

Session 1A

Culture, Poverty and Well-Being

Stemming from the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report on rethinking GDP and the Rio+20 request to the United Nations system to address the measurement of progress beyond GDP, can well-being be defined and achieved regardless of individual and collective aspirations, identities, rootedness, creativity, freedom of expression, the free-flow and exchange of ideas, diversity, access to culture and knowledge, and participation? How can the cultural dimensions of well-being be integrated into measuring progress beyond GDP?

Background Note¹
Introduction

The UN General Assembly in its Resolution 65/309 entitled “Happiness: Towards a Holistic Approach to Development” was conscious that the pursuit of happiness was a fundamental human goal and recognized that the indicator of gross domestic product (GDP) was not designed to and did not adequately reflect people’s happiness and well-being. Consequently, the Assembly invited Member States to draft additional measures that could better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development, with a view to guiding their public policies. Main Member State initiatives to develop new indicators were brought together in the aforementioned Resolution. Another initiative that has led to significant progress in this regard is the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report on rethinking GDP produced by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, where the shift in emphasis from measuring economic production to measuring people’s well-being is remarked upon.

http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/documents/rapport_anglais.pdf

Working within the framework of the Culture, Well-Being and Human Development Panel of the Hangzhou International Congress on Culture: Key to Sustainable Development, the objective of this background note is to contribute to the discussion on the role of culture when rethinking gross domestic product, achieving well-being and human development. This paper is intended to express the state-of-the-art when thinking about culture as an indicator of well-being and development. After a review of the background to this topic, different programmes proposed by different institutions are briefly analyzed, in order to highlight their most outstanding contributions and also any underlying deficiencies in them. As will be shown in this paper, the debate is still underway, and the improvements proposed by the different programmes are introduced into its proposals. This is a work in progress. Needless to say, the debate not only applies to which indicators are the most appropriate, but also to the methodology used to design those indicators themselves.

The Millennium Development Goals

¹ Prepared by Dr Cristina Ortega, Dr Fernando Bayón, Dr María Jesús Monteagudo and Aitor Abaroa, Official Research Team into Leisure and Human Development, University of Deusto, Spain.

- 1- Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
- 2- Achieve universal primary education;
- 3- Promote gender equality and empower women;
- 4- Reduce child mortality;
- 5- Improve maternal health;
- 6- Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
- 7- Ensure environmental sustainability;
- 8- Develop a global partnership for development.

We realize that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are such essential objectives, the minimum base for well-being to be achieved, that the debate about cultural indicators goes beyond the focus of the MDGs. However, it is important to take into account the fact that a solid foundation and certain minimum vital conditions are needed when talking about well-being and development, and as a result the sixty indicators gathered in the Millennium Development Goals are an appropriate starting point for debate. These indicators are quantitative and objectively collectable, which raises the first question to be introduced into the debate. Can well-being and development be measured without the data necessarily reflecting individual perceptions?

<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Host.aspx?Content=Indicators%2fOfficialList.htm>

Two Major Milestones

Bhutan

The Declaration of Independence of the United States of America (1776) says that “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the *pursuit of Happiness*” (our emphasis). Happiness is a term that the pioneer of well-being measurement, the Government of Bhutan, used to measure the quality of life or social progress in the country in 1972 in its well-known Gross National Happiness index.

<http://www.gnhc.gov.bt/>

This is not just an exotic indicator, since it predicted an approach that many other countries also later developed, being the need to combine quantitative and objective data with qualitative and subjective data by introducing personal questionnaires into the methodology used to gather statistics on well-being and development. This served as a catalyst for debate, as the PhD thesis by Eric Ezechieli and Andrew C. Revkin's newspaper article listed below explains, and it is a topic that is still being discussed today. It is interesting to note that in that same 65/309 Resolution, the General Assembly of the United Nations welcomed Bhutan's offer to convene during its Sixty-Sixth Session a panel discussion on the theme of happiness and well-being.

http://www.emissionzero.net/tesi_eric_ezechieli.pdf
<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/04/science/04happ.html?pagewanted=all>

Cultural Liberty

What about culture? What has been the space that the arts and culture have occupied in this debate? An essential document related to this is the report entitled “Cultural Liberty in Today's

Diverse World”, a Human Development Report (2004) published for the United Nations Development Programme. This report focused on multicultural policies, paying special attention to minorities. The policies proposed dealt with agreements on the distribution of powers among cultural minorities and the reassessment of the lost rights of these communities.

