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A Positive Approach Towards Social Policy – The Re-Foundation of Social Policy

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Social investment and social protection as productive factors

The role of decent work and social integration for an economically successful and socially cohesive society

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A Positive Approach Towards Social Policy

The Re-Foundation of Social Policy

Introduction

If we look at the main notions commonly linked to social policy we see – in history and at present – that these are concerned with problems. Poor relief had always been centre stage; what we know today as hospitals has its origins in the offer of medical treatment for the destitute and was at the same time a means of control. Although the terminology changed fundamentally, we can nevertheless see that the ground pattern prevails.

There is a second notion, perhaps somewhat contested, only hesitatingly admitted but nevertheless widely accepted: Social policy is seen as means of control, as instrument put into place in order to ensure that general norms and requirements of an employment-based, free-market economy are being fulfilled. Of course, all this is in itself ridden with prerequisites – the actual character of both: control, employment, free-market and the relationship of rights and obligations are debated. However, as normative framework they are largely accepted – and rarely consciously discussed.

Actual social policy is in such a perspective characterised by the following two fundamental issues:

- * It is not only caught in the search for short-term orientations; rather, it is fundamentally orientation on problems, i.e. starting from the assumption of a principal dysfunction of society;
- * it lacks a clear perception of what the social actually is, providing only a vague and diffuse understanding.

Search for the Social

I want to propose here to look at two aspects that may open an alternative perspective. In order of doing so I look in a first step for a definition of the social; in a second step I present some consequences for social policy. After these conceptual considerations I will look in a third step for an interpretation of some aspects of current social policy.

First, what is commonly considered to be a social problem should be redefined. The common debates on this – and this holds true for social professionals in a wide range – are shaped by attributing a shortcoming to the individual, seeing his/her behaviour or life history as ‘faulty’. The recipe is some kind of punishment or ‘training’ of different kind, aiming on overcoming the individuals’ weakness. Differences occur mostly on how social-work-like soft mechanisms are combined with hard instruments of supply of resources and mechanisms of obliging the recipient. Still, such a position is not the only approach. Another perspective is to look at the soci(et)al side rather than looking at the individual. In the extreme, the individual who is seen as problem or who is seen as having a problem is largely seen as not being responsible. Instead, society and/or social conditions are seen as cause or if one wants to express it this way: as a kind of *force majeure*. Of course, the actual debates are not as clear-cut as it seems to be suggested here. However, in any case we see the localisation of social policy as matter of defining **problems** in terms of a wrong behaviour or wrong societal condition. The fundamental issue with such an approach is that it suggests a dichotomy between individual and society. One orientation from here is that people – as individuals or members of a specific strata – have or cause problems. These problems can be “problems for themselves”; or it may equally be problems for others or society at large. The actual definition of what is considered as a problem is very much derived from a behavioural-normative approach, not allowing questioning the norms nor allowing looking at the question why or even how social cohesion is actually constituted. As this is not satisfying and in its extreme individualism implausible, an alternative seems to exculpate the person, taking the stance that it is actually society that is causing difficulties for individuals or groups. This may be seen as lack of support, as matter of allowing power imbalances etc.

In any case social problems are in these perspectives coming somewhat from outside of society; they are apparently not genuine part of the social being together. If we read for instance the recent *Communication from the European Commission on Opportunities, Access and Solidarity: Towards a New Social Vision for 21st Century Europe (COM [2007] 726; Brussels, 20.11.2007)* we find the suggestion of the following realities:

- * *European societies are changing fast: Europeans are living longer lives, facing unprecedented changes in family patterns, making progress towards gender equality and adjusting to new patterns of mobility and diversity.*
- * *Globalisation, technological progress and economic developments are affecting the way we live and work, with new work opportunities, a demand for new skills and an increasing pace of change. The associated benefits and risks are not evenly shared and some parts of the population have difficulty adapting and run the risk of unemployment and exclusion.*
- * *The EU itself has changed: it has grown to encompass 500 million citizens and is more diverse; the accession of new Member States has extended the benefits of peace, freedom and prosperity across the EU and to neighbouring countries.*
(*ibid.*: 3)

Reading that according to the document

policies need to be built on a solid understanding of Europe's social realities and to keep pace with them
(*ibid.*)

gives actually the impression that this understanding is not concerned with stepping back and gaining in depth insight in processes and relations of society. Rather, it seems almost as if we look at something outside of society, society – and within social policy as distinct sector in need to react.

