

Social Quality, Social Services and Indicators: a New European Perspective? Speech for the conference on 'Indicators and Quality of Social Services in a European context'. Organised by the German Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe¹ in Berlin, 16 and 17 October 2002. By Laurent J.G. van der Maesen, Director European Foundation on Social Quality, Amsterdam, November 2002 (EFSQ@Felix.Meritis.nl).²

1. Introduction: about the content and four preliminary points

It is an honour to be invited for giving a speech about one of the main themes of this conference, namely the topic of indicators. I really hope to contribute to the coming debates with help of this presentation. The European Foundation on Social Quality published two studies about the question of 'social quality' with contributions by forty scientists from all over Europe. The first one has been published in June 1997.³ The second one has been published in January 2001.⁴ We suppose these studies demonstrate that the social quality approach may be important for this conference. In this speech I will briefly address two concepts, used in the title of this conference, namely quality and social services. The main concern is the search for adequate indicators in order to determine or to appreciate the nature or quality of the supplied and used social services. In other words, before we look for indicators we have to develop a clear understanding of 'quality' in the light of social services. Only after this step we can develop meaningful indicators. With this in mind I will present the following:

- I will present my understanding of social services seen from a European perspective, and some considerations, connected with the way these services are supplied, by non-profit organisations and by private companies,
- These considerations demonstrate the choice policy-makers and experts have to make about the herewith-related suppositions concerning human subjects. The social quality initiative will be presented as a recent endeavour for addressing this choice.
- Especially this initiative may challenge scientists, policy-makers, experts, carers, volunteers and users to stimulate new ideas about the connection between social services and their quality.
- With the outcomes of this point in mind I will present the Foundation's search for new indicators,
- This speech continues with endeavours to stimulate a debate about the comparison of this search with the work of ZUMA in Mannheim, the Belgium-group oriented on indicators of social inclusion (presented during the last Belgium Presidency) and the coming activities of the Dublin Foundation for the Improving of Living and Working Conditions,
- Finally I will present some considerations about the meaning of this comparison for this German Observatory's coming activities.

Before starting I like to make four preliminary remarks. The first point regards a *political question*. The essence of the social quality approach is the emphasis of democratic values and norms for modern societies be it on the national or European level. Such values have a crucial role in paving the way for equity all over Europe. The focus is on the position and the role of citizens.

¹ To this conference contributed six German Welfare Associations, the Bundesministry for Family, Elderly, Women and Children and the ISS.

² For time reasons the actual speech had to be a shortened version of this text. I will thank Peter Herrmann for his corrections.

³ W.A.Beck, L.J.G. van der Maesen, A.C.Walker (eds), '*Social Quality of Europe*'. The Hague/London/Boston: Kluwer, Law, International, 1997 (the paperback edition is published by Policy Press, Bristol, 1998).

⁴ W.A.Beck, L.J.G. van der Maesen, F. Thomése, A.C.Walker (eds), '*Social Quality: A New Vision for Europe*'. The Hague/London/Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2001.

The second point regards an *ontological question*. The main focus of the social quality approach concerns a specific interpretation of 'individual subjects' as actors (see third section). It does not regard situations or given facts in connection with these subjects. With this approach the consequences of (by definition) top-down policies are analysed from the perspective of these acting individuals. The question is if policies support these individuals in such a way that they will be enabled to cope in a more appropriate way with their circumstances and opportunities.

The third point concerns an *ethical question*. This should be taken on board before the application of instruments. Here I will refer to Zygmunt Bauman's lecture, given during the conference admitted to hundred year social work in The Netherlands, three years ago. According to Bauman, "the question 'am I my brother's keeper?', which not long ago was thought to be answered once for all and so seldom heard, is asked again, more clearly by the day. And people wishing for a 'yes' answer try desperately, yet with no evident success, to make it sound convincing in the cool and businesslike language of interest. What they should do instead is to reassert, boldly and explicitly, the ethical reason for the welfare state. Thus the only reason the welfare state needs to justify itself in a humane and civilised society is its ethical foundation. There is no guarantee whatsoever that the ethical argument would cut much ice in a society in which the competitiveness, cost/benefit calculation, profitability and other free-market commandments rule supreme and join forces. But the issue of guarantee is neither here nor there, since the ethical argument is the welfare state's only remaining line of defence."⁵

