtuous or a vicious circle between the components in the upper part of the diagram.

This would tend to show that the key elements of well-being are to be found at the level of relations between persons and with institutions. They are closely linked to the way in which society and activities in general are managed, in other words governance. This could explain any disconnection between objective well-being (primarily tangible, in the lower part of the diagram) and subjective well-being (upper part), as highlighted by Wolfgang Glatzer.[18] In other words, even where all the material conditions are satisfied, poor governance may give rise to imbalances which lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and introversion.

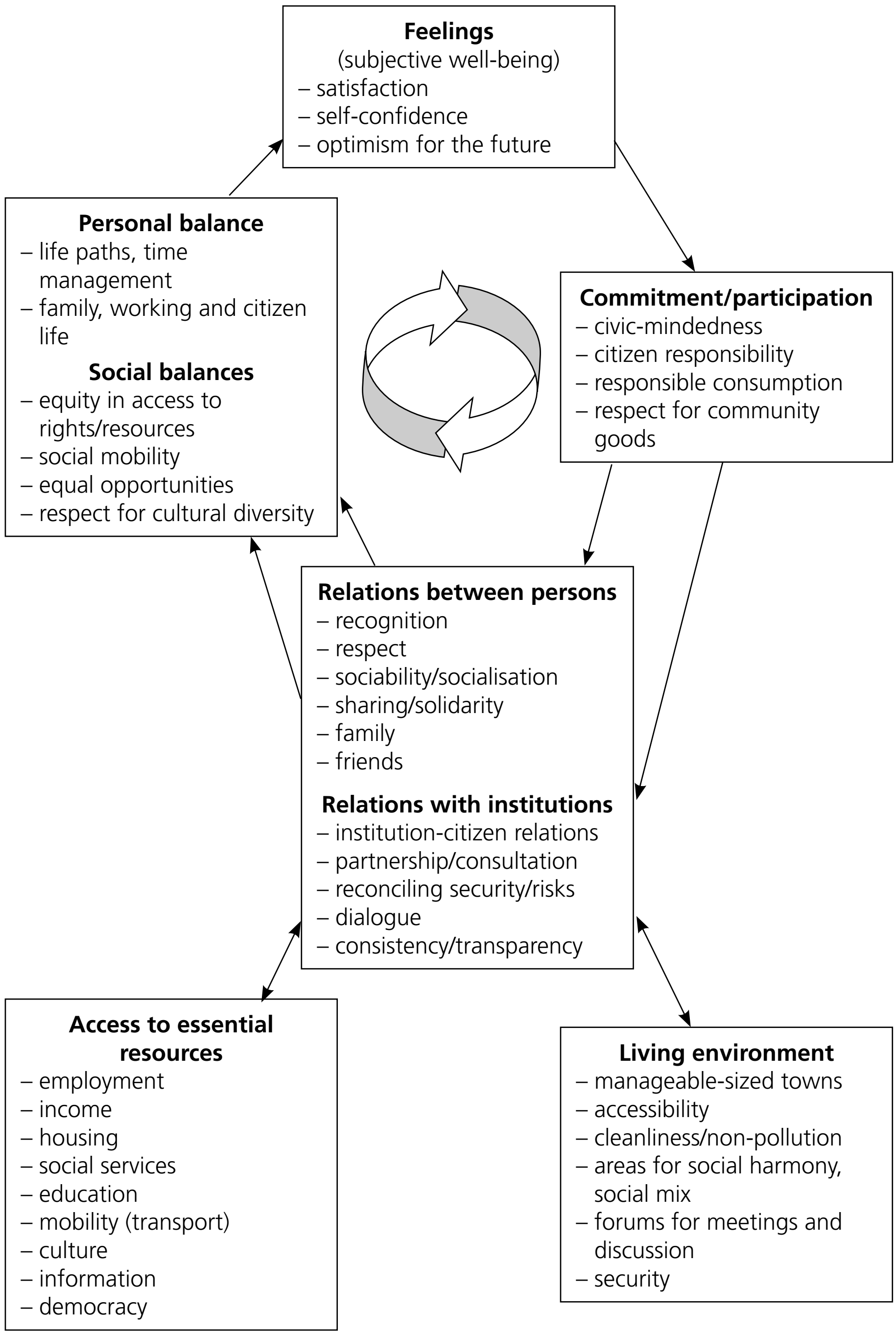
So what are the features of governance and human relations that are conducive to positive interactions (virtuous circle) and what are those that are likely to lead to a vicious circle and ill-being?

Some of the results of the research taking place could help us in attempting to answer this question.

For example, recognition (being acknowledged and listened to) is invariably the most frequent well-being criteria cited by citizens. Being acknowledged and listened to as a person and as a citizen can be found in all types of relations whether between persons or with institutions. It is a sign of inclusion in society (not merely economic inclusion, but social/societal inclusion in the sense of taking part in the way it is run). Governance

18. See his article in this volume.

Diagram 3 – Interactions between dimensions of well-being with examples of indicators



which fosters well-being is therefore inclusive governance where everyone is a stakeholder in the management of society at his or her own level and is recognised as such, whereas governance which fosters ill-being is one which does not enable this or which makes it difficult.

Second, there are many criteria relating to balance (personal or social) which emerge in all exercises. This is understandable if one takes the view (as suggested in the diagram) that feelings of well-being or ill-being can be traced back to questions of balance. The idea of recognition also plays a part here: it is not merely a question of recognising citizens as stakeholders in the society (or institution) but as individuals who, like any other, have the right to a life path and needs in terms of personal balance (time management, etc.). Social balances (equity in access to rights and resources and its corollaries: social mobility, equal opportunities, respect for cultural differences) are the very reflection of the recognition of everyone, without discrimination, as fully-fledged persons.

Returning to the hypotheses on key elements set out in the methodological guide, shared responsibility for well-being for all appropriately expresses the idea of inclusive governance geared towards each individual's social and personal balances. Shared responsibility is the very embodiment of the idea of everybody's interests being taken into account by everybody and, therefore, of governance based on everybody's commitment and participation so that all can find their place in accordance with their needs and abilities. The concept of shared responsibility can be seen as signifying harmonious co-existence or a relationship between co-subjects where each subject considers, along with the others, all humans and living beings and not only themselves. It ties in with the idea of the associative approach at the level of each individual living space, institution, territory or indeed the planet as a whole (a concept also set out in the methodological guide as a key element of social cohesion).

The four key elements concerning individual situations relate to the objectives pursued by a virtuous circle of well-being in terms of its four dimensions: recognition in human relations and governance; autonomy and personal, family and occupational development in personal balances; equity in access for social balances; and participation/commitment. The feeling of well-being is the outcome of achieving these four objectives.

In conclusion, shared responsibility is a means of linking material aspects, forming balances and subjective perceptions. It consolidates citizen participation and commitment and signifies the idea of harmonious co-existence or a relationship between co-subjects. Based on this, one could, in a manner of speaking, reformulate Stefan Klein's "magic triangle" made up of a sense of civic duty, social balance and mastery of one's own fate (Klein, 2006), adding that all these aspects need a regulatory function both regarding material matters and in respect of the acknowledgement of everybody's contribution.

c. *Breaking free from the "vicious circle"*

The key elements of well-being relating to the concept of shared responsibility point the way towards an ideal "well-being for all" situation. However, they do not shed any light on how to overcome certain obstacles in order to be able to break free from a situation of ill-being.

Vicious circles of ill-being comprise stumbling blocks that require special action. For example, as Catherine Redelsperger points out,[19] individuals either in long-term unemployment, who experience severe problems in their work, or who suffer from over-indebtedness (all of which are processes giving rise to ill-being) tend to withdraw into themselves to avoid repeating a negative experience. One of the most extreme cases is that of the "self-exclusion" of persons drawn into repeated processes of exclusion from a feeling of guilt.

In such cases, the way out requires another person to listen, not pass judgment, and to suggest other paths. Here again, the key elements for the way out of ill-being are to be found in relations with others, dialogue, empathy, solidarity, everything inherent in the co-subject relationship discussed above.

However, the obstacles to the exercise of (shared) responsibility at the level of society are immense. Particularly in the case of the poor and the victims of exclusion, apportioning the blame for their situation on them obviates the need to admit mutual responsibility; blaming others is the first stage in abdicating one's own responsibility and is therefore the opposite of co-responsibility.

In addition to apportioning blame, other social phenomena lead to individuals being stuck in ill-being: one's contribution to society not being recognised, one's voice in the public arena counting for little unless one belongs to the groups in power, information in the hands of a monopoly and others.

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19. See her article in this volume.

d. Shared responsibility as an ethical stance

Allocating blame and denying people the opportunity to exercise responsibility are to be found in several spheres of life in society. In the social field in particular, the theories and practices based on attributing responsibility for poverty to poor people themselves are taking over from the idea of the social state and citizen solidarity.

To understand why, we need to look at the legitimisation of these negative trends, that is, those reflecting selfishness, egocentrism and defence of one's own interests above those of others (dissociative approaches) rather than empathy and solidarity (associative approaches). Once these trends and practices are acknowledged as legitimate and there are no rules outlawing or forbidding them, they easily take root as they are a much easier choice than shared responsibility.

In the history of humanity, there have been examples of periods where the legitimisation of (or simply failure to condemn) these trends has led to regression and sometimes disaster, followed by periods where, learning lessons from these outcomes, society incorporated new rules and forms of regulation based on responsible co-existence. The most telling example in modern European history is the period 1920 to 1945 when the legitimisation of non-tolerance and dictatorship led to great atrocities. This was followed by a period of learning respect for difference, the dignity and autonomy of every individual and citizen participation, as a result of the emphasis on human rights and the whole process which ensued, in which the Council of Europe and other national and international institutions have played a key role.

Today, legitimisation of abdication of responsibility and its corollary, attributing blame, leads to situations of widespread ill-being which, in turn, gives rise to rejection and negligence bringing with it the risk of disaster if the paucity of resources requires increased capacity for sharing and co-existence. More than ever, there is a need for a new ethical stance of shared responsibility for well-being for all, a complementary aspect of human rights for co-existence.

Whereas human rights and the associated rules are legal and institutional in nature and fall above all into the public sphere, a matter for states and governmental or intergovernmental organisations, shared responsibility is a matter of ethics, because it is inseparable from inter-player relations: it cannot therefore be decreed but has to be learned empirically from rules and practices. Ethics here means knowledge developed in a reasoned way, from the interaction between subjects and structures. In a manner of speaking, it is the ability to live together harmoniously, based on rules between players (in a local, regional or national setting, or in an institution – company, department, etc.) among themselves and/or in their dealings with the outside world. This could be termed reasoned ethics, developed in an interaction between subjects, differentiated from morality which is rather a set of rules generally laid down by a higher entity.

Conclusions

The above analysis gives us a clearer idea of how to respond to the knowledge requirements for progress.

Let us first of all look again at the knowledge requirements relating to well-being (see Diagram 2). Taking account of the key elements of well-being introduces a second dimension into the analysis of the relevance of activities (either already existing or new activities), that is, relevance in terms of helping strengthen these key elements. This is a particularly important assessment criterion as it highlights the particular added value of activities which give rise to shared responsibility and other related key elements, especially equity in access. It also gives some guidance for identifying the improvements to be made to each activity taken individually. Lastly, it involves consideration being given to two dimensions in seeking consistency among activities (understanding the overall improvements to be made):

- to ensure that situations of ill-being are indeed taken into account;
- to enable full expression of shared responsibility for well-being for all.

With regard to knowledge for progress in terms of goods, the research carried out since 2006 have not yet reached the point where answers to methodological questions are clearly available. Nonetheless, a number of methodological approaches to be followed have clearly emerged.

For example, with regard to the knowledge of the goods necessary for well-being, the analysis above has demonstrated the vital role played by intangible assets, particularly vision and the rules which subjects (citizens, stakeholders) draw up and lay down to ensure together well-being for all. It is these common rules and vision which make it possible to identify what is necessary for well-being and to respond to questions relating to goods. In contrast, without vision, everybody would be functioning individually, “blindly” seeking forms of compensation for non-material ill-being in material goods, without any real understanding of what it is they are looking for.

This is much more than just rules, it is a genuine culture of harmonious co-existence. It is built up gradually. The processes of reflecting on well-being for all and the way of achieving this together, as described above, can act as catalysts.

However, as we have already seen, this culture of harmonious co-existence is fragile. Abdication of responsibility and attributing blame can gain the upper hand, especially in times of tension, and give rise to ill-being. More generally, all forms of non-recognition, discrimination, contempt, lack of transparency or unjust access to resources or similar can give rise to vicious circles leading to ill-being (distrust, insecurity, etc.), run counter to the ability to live together harmoniously and can, in a very short space of time, destroy years of effort.

This is why, if well-being for all is to be secured in a sustainable way, harmonious co-existence cannot be limited to an informal common culture. It must be formalised with precision, providing for socio-institutional bodies and instruments of practical implementation, monitoring and remedy.

Human rights and the associated rights (democracy, rule of law) are a fundamental achievement in this regard as they lay down the limits which must not be overstepped in order to avoid falling into vicious circles of ill-being and the destruction of common goods.

However, as we have said, rights are just one facet of the rules of harmonious co-existence. They have to be supplemented by responsibilities which are the other side of the coin and which must be developed in line with a reasoned ethical stance by the interactions inherent in a form of governance that makes room for shared responsibility and, in particular, consultation and the principle of autonomy versus responsibility.

In addition to intangible goods, well-being presupposes the preservation of material goods and the conditions which will allow each human community to secure access by all to basic needs (housing, education, health, employment, etc.).

Identifying the goods necessary for well-being is a complex but essential task, so as to have a reference framework (ideal situation) in order to assess existing goods (stage seven). The differential between what exists and what is required must be determined not only in static terms but also in terms of trends (tendency towards optimisation or, in contrast, deterioration), so as to be able to assess the impact and relevance of existing activities and identify what has to be done, either for each activity or at the overall level.

At this point two fundamental questions are raised:

- How should one allocate responsibilities for the production and preservation of goods? Here the concept of equity in access to goods and in responsibility for preserving them is key. It lies at the foundation of shared responsibility in consumption, production and preservation, one of the major challenges facing society today (responsible consumption and production).

- How can one reconcile the production and preservation of goods with the generation of well-being? This question already lies at the very heart of discussions when work on well-being criteria and indicators in conjunction with citizens is carried out in institutions whose output is tangible or intangible goods (companies, schools, etc.). While at the outset this may appear a difficult equation to resolve, since the effort exerted on production of goods is often associated with the idea of sacrifice and ill-being (ill-being at work, educational effort, etc.), it subsequently emerges, in applying this method, that well-being for all is a performance factor in the production of goods, placing this question of reconciliation in a win-win context.

In conclusion, the process of constructing shared responsibility for well-being for all opens up the prospect of a new, more associative form of governance, creating bridges not only between stakeholders, institutions and citizens, but also cutting across the different sectors and between major societal objectives which for a long time may have been viewed as difficult to reconcile.

The research being carried out have pinpointed key avenues to explore, whether in the context of a local area or within institutions (companies, schools). This article has sought to make an initial assessment, while at the same time highlighting the many questions still to be addressed. In some ways it is a progress report. In particular, developing the progress indicators concerning goods is an essential task which still needs to be carried out.

Nonetheless, we now have a simple method for defining criteria and constructing indicators for well-being for all, which can be easily applied and passed on, so that in the coming years it should be possible to transfer this method on a much larger scale.[20]

20. See Resolution 226 (2007) and Recommendation 207 (2007) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on the development of social cohesion indicators: the concerted local and regional approach.

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Appendix: methodology

Defining well-being criteria in conjunction with citizens

Well-being criteria can be defined in conjunction with citizens in a three-hour session with a large number of citizens (at least 60) using a group-based methodology based on the world cafés used in the "future search" approach,[21] adapting this method to reflection on well-being.

To begin with, citizens are asked to divide up into small groups of eight to 10 people of similar age, sex, ethnic origin and/or occupational categories (for example a group of young people, a group of immigrants, a group of people with disabilities, a group of elderly people, a group of housewives or an ethnic minority group). Each of these groups defines its own well-being criteria on the basis of three questions:

- What does well-being mean for you?
- What does ill-being mean for you?
- What do you or can you do as regards your well-being?

(The questions may be slightly different depending on the case, but taking care never to predefine the categories of well-being.[22])

Within each group, members first of all think about these questions on their own, writing down their criteria on post-it stickers. A group reflection phase follows with all the individual stickers put on a large sheet or table visible by all, and then a group summary is produced. In all, this should take about an hour.

Then "multi-profile" groups are formed with one person from each of the single-profile groups. Supposing one had eight single-profile groups of eight people, it would be possible to form eight multi-profile groups, which will attempt to define the criteria of well-being for all, summarising in an inclusive way the criteria identified in the single-profile groups,

21. Method used amongst others by the Neighborhood Assemblies Network: www.sfnan.org/.

22. A fourth question was added in the latest experiments (Trento, Paris) asking "What should be done to foster well-being?" The advantage of this question, which falls perhaps outside the definition of well-being, is that it encourages people to think about what would constitute an ideal situation and therefore makes it possible to broaden the scale of indicators (see below).

ensuring that diversity is taken into account. For example, if one of the criteria relating to housing is to have sufficiently spacious permanent housing and if a Roma-profile group had mentioned the possibility of living in caravans, the consolidated result should take both situations into account. In this way, it should be possible to reconcile different points of view, such as reconciling young people's desire to have places where they can celebrate late at night and the desire of older people to have peace and quiet, by identifying as a criterion for well-being for all the existence of physically separate areas.

Part II – The understanding and perception of well-being: individuals and goods

I. Understanding well-being to ensure that it is equitably accessible

Jean-Luc Dubois[1]

Introduction

Worldwide growth has led to the emergence of new players in the international arena. This arouses great hopes for the sustainable improvement of living conditions and more generally of well-being for millions of human beings hitherto deprived of it. But it also has a cost, since the ensuing increase in pollution, the growth of domestic and industrial waste and the effects on biodiversity and climate generate new risks – reflecting the environmental costs. In social terms, while extreme long-term poverty is on the wane, there is a parallel increase in the different forms of inequality, a growing vulnerability to these new risks and a permanent lack of financial security which fosters new poverty traps engendering social exclusion. In human terms, there is a certain malaise due to the collectively shared obligation to succeed and be productive, to forms of social disintegration and to the appearance of new forms of loneliness, whose psychological consequences affect the most privileged population groups as much as the others.

In this context, the pursuit of economic growth raises a number of questions. Can we protect a natural environment damaged by our modes of production to the extent that biodiversity is declining and ecological equilibria are endangered? What arrangements should we make for living together in such a way as to equitably combat inequalities and the

1. Centre d'Economie et d'Ethique pour l'Environnement et le Développement (C3ED) de l'Université de Versailles Saint Quentin-en-Yvelines (UVSQ) and Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD). The author's thanks to François-Régis Mahieu, Professor emeritus at the C3ED, for his advice on the outline of this study and Hanitra Randrianasolo, Ph.D., at the C3ED, for her support in the final drafting of the text.

gradual loss of social cohesion in a globalised world? How can we counter individual ill-being, in human terms, by enhancing people's potential and promoting their capability for innovation? To answer these questions, we need to think about a form of growth that would aim to meet these challenges while continuing to improve well-being.

There is an aspiration to well-being which seems to be universally shared and at the same time turns out to be a remarkable engine for change, in societies and in the organisation of social ties and relationships. This requires us to agree on the actual definition of "well-being", then to ask ourselves how to improve it while ensuring that it is equitably distributed.

In this article I shall attempt to address both these questions, in two parts. The first part will discuss the definition of well-being, seeing how it relates to happiness as conceived by philosophers and the search for meaning as conceived by psychologists. The second part will look at how we might introduce processes of collective action involving the responsibility of social players, in an attempt to equitably satisfy all human beings' aspiration to well-being.

1. A general aspiration to well-being

There is currently a universal aspiration to reach a level of well-being perceived as satisfactory. It arouses such a strong demand that it is disrupting demographic, economic, social, ecological and other equilibria. It results in development strategies that galvanise the international community, such as the millennium objectives on the reduction of poverty and some forms of inequality.

In actual fact, this pursuit of well-being is part of a long-standing philosophical tradition concerning the "quest for happiness". The earliest thinkers of ancient times, whether Greek, Chinese or Indian, studied this question as early as the 5th century BC. But most modern economists have kept in mind only a simplistic view of it, emphasising the optimal management of goods and services stemming from market balance. Yet many authors have introduced the concepts of public goods, basic needs, social ties, achievements and even freedom to achieve, thus broadening the economic view of well-being.

Recent studies in psychology take the issue still further, incorporating personal life into the analysis of well-being. They aim to confer "meaning" on the concept of well-being by providing tools to counter the ill-being which is developing in parallel to the increase in material well-being. The psychological concept of "meaning" therefore links together the economic concept of "well-being" and the philosophical one of "happiness".

a. *Starting with the philosophical view of happiness*

The first people to ask questions about happiness were the philosophers of Antiquity. The Greek Aristotle (382-322 BC) observed that all human beings wanted to be happy, but that they did not all agree on how to achieve this or on the approaches to adopt for the purpose. Quite similar views were expressed elsewhere, particularly in China, by thinkers such as Mencius (Mèng Zí, 371-289 BC) and Mo Zi, (479-392 BC).

