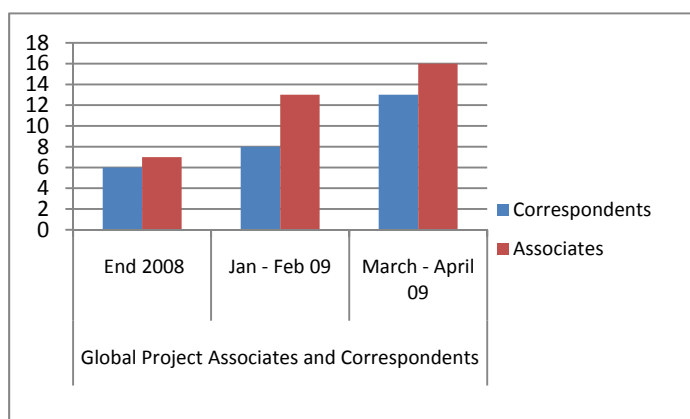


Towards the 3rd World Forum and Beyond

It has been quite an eventful three months, since the last Newsletter, a lot of things have come together and many goals have been achieved. For example, in March we held a regional conference in Kyoto, run in cooperation with Kyoto University and attended by people from ten countries and many international and regional organisations. We had some fascinating discussions about Asian views of progress and the challenges the region is facing. It was accompanied by a training course on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy: Understanding Societal Change”. A second Training course took place during May in Ottawa, Canada for which we received excellent feedback. The second version of the “Taxonomy of Progress” has gone out for extensive peer-review, and preparation on the “Handbook for Measuring Progress” has continued.

Several events are under preparation: conferences are scheduled over the next few weeks in Cairo (Egypt), for countries from the Arab region, Rome (Italy) and Münchenwiler (Switzerland). Thematic workshops and conferences will take place in June-July, in Paris, Florence and Washington DC, in preparation of the 3rd OECD World Forum, to be held in Busan (Korea) on 27-30 October. More training courses will be run in Florence (Italy) and Canberra (Australia).

We are pleased to have a number of new Associates and Correspondents who have joined the Project. New Associates to the Project include the Fondazione Bruno Kessler, the University of Monterrey, UNITAR, Sigma Orionis, SEED Media group and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. New Correspondents joining us are the Wales Wellbeing Network, the Oregon Progress Board, the State of the USA, Applied Survey Research and Audit Evaluation.



As you can see from the chart, the numbers have doubled since the end of 2008, and we trust that this trend will continue. In this edition of the Newsletter, we have included an article on the Global Project’s governance structure, for those of you who would like to know more about the Global Project’s modus operandi, including information on Associates and Correspondents and where they fit into the picture.

The current global economic situation will probably have a significant impact on the Global Project. On the one hand, as a result of the crisis, governments around the world are devoting their efforts and resources to tackling the crisis’s immediate effects and to restoring economic growth. On the other hand, a growing number of commentators and politicians are now advocating the notion that societies need to rethink their current emphasis on economic growth. In this respect, measuring the “right things” to assess the overall progress of a society and underpin policies is of paramount importance. The Great Depression of the 1930s led to the development of national accounts. Perhaps this crisis will act as a catalyst for a change in the measurement of progress. If you want to read more about this, visit www.oecd.org/progress.

With our best wishes,

Enrico Giovannini
Chief Statistician of the OECD

Jon Hall
Global Project Manager

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Special Feature

The Global Project Governance Structure

In July 2008 the OECD Council approved the establishment of the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies (GP). The GP is structured as a “network of networks”, i.e. as a co-operation among organisations based in all regions of the world, with different focuses, scopes and mandates. The activities of the GP are carried out by groups of interested organisations which include: international organisations, national public and private organisations, foundations, universities and research centres. These organisations provide financial and in-kind contributions to achieve the GP’s goals.

The GP is hosted by the OECD and run in collaboration with other [international and regional partners](#). Partners are major International/supranational Organisations which play a key role in the overall Project, investing substantial resources – financial or in-kind – over several years, assuming responsibility for the management of the GP or for specific tasks. A representative from each Partner organisation sits on the **Global Project Board**. The Board has two Co-Chairs: the Chief Statistician of the OECD (ex-officio) and another member of the GP Board, elected every two years. The two co-chairs are currently Mr. Enrico Giovannini (OECD) and Mr. Pedro Conceicao (UNDP).

The OECD portion of the GP is overseen by the OECD Council. The Council in turn is advised by the Co-ordination Group for the GP. The GP Board and the Co-ordination Group are supported by the Global Office, based at the OECD.

