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# Development as Well-Being

Holistic analysis of the Well-  
being concept in function of  
Development

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## Abstract

The concepts of well-being and development are widely used by economic institutions and international cooperation programs to form and inform their policies. **Even though we can say that an intuition of a link between both concepts may exist, until now there has not yet been proposed a formal definition between them.** The present work aims to establish a link between the concepts of *development* and *well-being* by defining the former as a function of the latter. By doing so, a new comprehensive definition of well-being is proposed, and, as a result, it is possible to link both notions in the same coherent vision in accordance with the capability approach framework.

Given the great scope where these concepts are used, a multidisciplinary analysis is expected, under a communal economic framework. One of the main contributions to this dissertation is to gather under a single text the different perspectives of the constitution of what is meant with well-being, or the quest of good life, notion that is present not only in economics but in the human condition. By linking the notions of development and well-being, under the behavioural economics context, we **exploit theories that have not been previously used in an economic framework**, such as the Yerkes and Dodson Law, and the Zone of Proximal development.

**While this is a theoretical thesis, it may have practical applications and influence**, given the great scope of utilization of both terms. By proposing a joint novel approach to these concept, it is not intended to replace the already existing ones, but rather to contribute to their better understanding, and in consequence, the **policies and programs where they are applied**. Also, by having a joint novel approach to the concepts, we may erase significant discrepancies emerged between:

- Sustainable development and well-being;
- Existing relationship between the capability approach and ethical or moral notions, under in a political economic context; more specifically, about the dimensions and limitations of the concept of freedom (in the capability approach framework).

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

Despite its high profile, the concept of well-being is considered very complex and hard to define<sup>1</sup>, and many academic works have been undertaken with this particular focus. Furthermore, due to the nature and use of both concepts, we could infer an existing relationship between the definition of development and well-being; however, until now there has been no formal definition using both terms up until now.

Clarifying and elaborating on the existing link between these two terms, and its consequences, is the main objective of the present work. To do so a deep, multidisciplinary review and analysis of both terms – development and well-being– is needed in order to identify a direct link. By doing so, I pretend to elaborate on current discussions, as well as expanding the current literature on the matter. Given their relevance and high profile, many other disciplines will be concerned, making this a multidisciplinary theoretical thesis: Topics generally addressed in philosophy, behavioural economics, welfare and development economics are expected to be present.

Despite this multidisciplinary approach, a concrete microeconomic analysis is to be expected on the propositions made which are not based on previous literature. **One of the main contributions of this dissertation is to combine in a single text many different outlooks, creating a discussion among various academic disciplines, under a common economic framework.** As expressed by Friederich Von Hayek, *nobody can be a great economist who is only an economist — and I am even tempted to add that the economist who is only an economist is likely to become a nuisance if not a positive danger*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>2</sup> Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics*.

The aggregated value of my dissertation might be a different approach and link to widely used concepts, not only in Academia or economical lexicon, but in the common day life. Being well-being the main approach in public policies, increasing our understanding on the matter can only lead to positive outcomes.

## *1.2. Methodology*

Despite being these terms- development and well-being- widely used, the fact that there is not a universal consent on their use has given place to misunderstandings and problematics. For example a debate on the scope of temporality: It seems to be an existing gap between economic growth and sustainability, topic that will be later on deeply covered. The discussion of the relation between the concepts of development and well-being could be addressed as a very specific issue, for example, in the capability approach context.

This dissertation is structured as following: This chapter one is dedicated to give an introduction to the topic explain the methodology of the dissertation and to elaborate on the importance of discussing these very specific topics. Chapter two is a literary review of the previous works supporting the discussion, and my own elaboration presented on chapter three, named discussion. On chapter four an evaluation of the implication on the current public policies and its possible consequences- and challenges- to apply these perspectives. Following, conclusions are presented closing with references and bibliography.

## *1.3 Importance of discussing this specific topic*

The concept of well-being is highly prominent and important in a wide variety of disciplines. Well-being and development are used in the statement of IMF<sup>3</sup>, World Bank<sup>4</sup> and UNDP<sup>5</sup>. As well,

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<sup>3</sup> "IMF -- International Monetary Fund Home Page."

<sup>4</sup> "World Bank Group - International Development, Poverty, & Sustainability."

<sup>5</sup> "UNDP - United Nations Development Programme."

these terms are used not only in an academic context but also in politics and in ordinary life. As a consequence, defining well-being is a matter of crucial importance.

The Economy of Wellbeing is a policy orientation and governance approach which aims to put people and their wellbeing at the centre of policy and decision-making<sup>6</sup>. For example, people's wellbeing is a principal aim of the European Union. The OECD has reached similar conclusions, as expressed by its general secretary in July 2019<sup>7</sup>. **The Economy of Wellbeing is also at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to which all Member States are committed.**

Acknowledging GDP as insufficient for measuring quality of life, well-being has been accepted as the main standard by which to measure quality of life. It is generally accepted that such a complex issue as measuring the quality of life must be addressed in an equal complex approach.

According to the view known as welfarism, well-being is the only value<sup>8</sup> and thus of the allocation on public resources: Improving the level of well-being of the citizens is one of the main goals of government. In consequence, communal decisions such as democracy depend on candidates and public policies that are expected to deliver better levels of well-being for the general of the population.

Such is the importance of the concept of well-being that it is used in the definition of other important notions such as **poverty**:<sup>9</sup> There is no doubt that poverty reduction remains a crucial topic, not only in the world's political agendas, but also as a human core motivation. Poverty reduction was the number one point in the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals,<sup>10</sup> and subsequently in the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>11</sup> In a report produced by the World

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<sup>6</sup> "Economy of Wellbeing."

<sup>7</sup> "The Economy of Well-Being - OECD."

<sup>8</sup> Crisp, "Well-Being."

<sup>9</sup> Houghton and Khandker, *Handbook on Poverty + Inequality*.

<sup>10</sup> "United Nations Millennium Development Goals."

<sup>11</sup> "About the Sustainable Development Goals - United Nations Sustainable Development."

Bank in 2000, we can find another definition: “*Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being.*”<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, is possible to say that our understanding of poverty is a direct function of well-being, and understanding well-being allows a better understanding of poverty, and vice versa.

But well-being is not only used in academia or public policy context: Well-being is agreed to be the crossroad of public and private efforts, we make decisions in function of the expected utility of our choices. Notoriously, we can find these issues addressed in the context of choice theory and behavioural economics. Individual’s choices are constrained by what they expect to receive with bigger rewards. Preferences, choices, social movements, elections, and decisions are based on a well-being calculation. As well, there are many important questions, which are normally addressed to a philosophical background, such as the relation between capital accumulation, and life satisfaction, which represents the very core of the economics discipline.

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<sup>12</sup> Lustig and Kanpur, *World Development Report: Attacking Poverty*.



# Chapter 2 Literary review

## 2.1 Understanding the concept of development and well-being

The notion of search of a better quality of life has been addressed since the dawn of human life as we know it:

*The foundational task of scrutinizing the demands of sustainable human development also provides an appropriate occasion to see how the "human development" approach relates to the more conventional analyses to be found in the standard economic literature from Adam Smith (1776, 1790) onwards. Interest in human development is not new in economics. Indeed, this motivating concern is explicitly present in the writings of the early founders of quantitative economics (such as William Petty, Gregory King, Francois Quesnay, Antoine Lavoisier, and Joseph Lagrange) as well as the pioneers of political economy (such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Robert Malthus, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill). There is, in this sense, no foundational departure in making economic analysis and policy take extensive note of the demands of human development. The approach reclaims an old and established heritage, rather than importing or implanting a new diversion.<sup>13</sup>*

### 2.1.1. Hedonic VS Eudemonic viewpoints

Well-being has been derived from two general perspectives: the hedonic approach, which focuses on happiness and defines well-being in terms of pleasure attainment and pain avoidance; and the eudemonic approach, which focuses on meaning and self-realization and defines well-being in terms of the degree to which a person is fully functioning<sup>14</sup>

First and foremost, the field has witnessed the formation of two relatively distinct, yet overlapping, perspectives and paradigms for empirical inquiry into well-being that revolve around two distinct philosophies: The first of these can be broadly labelled hedonism<sup>15</sup> and

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<sup>13</sup> Mollica and Campbell, *Sustainability*.

<sup>14</sup> Ryan and Deci, "On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being."

<sup>15</sup> Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz, *Well-Being: Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*.

reflects the view that wellbeing consists of pleasure or happiness. The second view, both as ancient and as current as the hedonic view, is that well-being consists of more than just happiness. It lies instead in the actualization of human potentials. This view has been called eudemonism<sup>16</sup> conveying the belief that well-being consists of fulfilling or realizing one's daemon or true nature. The two traditions—hedonism and eudemonism—are founded on distinct views of human nature and of what constitutes a good society<sup>17</sup>.

On one view (hedonic), human beings always act in pursuit of what they think will give them the greatest balance of pleasure over pain<sup>18</sup>. On the other hand, Aristotle for instance, thought that true happiness is found by leading a virtuous life and doing what is worth doing. He argued that realizing human potential is the ultimate human goal. This idea was further developed in history by prominent thinkers, such as Stoics, who stressed the value of self-discipline, and John Locke, who argued that happiness is pursued through prudence<sup>19</sup>. A sense of accomplishment can be important, rewarding and follow on from activities that do not, at the time, seem particularly pleasurable<sup>20</sup>

## 2.2 Development as a general concept

The term *development* is not only used in an economics related context but represents a positive change in every activity. It is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as **the process in which someone or something grows or changes and becomes more advanced**.<sup>21</sup> In the economic and public policy lexicon, we can recall the following related terms:

- **Economic growth**

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<sup>16</sup> Waterman, "Two Conceptions of Happiness: Contrasts of Personal Expressiveness (Eudaimonia) and Hedonic Enjoyment."

<sup>17</sup> Ryan and Deci, "On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being."

<sup>18</sup> Crisp, "Well-Being."

<sup>19</sup> "What Is Eudaimonia?"

<sup>20</sup> Anand, "Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures."

<sup>21</sup> "DEVELOPMENT | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary."

- Economic development
- Sustainable development
- Human development

This is not intended to be a comprehensive review of the literature but rather to enable us to provide some clarity about the relationship between different concepts of well-being and development and to generate some specific examples of the relationships that could then be elaborated. As they are all widely used, these terms are crucial in political speeches, public policies, and the lexicon of academic and international cooperation. We can illustrate this with the mission statements of the IMF<sup>22</sup>, the United Nations Development program<sup>23</sup>, and the World Bank<sup>24</sup>.

Although we can intuit a relation between well-being and development, I am not aware of a formal defined publication relating the one with the other. To do so, it is necessary to conduct an analysis of both terms and its implications in a profound level.

### *2.2.1. Economic growth*

Economic growth refers to the increase in the inflation-adjusted market value of the goods and services produced by an economy over time.<sup>25</sup> It represents the increase in the financial aspects of a certain segment of a population, also taking account of the growth in the production and consumption of goods and services. It also considers the increase in the **Purchase Parity Index (PPI)**. Economic growth focuses on the increase in productivity and the market value of goods and services and has traditionally been measured by GDP.

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<sup>22</sup> "IMF -- International Monetary Fund Home Page."

<sup>23</sup> "UNDP - United Nations Development Programme."

<sup>24</sup> "World Bank Group - International Development, Poverty, & Sustainability."

<sup>25</sup> "Growth of the Global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 2022 | Statistic."

After Arndt, the theory behind the term of economic growth meant: Rise in the levels of living of common people<sup>26</sup>. From about 1950 and through most of the next two decades, economic development was equated with economic growth, although the former tended to be used for poor, and later for rich countries.

The term economic growth became in the 1950 the single most important objective of economic policy, and later on 1960, it came under attack from various quarters. In 1961 Lewis stated that “there have been a shift in our whole thinking about the problem of growth and development” mainly focused with human capital. Harbison and Myers stated “We are convinced that the worldwide aspiration for development is much more than a desire of economic progress...”<sup>27</sup>

Simon Kuznetz, the creator of the measure of GDP, argues that “... economic growth is essentially a quantitative concept”<sup>28</sup>, warning against its use for measuring well-being<sup>29</sup>. It is thus crucial to understand what GDP cannot tell us and the reason why it does not have to be employed as a measure of the overall standard of living or well-being of a country. Although changes in the output of goods and services per person (GDP per capita) are often used as a measure of whether the average citizen in a country is better or worse off, it does not capture things that may be deemed important to general well-being<sup>30</sup>.

The use of GDP as a measure of well-being has recently been agreed as insufficient by numerous economists, such as Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea*.

<sup>27</sup> Harbison and Myers, “A.(1964) Education, Manpower, and Economic Growth.”

<sup>28</sup> Abramovitz, “Simon Kuznets 1901–1985.”

<sup>29</sup> Costanza et al., “Beyond GDP: The Need for New Measures of Progress.”

<sup>30</sup> “Finance & Development.”

<sup>31</sup> Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, “Mis-Measuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn’t Add Up (The Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress).”

### 2.2.2. Economic development

As a more complex concept, economic development is concerned with the level and rates of growth of the population, as well with the nature of the relationships between countries.<sup>32</sup> While economic growth is seen as a quantitative concept, it adds another layer of complexity which is related to the quality of the of trade relationships among countries and individuals.

One of the main differences between economic growth and economic development is that the former focuses only on quantitative aspects, while the latter focuses on both quantitative and qualitative characteristics. In its 1991 World Development Report,<sup>33</sup> the World Bank states:

*Economic development is defined in this report as a sustainable increase in living standards that encompass material consumption, education, health, and environmental protection. Development in a broader sense is understood to include other important and related attributes as well, notably more equality of opportunity, and political freedom and civil liberties. The overall goal of development is therefore to increase the economic, political, and civil rights of all people across gender, ethnic groups, religions, races, regions, and countries. This goal has not changed substantially since the early 1950s, when most of the developing world emerged from colonialism.*

### 2.2.3. Sustainable development

As a response to the impact of human activity on the environment, the notion of *sustainability* is added. This term has become so comprehensive and complex that it is no longer useful in guiding policymaking,<sup>34</sup> mainly because it is associated with (but not limited to) ecological issues. As a consequence, many definitions have emerged, but the most widely used is that proposed by the Brundtland Report:

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<sup>32</sup> Schwartz et al., *Frontiers of Research in Economic Theory: The Nancy L. Schwartz Memorial Lectures, 1983–1997*.

<sup>33</sup> Bank, “The World Bank Annual Report 1991.”

<sup>34</sup> Holden, Linnerud, and Banister, “Sustainable Development: Our Common Future Revisited.”

*"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."<sup>35</sup>*

Sustainability is the foundation of today's leading global framework for international cooperation, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its Sustainable Development Goals<sup>36</sup> (SDGs). Members of the OECD agree that sustainable development stands on three pillars: economic, social, and environmental. The first part of Article states:

*To achieve the highest sustainable economic growth and employment and a rising standard of living in Member countries, while maintaining financial stability, and thus to contribute to the development of the world economy;*

This squarely addresses the economic and social dimensions of Sustainable Development. But what about the third pillar, the environment? For years the OECD examined the trade-offs between economic growth and the social dimension of Sustainable Development. However, the trade-offs between environmental policies and the other two pillars have not been as evident, except perhaps in specific sectors such as fisheries. In order to give decision makers a rational basis for choices across the full range of economic, social and environmental policies, we need a clear framework to identify and, where possible, measure the trade-offs<sup>37</sup>.