The fourth point regards a *methodological question*. In ultimate sense we like to know how citizens are supported by provided social services and how they feel about it. It concerns citizens, living in vital communities and enjoining their position or, for example, citizens who are completely isolated and not respected anymore, unable to cope with their own circumstances. For this reason we will be confronted with highly subtle existential questions which change rapidly in recent times. Under the same circumstances this feeling may differ, for example, between Swedish and Portuguese citizens. Therefore, instruments for measuring these specific outcomes in different regions and cities of Europe should be especially appropriate for users living in different circumstances. How to compare the outcomes for users and for processes to enhance their position with this in mind? Furthermore we need independent experts who will interpret the users' conclusions by applying general accepted criteria for their judgement.⁶ Therefore indicators – being technical instruments - can not be sufficient for addressing these subtle existential questions with regard to the meaning of social services.⁷

2. Social services, the non-for-profit supply, the market and quality

In my understanding social services concern activities in the social work field, home work, health and social care in the communities (hospitals, day clinics, day care centres), assistance for elderly, children, disabled people and homeless people, etc. It does not regard aspects of the social security system, oriented on the distribution of income. In the case of inadequate distribution of income especially social work as an aspect of social services has often to cope with the human and financial consequences. Mostly it is the handmaiden of economic policies. Notwithstanding that, it will be provided by non-profit organisations, institutions from the local government and as well as profit

⁵ Z. Bauman, 'Am I My Brother's Keeper?: a speech for the Dutch Association of Social Work', Amsterdam: Stichting Brekend Vaatwerk, September 1999. Chapter 17 of the Foundation's second book (see note -4) opens with this ethical and normative point.

⁶ This theme refers to the Foundations distinction between indicators, profiles and criteria for judgements about quality, see note-4, Chapter-18.

⁷ L.J.G. van der Maesen, A.C. Walker, 'Social Quality: the Theoretical State of Affairs'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, June 2002. In this document the Foundation introduced its methodological triangle, connecting the measuring instruments indicators, profiles and criteria.

oriented private companies. Thanks or due to the ongoing unification of Europe the question of comparability of the nature of these social goods by suppliers and their meaning for users will become more and more important. That is especially the case if on European level the political drive is to stimulate circumstances that allow equity for all citizens. Logically, this political drive is an outcome of the ethical standard I referred to earlier on. In consequence the main methodological question is how to develop instruments to determine, to appreciate and to compare the nature of supplied and used social services in the communities and in the homes of people. Are there differences between East and West Germany, between North-Rhine Westphalia and Holland, between Scotland and the Provence?

Equity does not mean resemblance or equality. Connected with the political choice for subsidiarity every nation state or Bundesstaat should translate in its own way general accepted principals to local circumstances in order to create equity and fairness. That means, for example, that elderly in the Centre of Paris may be even strong assisted to cope with their daily circumstances as elderly in Leipzig. However, because their circumstances differ the nature of support should be different. But for both groups the support is meant to create conditions for a dignified life in a specific place and at a specific moment.⁸ With this in mind the strengthening of the Union require a debate about the comparison of the nature of supply and the meaning for its users. Therefore this conference is more than welcome. But is the necessity for this comparison evident? I suppose not for all people. From a neo-monetarists perspective with their business-like language of interest the plea is to open markets for a rational distribution of these social goods. And it is clear that many dominant players in the health care sector are eager to follow the example of the American 'Health Maintenance Companies'. Their, health provision is a matter of private calculation and profitability, thus leaving the public hospitals as a provision only for marginalised groups.⁹

For successfully applying market instruments for the distribution of social goods, the commodification of these social goods is a condition. They have to be negotiable and have therefore been expressed in amounts of money. For thousand and one things this is acceptable. Market instruments are a condition to live in freedom, to make our own choices. The abolition of the market during the Russian experiment was not an elaboration of the Enlightenment, on the contrary. For a successful use of the market we have to know if investments will deliver enough profit. We need so-called quantitative based performance indicators in order to design market strategies for its profitability.¹⁰ Than the concept of 'quality' understood as 'the totality of characteristics of an entity that bear on its ability to satisfy stated and implied needs' is not relevant for this commodification.¹¹ In these cases market instruments create, according to Vilfredo Pareto, the logical optimum between supply and demand. With this paradigm in mind, the question of comparability makes no sense either. If we create really open markets, the potential demand will steer the supply, between Finland and Hungary, between Wales and Denmark.