Other affiliates of the GP include Associates, Correspondents and Sponsors.

Associates are public and private national and international organisations that are interested in contributing to specific activities of the GP (proposals, peer reviews, advocacy, research, etc.) and implementing the actions envisaged by the Istanbul declaration and what followed. Each Associate collaborates, over a time bound period, on specific activities. The GP Board is asked to assess and endorse/decline each nomination for Associate status.

Correspondents are organisations that are aware of, and wish to support, work in their

country/region on measuring the progress of a society. Correspondents are a formal part of the GP’s network. They receive visibility on the GP website and are expected to promote the GP in their region. More than one Correspondent can be appointed from any one country. As with Associates, the GP Board is asked to comment on the credibility of the Correspondent and endorse/decline each nomination.

Finally **Regional Groups** are in the process of being created and will eventually include: Latin America, Africa, the Arab Region, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern European and Central Asian countries and OECD - including EU countries. Regional groups are expected to carry out activities in all the dimensions identified by the GP and each will be run – or co-ordinated – by a regional partner (an international organisation expert in that region). It is up to each regional group to establish its priorities and timetable, taking into account the available resources, existing processes, etc. Of course, to minimise overlaps and avoid waste of resources, these activities will be co-ordinated with those carried out by other regions or by the Global Office.



Figure 1. Representation of the Governance Structure

KNOWLEDGE BASE

Are you registered with the Global Project’s **KNOWLEDGE BASE** ? The Knowledge Base contains **hundreds** of documents on measures of progress (or sustainability, wellbeing or quality of life - all terms closely linked to progress) and is a community of experts sharing their experiences and defining together best practices. As such, **the Knowledge Base depends on your contributions**. We encourage you to submit material by registering at:

<http://www.measuringprogress.org/knowledgebase>

3rd OECD World Forum on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy” Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life Busan, Korea – 27th to 30th of October 2009



- Is life getting better? Are our societies really making progress?
- What does progress mean for our societies?
- What are the new paradigms to measure progress?
- How can better policies within these new paradigms foster the progress of our societies?

The 3rd OECD World Forum on **Statistics, Knowledge and Policy** will address these crucial questions that today, in the current economic crisis, have become more important than ever. The Forum will attract some 1500 high level participants, and more than 200 authoritative speakers with a mixture of politicians, policy makers, heads of international organisations, opinion leaders, Nobel laureates, statisticians, academics, journalists and representatives of civil society from all over the world.

The 3rd OECD World Forum is organised by the **OECD** and the **Government of Korea** (Korean National Statistical Office, KNSO) in co-operation with the **United Nations**, the **Organisation of the Islamic Conference**, the **European Commission** and the **World Bank**, and in association with the **International Statistical Institute** and **Paris21**.

Focus and Aims

The Forum, through 47 sessions (click here for the [Preliminary Agenda](#)), will offer political leaders, leading thinkers and a wide range of key stakeholders the opportunity to:

- Challenge some of the contemporary notions of societal progress;
- Discuss new visions of progress, identify concrete post-crisis efforts for fostering the effective improvement of people’s lives and appropriate ways to measure it;
- Better understand the potential role that evidence-based debate amongst citizens could play in policy making and fostering societal change for the better;
- Promote the establishment of regional and national fora to support this process.

Invited and confirmed speakers include: Alicia Bárcena Ibarra (United Nations Executive Secretary of ECLAC), Angel Gurría (Secretary General, OECD), Noeleen Heyzer (Executive Secretary of UNESCAP), Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf (President of Liberia), Donald Kaberuka (President of the African Development Bank), Geoff Mulgan (Director, Young Foundation), Sergey Stepashin (Chairman of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation), Joseph Stiglitz (Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences).

A Key Event for the Global Project on “Measuring the Progress of Societies”

The 3rd OECD World Forum will build on the outcomes of the previous forums, which led to the Istanbul declaration and the establishment of the “Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies”.

The Global Project is hosted by the OECD and is run in collaboration with several international organisations, non-government organisations, research institutes and leading foundations www.oecd.org/progress.



Nurimaru APEC House an annex to BEXCO (Busan Exhibition & Convention Center) where the 3rd World Forum will be held

The 3rd OECD World Forum is not a stand-alone event. In the lead up to the Forum we expect to involve thousands of people through regional and thematic events, and training courses held in Europe, Russia, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Australia and Asia. The first results of the Global Project will be presented at the Korean Forum, as well as the recommendations provided by the preparatory meetings scheduled around the world over the coming months.