Regarding this, it would be important to mention the social movements occurring in these days regarding the human impact on the environment.

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<sup>35</sup> World Commission on Environment and Development., *Our Common Future*.

<sup>36</sup> "Sustainable Development."

<sup>37</sup> OECD, *Measuring Sustainable Development*.

#### 2.2.4 Human development

While the terms *human development* and *economic development* are intimately linked to one another, they do not constitute exactly the same notion.<sup>38</sup> We can often find both terms as almost interchangeable.

In order to explain the difference between the two concepts, it is helpful to think about *economic development* as the improvement of the quantity and quality of relations of an economic nature; and *human development* as the **flourishing of a human being**. The human development approach is one that calls for a simultaneous treatment of economic and social aspects of development,<sup>39</sup> a theory developed by the economist Mahbub ul Haq, anchored in the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's work on human capabilities, often framed in terms of whether people are able to "be" and "do" desirable things in life<sup>40</sup>. In his book, *reflections on human development*<sup>41</sup> we can find:

*...The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these Choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms and a sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives.*

*The human development paradigm covers all aspects of development – whether economic growth or international trade; budget deficits or fiscal policy; savings, investment, or technology; basic social services or safety nets for the poor. No aspect of the development model falls outside its scope, but point of reference remains the widening of people's choices and the enrichment of their lives. All aspects of life – economic, political, or cultural – are viewed from that perspective. Economic growth therefore becomes*

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<sup>38</sup> "1998 National Human Development Report: Youth & Development."

<sup>39</sup> "1998 National Human Development Report: Youth & Development."

<sup>40</sup> "About Human Development | Human Development Reports."

<sup>41</sup> Haq, *Reflections on Human Development*.

*only one subset of the human development paradigm. On some aspects of the human development paradigm, there is fairly broad agreement:*

- *Development must put people at the centre of its concerns.*
- *The purpose of development is to enlarge all human choices and not just income.*
- *The human development paradigm is concerned both with building human capabilities (through investment in people) and with using those human capabilities more fully (through an enabling framework for growth and employment) ...*

Both economic growth and economic development (sustainable) are part of human development; however, neither economic growth nor development can be sustained without human development<sup>42</sup>. This is, in fact, the "human capital" aspect of human development. The economic roles of better and more widespread schooling, good health and nourishment, learning by doing, and technical progress all point to the importance of human agency as a prime mover of material progress.

### 2.3 The capability approach

The capability approach was first introduced by Amartya Sen in 1979<sup>43</sup> and remains an important pillar for human development. It is defined by Sen himself as "an intellectual discipline that gives a central role to the evaluation of a person's achievements and freedoms in terms of his or her actual ability to do the different things a person has reason to value doing or being".<sup>44</sup> It is generally conceived as a flexible and multipurpose framework rather than a precise theory.<sup>45</sup> In this context, capabilities are defined as a person's real freedom or opportunities to achieve functioning.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Deneulin and Shahani, *An Introduction to the Human Development and Capability Approach: Freedom and Agency*.

<sup>43</sup> Sen, "Equality of What?"

<sup>44</sup> Sen, "What Do We Want from a Theory of Justice?"

<sup>45</sup> Robeyns, *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice*.

<sup>46</sup> Robeyns, "The Capability Approach."



Capabilities constitute *the alternative combinations of things a person is able to be or do*<sup>47</sup>. These valued functionings range from the basic needs for human life, such as being adequately nourished, to more psychological and relational factors, such as ‘achieving self-respect or being socially integrated’<sup>48</sup>

As stated in the UN 2010 research paper written by Sabina Alkire,<sup>49</sup> human development aims to expand people’s freedom – the worthwhile capabilities they value – and to empower people to engage actively in development processes.

### *2.3.1. Clarifications on the development concept*

It is important to highlight, then, how the concept of development is considered in a simultaneous way as process and goals, both as a steady state and a changing condition of improvement. An interesting conclusion that we can infer from this reasoning is the fact that **development is regarded both as a process and as a goal**, the first obviously stated after its general definition, and the former due to the final desired state.

In 2009, the Final Report of the ‘Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress’ established by President Sarkozy of France, presented a comprehensive critique of the inadequacy of a narrow economic approach to development. While the focus of the inquiry was on how we might better measure development, the ramifications of its arguments and conclusions were much more wide ranging. One of the central observations of the inquiry is that what we measure for public policy shapes how we think about and design policy. The report concluded that income measurements of development have misdirected development policy. **The key recommendation of the commission was for a move away from measuring economic production as the yardstick for development, towards the measurement of**

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<sup>47</sup> Sen, “Capability and Well-Being”

<sup>48</sup> Sen; White and Blackmore, *Cultures of Wellbeing: Method, Place, Policy*.

<sup>49</sup> Alkire, “Human Development: Definitions, Critiques, and Related Concepts.”

**human well-being**<sup>50</sup>. As a result, the *beyond GDP* movement emerged, aiming for a substitution or expansion of existing standards of measure of quality of life.

## 2.4 Definitions of well-being and comparison with similar terms

### 2.4.1 Views of well-being

There is no doubt about the relevance of the concept of wellbeing. There is however, a lack of consensus about a general definition: the term is so broad, that its definition is a rather complex and difficult task. Knowing the historical background to the study of wellbeing is necessary to the definition of wellbeing. For example, in a non- academic context, popular use of the term ‘well-being’ usually relates to health. A doctor’s surgery may run a “Women’s Well-being Clinic”, for example, although it’s philosophical use is broader,<sup>51</sup> notions that we will analyse in a brief manner.

From the dawn of intellectual history, philosophers have debated what constitutes “the good life” and how such a life may be achieved, and this debate has recently permeated psychological theory and research<sup>52</sup>.

#### 2.4.1.1 Wellbeing as a process

Sarah White makes a point by adding a time dimension to the well-being notion. In her words, the understanding of wellbeing as a process (or set of processes) then relates to the next dimension – time. Understandings of what wellbeing is change with historical time. People’s ideas of their own wellbeing – and their estimations of whether they have or will achieve it – also change through the life-cycle. Expectations of the future and reflections on the past also have a

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<sup>50</sup> Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, “Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.”

<sup>51</sup> Crisp, “Well-Being.”

<sup>52</sup> Niemiec, “Eudaimonic Well-Being.”

bearing on how people conceive of their present – and how people feel about their present affects how they read their pasts and future<sup>53</sup>

Martin Seligman, in his book entitled *Flourish*<sup>54</sup> outlines his new “dynamic” concept of wellbeing, which moves away from theories based purely on happiness<sup>55</sup>.

#### 2.4.1.2 Well-being as Equilibrium

A dynamic equilibrium (DE) theory of subjective well-being (SWELL-BEING) was initially proposed to account for linkages between personality, life events, well-being and ill-being. Prior to that, Brickman and Campbell had shown that people usually return to a baseline - or equilibrium level, or set point- of happiness following even such major life events, such as becoming a paraplegic and winning a large sum in a lottery<sup>56</sup>. DE theory is now usually labelled set point theory<sup>57</sup>.

Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders appoint that it would seem appropriate that any definition of wellbeing centres on a state of equilibrium or balance that can be affected by life events or challenges<sup>58</sup>.

#### 2.4.1.3 Relational approach to well-being

Relational wellbeing is an emergent concept that provides some major challenges to the dominant conceptions of wellbeing and the ways these have been mobilized in policy. It is the concept that underlies the positioning of wellbeing – or ‘living well together’ – as a political alternative to development.

The starting point of relational wellbeing is that notions of wellbeing are seen as socially and culturally constructed, rooted in a particular time and place<sup>59</sup>. Well-being is not seen as the

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<sup>53</sup> White, “Analyzing Wellbeing: A Framework for Development Practice.”

<sup>54</sup> Seligman, *Flourish*.

<sup>55</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>56</sup> Brickman and Campbell, “Hedonic Relativism and Planning the Good Society.”

<sup>57</sup> Headey, “Subjective Well-Being: Revisions to Dynamic Equilibrium Theory Using National Panel Data and Panel Regression Methods.”

<sup>58</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>59</sup> Atkinson, “Economics as a Moral Science.”

property of individuals but as something that belongs to and emerges through relationships with others<sup>60</sup>.

Relational wellbeing is then suggested to emerge through the interplay of personal, societal, and environmental processes, interacting at a range of scales, in ways that are both reinforcing and in tension<sup>61</sup>. Wellbeing then becomes something that happens in relationship – between the collective and the individual; the local and the global; the people and the state. **Relationship** is thus at the centre of wellbeing analysis and politics<sup>62</sup>. **This seems to be the most complete outlook, covering the greater extent of all the other approaches.**

#### 2.4.2 Multidimensionality of well-being

Despite the differences in approach, most researchers now believe that wellbeing is a multi-dimensional construct, e.g. Diener<sup>63</sup>, Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi<sup>64</sup>, Dodge, Daly, Huyton and Sanders<sup>65</sup> and Page-Reeves<sup>66</sup>. For instance, The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment<sup>67</sup> defines human wellbeing as a “**multidimensional** concept encompassing material wealth, health, safety and security, good social relations, and freedom of choice and actions”.

**Objective** and **subjective** traits are accepted as composers of the general well-being of a person. Objective aspects of well-being are referred to as external, material, and measurable components of well-being (e.g. life expectation and income). Subjective well-being (SWELL-BEING) refers to how people *experience* and *evaluate* their lives and specific domains and activities in their lives. Other important aspects of SWELL-BEING are the personal states of mind,

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<sup>60</sup> Christopher, “Situating Psychological Well-Being: Exploring the Cultural Roots of Its Theory and Research.”

<sup>61</sup> White, “Relational Wellbeing.”

<sup>62</sup> White, “Analyzing Wellbeing: A Framework for Development Practice.”

<sup>63</sup> Diener et al., *Well-Being for Public Policy*.

<sup>64</sup> Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi, “Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress.”

<sup>65</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>66</sup> Page-Reeves et al., *Well-Being as a Multidimensional Concept: Understanding Connections among Culture, Community, and Health*.

<sup>67</sup> Assessment, *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*.

positive outlook, and perception of happiness. Mental state accounts often refer to subjective well-being (SWELL-BEING), which includes the thinking as well as the feeling self<sup>68</sup>.

The complementarity of these two approaches is increasingly recognized in economics and psychology<sup>69</sup>, and well summarized by Forgeard who conclude that, “Wellbeing is best understood as a multifaceted phenomenon that can be assessed by measuring a wide array of subjective and objective constructs.”<sup>70</sup>

**Another important mention is related to mental health Life-cycle of needs.** Well-being is not a fixed goal to be reached by each person at some point in time, but is reflected continually in a cyclical process of individual progress or evolution, from infancy and childhood to adulthood, reproduction and finally old age and death. Throughout this process, each individual has qualities and potentials to be discovered and cultivated. The types of development and their priority change at different stages of this life cycle. Where individual progress is initially dependent on others, and the family or some substitute for it are primordial for healthy human development and well-being, autonomy increases until the individual has almost complete responsibility for setting and achieving objectives in life. The increasing dependence in old age may reduce well-being in a material sense, but there is clear potential for continuing advancement in spiritual virtues like patience and detachment.

The quality of individual development at one stage is often an important determinant of the development possibilities and limitations at subsequent stages. A child physically and mentally stunted by malnutrition will have reduced potential for many kinds of future development. Well-being would therefore need to be considered at different critical stages in the human life cycle.

Japan has now announced plans to measure national happiness with 132 numerical indicators covering socioeconomic conditions, physical and mental health, and social relations, as well as intergenerational and international differences, and sustainability. The OECD is also developing

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<sup>68</sup> Diener et al., “Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress.”

<sup>69</sup> Anand, “Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures.”

<sup>70</sup> Forgeard et al., “Doing the Right Thing: Measuring Well-Being for Public Policy.”

international standard measures of well-being, and the European Environment Agency is working on a well-being index. Other countries and international organizations are also working on indicators of well-being and happiness.

#### 2.4.4 Multidisciplinarity of well-being

Besides the lack of consensus on the dimensions, definition, and scope of the term, due to it we observe its presence among varied disciplines, such as in the case of economics, politics, religion, and science, to name a few.

For instance, positive psychology is the scientific study of the "good life", or the positive aspects of the human experience that make life worth living. The discipline of positive psychology focuses on both individual and societal well-being. Seligman states the rationale behind this change in direction: *I used to think that the topic of positive psychology was happiness. I now think that the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing.*<sup>71</sup>

It might also be relevant to notice that, in a systematic examination of literature, Alkire noted 39 varying endeavours between 1938 and 2000 to define a 'flourishing' life<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> Seligman, *Flourish*.

<sup>72</sup> Alkire, "Dimensions of Human Development."

## 2.4.5 Definitions of well-being

The diversity of dimensions has created a confusing and contradictory research base<sup>73</sup>. Consequently, there is not a consented definition on the term. Nonetheless, Atkinson<sup>74</sup> suggests that the very fact that there is no precise or generally acceptable definition of wellbeing makes it valuable as a process tool<sup>75</sup>.

Another interesting point signalled by Ryan et al is that many previous definitions are *based upon descriptions rather than actual definition*<sup>76</sup>. A non-exhaustive list of examples can be found next:

- Shin and Johnson (1978) stated that well-being is a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his own chosen criteria<sup>77</sup>.
- In the book *Wellbeing for public policy*, by Ed Diener, Richard Lucas, Ulrich Schimmack, and John Helliwell, we can find the following: "*A life that matches individuals own ideas*"<sup>78</sup>.
- For Ryan and Deci wellbeing is: a complex, multifaceted construct that can be defined as optimal human experience and psychological functioning<sup>79</sup>.
- The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment in 2003 defines human wellbeing as "a multidimensional concept encompassing material wealth, health, safety and security, good social relations, and freedom of choice and actions"<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Pollard and Lee, "Child Well-Being."

<sup>74</sup> Atkinson, "Beyond Components of Wellbeing."

<sup>75</sup> White and Blackmore, *Cultures of Wellbeing: Method, Place, Policy*.

<sup>76</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>77</sup> Shin and Johnson, "Avowed Happiness as an Overall Assessment of the Quality of Life."

<sup>78</sup> Diener et al., *Well-Being for Public Policy*.

<sup>79</sup> Ryan and Deci, "On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being."

<sup>80</sup> Assessment, *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*.

- Other authors such as Ereaut and Whiting<sup>81</sup> argue for the non-necessity of a definition, stating that wellbeing is no less than what a group or groups of people collectively agree makes a “good life”. We could infer a similar thinking between the relational well-being approach and this last statement.
- As accurately stated in the title of their paper, Rachel Dodge, Annette P. Daly, Jan Huyton, Lalage D. Sanders; defining wellbeing is a challenge, concluding that: **wellbeing is when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.**

#### 2.4.6 Human development and human capital comparison

The term *Human capital* is often confused with human development. The UN suggests "Human development denotes both the process of widening people's choices and improving their well-being"<sup>82</sup>. The UN Human Development indices suggest that human capital is merely a means to the end of human development: Theories of human capital formation and human resource development view human beings as means to increased income and wealth rather than as ends. These theories are concerned with human beings as inputs to increasing production. The human development approach must take full note of the robust role of human capital, while at the same time retaining clarity about what the ends and means respectively are.