On this human aspiration to happiness, regarded as universal, two opposite schools of thought soon developed, proposing different definitions of what happiness should be.

The first, known as the "hedonist school", emphasised the pursuit of pleasure as the source of happiness. It was based on the hedonist philosophy (Aristippus, 435-356 BC) which held that life could be considered good only if it afforded the greatest possible pleasure or satisfaction. The Epicurean definition (Epicurus, 342-271 BC), a milder version of this view, held that happiness was the outcome of a well-thought-out balance between the positive dimension deriving from pleasure and a negative dimension associated with suffering. It was for the individual human being to be able to manage this balance between the two wisely, across time and space.

This view influenced the utilitarian philosophy (Bentham, 1748-1832), which contended that the individual's behaviour was the outcome of a hedonist calculation designed to maximise the amount of pleasure and minimise the amount of pain, so that happiness was defined as the difference between the two. In collective terms, universal happiness then derived from the sum of individual happinesses and the best society was that capable of providing "the greatest happiness of the greatest number".

Stuart Mill (1806-73) placed this theory on an economic footing and turned it into a philosophy capable of assessing, in terms of utility, the consequences of people's acts for well-being. Utility, or objective satisfaction, reflects the fact that a good or act can generate well-being in the form of pleasure, joy, benefits and so on, leading even indirectly to happiness. This means regarding well-being and happiness as equivalent. The purpose of all acts is then to pursue the greatest possible satisfaction in order to maximise well-being for all. What is important is the overall amount of well-being produced, irrespective of how it is distributed among individuals. In this context, all individuals are of equal worth and each one's happiness depends on that of the others. So we need to consider the well-being of everyone, not that of a few individuals in particular.

Current economic thinking, while featuring many non-orthodox trends, remains strongly influenced by this view. It considers that the growth of consumption and income is the prerequisite for improving well-being, and that utility always measures the capacity of a good to satisfy an economic agent's needs. Decision theory, for example, which uses cost-benefit analysis techniques to assess projects and public policies, always refers to a hedonist-type calculation.

Aristotle's view is at the opposite end of the spectrum from this utilitarian view with its strong hedonist underpinnings. His school of thought, known as "eudaemonist", focuses on personal or social achievement as the source of happiness, referring to ethical values such as prudence and generosity. In Aristotle's view, what is important is to establish, together with others, an ethics of what is possible in the *polis* or city-state, in order to achieve common goals on the basis of a concerted approach and, by this form of freedom, to improve the happiness of living in the city-state. This philosophy of "the good life" rejects the idea that the balance of pleasures is the sole criterion for defining happiness and relies on the fact that if the individual is an autonomous, rational and reasonable subject, he/she must also be able to establish a link between his/her own capability for action and the possibility of achieving happiness by means of acts suited to his/her social and natural environment.

The philosopher Robert Misrahi (2003) clearly illustrates this viewpoint, particularly in his thinking on happiness. Happiness is not the spontaneous result of pleasant events occurring in life, but rather the outcome of a considered personal construction. It is for the individual to build happiness through his/her own acts. However, there can be no access to happiness unless society first provides individuals with the basic social and economic opportunities that will allow them to lead normal lives.

This view is similar to that expounded by Sen (1999), who shows that in the economic sphere, it is "capability for action" in a free environment – what he calls agency – that enables individuals to achieve the aims they consider important. The role of public policies is then to ensure access to resources and opportunities that allow individuals to choose from a range of possible achievements, those likely to lead to a fulfilling life.

Still in the same frame of thought, individuals can then be regarded as incorporated into networks of rights and social obligations, which compels them to combine their freedom of choice with responsibility for their social obligations (Ballet et al., Dubois and Mahieu, 2005). This means broadening "agency", or the individual's capability for action, to include personal responsibilities, over and above the individual's freedoms and goals alone. This additional contribution refers to the phenomenological approach, which views social interaction in connection with individuals' existential intentions, the forms of responsibility they assume and the power struggles or dominant/dominated relationships in which they are involved in a given context. This is a more relevant way of addressing the complexity of human beings' aspiration to happiness.

In conclusion, this philosophy of "the good life" shows that by means of a reasoned, structured approach based on responsibility, it is possible to ensure that people's individual and collective capability for achievement results in the capability to build a fulfilled life, which is a source of common happiness. In this sense, Ricœur talks of "the good life, with and for others, in just institutions" (Ricœur, 1995).

b. Broadening the very restrictive view of economic well-being

While philosophers reason in terms of happiness, economists use the concept of well-being, defined as the result of a balanced management of material goods and services, either consumed or accumulated in the form of capital. The definition has been broadened with the recent introduction of relations between individuals and their social environment, particularly incorporating the concepts of social capital and altruism.

To reach a certain level of well-being, decisions must be taken on the allocation of available resources, given the many technical constraints and people's social behaviour. As economic reasoning is based chiefly on goods and services, one can look into ways of efficiently allocating one's limited resources to purposes that have previously been evaluated, usually in monetary terms. In this context, the economic approach means managing the available resources in the best possible way by deciding where to allocate them in order to achieve a given purpose, such as increasing well-being, as swiftly as possible.

The utilitarian view is upheld by the theory of general equilibrium and that of welfare economics. Both seek to answer this question: which of several possible economic situations, each featuring a certain distribution of resources and incomes, can be considered the best? This is a fundamental question in public sector economics, which looks at individual behaviour in order to analyse issues relating to public goods, taxation, collective choices, the social optimum, the treatment of forms of poverty and inequalities and issues surrounding justice and equity (Jarret and Mahieu, 1998).

On the basis of various hypotheses, the theory of general equilibrium demonstrates that when consumers rationally maximise their individual satisfactions despite income constraints, and producers likewise maximise their production despite technical constraints, the outcome is a single system of prices and quantities which ensures equilibrium between supply and demand on all markets, the optimal satisfaction of economic agents and the most efficient possible technical production. The hypotheses concern the behaviour of individuals, which is assumed to be selfish and rational, in a system of pure and perfect competition. Furthermore, according to welfare economics, this situation of equilibrium can be regarded as optimal (in the sense conferred on the term by Pareto): in other words, the satisfaction of one economic agent cannot be increased without that of another being reduced.

This formalised monetary approach, which is interesting because of its rigour and consistency, is based on extremely restrictive hypotheses. These are individualist in terms of both consumers and producers, so they do not incorporate forms of social interaction such as commitment to others or alliances between producers, which are nonetheless conducive to social innovation and technical progress and consequently generate increases in output. Of course such models are of interest in helping us to understand, on a didactic basis, how different variables can interact in a coherent framework, but there is a risk that the theory will be completely disconnected from real experience. When it comes to predicting public policies, this can lead to targeting errors in terms of the well-being of the population groups concerned.

In this frame of thought, gross national product (GNP) and national income per head serve as indicators to measure the level of well-being in macro-economic terms. They have many weaknesses: although they take proper account of goods and services consumption and of the production-generated income that ensures this consumption, they do not take account of the nature of the goods produced or consumed, or of the adverse side-effects of production (urban congestion, social costs, insecurity), and they also disregard many forms of production such as domestic work and voluntary work.

Unlike this utilitarian view, the view of the good life focuses on people's attainments in terms of living conditions, on their behaviour and on the achievements that may result. What is important is not so much the satisfaction obtained as people's capability to act, that is their capability to perform a number of acts (or functionings) which enable them to reach a goal that is not necessarily the pursuit of their own well-being, but reflects a degree of personal achievement (Sen, 1985).

This "capability approach" moves beyond economics based solely on the management of resources, particularly goods and services consumed; it devises a form of economics that focuses on people's potential and functionings so that they will be more capable of making the life choices they want, for themselves and with others. This amounts to incorporating a discussion of behaviour into economic analysis, alongside the usual discussion of living standards and conditions.

By definition, this "capability" of the individual comprises two components. The first reflects what the person is actually capable of achieving in the current context, given the constraints and opportunities he/she encounters, on the basis of his/her own characteristics and with the use of the resources available. This can be measured by standard indicators, deriving in particular from household surveys. The second component – and this is its original feature – expresses a person's potential capability, that is what he/she could achieve in a different context and which would demonstrate his/her capability to choose and perform specific acts which were not initially planned. This in fact reflects the person's degree of freedom to choose to achieve what he/she aspires to do. It is a form of "freedom to do and be" which proves much harder to measure with indicators, but enables the person's "capability" to be viewed as his/her freedom to achieve.

In this frame of thought, poverty expresses the deprivation of capabilities and even of freedom of choice, and combating poverty means pursuing economic policies designed to increase people's capabilities so that they can be free to lead the lives they want. Sustainable human development, as advocated by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is part of this thinking. It aims to reinforce individual and collective capabilities through ties with others, while countering intra- and inter-generational inequalities in capability which put a brake on poverty reduction.

Likewise, a person's vulnerability stems from a shortage of the capabilities he/she would need to muster in order to cope with the consequences of risks that occur. Increasing one's range of individual and collective capabilities would improve one's capability for resilience in the face of unexpected setbacks.

In this context, well-being is part of a multidimensional view which contrasts with monetary well-being or "welfare", a reflection of utility. The fight against poverty, taken in the multidimensional rather than the exclusively monetary sense, the reduction of vulnerability, the fight against exclusion and so on are part of this process, which places the accent on development (Perroux, 1952) and sustainable human development (UNDP, 2005) rather than on economic growth alone, as expressed by GNP.

This economic view of well-being more closely reflects the human realities observed, in which economic relations such as those of production, consumption and savings take place between individuals belonging to social networks, who have to meet obligations and constraints. It takes account of their capability for compassion or commitment, which makes them reasonable social players, responsible citizens or people capable of looking beyond themselves. This approach is concerned as much with people's social ties and achievements as with management of the goods and services that allow those achievements to come about. The individual's capability to act and achieve thus becomes the source of well-being, much more than satisfaction or utility (Sen, 1999).

The macro-economic measurement of this well-being is the Human Development Index (HDI), which also has many limitations. It refers to a small number of essential achievements relating to income, education (literacy, schooling) and health (life expectancy). The advantage of these few achievements is that they can be evaluated in all the countries in the world, so that HDI can be regularly compared to GNP.

c. The necessary contributions of psychology

With the various currents of positive, clinical and social psychology, psychologists add a new dimension to the idea of well-being, broadening the economic view and linking it up to the philosophical concept of happiness. The positive or humanist current, represented by Eric Fromm, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rodgers and Victor Frankl, looks at people's capability to give life "meaning" (Lecomte, 2007) through the intensity of their social relationships, reference to a number of values and skills, and their personal or collective capability for action. Happiness, in the philosophical sense, is then constructed by a combination of well-being, in the sense used by economists, and "meaning".

In clinical psychology, as in psychoanalysis, the accent is placed rather on seeking out the underlying causes of ill-being and of the ensuing suffering, which obstructs the possibility of well-being. While some advocate medication to combat ill-being (Layard, 2005), it is clear that many such situations stem from difficult human relationships in terms of hierarchy and information-sharing, in a context marked by the use of more sophisticated technologies, increased international competition and new modes of communication.

Social psychology studies the effects of the social environment and institutions on people's behaviour, taking account of factors such as individuals' interaction in groups, people's perceptions and motivations in society, the influence of social representations and conflict situations.

These different approaches give us a clearer picture of the concepts of well-being, meaning and happiness. We can therefore avoid equating well-being with happiness, as the utilitarians do, and consider that people construct happiness via the pursuit of well-being, expressed in terms of living standards, living conditions and social ties, together with the pursuit of meaning, which is based on people's capability for achievement. Some go so far as to speak of "human well-being" to reflect this broader view of well-being which incorporates the economic and psychological aspects and thus comes closer to the idea of happiness.

This expression tallies with the very pertinent question put by the sociologist Edgar Morin, who wondered whether it was not preferable to talk of "good living" (*bien-vivre*) rather than well-being.

2. Ensuring well-being: in search of a new ethics

In the 18th century (Sismondi, 1773-1842), the introduction of the first public policies provided a response to the universal aspiration to well-being. This continued in the 20th century with the pursuit of regular economic growth and planned development. The idea was that growth would benefit everyone, regardless of the redistribution mechanisms envisaged. But the 19th-century social question in the industrialised countries, then development issues in Third World countries and lastly European integration at the end of the 20th century made it quite clear that only growth policies coupled with deliberate redistribution mechanisms could ensure that everyone had access to basic levels of well-being.

By means of specific social redistribution mechanisms, the welfare state upheld this strategy with a concern to protect the most vulnerable. The state thus bore part of the responsibility for access to well-being by firstly guaranteeing the resources to ensure the regular rise of living standards and improve living conditions, and secondly reducing the risk of poverty and remedying inequalities through appropriate redistribution mechanisms. Policies of this kind have served to regularly reduce poverty and in many countries, to foster the emergence of a new middle class.

At present, however, while growth continues worldwide, inequalities are rising sharply, to the extent of curbing poverty reduction, although it is the prerequisite for gaining access to well-being. Moreover, beyond a certain threshold, this growth is no longer coupled with an improvement in people's subjective perception of well-being, as if economic growth were no longer helping to improve well-being.

a. Economic growth no longer ensures well-being

Surveys assessing well-being on a subjective basis, using questions to individuals, show that while the feeling of well-being increases very sharply when people leave poverty behind, as a result of their increased consumption of goods and services, the feeling then wanes steadily as their consumption grows.

It is as if economic growth improves the subjective feeling of well-being as long as it allows people to escape poverty and reach a living standard they perceive as decent. Beyond this level, improvements in income or consumption levels have little impact on the level of well-being experienced (Lecomte, 2007).

The findings are similar in all the rich countries, whether in the United States, where this trend became apparent in the mid-1960s, or in Britain and Japan, where it emerged later, towards the late 1970s.[2] This discon-

2. Comparative country analysis shows that above a threshold in national income per head of about US$20 000, the subjective feeling of well-being ceases to grow with the increase of income (Layard, 2005).

nection may also be due to the fact that the pursuit of economic growth generates additional social and human costs which are increasingly rejected. To increase this well-being, we need to look into its broader form, particularly in view of the psychological evidence discussed above that additional well-being can be found in the intensity of social relationships, in access to knowledge and the practice of certain values and in people's capability to act – all elements that provide people with meaning and a feeling of achievement. In other words, involvement in social networks, with the commitment, compassion, obligations and responsibilities this entails, helps to increase the subjective feeling of well-being.

This nevertheless raises the difficult question of how to handle the shift from an approach geared to individual well-being to a situation of collective well-being, taking account of social interaction. This is a serious aggregation problem, which collective choice economists, among others, study closely. For the moment, however, there is no universal solution because it remains difficult to assess the well-being stemming from interaction between several people otherwise than by taking a specific look at each situation.

When it comes to measuring well-being, the question is how to describe it and how to assess levels of well-being. There are of course income and consumption indicators, but they turn out to be inadequate. The solution is a pragmatic approach, referring to the different aspects of well-being in the broad sense and adding the aspects of ill-being.[3]

To assess people's capability for action and achievement, and the difficulties and constraints they encounter in achieving them, the list of basic capabilities proposed by the philosopher Nussbaum (2000) can serve as a reference for exploring new avenues. Lastly, the psychological approach, which is closer to existential concerns, requires us to consider factors such as social interaction, perceptions, trust, aspects of ill-being and social comparisons and representations.

b. Ensuring equity in reducing poverty and inequalities

Escaping poverty can be regarded as the priority achievement sought in the aspiration to well-being. The same is true of social exclusion, especially bearing in mind that it is due to the impossibility of gaining access to certain goods, services and social relationships. The different

3. On this point, see the article by Samuel Thirion.

forms of exclusion derive from this deprivation of access (Dubois and Mahieu, 2002).

Economic growth is an effective way to reduce poverty. However, it has been demonstrated, particularly in monetary terms, that growth reduces poverty much less effectively if inequalities increase at the same time. In other words, at a given level of growth, the increase in inequalities curbs poverty reduction, since the additional income is not transferred to the poorest groups. To remedy this situation, specific redistribution mechanisms must be put into operation so that the benefits of this growth enable people to escape poverty.

The problem is that there are many forms of inequality – social, spatial, gender-based and so on. They are reflected in differences in access to goods and services, discrepancies in the building of assets and potential, unequal opportunities, inequality in terms of capability to function, differences in outcome and so on. All these forms of inequality often collect around the same groups, shaping structures of inequality which are hard to remedy with the use of redistribution mechanisms.

Given the range of socio-economic situations, the problem is which inequalities to focus on and which ones to combat first. Furthermore, depending on the areas of action chosen, the fact of reducing particular forms of inequality occasionally has the effect of generating or heightening others.

The concept of equity resolves this dilemma because it draws a distinction between inequalities: those that are considered unacceptable because they are unjust or unjustified, and those that can be considered acceptable at a given time because they are tolerated for social reasons or recognised as producing generally positive benefits.

The principles of equity determine spheres of justice in which trust can be established between social players, facilitating the emergence of innovative individual or collective initiatives. Clearly, equity is of fundamental importance. In a setting of permanent growth and development, it is a way of combining action to reduce poverty and inequalities with respect for the freedom of social players.

In this context, the prime objective is to ensure equitable access to well-being. This means guaranteeing basic access to essential goods and services for everyone, then ensuring that each individual has the wherewithal to aim for a situation of well-being that he/she considers decent.

Then it will be a question of tackling situations of ill-being and the factors underlying them.

c. *Relying on an ethics of responsibility*

Setting in motion processes designed to promote well-being, especially equitable access to well-being, raises issues of moral responsibility – responsibility towards those who have been promised an improvement in their situation and who are expecting results in view of their aspirations, but also responsibility as the joint authors of equity rules, or processes, for the achievement and distribution of well-being. These two forms of responsibility suggest a distinction between two views of responsibility reflected in the terms "being answerable to others" and "being answerable for others" (Thirion, 2004).

"Being answerable to others" refers to one's responsibility for one's own acts and therefore for their a posteriori consequences (the term would be *ex-post* in economics). This kind of responsibility is normally defined by social practices, which is why it can be described as social or retrospective responsibility (Jonas, 1979). What is important in this case is the person's freedom of action, which makes them responsible to others.

When it comes to "being answerable for others", the important point is responsibility for meeting obligations, which may be imposed by a particular status, by others or by oneself. This is a priori responsibility (the term would be *ex-ante* in economics). The model here is parental responsibility. This can be described as personal or prospective responsibility, which effectively reduces the person's own freedom.

Explicitly at least, an author such as Sen considers only retrospective responsibility, because that is where it is easiest to measure a posteriori the consequences of the acts performed. Conversely, philosophers Jonas, Levinas and Ricœur emphasise prospective or personal responsibility as the most appropriate element for dealing with the natural and social challenges of today's world. It is a fact that apart from a few precisely defined situations such as parental responsibility, the responsibility of company directors and sometimes political responsibility, there is no general moral rule covering all the cases reflected in this form of responsibility.

Expanding on the example of parental responsibility, Jonas (1979) stresses responsibility towards future generations and towards a natural environment undermined by sophisticated technologies born of technical progress – a situation calling for a principle of responsibility which can be implemented with the introduction of precautionary or prudential principles. This brings us back to Aristotle's virtuous view, in which prudence was the virtue associated with all capabilities for action.

Levinas (1982) takes the same attitude. Our encounter with the most fragile and vulnerable individuals, whether we already know them or not, requires us to give them priority and therefore to restrict our own freedom. Personal responsibility to others thus takes precedence over personal freedom of action.

Ricœur clarifies responsibility in relation to people's capability to act. In his view, situations of vulnerability are due to individuals' fallibility, to the fact that they can make mistakes. Carrying the two previous authors' thinking further, he shows that prospective responsibility means being capable of assigning oneself a priori responsibility with regard to specific acts and individuals, considering oneself "responsible for …". This leads to a voluntary process of restricting one's own freedom to meet social obligations that take priority, as it were. This voluntary capacity to impose constraints on oneself is a characteristic of the individual as a responsible subject.

Behind these three authors' concurrent thinking lies the understanding approach of phenomenological thought, which focuses on people's intentions and social interaction and the connections between their rights and obligations in order to ensure the cohesion of a socially and culturally identified society.

The emphasis on personal responsibility thus results in a departure from the strict definition of the utilitarian individual, who seeks to rationally maximise his/her interests, and a move towards a broader definition, that of the individual capable of transcendence, that is of looking beyond him/herself for the benefit of others, especially the most vulnerable. The individual becomes the most comprehensive subject of analysis, being simultaneously capable of rationality, reason, responsibility and transcending the self.

On the spectrum between the rational individual, as perceived in economics, and the person capable of transcending the self, there are many different ways of considering the subject in action – as an economic agent, a reasonable social player or a responsible citizen, for example.