Both approaches as they had been outlined before – even if considered in more elaborated forms than the brief pointer allowed to present – are in the same matter limited. They suggest some kind of liability, requiring an exculpation of the other side. And they suggest that power and resources follow in principal the rules of a zero-sum game, requiring social policy as distinct mechanism in order to redistribute inequality of gains – be the gains of power or the gains of resources.

The consequence is that social policy is fundamentally mis-conceptualised as (counterbalancing) intervention. The paradox is that this is based on the assumption that society presents an equilibrium. In other words, the process of production does not play a role within this thinking. Instead, production, being suggested as equilibrium, does not require consideration. What is needed – and this is seen as concern of social policy – is the compensation for unjust outcomes of a fundamentally just system. In other words, the problem of social policy is in the perspective as it is provided here, is not finding a new balance with other, and in particular economic and financial policies. Rather, the challenge is twofold,

- a) recovering and re-cognising the fact that the economic process is in itself both a process of production and the constitution and maintenance of a social relationship and
- b) elaborating from here that the term of productivity is going far beyond the production of commodities.

As correct it is to see that exchange on the market is an inherent moment of (capitalist) production, it is not less correct that de-commodification is another inherent moment. This means that we have to (and will be able to) develop from here a different understanding of profit and general interest.

In order to do so, it is of course possible to simply refer straight to a Marxist perspective. This would suggest to remain with the elaboration in a traditional pathway of what may be called classical economy of exchange economies, however, making clear that the challenge is not the concern with the mechanism of distribution. Instead, as generally known, *Marx* challenged classical economic thinking by asking for a fundamental shift within the economic framework. This shift was concerned with turning away from the sphere of circulation, drawing attention to the sphere of production. It was only by this reorientation that he could elaborate the concept of profit.

What is proposed here is somewhat contradicting as I want to make on the one hand an important step with *Marx*; at the same time I suggest to go beyond his perspective.

So far – and going with *Marx*, the crucially important point for us is that social policy is not an distinct area. Instead, it is within the economic sphere where we are dealing with genuinely social issues. Secondly, the social is not a matter of the inequality in the sphere of circulation. Rather, the social is about the relationship of equals on the market that creates a tension between different interests. This is another formulation of the fact of dealing with profits. However, leaving the pathway

as outlined by *Marx*, it is suggested to go beyond the economic sphere. So surely only with qualification, we can say that *Marx* suggested a somewhat economist pathway, not disregarding political and ideological factors, however, seeing them as matter of “appendixed to economy” or actually more likely “being determined by economy”. In any case, although we find probably the most advanced understanding of a **political** economy, we are still very much concerned with a pattern of instrumental rather than an integrated role. This is not least getting clear when we look at some of the political works, especially the dispute of *Hegel’s Philosophy of Law*. Sure, this requires an elaborated and detailed debate. The rejection of both the general interest on the one hand and the civil society on the other hand is of special interest though this cannot be discussed further.

To go beyond such understanding and develop a wider understanding of social policy, I will present in the following a definition of the social. This is necessary, as social policy today suffers from a paradox: Although social policy is, of course, directed towards the social it usually lacks a clear understanding of what this social actually is about. We can see this for instance if we look at the debates on rights – as important as general claims for a rights-based approach are, we rarely find a systematic approach with regard to defining them: social rights, human rights The paradox is, that they are seen as general rights – general even meaning timeless, valid independent of time and space. At the same time it is however (at least in retrospective) clear that they are very much defined in a historical perspective only, i.e. any social rights are “general” only in their time. If we take for instance the right of general suffrage – being thought from the beginning as general right, it actually meant in the beginning: the general right only for men to vote. Not asking for relativism of today’s general rights, I want to call at least for attention of the historical character of today’s general rights – seen from the year 3007, they may seem very backward. In any case they should be seen as part of a ‘historically integrated’ system of production and reproduction.

The challenge is to find a proper definition of the social dimension that goes beyond a discourse that is based on natural law and that goes beyond simple normative and moral – i.e. subjective – notions. At this stage I want to mention only in a side remark, that this is important as well with regard to the use of the term social when it comes to terms as social capital, social investment, corporate social responsibility etc.