What has to be avoided is seeing human beings as merely the means of production and material prosperity, taking the latter to be the end of the causal analysis. That is the danger to which an approach that sees women and men only as “human capital” is open; rejecting such exclusive concentration on people as “human capital” is central to the human development approach. But

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<sup>81</sup> Ereaut and Whiting, “What Do We Mean by ‘wellbeing’?: And Why Might It Matter?”

<sup>82</sup> “Indices & Data | Composite Indices | Human Development Reports (HUMAN DEVELOPMENT) | United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).”



that disputation does not, in any way, deny the commanding role of human capital in enhancing production and material prosperity as well.

In consequence, it might be right to address human capital as a part of human development. It is also worthy to mention the importance between human capital and economic growth, resulting in a very known and studied positive correlation between human development and economic growth<sup>83</sup>.

#### 2.4.7 Well-being and Quality of life term comparison

Adding another layer of complexity, well-being is also closely related, if not equal to an expression of the quality of life of an individual.<sup>84</sup> Subjective well-being (SWELL-BEING) and subjective quality of life (QoL) are often used interchangeably in research, policy, and practice. However, a problem with the term 'quality of life' is that it is used interchangeably with well-being in a variety of disciplines.<sup>85</sup> Many believe that this has made the task of defining wellbeing conceptually muddy<sup>86</sup>

WHO defines Quality of Life as an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, personal beliefs, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of their environment.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Galor and Tsiddon, "The Distribution of Human Capital and Economic Growth."

<sup>84</sup> Pinto et al., "Comfort, Well-Being and Quality of Life: Discussion of the Differences and Similarities among the Concepts."

<sup>85</sup> Skevington and Böhnke, "How Is Subjective Well-Being Related to Quality of Life?"

<sup>86</sup> Morrow and Mayall, "What Is Wrong with Children's Well-Being in the UK? Questions of Meaning and Measurement."

<sup>87</sup> "WHO | WHOQOL."

Psychologist Carl Rogers discussed wellbeing in terms of the good life<sup>88</sup>. He believed that each individual strived towards becoming a, fully functioning person who is open to experience, is trusting in his/her own organism, and leads.<sup>89</sup>

Skevington and Bohnke concluded that “On the basis of available evidence drawn from cross-cultural research, we suggest that SWELL-BEING and subjective QoL are virtually synonymous with each other, and question whether SWELL-BEING may now be superfluous to definitional requirements”<sup>90</sup>. In other, Oleg N. Medvedev and Erik Landhuis arrive to the conclusion of interchangeable use of terms happiness, subjective well-being, and psychological quality of life.<sup>91</sup>

However, for Dodge, Daly, Huyton, and Sanders a narrow emphasis on quality of life cannot adequately help us to define wellbeing. Indeed, it would seem that quality of life appears to be a dimension of wellbeing rather than an all-embracing definition.<sup>92</sup>

#### 2.4.8 Well-being and happiness comparison

The concept of well-being has been associated with happiness to various degrees. This is why there is also an ongoing debate on the limits and importance of each concept, which are often considered as equal or interchangeable.

As an example, the State of Bhutan decided to measure well-being using the Gross National Happiness Index (GNH). Furthermore, the United Nations invited the member countries to measure the happiness of their people in order to guide public policy with the resolution 65/309 *Happiness: Towards a Holistic Definition of Development*.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Rogers and Kramer, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*.

<sup>89</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>90</sup> Skevington and Böhnke, “How Is Subjective Well-Being Related to Quality of Life?”

<sup>91</sup> Medvedev and Landhuis, “Exploring Constructs of Well-Being, Happiness and Quality of Life.”

<sup>92</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

<sup>93</sup> “Happiness : Towards a Holistic Approach to Development : Resolution /.”

On 2 April 2012, the Earth Institute of Columbia University launched the first World Happiness Report at the UN<sup>94</sup>. This has drawn on data from the Gallup World Poll, the World Values Survey, the European Values Survey and the European Social Survey to assess subjective well-being or happiness, both as felt at one point in time (affective) and as evaluated in a reflection on life satisfaction. It demonstrates the validity and policy relevance of such subjective measures, and encourages their widespread use in other surveys. To explain the variations in happiness, it analyses both external factors (income, work, community, governance, values and religion) and personal factors (mental health, physical health, family, education, gender and age).

However, happiness is often used, in ordinary life, to refer to a short-lived state of a person, frequently a feeling of contentment: “You look happy today”; “I am very happy for you”<sup>95</sup>. Across the literature as a whole, happiness generally appears as a narrower concept, a component of wellbeing, sometimes identified with ‘subjective wellbeing’<sup>96</sup>. After Shah and Marks, well-being is more than just happiness. As well as feeling satisfied and happy, well-being means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community<sup>97</sup>.

In order to fully understand the concept of well-being, it is necessary to regard it as an inclusive, integral, extensive, and comprehensive multidimensional concept. As a result of an analysis of these past important concepts (development, well-being, and happiness under the capability approach framework) we can state that **well-being can be regarded as a converging point between the final goals of human activities and disciplines**. Regarding well-being as a comprehensive global concept we can say that the notion of happiness is implied therein. Happiness is part of well-being, but not the reverse; therefore, **strict commutativity between well-being and happiness does not strictly apply**.

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<sup>94</sup> Helliwell, Layard, and Sachs, “World Happiness Report [2012].”

<sup>95</sup> Crisp, “Well-Being.”

<sup>96</sup> White, “Introduction: The Many Faces of Wellbeing.”

<sup>97</sup> Marks and Shah, “A Well-Being Manifesto for a Flourishing Society.”

### 2.4.9 Human development or Well-being?

The first Human Development Index was presented in 1990. It has been an annual feature of every Human Development Report since, ranking virtually every country in the world from number one (currently Iceland) to number 177 (currently Sierra Leone).

It might be relevant to analyse the very fact that the one term is in the other: **Human development** is defined as the process of enlarging people's freedoms and opportunities and improving their well-being.

The concepts of human development and development seem somehow intertwined. It is observable that there is a substitution of terms, between Human development and well-being in similar contexts. As an example, the capability approach is not only defined as a function of development, but also as a function of well-being. In Robeyns (2017) we find:

The capability approach is a conceptual framework, which is in most cases used as a normative framework for the evaluation and assessment of individual **well-being** and that of institutions, in addition to its much more infrequent use for non-normative purposes.<sup>98</sup>

The evaluation of the capability approach framework in consideration of a definition of well-being is relevant, because well-being is defined as in function of capabilities.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, the first Human Development Report in 1990 defined human development as *both the process of widening people's choices and the level of their achieved well-being*<sup>100</sup>.

In particular, it is relevant to highlight that the very fact that the question about the difference between human development and well-being arises is already by itself important. For example, there are some papers written to explore the difference between the terms "well-being " and "quality of life", finding that both terms are used as synonyms. Nevertheless, I couldn't find

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<sup>98</sup> Robeyns, *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice*.

<sup>99</sup> Sen, "Development as Capability Expansion."

<sup>100</sup> "Human Development Report 1990 | Human Development Reports."

any similar work regarding wellbeing and human development. In a United Nations paper written by Paul Anand<sup>101</sup> (*The models of well-being surveyed in the previous section contribute particularly to our understanding of well-being as an input to human development but also as an aspect of it*) he states that understanding wellbeing can help the understanding of human development, implying on these lines and further along his work well-being in function of human development.

Human development refers to the set of capabilities to be developed in function to achieve a state of wellbeing, regarding well-being more comprehensive than human development. **It might be useful to regard them as a how and why issue:** While well-being remains the reason of our efforts, human development represents the set of capabilities to develop to reach an ideal state of well-being.

#### 2.4.10 Well-being and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development has emerged as the conceptual framework to improve current well-being, while maintaining the basis for future well-being<sup>102</sup>. A mutually beneficial relationship between well-being and sustainable development (SD) has been postulated<sup>103</sup>. For example, the UK government has argued that the local environment “effects everyone’s daily life, and directly contributes to their sense of well-being<sup>104</sup>”, and it identifies a “just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well-being” as a goal for public policy<sup>105</sup>.

Obviously, SD and objective well-being are more likely to be compatible if the objective list includes aspects such as freedom from pollution, health and future health, access to green space, avoidance of extreme temperatures, and equality. Furthermore, action that strengthens SD is likely to enhance one attribute (e.g. health) at the possible expense of another (e.g.

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<sup>101</sup> Anand, “Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures.”

<sup>102</sup> Solow, “25. Sustainability: An Economist’s Perspective.”

<sup>103</sup> Defra, “Securing the Future: UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy.”

<sup>104</sup> Architecture, Planning (London, and Minister, *Living Places: Caring for Quality*.

<sup>105</sup> Defra, “Securing the Future: UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy.”

consumption). If the items on the list are non-commensurable, then it becomes difficult to establish if well-being has increased/decreased<sup>106</sup>.

Potentially positive relations or synergies between objective well-being and sustainable development can be found in the domains of transport and energy production. Synergies between objective well-being and both WS and SS can also be found in the area of energy production such as ethanol production in Brazil<sup>107</sup>. The trade-off of well-being and SD against one another within the same macroeconomic indicator is problematic. The Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) has grown out of concern that GDP is not an adequate indicator of both SD and well-being<sup>108</sup>.

**However, the most common way in which well-being and sustainability are seen to conflict with one another is in relation to the time frame over which they operate. Neumayer for example, argues that well-being is orientated to the present whilst environmental and inter-generational sustainability looks towards the future<sup>109</sup>.** In consequence, the trade-off of well-being and SD against one another within the same macroeconomic indicator is problematic. The Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) has grown out of concern that GDP is not an adequate indicator of both SD and well-being<sup>110</sup>.

Paul Dolan, Melanie Knight, Robert Metcalfe, Tessa Peasgood and Mat White, expressed in a paper that *relatively little is known about how the different definitions of well-being relate to sustainable development...Given that there is a lack of shared understanding about exactly what is meant by the terms well-being and SD, having a common set of definitions allows us to*

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<sup>106</sup> Dolan et al., "The Relationship between Well-Being and Sustainable Development."

<sup>107</sup> Moreira et al., "Alcohols, Esters and Heavy Sulphur Compounds Production by Pure and Mixed Cultures of Apiculate Wine Yeasts."

<sup>108</sup> Dolan et al., "The Relationship between Well-Being and Sustainable Development."

<sup>109</sup> Neumayer, "Sustainability and Well-Being Indicators."

<sup>110</sup> Dolan et al., "The Relationship between Well-Being and Sustainable Development."

*meaningfully discuss the synergies and tensions between them.... This makes it difficult to define the precise relationship between SD and well-being.<sup>111</sup>*

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<sup>111</sup> Dolan et al.

## 2.5 How and what to measure?

Given the multiple indexes, there is an open discussion of what is worth to be measured. Despite agreeing well-being as the main indicator for improving the quality of life, the open set of the constituents of well-being make of this a hard task.

As a first classificatory attempt, the various human development indicators can be grouped into five clusters, namely: i) subjective indicators of human development, ii) goals-based indicators of human development, iii) sustainability indicators of human development, iv) comprehensive indicators of human development and v) specific (or sectoral) measures of human development. There are other measures that can be derived from specific contributions, such as a Rawlsian measure of 'primary goods', Doyal and Gough's index of basic needs or Narayan et al.'s measures of voices of the poor<sup>112</sup>. Not to mention a wide range of sustainability measures flourishing since the Brundtland Report in 1987. But here the paper focuses on indicators that are used as quality indicators and not as ad hoc expressions of normative theories, as with some of those referred to above.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Narayan et al., *Voices of the Poor: Crying out for Change*.

<sup>113</sup> Comim, "Beyond the HDI? Assessing Alternative Measures of Human Development from a Capability Perspective."



<b>Country/organization</b>	<b>Subjective measure(s)</b>	<b>Other indicators</b>
Bhutan (Centre for Bhutan Studies)	Psychological well-being, social support, mental well-being, spirituality, emotional experience	Health, time use and balance, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, living standards
European Union (29 countries)	Life satisfaction	Material living conditions, productive or main activity, education, leisure and social interactions, economic and physical safety, governance and basic rights, natural and living environment
OECD (34 countries)	Life satisfaction	Income and wealth, jobs and earnings, housing health status, work and life, education and skills, social connections, engagement and governance, environmental quality, personal security
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	14 questions about domain satisfactions (used with 15-24 year olds)	The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey covers several aspects of life quality, and has a focus on women, children and health.
United Kingdom (Office of National Statistics)	Life satisfaction  Things you do in life are worthwhile  Happiness yesterday  Anxiousness yesterday	Where we live, personal finance, economy, education and skills, governance, natural environment, our relationships, health, what we do

Table from the 2016 UNDP Working paper *Happiness, well-being and human development: The case for subjective measures* written by Paul Anand

In very basic terms, rankings can be different not simply in terms of their specific ordering of options, but in terms of how they assemble different criteria, each producing its corresponding ordering. As much as the range of different criteria can be quite large, it is common to see criteria formulated around four kinds of informational spaces. Nonetheless, it seems that it is divided between human development as objective and well-being as these applications cover the health, education, paid employment, gender and inequality concerns of human development, and often echo the messages derived from more objective indicators, but they serve to highlight other issues also that would not emerge so clearly if we used only an income focus.

At the same time, a wide array of new alternative development indicators has spread, ranging from all-encompassing indicators such as Michael Porter's Social Progress Index to more subjective alternatives such as Helliwell et al.'s Ranking of Happiness or the New Economics Foundation's Happy Planet Index.<sup>114</sup>

At the same time, there are discrepancies between indexes: evidence from the 2016 World Happiness Report suggests that there are considerable discrepancies between the rankings of some countries. For instance, Japan, which is 20th in the 2015 HDI, is 53rd in the happiness ranking, whereas Venezuela, which is 71st in the 2015 HDI, is 44th in the happiness ranking. A similar case would be the Republic of Korea, which is 17th in the 2015 HDI and 57th in the happiness ranking, and Brazil, which is 75th in the 2015 HDI and 17th in the happiness ranking. This suggests that between East Asia and Latin America, there are some important differences in the way that people rank and value their well-being. Rather than being an embarrassment, this evidence raises very important lessons for the HDI<sup>115</sup>.

To a large extent, many indicators already discussed are comprehensive. But a separate category is necessary to accommodate a new indicator, the **Social Progress Index**. "The Social Progress Index is the first comprehensive framework for measuring social progress that is independent of GDP, and complementary to it"<sup>116</sup>. The index is built around three dimensions, just as the HDI, but these are broader in character. They comprise 'basic human needs' (nutrition, water, shelter and safety), 'foundations of well-being' (knowledge, information, health and sustainability) and 'opportunity' (personal rights, personal freedom, tolerance and advanced education). The index has many attractive features from a capability perspective. In its last dimension, the Social Progress Index enters an area that the HDI has not been able to enter sustainably, namely, that of political and civil liberties (the early critiques of Dasgupta 1990, Desai 1991 and Kelley 1991 are telling). More recent attempts, such as the Economic and Social Rights Fulfilment Index (rights to education, food, health, housing and decent work) by Fukuda-Parr et al. (2008)

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<sup>114</sup> Comim.