Nowadays, what makes personal responsibility increasingly important by comparison with social responsibility, although the latter is more clearly defined and more firmly established, is the need to confront the great natural and social challenges of today's world. Given the scale of the problems to be resolved in this much more complex society, a wide range of players are affected by the existing risks, and a preventive approach, adopted a priori, becomes preferable to an approach consisting in remedying the consequences a posteriori – which in some cases even proves impossible.

At the same time, the various social players are growing increasingly aware of the challenges threatening well-being in its broader form. This raises the wider issue of how to share out responsibility between the different players concerned. In addition to the usual role of the state and formal institutions, there are now individuals, various social groups, local authorities and a range of associations concerned with environmental issues, poverty reduction, the rise of inequalities, social cohesion and so on. All these aspects have to be taken into account by those involved in the process of improving well-being.

In any event, the sharing out of responsibilities must be addressed. It can be done on the basis of a legal and institutional framework determining each player's particular responsibilities. Alternatively, the players' shared responsibility can be viewed as a process better suited to prospective responsibility because it allows the players to feel responsible in terms of rules they have established themselves. This process can be applied to the equitable promotion of well-being in the broad sense. It is thus conducive to the establishment of "just institutions" in the sense advocated by Ricœur, that is institutions which, because they feel jointly responsible, take care to promote well-being equitably, particularly by reinforcing people's capability to act.

In this context, distribution criteria are not established by law or by institutions and can therefore derive only from an agreement between the different players concerned, after discussion. The ethics of discussion (Habermas, 2003) then provides the conditions for a debate between the stakeholders, resulting in a compromise solution to the problem of sustainable distribution.

Thanks to this approach, important collective decisions can be taken, such as agreement on the aspects of well-being or ill-being, on the priorities for reinforcing capabilities in order to link up freedoms and responsibilities, or on the equity criteria for distributing well-being. Debate on these issues serves to build a capability for collective action, in the form of co-operation and commitment, on the basis of the stakeholders' capabilities, while taking account of their choice of values. Debate then becomes a formidable tool for effectively determining the level of shared responsibility between the various players concerned.

Nevertheless, efforts to implement this approach will undeniably run into a number of difficulties due to situations of exclusion, discrimination, power structure and unequal access to information, which are features of all societies. Special skills, held mainly by psycho-sociologists and social coaching specialists, help to overcome the corresponding risks of deadlock.

Conclusion

In view of the universally shared aspirations to well-being, the state and institutions can ensure that a basic level of well-being is available to everyone and that the resources and capabilities for achieving this well-being are equitably distributed. The pursuit of happiness, on the basis of the broader view combining economic well-being and psychological meaning, is more a matter for individuals and social players, who, by their choices, can take advantage of the opportunities directly offered to them by growth and technical progress to work towards greater achievement.

Taking people's aspirations and means of expression as a starting point in order to inspire concerted public policies thus seems to be a plausible approach if well-being does not amount exclusively to the pursuit of personal satisfactions arising from the consumption of goods and services, but incorporates the aspects of individual and collective achievement deriving from a system of mutual rights and obligations. This also confers meaning on the steps taken.

This brings us back to Ricœur's ethical statement on the establishment of a "good life, with and for others, in just institutions". It provides the ethical framework justifying the equitable promotion of a view of well-being in the broad sense, on the basis of shared responsibility between social players. This view can generate a practice based on the concerted expression of ideas by stakeholders regarded as sharing responsibility for situations of well-being and ill-being, who, in line with a bottom-up approach, carry out processes for improving and distributing well-being.

On this basis, taking a pragmatic approach and relying on debate, we can identify the range of indicators for characterising situations of well-being and ill-being. And we can then consider public measures and policies aimed at influencing the factors for improving well-being while combating those that cause ill-being.

Putting this vision into practice, however, still poses many theoretical and empirical problems. For example, the discussion of economic subjects regarded as responsible individuals because they are capable of restricting their freedom to comply with their social and economic obligations entails assessing the costs of this kind of responsibility by taking specific measurements.

Likewise, the fact that people can together take collective steps to improve their well-being entails knowing how to resolve the problem of aggregating the effects of these steps, since improving well-being at local level should preferably also help to improve well-being at a wider level.

These methodological investments need to be made; they are legitimised by the new conceptual discussions in the field of phenomenology which aim to incorporate social players' perceptions, aspirations and intentions into economic analysis. The emphasis on social interaction thus brings us back to the more comprehensive view of socially sustainable development, with its direct concern for responsibility and equity (Ballet, Dubois and Mahieu, 2005).

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II. Well-being: perception and measurement

Wolfgang Glatzer[1]

Introduction

The concepts of well-being and quality of life are rather similar in respect to the basic idea that they are conceived as fundamental societal goals much broader than material welfare. Both are conceived in terms of "objective" living conditions and their "subjective" perception by individuals. When different components of "objective" and "subjective" provenance are interconnected then the picture of society always shows some complexity. The perception of public goods, in particular, seems to follow its own rules and is of apparent significance for the social cohesion of the population. Depending on the type of goods, the state has more or less influence on their provision and different types of welfare state use this influence in different ways. The problem will be illustrated by three examples: firstly, by the difference in the ratings of private and public goods; secondly, by the difference in the evaluation between individual and aggregate characteristics and, thirdly, when the difference of levels between personal and national well-being is taken into account. In all these cases we find a lower estimation of and satisfaction with components which are outside the responsibility of the individual. The problem of the evaluation of public goods by the population is demonstrated and the challenge to avoid negative social consequences is articulated.

1. Well-being and its perception

a. *The concepts of well-being and quality of life*

Among the ultimate goals of humankind well-being or social well-being is discussed and considerably emphasised, although the concept itself is historically not very old. As far as can be seen it was the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 1973, 1976) who developed the term and the concept of well-being in the early 1970s and used it until recently. As well as the OECD there were some American authors (notably Andrews and Withey, 1976) who particularly chose well-

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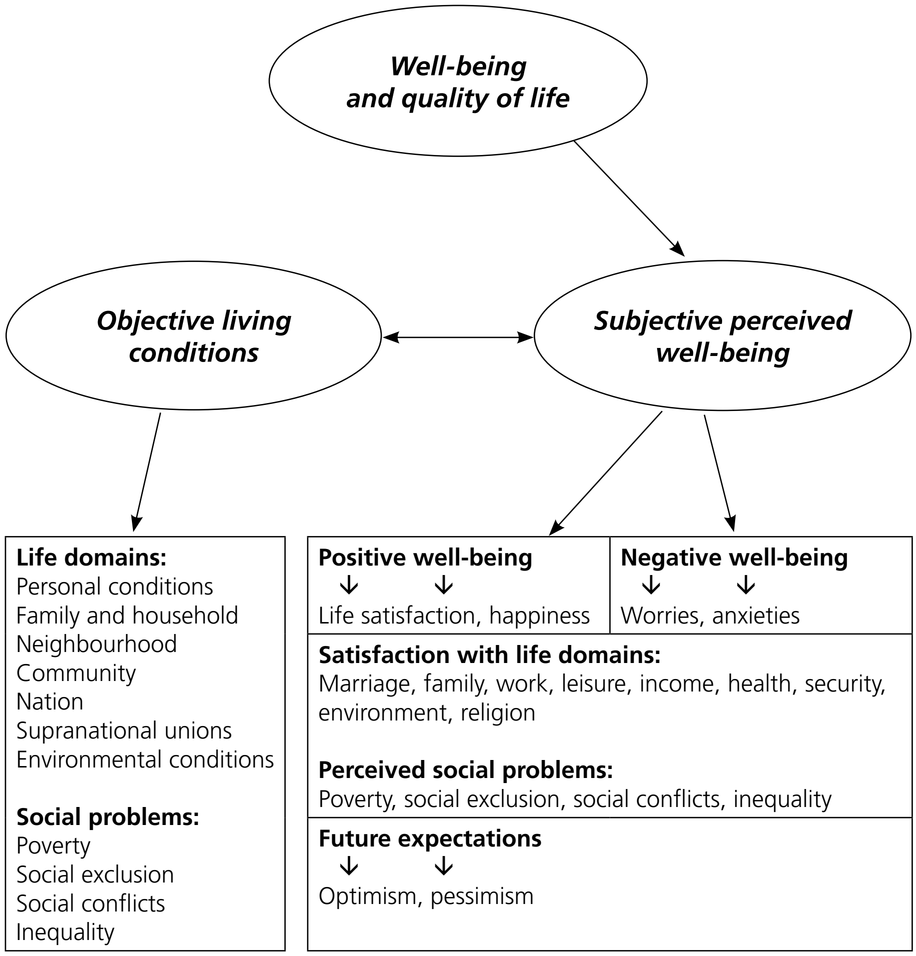
being as their guiding term and presented investigations related to well-being and quality of life. These terms seem to be interchangeable and they were used without clear separation in books and papers.

Of course the subject of well-being has existed and been discussed since ancient times, but often with different terminology and different concerns. The OECD stated that "the term social well-being is used as a shorthand for the aggregate well-being of individuals. … The heart of the problem is the well-being of individual human beings and the way in which it is affected by their relations with other human beings and the physical environment" (OECD, 1976: 12). The broader frame of reference for well-being is the context of research into social indicators and among the first 17 articles of *Citation Classics from Social Indicators Research* (Michalos, 2005) one finds seven times the concept of (subjective) well-being. Well-being is related to objective reality as well as to subjective perception and evaluation. Soon afterwards, however, the *Subjective Elements of Well-Being* (OECD, 1973) or more concise *Subjective Well-Being* (Strack, Argyle and Schwarz, 1990) came more and more to the attention of research and politics. The concept is so successful that editors spoke recently of "the universality of subjective well-being indicators" (Gullone and Cummins, 2002).

Well-being in its broad sense is defined basically as a constellation of components which can consist of objective living conditions and/or of subjective perceived aspects of life.

The objective living conditions are usually monitored by experts from the social and natural sciences; these objective conditions exist independent of the awareness of the population exposed to them. Their range may vary from narrow personal conditions through the community domain to the world's environmental conditions. Some approaches prefer to focus on social problems, preferably on poverty and social exclusion and not least on social inequality (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Components of well-being and quality of life



Subjectively perceived well-being consists of perceptions and evaluations from individuals; subjective quality of life is here in the eye of the beholder. Investigations into the subjective perceptions of well-being have demonstrated that it is a multifaceted concept. It has a positive side, mostly described in terms of satisfaction, happiness or similar, and there is a negative side in terms of worries, anxieties and further aspects.

For the subjectively perceived aspects of life there are comprehensive concepts such as satisfaction with life as a whole and happiness. These concepts can be deconstructed down to many specific life domains. Several investigations have shown that negative well-being is only modestly correlated with positive well-being. This means some people are satisfied and happy although they have a high burden of worries and others are unhappy although they have only few worries. Subjective well-being is obviously a rather complicated and ambivalent concept.

The relationship between objective conditions and subjective perceptions is not very strong and many investigations have been done into this problem. One approach is related to typical combinations between good and bad levels. Consistent types are "well-being" and "deprivation"; inconsistent types are "dissonance" and "adaptation". For example, the case of "adaptation" is characterised by poor living conditions with relatively positive well-being of the people exposed to them (Glatzer and Zapf, 1984).

In order to achieve a full picture of social well-being in addition to the positive and negative dimensions, another dimension has to be taken into account, namely future expectations. It makes a big difference if somebody is in a bad situation and looks optimistically into the future as opposed to someone who sees no way out of a difficult situation. This is the reason to also emphasise future expectations as a component of well-being. Thus, optimism and pessimism became an essential part of the concept of well-being.

The problem of defining well-being was solved in rather different ways, due to the challenges of the different contexts. In the United States a strong preference for the subjective approach to well-being gained acceptance, while in Europe – at least in Scandinavia and to a certain degree in other parts of Europe – there was more emphasis laid upon objective indicators which measure social conditions in the eyes of statistical experts. In Germany the researchers took up a position in between and preferred a combination of objective and subjective data (Zapf, 1987). Only recently has the subjective approach been adopted for developing countries (Camfield, 2004). In Europe the monitoring of well-being gained increasing awareness and is now an established and respected part of social sciences.

The concept of well-being is related to goals which are of high significance for our society: freedom[2] and democracy, social security and safety, solidarity and political participation, equity and sustainability and suchlike.

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2. In analogy to measurement of quality of life there are nowadays measures for freedom and similar concepts; see, for example, Holmes, Feulner and O'Grady, 2008.

Among the value concepts of our society, well-being has a position among the values of highest importance.

b. *The objective-subjective difference*

The distinction between objective and subjective aspects (respective components) is fundamental in research into well-being. The emerging problem is that we do not have a clear decision as to what is right or wrong about the two views of society. Are the objective aspects of reality more correct than the subjective ones or is the contrary true? If somebody decides that both are relevant, the question arises as to whether they have equal weight or if one has more significance than the other. In the course of time different pragmatic solutions to operationalise and measure objective and subjective concepts have been developed. Having a number of objective and subjective indicators on the table – as is the situation nowadays – we get a view of the gaps and discrepancies. On different levels – the world, nations, individuals – the objective components do not show exactly the same as the subjective components.

2. Measurement of well-being

a. *Measurement of well-being in different countries*

The new measures of well-being on the objective side are the Human Development Index (HDI), the Human Wellbeing Index (HWI) and the Weighted Index of Social Progress (WISP). In the HDI, which has basically three components, the traditional GDP has the weight of one third. The HWI is strongly oriented towards environmental goals and contains 10 components. The WISP is an index of 40 components and includes more aspects of a social state. On the subjective side we find the Overall Satisfaction with Life index (OSL) and the Affect Balance Scale (ABS). OSL is a single-item index and ABS is a 10-item index which is explicitly related to positive and negative daily experiences. Finally, there is the Happy Life Expectancy index (HLE) a mixed index containing objective and subjective aspects in one index. Length of life and satisfaction with life are included in one index. These seem to me to be the most important measures of well-being and quality of life but there are additional ones in scientific and public literature, though sometimes they are insufficiently documented.

To attain a certain picture, the overview (Figure 2) is restricted to a selection of countries. The countries which were selected for the comparison are always two representing a larger area: two from northern Europe (Norway, Denmark), two from central Europe (Germany, France), two from southern Europe (Italy, Spain) and two from eastern Europe (Poland, Romania). In addition to the European countries there are two other countries (United States, Japan) from the developed world.

Figure 2 – Quality of life indicators for selected countries

Indicator	HDI	HWI	WISP	OSL	ABS	HLE
Norway	**1** 0.97	**1** 82	**2** 104	**3** 79	**1** 2.31	**2** 59.4
Denmark	**3** 0.94	**2** 81	**1** 107	**1** 86	**3** 1.93	**1** 62.7
Germany	**6** 0.93	**4** 77	**3** 100	**2** 80	**4** 1.47	**4** 56.1
France	**4** 0.94	**5** 75	**6** 94	**6** 66	**6** 1.33	**8** 51.4
Italy	**5** 0.93	**6** 74	**4** 98	**5** 70	**7** 1.24	**5** 54.2
Spain	**7** 0.93	**7** 73	**5** 96	**7** 65	**8** 0.73	**6** 53.4
Poland	**9** 0.89	**8** 65	**7** 85	**8** 50	**5** 1.47	**9** 43.2
Romania	**10** 0.83	**9** 50	**10** 77	**10** 38	**9** 0.71	**10** 38.0
United States	**2** 0.94	**7** 73	**7** 85	**3** 79	**2** 2.21	**3** 57.0
Japan	**8** 0.92	**3** 80	**7** 85 (1995)	**9** 53	**10** 0.93	**7** 53.0

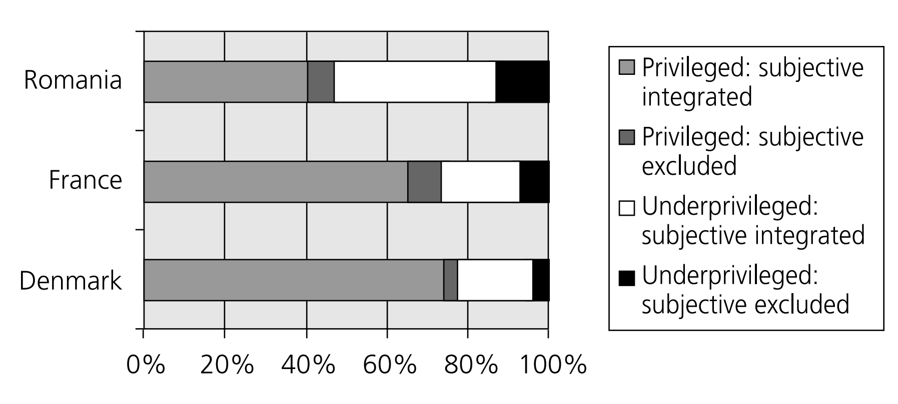
HDI: Human Development Index (UNDP, 2005)
HWI: Human Wellbeing Index (Prescott-Allen, 2001)
WISP: Weighted Index of Social Progress (Estes, 2004)
OSL: Overall Satisfaction with Life (Halman et al., 2008)
ABS: Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969; Veenhoven, 2008)
HLE: Happy Life Expectancy (Veenhoven, 1996)

According to the construction of well-being indices, the results for the positions of the 10 nations are the following. The best values on each scale were attained mostly by Norway and Denmark. The Scandinavian and northern European countries are all exceptional according to all the well-being indices. Only the United States sometimes has evaluations as high as the northern European countries. Europe as a whole shows a bias in favour of northern and central Europe as opposed to southern and eastern Europe. Comparison countries such as the United States are sometimes in the upper part of the scale but Japan is mostly in the lower part of the ranking list. The US has the strongest changes in positions from two on the HDI to seven on the WISP. There is more often continuity rather than strong changes and the gaps between the upper and lower positions are constant over time. The HDI results are quite close to those of the OSL and the discrepancies, all in all, are lower then one might expect. It should be added that time series data are always very stable over time for whole countries, and it is obvious that the societies in countries exert an influence on quality of life (Böhnke, 2008).

b. Measurement of well-being within countries

The measurement of well-being contributes to a better understanding of the differences between nations but also within nations, where the distribution of well-being is often described in terms of gaps. Gaps can be defined as the existence of a significant long-running discrepancy between two variables and these exist in many forms. We often come across a gender gap, age gaps, intergenerational gaps, educational gaps, regional gaps (Bergheim, 2007), unemployment gap (Luechinger, Meier and Stutzer, 2008), migration gap and gaps related to family composition. There are comprehensive maps of the distribution of well-being for whole countries (Bergheim, 2007).

Figure 3 – Living conditions and social exclusion in Europe, 2003



Privileged and underprivileged conditions: index of objective conditions
Subjective integration and subjective exclusion: index of feelings of social exclusion

Source: Böhnke (2008: 22) according to Alber and Fahey, European survey: percentage of population in the age between 15 and 65.

It is obvious that we have a lot of well-off people who are privileged in life and who feel socially integrated (see Figure 3). At the same time we have a pattern of underprivileged people who feel excluded. Most interesting now is that there are inconsistencies: people who are in the privileged group and feel subjectively excluded and people who are underprivileged and feel subjectively integrated. A rich country like Denmark still has around 25% and a poorer country like Romania has 60%. The underprivileged who feel subjectively integrated are many more than the privileged who feel subjectively excluded and this favours the social integration of society.

There are many gaps like these and each aspect of social inequality can attain significance in objective and subjective terms. Gaps inside a society are characterised by the social consequences they have on societal development. The point at which objective differences turn into subjective articulated discrepancies varies according to societies and cultures.

c. *Individual well-being*

In a third context, the concept of gaps is related to the individual and their perception process. This has been a very broad discussion since the beginning of well-being research (see mainly Michalos, 2005; Diener and Lucas, 2000). A common hypothesis is that behind the dissatisfaction of an individual there is always a gap between what the individual has and what the individual wants. Both need to be defined: the individual defines how the situation is and how it would be preferred. Between both reference points is a gap which determines the level of satisfaction. There are a number of reference points: expectations/aspirations, past experience, future expectations, the situation of relatives, friends and neighbours, the average citizen, the poor and the rich. There is some ongoing research into this problem but the gap is currently the most important theory to explain satisfaction and dissatisfaction.[3]

3. Public goods, context characteristics and national well-being in the social state

Within the approach of measuring well-being it is a normal procedure to include the perception of goods and characteristics beyond just market goods and domestic products. In our opinion these are public and common goods such as the transport system and social security, environment characteristics such as the average health in the region, as well as national well-being, for example the satisfaction reflected by national performance indicators.

Goods, as well as their opposite the "bads", are a result of the process of welfare production. Goods and services are produced through one of four institutions: the market with its enterprises, the state with its activities, the households with their household production and the intermediate organisations concerned with the provision of services. Each good is mainly produced by one provider, for example the market is responsible for market goods, but often we find combinations of producers, for example care is provided both by the state and by the private sector. This joint production is often regarded as especially productive. Political goods are goods which are provided by the state or sometimes in co-operation with the state.