The main conclusions of the report were:

- Cultural liberty is a vital part of human development because being able to choose one’s identity is important in leading a full life;
- Cultural liberty allows people to live the lives they value without being excluded from other choices important to them, such as education, healthcare or job opportunities;
- Several emerging models of multicultural democracy provide effective mechanisms for power-sharing between culturally diverse groups;
- Power-sharing arrangements have broadly proven to be critical in resolving tensions;
- Multicultural policies that recognize differences between groups are needed to address injustices that are historically rooted and socially entrenched.

http://hdrnet.org/32/1/hdr04_complete.pdf

Terms such as “multicultural democracy” have been widely used, and cultural liberty was introduced as a new indicator of human development, but without determining an index or indicators chart to measure it. It was a topic of discussion in subsequent debates. However, since the idea is that minorities must have access to culture and that their cultural needs must be satisfied while respecting the context to which they belong and the values that cultural liberty defends, a lack of a subjective perception of the role of culture in well-being and development can be identified.

Contemporary Debates

Latin America

Linked to the previous point and in examining contemporary programmes, a significant difference between Latin American measurement policies and North American and European ones can be seen. Latin American countries have been working on well-being and development indicators that are explicitly related to the cultural dimension. Notably, many of the cases studied have been located in rural areas and have aimed to determine the well-being and development level of indigenous communities, with the result that once again the term culture has been taken into account solely in relation to minorities.

<http://www.fao.org/sard/en/init/964/2687/2453/index.html>

Quality of Life in Europe

In 2003, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions launched the first pan-European quality of life survey (EQLS) called the Quality of Life in Europe. This reported that subjective and attitudinal perceptions were of particular relevance when identifying individual goals and orientations, and that individual perceptions and evaluations were most valuable when such subjective evaluations were linked to objective living conditions. The report stated that combining both ways of measuring quality of life gave a more complete picture. The six indicators used in the report were:

- Employment;
- Economic Resources;
- Family and Households;
- Community Life and Social Participation;
- Health and Healthcare;
- Knowledge, Education and Training.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2004/105/en/1/ef04105en.pdf>

France

The Chilean proposal (see below) was inspired by the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (2009). This report, commissioned by former president of France Nicolas Sarkozy, aimed to identify the limitations of using GDP as an indicator of economic performance and social progress, including problems in its measurement. The report was written by a team of economists and social scientists, and it drew on a broad range of specialists. It proposed eight indicators that would take into account the objective and subjective dimensions of well-being:

- Material Living Standards (Income, Consumption and Wealth);
- Health;
- Education;
- Personal Activities including Work;
- Political Voice and Governance;
- Social Connections and Relationships;
- Environment (Present and Future Conditions);
- Insecurity, of an Economic as well as a Physical Nature.

http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/documents/rapport_anglais.pdf

United Kingdom

The definition of suitable indicators gave way to a new dimension in the debate. How were such indicators chosen and who chose them? Over recent years, the United Kingdom has highlighted the importance of social participation in designing such indicators. At the end of 2010, the UK's Office for National Statistics launched a programme to design an index and a chart of indicators that could be used to measure national well-being and development in consultation with ordinary citizens and sectorial experts. The consultation, carried out online or at nationwide events, took place between November 2010 and January 2011, and a first draft of its results was then published. The consultation once again focused on subjective perceptions: "individual well-being is central to an understanding of national well-being. It includes objective circumstances, for example an individual's employment status, and subjective well-being, which includes the individual's experiences and feelings." The proposed domains for the indicators were as follows:

- Our Relationships;
- Health;
- What We Do;
- Where We Live;
- Personal Finance;

- Education and Skills;
- The Economy;
- Governance;
- The Natural Environment.

One particularly interesting development was that after the first draft of the findings of the consultation was published in November 2011, many experts in the cultural sector, such as John Holden (an associate at the independent think-tank Demos and a visiting professor at City University in London), and Hilary Jennings (an associate at The Happy Museum), raised their voices in different media to proclaim that the arts and culture had not been considered as main indicators. In the wake of these comments, the first revision of the draft was published in February 2012, saying that “there was broad overall support for the domains proposed, with many suggesting that more domains are needed in order to provide a complete picture of well-being. The most often cited areas for additions covered the arts, culture, sport, spirituality, religion, faith and access to green spaces.”

http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171766_287415.pdf

Another interesting point came out of the consultation. While social participation was introduced into the design of well-being and development programmes and indicators, it was also shown that ordinary citizens may not always identify culture as an important issue in relation to well-being and development and that the experts responsible for filtering the data collected did not always give great importance to culture. For our part, we think that access to culture, as well as cultural training and education, should be emphasized.