<sup>115</sup> Comim.

<sup>116</sup> Imperative, "Social Progress Index 2015."

illustrate the relevance of this old debate about the links between the HDI, and political and civil freedoms.

### 2.5.1 Critics to the existing measures

Besides the critics that GDP is not a sufficient measure to quantify well-being. There is an extensive literature on the topic, aiming to replace it for a more extensive measure. For example, the HDI has been criticized for its negligence of inequality and for the assumption of trade-offs between its components<sup>117</sup>.

Regarding the first point, the IHDI has been developed, which can be interpreted as the level of human development when inequality is accounted for. The difference between the IHDI and HDI is the human development cost of inequality, also termed – the overall loss to human development due to inequality. The IHDI allows a direct link to inequalities in dimensions, it can inform policies towards inequality reduction, and leads to better understanding of inequalities across population and their contribution to the overall human development cost. A recent measure of inequality in the HDI, the Coefficient of human inequality, is calculated as an unweighted average of inequality across three dimensions<sup>118</sup>.

Another critic to measures is the ignorance of religious beliefs. Let's consider the Islamic Human development Index<sup>119</sup>: It is argued that Muslim countries have some special features, cultures, and values that are not completely accommodated by the HDI measurement. An argument for its existence is that *the existing HDI concept is value neutral and unable to capture the religious and ethical perspective of socioeconomic development in Muslim countries*. Therefore, the current study is an attempt to propose an Islamic Human Development Index (I-HDI) as a holistic and comprehensive index for human development derived from the five dimensions of maqāṣid

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<sup>117</sup> Ravallion, "Troubling Tradeoffs in the Human Development Index."

<sup>118</sup> "Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) | Human Development Reports."

<sup>119</sup> Rama and Yusuf, "Construction of Islamic Human Development Index."

al-Sharī‘ah: religion (dīn), life (nafs), intellect (‘aql), family (nasl) and wealth (māl). The computation method of an I-HDI is parallel with the HDI method.

Another notion worth to consider are **suicide rates**. Suicide is often considered as an extreme manifestation of depression and of poor quality of life. Because of its extreme nature, suicide can be viewed as the tip of an iceberg, with inter-temporal changes in rates of suicide, and differences between countries, giving an indication of the extent of broader problems of depressive illness.<sup>120</sup> I believe should be an important matter to discuss, given the increasing statistics, for example, U.S. suicide rate rose 30 percent from 2000 to 2016. In 2016, suicide became the second leading cause of death among those aged 10 to 34 and the fourth leading cause among those aged 35 to 54<sup>121</sup>

A research paper titled "Dark Contrasts: The Paradox of High Rates of Suicide in Happy Places"<sup>122</sup>. The research confirmed a little known and seemingly puzzling fact: many happy countries have unusually high rates of suicide. This research found that a range of nations -- including: Canada, the United States, Iceland, Ireland and Switzerland, display relatively high happiness levels and yet also have high suicide rates. This observation has been made from time to time about individual nations, especially in the case of Denmark. This study was conducted to determine the association between 130 HDI levels and the incidence of suicide in different countries. The 131 results of this study showed that suicide rates increased with 132 increasing levels of HDI, and were higher in men compared to 133 women. There was a direct and significant correlation between 134 incidence of suicide with percentages of urbanization of countries, 135 GNI, and life expectancy in women.

The economists' explanation for this paradox was that people tended to compare themselves to those around them—if you're an unhappy person in a happy place, your negative feelings might be exacerbated by your positive surroundings, which could lead to suicide. Professor Stephen

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<sup>120</sup> OECD, *OECD Factbook 2010: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics*.

<sup>121</sup> Hedegaard, Curtin, and Warner, "Suicide Mortality in the United States, 1999–2017."

<sup>122</sup> Daly et al., "Dark Contrasts: The Paradox of High Rates of Suicide in Happy Places."

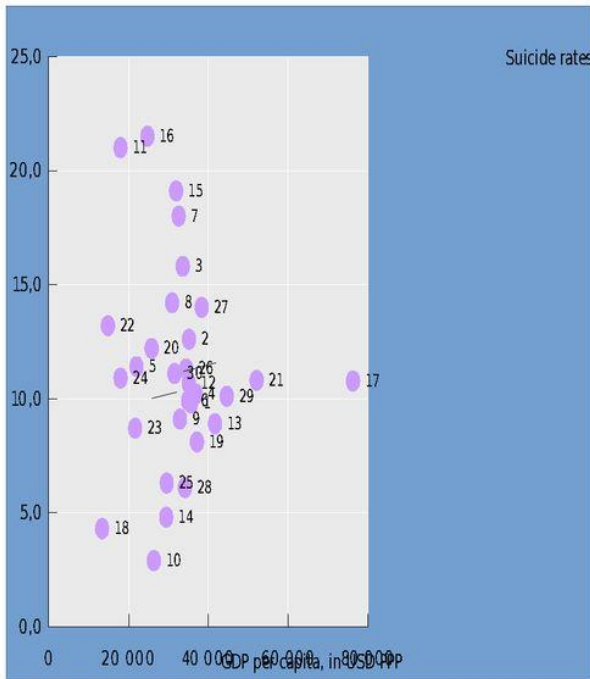
Wu of Hamilton College said: "This result is consistent with other research that shows that people judge their well-being in comparison to others around them. These types of comparison effects have also been shown with regards to income, unemployment, crime, and obesity<sup>123</sup>.

In a contrasting comparison, we observe lower rates of suicide in lesser developed countries (in the HDI ranks). Peru, for example, was in the 63rd happiest position in the 2016 Report, but had a suicide rate of 4.9, under a third of Finland's suicide rate.

**OECD Factbook 2010: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics - ISBN 92-64-08356-1 - © OECD 2010**  
*Quality of life - Society - Suicides*

**Suicide rates and per capita GDP**

2006 or latest available year



<sup>123</sup> Daly et al.

Adding another layer of complexity, and retaking religious critics to the indexes, after studies Religion deters suicide<sup>124</sup>. In a more sociological context, we can pinpoint the analysis made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Emile Durkheim where he signals how economics can explain why there is a higher rate of suicide in protestant regions than in catholic regions<sup>125</sup>.

As well, studies have found positive relationships between aspects of religiosity and happiness and the satisfaction with life. Only a few studies have found negative relationships between religiosity and subjective well-being.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Martin, "Religiosity and United States Suicide Rates, 1972-1978."

<sup>125</sup> Becker and Woessmann, "Social Cohesion, Religious Beliefs, and the Effect of Protestantism on Suicide."

<sup>126</sup> Ferriss, "Religion and the Quality of Life."

## Chapter 3: Development as well-being

After extensively reviewing the existing related literature, the main focus on the following chapter is to elaborate new ideas and relations between existing concepts.

### 3.1 Relation between the development concept and well-being

As we have observed, differences between development and well-being are not often clear. While it is agreed that both human development and well-being are multidimensional and increase quality of life in a positive way, they do not represent the same notions. Nonetheless, due to these similarities we could imply a link between the terms.

In a more radical approach, Sarah C. White mentions that, *policy language may also suggest that wellbeing (like development before it) is an outcome to be sought, and that calls to re-frame policy in terms of wellbeing come from many different quarters*<sup>127</sup>; inviting to an investigation for the understanding the possible consequences that could emerge.

#### 3.1.1 Proposed characterization of well-being

The concept of wellbeing is undeniably complex, considering the aspects previously discussed. This work has highlighted the difficulty that researchers have had with defining wellbeing<sup>128</sup>. The link between the capability approach with development is not novel at all, neither the one with poverty and well-being. However, we can observe a lack of formal definition involving development and well-being

After Dodge, most definitions of well-being are characterizations. Therefore, I will add another one. **By stating the former characterization, the intention of replacing the existing definitions of well-being is not sought, but rather to expand the already existing knowledge on the matter.** The next characterization is proposed:

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<sup>127</sup> White, "Analyzing Wellbeing: A Framework for Development Practice."

<sup>128</sup> Dodge et al., *The Challenge of Defining Wellbeing*.

**Well-being is the converging point of development, both as a process and as a goal.**

Although this concept may seem over simplistic at first sight, interesting clarifications of important topics related to the subject may arise. By joining both terms, development and well-being, we can exploit the characteristics of the one to clarify the other. By relating both terms, the aspects composing development apply to well-being. Therefore, a multidimensional and multidisciplinary analysis should be made. By doing so, problems normally addressed to the capability approach can be better understood. For example, this notion implies the observance of well-being both as a **steady state of equilibrium and as an ongoing process**.

Also, by considering well-being as a state of equilibrium, we switch from a perspective regarding well-being *composed* of subjective and objective aspects towards its observance as the **relationship** individuals have to subjective and objective aspects. This notion explains that well-being is not only dependent in a quantitative aspect, but rather, in the quality of the relations we have. These relations can be summarized as the relation that the individual has with:

- Herself
- The others
- With its belongings

Psychological, moral, religious, philosophical and health related notions can be related to the first point. Regarding the communal aspect of well-being, political and social structures would be appropriate to analyse. For the third point, a purely economic analysis would be appropriate. And concerning these three dimensions, it might be relevant to consider religion.



## 3.2 Neglected behavioural economic terms associated to well-being

### 3.2.1 Well-being at the individual level/ Personal maximal effort notion

To sustain this past statement, it is useful to regard some background psychological theories. **In accordance with the set point theory**, each time an individual meets a challenge, the system of challenges and resources comes into a state of imbalance, as the individual is forced to adapt his or her resources to meet this particular challenge. This adaptation can be short-lived if the resources easily match the challenge, as in dealing with routine tasks. On the other hand, it can be a long, anxiety-provoking process, when the challenge is significant, or when there are several challenges encountered at the same time<sup>129</sup>

Regarding this last concept, it is important to mention that a state of well-being is given by equilibrium of effort and results, translated into constant motivation for improvement. **As a consequence, the accumulation of capabilities and their development will not ensure a state of satisfaction of life by itself.** To reach a state of well-being, we also need a feeling of doing our best or constant improvement. **As a result, the notions of *constant effort* and *personal maximal effort* are introduced.**

The notion of *personal maximal effort* suggests as well the converging point between two important notions regularly not utilized in an economical context<sup>130</sup>, but education: The zone of proximal development (ZPD) developed after the Vygotsky theories and the Yerkes- Dodson law. As I am aware, there is no link made until now.

The ZPD explains that the potential greater learning may be achieved when the learner is stressed or stretched can be aligned with the educational concept of the zone of proximal development, which refers to the difference between what is easy enough for a person to do on his or her own, and harder tasks that the same individual can complete only with support<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>129</sup> Coleman and Hendry, *The Nature of Adolescence*.

<sup>130</sup> Kaufman, "Emotional Arousal as a Source of Bounded Rationality."

<sup>131</sup> Chaiklin, "The Zone of Proximal Development in Vygotsky's Analysis of Learning and Instruction."

Regarding the ZPD, it is important given the role of education in the eudemonic regard of well-being. Education is also connected to subjective well-being, both directly and indirectly, although there is much less research on this connection. In the economics-related literature, theory suggests that because education enhances capabilities, it should lead to more favourable assessments of wellbeing<sup>132</sup>

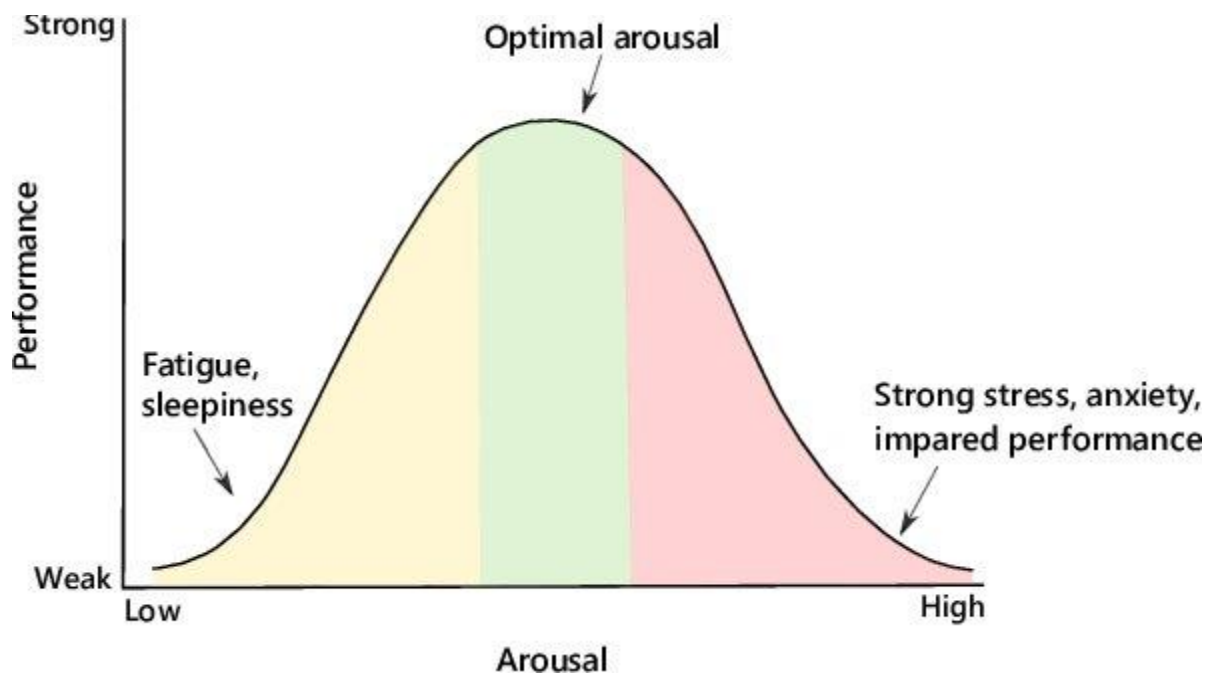


Figure 1. - Yerkes and Dodson law (Saeed et al., “Deep Physiological Arousal Detection in a Driving Simulator Using Wearable Sensors”<sup>133</sup> .

The **Yerkes–Dodson** law is an empirical relationship between arousal and performance, originally developed by psychologists Robert M. Yerkes and John Dillingham Dodson in 1908<sup>134</sup> .

In the same manner, the realization of the maximal personal effort is in accordance with the notion of the **opportunity cost**<sup>135</sup>: An individual will not feel satisfied if he believes he could make

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<sup>132</sup> Anand, “Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures.”

<sup>133</sup> Saeed et al., “Deep Physiological Arousal Detection in a Driving Simulator Using Wearable Sensors.”

<sup>134</sup> Yerkes and Dodson, “The Relation of Strength of Stimulus to Rapidity of Habit-formation.”

better use of his current resources and abilities. By intertwining bounded rationality with opportunity cost gives rise to *ignorance as base of happiness*. If we are conscious to be able to do more, and is our will, satisfaction will not exist.