To approach the understanding of the social differently, I want to introduce briefly the *Social Quality Approach*, an initiative by academics from the middle of the 1990s, worrying about the European developments of the time. In the *Amsterdam Declaration* it is stated:

Respect for the fundamental human dignity of all citizens requires us to declare that we do not want to see growing numbers of beggars, tramps and homeless in the cities of Europe. Nor can we countenance a Europe with large numbers of unemployed, growing numbers of poor people and those who have only limited access to health care and social services. These and many other negative indicators demonstrate the current inadequacy of Europe to provide social quality for all its citizens. We want, in contrast, a European society that is economically successful, but which, at the same time, promotes social justice and participation for its citizens. This would be a Europe in which social quality is paramount. Its citizens would be able and required to participate in the social and economic life of their communities and to do so under conditions which enhance their well-being, their individual potential and the welfare of their communities. To be able to participate, citizens must have access to an acceptable level of economic security and of social inclusion, live in cohesive communities, and be empowered to develop their full potential. In other words, social quality depends on the extent to which economic, social and political citizenship is enjoyed by all residents of Europe.

(<http://socialquality.org/site/index.html>)

Reading this carefully, the following moments proof being important for determining the social. First, there are three sets of factors, namely

- * conditional factors
- * constitutional factors and
- * normative factors,

summarised in the following table.

CONDITIONAL FACTORS	CONSTITUTIONAL FACTORS	NORMATIVE FACTORS
socio-economic security	personal security	social justice (equity)
social cohesion	social recognition	solidarity
social inclusion	social responsiveness	democratic based citizenship
social empowerment	personal capacity	human dignity

Figure 1: Three Factors and the 12 Dimensions of Social Quality

So far, only the conditional factors had been more closely looked at. The definition of these factors goes as follows:

- * *Social economic security* is the degree to which people have command over material and immaterial resources over time in the context of social relations.
- * *Social inclusion* is the degree to which people are and feel integrated in the different social relations (systems, institutions, organisations and structures) that constitute everyday life.
- * *Social cohesion* is the strength of social relations between people (including networks) which are a function of the integration of the integration between integrative norms and values (including trust and solidarity) in society.
- * *Social empowerment* is concerned with the means and processes and relations necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment.

However, the more important point in order of defining the social is that we work on several assumptions, the first and fundamental being that human beings are principally social beings, depending in their own biographical development on being involved in interactions with others.

– Of course, there is always the danger of circularity in arriving from here at a definition of what the social is. In order to avoid such circularity and to concretise the determination of the social, we have to consider two axis of a dialectical tension. The one is the tension between biographical and societal development, the other is concerned with the tension between communities and systems. It has to be emphasised that the tension is a dialectical one. In other words, we are not speaking of antagonisms, nor are we talking about relationships of “independent moments”, of which the relationship is the one of externalities. Only by looking at the different aspects in the mutuality the social can be grasped

- * in its relational terms
- * in terms of its processuality (a matter of past and future) and
- * in terms of the dimension of action.



Figure 2: The Social Quality Quadrant

From here we can define both, the social and social quality.

1) The Social Quality Approach understands the social as the outcome of the interaction between people (constituted as actors) and their constructed and natural environment. With this in mind its subject matter refers to people’s productive and reproductive relationships. In other words

- * the constitutive interdependency between processes of self-realisation and processes of the formation of collective identities
- * is a condition for ‘the social’, realised by the interactions of
 - actors, being – with their self-referential capacity – competent to act
 - and their framing structure, which translates immediately into the context of human relationships.

The following graph may clarify the references:

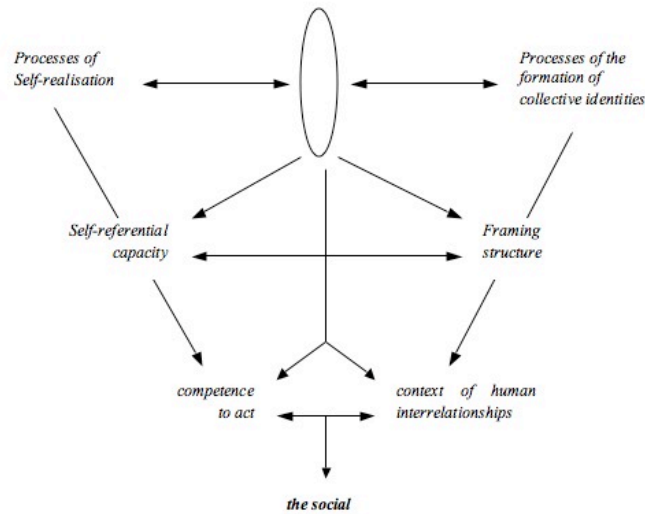


Figure 3: Defining the Social

2) Then, social quality is concerned with the means and processes and relations necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment.