About Busan, Korea

Busan is Korea’s largest port and its second largest metropolis. Busan (which means ‘cauldron-shaped mountain’) is situated where the Nakdong and Suyeong rivers meet the south coast. These two rivers intersect Busan and its surrounding mountains forming narrow valleys to the coast which allow for magnificent views to the sea. Among its many other attractions [Busan](#) is also famous for natural hot springs and fresh seafood.

To Register to the 3rd OECD World Forum

If you have not received an official invitation and you would like to attend the 3rd OECD World Forum, please write to us preregisterKorea2009@oecd.org attaching information on the reason for your interest and giving details of your professional qualifications, as well as web links to some of your work, where appropriate.

International Exhibition

The Exhibition at the 3rd OECD World Forum will focus on issues related to "Charting Progress, Building Visions, Improving Life". It will be held on the 27th to 30th of October in the Exhibition Hall, BEXCO, Busan, Korea.

The scope will include new technologies for visualizing statistics, initiatives to measure and foster quality of life at local and national levels, eco-friendly green technology and with a particular focus on promoting green growth and social cohesion.

Expected Exhibitors: Companies, National Statistical Organisations, Foundations, International Organisations, Software companies, Governments, Publishers, Research Institutes, Universities, Civil Society Organisations, Professional Associations and all organisations involved in data dissemination, evidence based policy making, statistical indicators and measures of progress. [Read more about the Exhibition](#)

The Exhibition will be free of charge and we hope to have places for about 50 exhibitors, with 250 booths. The online Exhibition registry will be opened in June, on the [official website](#). However, in the meantime you may request information by contacting the Exhibition Secretariat by emailing to: ocdexhibit@ioconvex.com



Booth specifications

Shell Scheme (Package)	Raw Space (Space Only)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Booth - 9m² each (3m×3m×2.4m) Booth Charge - Complimentary (Maximum 2 Booths) Walls (side, back), Floor tex, Fascia including booth number Electricity supply(1kW), 3 Spot lights, 2 fluorescent Lamps, 3 Sockets Furniture sets (1 Table and 1 Chair) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Booth - 9m² each (3m×3m) Booth Charge - Complimentary (Minimum 2 Booths, Maximum 15 Booths) Booth interior decorations will be done by the exhibitor themselves Exhibitors can build up their own booth material after receiving an approved building plan from the Exhibition Secretariat.

In cooperation with:



European Commission



Organisation of The Islamic Conference



United Nations Development Programme



World Bank

In association with



International Statistical Institute



Partnership In Statistics for development in the 21st Century

The Global Project on MEASURING THE PROGRESS OF SOCIETIES www.oecd.org/progress

Mission Statement: The Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies exists to foster the development of sets of key economic, social and environmental indicators to provide a comprehensive picture of how the well-being of a society is evolving. It also seeks to encourage the use of indicator sets to inform and promote evidence-based decision-making, within and across the public, private and citizen sectors. The project is open to all sectors of society, building both on good practice and innovative research work.

[What we are doing](#)

[Why is our work important](#)

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

The Global Project on "Measuring the Progress of Societies" is hosted by the OECD and run in collaboration with other international and regional partners, it seeks to become the world wide reference point for those who wish to measure, and assess the progress of their societies.

[Who is involved in the Global Project](#)

The project's network comprises a growing number of: [Partners](#) - [Associates](#) - [Correspondents](#) - [Other](#)

- [Overview of Research](#)
- [Training Courses](#)
- [International Survey](#)
- [Knowledge Base](#)
- [Information into Knowledge](#)
- [Future Events](#)

[World Forum Korea 27-30 October 2009](#)

If you are interested in attending, please write to us stating your interest and giving some background information about your expertise and experience **on** preregisterkorea2009@oecd.org

Director of Statistics: Mr. Enrico Giovannini

Global Project Manager: Mr. Jon Hall

Webmaster : Ms. Lynda Hawe

Contact us: Progress@oecd.org

Finnish project to measure progress Internet service with a hundred indicators

By Ulla Rosenström and Harri Lehtinen

*The Finnish Prime Minister's Office and Statistics Finland
in a joint project*

Carried out as a joint effort between the Prime Minister's Office and Statistics Finland, the Finnish project aims to develop an Internet service incorporating a variety of indicators. The PMO's main role is selecting policy-relevant indicators while Statistics Finland is in charge of the technical aspects, such as setting up the web-page and maintaining the database. Statistics Finland is also the main provider of the data for the service. The project team consists of more than ten experts in different special fields such as indicator development, informatics, database management, Internet coding and graphic design.