There is a complex discussion on various types of goods: public goods, common goods, collective goods, social goods, merit goods, political goods and others, such as infrastructural goods and environmental goods. All these goods are defined in some way in contrast to private goods, personal goods, individual goods and market goods. A good is everything which is a positive contribution to life in the material or

3. The most discussed non-gap theory is set theory.

symbolic sense; the opposite are "bads", which have a negative impact on life. The significance of "bads" for inequality in society is as high as for goods, although they are much less mentioned. In the classic sense the criteria for public goods and common goods is related to non-rivalry and non-exclusiveness. Sometimes public goods are conceived as non-rival and common goods as non-exclusive, but this is a theoretical definition. If we want to look at the goods provided by the state we would speak of political goods.

Some goods are shared by the whole population, for example air, climate, social security or the transport system. The average conditions in a country are also similar to a common good: the average standard of living, the average satisfaction level and so on. We could speak of context goods which act as a framework for individual goods. The opposite are personal goods which are accessible only by the individual whereas the common goods are for everybody. Common goods are a result of the aggregation of individual goods.

The social state is an institution, established during the last century, which offers a broad range of public goods and services to the population and especially symbolic goods such as solidarity and justice. There are different types of welfare state: conservative, social democratic or liberal. Another terminology distinguishes between the poor and restricted welfare state and the more developed one. It is hard to detect the influence of the welfare state on well-being because there are direct and indirect influences. The more developed welfare state is intertwined with the social structure and is guaranteed and shaped by the social state.

4. Private-public differentiation and well-being

The significance of public and common goods for well-being is not in doubt in principle but in practice it is an unsolved problem. There is no comprehensive book or article which gives an informative overview of this problem, but certain aspects can be found in various places and many datasets include hidden data about this problem. In this article three examples are presented which throw light on the private-public differentiation from different perspectives. A broad systematic survey would go beyond the possibilities of this report. Only some illustrative pointers can be given here.

The pioneer studies on well-being (Andrews and Withey, 1976: 433) and quality of life (Campbell and Converse, 1976: 63) already touched on the problem of low satisfaction with governmental concerns. The indicators show "that the great majority of people in this country were content with life in the United States today" but they also demonstrate the "presence of millions of Americans who had serious complaints about their society" (*ibidem*: 285-6). This was mentioned but did not become a significant point presumably because only very few public dimensions were included in the questionnaires. Similar results can be found in various studies. There is one study in Europe looking explicitly at *The Quality of the Public Sector* (Social and Cultural Planning Office of the Netherlands, 2002). Many dimensions of the public sector are investigated but the comparison with the private sector is very brief. All in all, moderate satisfaction with public goods is supported: "It is not difficult to tap a large reservoir of dissatisfaction among the population towards the public sector in the Netherlands" (*ibidem*: 56). The following example is related to the comparison of private and public domains (Table 1).

a. Private well-being versus public well-being

In the investigation of life domains and societal areas there are topics which seem more private and others which seem more public. Without reservation, it is obvious that there is generally a clear division: the private ratings are higher and the public ratings are lower. The data comes from the welfare survey (1998), which is representative of the German population, because in the course of the interview more domains than elsewhere are counted. The distinction between western Germany and eastern Germany was made because the data for eastern Germany have a special underlying rationality although the public-private division is the same.

Table 1 shows that the margins for the general average are between 8.8 and 5.8 with a difference of 3.0 between the relatively high and relatively low domains. Results of over 7.0 include satisfaction with marriage/partner, family, living area, working position, living standard, housing, health and household income. Below 7.0 are social security, democracy, political participation, public security and environmental protection. The first impression is without doubt a lower satisfaction in public areas and a higher satisfaction in private areas.

Table 1 – Satisfaction in private and public life domains for population groups in western Germany, 1998

Satisfaction* with______ for total population and subgroups	Total	Gender		Age			Education			Status of occupation			Income		Citizenship	
		M	F	18-34	35-59	60 +	Secondary school certificate	Middle degree	High school	Employed	Unemployed	Pensioner	Lower quintile	Upper quintile	German	Other
Marriage/ partnership	**8.8**	9.0	8.6	8.8	8.7	8.9	8.8	8.8	8.6	8.8	8.5	9.0	8.7	8.7	8.8	8,8
Family	**8.5**	8.7	8.4	8.3	8.5	8.9	8.6	8.7	8.3	8.6	7.5	8.9	8.3	8.6	8.5	8.5
Housing	**8.3**	8.1	8.3	7.8	8.2	8.8	8.3	8.2	8.2	8.1	7.2	8.7	7.6	8.5	8.3	7.3
Residential area	**8.1**	8.0	8.1	7.6	8.0	8.5	8.1	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.0	8.4	7.9	8.1	8.1	7.3
Employment position	**7.7**	7.7	7.6	7.6	7.6	8.5	7.6	7.7	7.6	7.7	-	-	6.7	8.1	7.7	7.1
Leisure time	**7.6**	7.6	7.5	7.2	7.2	8.3	7.6	7.5	7.5	7.2	6.7	8.4	7.3	7.7	7.6	7.0
Economic status	**7.4**	7.4	7.4	7.1	7.3	7.7	7.2	7.4	7.8	7.5	5.2	7.7	5.3	8.3	7.4	7.0
Health	**7.4**	7.6	7.3	8.4	7.3	6.5	7.0	7.8	7.9	8.0	7.4	6.2	7.0	7.6	7.4	7.9
Income	**7.0**	7.0	7.0	6.7	7.0	7.4	6.8	7.0	7.3	7.1	4.9	7.4	5.0	8.2	7.0	6.2
Social security	**6.5**	6.6	6.4	6.2	6.4	7.0	6.5	6.5	6.6	6.4	5.5	7.1	6.4	6.9	6.5	7.0
Democracy	**6.5**	6.7	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.7	6.3	6.4	6.8	6.6	5.9	6.7	6.3	6.9	6.5	6.6
Environment protection	**6.1**	6.3	6.0	6.0	6.1	6.4	6.3	6.1	5.9	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.0	6.3	6.1	6.5
Public safety	**5.9**	6.0	5.9	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.8	6.2	6.0	5.6	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.9	6.3
Political participation	**5.8**	6.0	5.5	5.5	5.8	6.0	5.5	5.8	6.3	5.9	4.7	6.0	4.9	6.3	5.8	4.4

* Average on satisfaction scale from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied).
Database: Wohlfahrtssurvey, 1998.
Source: Statistisches Bundesamt, 2000: 432 et *seq*.

This result is not unique for a certain time context. It is stable over time (in Germany since 1978) and another type of data also hints at the same direction. In the socio-economic panel in a series of domains, social security shows the lowest value (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2006: 445). Again the developments over time are of special interest: certain domains have lower satisfaction, especially environmental protection and, in recent years, social security.

Different population groups often show the same satisfaction level, but some population groups are different in their satisfaction levels. Women are less satisfied than men in respect to satisfaction with democracy and political participation, which could be explained by historical developments. The older generation are more satisfied with social security, probably because they profit more from it. There are no big differences with regard to educational levels. The pensioners are most satisfied with social security, the unemployed least of all. The upper quintile is more satisfied with social security, democracy and political participation than the lower quintile. The German people are more satisfied with their political participation, less with social security. It seems that conditions that influence satisfaction depend on the interests of the people. The reasons will be discussed in the final section. It is an unexpected result that richer people are more satisfied with public goods than poorer ones. Presumably they can compensate for deficits in public goods by using their private income.

b. Individual characteristics versus aggregate characteristics

In each collective entity there are characteristics of individuals and characteristics of the aggregate, for example the wealth of an individual and the wealth of the collective. Each individual can have a perception of the individual characteristics and a perception of the aggregate characteristics.

The most popular example is the individual's perception of their own situation versus the aggregate situation. The problem is that there is a tendency to rate the individual situation better than the aggregate. Public goods are in the same category as aggregate goods, more distant from the individual and their influence. Examples of the differences between individual and aggregate characteristics can be:

- personal satisfaction with one's own life versus national levels of satisfaction with life;

- personal feeling of justice versus evaluation of justice in the country;
- evaluation of personal economic conditions versus national economic conditions;
- perception of personal conflicts versus the general intensity of conflicts;
- satisfaction with own social security and satisfaction with general social security of the region.

Whatever is asked, there will always be different results for the individual characteristics and for the aggregate characteristics, and there is a clear tendency to evaluate the personal conditions better than the aggregate ones.

c. *Personal well-being and national well-being*

In the debates about well-being there are always voices saying that a single item is not sufficient to describe subjective well-being. Indeed one item alone can never meet the differentiation and intricacy of subjective well-being but it gives a rough picture and shows the main message. A small number of items could give a more informative representation of subjective well-being. One of the interesting approaches to deconstruction of well-being is the Personal Well-Being Index (PWI) and its complement, the National Well-Being Index (NWI) (Cummins, 2007: Figure 4). The PWI consists of seven items which concern the perception of an individual's life whereas the six items of the NWI are related to questions of life in the nation in general.

Figure 4 – Personal and national well-being indices

Personal well-being is represented by seven items based on the question:
How satisfied are you with

❑ your standard of living?	77.8
❑ your health?	75.1
❑ what you have achieved in life?	74.8
❑ your personal relationships?	81.3
❑ how safe you feel?	79.0
❑ feeling part of your community?	71.2
❑ your future security?	71.4
Personal Well-Being Index	**75.8**

There are six questions on national well-being:
How satisfied are you with

❑ the economic situation in your country?	66.1
❑ the state of the natural environment in your country?	59.6
❑ the social conditions in your country?	62.6
❑ the government in your country?	55.8
❑ business in your country?	60.9
❑ national security in your country?	65.2
National Well-Being Index	**61.6**

Source: Cummins, 2007.

The answers are given on an 11-point scale from zero to 10 in which zero means completely dissatisfied and 10 means completely satisfied. Several tests in a variety of countries were conducted using this measurement instrument and they showed good measurement capacities for the scale, as it seems the items on the scale are more or less of relevance in all countries (Lau, Cummins and McPherson, 2005).

The interesting point is the differentiation between personal well-being and national well-being. National well-being is on average somewhat below personal well-being and the highest value of the NWI is always below the lowest value of the PWI. The components of the PWI and those of the NWI are not on the same level but are spread over the whole range.

At present, the PWI is available in Australia and a few other European countries. What can be shown is that the order of European countries is the same as for general life satisfaction. The PWI of Ireland is above Italy and Spain and both are above Romania; in each country the NWI is below the PWI.

Conclusions

The data presented here and many additional data demonstrate the fact that perceptions of goods and characteristics are different: goods close to the individual are highly estimated and goods distant from the individual have a low level of estimation. The problem is expressed through different terminologies: the satisfaction level relating to public goods is below the level of private goods, the satisfaction with aggregate characteristics is below that of individual characteristics, the level of national well-being is below the level of personal well-being. There is obviously an imbalanced perception which remains over time and is stable between population groups. It seems as if something which is in a social sense far from the individual is less satisfying than something which is close to the individual. There are some hypotheses which could explain these differences:

- The different degrees of satisfaction could show differences in the real level of provision, that is, private affluence and public poverty. Public goods are more often scarcer than private goods and therefore the satisfaction with the public area is lower. It is also remarkable that public goods show average satisfaction scores above the numerical midpoint of the satisfaction scale: people tend in general to be rather satisfied. It should not be overlooked, however, that some public goods attain higher and others attain lower ratings and this means that there are differences between the satisfaction levels of various public goods.

- What could make the difference between private and public goods is that private goods are bought according to the individual's wishes whereas the public goods are given. As far as private goods are concerned one can choose within the restrictions of one's own budget, but the provision of public goods is mostly a political decision which is not influenced directly.

- Private goods cost something whereas public goods are paid for indirectly through taxes or social contributions but to use them is free. It is an old theory that something which is free is less appreciated whereas something which is expensive is highly appreciated.

- It could be that aspirations and expectations are higher for public goods than for private ones. Because public goods cost nothing there is no budgetary limit to act as a brake on individual expectations.

- There is a theory that the attribution process is important for satisfaction ratings. An individual who does not see a good as being relevant to their field of activity is more easily dissatisfied than those who do. If the individual is involved, it can change their perception of the situation. Again this could be the reason for higher satisfaction.

- It is easy to escape from private goods which are not liked, be they an old car or an unhappy marriage. In each case it is possible to escape the dangers of the car or the unhappy marriage. In the case of public goods it is not usually possible to escape or to improve the situation through individual actions.

- There is also the question of information. Interpretation of private goods is usually through direct experience or direct observation. Public goods are only used under special conditions: the kindergarten if there are small children, the pension if somebody is old enough and so on. Often people have to answer questions about the distant future, especially those relating to pensions, but they may have only vague ideas about what might happen in thirty or forty years time. People often have the wrong idea about public goods and this could be the reason that they are so dissatisfied.

- Knowledge about public goods and other features outside the individual field is influenced by the media. One rule of the media is to prefer negative messages because they gain more attention so this unavoidably contributes to low satisfaction with public goods.

- Despite all these irritating factors, it is obvious that there exist differences in public satisfaction between population groups as well as at different points in time, which should be taken into account in the political process. It should be of relevance for different types of welfare state and – right or wrong – what people think has an impact on politics and society. It is obviously significant for social cohesion. So the evaluation of public goods is a challenge for research and the development of policies.

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PART III – WELL-BEING AND RESPONSIBILITIES

I. THE COMMON GOOD, WELL-BEING AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Iuli Nascimento[1]

1. The common good and the public interest

Social crises and rifts between citizens and their representatives are now a feature of the political arena in most European countries. Members of the public feel less and less well represented by the system of political representation. The abstention rate has nearly doubled since the 1970s for every type of election – presidential elections, general elections, municipal elections and European elections (and even regional elections since 1986, when they were introduced), with the result, in France at least, that citizens have become less involved in the system of political representation. This rift affects all sections of the population and is massive in the areas where the working classes, those hardest hit by the social crisis, are concentrated (Dapaquit, 2007). Citizen involvement in the participatory and social cohesion process is thus running out of steam.

Does this really mean that citizens are becoming apolitical or is it that they do not identify with the system for their political representation and with the current social development model? Might it not also mean that individuals have lost confidence in the body politic as a result of rising unemployment and growing social inequality?

Although the aim here is not to provide exhaustive answers to these questions, it would seem that this rift stems from the fact that the existing system of political power, its authority, its effectiveness and its results are being called into question, as is the integrity of political representatives. As cultural precepts change, the old models of political representativeness are disintegrating. In several European countries we are witnessing, at each level of political representation, efforts to put participatory democracy in place.

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Local authorities' aspirations to introduce participatory democracy must not, however, be announced merely for political effect and remain a dead letter. They must usher in a new learning process so that new theories and new information systems can be devised to address the changes in society.

The aim must be to give citizens a proper place in the decision-making process in order to answer their genuine questions and meet their expectations. Local authorities have a responsibility here to help establish a framework conducive to sustainable development, in which the notion of the common good and the public interest is no longer confined to the local population but extends to the current world population and to future generations under the banner of solidarity between generations. Local authorities must help to avert any threat of society's disintegration, precisely in order to ensure social cohesion and hence citizen well-being. The social cohesion of a modern society depends on its ability to secure the long-term well-being of all its members, including equitable access to available resources, respect for human dignity with due regard for diversity, personal and collective autonomy and responsible participation (Council of Europe, 2005).

Society is changing increasingly fast, as people lose their old bearings and new ones emerge. The current crisis is an identity crisis and we need to understand its mechanisms rather than merely establish a correlation between, for example, rising unemployment and urban violence, or globalisation and the disintegration of society. Transformations have always taken place in societies. They invariably necessitate changes and may therefore create problems for human communities. In order to adapt to and address these changes, local authorities must therefore rise to the challenges of these transformations.

In the current context of globalisation, the economic model does not lead to transparency of the democratic management of local authorities and it undermines the legitimacy of their action at local level. The global economy and the exercise of democracy operate at different paces and are based on different things. The former needs a global market and is developing fast. The latter requires a well-defined, geographically localised territory, which develops slowly. The contrast between the two rates of development and the geographical scope of each, whether in economic or social terms, can sap confidence in a high-quality personal and collective future and bring the social development of the poorest sections of the population virtually to a standstill. The growth of ill-controlled free trade in the absence of regulatory instruments can plunge modern societies into uncertainty and put paid to collective strategies that could mobilise the population.

Generally speaking, with economic globalisation, rapid growth should generate extra output, maximise consumer benefit and increase population well-being. But the imperfections of the market prevent this extra output from delivering the anticipated benefits to the world population as a whole. Firstly, producers of goods and services can play with the argument of "improving the efficiency" of production and increase their profits to the detriment of consumers. Secondly, producers are increasingly concentrated in a small number of countries, unlike consumers, who are spread throughout the planet. This waters down the concept of the common good. In this context, care must therefore be taken to ensure that there are regulatory instruments to offset the shortcomings of the globalisation process.

Globalisation has thrown societies' conceptual frameworks into disarray, not only in cultural and societal terms but also on the trade and financial fronts. We are living in a world in which human activity is accelerating constantly, and in which the global economy has repercussions on life in society. This requires us to give thought to the changing content of the concepts of the common good and population well-being. To this end, new frames of reference need to be devised so that we can asses their consequences and ascertain whether they meet our requirements and those of future generations. It is thus essential to rethink the concept of the common good in the current globalisation context in order to preserve social cohesion within our societies.

The concept of the common good is similar to that of the public interest. It implies meeting the needs of people living in a given area who share the same vision. The common good is the result of their own individual actions within and outside this area. The members of this community voluntarily display solidarity towards the outside world and depend on it in practice, just as it depends on them. The shared living area in which they consume and meet their needs must be commensurate with the level at which decisions are taken by economic operators, who, in turn, will be responsible for these exchanges between different communities or societies. The common good is therefore what gives meaning to society and hence to human beings as individuals and members of society (Rochet, 2001). Local and regional authorities have an important role to play here.

2. Well-being and globalisation

a. *Economic globalisation, a process that began a very long time ago*

The idea here is not to try to explain the situation in terms of historical events or to show that globalisation inevitably affects population well-being. A brief look at how the economic globalisation process came into being is nevertheless called for. Globalisation is the result of a process that began a very long time ago. The planet went through successive phases during which the economy became more international. The first covered the period from 1840 to 1914, which was marked by an attempt to standardise the price of commodities and by such phenomena as human migration and movement of capital within the Atlantic area and on the Asian markets. This phase came to an end with the 1914-18 war. At the time, this first stage in the globalisation process called for numerous sacrifices, but many consumers benefited from the resulting market. During the post-war years and up till 1945, there was a backlash, with the emergence of ideological and trade wars, greater exploitation of the colonies and sharing of their natural resources, along with such tragedies as Auschwitz and Hiroshima. In order to regulate international economic relations, institutions were set up to introduce trade, monetary and financial regulations. In 1947 a new economic globalisation phase began, and some 20 states signed the Havana Charter,[2] which liberalised trade within a multilateral framework. Since the charter was signed, 139 countries have joined GATT,[3] now known as the WTO,[4] with a view to making trade policies more flexible. The volume of trade has made an unprecedented contribution to the growth in world production since the agreement was signed.

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2. The Havana Charter, signed on 24 March 1948, was proposed by the United States at the end of the Second World War. The rules were not observed immediately, but it provided for the establishment of a World Trade Organization (WTO). It was a proper agreement, setting up a genuine organisation.
3. General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade: an agreement signed in Geneva in 1947 in order to organise the customs policies of the signatories. In 1955, GATT was supplemented by the Organization for Trade Cooperation.
4. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an international organisation responsible for rules governing trade between countries. It seeks to help importing and exporting countries to carry out their activities, by reducing obstacles to free trade and producers of goods and services.

Since the 1970s the economy has become increasingly international and nations have become aware of their interdependence. At the same time, companies have extended their activities beyond national borders. New connections of different kinds (telecommunications, transport, new technology, etc.) are now materialising, creating a grid across the whole planet. International, national, intergovernmental and non-governmental scientific, cultural and political agencies and organisations are mushrooming in the international arena. The development of communication technology is highlighting the growing role of multinational companies and declining role of the state in the global economy. In the 20th century the state played a leading part in introducing major innovations – free trade, road transport, the digging of canals, railways and the laying of cables across the ocean bed.

The result of this process is globalisation, as it emerged from the 1960s to the 1980s: the "global village" described by McLuhan in 1968, the "globalisation of markets" to which T. Levitt referred (1983) and the "world without borders" described by Ohmae (1999) – in other words, a diversified worldwide village shaped by the dwindling effect of distance and the universal availability of information; a world without barriers, in which there is a growing awareness of a heritage and of common values stemming from the benefits of scientific progress. The effects of the "progress" made since 1990 are casting doubt on this globalisation, for the abundance that world economic growth has provided for some has not brought well-being to the bulk of the planet's population. The fact is that globalisation is now something that transcends political and ideological systems and bears the hallmark of a world where capitalism, the market and neo-liberalism[5] hold sway and technology is constantly being developed in a quest for improved productivity. This state of affairs has led to rapid changes in relations between certain parts of the world and the globalised world as a whole.