Social Policy in a Changed Light

We can move to the second point – at the same time coming back to a point mentioned earlier, namely the localisation of social policy between production and distribution. It should be already clear that – in a social quality perspective – social policy is neither flanking economic policies nor a productive factor. Finally and most importantly, social policy is not a morally based option – equally treated as other morals and norms, and made to will of the day.

To understand social policy, we have to see that it is – even if not recognised as such – a matter of socialisation. Broadly, socialisation is understood as process of increasing complexity, however paradoxically increasing the independence of individuals by an ever-closer inclusion into social processes. Such inclusion, surely shifting some control away from the individual, means as well the emergence of control of distant matters by the individual. Again, such control is not real, immediate and ‘tangible’ and it is indeed limited. Still, socialisation is enhancing in one or another way the reach of the individual – his/her knowledge, his/her awareness, his/her being integrated and his/her control. In sociological terms we can make relevant links for instance to the debates on a shift from status to contract (*Maine*), from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* (*Toennies*), from mechanical to organic solidarity (*Durkheim*) etc. Such processes, even if they reflect as well a pattern of colonisation of the life world through the system world (*Habermas*), they are very much about a lengthening of chains of interdependence and interaction as the masterly elaboration by *Norbert Elias* shows. Consequently we are concerned with a much wider perspective on the economic process, understanding this as process of – socially differentiated – appropriation. In other words, economic processes are social processes and as such they are concerned with the active and directed dealing of the individual with the natural and social environment. Exchange processes mediated by the market are only one facet of this process. And they are as well – one – instrument of organising these processes. ‘One’ means in today’s societies of course the central one. And what is important, they are the central instrument as well of establishing and overcoming inequalities. Furthermore, such statement implies that these inequalities are in one or another way at the core of the economic process itself.

Leaving pure academic elaboration and allowing for a heuristic usage of methodology and some models of thought we can combine the social quality quadrant as presented in Figure 2 with two other important thoughts in social science.

First, coming back to *Elias* we can see the two axes of the quadrant as matter of increasing chains of interdependence and interaction. The horizontal axis enhances the individual's reach from the manageable community area into the area of complex societal frameworks and patterns. The vertical axis stretches the space of action to society. In both cases it is important that this is not a one-dimensional perspective – the gained influence means as well that we are facing an increasing 'influence' the other way round – an influence that actually activates and directs the individuals' potentials. In short, the axes can be considered as chains of interdependence and interaction. In Figure 4 can be seen how this perspective integrates into the Social Quality quadrant – the broken red lines symbolising the *Eliasan* chains.

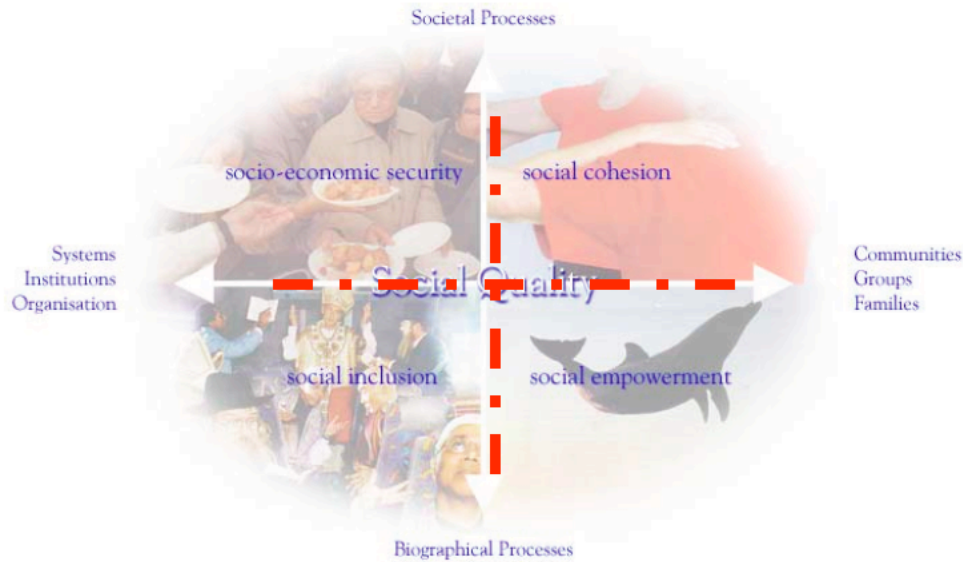


Figure 4: Social Quality and Lengthening Chains of Interdependence and Interaction