The project will also cooperate closely with the interministerial working group, communication departments and other data providers in order to produce the service needed and to be able to collect data for the service from different sources.

The service includes about 100 indicators

The service will include about 100 indicators grouped into twelve categories. The indicators will also be categorised according to the policy issues discussed in the Government Programme. Additionally, the indicators can be browsed in alphabetical order or by the latest update, and the service will provide effective search facilities.

The service provides each indicator with a carefully designed graph which updates automatically from a database. Initially, each graph will have to be individually defined to optimise its details in order to ensure clarity and effective communication. Each graph can be downloaded onto a presentation programme or printed out. Data presented in a graph can also be easily retrieved in a table format.

The interpretation of the indicator will include the date of the latest update and the next update. Each indicator will come with a short analysis text putting the development into national, regional and international context.

Each indicator will be accompanied by links to further information. This information may include other national indicator portals, databases, Government online publications or websites with value-added information to the indicator or issue that it describes.

The indicators will be based on a number of data sources. Statistics Finland accounts for over the half while the rest comes from other official data sources, such as the health and environment sector.

The economy
Labour
Well-being/quality of life
Health
Population/demographics
Safety
Participation and equality
Education and research
Culture
Transport and community infrastructure
Environment and energy
Natural resources

Table: Categories in the service.

The service is a response to user needs

The main reason for developing this service was the obvious need clearly articulated by the user side in an indicator service feasibility study conducted by the Prime Minister's Office in spring 2008. The study included 20 interviews with potential users of statistics who monitor the progress of society: politicians, their assistants, journalists, researchers, civil servants and teachers.

Several interviewees claimed that finding a certain interesting piece of information took too long and the information was often hard to find. They suggested that the most important and most frequently used statistical information could be collected in one place under one service. This service could contain data from different sources in a usable and easily understandable form in a unified user interface. A special problem also seemed to be that users, especially politicians, considered official statistics to have unbearable time lags. Due to the production times of official statistics, this problem is harder to solve. The best the service can do is to provide the most frequently updated information and ensure that users find it.

The interviews resulted in the creation of five key criteria that the process and the service should apply. These are as follows: the indicators should be policy relevant and interesting to the users, their presentation should be of high quality (including carefully designed data graphs), users should be consulted about the content of the service, the service should be actively marketed before and after its launch, and the work should be guaranteed sufficient resources for best results and continuous updates (although data is updated automatically).

High quality graphs produced by new software

The technical background for the service is provided by Statistics Finland in the form of a statistical database called StatFin which is based on PX-Web. The data for the indicator service, and for each indicator, is selected from the data in the database. On top of the traditional PX-Web service, there will be special software for the needs of the indicator service. The main advantage of this software called VERTI is the capability to produce high quality statistical graphs and pre-selected tables. These graphs and tables will also update automatically every time the data in the database is updated. This will ensure that the information in the indicator service is always up to date.

The user interface of the indicator web service will compile graphs and tables with the analysis text and relevant background information. The analysis text may be written manually by an editor, or it can be retrieved from the official statistical releases automatically. Background information will provide links to other data sources for more detailed information and it will also provide metadata for the indicator.

The service will be launched in October 2009

Work on the service began in October 2008 and its launch is envisioned for 2 October 2009 when Finland celebrates 200 years of central administration. The service will not be complete by then, but ready enough for public use. The features of the indicator service will be complete by then, but every indicator may not contain data. Constant efforts will be made to further develop the service.

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTION

You can subscribe to our newsletter using either of the below methods

Via OECD Direct

<http://www.oecd.org/oecdirect>

1. [Register with MyOECD](#) (or [Login to MyOECD](#) if you already have an account)
2. Under Define your Profile, check the box "**Statistical portal**" then "Submit"
3. Next in the "**Newsletters**", section check on "Measuring the Progress of Societies"

Or email us directly : progress@oecd.org with your name, organisation and email address.

Future Events

June 2009



Monitoring Italy 2009: Measuring the Progress of Italian Society

June 3-4
Rome, Italy

The [Institute for Studies and Economic Analyses \(ISAE\)](#) and the OECD will host a Conference on "Measuring the Progress of Italian Society" at the ISAE premises in Rome.