Given the substantial changes taking place in the world as a result of free trade and market competition, we need to look at the relationship between economic globalisation and the common good, between globalisation and the general interest of populations and between globalisation and the role of states in addressing economic challenges. Does the "state of free trade" of the existing globalisation process create the requisite conditions for the economy to function in optimum fashion and thus

5. Limited state intervention.

provide the population with maximum satisfaction? Does the scale of the conflicting interests that states have to reconcile for the benefit of the protagonists call into question the concept of the common good or public interest?

The advantages of free trade and of opening up the world to the global economy may be illustrated by the premise of a "competitive balance",[6] which entails a world without states, companies without market power and totally malleable production machinery. The imperfections of the international market and national regulations interfere with the balanced operation of free trade. The member states of the WTO are running a process that exposes political leaders to pressure from economic interest groups. In other words, the WTO is an intergovernmental agency in which the countries' official representatives have a twofold task: to negotiate in order to protect the interests of their own country as much as possible and to try to do away with the protectionist practices of their trading partners.

It should be stressed that present-day globalisation extends beyond physical goods: it applies to international trade that includes a substantial proportion of service provision, which may or may not be linked to the provision of goods. The services in question depend on information transmitted by satellites, for which states are responsible. The intangible nature of the Internet undermines the effectiveness of any form of supervision of trade negotiations concerning financial services, transport services, the cultural industry, the film industry, intellectual property rights and so on. In such a context, where does one draw the line between what lies in the domain of governments and what is to be left to market forces? By dint of promoting free competition, globalisation thus prevents governments from providing financial aid for their respective countries' industrial policies, as a result of which national economic policy can no longer be based on domestic demand because of the repercussions it may have on foreign trade. Moreover, the free movement of capital ties national governments' hands and restricts their room for manoeuvre in the area of fiscal and monetary policy.

6. The general balance achieved by perfect competition is said to lead to full employment of all the factors of production. It is claimed, in other words, that it enables the entire workforce to be employed and all capital to be used to make it possible to meet all effective demand (Léon Walras – 1834-1910).

One of the paradoxes of globalisation as shaped by the WTO is that there is a constant demand for free access to foreign markets and yet import barriers are imposed unilaterally in defiance of the spirit of free trade. As a result, although globalisation admittedly sustains economic growth, it breeds inequality and social exclusion. Present-day society is witnessing three major transformations: in the power of the state, the allocation of responsibility for public choices and the content of the concept of the common good and the public interest.

In this context, all public services need to be rethought and reorganised in order to reconcile the civic and commercial dimensions of globalisation. It is this that constitutes the major challenge for participatory democracy. The fact that elected representatives are less and less representative because fewer citizens are voting in elections must be offset by another form of participation in public decision making so that the general interests of the public and public policy in general can be defended. User/consumer associations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the logical partners for consultation between governments and the public. Through them, citizens can shoulder a substantial share of responsibility in the policy-making process.

b. Globalisation and the notion of "common-good"

One of the features of the current globalisation process is that growth is not the same in urban and rural areas and differs from one region, country and continent to another. This unequal distribution concerns growth of all kinds: economic and population growth as well as the increase in knowledge, income and life expectancy. The unequal distribution of the fruits of growth is affecting the lifestyles of populations and cannot be allowed to continue indefinitely (Dollfus, 2007).

In Europe, European Union directives are legally binding and yet this has in no way diminished the responsibilities of states. On the contrary, these responsibilities have become more complex as a result of the concept of the common good that emerges from these directives. Public services must reconcile their public interest mission with the requirement that they be open to competition. In the context of sustainable development, the concept of the common good and the public interest is no longer confined to the existing world population, but extends to future generations in the name of solidarity between generations. Pursuit of the common good therefore entails organising various components in connection with any project: material components (physical and financial resources), intangible components (identity and a feeling of belonging) and the project itself, which draws together the two in the light of long-term considerations.

The Lisbon Strategy set out, without success, to make the European economy more competitive by drawing on knowledge and technical innovation, with a view to ensuring a higher level of social protection and hence of well-being. Other avenues must continue to be explored in search of a "state of well-being" for the population. Some see the new European Treaty of Lisbon, as amended and signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 by the heads of state and government of the 27 member states of the European Union, as a missed opportunity, arguing that environmental issues were ignored and that none of the institutional reforms proposed will make it possible to do any more to avert the major crises that are looming, as is confirmed by one expert report after another.[7]

The Lisbon Strategy Report largely incorporates the earlier sustainable development provisions of the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht) without leaving any scope for European citizens to become involved in environmental issues. The only means of participation offered to Europe's citizens is the right of petition, and any petition requires a million signatures. This right merely enables citizens to submit proposals to the European Union but in no way obliges it to take account of them. On the other hand, where energy is concerned, Europe's clearly defined policy is to continue to promote the development of new and renewable forms of energy. Little scope is afforded to citizen participation in this context.

It has to be said that the latest edition of the UNDP *Human Development Report* shows that the world has never before produced so much wealth but that, paradoxically, poverty is on the increase, even in the most highly developed countries. Consideration of the common good should form part of all development strategies, be they European, national or regional, for it is this concept that makes society meaningful and allows human beings to exist as individuals and members of society.

The statistical tools currently at our disposal are incapable of measuring the advantages and genuine satisfaction that globalisation (free trade) provides in terms of the common good. Reality is more complex. Consumer (citizen) satisfaction and the concept of the common good cannot be reduced to the sum total of the interests of individuals or small groups

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7. *Le journal de l'environnement*, 14 December 2007.

that are separated from one another, to the detriment of the majority of the world population.

The point was recently made at France's major environmental conference (Grenelle de l'Environnement) that many of our activities generate greenhouse gases and therefore contribute to global warming. The French daily newspaper *Les Echos* published an article on 21 November 2007 entitled "Desertification is taking hold of fertile soil", showing that human activity was responsible for the deterioration of farmland throughout the world. This is a somewhat alarming finding: the desert is spreading considerably and soil erosion is becoming substantially worse. The International Soil Reference and Information Centre (ISRIC) reports that 200 000 square kilometres of soil are eroded every year, an area the size of the United Kingdom. Social and ecological balances are being destroyed and this is resulting in increasingly rapid and substantial disturbances, including:

- desertification;
- climate change (global warming);
- rapid, pronounced urban expansion (leading to a contrast between urban and rural areas);
- growing social exclusion (in terms of access to drinking water, health services, housing, education, etc.);
- substantial demographic change (ageing of the population, immigration and pressure from the growing world population);
- increasing world poverty;
- effects of pesticides on health and the environment;
- recurrent natural and technological disasters.

The global economy envisages several solutions to the worldwide crisis, in the form of the generation of renewable energy through the development of biofuels produced from vegetable oils and cereals, which is held up in some quarters as a miracle remedy. In order to develop fuels of this kind, the agricultural industry has to make massive use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. This economic development model drives growth but does not provide a solution to the problems of social cohesion and population well-being, as is borne out by growing world poverty and hunger. The pace of change fuelled by technology is no longer conducive to the well-being and social cohesion of the socio-economic system as a whole. It is therefore high time the concept of the common good were refined and adapted to collective projects and that local authorities were recognised as being legitimately entitled to consider the future of the population and the means of improving its living environment and the future of the world in general.

3. Local authorities' role and responsibilities and the tools at their disposal – The example of France and the Île-de-France region

a. Responsibilities of local authorities and the population's well-being

Local authorities acquire a new sense of responsibility when they are required to put the concept of sustainable development into practice and its implementation enhances the effectiveness of efforts to introduce a fairer socio-economic development model, since the concept can be applied to numerous sectors. The notion of well-being, when it is based on a sufficiently comprehensive and polymorphous concept of sustainable development, can be applied to virtually all local public policies. A systemic approach to human activity across the planet, in its biophysical entirety, should provide an opportunity to give thought to the future of our societies and how to manage the various parts of the world in conjunction with the natural environment and human activity. This is the main message to emerge from the Earth Summit (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), and the main sustainable development challenge highlighted by the Rio Agenda 21, which spawned the local Agenda 21s.

The Île-de-France has been chosen as an example here, illustrated below by a description of the regulatory instruments the local authorities have at their disposal for assuring the population of an acceptable quality of life and level of well-being.

Two main regional instruments set out the role to be played by the Île-de-France region in ensuring its integrated development: the regional economic development strategy (*Schéma régional de développement économique*) and the Île-de-France regional planning blueprint (*Schéma directeur régional*). The first is designed to co-ordinate the economic development measures taken by the local authorities and their associations on the region's territory, except for those tasks for which central government is responsible. Under Article L. 1511-1 of the General Local and Regional Authorities Code, the state may entrust the regions with devising a regional economic development strategy. This experimental strategy sets out and promotes strategic guidelines designed to achieve balanced economic development and seeks to enhance the attractiveness of the region and to avert risks to the economic balance of the region as a whole, or parts of it. Once the strategy has been adopted by virtue of powers delegated by central government, the region becomes responsible for allocating aid to companies.

The purpose of the Île-de-France regional planning blueprint is to provide for the planning of the region as a whole. It may be amended by the Chair of the Regional Council with the consent of central government, provided the amendments do not run counter to the broad lines of the economic development strategy. After a public inquiry, the draft blueprint may be amended to take account of citizens' observations and the views of the public corporations consulted. It is adopted by the Regional Council and approved by the relevant administrative authority. If a *département* objects, the amendments are approved by a decree issued by the *Conseil d'Etat* (the supreme administrative court).

The "public interest declaration" or "strategy declaration" is issued once the validity of the blueprint has been examined in consultation with central government, the Île-de-France region, the regional economic and social council, the *départements* and the chambers of commerce and industry. The "public interest declaration" signifies that the new provisions of the Île-de-France blueprint have been approved. It is issued by *Conseil d'Etat* decree if the region objects. The "strategy declaration" cannot be issued until the administrative authority has rendered the blueprint compatible with requirements and, if the region objects, it is issued by *Conseil d'Etat* decree.[8] A two-month public inquiry is then opened, during which all parties concerned within the boundaries of the region may intervene in respect of the guidelines set out in the regional blueprint.

On the basis of the regional strategy and the regional blueprint, the concept of well-being can be addressed in terms of six main sustainable development themes that are a matter for local public policy: spatial organisation and planning; social development; the development of economic activities and employment, transport and mobility; ecological

8. Article 2 of the Town Planning Code L. 141-1-2 – *Projet de loi relatif aux libertés et responsabilités locales* (Freedoms and Responsibilities of Local Authorities Bill) (final text).

management of natural resources, energy and waste; and decentralised co-operation and measures to combat global threats. In the context of these main themes, it is possible to promote the concept of the common good and population well-being. Proper co-ordination of the regulatory instruments at the disposal of the local authorities should make it possible to clarify their responsibilities in respect of both these concepts and ensure that sustainable development is put into practice by the various tiers of government.

A number of existing spatial organisation and planning instruments in France may serve as effective tools for ensuring population well-being and fostering a sustainable development policy: the *Schéma de cohérence territoriale* (Territorial Cohesion Strategy) (SCOT), the *Plan local d'urbanisme* (Local Urban Development Plan) (PLU), the *Plan d'aménagement et de développement durable* (Municipal Planning and Sustainable Development Strategy) (PADD), the *Programme local d'habitation* (Local Housing Plan) (PLH), the *loi Solidarité et Renouvellement Urbain* (Solidarity and Urban Renewal Act) (SRU) and the *Plan de déplacements urbains* (Urban Transport Plan) (PDU).

The SCOT is drawn up by elected representatives and has replaced the old local town planning and urban development strategy. It is designed to co-ordinate town planning, housing, transport and commercial amenity policies within the urban area concerned. It sets town planning and urban development objectives in order to co-ordinate all planning and programming strategies. It is designed, on the one hand, to strike a balance between development, urban renewal and rural development and, on the other, to preserve farmland and forests and protect natural areas and landscapes. It must also respect the diversity of urban functions and ensure a social mix in housing and employment. In short, it seeks to ensure carefully managed, balanced development of urban, suburban, natural and rural areas.

The PLU has replaced the *Plan d'Occupation des Sols* (Land Use Plan) (POS) and determines the allocation of space at municipal or inter-municipal level. It must include a PADD setting out arrangements for the general organisation of municipal territory in town and spatial planning terms. It may provide specific information about the use to which certain areas or neighbourhoods are to be put. The document is drawn up at municipal level and provides a frame of reference for planning schemes concerning housing policy, public spaces and landscape conservation.

It also identifies sectors to be renovated or protected and provides for appropriate action.

The PLH is a planning tool specifying the required supply of social housing (and in particular the balance to be struck between social and other forms of housing) and sets out five-year plans for local authority new-build housing and housing rehabilitation. The SRU encourages the preparation of an inter-municipal PLU to allow housing policy to be framed on an appropriate geographical scale at the request of a "housing catchment area", in accordance with the SCOT. The SRU strengthens consultation procedures for the purpose of the revision of a PLU or POS.

In the area of social development, local authorities carry only a small share of responsibility for addressing such major social problems as poverty, unemployment, dilapidated or insanitary housing and violence. Unemployment and poverty are more a matter for national than local policy. This responsibility extends to problems in the environmental, economic and social fields. Environmental problems take several forms, such as exposure of households to noise, the presence of industrial wasteland, subsoil pollution, the presence of inert waste and the deterioration of the natural environment. Economic problems include rising unemployment and dwindling local finances. Among the social problems are the difficulty of redeploying former employees, the loss of vitality of the social fabric and growing poverty. Since the regions are responsible under Article L. 214-12 of the Education Code for implementing regional apprenticeship and vocational training policies for young people and adults in search of a job or change of career, they are expected to organise, on their territory, a network of centres providing information and advice about obtaining recognition for vocational experience and, at the same time, to organise schemes to meet apprenticeship and training needs.

The promotion of economic activity and employment is one of the major responsibilities of local and regional authorities and yet current practice does not involve an approach that takes account of environmental and social considerations when companies are sited or projects for the economic exploitation of local resources are devised.

Local authorities have considerable responsibility for transport and mobility. They have various means at their disposal, provided for in the PDU, for curbing the growing trend towards personal car use that has been apparent for several decades now.

The PDU, as provided for in the Air and Rational Energy Use Act, is compulsory for towns with over 100 000 inhabitants. Its long-term purpose is to reduce car travel in favour of public transport, cycling and walking.

Local authorities must therefore introduce a number of measures to strike a new balance in the area of transport and mobility. They are required:

- to introduce areas specifically designed for public transport, bicycles and pedestrians;
- to control parking by means of regulations, pricing and park-and-ride car parks;
- to optimise goods transport in town centres by setting up delivery logistics centres on the outskirts of towns and ensuring that non-polluting vehicles are used for deliveries;
- to co-ordinate urban development and transport by siting new areas to be developed near public transport infrastructure.

Local authorities have key responsibilities when it comes to achieving the objectives set in terms of the ecological management of natural resources, energy and waste. In particular, the aim is to control the impact of economic and social development on the environment. This responsibility requires local authorities to make efforts to protect vulnerable ecosystems by managing natural resources sparingly, reducing the consumption of raw materials and energy and cutting back on waste production.

Some of these measures directly affect the quality of life and well-being of the population. For instance, the conservation of natural areas (natural parks, green belts, suburban farmland, etc.) in town centres and/or on the outskirts helps to protect and enhance local fauna and flora, thus lessening the effects of air pollution.

These measures bring about a direct and very substantial improvement in the lives of city dwellers, as a result of the proximity of leisure areas and the possibility of procuring quality farm produce nearby. Other measures may seem less important, but they have indirect benefits, for example the sorting of waste, water-saving measures and steps to combat climate change and global warming.

Waste treatment measures have made it possible to reduce the amount of fly-tipping in France. Other measures that indirectly improve the quality of life include schemes to re-use waste (recycling, home composting, energy recovery) and energy-saving measures (housing insulation, environmentally sound house-building). Other examples are pilot renewable energy schemes (wind, biomass and solar energy), which contribute to the well-being of local communities.

A local plan to combat greenhouse gases can also bring significant benefits by combining measures to reduce polluting vehicle emissions with steps to save energy in housing and public buildings.

Under the decentralised co-operation scheme, a local authority may, in order to combat global threats, promote projects to boost the development of the least-favoured parts of the world. The production of electricity by such means as photovoltaic panels, water engineering micro-schemes, wind turbines and from biomass, along with training for local technicians, is an alternative to the installation of generators burning fossil fuels. It makes it possible to provide power for craft activities and reduce pollution while helping to improve the quality of life and well-being of a disadvantaged section of the population.

b. Improving sustainable development in the regions

Asserting a determination to strive for the common good is tantamount to affirming that people have the capacity to decide on their future and that of the planet. In taking account of the common good, companies also become more creative, productive and competitive. In order to devise a form of development that is genuinely sustainable, it is necessary to assess long-term benefits and avoid jumping to conclusions about the disappearance of borders, the liberalisation of trade in goods and services, the movement of capital and technological innovation. Technological innovation and globalisation can then become opportunities for cultural openness, provided they are tied to a well-thought-out form of liberalism.

Human societies are complex systems that are constantly evolving and subject to imbalances. If such systems are to work, they must be regularly adjusted. Local authorities must be responsible for ensuring that these systems operate properly in order to avoid social regression. Non-governmental organisations representing the public can and must help to ensure citizen well-being. The transfer of decision-making power to independent authorities can be quite damaging to local authorities. Care must be taken to ensure that the existing economic development model does not become increasingly complicated rather than merely complex, and to make sure that it is not only lobbies that are able to make their voices heard.

Here it is politics that is in greatest need of complexity. Ideas are being produced that increasingly simplify things and yet societies are more and more complex. Increasingly one-dimensional visions are being generated and yet societies are more and more multidimensional. Ideologies are being produced that increasingly rationalise things and yet the situation is ever more uncertain (Morin, 2004).

Human beings must be actively involved in, and responsible for, organising and managing their environment. The ties between human beings and their territory make it possible to take simultaneous account of individual interests and the public interest in terms of the long-term sustainability of the territory and the survival of the community living there. This cannot happen unless the activities of local authorities are co-ordinated with those of NGOs. The local Agenda 21s can therefore be a very useful means of introducing coherent sustainable development in the regions.

For the sake of sustainable development, there is no option but to consider population well-being and a high-quality ecosystem as objectives to be achieved at all levels. The regional tier of government plays a key role here. Setting well-being indicators is one means of achieving these objectives. This entails reorganising information systems at all levels (national, regional, *départemental*, municipal) and rendering them interoperable with one another and with ad hoc data so as to allow both in-depth technical approaches (particularly for the purposes of assessing the quality of the ecosystem) and simpler approaches designed to make the media and the general public aware of the various facets of human well-being.

This objective implies that systems for compiling statistics must be able to come up with a set of comparable data at the different levels. Apart from statistical analyses, it is essential, when regional plans are devised, to be able to define "areas of well-being" according to different criteria (for instance, calm, heritage, wild and domesticated biodiversity) in order to preserve the quality of life and well-being of the population in areas used for mixed purposes (the built and open urban environment, cultivated areas, nature in the wild, etc.). The quality of life and well-being indicator developed by the Île-de-France region is, along with other sustainable development indicators, an example of an effort made by a regional authority to acquire a better grasp of the notion of the common good and thus make the planned ecoregion more effective.

The composite indicator for well-being devised by the Île-de-France region is more than just an indicator: it is a proper tool which can be adapted to various territorial levels and which, by virtue of its transparent and evolving tree-like structure, makes it possible:

- to assess and compare territories at a given point in time;
- to monitor their development;
- to set well-being objectives and target the sectors and parties that can make their achievement possible;
- to carry out simulations, varying some or all of the component indices;
- to carry out an overall assessment of a policy on the basis of a set of sustainable development indicators and, more particularly, to shape a policy (by producing tree diagrams specifically designed for the purposes concerned).

The Regional Council's plan to make the Île-de-France into an ecoregion is an excellent opportunity to introduce sustainable development at regional level. Although, at first sight, the concept of sustainable development may seem somewhat vague, it has the merit of advocating an across-the-board approach to regional development, encompassing the economy and sociological and environmental considerations. This makes it both rich and complex. It also takes account of the long term, incorporating the concept of responsibility towards future generations, and of the principle of citizen participation and governance (political ecology). It is not always easy to translate the notion of sustainable development into practice in the regions, and its application requires a special effort on the part of specialists in the various disciplines. The human sciences, the earth sciences and sustainable development are sometimes at odds with sectoral objectives, but sustainable development provides an opportunity to acquire a better grasp of the way in which urban systems operate as a whole and to pursue a genuinely ecological approach – one that is fully in keeping with the Île-de-France inhabitants' desire to be responsible citizens.