3. The necessity of a fundamental choice: the perspective of social quality

⁸ See for this theme Chapter 5 of the Foundation's second book (see note -4): M. Calloni, 'Gender Relations and Daily Life: Towards a Cross-Cultural Approach', pp.69-85.

⁹ J. Kozol, '*Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*'. New York: Crown Publishers, 1995.

¹⁰ In this case an indicator is a measure for values expressed in an amount of money.

¹¹ See Annex 11 of the conference paper, a quotation of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), Frankfurt am Main: ISS-FFM, May 2002.

Why to worry about the question of comparability on the European level and a dignified life for all citizens as we implicitly did in forgoing sections? Why to focus ourselves on a European perspective if policy-makers and civil servants worked for years to create an open market and daily newspapers are taken up completely by the development of competitiveness, cost-and-effects calculation, profitability and other free-market commandments? If we do not believe market instruments are appropriate for distributing *all* social goods in order to obtain a dignified life than we have to give some arguments. We have to demonstrate that the neo-monetarist paradigm is not sufficient for creating equity and fairness. The argument may be that we do not agree with the utilitarian approach neo-monetarists accept for understanding what human subjects are. But in the literature about indicators with regard to the social and cultural dimension of Member States and regions we rarely find a debate about the underlying propositions with which to legitimise the development of these indicators. Thus we seldom find the explanation of this argument.

In the social quality initiative this topic is crucial. If we do not agree with the neo-monetarist paradigm we need indicators for exploring the quality¹² of, for example, social services in order to contribute to the indispensable completion of the market under modern circumstances. In our Foundation's second study, the editors explained that human subjects are not atoms of an aggregated whole, only preventing discomfort and striving for profit and personal success on the base of a deep reaching rivalry between the generations.¹³ According to Jan van Kilsdonk, this interpretation refers also to the Greek legend, Oedipus, "which has captivated and driven depth psychology to portray the deadly threat, rivalry and jealousy between successive generations. Therefore in every human subject should be hidden such an Oedipus. Overlooked, however, in the attention to Oedipus is another myth concerning father and son, the myth of Aeneas. It is every bit as Greek as that of Oedipus, though it has been handed down to us principally through the work of the most famous poet of Latin World, Virgil. When Troy is ablaze, close to its final and complete destruction, Aeneas, one of its great heroes, flees the city with his wife and son, but not without bearing on his shoulders his aged father, Anchises. Crippled and blinded by the gods (....) Aeneas carries him on the shoulders – and on his way to founding the empire (....) In our society, and in the field of psychiatry particularly, the Oedipus complex and its doctrine of deadly rivalry and fear of parents, has been extraordinarily influential in not only explaining but determining our behaviour."¹⁴

In contradistinction to the utilitarian propositions human subjects are, according to scientists cooperating with our Foundation for developing social quality, *social beings*. They interact with each other for their self-realisation in the context of the formation of collective identities as families, communities, other groups etc. Between both, processes of self-realisation and the formation of these collective identities, exists a dialectical relation. The one unfolds itself through the other. This will constitute 'the social' and the social world.¹⁵ The social is the outcome of constantly changing processes through which human subjects realise themselves as interactive social beings. The main question is what policies or interventions of citizens, policy-makers, civil servants are needed to contribute to this dialectic for supporting citizens' self-realisation in the context of the formation of *acceptable* collective identities and vice versa?

¹² I really mean 'exploring', because indicators can not be enough for determining 'quality', see note -6 and 7.

¹³ See note-4, Chapter 17.

¹⁴ Jan van Kilsdonk sj, 'Foreword', in: A. van Heusden, EM van den Eerenbeemt, I. Boszormenyi-Nagy, '*Balance in motion. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy's Vision on Individual and Family Therapy*'. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1987.

¹⁵ This refers as well as to A. Honneth, '*The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*'. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.

These policies and interventions should be oriented on the development of *social quality*. In the Foundation's first book it is defined as