June 4-5
Münchenwiler, Switzerland



Round Table on "Progress and quality of life, Switzerland in 2029"

The Information Technologies and Communication Commission of the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences (SATW), the Fondation du Devenir in collaboration with Avenir suisse and the review La Chair et le Souffle, and the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies are pleased to announce the Round Table on "[Progress and quality of life, Switzerland in 2029](#)"

18-20 June
Paris, France



[Data Designed for Decisions](#)

The [DD4D](#) Conference is organised by the OECD and the International Institute for Information Design. The conference will investigate **selection, visualisation, interpretation and communication of data**, and how it can be effectively used to take decision based on evidence, help understand complex issues, make data relevant at a personal level and close the gap between objective measurement and perception.

Register now!

Program: www.dd4d.net

Community Indicators Summit Measuring the Progress of Australian Communities Brisbane, 22-23 July 2009

A discussion is occurring around the world about the need to move 'beyond GDP', to a more comprehensive view of societal progress that takes into account social and environmental concerns as well as economic ones. As a result, hundreds of initiatives are underway around the world relating to measuring progress and well-being at the international, national and sub-national levels.

The ABS is holding a Community Indicators Summit in Brisbane from 22 -23 July 2009, coinciding with the OECD's "Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies". Delegates involved in the development of the community indicators platforms and frameworks will be able to share ideas, strategies and contribute to the development of emerging requirements in measuring Australia's progress along with other community indicator practitioners.

An exciting program is being developed. Confirmed speakers include:

- **Jon Hall** (OECD Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies)
- **Peter Crossman** (Assistant Under Treasurer and QLD Government Statistician)
- **Desley Renton** (Social Policy Advisor, Local Government Association QLD)
- **David Tune** (Associate Secretary (Domestic Policy) Prime Minister and Cabinet)
- **Leigh Gatt** (New Zealand Big Cities)

A feature of the conference program will be interactive workshops to explore current issues in the development and application of Community Indicators.

For further information, or to express interest in attending, please visit the website www.nss.gov.au/communityindicators09 or e-mail inquires@nss.gov.au

For more information on 'Future Events'
www.oecd.org/progress

Is the West really the best?

By Richard Eckersley, Australia 21 Ltd*

It seems self-evident that Western liberal democracies represent the leading edge of national progress. As a group, Western nations score highest on most, if not all, of the indicators usually used to measure human development: life expectancy, happiness and satisfaction, wealth, education, governance, personal freedom, human rights.

From this perspective, developing countries would be better off if they were more like developed countries (and other developed countries would be better off if they were more like Sweden or Denmark). I want to challenge this supposition, at least to the extent that it suggests continuing on this developmental path will improve people's quality of life. While this unorthodox view is accepted at some levels of analysis, it is not reflected in the picture painted by the usual international comparisons.

My grounds are that: life expectancy is not a valid measure of overall health; happiness may not be comparable across cultures and does not, in any case, cover the all the attributes of healthy people or societies; and other common measures, being mainly structural and institutional, do not adequately reflect the cultural and moral qualities that shape the more intimate aspects of life, and so are central to wellbeing. By these cultural measures, it is arguable that Western societies have become increasingly dysfunctional in recent decades. (The environmental costs of Western, high-consumption lifestyles are additional grounds, but are not discussed here.)

Health

With the possible exception of increasing wealth, improving health is the most widely used measure of human progress. The standard measure of population health is life expectancy (the number of years people can, on average, expect to live at prevailing mortality rates). The dramatic rise in life expectancy, which globally has more than doubled in the last 100 years, is one of humanity's greatest achievements. Historically, it might well have been a valid indicator, but this is now questionable, especially in the developed world.

Life expectancy does not reflect adequately the growing importance to health of non-fatal, chronic health problems. Just as we often wrongly equate quality of life with standard of living, we confuse how well people live with how long they live. This 'measurement error' is particularly pronounced with mental illnesses, whose

health burden has a low fatality component, but a high disability component.

According to the WHO, mental and neurological conditions account globally for almost a third of all years lived with disability. In 1990, they accounted for 10% of the total burden of disease, measured as both death and disability, and this figure is expected to rise to 15% by 2020. Major depression is now the leading single cause of disability globally, and it is projected to rise from fourth to second as a contributor to the total burden of disease by 2020.

This issue is particularly important in Western nations because of their disease profile. To take Australia as an example, mental disorders are the third largest contributor to the total burden of disease after cancer and cardiovascular disease, and the largest contributor to the non-fatal component. Furthermore, while the burden of the physical diseases falls overwhelmingly on people over 60, that of mental disorders falls mostly on those under 60. As these are the most productive years of life, the personal, social and economic costs are therefore much higher.