Considering a state of well-being as a function of development as a process and as a goal, with the convergence between the Yerkes and Dodson and the ZPD we can also deduct the notion of personal *maximal effort* from the individual. Explained in the capability approach framework, this exemplifies why individuals with different degrees of development in certain capabilities could experience different degrees of satisfaction in the same given situation. As an illustration, let us take the following case:

*A five-year-old will feel accomplished by being able to read a single phrase, because it represents the convergence between her past efforts and her results at the same time – in other words, her maximal personal accomplishments and efforts simultaneously – while reading the same lines will be (in general) of no particular relevance for a literate adult.*

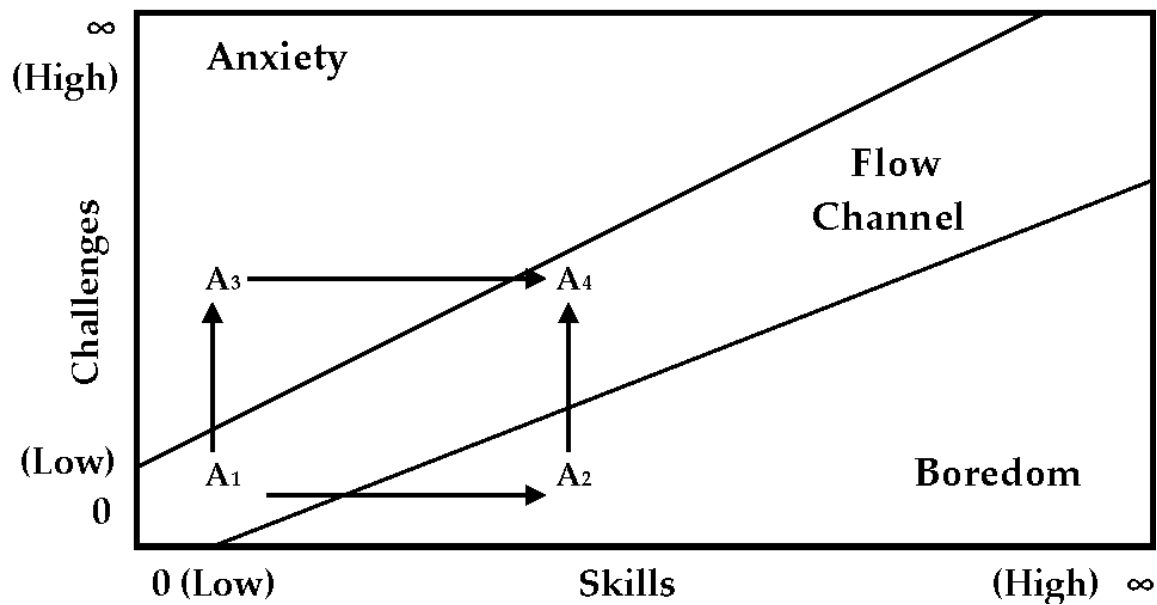
In this regard, the notion of well-being is a direct function of the judgement of capabilities and effort judged by a self-analysis of development of capabilities, besides an external and subjective feeling of constant improvement. **Therefore, well-being does not depend only on the quantity of capabilities we have developed as individuals, but also on how they are employed,**

By linking the ZPD, the Yerkes Dodson law, and the notion of personal maximal effort with the constraints given by the opportunity cost notion, we can also characterize the states of absorption labelled **flow**<sup>136</sup>. Initially conceived of as a model of play derived from the study of artists absorbed in their work, the concept of flow has been used to shed light on issues ranging from the development of innovative ideas to the motivation of learning in schools and professional training.

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<sup>135</sup> Green, "Pain-Cost and Opportunity-Cost."

<sup>136</sup> Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*.



Demonstration of the relationship between challenges and skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 74)

As nearly the polar opposite, psychologists have also identified a state of burnout, which is defined in terms of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficiency<sup>137</sup>

The notion of *constant effort* is introduced to eliminate stagnation, which is also in line with the definition proposed by Dodge et al, and Hendry and Kloep<sup>138</sup>. In addition to past remarks, by adding the notion of ethics to well-being, there could be no convergence between a state of well-being and the knowledge that others are being harmed or that one is not giving one's best personal effort in any given situation, which is also in accordance with an equilibrium between individual and communal desires, notion that will be next evaluated.

These past notions help integrate in the same theory discrepancies derived from hedonic and eudemonic visions of well-being.

<sup>137</sup> Anand, "Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures."

<sup>138</sup> Hendry and Kloep, *Lifespan Development: Resources, Challenges and Risks*.

It is also worthy to mention our own limits: For example, to the extent that what we want is based on predictions of what we will subsequently like, we are often guilty of “miswanting”; that is, of wanting things that do not make us happier or not wanting things that would make us happier<sup>139</sup>. These and other factors result in preferences for options which will not produce the greatest utility in terms of how people actually think and feel about the outcome, i.e. **miswanting**.<sup>140</sup> In addition, it seems that we overestimate the intensity and especially the duration of our reactions to events<sup>141</sup>.

The concept of **bounded rationality**, as developed by Simon and others<sup>142</sup> is based on human cognitive constraints, such as limited computational ability and selective memory and perception.<sup>143</sup> Simon locates the source of bounded rationality in the limited processing capability of the human brain (“stupidity”) and lack of knowledge of alternatives in the choice set (ignorance)<sup>144</sup>.

As an ethical paradox in a condition of **perfect information**, the offender will at a certain point experience a certain degree of regret, which can be translated to a desire to change his conduct. This situation can be better understood as a distance between reality and desire, contradicting the notion of well-being developed i.e. by Diener. **In this regard, ignorance of the consequences of one’s own actions is the departure point of the state of lack of well-being**

As an illustration for the past psychological notions, and to introduce the communal aspects of well-being we can consider the study of psychopathy: It is considered as one of the biggest predictors of criminal behaviour, but what we found was that behavioural regret sensitivity

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<sup>139</sup> Gilbert and Wilson, “Miswanting: Some Problems in the Forecasting of Future Affective States.”

<sup>140</sup> Wilson and Gilbert, “Affective Forecasting.”

<sup>141</sup> Kahneman and Dolan, “Interpretations Of Utility And Their Implications For The Valuation Of Health.”

<sup>142</sup> Simon, “Theories of Bounded Rationality”; Conlisk, “Why Bounded Rationality?”; Rubinstein and Dalgaard, *Modeling Bounded Rationality*.

<sup>143</sup> Kaufman, “Emotional Arousal as a Source of Bounded Rationality.”

<sup>144</sup> Kaufman.

moderated that, raising the suggestion that intact behavioural regret sensitivity could be a protective factor against incarceration in psychopathic individuals.”

As suggested by a study, psychopaths are not incapable of feeling emotions like regret and disappointment. What they cannot do, it seems, is make accurate predictions about the outcomes of their choices<sup>145</sup>. Using an economic game, Buckholtz and Baskin-Sommers were able to show that while psychopaths have normal, or even enhanced, emotional responses in situations that typically elicit regret, they have trouble extracting information from the environment that would indicate that an action they’re about to take will result in the experience of regret. “It’s almost like blindness to future regret,” he added. “When something happens, they feel regret, but what they can’t do is look forward and use information that would tell them they’re going to feel regret to guide their decision-making.”

*Using a counterfactual decision-making paradigm, they have found that higher scores on psychopathy were associated with higher levels of retrospective regret. Despite this, however, individuals higher on psychopathy made riskier choices and were less influenced by prospective regret when making decisions. These findings support the idea that the maladaptive behaviour of psychopathic individuals is related to deficits in domain-general cognitive processes, such as counterfactual decision making, rather than a primary affective deficit.*<sup>146</sup>

### 3.2.2 Well-being as a tailored individual definition

Well-being is regarded as a measure of quality of life, which depends to a great extent upon the individual’s expectations, desires, and needs. The concept of *cultural repertoires* opens a space for considering local contestations about what “the good life” might be for different kinds of person (Dean 2003). Since each individual interprets and evaluates their experiences in her own way the relation between local models of wellbeing and subjective wellbeing is complex.

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<sup>145</sup> “A Revised Portrait of Psychopaths.”

<sup>146</sup> Baskin-Sommers, Stuppy-Sullivan, and Buckholtz, “Psychopathic Individuals Exhibit but Do Not Avoid Regret during Counterfactual Decision Making.”

Shin and Johnson defined wellbeing by stating that it is ,a global assessment of a person’s quality of life according to his own chosen criteria<sup>147</sup>; and Felce and Perry believed that wellbeing stems from individuals’ perception of their current situation and their aspirations<sup>148</sup>.

An important argument put by Ryan and by Bevan and Pankhurst<sup>149</sup> recognized that there are lifespan changes in wellbeing so that the components vary with age. Gender differences must also be taken into account<sup>150</sup>. **In this regard, well-being remains tailored to individual preferences, which are adapted according to individual liberty, capabilities and the use of them.**

Also, exploiting the relational approach of well-being, it comes naturally to state that the quality of life of an individual comes from the quality of its relations. In the following pages an analysis of relevant relational human aspect is expected, although it must be signalled that this by no means should be considered exhaustive, given the importance that each individual grants to every aspect.

### *3.2.2.1 Discussion on the lack of consensus of well-being*

With previous reasoning, we can elaborate that the quest of human development is related to erase those differences. Which are negative externalities, and well-being is given by our perception of individual maximal effort. The lack of understanding of this creates the artificial separation of desires, and gap between action and desire. This comes from a lack of capabilities and understanding, related to the concept of bounded rationality. In the same spirit as well-being seems to be not in accordance with timing, the same as with relations. Lack of well-being equals a lack of understanding, which is completely in accordance with the human development notion and capability approach. As opposed to previous Sarah White considerations, where is suggested to replace the one term with the other, my point of view is more keen to considerate them intrinsically linked; meaning that it would be impossible to consider an action, or policy

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<sup>147</sup> Shin and Johnson, “Avowed Happiness as an Overall Assessment of the Quality of Life.”

<sup>148</sup> Felce and Perry, “Quality of Life: Its Definition and Measurement.”

<sup>149</sup> Pankhurst and Bevan, “Hunger, Poverty and Famine in Ethiopia: Some Evidence from Twenty Rural Sites in Amhara, Tigray, Oromiya and SNNP Regions.”

<sup>150</sup> Gough and McGregor, “Researching Wellbeing across the Disciplines.”

direction as related with the notion of development if it does not contribute to the increase of general well-being of the population. In simple words, I mean by this that everything related to development should be constrained with well-being; being understood with development as a characteristic of the process, and well-being the end. If an action is doomed to have negative results in our individual life or community, then such efforts should not be encouraged. By relating our notions of development to the wider spectre of wellbeing could help reduce this gap.

In other, the concept of **homo economicus** is not completely understood. Previous the behavioural economics revolution, it was believed that the human species would act in a rational way. However, we could argue that the unifier motive behind every action as well-being; nonetheless the infinite ways to achieve it makes it a difficult measurable aspect: Bounded rationality, different inclinations and capabilities and experiences create of well-being an open set with infinite combinations which are perceived as irrationality in the human behaviour.



### 3.3 Well-being as equilibrium between individual and communal life satisfaction

A particular concern is to determine if wellbeing is a term to be employed to determine an individual, or a collective characteristic.

Early evaluations on this concern give us useful insights. On Aristotle's view, if you are my friend, then my well-being is closely bound up with yours. It might be tempting, then, to say that 'your' well-being is 'part' of mine, in which case the distinction between what is good for me and what is good for others has broken down. One correlate term worth noting here is 'self-interest': my self-interest is what is in the interest of myself, and not others. But this temptation should be resisted. Your well-being concerns how well your life goes for you, and we can allow that my well-being depends on yours without introducing the confusing notion that my well-being is constituted by yours. There are signs in Aristotelian thought of an expansion of the subject or owner of well-being. A friend is 'another self', so that what benefits my friend benefits me<sup>151</sup>.

In other, happiness tends to be identified more with emotion or feelings, and with the individual, while wellbeing may include 'objective' elements – such as standard of living, access to health care or education – in addition to 'subjective' – such as satisfaction with life<sup>152</sup>. Wellbeing has a more established trajectory as a shared objective for community<sup>153</sup>.

Shah and Marks consider wellbeing to be more than just happiness. As well as feeling satisfied and happy, well-being means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community. Shin and Johnson stated that well-being is a global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his own chosen criteria<sup>154</sup>.

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<sup>151</sup> Crisp, "Well-Being."

<sup>152</sup> White, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Wellbeing."

<sup>153</sup> Collard, "Research on Well-Being: Some Advice from Jeremy Bentham."

<sup>154</sup> Shin and Johnson, "Avowed Happiness as an Overall Assessment of the Quality of Life."

As a result of a misinterpretation of the theory, the capability approach has been criticized as being too individualistic<sup>155</sup>, as it focuses mainly on the individual development level. Arguments concerning the importance of relationality and the politics of wellbeing clearly imply that wellbeing must be sought collectively: contrary to the dominant usage, the proper “home” of wellbeing may be more properly identified at the community than at the individual level. **Wellbeing may be assessed at both individual and collective level, but its grounding is in the links between them: wellbeing happens in relationship**<sup>156</sup>.

Helping the others, altruism, international cooperation programs and even philosophical notions of what is good, notions that will be deepened further. More than being labelled as individual or communal, a **state of well-being represents equilibrium between individual desires and communal needs**. There could be no well-being in a situation where the individual desires different social conditions. Well-being is, then, the final aim of public and individual efforts<sup>157</sup>. Consequently, well-being remains an individual notion in the strict sense as the capability approach is, given that it can exist only in a healthy relationship with the community; well-being representing the nature of the relationship of the individual with his community, notion in line with the relational approach of well-being.

Given that this is a very wide subject by itself, we can summarize in a scale in base of the concept of **liberty**. I choose this notion, because it is one of the most debatable issues in the justice theories evaluated on the capability approach.

### *3.3.1 The capability approach and its relation to the concept of liberty*

The capability approach and the human development approach emphasize the concept of *liberty*. However it seems to exist an ongoing debate concerning the limits of liberty. Where

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<sup>155</sup> Robeyns, *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice*; Osmani, “The Capability Approach and Human Development: Some Reflections.”

<sup>156</sup> White, “Analyzing Wellbeing: A Framework for Development Practice.”

<sup>157</sup> Alartseva and Barysheva, “Well-Being: Subjective and Objective Aspects.”

should we draw the line between capabilities to be developed, as suggested by Robeyns<sup>158</sup>; being this is mainly the concern relating the capability approach and **theories of justice**. The fact that the CA is used in theories of justices gives a scope of how varied it can be used.

With *Total liberty* some negative capabilities could be then developed, such as the power to harm others. This debate is related to the scope of limitations of which capabilities are worth developing, as some capabilities can be employed in a negative way to harm other people or the individual himself. In brief, based on academic research on the capability approach<sup>159</sup> we can summarize that the more debatable topics on the capability approach are related to these two notions: the concept of liberty and the capabilities worthy of development. Regarding capability to harm, we divide the analysis into the following two branches:

- The capability to harm others;
- The capability to harm ourselves (individual personal level).

In addition to this first point it is important to clarify the difference between *personal* and *communal* liberties. More on these topics of discussion will be presented and clarified in subsequent analysis.