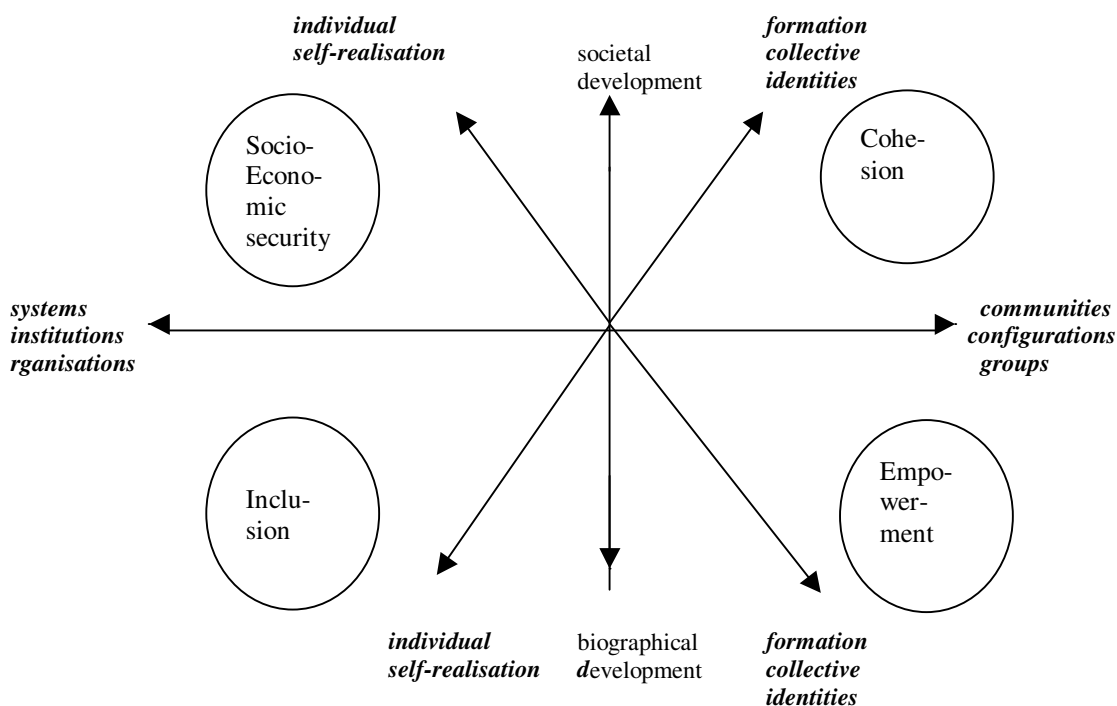
“the extent to which people are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well being and individual potential”.¹⁶

The Foundation's first and second books are consecrated to the development of the theory of social quality. Thanks to this permanent 'symposium' in the second book distinctions are made between:

- (i) its *constitutional factors*, namely processes concerning the above mentioned dialectic,
- (ii) its *objective conditional factors*, namely that people have to have access to *socio-economic security*, the they must experience *inclusion* in political, economic and social systems, that they should be able to live in communities characterised by a sufficient level of *cohesion* and that they must be *empowered* to be able to take advantage of opportunities,
- (iii) Furthermore, human subjects orient themselves on self-reference. That means we as well have to consider the cognitive, motivational and affective aspects of self-interpretation as they are in definition crucial aspects of interacting human subjects. These concern the *subjective conditional factors*. They may be seen as a logical consequence of the recognition of the constitutional factors.¹⁷

The connection between the constitutional factors and the objective conditional factors is illustrated in the following quadrant:

Figure 1: The Social Quality Quadrant¹⁸



¹⁶ See note-3, Chapter 20.

¹⁷ The distinction between criteria, indicators and profiles (see note-4) refers to different instruments for measuring respectively constitutional, objective conditional and subjective conditional factors (see note-6).

¹⁸ See note-4, p. 315. Thanks to recent theorizing social quality this one-dimensional quadrant will be changed in a multi-dimensional one. See furthermore, note-7.

4. *Theories, policies and the debate on social services and their quality*

The question was ‘why to worry about the comparability and a dignified life?’ The reason is that human subjects are no mechanic, egocentric beings, acting as a homo oeconomicus.¹⁹ They are social beings and constitute the social as a reality. Accepting that market instruments are necessary for the production and distribution of a manifold of goods, this does not mean that they are appropriate for a lot of specific, so-called social goods. In order to make a choice between the application of market-instruments or means of political steering we need *a theory* about the nature of human subjects in contemporary society. In our opinion the essential mistake made by many neo-monetarists is to legitimate the application of market instruments for coping with all human dimensions and assessing all living conditions of citizens. Even the think-tank of the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies accepts that the theory and practice of free market on a global level (based on utilitarian propositions) will destroy the identities of historically rooted communities. It says, “this turbo capitalism reduces human beings to objects of profit making and causes the commodification of all manifestations of nature and culture”.²⁰