Happiness

Happiness measures (including life satisfaction) are being increasingly used to compare nations. Indeed, its correlation with the many, varied objective indicators of human development seemed to suggest happiness might be the 'holy grail' of national indicators: a simple, easily understood and measured quality that could serve as a single measure of human wellbeing and societal progress.

However, like life expectancy, happiness has its limitations. While some researchers argue they represent a valid measure of the quality of development, others doubt their comparability across countries and cultures. Happiness is closely correlated to individualism, and the higher scores in individualistic societies may reflect a higher degree of self-deception rather than the benefits of individualism. Some differences in subjective wellbeing between nations also appear to be because people value wellbeing differently; people may trade some amount of positive emotions to obtain other things they value.

Even if we regard comparisons of happiness as valid, they are still only partial indicators of societal functioning. Historians have noted that civilisations rise or fall on the confidence and optimism of their peoples. The Pew Research Center's 2007 global attitudes survey shows that, broadly speaking, Non-western nations score lower than Western nations on personal life satisfaction, but higher on next-generation optimism (Japan is a somewhat unhappy blend) (see Table 1). The results may, in part at least, reflect response differences

between cultures and stages of economic development, but this does not negate their significance. Even the most cursory assessment of China and the US today exposes the danger of using happiness scores as a measure of their national performance.

Another limitation is that the positive picture happiness indicators present is at odds with other measures of psychological wellbeing. A survey of more than 10,000 Australian school students aged 4-18 found that while 89% of the students said they were happy, about 40% scored in the lower levels of social and emotional wellbeing. Between a fifth and a half of students admitted to feeling lonely, very stressed, recently hopeless and depressed, and frequently angry.

Another study found that over 80% of young Australians (aged 19-20) were satisfied with their lives – including lifestyle, work or study, relationships with parents and friends, accomplishments and self-perceptions. However, 50% were experiencing one or more health problems associated with depression, anxiety, anti-social behaviour and alcohol use. In other words, most of those with problems were satisfied with life.

Quality of life

A third argument against the view that Western nations are at the vanguard of progress is that, for all their positive qualities, most of their people do not believe life is getting better. Many studies over the past decade reveal levels of anger and anxiety about changes in Western society that were not apparent thirty years ago.

The studies show many people are concerned about the materialism, greed and selfishness they believe drive society today, underlie social ills, and threaten their children’s future. They yearn for a better balance in their lives, believing that when it comes to individual freedom and material abundance, people don’t seem ‘to know where to stop’ or now have ‘too much of a good thing’.

The 2006 European Social Survey found 61% felt that for most people in their country, life was getting worse. A 2004 US survey showed large majorities believed that

the country was not focused on the right priorities, with too much emphasis on work and money and not enough on family and community; and that American society was too materialistic, with serious consequences for children, society, the environment and the world. Britain’s Joseph Rowntree Foundation found in its recent consultation on today’s social evils ‘a strong sense of unease about some of the changes shaping British society’. The top concerns were: a decline in community; individualism, consumerism and greed; and a decline in values. More concrete concerns included: the decline of the family; young people as victims or perpetrators; drugs and alcohol; poverty and inequality; immigration; and crime and violence.

These surveys predate the current global financial crisis, the root causes of which include the very qualities that worry people. It is just one of the more dramatic expressions of their concerns about ‘progress’ and ‘development’.

Conclusion

Standard measures of national progress and human development suggest the Western liberal democracies are leading the way. Yet when we look ‘inside’ these societies at their psychosocial dynamics and how these have played out over time, a very different picture emerges. The West has its own set of problems that indicators do not adequately capture.

The contrast between the two views could scarcely be more marked. The orthodox human development model emphasises what can easily be measured and the correlations between them: simple measures of inadequate measures of wellbeing (happiness or life expectancy) and mainly material, structural and institutional factors (for example, income, education, democratic government, and human rights). A psychosocial-dynamics model of human development emphasises associations between multiple measures of wellbeing and broader, cultural and moral causes and correlates (for example, the effects of materialism and individualism).