Hypothesizing, **there could not be a state of well-being that includes actions that produce undesirable outcomes**. In the first case, we can say that the notion of personal well-being could not converge with harming others, such as in the cases of violence or disrespect, even in situations where harm is *believed* to be desired. Which we can test by instance with two important notions: **Misswanting and bounded rationality**.

Reframing, **liberty** must not be constrained by an ethical notion, by agreeing that a state of well-being cannot be achieved in a *negative* (violence, disrespect) situation. For instance, supporters

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<sup>158</sup> Robeyns, *Wellbeing, Freedom and Social Justice*.

<sup>159</sup> Robeyns, "The Capability Approach."

of personal well-being may argue that vandalism is not a satisfactory behaviour for true psychological flourishing, even if they do lead to greater social respect from one's peer group, because they go against underlying needs for social cohesion more generally<sup>160</sup>.

As a result of this reasoning, we can conclude with another aspect of the notion of liberty, not as a final end of development, but rather as a condition to achieve well-being. **Liberty is then exerted in the individual's choice of how to achieve well-being, not as a final end, as expressed by Sen himself<sup>161</sup>.**

Since the very aim of development is to reach a state of well-being, the set of relevant capabilities to develop at the individual level are constrained only to those which increase well-being. Thus harmful capabilities (to ourselves or others) are excluded. In plain words, there must be liberty in the choice of path taken. But the general intention and final general aim remains the same –to achieve well-being- which is in accordance with the singularity of the individual's priorities and inclinations.

### 3.3.2 Clarifications on the proposed characterization

Recalling, the most debated aspects of the capability approach framework are related to these three main topics:

1. The role of *liberty*.
2. The scope of relevant capabilities to develop.
3. The individualistic/communal dimension of the approach;

This can be clarified with through the link between well-being and development. Moreover, by defining well-being as a function of development it represents a process of growth, which does not necessarily imply a constant pleasurable situation at all times. Growth demands effort and the deployment of resources, of which the past notion of *personal maximal effort* can serve as

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<sup>160</sup> Dolan et al., "The Relationship between Well-Being and Sustainable Development."

<sup>161</sup> Sen, *Development as Freedom*.

an example. Defining well-being helps our understanding the current division between hedonistic and eudemonic perspectives. As expressed by O’Neill, **the convergence between the hedonic and eudemonic traditions is in the details of what makes for a good life.**<sup>162</sup>

Addictions may be a relevant framework for this analysis. As expressed in one paper, they are a failure in the evaluation of capabilities<sup>163</sup>. That being said, we can tell that not only freedom of choice determines well-being, but rather, the outcome of our decisions. They must aid to achieve a state of well-being.

Harmful habits such as smoking or alcohol consumption have consequences for the immediate happiness of the user. But both, as they harm the individual’s health in an objective manner, also do so in a subjective way, due to the notion of personal maximal effort. With the same reasoning applied to the *sustainable development* term, this notion could be addressed as ***sustainable well-being***.

This particular concern applies to the current debate between sustainability and economic progress, particularly addressing the concern presented by Dolan and colleagues regarding the incompatibility between sustainable development and well-being. Perhaps we should not aim to replace one term with the other, as suggested by White, but rather to understand them with a close symbiosis, using a characterization of the one with the other, due that they represent different stages of the same goal.

Another positive trait of this definition is that it can be employed in the context of every social discipline. In the same manner, we can deduce that a state of well-being can also be achieved without developing *all* possible capabilities, but only those considered as important for the individual in the first place. Consequently, we can say that this approach is highly tailored to the individual level and is in accordance with the capability approach framework. It is thus a state of equilibrium. Instead of being regarded as being composed of objective and subjective aspects, it

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<sup>162</sup> O’Neill, “Citizenship, Well-Being and Sustainability: Epicurus or Aristotle?”

<sup>163</sup> Ruger and Zhang, “Addiction as Capabilities Failure.”

could be regarded as equilibrium thereof. In this spirit, differences among long-run and short-term well-being are erased, minimizing such gaps.

## 3.4 Implications on some political theories

### 3.4.1 Implications on some political theories

The most evident manner in which we can observe the communal aspect of well-being, is regarding political and social systems. From that reasoning and perspective we can answer the first two previous points, and we can also infer the moral character implicit in the assessments of well-being, and in the theory justices of the capability approach.

#### 3.4.1.1 *The paradox of development*

Given bounded rationality, divergence in preferences and inclinations, and just different background and history, we observe *different perceptions on development*. While the goal of development after this thesis is to achieve a state of well-being, this concept remains a tailored definition, and the way to achieve this, development is personal as well. In consequence, different notions of development emerge, leading to incongruence between personal notions of the term. This quest for searching the better, or the good is once again based on philosophical quest, anchored in the search for *goodness*.

As a result, difference between perceptions of what will lead to better outcomes give place to disagreements, leading to differences. In a comparison to the notion of a market, which is defined as the place where agents satisfy their needs, democracy could be seen as a market well-being. Democracy permits to every individual express how do they consider a better way to achieve well-being, departing from the point that every individual has the right to strive for a better quality of life, reason why in this system every vote has the same weight.

### 3.4.2 Further explorations on some democratic theories

Given the broad use of the development and well-being terms in the international cooperation, public policies and governmental programs, it is reasonable to analyse the impact and changes that may result. Well-being is the base of the welfare state, and thus a big amount of the use of

public resources around the globe. Welfare state is based in great measure in the government system, and thus has implications on the government form. Welfare resource allocation remains the source of political tensions, and in consequence it is related to the exercise of the democratic process or governmental election of society.

Same as a lack of understanding regarding an environmental perspective, we could argue the same regarding individuals and communities. This lack of understanding gives place to undesirable social problems, such as **inequality, corruption, violence and extractive institutions**.

Inequality will be analysed in a section apart. Corruption, besides being against the law by definition it represents the benefit of a limited number of individuals with detriment of the rest of society. Accepted as a very damaging tradition, corruption weakens the rule of law and is part of a non-effective political structure. As signalled by Acemoglu in the book *Why nations fail*<sup>164</sup> are one of the main reasons why some countries have populations with low qualities of life. These institutions could be said to be emerged, or operate towards the advantage of particular individuals, instead of the general of the population. **We could consider the publication of the IDB regarding how this particularly affects Latin America**<sup>165</sup>.

Democracy has been associated with the capitalist market view. We can say that a market is the structure where the individual is able to satisfy her needs. In this regard, democracy could be addressed as the market for well-being; it might be possible to **observe democracy as the aggregate of decisions of a population to achieve well-being**. As pointed in the beginning of this dissertation, the perception of well-being determines the outcome of elections and choice of government. The choice of one candidate, one political party or a specific public policy support is determined by the expected outcome of its application.

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<sup>164</sup> Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*.

<sup>165</sup> Izquierdo, Pessino, and Vuletin, *Better Spending for Better Lives: How Latin America and the Caribbean Can Do More with Less*.



Another political theory worth to be mentioned is the Democratic Peace theory<sup>166</sup>: this theory points that the aggregate of preferences result in the most popular choice. It signals that only in a dictatorship or in a political structure where the choice of the majority is not taken into account, is the only possible way to arrive to a state of war. This notion is supported by the belief that the decision to engage in war is carried by a unilateral decision making process, being the person or group of people in power.

In other, the Democratic Peace Theory is in accordance with the notion previously mentioned that externalities are differences in the well-being of the individual and the community.

#### *3.4.2.1 Another perspective on the concept of externalities in a social dimension*

Another significant finding is the fact that subjective well-being is, substantially, a matter of comparative judgement. The comparisons people make to produce life satisfaction assessments and scores are based on a variety of benchmarks relating to expectations and aspirations, past experiences and the situations of others<sup>167</sup>. One particularly well-known study in the United States, Luttmer 2005<sup>168</sup>, found that happiness is negatively related to the incomes of neighbours, and that the effect is more pronounced for those who are more sociable<sup>169</sup>.

It might be helpful to recall the previously discussed relational well-being approach, which in this case is observed with the individual's relation with the others and with the objective aspects (wealth, in this case) of well-being. Dolan and colleagues go further, stating that it is possible to find out the extent to which individuals are willing to trade off their current well-being for the future well-being of other people. In the same way as it is possible to ask respondents to express their willingness to pay in monetary terms for a benefit that is experienced by other people<sup>170</sup>. He encourages quantifying this.

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<sup>166</sup> Cederman, "Back to Kant: Reinterpreting the Democratic Peace as a Macrohistorical Learning Process."

<sup>167</sup> Anand, "Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures."

<sup>168</sup> Luttmer, "Neighbors as Negatives: Relative Earnings and Well-Being."

<sup>169</sup> Anand, "Happiness, Well-Being and Human Development: The Case for Subjective Measures."

<sup>170</sup> Dolan et al., "Research on the Relationship between Well-Being and Sustainable Development."

### 3.4.2.2 Analysing inequality through a holistic well-being perspective

There is no doubt that inequality is one of the biggest threats and challenges of our time. With this scope many initiatives, programs, discussions and public policies have emerged; for example the 2020 World Social Report of the United Nations titled Inequality in a rapidly changing world<sup>171</sup> or the OXFAM multiple reports<sup>172</sup>.

After the WEF, inequality is one of the most important problems to be solved<sup>173</sup>. In brief, we can say that income inequality is the difference among the population in earnings, producing social inequalities translated in different levels of education, health, quality of life, among others. It is important because it creates a fair amount of undesirable effects, such as

- Life expectation<sup>174</sup>
- Mental health<sup>175</sup>
- Crime<sup>176</sup>
- Social cohesion<sup>177</sup>
- Drug use<sup>178</sup>

Besides these listed social problems, it would be possible to argue that inequality has many other corollary problems, such as engaging in environmentally damaging practices and industries in the quest for monetary gains.

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<sup>171</sup> United Nations, *World Social Report 2020*.

<sup>172</sup> "Policy Papers."

<sup>173</sup> "The Global Risks Report 2020."

<sup>174</sup> De Vogli et al., "Has the Relation Between Income Inequality and Life Expectancy Disappeared? Evidence from Italy and Top Industrialised Countries."

<sup>175</sup> Burns, Tomita, and Kapadia, "Income Inequality and Schizophrenia: Increased Schizophrenia Incidence in Countries with High Levels of Income Inequality."

<sup>176</sup> Choe, "Income Inequality and Crime in the United States."

<sup>177</sup> Kawachi and Kennedy, "Socioeconomic Determinants of Health: Health and Social Cohesion: Why Care about Income Inequality?"

<sup>178</sup> Pickett and Wilkinson, "Inequality: An Underacknowledged Source of Mental Illness and Distress."

By diminishing the importance to material aspects, we could help diminish this gap, not as a justification for inequality, but by reducing their importance or social value and allocating in a more efficient manner capital, good, efforts and social priorities. By linking communal well-being to social well-being, private incentives for extreme inequality should diminish. There could be no well-being for any part if we consider **a relational approach**: From the part of the rich people, by ignoring the state of the poor (bounded rationality), and for the poor people by having less capabilities to choose from.

Such social concern as inequality might is subject to many discussions, study and analysis, and public policies concerned in diminishing the social gap is expected to emerge in the future. It also might be relevant to discuss why people do not vote for a more distributive approach, such as higher taxes or universal basic income.

In a political economy framework, we may recall the paradox of why do not the electorate vote for a more distributive economic or political system, with higher taxation to capital or utility for example<sup>179</sup>. It is accepted that such a system goes against the notion of effort, or the capitalist view of rewards for a given work or effort. To answer this paradox, it is necessary to evaluate one of the main characterizations of the capitalist system, which is to perceive a utility as a consequence for the investments in time, capital or efforts made, referred as incentives.

Capitalism is not only associated with freedom of the choices of the agents, but also to a consequentialist perspective, linking incentives and rewards to actions, where it is not precisely the case in a communist system.

However, in traditional views neoliberalism is regarded as an opposed to social aid. Given the capitalist relatedness

In some sense we could link the concept of neoliberalism through a capability approach analysis. Through a more capable society, it should need less and less regulation, which is in accordance

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<sup>179</sup> Kasara and Suryanarayan, "When Do the Rich Vote Less Than the Poor and Why? Explaining Turnout Inequality across the World."

to freedom of markets. Being more able- in an individual and communal level-represent the need for less regulation, which motivated the neoliberalism boom and the market economy and monetarism in the 70's onwards. However, traditionally neoliberalism is perceived as related to capitalism, and in opposed way to the welfare and social aid system.

We could argue that in principle, both perspectives aim for a greater communal well-being: capitalism through the development of capabilities of individuals through need, and socialism, through a more equal distribution of the utilities. Both extremes face critics, however, the line where the state should intervene in economic affairs is far from being clear. As expressed by Stiglitz, it is not a discussion on about if the state should intervene or not but rather, on the degree and method of such intervention<sup>180</sup>.

In the present times, we observe the ravages of such system, having neoliberalism and capitalism many critics across the globe. For example, rising levels of inequality and environmental are some of the critics it faces

In my own particular perception, the aim of the state should be increasing the state of well-being of the population, through development of capabilities. To do so, it is necessary to strengthen public institutions, but carefully remembering that the very goal of such is the well-being of the population, and not precisely to strengthen those institutions nor the individual who represents them, not precisely to strengthen individual political figures. Democracy's final goal should be centred to increase the capabilities of the general of the population to reach a state of well-being, not precisely electoral victory nor political figure or party strengthen, such as the raise of demagogues. In this case, it should be agreed that the purpose of a government is to increase well-being through development of capabilities, and not precisely to protect business nor the economic system.

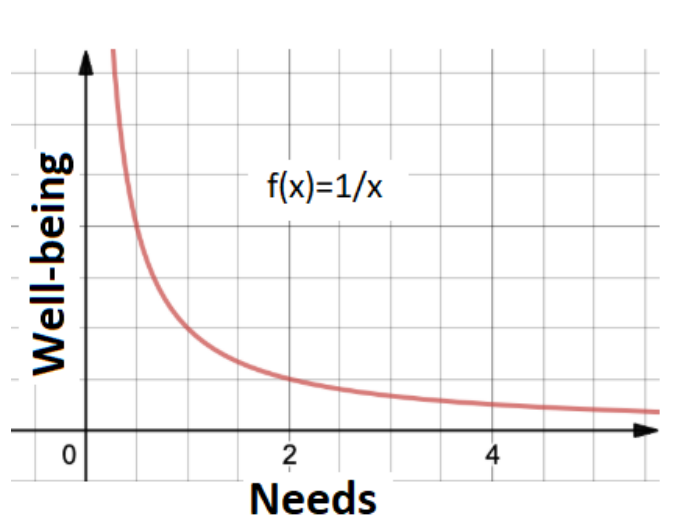
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<sup>180</sup> Stiglitz, *People, Power, and Profits: Progressive Capitalism for an Age of Discontent*.

### 3.5 Relational approach of well-being to possessions, and its exploration as final aggregate for positive outcomes

Despite being already defined as the crucial part for public policies, due its acceptance as the crossroad of public and private, individual and communal **efforts well-being should be regarded as the final ultimate aggregate**. Furthermore, as an opposite concept we can consider the lack of well-being in the aggregate concept of needs.