Conclusion

In the 1970s, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1995) demonstrated in his theory of "non-growth", based on thermodynamics[9] and system entropy,[10] that economic growth was the result of the productivity of a society and that this productivity depended on the availability of natural resources and the workforce used to transform those resources into consumer goods. It emerged from his work that natural resources were not inexhaustible and that they were not being used with due regard for the resilience[11] of habitats and the environment. As said above, the post-war economic development model has had serious consequences for present-day societies, including climate change, growing natural hazards, loss of biodiversity and the denial of survival necessities to a section of the world's population. Growth means an increase in economic activity and is not always reflected in the quality of the living environment and population well-being. Development, on the other hand, implies greater human fulfilment and requires us to consider the concept of the common good in greater depth.

The industrial-growth-based economic model has undeniably been damaging to rural economies and natural resources. Globalisation in its current form merely speeds up the process whereby small urban centres and rural areas are excluded from the global economic network. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that economic globalisation has positive externalities for all countries and regions of the world.

The Île-de-France region is seeking to ensure that rural areas do not remain isolated from the global economic network, without disrupting their economic and cultural balance. In order to reshape the model for the development of human activity at regional level, it is necessary to propose new means of organising space that are conducive to the well-being of the population. An ecoregion would seem to provide the appropriate spatial framework in which to achieve this objective.

An ecoregion is broken down into geographical sub-sectors (living areas), in which the well-being of the community can be fostered and enhanced. Together they form the regional ecosystem. These geographical sub-

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9. The field of physics concerned with thermal phenomena.
10. In thermodynamics, entropy is a measure of the state of disorder of a system. It increases when disorder increases.
11. Here, resilience corresponds to the capacity of an environment to regenerate itself.

sectors are the basis of society and of all economic and cultural life within the territorial entity formed by the Île-de-France region. The region's balance stems both from its ability to meet the legitimate needs of its population and from its capacity to react to conduct on the part of the population that is detrimental to sustainable development. What we must do, therefore, is rethink the concept of the common good in the current globalisation context in order to maintain cohesive societies, for the common good is the result of individual and collective action within and outside the boundaries of a particular community.

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II. From ill-being to well-being: individual and collective responsibilities

Catherine Redelsperger[1]

Introduction

The world of work is a battlefield where forces striving to achieve solidarity, departitioning, dialogue, integration, symbolisation and shared vision contend with forces intent on classification according to categories, territory, narrow expertise, hermetic language, insularity and disintegration of what is communal.

On the premise that experience of the world of work can be helpful in understanding, querying and discovering avenues as regards the learning processes that internalise states of individual and collective balance or imbalance generating well-being or ill-being, the author proposes to define three key expressions:

- learning processes;
- states of individual and collective balance/imbalance;
- feelings of well-being/ill-being.

She will then present what she has learned about these processes in the context of job-seeking and that of the wage-earning community, in three dimensions: individual, collective and from the standpoint of someone coming from outside and acting upon the system.

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1. Proposed definitions[2]

a. Learning processes

A learning process is the clarification (a priori for a known process, a posteriori for a random process) over time of the transformation of an initial condition into a final condition experienced by an individual:

- by observing and confronting the world at large, other people and him/herself; from his/her observations and confrontations he/she infers general laws and knowledge;
- by receiving knowledge and skills with which to interpret the facts.

The observations and knowledge are memorised and the individual acts and adapts both for better (improves, creates greater well-being for him/herself and others) and for worse (withdrawal, decline, dragging others into a vicious circle of ill-being).

Learning requires that the individual should be in liaison with another. One does not learn alone but in a state of interaction with another, who may even be an animal, an object or an imaginary invention.

A learning process is living: it consists of paths, detours, encounters, casting about, questioning, dialogues, tensions and errors or conflicts.

Learning processes differ between individuals. They are reversible and can branch out.

The content of the learning process can just as easily be ill-being as well-being. Ill-being is also learned.

b. States of individual and collective balance/imbalance

Balance will be spoken of as the proper combination of several "ingredients" for an individual or group. Let us take the example of how an individual combines working and private life.

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2. The definitions offered here are based on the scientific dictionary "Le Trésor" edited by Michel Serre and Nayla Farouki (eds.) (Flammarion, 2000); Barbara Cassin's article on "esti" and "einai" in Parmenides' poem "On Nature" as found in the dictionary of European philosophical vocabulary (Le Seuil, 2004); on varied reading about complexity and systematics and on the author's professional experience.

If my working life monopolises and absorbs me through the amount of time I spend working (or lack of it in the event of unemployment) or due to stress or worries, and if in these instances my personal life is affected, I suffer from a general imbalance in my life.

Another example at the collective level is where a department of an enterprise chooses an open, participative approach starting from the shop floor for a project closely concerning the participants, since the aim is to plot the potential of their occupational careers according to the firm's future development and skills needs. Volunteers enter into this approach and discover the pleasure of working collectively and their own ability to shoulder responsibilities. The same department's day-to-day functioning is partitioned, hierarchical and infantilising. After a few months, the domination of the daily routine, of a nature discouraging responsibility, literally stifles the volunteers who experience imbalance and ill-being because of this contradiction.

This is an initial definition of an imbalance based on a combination of elements that are skewed by the wrongful domination of one element which generates ill-being, or a contradiction between two elements, or even the paradoxical injunction to be spontaneous. Balance is thus defined by a combination of ingredients of life, of living conditions whose effect on the individual or the system is to generate well-being.

The dynamics of the balance/imbalance correlation will also be embodied in our hypothesis.

According to scientists, the balance/imbalance correlation can be dynamic. This dynamic concept makes us aware that a type A balance can become a type B balance. Moreover, the transition from one to the other occurs via a transitional, or critical, imbalance. A very simple example may illustrate this argument: the crisis of adolescence, which is a state of physiological and psychological imbalance and a transition from childhood to adulthood.

The process of well-being needs this transitional imbalance: it strikes a particularly responsive note in Western culture where the creation myths tell of a creative separation – God dividing the waters from the heavens and the earth, or light from darkness. Psychoanalysis also tells us something self-evident: for a newborn infant to live, it must be severed from the mother by cutting the umbilical cord. This separation is a transitional imbalance allowing a new balance to be struck.

In the link between the individual and collective spheres, I make the assumption that if I am ill at ease with myself I have difficulty in generating well-being with others, but I can rebuild it with a person or persons who do generate it. This raises the question of who is proactive, in the sense of who initiates the dynamic of switching from imbalance to balance.

The regulation of states of collective balance/imbalance on a larger scale (organisation, institution) is performed by the law (in its various forms), whose amendment results from the meeting of individuals and their interests, for example wage parity between men and women in companies or through regulatory bodies.

c. *Feeling of well-being/ill-being*

Defining the sense of well-being and ill-being is complex. The question of being is one of European philosophy's major questions, through the exceptional use of the verb "to be" which has a syntactical and lexical use and serves to connect subject with predicate in language. The reference text is Parmenides' poem. From the interpretation of the poem by philosophers, I draw two maxims for subsequent examination:

- To be is to live, to develop, to dwell (in the sense of a home).
- To be is to exist, think and speak.

I infer that well-being must be in the realm of "it is" and ill-being in the realm of "it is not".

There remains the question of feeling. The "sense of well-being and ill-being" places us in the register of emotion, of appeal to the senses and of subjective representation of what is experienced as well-being and ill-being. The relativity of this feeling is immediately perceived.

Simply by considering the question of ill-treatment, it is very quickly understood that there are two realities: the one actually lived and the spoken one. As long as making children work was not said to be ill-treatment, it was not ill-treatment for anyone, least of all the person undergoing it, who did not have words to express it, and all of whose reference points were built on that normality. This means that the feelings of well-being and ill-being are subjective and social, making it necessary to lend an ear to the other, or others, waiving judgment. This is done on a variety of levels such as the subject who speaks, society speaking through the subject (what the subject purportedly says) and the strategy of the subject going through the process (intelligence harnessed to an over-indebtedness strategy, for instance). But there is also knowledge of self, of one's own representations and experience of life compared to the well-being and ill-being ordained by practitioners, decision makers, thinkers and experts.

One question is important: who speaks and who ordains whether it is well-being or ill-being: do I speak, or is this spoken by someone else?

d. How these definitions are used

These proposed definitions are not final but open-ended, enriched by their dynamic quality and conceptual variety (scientific and philosophical standpoints). Moreover, the definitions are under construction. In the subsequent discussion, the reader will find links with one or more aspects of the proposed definitions. They are, as it were, a backdrop to what will be an illustrative, empirical argument.

2. Learning processes for a person's return to well-being: individual and collective dimensions

In line with the proposed definitions, I now set out to describe processes of transition from a state of ill-being to one of well-being. As ill-being is associated with imbalance (for instance, lack of work, lowered income, self-esteem and social life), so the learning process can momentarily generate an imbalance within the imbalance, that is a transitional imbalance (for example, overcoming the belief that one will no longer be able to find work). Well-being is associated with balance.

a. The individual dimension

Voicing of expectation and assumption of responsibility or how I escape from inevitability to regain control of my destiny

I have guided persons who have been out of work for over two years towards resumption of employment. It was hard for the regional directorate of the state employment agency (ANPE)[3] to find consultants who would accept this type of assignment. I accepted not because I was

3. ANPE: Agence nationale pour l'emploi: the French national employment agency.

supposedly a superwoman or a knight in shining armour, but because I knew that once a person enrols in a coaching scheme after two years of unemployment, he or she has some expectations (even if responding to coercion by a spouse or the ANPE). In any case, this is the person confronting the counsellor, not an ANPE official or a spouse. The first task in the process is to restore to the other person the ability to say what their expectation is and to shoulder their responsibilities. Thus the person escapes from their alignment of the planets, the disaster of fatalism, to express a desire for change in which they will be an agent. It is a first transition to well-being, a stage in regaining self-possession. Indeed, it should not be overlooked that human beings adapt to their misfortune. It is an effort in these circumstances to express the desire to live otherwise because of the huge risk.

Normalisation and ending self-condemnation, or how I understand what is happening to me

As our society is firmly founded on culpability rather than responsibility, the learning process operates by tracking down guilt. Guilt is a forceful emotion conducive to narcissism, self-centredness and inhibition. It is usually learned during one's upbringing and a person experiencing the sense of guilt lives though it as an ineradicable torment. What helps jobseekers is to help them understand what is happening to them, that they are not alone, that others are going through a similar sequence (fracture, affliction, reprogramming), and that they must take a share of responsibility in what is happening to them today as well as in their role in building their future. In short, the question of guilt is not addressed by delving into it and looking for the causes, but by centring oneself on responsibility conducive to action.

Self-esteem or how the other appreciates me and restores my self-esteem

Self-esteem is eroded:

- by people's opinions of me at the time of my break with the firm (on a ++ sliding scale if I did not leave by choice, and on a - - one if it was my choice);
- by the opinions of those around me (whether fantasised or real);

- by my own opinion of myself in relation to my system of values and world view.

When the erosion is very pronounced, a sense of exclusion is expressed. It may be associated with denial of the situation to those around one (untruthfulness about the real position), or with such dejection that the person dealt with has little hope of still being "worth" anything, or with such a violent spirit of vindictiveness as to become intolerable, or again with unappeased rebellion against the former employer.

Regaining self-esteem is a stage in learning the way back to a balanced state of well-being vis-à-vis oneself and others – to inclusion.

This rehabilitation requires a number of ingredients:

- an institution which recognises and is recognised by the person; here I note a difficulty: an institution such as the state employment agency (ANPE) by no means enjoys legitimate recognition by enterprises, or therefore with employees, and its staff themselves often have trouble with their self-esteem; the mirror of self-esteem does not work properly;

- a position and a person: the quantitative targets set for ANPE staff of number of appointments per day aggravate the difficulty of getting past the relationship of an official (counsellor) with a jobseeker, and thus of working within a relationship of a genuine, sincere person who recognises another person's worth;

- time for acquaintanceship is lacking: may I recall here that the process of recognition does not occur without an initial stage of getting to know the other person.

Let it be re-emphasised at this juncture, I am not speaking of the ANPE's prowess, in competition with private agencies, at conjuring up a return to work (equal success for both) but of what happens during the phase of exclusion from the active labour market.

Inclusion, or how I identify with a group

In this process, within a very brief space of time, the person is presented with a *modus operandi* under both individual and group conditions. The first group they face consists of their own peers, other unemployed people. The sweeping designation "unemployed" should not conceal the group's wide inner differences: people from different occupational backgrounds who did not mix with their counterparts in their previous jobs, people who are not in the same psychological state or people in differing positions of authority. It is an important first stage, even if unsettling and unpleasant for some (exposure to others, being forced out of one's personal sphere and habits). It is a first stage of inclusion, that is, coming to terms with and being disturbed by others.

Inclusion by re-skilling

For some, inclusion can only be achieved by re-skilling for another occupation. The person goes through renunciation of one occupation in order to re-programme themselves for another. There too, imbalance and the time of ill-being due to renunciation are necessary before one can re-immerse oneself drastically in something else. It is necessary so that the imbalance may be beneficial – a transitional imbalance. Another instance is literacy training (reading and simple arithmetic) without which an operative cannot take part in quality operations, follow instructions, and suchlike, or qualifying to drive (paying for and obtaining a licence) without which certain occupations are impossible, as is general mobility.

For others the situation is far more complicated. Here I refer to people who are rigid in their way of relating to others, who function in an unvarying one-to-one authoritarian register of subordination, whereas enterprises are looking more for people capable of working both in a chain of command and on a transversal plane or within a matrix structure. In this case, the mutation is painful but nonetheless decisive for a return to work.

b. The collective dimension

I propose to enlarge on this collective dimension in the same context of unemployment. In practice the collective dimension is organised in groups around a nucleus of 10 or so people – jobseekers and others, based on workshops (on CVs, letters of motivation, mailings, interview skills, phone canvassing, networks). The benefits of these workshops, apart from instruction in the use of methods or tools which trigger action, lie in generating a balance adjustment process during them.

Measuring oneself by the yardstick of others: taking one's bearings from degrees of well-being/ill-being

Normalisation, ending self-condemnation and regaining self-esteem, discussed above under the individual dimension, are amplified and speeded up by collective confrontation. Indeed, individuals can measure themselves through each other; they measure their misfortune, resources, chances and solutions. They devise a scale and position themselves on it. Often, moreover, their assessment changes as they come to understand what is happening where the others are concerned. A sensitiveness to others develops; gaps open in their reserve during these workshops, for there is nothing of interest at stake between them (except borderline cases of reversion to very strong competitive instincts when, for example, a large enrolment of computer technicians in the workshop coincides with a glut on the market).

Interaction with companies

In my own practice, I have observed that the approach is most workable when it includes the companies and thus is not confined to an ANPE officer as group leader or a private-sector operator and the group of jobseekers. During a telephone canvassing workshop, a period of instruction in method, testing and role-play leads to a real application during the workshop, with the jobseekers calling companies. The ability to win recruitment interviews during the workshop, in a mood of emulation among the group, is a powerful inclusive factor: "By my own proactiveness, I have succeeded in securing an appointment without anxiously waiting for a reply to land in my letterbox" (whether physical or virtual). The lightened brow and triumphant look of the one who secures an appointment is the sign of a return to self-esteem.

Divisive space: replication of social divisions in job-seeking

The question of space is ambivalent. Both the ANPE and the employment agencies play on the replication of social divisions in the world of work. Executives and non-executives are distinguished by the ANPE, and non-executives, executives and managerial executives by the employment agencies. In short, "everyone in their proper place". I mentioned space because the places are not identical; the space is shared with one's peers, the space made available is not the same and the benefits are different. The entirely positive effect is that the conditions are met for aiding recovery of self-esteem: people continue "playing in the same league", the "big league" (moreover, executives are often the most fragile in terms of self-image).

Yet the imperviousness remains surprising. One cannot help thinking that a director of human resources development could help non-executives in their search for employment through his/her advice and personal address book. However, to the best of my knowledge bridges of this type are hardly ever built (I would be glad to learn of experience with this). Such bridges could help change people's opinions once they find themselves caught up in the organisation of an enterprise: "I now know that a Director of Human Resources is not only the strong arm of the management, but also capable of helping"; "I know that a worker is not just one more registration number, I have seen the human being" or similar.

Solidarity over time: the amnesia of former jobseekers

It is a rare occurrence in the corporate environment for me to meet people ready to talk about their period of unemployment or to concern themselves with jobseekers or, in the case of recruiters, not to be intent on recruiting someone who is already working.

Former jobseekers are amnesic, with little patience for jobseekers, who they do not seem to trust, as if their own period of unemployment was suspect, as if it carried shame and stigma. This period is seldom valued as a phase of greater self-knowledge and of learning. Presenting it in this light is often perceived by those on the other side of the fence as window-dressing for self-promotion.

At the collective level there is a twofold loss: recognition of the learning is forfeited and likewise solidarity.

c. Specific case of over-indebtedness

I wish to bring up a specific, complex issue which is one of the possible effects of very protracted unemployment: over-indebtedness. It simultaneously involves elements of macrosystems (banks, lending agencies, laws, the employment market, etc.) and of the individual system bringing the over-indebted person's responsibility into play. May I firstly stress a conviction founded on my experience: I do not believe that all over-indebted persons feel they are in a state of ill-being or imbalance. They may have found in over-indebtedness a comfort zone with fringe benefits of some significance and they may choose an adaptive response to the prevailing rhetoric of ill-being. They may not attempt to reason differently or to devise other strategies, but they make tools of the new aid resources. A most important question arises: is an over-indebted person ready to change their stance?

Attaining a shared vision through confrontation

I find it essential that all "assistive" functions come together with the over-indebted person or couple in order to align the shared vision to the situation and the demand, avoiding word games such as "I tell you what you want to hear about me according to your role". This confrontation with reality is harsh for the professionals and for the over-indebted person or couple. Why? Because everyone at the table is forced to admit to themselves that they have been blind to the situation.

Unity of time and place counters the allure of mirror images

The confrontation occurs in a unity of time and place. It eliminates possibilities of triangular manipulations: "You understand me, but not the others" and replies targeted according to who is addressed.

The paradoxical question is how to succeed at being over-indebted

The systemic approaches reveal paradoxes in terms of learning and self-esteem. Indeed, through the disclosures about their successes, the over-indebted person's skills, qualities and strategies leading to over-indebtedness can be revealed, then these very same skills and qualities can be harnessed to another strategy to vanquish over-indebtedness, by way of all the proposed arrangements tried out under the multipartite social contract.

3. The learning process of well-being/ill-being as it affects wage-earners

I recall my initial premise that what happens as regards learning processes associated with states of balance/imbalance generating well-being or ill-being in the context of the enterprise gives us a perspective of society as a whole by analogy.

a. The individual dimension

Estrangement of employees from their companies

Ethnological studies of enterprises have established that employees are alert to and undeceived by the systems of marketing and propaganda set up in companies. They play the game, keep up the pretence and above all protect themselves by withholding their full intelligence, creativeness and culture from the enterprise. They build their path to happiness outside the enterprise. This phenomenon would seem to have intensified since the introduction of the thirty-five-hour week in France. For example, many fathers take their paternity leave at the birth of their child. This is still more blatant in the case of younger people who contemplate just passing through companies, using them as their parents were used by them (parents who experienced periods of unemployment, mothers tied down by part-time working hours making an absurd ordeal of their day-to-day lives). Private life is more important to them than working life.

Here I am describing an instance of individual balance which has been achieved but which generates significant collective weaknesses as well as withdrawal and pronounced individualism. Some enterprises try to develop what they call collective intelligence or joint responsibility, more or less successfully depending on the contradictions that exist; for example, developing joint responsibility when a manager will not acknowledge his/her mistakes renders the task impossible.

Some situations of "estrangement" are linked with a confusion causing ill-being and frustration, when an employee casts the enterprise in the role of complete power over his/her whole life. I have observed this in young single women trapped in working hours which they themselves have taken to crazy extremes (sixty or seventy hours per week). They end up blaming the enterprise for their inability to find a soul-mate and often consider it unappreciative of their professional dedication. Ending confusion, putting everything back in the right slot and restoring the individual's responsibility for his/her own problem is the most effective avenue. Here I am referring to situations where, under similar working conditions, some work within inordinately extended time bands while others find regulation mechanisms which are very easy to describe (simply working less) but hard to apply for someone "trapped".

The zones of non-being

We have been speaking of well-being and ill-being; now I take the liberty of introducing Virginia Woolf's idea of zones of non-being. I construe non-being as a kind of evanescence, loss of self, of passing time, of linkage with the world. In it, events are non-events. Nothing happens to me, nothing matters. This trivialisation of self makes me a nonentity.

This zone of non-being is an absence of being, neither well-being nor ill-being, a negation of being. As it implies suffering, one would be inclined to class it with ill-being. But that would be to overlook a concept pointing to a situation of self-effacement, like a situation of refuge, a bolt-hole, a zone of safety from the vicious circles of ill-being in society.

I sometimes find myself faced with people in a state of non-being when they work. They function mechanically but are "not there". This is a form of self-exclusion from the world. There too, by dialogue with another, the possibility of a link with oneself and the other is rebuilt. This dialogue restores a self-excluding person's perspective and appreciation of day-to-day events.