The standard model may be useful in evaluating earlier stages of human development, but it is less relevant in

Country	Sat. own life %	Sat. state of nation %	Sat. national govt %	Next generation better off - %
US	65	25	51	31
Sweden	72	66	64	29
Japan	43	22	50	10
China	34	83	89	86
India	41	42	77	64

Table 1. Satisfaction and optimism: East vs West. Personal life satisfaction 7-10 on 0-10 scale
Source: Pew Research Center, 2007. <http://pewglobal.org/reports/display.php?ReportID=257>.

assessing so-called highly developed societies. Across all stages, but especially in the latter cases, it needs to be supplemented by the psychosocial-dynamics model. This model helps to improve our understanding of, and response to, the concerns at the heart of the OECD project on the progress of societies: the focus of governments on economic growth and material welfare, even at the expense of other aspects of life.

The evidence shows that material progress does not simply and straightforwardly make us richer, so giving us the freedom to live as we wish. Rather, it comes with an array of cultural and moral prerequisites and consequences that affects profoundly how we think of the world and ourselves, and so the choices we make. These choices are not, collectively, optimising human health, wellbeing and potential. Measures of progress need to reflect this reality.

Richard Eckersley is a founding director of Australia 21 Ltd, a non-profit R&D company, and visiting fellow, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia. Email: richard.eckersley@australia21.org.au

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Wawu-Shan-Forest China©Jon Hall 2009

The Global Project on Facebook !



The Global Project has launched a Facebook page

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Why not [become a Fan](#) and help us reach a greater audience. You can also contribute to discussions on Progress, or start your own and more.....

Training courses on “Statistics, Knowledge and Policy: Understanding Societal Change”

Florence, Italy : 14-17 July 2009

In association with the International Society for Quality-of-Life (ISQOLS) and the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the EC we have developed a 4-day training course on [“Statistics, Knowledge and Policy: Understanding Societal Change”](#) to compliment the IX Conference on [Quality of Life Studies: Measures and Goals for the Progress of Societies](#)



Canberra, Australia : 27-31 July 2009



In collaboration with the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** we are running this training course for individuals who want to understand the progress of their societies and promote evidence-based debate and policy making.

More information at: www.oecd.org/progress/training
Email: progress@oecd.org

Quality of Life: A Framework for Assessing the Progress of Societies

By Mariano Rojas

Mariano Rojas is the Coordinator, of Midiendo el Progreso de las Sociedades: Una Perspectiva desde México, Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico, México

*Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?*

- T.S. Eliot, Choruses from the Rock

ON QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of life and progress of societies. Progress is usually understood as a process that leads to an increase in the quality of life of society's members. Quality of life is about goodness in life, about a life people can be satisfied with, and about a life that can be considered of value.

Enhancing quality in life is a globally accepted aspiration. It is expected from governments, as well as from local and international organizations, to embrace the enhancement of people's quality of life as a top priority and a main justification for their actions.

Quality of life is a personal attribute. Thus, it is not suitable to talk about a country's quality of life; although, it is correct to talk about the quality of life in a country, as it makes reference to the situation of people living in the country.

Quality of life is a final goal. Quality of life is an ultimate goal in life. Ultimate goals are pursued for their own sake and not as means to attain further goals. There are also intermediate goals, which have instrumental value. Intermediate goals are pursued because they contribute to the attainment of the final goal; thus, the value of intermediate goals can be assessed in terms of their contribution to attaining the final goals.

Quality of life is not foreign to people. The literature on well-being is prolific in academic concepts which are strange to people; however, quality of life is a concept people can relate to.

Quality of life: Measurement has prevailed, but conceptualization must come first. Being an umbrella concept, quality of life is difficult to define. It is of no surprise that most efforts have been placed in measuring quality of life rather than in discussing its conception. In consequence, quality of life ends up being defined by how it is measured; and most academic efforts end up focusing on such measurement problems as availability of variables, construction and properties of indices, definition of weights, and use of dimension-reduction techniques, rather than on what quality of life is. This approach has contributed to the proliferation of indicators.

Without neglecting the importance of measurement issues, we state that conceptualization must drive measurement in the assessment of quality of life. In other words, thinking about what quality of life is and providing a rationale for its assessment must precede and shape up its measurement. In consequence, rather than contributing to the proliferation of quality-of-life indices, we aim to provide and discuss a rationale for the understanding and measurement of quality of life.

A RATIONALE TO ASSESS QUALITY IN A PERSON'S LIFE

This rationale is inspired on Veenhoven's 'four-qualities-of-life' framework (Veenhoven, 2000); however, this rationale varies from Veenhoven's original work.

Two qualities in a person's life. What means for a person's life to be of quality? We state that there are two values in each person's life: a person's life has intrinsic and extrinsic value. Associated to these life values there are an inner quality and an outer quality in each person's life. These two qualities should not be added up nor summarized in a single 'overall' quality-of-life indicator. Besides, for public-policy purposes it is important to keep the distinction between the inner and the outer quality of life.