It is both interesting and relevant how needs are impossible to separate from **wants**, as expressed on a working paper by the OECD<sup>181</sup>. As a result of the past clarification, we could infer the following relation between the concepts of needs and well-being, as an inversely proportionated relation with the past assumptions



Graph (2)

Thus, with this approach what is sought is not the increase of the capital goods, but rather, to improve real well-being of the population, which is in function of eliminating needs.

<sup>181</sup> "OECDGFD - Global Forum on Development."

It would be useful to consider the definition of a **good**, in economics; goods are materials that satisfy human wants<sup>182</sup>. Thus, wellbeing resides in reducing needs, not precisely in increasing consumption. The aim then should be focused on reducing needs, through an increase in capabilities, not precisely of the goods or capital by themselves.

In plain words, the intuition behind this thought is not precisely to aim for greater productivity power, but rather to improve what we already have; not an increase of quantity, but quality. The *beyond GDP* courant of thought has since long time signalled how GDP is not a sufficient measure for well-being, and quality of life; as an overall characterization for a global improvement of the quality of people's life.

#### 3.4.1.1 Backgrounds

In accordance with the *Beyond GDP* reasoning and the quest for better measure yardsticks to well-being, we can link all of the considered notions to a single theory. In accordance with the Capability approach and human development context, capabilities should be developed in order to satisfy our needs and desires. Increasing our dependence on external goods, services and objects represent the exact opposite path. In this regard, we can link the notions of personal effort, such as learning strategies, bounded rationality to human development, and thus to notions of well-being.

By doing so, instead of aiming for a constant economic growth, more suitable result could emerge by focusing in creating a better relationship with goods and services mind-set. In this case, I will argue not for a growth of production and consumption- as regarded traditionally by past and current macroeconomic models- but rather for an improvement of **relations**.

**However, by creating need it creates a lack of well-being:** Given the greater expectations in the developed world, it is thus harder to satisfy them all. This implies that the individual must have the feeling of doing their best, in order to feel satisfied.

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<sup>182</sup> Durlauf and Blume, *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics*.

By linking the notion of personal effort, we observe how it is part of the human nature to always try to do more, in an industrialized society for example, and it can have detrimental consequences; for example, this could be a good starting point to an alternative explanation to higher suicide rates in highly industrialized countries, as well as the well discussed Easterlin paradox and Luttmer studies.

In other, by conciliating all the precedent main concepts of this dissertation allow us to have a more global theory of well-being: for example, wishes are seen as *the root of all suffering* in a Taoist, Buddhist perspective, which is in line with our previous reasoning; considering them as imperfection in an opportunity cost analysis. This is a good way to link human development, to moral virtues, to the capability approach and well-being in a holistic manner, related to a human integral reasoning and not only in a Eurocentric perspective.

In order to back up these assumptions I rely on basic economic principles: First, **bounded rationality** does not allow agents to realise how a possible lack of capabilities are the cause of existence of desire and needs, as well as the impediment to develop those capabilities required to satisfy needs.

Second, through a **marginal utility** analysis: there was a period and place where greater wellbeing was achieved through industrialization. But, through a marginal gains analysis we could argue that in the developed world, those levels of the population's wellbeing perhaps are not achieved through the very same actions, given that circumstances and incentives have changed. A growing industrialized sector of the society does not entail the same levels of benefit for all levels of population. We could argue for example, that some social groups will benefit more by not engaging in productive activities, such as industrial production. In few words, what I want to express is that what has helped society in the past will not necessarily deliver the same wellbeing utility in the future.

Happiness or well-being in a more holistic term is not in function of capital accumulation per se, but rather the *existing relation towards it*. The good life is attained when we achieve goals that represent our culture values that designate the good life<sup>183</sup>. Resources are imperfect indicators of human well-being (which has become a ‘human development mantra’)<sup>184</sup>.

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<sup>183</sup> Ferriss, “Religion and the Quality of Life.”

<sup>184</sup> Comim, “Beyond the HDI? Assessing Alternative Measures of Human Development from a Capability Perspective.”



### 3.5 Further explorations on religion under a socio-political-economical perspective

As expressed before, the analysis of religion is important due that it comprises the three levels of relation presented before, meaning the relation that the individual has with herself, with the others and with its belongings. Also one of the critics to the current well-being indexes is that they do not consider religion.

It might be relevant to evaluate religious aspects, because they represent an important set of characteristic of people's life. As well, they shape political notions, such as the case of the Islamic state, or the ancient Chinese political configuration. Historically, there has been a power struggle between religion and the political figure, not until recent times that there has been a clear separation between them. We can also recall the Marxist analysis of religion, and Karl Polanyi.

Another important trait of this characterization worth to notice is to help towards a universal mind-set. Not only in western thinking, but universal. Let's take for example Buddhism. It would be helpful to consider a universal perspective, not only a Eurocentric perspective of well-being. A recent attempt has been made by Schumacher<sup>185</sup> considering a Buddhist or unorthodox approach to economics with a more humanitarian goal.

The analysis between religion and economics is nothing new; Adam Smith laid the foundation for economic analysis for religion in *The Wealth of Nations* stating religious organisations are subject to market forces, incentive and competition problems like any other sector of the economy.

On the first page of his *Principles of Economics*, Alfred Marshall wrote:

*Man's character has been moulded by his every-day work, and the material resources which he thereby procures, more than by any other influence unless it be that of his religious ideals; and the two great forming agencies of the world's history have been the religious and the economic. That religion and*

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<sup>185</sup> Schumacher, *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as If People Mattered*.

*economics are great forming agencies that shape the conduct of human affairs and the organization of human society is largely undisputed. What is in dispute is their relationship to one another*<sup>186</sup>.

Max Weber believed that religion, especially Calvinism helped to capitalism, as expressed in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*<sup>187</sup>. As well, in the quest of greater economic gains there has been the debate on how religion influences economics: In a study we find that on average, religious beliefs are associated with “good” economic attitudes, where “good” is defined as conducive to higher per capita income and growth. Yet religious people tend to be more racist and less favourable with respect to working women. These effects differ across religious denominations. Overall, we find that Christian religions are more positively associated with attitudes conducive to economic growth<sup>188</sup>.

In other, it must be precised that it is different economics *of* religion, and economics *and* religion

It is also worthy to clarify that by referring to the term of religion I do not refer to a precise set of beliefs, but rather, towards existing relations. It is to be expected that we will not discuss specific religious traits, but rather its impact on a political and economic context; **what it matters is that there is the debate**, not precisely how it is answered. **My emphasis on considering religion is not to state the correctness or superiority of one belief over another, but rather, to importance of considering economic aspects within them, and how they are a fundamental aspect of individuals own perception on their quality of life**

### 3.5.1 Economics and religion as an heuristic for well-being

Given the complexity of introducing religious thoughts in a scientific context, I would suggest to consider an aggregate of all beliefs, called Universal Religion in the same spirit as the political thinker Noam Chomsky came with the term Universal Grammar<sup>189</sup>.

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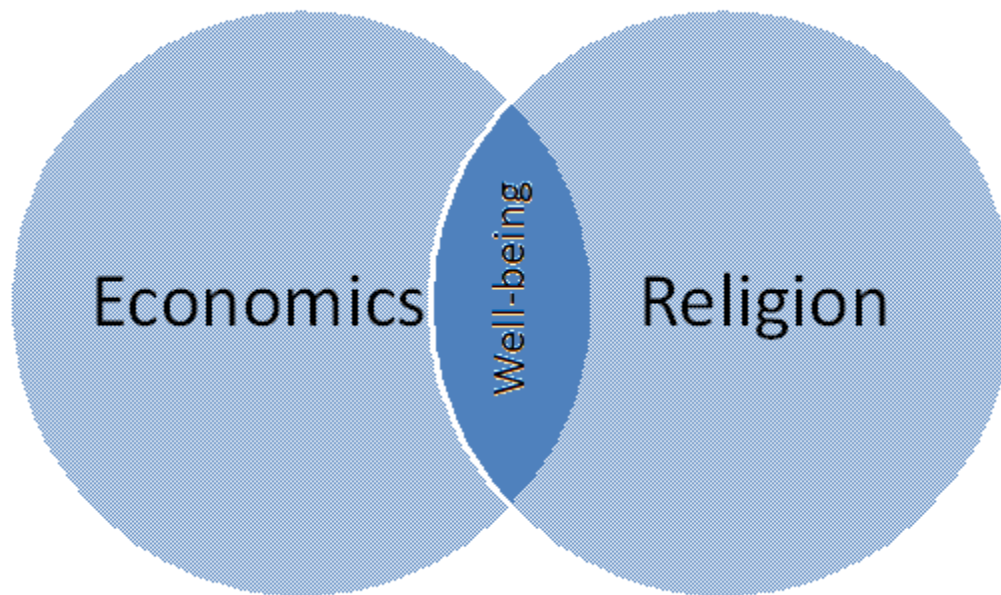
<sup>186</sup> Marshall, *Principles of Economics: Unabridged Eighth Edition*.

<sup>187</sup> Weber and Kalberg, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

<sup>188</sup> Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales, “People’s Opium? Religion and Economic Attitudes.”

<sup>189</sup> Cook and Newson, *Chomsky’s Universal Grammar*.

In other, given the wide set of beliefs modern political thinkers have come with the association of religion to the concept widely used in behavioural economics as **heuristic**<sup>190</sup>. A heuristic is defined as a mental shortcut to approach life, and being this the case suppose the fact that every individual is entitled to a personal approach to the matter. The importance of this is that both the goal of religion seen as an aggregate, and economics is that their shared aim is well-being.



Where the aim of this heuristic is well-being. It seems to be a conflict between these concepts, given that **they are both heuristics aiming for the same final goal, which is to reach a state of well-being.**

Karl Polanyi argues that the term 'economics' has two meanings. The formal meaning, used by today's neoclassical economists, refers to economics as the logic of rational action and decision-making, as rational choice between the alternative uses of limited (scarce) means, as 'economizing,' 'maximizing,' or 'optimizing. The second, substantive meaning presupposes

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<sup>190</sup> Payne, "On the Heuristic Value of the Concept of Political Religion and Its Application."

neither rational decision-making nor conditions of scarcity. It refers to how humans make a living interacting within their social and natural environments<sup>191</sup>.

In a sense, what this can tell us is that religion evaluates the quality of the relations we have: towards the others, towards ourselves, and the environment; comprising what is measurable and what is not.

These examples raise two questions. First, how does one determine whether economics is separate from religion? One approach was offered by Brennan and Waterman (1994): if economics and religion were separate, “. . . then virtually any position on religious questions (including aggressive atheism) would be consistent with any position on economic questions<sup>192</sup>.” On this, Robbins (1935) wrote that “. . . by itself Economics offers no solution to any of the important problems of life. . . . [F]or this reason an education which consists of economics alone is a very imperfect education<sup>193</sup>. . . .” Along similar lines, Waterman (1989: 47) argued that if theological knowledge is genuine, different from economic knowledge, and obtained using different methods, then there is something to be gained from exploring the relation of the two<sup>194</sup>. This is done in the three remaining categories. Martin and Laczniak (1989) wrote: [T]he bishops are not expert economists. Neither, in most cases, are economists, physicians, lawyers, business practitioners and the like expert theologians. Unless we wish to build a “wall of separation” between economics and Christianity, medicine and Christianity, law and Christianity, etc., somehow the expertise of numerous specialists and experts must be conjoined. Perhaps a first step in creating a constructive dialogue among experts and non-experts alike is to acknowledge that the relationships between religion and economics are both complex and controversial, and that we have yet to arrive at agreed upon operational definitions about how the two interact.<sup>195196</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Polanyi and Maclver, *The Great Transformation*.

<sup>192</sup> Brennan and Waterman, *Economics and Religion: Are They Distinct?*

<sup>193</sup> Robbins, “The Nature and Significance Of.”

<sup>194</sup> Dean and Waterman, *Religion and Economics: Normative Social Theory: Normative Social Theory*.

<sup>195</sup> Martin and Laczniak, “Why Bishops and CEO’s Do Not Agree on Economics.”

<sup>196</sup> Welch and Mueller, “The Relationships of Religion to Economics.”

The heuristic approach can help us understand why we all can have a right perception, because it exploits the fact of observing the quality of our relations. In this sense, economics can be understood as the measure of the quality of relation towards material goods. The same way well-being is regarded as a relation, **economics could be regarded as an increase in the quality of the relations we have towards goods and services**: Economics is the way society meets material needs<sup>197</sup>.

### 3.5.2 Religion in a relational well-being context

#### 3.5.2.1 Religion as the relation of the individual with him/herself

The notion of human perfectibility plays a pivotal role in explaining how religion and economics might work together, because it is found in each. An often-repeated theme in the Judeo-Christian tradition is that the individual should aspire to his or her best, and that aspiring to one's best has a social dimension. Consider, for example, Isaiah 58:7–8 (p. 849), where it is written: Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed.

Thus, both Bastiat and John Paul II found relationships of unity where, on the one hand religious ethics and economics, and on the other, faith and reason, are compatible and contribute. While not looking at exactly the same things, Bastiat's and John Paul II's writings share a common point of reference: the human person in general and human perfectibility in particular. Here human perfectibility is not used in the sense of a person's becoming the smartest, richest, or most powerful of all individuals. Rather, it is used in the sense of the person as a social being seeking to become his or her best self. **Dempsey argued that the goal of the economic process is to develop and perfect the human personality, and that perfection of the human personality can occur only within society.**

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<sup>197</sup> Polanyi and Maclver, *The Great Transformation*.

In a discussion of these and other findings, hypotheses are suggested to explain and to further explore the effects of religion upon the QOL. Among the conclusions: our conception of the "good life" rests heavily upon Judeo-Christian ideals; religious organizations contribute to the integration of the community, hence enhancing the QOL; since frequency of attendance is imperfectly associated with the QOL, other influences are at work; the doctrine of the religion may attract persons of happy disposition; religion may explain a purpose in life that fosters well-being; and others<sup>198</sup>

### *2.5.3 Ethics, morals and well-being*

As signalled by Anthony Atkinson in "Economics as a Moral Science",<sup>199</sup> despite agreeing that well-being is a fundamental notion for the academic economics discipline, the revision of what constitutes these last concepts remains important. Notions of morals and ethics imply a deep philosophical analysis related to deep issues. Therefore, the analysis undertaken in this present work will be carried out in the simplest possible manner. To completely address such concerns, it is appropriate to also consider the dimensions of **morality and ethics**. Not only is the self-development a dimension of morality; in the relational aspects of well-being and religion as well as in justice theories.

In other, we could say that Religion is concerned in human interaction. We could exploit the relational approach known in this field as the **Golden Rule**. The golden rule basically states to *treat others the way you would treat yourself*. Elaborating, we can say that the notion of our own well-being depending on the communal level is the very origin of the motivation of helping the others, altruism and even the international cooperation programs and initiatives.

In a philosophical context, it exist a paradox stating that no action is purely unselfish, because the mere fact of helping the others, or to observe joy in others is in function of our own individual well-being. To regard well-being as a relation could be an interesting explanation for

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<sup>198</sup> Ferriss, "Religion and the Quality of Life."

<sup>199</sup> Atkinson, "Economics as a Moral Science."

this philosophical paradox. In fact, the question of what is good can be answered by joining the capability approach with the relational approach to well-being, what is good represent an augmentation of the capabilities and the well-being of others.