A second approach to grasp the meaning of socialisation draws attention to the heuristic triangle of the welfare mix (s. Evers, Albert: *Shifts in the Welfare Mix – Introducing a New Approach for the Study of Transformations in Welfare and Social Policy*; in: Evers, A./Wintersberger, H. [Hrsg.]: *Shifts in the Welfare Mix. Their Impact on Work, Social Services and Welfare Policies*; Vienna: European Centre for Social Welfare, Training and Research, 1988; 7-30). As well known, the triangle spans between state, informal sector, and market – three different forms of socialisation, shown in the following Figure 5.

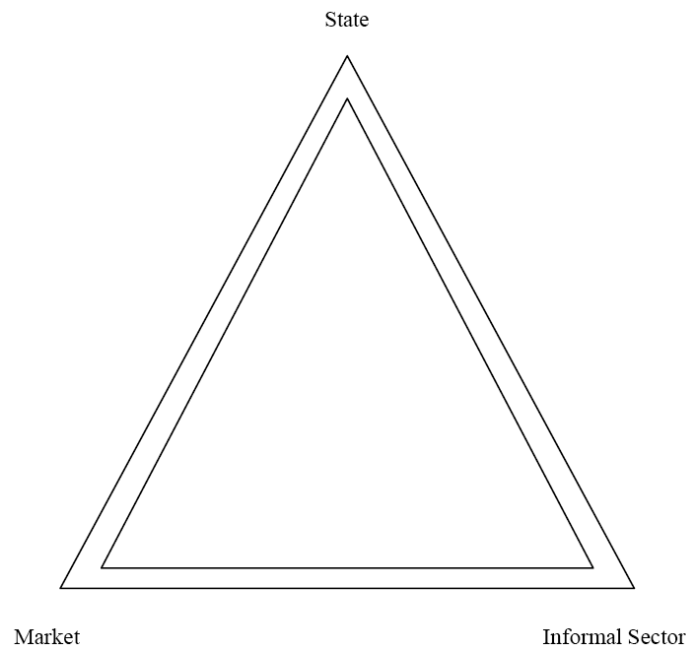


Figure 5: Welfare-Mix Triangle

So far the triangle only reflects different institutional forms. However, the actual meaning can only be spelt out if we understand the institutional dimension as specific forms of socialisation. Consequently we have to keep in mind that we are dealing with a process of appropriation in terms of interdependence and interaction. Equally important is to understand the institutional factors as part of the process of actually permanently defining in their interaction the social. An impression can be gained from Figure 6:

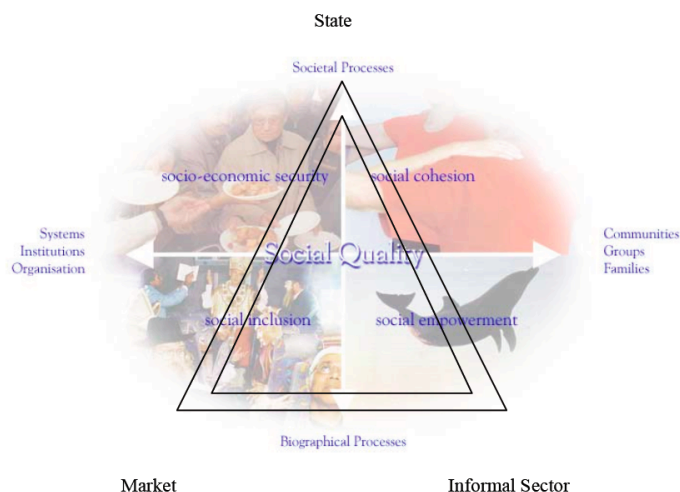


Figure 6: Social Quality Welfare Mix

However, a crucial point is that this interdependence and interaction is actually in practice accepted – and this is the decisive moment for defining requirements of social policy today. In a social quality perspective, social problems today are differently accessed.