Canada

It has already been noted, with the UK being the best example and the aforementioned indicators verifying it, that culture has not always been taken into consideration as an indicator for measuring well-being and development. Culture has been thought of as important, but always as a way to improve other sectors, for example as being related to education, or as a tool for inclusion. However, cultural practices in themselves have not always been seen as having a significant impact on an individual's well-being in the indexes considered thus far. Nevertheless, some countries, such as Canada, have moved in this direction by introducing leisure as a main indicator (2011 & 2012), as follows:

- Living Standards;
- Healthy Populations;
- Community Vitality;
- Democratic Engagement;
- Time Use;
- Leisure and Culture;
- Environment.

<https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/about-canadian-index-wellbeing/history>

The OECD

Apart from the Office for National Statistics in the UK, the institution that has probably most enlightened the present debate has been the OECD. In 2011, a new programme for measuring

well-being and development was carried out, in which the subjectivity of individuals was further taken into account. Eleven main indicators were proposed, and the individuals asked to answer the OECD questionnaire were asked to determine how significant each of these was in their lives. This methodology further highlighted the subjectivity and perception of each individual. The indicators proposed were:

- Housing;
- Income and Wealth;
- Jobs and Earning;
- Social Connections;
- Educational Skills;
- Environmental Quality;
- Civic Engagement and Governance;
- Health Status;
- Subjective Well-Being;
- Personal Security;
- Work and Life.

Chile

Following the debate about subjective well-being, some countries, such as Chile, decided to go one step further. In 2012, Chile presented a programme that would rethink indicators measuring development and look at it from a new perspective based on the subjectivity of individuals and adopting a holistic approach. Six main goals were proposed:

- To extend the perspective from happiness to subjective well-being;
- To adopt a holistic concept of subjective well-being;
- To guide public policies towards the competences for subjective well-being;
- To work on the complexity and real dynamics of subjective well-being and malaise;
- To innovate in public policies in order to build the competences for subjective well-being;
- To update policies in Chile to represent the new dynamics of subjectivity.

<http://www.desarrollohumano.cl/>

Australia

In Australia, culture has been considered to be a main indicator for measuring well-being. However, it was not a national institution that made this proposal, but a regional one, the Community Indicators Victoria (CIV). This institution aims to support the development and use of local community well-being indicators in Victoria, with the purpose of improving citizen engagement, community-planning and policy-making. It should be emphasized that the indicators proposed by CIV were designed to measure community well-being and not individual well-being. However, we think that the latter should also be taken into account. The five main indicators proposed were:

- Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities;
- Dynamic, Resilient Local Economies;
- Culturally Rich and Vibrant Communities;
- Sustainable Built and Natural Environments;
- Democratic and Engaged Communities.

http://www.communityindicators.net.au/files/docs/CIV_Data_Framework_March_2013.pdf

United Nations

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 65/309 (Happiness: Towards a Holistic Approach to Development), adopted on 25 August 2011, invited Member States to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better captured the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development with a view to guiding their public policies.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/309

Article 38 of the Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20, 20-22 June 2012), states: “We recognize the need for broader measures of progress to complement gross domestic product in order to better inform policy decisions, and in this regard we request the United Nations Statistical Commission, in consultation with relevant United Nations system entities and other relevant organizations, to launch a programme of work in this area building on existing initiatives.”

<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/PDF/N1147610.pdf?OpenElement>

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/67/697, adopted on 16 January 2013, encouraged governments as part of its recommendations to:

- Consider using a broader concept of well-being, going beyond GDP and economic growth, and adopting a new economic paradigm that encapsulates the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development;
- Use carefully constructed, regular and large-scale data on happiness and well-being to inform a more appropriate indicator for improving macroeconomic policy-making and informing service delivery;
- Initiate broad consultations, involving all stakeholders, to identify and prioritize the well-being indicators that have the potential for arriving at a shared view of the ways that social progress can be achieved and sustained over time;
- Instruct national statistical offices to consider expanding the well-being content of their national statistical systems. A system of evaluation could take shape over time in which policies might be judged by the changes in happiness that they produce per unit of net public expenditure.