Materialism and individualism

The acquiescent sadness of disillusion in people with the potential for dedication and supportiveness, considering their competence and capacity for professional initiative, is questionable. I regularly come across executives approaching middle age who admit they are materialistic, individualistic and sad to be like that, while at the same time saying how clear-sighted they are about themselves. They like their comfort and do not wish to choose a path to greater happiness entailing a loss of income (to change occupations, set up a firm), since they use the money to purchase compensatory pleasures (their very words). It is hard to imagine these people who take a "preservative" attitude to themselves spontaneously taking the risk of caring for someone else. Yet they are aware of the socially excluded. The question remains as to how to stimulate their desire to activate change. There too, the key lies in encounters with another who does not judge them and offers them other avenues.

Saying no

In the learning process that leads towards well-being, learning to say no is one of the keys to resumption of proactiveness. Of course, the reverse happens, since acquiescence is also a key. On the whole, however, I meet people subjugated to their wish to please, to be perfect, obedient and overburdened. Sometimes when I meet them, weary and at odds with themselves, they have not realised it on their own because it had become their normal state. Another person (family member, manager, colleague) has pointed out that life could be different. The next step after gaining this awareness is learning to set oneself limits and make them clear to others, to force a change in one's doormat image. The learning may take place, *inter alia*, by inversion methods (I take the other's place and realise that to hear "no" does not trigger a conflict), through learning by rhetoric (reasoning the refusal).

b. The collective dimension

Here I propose to deal only with the principles that govern the learning processes of well-being by setting out the limits and the hardships of these learning processes. These principles mainly result from research within companies. They are being tried out more and more in varied contexts (associations, job creation schemes, companies, regions).

The diagonal approach

The word "diagonal" means offering people from different entities, levels of authority and cultures the possibility of becoming involved in seeking heterogeneity and creating conditions of parity, that is, in hierarchical organisations, in creating a-hierarchical or hetero-hierarchical areas. In the first case there is no more hierarchy, in the second the hierarchy revolves, each person taking their turn as leader. The advantage is in being able to create conditions of joint responsibility, empathy, inventiveness and implementation. For this to work, it requires that experts and decision makers strive for the humility to accept and heed people less knowledgeable than themselves but nonetheless to help seek solutions in which all would be involved.

Voluntary service

Voluntary service is also one of the keys to success and, in a group situation, has a knock-on effect. The limitation, in the corporate environment, is that at some stage the rule of voluntary service is pushed aside by short-sighted time constraints and in the end a decision maker chooses the volunteers.

Joint responsibility

Joint responsibility is another way of saying that all are players, all are interacting and all have effects on each other. Enterprises, like states, have high levels of complexity. To live this complexity to the full, not contemplate its dissolution, it is necessary for all players to realise that they are players. In practice, one of the keys is decentralisation.

Decentralisation

For there to be joint responsibility, there must be no more centre, or one that shifts according to the encounters, reflections and actions. As long as an individual or group of individuals can be identified constantly as the centre, the phenomenon reduces the possibilities for the players to see themselves in action; they so often become onlookers again that they end up leaving the action to the person or persons at the centre. In practice, this means circularity in the exercise of power (each in turn, with frequent change decreed not by a rule but by force of the real circumstances observed as one makes one's way along).

Making one's way

The foregoing does not generate well-being at the outset but unease, a disturbance of habits (stating one's opinion, listening to people different from oneself, making a commitment, breaking down barriers). One of the other features is the need to take account of reality. How do we act? How could we do otherwise? What kind of effect do we produce? This signifies leaving behind a pure planning logic to combine it with acceptance of contingencies, side-effects of greater interest than the results aimed at. This accommodation of reality, of what happens and of its consequences, confirms each group member's scope for action at their level. It is a process of experimentation, interesting in its peculiarity of being undergone by a particular group at a given time – "t".

Dialogue

The way people speak to each other is crucial in a learning process generating well-being. Several conditions are necessary:

- a person speaks, not the function or institution;
- it is not communication;

- it is the spoken word;
- there is suspension of judgment;
- the other must show hospitality;
- empathy must exist;
- curiosity must also be there;
- there must be association of ideas, etc.

All this is learned by doing but with initial guidance in order to develop this way of escaping from monologues of the deaf, from "I want to be in the right", from restrained parlour conversation.

Shared objectives and shared vision

Shared vision, a heavily used term in corporate parlance, implies the possibility of creating a common image, concept and logos.

The term is used to denote the possibility of collectively devising a common strategy (for example, on health for an enterprise making and marketing foodstuffs), a joint project (for example to build a car costing less than €10 000 for the "emerging" markets). In this dimension, the term "shared vision" denotes the activation of all in the implementation of the strategy or project, hence a way of bringing together different occupations, rationales and individuals.

A tendency for employees, customers and shareholders to join in creating value around the shared vision has been taking hold for the last ten years or so in very large enterprises. One example to illustrate this claim is an international agri-food firm quoted on the stock exchange which has "nutrition" as its strategy. Symbolically, the strategy embraces the shareholder (feeding the shareholder) and, in practice, the customer and the employees (with the idea of education). Aimed at the employees, a nutrition programme has been set up specifically for operatives working shifts, whose eating habits, linked with their working conditions alternating between night and day, are not optimum and may cause health problems. Moreover, companies alert to their "planetary responsibility" increasingly accommodate the natural environment (eco-responsibility).

At the same time, however, in some of these very large enterprises, the employees often perceive this drive for joint creation of value as a trendy way of asking them to accept further numerous changes under stressful conditions.

Yet shared vision is perceived in a perspective of rational philosophy. Shared vision does not go with the idea of literally "making" one's way. It is more a matter of the "mix" competing with the "logos". "Mix" is subterfuge, lateral thinking. It is a matter of heeding and sharing the mental representations and the goals of individuals and groups, of collectively setting up a common progression, an impetus towards future action.

Today in companies, these two rationales of "logos" and "mix" combine more or less successfully.

Here is an example of a success: an international enterprise manufacturing industrial components is merging two sites in a new location but 110 staff will be required to work 50 km from their present place of employment. The enterprise wished to secure every chance of causing as little ill-being as possible and took this occasion as an opportunity to develop employees' expression. The director-general, the factory manager, the human resources department, the works committee, the trade unions and all 110 staff (operatives and team leaders) went through a multiple experience six months before the move:

- personal interviews with all employees to understand their needs;
- other firms' transport experience (car-sharing, company buses, local transport authority buses);
- working from the road map to calculate costs (motorway toll);
- joint work with real-estate agents and architects.

This procedure was an extraordinary gamble which ended with the choice of the new site. This new factory construction site is an amazing adventure which, even years after this experience, welds the staff of the new factory together and has given them self-confidence. The workers felt they were heeded, considered and were agents of the decision. A shared choice could not possibly be jointly constructed like this in enterprises where planning and centralisation reign supreme. After cursory opinion polling of employees, the financial manager and the general director would decide and disclose their decision.

c. *Keys?*

Attitude of mentors: unknowing

The term "societal coaching" denotes a mentoring action at the level of the system, hence interactions between the elements thereof. Here the societal coach would be one of the players with other players. The mentor's stance is essentially unknowing.

The mentor has a low profile (conversely, a decision maker has a high profile), does not know what will be the solutions, the content or the outcome. His/her know-how concerns the conditions of success to be met (some of which are described herein) so that interactions within the system are rewoven, some of its elements disappear and other new ones are introduced to transform the system as a whole. The mentor is not the decision maker, or the expert on content.

Perception of the system: interactions

To look at the system is to look at its interactions, which is easily said but difficult to do. We tend to contemplate our own navels and to regard the other as a problem to be solved. Looking at interaction and the effects on myself generated by the other, and by myself on the other, demands great rigour, a search for a way out of self-delusion at the individual level. At the institutional level, looking at interactions requires us to look at them together and speak to each other about how we can manage to work together (well or badly).

A blind spot

The chief blind spot when a person undertakes to work in liaison with someone weaker and more destitute is their own generosity. Excessive generosity has adverse effects, for generosity is a way of making the other dependent on me, beholden to me, in short I derive pleasure from being generous, superior to the other. This generosity, very aptly described by Edgar Morin in *Éthique*,[4] must be counterbalanced by egocentricity and consciousness of the effects of one's generosity. This is one of the chief risks of blindness in mentors.

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4. Morin, Edgar, *La méthode,* Vol. 6, Ethique, Le Seuil, 2004.

At the level of society, the flaunting of generosity with a strong undercurrent of self-interest may amount to forgetfulness of the equity of well-being for all. Indeed, this association of selfishness and generosity could be the seed of cronyism: "I am generous to you, but you will have to do me a good turn back one day." Anyone not equal to this or not wishing to play along is excluded.

Conclusion

The few examples given in this article show how the learning processes that lead to states of balance or imbalance generating well-being or ill-being are fraught with pitfalls, false appearances, paradoxes and illusion, and that vigilance and humility are indispensable qualities for any player involved in the process.

PART IV – THE CASE FOR A SOCIETY FOCUSING ON THE COMMON GOOD AS A CONDITION FOR WELL-BEING

FROM WELFARE STATE TO WELFARE SOCIETY

Bruno Amoroso[1]

1. Collective imagination and welfare: the two utopias

The collective imagination that nourishes people's plans for life and society is expressed by concepts such as education, instruction, culture and religion. It is reflected in the role of family, civil society, labour and institutions. The collective imagination has often given rise to new utopias when the old ones have declined or have been recaptured by old-new visions. Utopias are historically specific and promote the necessary conditions for a radical transformation. Utopias are needed because they enable the collective imagination to materialise in time and space. Any transformation – economic, political or religious – first requires a cultural revolution. Utopias can legitimise revolutions as well as counter-revolutions. The Keynesian revolution was sustained by the utopia of the social economy (fairness, efficiency and equality) in the same way as the neo-liberal counter-revolution was sustained by the utopia of globalisation (the "global village").

Globalisation has very quickly been shown to diverge from its promises. The global village has turned into global apartheid and the reactions to it are creating a new universe of visions, aspirations and dreams. The changes occurring on a day-to-day level at local and world scale (such as globalisation of the economy; the information and communication explosion; the growth of inequalities and social exclusion; economic marginalisation and political destabilisation of communities and countries; the biotechnological "revolution"; the renewed rise in unemployment and

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labour slavery in the North and in the South; environmental pollution; climatic change on a planetary scale) have reopened the need for a re-think of the present situation as well as of the overall objectives of our way of life.

Because globalisation has been introduced as the highest achievement of the Western modernisation model, "the landing point of human history", its discontents have re-opened the dossier not only of globalisation but of the whole system built up by more than two hundred years of European history. Once again collective imagination is creating a new utopia, "another world is possible", based on the revival of the communities and their cohabitation. Its benchmarking is provided by the reintegration of the markets into the communities, the deinstitutionalisation of its main functions which will be overtaken by civil society, the re-linking of education with instruction and training. Life, people, living together and creativity have again become major issues to be questioned, explored and investigated.

a. European utopia and globalisation

Since the 18th century European utopias have attributed a central role to science and technology, to the supremacy of the state over communities and of institutions over civil society. Furthermore globalisation defines itself as the "knowledge society", because its economy is considered to be increasingly driven by knowledge and the dominant tendency is to give primacy to a techno-scientific and utilitarian vision of research and education. First education and knowledge were expropriated from the family and community life (civil society) by the state (as the governor of a new umbrella called society), now they are being expropriated from societies and states by capitalist globalisation. Knowledge and its institutions (schools, universities, research centres) are becoming instrumental to the objectives of the capitalist market and its transformation from welfare to workfare (1980-90) and from workfare to warfare (2000-08).

The impact of these processes on universities and educational systems is obviously destabilising. Universities tend to specialise in "useful" fields and disciplines where they can better serve the economic interest of national competitiveness. This leads to increasingly close links with private companies in the financing of research "which produces returns" and in "cutting edge" training. In turn, this leads to an expansion in commercialisation and privatisation of higher education, particularly university education. Education no longer belongs to the field of non-commercial goods and services. Students are becoming customers and the various actors in the education field are regarded as “stakeholders” in the “educational enterprise” that the university is becoming.

Above all, they have to become functional to the objective of globalisation by educating the most qualified and competent “human resources” to enable companies to maintain and improve their competitiveness in the world markets. This means continuing with the process of “financialisation” and creation of a techno-structure that increasingly uses science and technology to orient production systems and consumer behaviour to its purpose and for the creation of unequal control by social groups and countries of the design, production and use of the new information and communication technologies (the Internet universe).

This process, called the “knowledge divide”, refers also to the ever growing gap between individuals, social groups and countries which produce and those which do not produce the increasingly sophisticated and complex knowledge which fashions the military, space, biotechnological, agricultural and multimedia fields. Because of the power this capacity gives them, the former have little interest in sharing this knowledge. Their interest lies rather in using it to extend and consolidate their influence and control of the economy from a local to global scale. This explains the strategic importance acquired by intellectual property rights and, consequently, the race for patents.

b. European paths of emancipation

The communities’ revival, identified by the will of millions of people in Europe and elsewhere to govern their own lives in coherence with their own choices and values, has been a recurrent event in European history. All forms of protest and revolt against the imposition of economic and political processes have been vital. At the centre there was a difficult relationship with modernity and the various forms of modernisation introduced at institutional level (state policies and practices) as well as at the economic one (commoditisation, “financiarisation” of market economies). Choices and decisions were always introduced as “constraints” – dictated by the needs of the economy and the promise of development by various social and political forces – to which people and local communities had only to submit.

Choices and decisions have been entrusted to God and to the interpretation of oracles in ancient times and to science and laboratories in modern times. Once the main routes for the future have been outlined, communities need only to adapt to them. Consequently, the transformation from "education to …" to "training for …", from experiences and knowledge to science and the need to make local demands consistent with the general interest became the accepted rules of the game. The traditional view, "think local and act global" (bottom-up), that has always been the natural basis for communities' sustainability, has been transformed into the opposite, "think global and act local" (top-down), with its inevitable impoverishment.

These approaches, reflected in the policy orientation of European and international organisations, as well as in various movements, can be summarised in two blocs:

- those who pursue the adaptation of local communities, regions and countries to the increasing demand for integration and industrial innovation imposed by globalisation; these are the positions of the European and international institutions that are also accepted by a number of governments;
- those who search for possible ways to adapt the processes of integration and technological innovation to the needs of communities; these positions, sustained by some governments and by the movements labelled "new-global", do not question the choices and orientations of the former but try to reduce their negative impact.

Both positions, despite their diversity, assume the direction and the content of development as given, and share an optimistic view about the outcomes of modernisation. The first considers the adaptation of the communities to the needs of industry a simple result of world development in which it is necessary to participate as much as possible. The second is more critical about the risks of social exclusion and its high social costs. However, it retains the possibility of overcoming these using appropriate policies. Common to these positions is the idea that local development is a residual factor consistent with more general objectives. A third position is taken by the "no-global" and "alter-global" movements that question globalisation as well as the more general concept of development. It is close to the approach of "mondialisation" that overturns the two previous positions, because it assumes the community to be the independent variable and industry and market the dependent ones.

The events that characterise the life of our communities and societies always follow at least two paths, parallel and often intertwined: the planned juridical and institutional one and the voluntaristic one of people, movements and associations. Diversity and interaction among the two create conflicts but also reciprocal influence and synergies and therefore they ought to be carefully analysed and monitored in order to verify the coherence of their respective objectives.

c. The rise and fall of the European social model

The welfare state was the social project applied through European policies over two decades after the Second World War and it has been a positive achievement of European societies. Its crisis is due to the lack of innovation during the 1960s and to the impact of globalisation since the 1970s. Its inner construction and dynamic were established with the "social pact", which gave the entrepreneurs the right to manage and organise production in order to achieve the efficiency of the system, and the labour movement the prerogative to govern and to provide the necessary public goods and an income re-distribution financed by a progressive tax system in order to achieve equity in income and welfare distribution.

However, the narrow path of social redistribution was dictated by the logic and intention to compensate for the "social costs" of capitalist development. The challenge posed by the economic system was not answered by policies trying to internalise social costs within the enterprises but, on the contrary, by reducing their negative impact on workers and citizens in general. Paradoxically, the state care on these matters and their partial compensation produced an enlarged externalisation of production costs by the enterprises.

Here are the roots of the failure of the welfare state – its inner crisis – illustrated by various authors (for example, Archibugi, 2000) in its various dimensions: i. fiscal crisis; ii. efficiency crisis; iii. crisis of affection. Its inability to react to these trends and the resistance met in implementing the needed reforms (industrial and economic democracy) made it easier for the new economic policies of the 1970s and 1980s (neo-liberalism) to undermine the legitimacy of the "social pacts" through the Washington Consensus, to dismantle the public goods supply through privatisation and to reintroduce "flat" tax systems.

In the meantime, the transformation of the production systems from Fordism to post-Fordism erased the systems that made possible the rise of the working class and middle class on which the system of democratic institutions and participation had been created. Therefore, because of these structural changes that have produced a power shift from industrial to finance and technology groups the reconstruction of the welfare system is not possible on the prerogatives of the previous one. As has been correctly noted:

> "From this point of view, then, the expression 'welfare society' could be considered not only *integrative* and *complementary* to that of the 'Welfare State' but it would become even *antinomic* to the latter: for the welfare society to exist it is necessary that first the Welfare State in one way or another is 'destroyed'; that state that until now has assumed the task of generalising well-being only through an ever-increasing *redistributive* function and/or the supply of productive functions of (divisible and indivisible; individual and collective well-being)" (Archibugi, 2000: 177).

The "common good" project arises because of the crisis of the welfare state, put down by the European Union Commission to democratic, economic and social deficits. This crisis is rooted in two problems of scarcity: economic scarcity expressed by the "financial crisis of the state"; and scarcity of resources due to the limited availability of natural resources.

Economic scarcity is caused by the welfare systems' inability to properly manage the processes of socialisation and democratisation that they had introduced (Caffè, 1986). The stated principles of economic sustainability (by the enterprises) and social sustainability (by the citizens), that ought to limit the impact of social costs on public finances and on people, did not produce the expected results. The behaviour inspired by the capitalist system produced the externalisation of the "social costs" ("the privatisation of profit and socialisation of costs"). The capitalist market became increasingly a "system of unpaid costs" (Kapp, 1950) that made the economy inefficient and public finance out of balance. The state support to enterprises was systematically used not to reinforce the real economy but to cover for structural deficits and management mistakes. The welfare measures were not used to improve the quality of life for families and people but to increase their dependency on the labour market. Furthermore, greater access to higher income and welfare did not improve the quality and the lifetime of the product but increased the people's propensity to consume and their behaviour as consumers.

Scarcity of resources has been caused by the conflict between the unlimited growth ideology and the limited nature of natural resources. During the 1970s a number of reports dealt with the problem of "limits to growth" (for example, the report produced for the Club of Rome:

Meadows et al., 1972) and increased the social consciousness of their worldwide dimension and interconnection. Various reports further raised awareness of the problem of distribution of resources (WCED, 1987) and regional disparities.

In recent years both phenomena have given rise to various movements and new organisations that have taken over the fulfilment of the above-mentioned objectives, widening their implication on forms of market organisation, production systems and international co-operation. The civil society mobilisation on these topics represents a constructive contribution to the problem of the welfare state but, at the same time, has accelerated the need for its reform and radical transformation. The awareness of the interconnection between people and communities – due to the growth of environmental problems, outrageous waste of energy and raw materials, increasing migration, conflicts and wars – is what we define as "mondiality". These interdependencies are reinforced and extended by the diffusion of new transport technologies, communication and new materials. Finally, the increase of immigrant communities within national states calls attention to the problems of cultural diversity and polycentrism in European countries.

d. The social state as a symbol of the common good, in the past and today

Prior to the objectives of the welfare society today under discussion, the European social project has for forty years been that of the welfare state. Its objectives and functions were articulated through public goods. The welfare state project was established during the last century to deal with the economic and political crisis of the capitalist system. After the Second World War, it was designed to deal with the reconstruction of much of the civil and economic infrastructure including education, health, transportation, post services, housing, and industry. At that time, governments, democratic or not, were the only authority in charge of those functions. The state, therefore, took over many of the functions of a market economy and introduced a "mixed economy" characterised by the presence of powerful, state-controlled enterprises in the main strategic sectors of the economy. The modernisation of the economy was mainly based on the Fordist system and its model of mass production and consumption.

This hegemonic industrialism introduced in European countries from the United States became the guideline for the newly established European reconstruction, penalising rural societies and traditions. The institutional and political framework (political parties, trade unions, etc.) was built around this new economic and state organisation: the industrial "trade union" and the "class" political party both derived from the large-scale model of the Fordist enterprise. Rural culture and traditions at the core of European societies were ignored during this process and marginalised as "pre-capitalistic" or "pre-modern" forms of social organisation.