New Definitions – New Measures

If we look at definitions of today's social agenda as they can be found in various documents recently published by the *European Commission*, we find indeed major challenges put forward. However, a difficulty is that the analysis does not provide an insight into the complexity. The way the areas are presented as problems lacks to focus on dealing with the mechanisms of socialisation. Solutions are sought in how individuals can be adapted and how mechanisms can be provided that allow the integration of individuals and groups. As well, changes of the system – the employment, social insurances etc. – are considered. However this is only the extent to the extent as it concerns mechanisms of the reproductive sphere.

The following may give an overview over some aspects. Reference is made to documents as the *Communications of the Commission of the European Communities: Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe* (Brussels, 20.11.2007. COM(2007) 726 final); *A single market for 21st century Europe* (Brussels, 20.11.2007. COM(2007) 724 final); *Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market* (Brussels, 17.10.2007. COM(2007) 620 final); *Reforming the budget, changing Europe. A public consultation paper in view of the 2008/2009 budget review* (Brussels, 12.9.2007. SEC(2007) 1188 final); and the *Commission's staff working documents: Instruments for a modernised single market policy. Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe* (Brussels, SEC(2007) 1518; provisional version); *The external dimension of the single market review Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe* (Brussels, SEC(2007) 1519; provisional version); *Initiatives In The Area Of Retail Financial Services Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe* (Brussels, SEC(2007) 1520; provisional version); *The single market: review of achievements Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe* (Brussels, SEC(2007) 1521; provisional version).

Looking for instance at the only recently published document on the *New Visions* it is characteristic that changes are divided into three groups, namely changes in society, changes in the economy, and

changes in lifestyles and values. However, it is not getting clear in which way these changes are linked to each other. In some cases the attribution can actually be contested. The report states for instance that

Traditional bonds such as family, social group and religion are weakening. There is a trend to individualisation of values and an atomisation of culture – a focus on the individual and the consumer rather than on society as a whole, and new issues of tolerance and respect for others. At the same time, new forms of solidarity are emerging, including through new leisure and cultural activities. (Communication of the Commission of the European Communities: Opportunities, access and solidarity: towards a new social vision for 21st century Europe; Brussels, 20.11.2007. COM(2007) 726 final: 5)

Much could be said with regard to such a statement. However, what is of interest here is the question if this can be brought forward as primarily a matter of changes in lifestyles and values. In general the economy seems to be located outside of society. A similar problem arises if we look at the statement in the *Staff Working Paper Instruments for a modernised single market policy*. There we read:

The Commission's final report on the Single Market review calls for an improved 'governance' of the Single Market. In particular, Single Market policy should become

- *More evidence-based and impact-driven*
- *More targeted and better enforced*
- *More decentralised and network-based*
- *More accessible and better communicated*

(Commission's Staff Working Document: Instruments for a modernised single market policy. Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe; Brussels, SEC(2007) 1518; provisional version: 2)

Sure, there are issues mentioned. However, all problems mentioned lack a 'real basis'. The point of reference is the single market – this must of course astonish if we consider that it is said at the same time that the economy, the single market ... are about

[h]arnessing opportunities for citizens

(Communication A single market for 21st century Europe; Brussels, 20.11.2007. COM(2007) 724 final: 4)

From a social quality perspective a serious shortcoming of such an approach that can be summarised by pointing on the fact that elaborating *harnessing opportunities for citizens* by switching immediately to *Empowering consumers and SMEs* and *Making globalisation deliver for Europe*. All this preempts the objectives of the entire process – it can be seen not least from the Commission's Staff Working Document *The single market: review of achievements (Commission of the European Communities: The single market: review of achievements Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe. Commission's Staff Working Document. Brussels, SEC(2007) 1521; provisional version)*, there looking at the various benefits – benefits for citizens, benefits for business and the economic benefits. Three preconditions go through the entire argumentation:

- * An automatism of translating economic growth into social progress
 - If we look at the growth of productivity over the last decades and relate this to factors as not least cohesion, overcoming inequality, overcoming poverty and homelessness, enjoyment of leisure time there is no link. – We should not forget that many so-called gains are nothing else than the privatisation of previously socially performed services: this can be equally seen if we look at making travel arrangements or if we look at many social care acts.
- * The orientation of an activation strategy on activating people in order to get into the labour market rather than on activating people by various means, labour market integration being
 - a means
 - an instrument and
 - only finally an objective.