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/697

Consequently, the development of well-being indicators to date, show that culture is increasingly being taken into account as a critical factor. As noted in the “Measuring Cultural Participation” report, released by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics last year, there is “a growing body of studies that demonstrate the importance of participation in cultural activities and sport to *emotional and physical health, to social capital, cohesion and neighbourhood*”. The report states that the positive impact of participation in cultural activities on the perception of one's own psycho-physic well-

being has been acknowledged for around 40 years by a scientific measurement scale, the *psychological general well-being index*.

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/culture/Documents/fcs-handbook-2-cultural-participation-en.pdf>
http://www.fondazionebracco.com/archivio/pdf/The_interaction_between_Culture_health_and_psychological_wellbeing.pdf

Final Reflections

In conclusion, we would like to look again at the cultural indicators proposed for measuring well-being. The aforementioned programmes aspired to measure well-being and development, and they designed their indicators with that in mind. The present paper has tried to analyze what the current debates are and to identify the role that culture plays within them. However, why not pose the question the other way around? New lines of research could be opened up in this debate if indicators to measure cultural activity were looked at through the lens of well-being. Many indicators have already been used and have proved to be appropriate for measuring cultural activity, and it could be useful to analyze which of these could also be used to measure well-being and development. The following paper by Derek Simons and Steven R. Dang, “International Perspectives on Cultural Indicators: A Review and Compilation of Cultural Indicators used in Selected Projects”, contains interesting material in this regard:

<http://www.cultureandcommunities.ca/downloads/indicators-2006/Simons-Dang.pdf>

We would like to highlight the fact that culture should be a general objective, and not just a tool to achieve other goals, as Simons and Dang argue in their paper. That is to say that not only can culture be an indicator of the well-being and development of an individual or community, but that high scores in well-being surveys can indicate a good status of culture. The survey “The Arts and Individual Well-Being in Canada” released last January shows that there is a strong connection between cultural activities and eight indicators of health and well-being. The survey details that “the statistical models (...) examine whether cultural participants simply fit the demographic profile of healthy, socially-active citizens, or whether cultural participation might help explain aspects of health and well-being that are beyond demographic analysis”. Therefore, as in the case of wealth and cultural indicators where mutual influence is acknowledged, if cultural participants show themselves to be healthy and socially-active citizens, well-being can also be assumed as an indicator of the cultural status of a community.

<http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/arts-and-individual-well-being-canada>

List of Indicators

INDICATOR	AUTHOR(S)	REGION/COUNTRY	YEAR
Employment	Richard Rose	Europe	2003
Economic Resources	Richard Rose	Europe	2003
Family and Households	Richard Rose	Europe	2003
Community Life and Social Participation	Richard Rose	Europe	2003
Health and Healthcare	Richard Rose	Europe	2003
Knowledge, Education and Training	Richard Rose	Europe	2003
Material Living Standards (Income, Consumption and Wealth)	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Health	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Education	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Personal Activities, including Work	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Political Voice and Governance	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Social Connections and Relationships	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Environment (Present and Future Conditions)	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Insecurity, of an Economic as well as a Physical Nature	Joseph E. Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi	France	2008
Living Standards	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Healthy Populations	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Community Vitality	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Time Use	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Leisure and Culture	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Democratic Engagement	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Environment	Various authors	Canada	2009-2011
Our Relationships	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
Health	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
What We Do	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
Where We Live	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
Personal Finance	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
Education and Skills	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
The Economy	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
Governance	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
The Natural Environment	Abigail Self, Jennifer Thomas and Chris Randall	United Kingdom	2012
Housing	OECD	Europe	2012
Income and Wealth	OECD	Europe	2012
Jobs and Earning	OECD	Europe	2012
Social Connections	OECD	Europe	2012
Educational Skills	OECD	Europe	2012
Environmental Quality	OECD	Europe	2012
Civic Engagement and Governance	OECD	Europe	2012
Health Status	OECD	Europe	2012
Subjective Well-Being	OECD	Europe	2012
Personal Security	OECD	Europe	2012
Work and Life	OECD	Europe	2012
Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities	Community Indicators Victoria	Australia	2013
Dynamic, Resilient Local Economies	Community Indicators Victoria	Australia	2013
Culturally Rich and Vibrant Communities	Community Indicators Victoria	Australia	2013

INDICATOR	AUTHOR(S)	REGION/COUNTRY	YEAR
Sustainable Built and Natural Environments	Community Indicators Victoria	Australia	2013
Democratic and Engaged Communities	Community Indicators Victoria	Australia	2013