Inner quality of life. There is quality in a person's life if she is satisfied with the life she is living. Thus, the inner quality of life refers to how a person experiences her life. The experience of life results from a combination of cognitive experiences (experiencing successes rather than failures in the consecution of whatever aims people consider of relevance for their life), affective experiences (experiencing positive affects rather than

negative affects), and hedonic experiences (experiencing pleasure rather the pain) The inner quality of life is measured by a person's assessment of her own life; for example, in terms of how much she is satisfied with her life. This quality of life is based on the subject's judgment of her life; as such, it is a subjective well-being assessment.

It is important to state that the inner quality of life is inherently subjective, since it is a personal experience of life. Thus, there is a distinction between the inner quality of a person's life, which is an experience people are aware of, from the vast lists of variables that, mostly by presumption, are associated to well-being. The inner quality of life refers to an inherently subjective experience; as such, it is inappropriate to consider objective measures of the inner quality of life. However, it is appropriate to keep track of objective variables which have proven to be strongly associated to the inner quality of life. The identification of the relevant factors for a person's well-being requires the using of inferential techniques.

Outer quality of life. A person's life also has another quality, that of contributing to the well-being of others. Thus, the outer quality of life refers to the goodness of a person's life from the point of view of the interest of an external agent (e.g.: society's members)

How can a person contribute to the well-being of others in society? There may be many ways which have been studied in the literature, for example: by producing goods and services which allow others to satisfy their material needs; by producing relational goods which satisfy others' needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness; by doing volunteerism and philanthropy; by behaving in a pro-social way; by reducing their ecological footprint.

These two qualities of life do not necessarily go together; for example, a person may be enjoying life and having a life of great inner quality with little contribution to the well-being of others. On the other hand, there may be persons who are contributing a lot to the well-being of others while having little satisfaction with their own life.

MEASURING QUALITY OF LIFE

The proposed framework deals with the assessment of quality of life rather than with the study of its presumed explanatory factors. The study of the relevant explanatory factors constitutes a second layer of analysis and measurement.

The measurement of the inner quality of life necessarily requires addressing people's subjective experience. In consequence, it is necessary to use subjective measures such as people's own declaration about how satisfied they are with their life and their affective state. These measures constitute a main area of study in the growing subjective well-being literature.

The measurement of the outer quality of life requires focusing on all those factors that proxy a person's contribution to the well-being of others. The subjective well-being literature has shown that the production of economic and relational goods and participation in volunteerism activities are relevant in enhancing others' well-being. A consideration for the well-being of future generations implies incorporating people's ecological footprint.

Once quality of life is assessed, it is possible to move towards the second layer of measurement: that which measures those intermediate goals which are relevant to increase people's quality of life. This second layer incorporates indicators from many dimensions such as health, education, technological innovation, political and social regimes, safety, and so on. This large set of intermediate goals is not progress, but their attainment contributes to progress through their impact on increasing quality of life. Public policy usually deals with this second layer of intermediate goals; as well as with a third layer of sets of specific instruments which contribute to the attainment of intermediate goals. In consequence, it is necessary to keep track on intermediate goals and to develop appropriate indicators which are relevant for public policy. It is also important to develop statistics to keep track of final goals to assess the progress in societies and to assess the efficiency of intermediate goals in attaining those final objectives.

The framework also suggests that the typical distinction between objective and subjective indicators is, in principle, irrelevant. What is relevant is to define what

ought to be measured and, in consequence, to work with the corresponding appropriate indicators.

Rojas (2008) provides an illustration of this framework on the basis of information from the Gallup Poll 2007. At this moment information is not perfect to completely apply the framework, but the framework may help in guiding the construction of new relevant indicators. Preliminary results from Latin America show that measurements of the inner and outer quality of life provide additional information which is not captured by current measures such as per capita income and capabilities indicators.

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An endangered Takin from Sichuan, China © Jon Hall - 2009

This Newsletter on “[Measuring the Progress of Societies](#)” is published by the OECD in collaboration with other international and regional partners of the Global Project.

Thank you to the following authors for their contributions on this issue:

Ulla Rosenström, Prime Minister’s Office, Finland; Harri Lehtinen, Statistics Finland; Richard Eckersley, Australia 21 Ltd, Australia; Mariano Rojas, México, Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico, Mexico

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Deadline for articles for the next issue: **31st of July 2009**