Talking about employment as objective means as well to redefine work and emphasise more than it is currently the case the central meaning of quality employment – creation of quality jobs is already an issue and so is the increasing problem of precarity (*see in this context as well the work of the network SPIRU - <http://www.supi-project.eu/index.php>*). However, required is a stronger emphasis. In this context it is as well of importance to look at globalisation issues in a perspective of their meaning in terms of changing processes of production – a matter that is also largely neglected. Finally, work has to be reconsidered with regard to looking for what actually work is. In other words, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional understanding of 'jobs' – a debate on socially

meaningful activities is pending since a long time although frequent attempts can be found as well in the European Institutions (*not least under the Delors Commission*).

Not denying the problems linked to it, a concrete question is in this context for instance why we find a – though minor – debate on minimum income (*see for instance Communication by the Commission of the European Communities: Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market; Brussels, 17.10.2007. COM(2007) 620 final: 5*) but rarely any mention of concepts as for instance the concept of unconditioned basic income etc.

* The concept of benefits as it is brought forward with the EU-official documents and the concept of well-being are on closer examination static, the dynamic solely being the dynamic in economic terms. In addition to it the real **European** benefits are actually limited even more. We can look at the following suggested benefits:

- *The opportunity to study abroad, which is considered positive by 84% of EU citizens. 1.5 million young people have completed part of their studies in another Member State with the help of the Erasmus programme.*
- *The ability to travel in another Member State: 72% of citizens find travelling within the EU easier than ten years ago, notably in those countries which have signed the Schengen agreement.*
- *The right to work and live abroad: although temporary restrictions remain since the last enlargements, 70% of European citizens consider the possibility of working in another Member State a positive factor. More than 15 million EU citizens have moved across borders to work or to enjoy their retirement. They can vote and stand for office where they live. EU migrant workers enjoy the right to equality of treatment as regards employment, remuneration and other conditions of work, as well as social and tax advantages. They can be accompanied by their family members, irrespective of their nationality. The creation of the European Health Insurance Card has facilitated reimbursement of health care during a temporary stay in another Member State. Legislation and programmes are in place to facilitate the mobility of researchers and guarantee automatic recognition of diplomas in a wide range of professions such as architect, midwife, pharmacist, doctor, nurse, dentist and veterinary surgeon.*

(Commission of the European Communities: The single market: review of achievements Accompanying document to the Communication A single market for 21st century Europe. Commission's Staff Working Document. Brussels, SEC(2007) 1521; provisional version: 3)

Surely, in regard of the various aspects, diverse approaches have to be considered. It has to be welcomed as well that the President of the *European Commission*, José Manuel Durão Barroso, stated in the opening speech of a conference *Beyond GDP* in Brussels on November 19th 2007

You are building on strong foundations. Many international organisations have already started looking at ways of going beyond GDP. More recent generations of economists like Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen have been grappling with the challenge of measuring the somewhat abstract, and multi-dimensional, concept of well-being. The EU's own statistical office, Eurostat, has already published sustainable development indicators for the last six years, and statistics on some sub-categories for even longer.

But while all this is positive, there has been no progress yet in reaching a consensus on well-being indicators. Today is when we start to fix that.

It is not enough for us to talk about the different global challenges, as energy, climate change, health, security and the environment. We need widely accepted communication tools that show progress in these fields. And that progress can only be measured with suitable indicators.

(Barroso, José Manuel Durão: Beyond GDP - Opening Speech; Brussels, November 19th 2007: 3)

However, the challenge is not really one of indicators and about including more issues into the measurement programs. It is of special interest that wider approaches are frequently raised. However, when it comes to the practical policies there is a shift to pragmatic approaches. So we find in the

Consultation Paper from the Bureau of European Policy Advisers on Europe's Social Reality important questions issues tabled.

The conventional view is that greater economic openness drives the innovation and productivity growth that in turn creates the jobs and prosperity on which well-being and better quality of life ultimately depend. But in recent years it has become clear that a significant number of European citizens see globalisation, liberalisation and the drive for greater competitiveness as much as a threat to their well-being as a facilitator of it. Why should this be so? What is at the root of the insecurities that people feel and which result in resistance to openness and a reluctance to face economic change with confidence?

(Liddle, Roger/Lerais, Frédéric: Europe's Social Reality. A Consultation Paper from the Bureau of European Policy Advisers; 5)

However, coming to the analysis, the argument recognises wider approaches; but with regard to both: analysis and drawing up conclusions pragmatism gains overhand.