More remains to be explored about the relation between theology and economics/social science. Variations exist between Catholic, Reformed, Anabaptist, etc. theologies that might lead to exposing different relations between each and economics, and analogous considerations apply to competing schools of economics—as they do to relations of Judaistic, Islamic and Buddhist theologies to economics. Even if significant common ground were found among these theologies in terms of their approaches to economy and society (e.g. Beed and Beed 2003b) still this would not provide a basis for studies of the economy separate from the theologies themselves. This is because these theologies hold to an integral connection between their divine being and his/her (actual, potential, sought) involvement in the personal and socio-economic lives of humans. One should not be studied without the other. Such considerations do not apply in comparable degree to the objects of interest of the physical sciences that, in the beliefs of these theologies, possess capacities and causal mechanisms functioning with qualitatively different links to the divine being.<sup>200</sup>

#### *3.5.4 Relational approach to capital and goods, and notion of scarcity in an economical-religious context*

We may indicate that the common goal between economic activity, and in some sense one of the scopes of religious beliefs is abundance. Of course, I do not intend to specifically analyse every set of beliefs, but just to illustrate how religions consider material wealth.

For instance, in the Christian and catholic thought we find that *is easier to pass a camel through the eye of a needle than to a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven*. There is also a long debate about the immorality of charging interest for financial services, which had repercussion on the

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<sup>200</sup> Beed, “What Is the Relationship of Religion to Economics?”

ancient and present financial system and players. Another important trait to consider, not only in the eyes of the bible but for the most part of religious beliefs are the *vows of poverty*.

Vows of poverty refer to the moral obligation of a religious person of minimal possession. In the eyes of Buddhism, seekers are welcome to leave all material possessions, together with every aspiration, wish or desire. If we consider graph (2) we might realize that if nothing is desired, then automatically every need will be fulfilled. This could be the origin of minimalism. Also, we might observe this as to seek the capabilities to satisfy our own well-being; while if we depend on external objects such as goods and capital represents a dependence of external factors. In this scope, we can find different perceptions of what is valuable. Values and goods are external, and can be eliminated; while human development is not. As in the case of the *vows of poverty*, happiness is found in the lesser amount of craving. In this case, goods are needed to satisfy needs, not for the accumulation of capital and to create a sense of liberty to choose from.

Greed is perhaps bad seen in a moral context, because instead of representing a satisfaction of needs, it is a need by itself. How can we possibly give priority to the means of living, which is what treasures and wealth are, over the ends of good and free human lives?<sup>201</sup> As Aristotle said in ancient Greece, "Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for the sake of something else." In that sense, we can say that it is not precisely that we aim for increasing the quantity of material goods or capital to achieve a state of well-being, but rather, to increase the quality of the relation we have towards them; meaning in diminishing needs as proved before. **This is the origin of questions such as if money can buy happiness**, which have been present since the beginning of civilization.

As we have observed, there is a clear contrast of the perception of desire compared to occidental thought. In this case, desire is seen as positive due that it represents the very core motivation for action and posterior production. While in Buddhism, desire is considered as the root of all suffering, and only through the development and strengthen of the person, or acquire of virtues- which can be equated to human development- true joy, bliss or well-being in a more

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<sup>201</sup> Anand and Sen, "Human Development and Economic Sustainability."



complex term emerges. Combining with the notion of maximal personal effort, could be regarded as unfulfilled potential, in an opportunity cost approach.

### *3.5.5 Analysing altruism through a holistic well-being perspective*

Regarding the state intervention on economic affairs, another interesting discussion is focused on altruism and its role in an effective economic system. We can recall the important works of the economist Stefano Zamagni<sup>202</sup>, Luigino Bruni<sup>203</sup> and Herbert Simon<sup>204</sup>.

Simon shows how altruism is compatible with Neo-Darwinism and with neo-classical economic theory<sup>205</sup>. In the same spirit, we can simplify this reasoning by regarding well-being through a relational perspective. Altruism supposes an exchange of goods of the individual to the community, to increase the quality of life of the others. With such thinking, our own well-being is in direct relation to the well-being of the others: The fact that we want to help others can be seen as a prove of the relational approach to well-being.

This is an interesting debate on the role on how should we address altruism, or even the limits of the welfare state, which do not have to be mistaken for the effectiveness of such strategies. Regarding this last point, there have been many critics of how the international cooperation programs<sup>206</sup>, expressing concerns on the effectiveness of the programs and an effective use of resources.

Another debate could emerge in function of the measure used to categorize a country. For example, if people in an underdeveloped country X show high statistics of happiness among their population, does that mean that they should not obtain financial humanitarian aid?

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<sup>202</sup> Zamagni, *The Economics of Altruism*.


<sup>203</sup> Zamagni and Bruni, *Handbook on the Economics of Philanthropy, Reciprocity and Social Enterprise*.

<sup>204</sup> Simon, "Altruism and Economics."

<sup>205</sup> Simon.

<sup>206</sup> Paulmann, *Dilemmas of Humanitarian Aid in the Twentieth Century*.

Another important topic to be considered is the world's military expenditure. After the United Nation's website, the amount of capital used in 2017 was around 80 times what is needed for global humanitarian aid. Total global military expenditure rose to \$1917 billion in 2019, according to new data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)<sup>207</sup>.



**[It] has been estimated that the cost to achieve quality universal primary and early secondary education for all (SDG 4) would be just over 3 per cent of global annual military spending.**

**Eliminating extreme poverty and hunger (SDG 1 and 2) would cost about 13 per cent of annual military spending.**

**Extending basic WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) (SDG 6) to unserved populations would cost less than 2 per cent of annual military spending.**

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/over-armed/>

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<sup>207</sup> "Global Military Expenditure Sees Largest Annual Increase in a Decade—Says SIPRI—Reaching \$1917 Billion in 2019 | SIPRI."

## Chapter 4: Policy implications

Despite the signalled notion that there was not a formal definition involving both the concepts of development and well-being, it does not mean that the international cooperation programs and public and private efforts are not working towards equilibrium between them.

Well-being is already the main focus on policies; however, there is a gap between what is sought, and the current actions. It would not be exaggerated to say that there is a gap between what is sought, i.e. what is stated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and what the big companies and nations are doing, such as the retirement of the Paris agreement of the U. S. A new perspective is perhaps needed to reduce the gap between goals and real actions; not only for the economy key players but as a general perspective.

The main outcome of my research is to expand our common comprehension of well-being. By doing so, we can only expect to increase the current levels of quality of life, by understanding what really leads to an augmentation of general well-being. By doing so, it could lead to make better decision and enhance our resource allocation, both in a private and public sphere. As a corollary, or spill-over effect is that happy people are expected to produce more.

Given the focus of this work, it is expected to affect the perception of basic economic notions, used in academia and in an international cooperation environment, such as the wide array of development programs and governmental development approaches. As well, social problems can be analysed through this lens. For a reference, I will cover the issues treated in the Sustainable development agenda, and analyse how they are currently faced and how can we improve current actions.

## 4.1 Alternative perspective of consumption

While the vast majority of the current macroeconomic models focus in consumption increase, even regarded as a synonym for the concept of utility. As a consequence of all the previous analysis made until this point, we can present a different perspective on consumption.

For illustration, consider the following statement on economic growth:

Economic growth is closely related to earning level. Then, the income level determines the level of consumption. It means that a higher consumption level will follow the higher community income. Furthermore, higher levels of consumption encourage higher welfare of society.<sup>208</sup>

Where it is specified that the greater the consumption of an agent, greater its welfare.

Consumption represents for the demand side a satisfaction of needs. For the production side, a capital gain in order to be used on the market to satisfy its needs. The entire modern human life is based on quest for consumption increase. Governments and industries seek to increase consumption, because it is helpful for the economic system. However, we must aim to increase well-being, not precisely consumption *per se*. For example, revisited Malthusian perspectives signal that current consumption levels will lead to stagnation, notion related with environmental impact

Productivism or growthism is the belief that measurable productivity and growth are the purpose of human organization<sup>209</sup>. However we can have two main critics: First, environmental damages, and second consumption emerges from a need to be fulfilled<sup>210</sup>.

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<sup>208</sup> "Human Capital Spillovers and Human Development Index in Yogyakarta Special Region and Central Java - Research Leap."

<sup>209</sup> Henkel, *21st Century Homestead: Sustainable Agriculture I*.

<sup>210</sup> Fiaschi and Signorino, "Consumption Patterns, Development and Growth: Adam Smith, David Ricardo and Thomas Robert Malthus."

#### 4.1.1 Well-being and its relation to sustainability

After the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Risks Report the biggest threats for the world are related to the environment: For the first time in the survey's 10-year outlook, the top five global risks in terms of likelihood are all environmental<sup>211</sup>. Even though there is not enough scientific evidence to support global warming<sup>212</sup>, there is no doubt that human activity affects the environment. For example, Human activity has already caused the loss of 83% of all wild mammals and half of plants<sup>213</sup> – which underpin our food and health systems<sup>214</sup>. Also, consider the plastic islands in the Pacific, product of human activity, measuring in 2018 the double size of France<sup>215</sup>.

The concern raised by Dolan arguing an incompatibility between sustainable development and well-being: By linking well-being in function of development, such incompatibility is diminished. Important as well, this past notion could help clarify the current debate between environment degradation and industrialization, and economic growth. Not precisely by complete redirection private and public efforts but refining them towards a more sustainable future, with a better understanding of well-being. For illustration, consider the CO2 emissions. To a certain degree, some emanations are inevitable. The debate is not weather is good or bad, but rather to calculate the trade-off of implications. To establish the reasoning that permits to establish the trade-off calculations for achieving general well-being state.

On one extreme, we could observe how developing countries struggle not only to increase the general well-being of their population, and even to eradicate absolute poverty and hunger. On the other, we have all of the social problems in the industrialized world. Radically seen, we could summarize by saying that it is the struggle between deciding whether to eat (in the most affected areas of the global south) or to preserve the environment.

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<sup>211</sup> "Burning Planet."

<sup>212</sup> Rubin, "REJECTING CLIMATE CHANGE."

<sup>213</sup> Bar-On, Phillips, and Milo, "The Biomass Distribution on Earth."

<sup>214</sup> "The Global Risks Report 2020."

<sup>215</sup> Lebreton et al., "Evidence That the Great Pacific Garbage Patch Is Rapidly Accumulating Plastic."

For that reason economic problems and sustainability must be solved together, given that they have risen from the same need. Every industrial activity has the goal to produce, and not precisely to only pollute. As signalled before, environmental sustainability should be comprised in well-being measures in a public policy dimension.

#### *4.1.2 Stages of national development*

While human needs, potentials and desires are reasonably universal, the economic development context within which an individual is born and lives will condition many aspects of both the possibilities for and results of individual development and well-being. These range along a spectrum from a country or region with indigenous populations living traditional lifestyles; to an economically-poor country with rural subsistence farmers, primary and extractive industries and urban slums; through stages of industrialization, either with large multinationals and foreign direct investment, or with many small and medium companies and a few large domestic conglomerates; to a largely tertiary and services-oriented economy. How well-being is achieved and perceived will be very different at each of these stages of development.

As expressed before, through a marginal gains analysis we could say that certain policies are better suited to which or what society, depending on the state of development of its population and current needs. It must be relevant to clarify that this is not an advocacy against industrialization, because modern industry is precisely what made us think like that. This is rather advocating for a more efficient use of resources. However, many are the side effects of such acts. It might be just to say that I am not arguing against the benefits of the modern world and industry, but rather to a more clear perspective.

## 4.2 Overview and spill-over effect of increasing the quality of life of the generality of the population

We might find important to increase general satisfaction of people due that happy people produce more<sup>216</sup>. While the pursuit of the good life remains an end by itself, not doing so has concrete economic damages. For example, depression is the no. 1 cause of ill health and disability worldwide <sup>217</sup>.The cost of depression to employers, particularly the cost in lost work days, is as great or greater than the cost of many other common medical illnesses, and the combination of depressive and other common illnesses is particularly costly<sup>218</sup>. Mental health disorders cost the global economy \$1 trillion in lost productivity a year, with depression being the leading cause of ill health and disability, according to the World Health Organization.

Corollary to this, we find the opiates addiction in the western world, and its ravages. According to a study there exist a link between rates of depression and fatal opioid overdose in the United States<sup>219</sup>. The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total "economic burden" of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is \$78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement<sup>220</sup>.

### 4.2.1 Comments on how to measure well-being

While there is a large list of measures for human development and well-being there is an ongoing debate of how to do it. In a recent paper, it is signalled that GDP is not likely to be used as a quality of life measurement, despite its acknowledged lacks.

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<sup>216</sup> Bellet, De Neve, and Ward, "Does Employee Happiness Have an Impact on Productivity?"

<sup>217</sup> "Depression Is the No. 1 Cause of Ill Health and Disability Worldwide."

<sup>218</sup> Druss, Rosenheck, and Sledge, "Health and Disability Costs of Depressive Illness in a Major U.S. Corporation."

<sup>219</sup> Foley and Schwab-Reese, "Associations of State-Level Rates of Depression and Fatal Opioid Overdose in the United States, 2011–2015."

<sup>220</sup> Abuse, "Opioid Overdose Crisis."

In other, is possible to remark that the current measures are focused in an aggregate dimension of characteristics, being accumulative. As a suggestion, I believe that it would be interesting to explore a new measure, not focused on what people have, but rather on *what is missing*. By doing so, diminishing needs become the main issue, and thus increasing directly well-being as expressed in graph (2).

### What is next?

As far as the current times, there is a social concern to communal well-being. Many policies have already implemented well-being as their main objective. However, there is a gap between theory and practice, which can only be solved through a better understanding of well-being. By doing so, a better allocation of resources, whether they are material or related to time and effort could be made.

Following this current of thinking could lead to a greater implementation with the concept of **circular economy**, which is defined as the production and reuse of more durable goods. As well, the past notion signalled by Dolan of an existing gap between sustainability and growth and development could be erased, by linking one notion to the other, with the final aim being to increase the quality of life of the population.



## Conclusion

The aim of this work is to establish that the goal of every action considered as positive, has as its outcome wellbeing. An action to be considered as development has to be in function of wellbeing. The goal is not to replace the previous notions of wellbeing, but to complement them; establishing a link between them, rather than replacing the one with the other.

It must be agreed that well-being be regarded as the **final aggregate utility**, as it represents the crossroads of the goals of every human activity and discipline, as well-being is the final aim for both public and individual effort. As a corollary conclusion, we can also state that well-being can be interpreted as a measure of the quality of our relations, and as the integration of both human development and happiness.

As a function of the above, the value of *liberty* is given as *how to* achieve well-being, *not* as a final end. In order to do so, liberty is constrained by ethical notions. In the absence of such notions, sustainable well-being cannot be obtained. In brief, well-being represents a dynamic equilibrium between:

- subjective and objective factors;
- individual and social desires;
- Hedonic and eudemonic views.

Since neither happiness nor desire is very easy to measure, utility is often defined in modern economic analysis as some numerical representation of a person's observable choices

The final clarification of this work is to stress that something that does not contribute to well-being **should not be considered as part of human development**. My emphasis is that **no progress accompanied with an increase of life satisfaction, quality of life or well-being should be called as such**.

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