The search for a new worldwide welfare consistent with the objective of "living together" on earth – with less government involvement and greater self-reliance and participation of citizens and the local community – started several decades ago. The limits of laissez-faire economics and liberalism and the need for the "common good" had already been emphasised by J.M. Keynes in his *National Self-reliance (1933)* and in *The Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren* (1932). During the 1960s Gunnar Myrdal pointed out the need for transition from welfare state to welfare society (Myrdal, 1960), while Gunnar Adler Karlsson denounced the "cultural barbarism" of consumerism and growth ideologies (Adler-Karlsson, 1976).

The need to overcome the national model of welfare redistribution has been analysed recently by Franco Archibugi:

> "Welfare Society is not integrative or complementary to the Welfare State but can only be born through its destruction: the limits of Welfare State are identified in the utopia of the functional dualism between social policy and economic system and in the need to put an end to the logic of compensation for the social costs produced by 'development'" (Archibugi, 2000: 177).

As stated by William Robson:

> "The welfare state is what the government does. The welfare society is what people do, feel and think about the general welfare. Unless people generally reflect the policies and the assumptions of the welfare state in their attitudes and in their actions it is impossible to attain the objectives of the welfare state… When an industrial nation becomes a welfare state, the need for a strong sense of individual, group and institutional responsibility, the need for social discipline, become very much greater" (*ibidem*: 303).

The importance and complexity of this paradigm shift are due to the fact that after three hundred years of European modernisation a new culture needs to be created. In many ways, the welfare state stands for the most developed form of economic and institutional transformation initiated by the French Revolution. The power shift introduced by the European bourgeoisies was achieved by the destabilisation of all existing forms of power based on civil society (family, religion, local communities, etc.) that transformed "persons" into "individuals" and liberated "citizens" from their communities' bonds and obligations. The vacuum created by this change was taken over by the state that took on the role of the previous community structures through the proclamation of individual rights and the establishment of the social state (in its various forms). This transformation individualised the relation between government and citizens and took away from individuals their social responsibility towards the community as a whole. The "collective interest" created by the sum of individual interests, replaced the "community common good". People's attitudes toward the concept of the common good were replaced by conflicts among "special interest groups".

The state thus became the provider of goods and services for its citizens "from the cradle to the grave". This situation explains why the crisis of the welfare state has been particularly dramatic in societies where the transformation has been most successful. Individuals have nothing to fall back on: in most cases they are driven to despair and, in some cases, try to re-establish new forms of community life. The recent rise of civil societies and the development of alternative economic systems based on community are an expression of this new demand for social transformation.

2. Welfare society as a new project for well-being

Welfare society is an alternative to globalisation, oriented by the communities' new vision of the common good and their capability of living together. It should find educational and operational methods coherent with its principles, based on local developments as the primary cells of worldwide networks of solidarity and on new co-operative institutions at meso-regional level re-establishing common boundaries that national states no longer represent. These methods ought to be participative from the drafting of the project to its implementation. Furthermore, they must be able to unify the segmented knowledge produced by specialisation into a trans-disciplinary perspective giving back a central position to intercultural dialogue, which today has been reduced from an approach involving listening to each other and real dialogue to simply teaching our own values and way of life to other cultures.

This new utopia of the common good is based on the principle that knowledge is the common heritage of humanity and that knowledge sharing has primary importance. The expropriation of the knowledge accumulated over years of collective effort by the communities and the privatisation of results produced thanks to public investment in education and research are against the logic of the common good and living together. Rewards for the achievements of researchers can be provided in other ways than by privatising research results, whose only real objective is to ensure the highest profit for the shareholders of the companies owning patents.

The common good of each community ought to be supported by the principle of "living together" in a worldwide polycentric system of communities and meso-regions able to co-operate at all levels, thus counteracting the 21st-century trend towards deepening conflicts and wars between states and between social groups within countries. The majority of these conflicts are rooted in economic, political and social systems that have created unsustainable "ways of life" putting people in opposition to each other in their confrontational rationale for survival. The promotion of these "ways of life" and the economic systems they rely on in a new form of civilisation, as well as the repeated statement that they can neither be the objects of bargaining or be shared because of their sustainability, has given rise to Western rhetoric that the world has entered an era of "wars between civilisations", a "war" between, on the one hand, a knowledge system considered to be evolved, modern and open and, on the other hand, an antiquated system accused of being backward, archaic and obscurantist.

The objectives of the common good and its utopia are different from those of globalisation. The unsustainability of globalisation is due to its attempt to create a global sustainability in the interest of 800 million people by the exclusion of more than 6 billion. The utopia of the common good is different: it is the project of "mondialisation" for the living together of 8 billion people. It is a project that fosters dialogue among communities and participation within them in order to create a worldwide system of various "ways of life" respectful of each other and "all concerned about the sustainable use of natural resources.

The question is whether the utopia of the common good be transformed into a worldwide project:

> "which enables a group of individuals to constitute a human community, 'to create society' and to live together in such a way as to ensure

> and guarantee the right to a 'decent' life (in accordance with human dignity) to each member as well as collective safety; all this while respecting 'the other' and in solidarity with other human communities and future generations, while safeguarding life on the planet" ("The University for the Common Good", 2004).

The project is rooted in the theory and life praxis of millions of people around the world who, by opposing the response given to "mondiality" by globalisation, are establishing new forms of community life and co-operation ("mondialisation"). "Another world is possible" because it exists already in the life of communities, families and people that are today deprived of the possibility to express themselves, have been frustrated in their collective aspirations and have had the possibility to govern their own lives taken away from them. However, the rise of a worldwide "citizenship" has been manifested by the civil society movements during recent decades (Seattle, Prague, Göteborg, Genoa, Québec, Porto Alegre, Florence) despite difficulties and contradictions. The task is not easy. What is required is a responsible attempt to re-think the world's dynamics, to question the dominant paradigms, to open a discussion about the current worldwide cultural homologation and to act on the processes of globalisation. What is needed is to re-establish the ability to think about the common good at local and worldwide level; to redefine the foundation and the value of the world in coherence with different keywords; to reintroduce the "other" into the dynamics of interpersonal relations within human communities and in all relations of the world society and of the planetary ecosystem.

a. Links between well-being and resources/the common good

The project of the welfare society arises because an unsustainable system of production and consumption has been created despite the success of the previous project – the welfare state – which was unsustainable because of its brutal exploitation of natural resources and its unfair distribution of wealth and power. This requires a re-think of our production and consumption models as well as of the ideas behind our institutional setting. The former ought to be oriented towards sustainability and co-operation among states and communities. The latter ought to be reassessed in accordance with the need for increased self-reliance and participation at the local level in order to increase co-operation among neighbouring countries and meso-regional entities. The two basic elements of the common good are the reconciliation of human life with all other living species and their natural environment and their capability of living together.

The common good is neither the singular form of common goods nor the sum of individual wealth in a country but:

> "*the community spirit*, an invisible and inclusive third factor that cannot be reduced to the sum of the parts and cannot be owned by somebody. Therefore in this perspective nobody can be perceived as more important than anyone else. His identity includes the diversity of the other. It is an invisible and irreducible family relation that unify us despite our differences and because of them. It is a structure of reciprocity that prevents privatisation efforts and hinders competition, accumulation of wealth and exploitation and therefore the birth of social classes" (Vachon, 1988).

The common good is the essence of the project, the nucleus around which the economic, social and cultural objectives and activities of people and communities are articulated. The common good provides the values and principles that inspire the form and content for living together during a specific period of history, as well as the choice of common goods necessary for its implementation. As stated elsewhere:

"By 'common good' we refer in their entirety to:

- *principles* (such as the principle of the right to life for all, the principle of precaution, the principle of equal citizenship, the principle of the finiteness of most of the planet's resources ...);
- *institutions* (such as representative democracy, local community institutions, free trade unions ...);
- *resources* and *means* (such as air, water, land, education, information ...);
- *practices* (the practices of common sharing, individual and collective solidarity ...)" ("The University for the Common Good", 2004).

b. From welfare state to welfare society

The transformation from welfare state to welfare societies, based on the new social pact for the common good, requires the correct definition of three areas: i. community welfare, ii. associative and co-operative welfare and iii. personal welfare.

i. Community welfare: "is constituted by the whole of principles, institutions, means and practices taken by society in order to guarantee for all its citizens the right to a human decent life and a peaceful, suitable and co-operative 'living together', to preserve one's own 'home' security, that is to say the sustainability of the local and global ecosystem, and overall taking into account the right to life of the future generations" (Petrella, 1999). The common good is the basis of the communities' welfare on which associative and personal welfare can be built.

ii. Associative and co-operative welfare: "is constituted by the whole of principles, institutions, means and practices taken by society in order to promote voluntary co-operation among people, and/or groups that pursue common objectives by putting at common disposal and sharing the material and immaterial resources following the practices of mutuality and co-operation" (*ibidem)*. De-privatisation means the extension of the area of de-commodification to new forms of organisation of the private sector able to promote and establish co-operative and associative economic forms belonging to the concepts of "other economy", "economy of solidarity" and "districts of solidarity". These new areas of activity and socialisation, which include forms of production, consumption and services, can be developed if the community has access to an autonomous space, both inside and outside the market economy, where they are able to develop participation and various forms of social benefits which are consistent with the values that inspire them. These social forms of organisation and management of the economy should be able to avoid the juridical constraints introduced by institutions in order to protect monopolistic positions on the economic as well as the institutional side.

iii. Personal and private welfare: "individual welfare is constituted by the whole of principles, institutions, means and practices taken by society in order to permit to each individual, in competition with all the others, to optimise his own personal utility in terms of monetary wealth and freedom of action" (*ibidem*). This sector of the private economy should regain its strength in the market economy, re-establishing its links to the real economy by pursuing enterprise profit within production and service channels liberated from "bonds" and "constraints" imposed by the financial systems and by an unnecessarily excessive state burden on the enterprise's costs and management. The creation of an enterprise culture able to internalise social costs, to remain within the boundaries of non-war production, to contribute to the establishment of a fair relationship between production, distribution and consumption in society, open to dialogue with the community and the society it belongs to, seems to be a realistic objective.

These guidelines enable a group of individuals to constitute a human community, "to create society" and live together in such a way as to ensure the right to a "decent" life (in accordance with human dignity) to each member, as well as collective safety. All this is done while respecting "the other" and in solidarity with other human communities and future generations and while safeguarding life on the planet.

c. *Establishing new tangible and intangible common assets in the pursuit of citizen well-being*

The common goods are the instruments needed by a welfare society, which should reflect the content and form of the objective of solidarity for the achievement of the common good. They are the goods necessary for material life as well as for new activities and relations seen as of central importance in the life of the communities. Therefore, they should be characterised differently from private goods (commodities) where the principles are those of rivalry and exclusivity of access and use applied in the capitalist market system. The public economy and the co-operative economy function in a different way in the market economy than in the capitalist one.

A preliminary list of the common goods includes: air, water, state lands, seas and forests, space, energy, knowledge, transportation, education, health, communication and information, security, justice, basic financial activities and political institutions. Among the common goods we also find labour and culture whose roles, functions, times and forms are closely intertwined with other forms of social life. Common goods of world-wide importance should be matters for dialogue between communities regarding their maintenance and use within the perspective of "living together" (Table 1).

Table 1 – Common goods, actors and practices, well-being

Common goods	Actors and practices	Well-being
– air – water (from surface and underground, brackish and fresh water, not only for drinkable use but also for all other uses, such as agriculture, necessary to common existence – "green" energies, such as solar energy, wind power, etc.) – state lands and forests – the ether and extra-terrestrial space – knowledge (in all its various forms) – education (in all its forms) – habitat (from housing to the government of the territory) – health – culture (specifically cultural goods) – common transportation – communication and information – common security (police, army, civil protection) – justice – mutual financial institutions (for example, the Treasury, popular saving banks) – political institutions (parliament, government, public administration).	Actors: – institutions (representative democracy, local community institutions, free trade unions, etc.) – social enterprises (SMEs, co-operatives, social co-operatives, etc.) – civil society organisations (NGOs, associations, etc.). Practices: – principles (the principle of the right to life for all, the principle of precaution, the principle of equal citizenship, the principle of the finiteness of most of the planet's resources, etc.) – practices (the practices of common sharing, individual and collective solidarity, etc.).	Sustainability: – environmental – social – cultural – political – economic.

The resources at the disposal of the welfare society project inspired by the common good are:

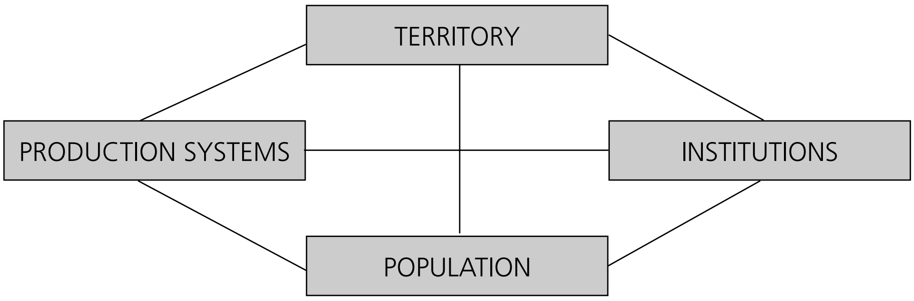
- values and principles;
- laws and institutions;
- finance;
- actors and practices.

The recent trend towards the segmentation of common goods to be managed by international agencies (“governance”) reproduces the negative effects experienced with public goods administered by the state, followed by the ”de-responsabilisation” of communities and peoples. Therefore the selection and the management of common goods should re-establish the principle of sovereignty at community level as opposed to the state, as well as to international institutions. This implies the introduction of new ownership and management forms based on a high level of self-government and participation able to mobilise local communities and civil societies.

The economy cannot remain outside and independent of this system, as in the case of the welfare state built on the dualism of state and market. This dualism is today challenged on two sides. Globalisation, by increasing privatisation, transforms dualism into a unified system based on the principle and supremacy of finance and technology with the marginalisation of increasing areas of society. An alternative answer to this problem is the common good, which overcomes the dualism of the previous system by re-establishing the centrality of community life based on its main components: territory, population, production systems and institutions (Figure 1).

The life of the communities inspired by the common good requires an overall cohesion and mobilisation of all its components and resources. The common goods create the basis for its overall functioning and within each of its main factors: territory, production systems, population and institutions. The diamond represents the necessary structure based on its main pillars. Globalisation is based on de-territorialised production systems, on nomadism of the population and on centralised institutions. The cells of welfare societies are the communities that demand, within their respective boundaries, the existence of their own institutions that govern a specific territory, population and production systems (Table 2).

Figure 1 – The diamond of the community



In comparison to globalisation, the common good pursues re-socialisation in order to extend the domain of de-commodification from the co-operative sector of the economy to other forms of private economy sensitive to the appeal of the "other economy", based on various forms of co-operation, solidarity networks, social districts, and similar. It is the creation of an economy reintegrated into the community, where the market regains a dependent service function for producers and consumers, liberated from the capitalist "for-profit" spirit and oriented by a surplus principle (not-for-profit) which enables it to maintain its sustainability. These new areas of activity and social relations can be developed in the autonomous space at local level, inside and outside the market economy.

Their success can also have positive effects on the behaviour of private enterprises. Therefore the success of this new economy has been extended to the private sector through the concept of "social enterprises"; that is to say, all enterprises that, independently from their chosen juridical forms, operate at local level and follow patterns of organisational behaviour that define their social function. The social enterprise, according to this definition, is rooted in its community and pursues its sustainability goals (economic, social, institutional and environmental).

In all forms of social organisation, the production system and the market can play an important role as instruments of social and cultural exchange of experience and as places to meet and develop new ideas. This can only take place, however, if a strong link is maintained between the territory, population, production systems and institutions without the decline or disappearance of any of these elements. Therefore the central position given to the local dimension in designing the new boundaries of the community (instead of the national state dimension) is not a choice of specialisation within a bigger domain, but the privileged areas of reference to which the other dimensions – such as the state, regions, international institutions – should be functionally related (Table 2).

Table 2 – Welfare state, globalisation and common good

	Welfare state	**Globalisation**	**Welfare society**
Objectives (a)	Individual and material	Individual – status	Social – relational
Objectives (b)	National growth	Global apartheid	Common good
Instruments	Public goods: – steel – electricity – transport – education – health	Private goods: – finance – technology – trade – knowledge society	Common goods: – water – environment – habitat – education – health – space
Actors	**Individual rights**	**Consumer choices**	**Individual membership**
Institutions	National state	Triadic power	Community, region, state and meso-region
	Government	Governance	Self-government and participation
	National development	From global to local	From local to meso-regional
Production systems	Public and private enterprises (big enterprises) Industrial districts	Transnationals (Toyota model)	Social enterprises SMEs Networks Public institutions

d. Role of collective ownership and shared heritage

The second half of the last century witnessed two stages in the development of European economies. The first two decades – 1950s and 1960s – experienced the planning system in central and eastern Europe and the capitalist market and mixed economies in western Europe. Both systems produced economic growth and a strong rise of public institutions and services. During this stage, planning and market economies were able to satisfy most of the demand for goods and services and almost no space was left for the development of other forms of economy. The existing co-operative movement in the East and in the West was squeezed between the market and the state and had to survive in a very narrow space often adapting itself to the behaviour of the prevailing economic system.

The situation changed radically in the following decades (1970-2000) because of globalisation that became the dominant paradigm in the economy and politics. The fall of the Berlin Wall unified eastern and western European societies favouring concentration of growth and squeezing the market along the lines of global apartheid (Amoroso, 2004). Furthermore, the implementation of the new neo-liberal policies put an end to Keynesian economic policies that sustained mass production and consumption during the stage of national capitalism. The public sector policies and their public goods were no longer needed and started to decline.

Paradoxically, these two negative events in the history of European societies are also the cause of the rise of the most innovative events of the new century. The withdrawal of capitalism from vast regions and sectors – because of its concentration on the rich segments of the markets (the capitalist answer to the problem of worldwide sustainability) – led to the opening up of opportunities for market and social activities. This has given rise to civil society mobilisation that, after a short period of resistance to globalisation in defence of the welfare system, decided to experience new ways of economic and institutional organisation. Hence the rise of social co-operatives and social enterprises together with a revitalisation of local development as the basis for the revival of communities (Amoroso and Zandonai, 2007). The slogan of globalisation "from global to local" was overturned into its opposite: "from local to global". The first assumes globalisation as the model for inspiration at local level. The local community should adapt to it. The second opposes this monocentric view with a polycentric one, where it is the sustainability of the single community and its social project that determines the forms and extension of the necessary dialogue with other communities for the achievement of the common good worldwide. Therefore within this new paradigm the social enterprise becomes the answer to the problem of sustainability in the production of goods and services for the new economy.

To sum up what has already been mentioned we can state that the qualifying elements of the social enterprise are:

- its territorial and local roots as a condition for an efficient choice of sector of activities and use of local resources;

- its belonging to the community, which can understand the demands made on it, as well as the social and productive impact on the community that it generates;
- the hybrid character of the resources and labour forms at the disposal of the entrepreneurial project, which is able to make use of all forms of employment beyond the boundaries of market-oriented juridical definition with reference to employment, as well as ownership forms;
- the involvement of all entrepreneurial actors through real forms of participation and co-decision making in the enterprise management;
- attention and adequate investment in inter-organisational relations at the local as well as the enlarged level, able to link local co-operation with co-operation with producers and markets in other communities and other countries.

The social enterprise model is a natural response to the problems raised by globalisation.

Conclusion: access to, and the use of, resources and rights

The topics of "access to", and "the use of", have been the keywords by which the efficiency of a democratic system has been monitored and measured in European policy as well as in the international organisations during recent years. They have been widely introduced to set up benchmarking for the processes of democratisation. During the period of the welfare state the procedures for their implementation were based on the supply by the public sector of the basic infrastructures needed to achieve these goals and by the strategy of "rights" to be guaranteed to all citizens by formal declarations (right to work, right to income, etc.). The strategy of rights has been widely intertwined at international level with the one of "human rights", sharing with it the underestimation of the problem posed in both cases by the "to" and by the "of" which are assumed to be clearly defined and well known.

However, some results have been achieved but nearly always below the level of expectation and, since the 1970s, problems that were finally considered solved – such has poverty, inequality, poor labour conditions, insecurity, and so forth – have reappeared on a greater scale. These have provoked various reactions from the people and their movements, who have expressed a general disaffection for institutions and politics as such and have sought initiatives from institutions and from civil society. The new slogan has become "participation", introduced on a vast scale at all level of institutions and tested also in some sectors of the economy. The limit of participation, however, is that it does not question the objectives and the forms of the existing political and economic institutions, but tries to create more support for their functioning. It can improve "access to" and "the use of" but does not question the objective and the forms for which participation is intended to work.

This brings us back to the central problem of form and content of the model of development to be chosen. The prevailing trend today, despite the declarations and policies that raise awareness of the problem of diversity in European development, rightly pointed out as a positive and specific European value, is a monocentric one (Eurocentrism and Westernisation). Diversity has not become the key to understanding the need for a polycentric development based on regions and communities – where values, objectives and forms are shared but remain different – but, as already mentioned, still goes from global to local by a process of adaptation of the latter to the former.

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