Within the Commission, DG Research has backed the project of the European Foundation of Social Quality to examine the feasibility of establishing social quality indicators. So far this has led to a comprehensive listing of indicators by researchers under the four headings of socio economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment. The precise definition of indicators is of course highly contestable. To take one example, in assessing socio-economic security and the crucial employment dimension to this, is it legal security in one's existing job that matters or employability in future jobs? Also questions of sustainability cannot be ignored.

The present paper adopts a more impressionistic and selective approach. A simple measure of human well-being may well be the number of 'happy life years' that citizens enjoy: a combination of subjective enjoyment of life with its objective length.

(ibid.: 19)

It has to be said again, that this is not a matter of over-complexity of the alternative approaches – many activities, as for instance the work of the SPC are by no means of little complexity. Rather, there seems to be reluctance to actually put into practice the wider definitions. The problem with it is that we have to deal in any case with contradictions – and policy making is challenged to deal with these contradictions.

From a social quality perspective it is necessary to develop an approach that integrates social and economic issues in the measurements not in terms of what the one does for the other. Rather, the crucial point is to analyse and evaluate the genuinely social aspects of economic processes and vice versa. Looking at the program of the present workshop, I think we have to go beyond many issues mentioned on the agenda. Rather than looking at the contributions from one area towards the other the matter in question is the character of the elements of the objective of the entire process which we define as social quality. As said, social quality is concerned with the means and processes and relations necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment.

In the light of such a definition it is somewhat astonishing that it is in mainstream discussions rather common to use terms as social capital, costs of social policies and of not having them etc.; however, the “social profitability”, if something like this is considered at all, is only seen in the contribution the economy makes to the individual's well-being, perhaps and at most to the well-being of groups. Only in recent times there is some contemplation and action on corporate social responsibility. However, such CSR approaches are limited again as they are in many cases de-linking the social and the individual from another side: there is a demand for contributing to the community, but not towards the individual in the community or the community for the individual. Furthermore and most importantly, the aspect of ‘social profit’ remains outside. It is time to think not only about ‘social capital’ but as well about social profit, i.e. the consideration of

- * socio-economic security
- * social cohesion
- * social inclusion and
- * social empowerment

as actual **objective of the process of production** – the organisation of the productive process decides very much about how society itself is organised.

Conclusions

Four points have to be emphasised at the end.

- * The first is that we are facing the need of integrating policies – thus accepting the need of refocusing policies.
- * The second is to accept the need of rethinking public responsibility. The various debates on the inefficiency of public services and the lack of freedom of choice are very much limited by the fact that arguments for private choice fundamentally neglect the inequality which is in one or another way unavoidable consequence. The attempts of securing justice ex post are not in a position to overcome the shortcomings of producing injustice in the first place. In other words, justice, rights, cohesion etc. are not a matter of regulation but a matter of production.
- * Third, we have to face a paradox. As said, social quality is concerned with the means and processes and relations necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment. However, to achieve this it is necessary to start neither from the societal needs nor from the individual needs. Rather, the central interest is to look at how the links are actually shaped. Looking at the individual and choosing a person-oriented approach means then nothing else than looking at the opportunities society provides to enhance development.
- * Finally, it is most profound to make sure that besides the measures in favour of the most excluded, people being furthest from the labour market etc., social policy is something which is at the core of society. As much as health policy is justifiably not illness policy, social policy is at the end not policy with a-socials – rather, if it is limited in such a way it would actually be society that is be a-social.

A graphic at the end may provide an insight into an admittedly complex approach that considers the different dimension in their interplay – here it is provided as tentative example, focusing on empowerment. The same would be necessary for the remaining dimensions. The disadvantage is the complexity of interdependencies. The advantage is that the considers the real complexity from the outset rather than permanently changing policy issues – in this regard it is not least oriented towards sustainability.

Societal Development			
Systems, institutions, organisations	Access as dimension of socio-economic security in terms of empowerment as <u>personal capability and relationships</u>	Autonomy as dimension of appropriating and utilising resources in order to be capable of <u>actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more</u> distant social and physical environment	Communities, configurations, groups
	Participation as dimension of inclusion in terms of empowerment in terms of empowerment as <u>civic rights (comprising of civil, political and social rights)</u>	Control as dimension of cohesion in terms of empowerment as <u>accessibility of the institutional system</u>	
Biographical Development			

Figure 7: Defining Different Dimensions of empowerment