I suppose the famous institute ZUMA in Mannheim is completely convinced of that question. This may explain its drive to develop indicators with which to contribute to policy instruments for an acceptable distribution of social goods as well. They accept the concept of *quality of life*. According to ZUMA, this concept is the most prominent and widely used theoretical framework for assessing living conditions in societies. It supposes, this very broad and multidimensional notion of quality of life enlarged the perspective of societal development by considering not only economic aspects but also social and ecological concerns.²¹ But in our opinion a concept is not identical with a theoretical framework. And the question is not the neglect of social and ecological aspects but the lack of a comprehensive theoretical framework with which to address economic, social, cultural, juridical and ecological questions from the same point of view. This will support us to elaborate the interrelationships between these aspects in theory, politics and the praxis of daily life. Herewith we refer to one of the differences between the quality of life approach and the social quality approach.²² From the side of ZUMA the ‘quality of life’ approach is logically connected with ideas about ‘*social capital*’. This concept is strongly promoted by the World Bank. The drive is to complement the dominant economic approach. It is also addressing a neglect. But is the essence of the meaning ‘capital’ concerning ‘economic capital’ projected in ‘social capital’ (as well as ‘cultural capital’)? In other words, is this neglect implicitly addressed by applying propositions underlining the dominant approach?²³ Representatives of the World Bank suppose that the free market and economic growth

¹⁹ U.J.Heuser, ‘Die Revolution hat begonnen: Auf Wiedersehen, Homo oeconomicus’, *Zie Zeit* (nr.43), 17 Oktober 2002, p.19. “For long times scientists thought human beings act rational. Recent economic researchers know how people really make their choices and decisions. They do not accept the old theory anymore”.

²⁰ D.H.Lamparter, F.Vorjolz, ‘Das WTO-Fiasko: Der Kapitalismus macht ungleich. Der US-Ökonom Edward Luttwak über den globalen Vormarsch des Turbokapitalismus und über Gerhard Schröder and Tony Blair’. *Die Zeit*, 1999, 9 December, 50, 25.

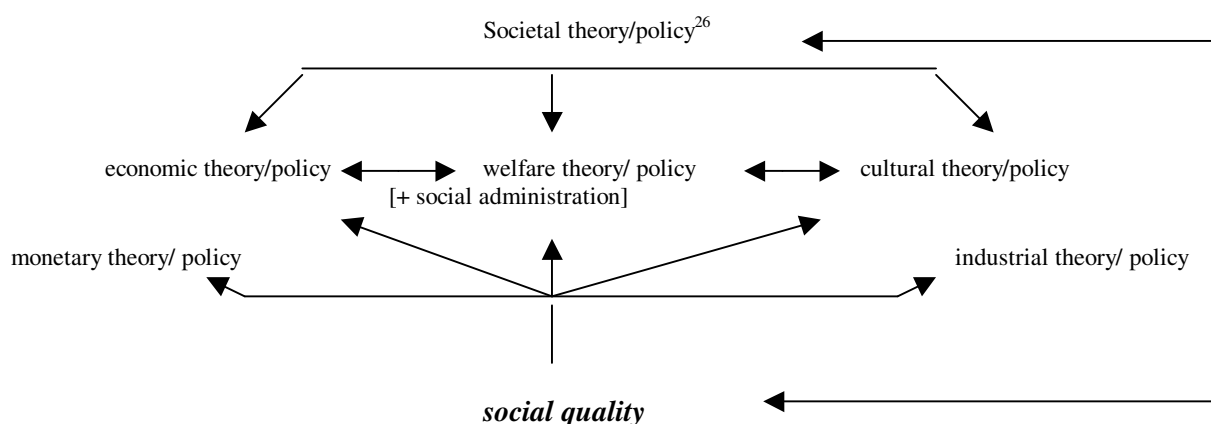
²¹ R. Berger-Schmitt, ‘*Social Cohesion as an Aspect of the Quality of Societies; Concept and Measurement*’. Mannheim: ZUMA, *Eureporting Working Paper no.14, 2000*.

²² In a General Paper for the Foundation’s expert-meeting developing ‘indicators social quality’ the comparison with interpretations by ZUMA on ‘quality of life’ and ‘societal quality’ and the ‘social quality’ approach is more extended, see: W.A.Beck, M. Keizer, L.J.G. van der Maesen, D. Philips, ‘*General Paper on Behalf of the first Plenary meeting of the Network ‘Indicators Social Quality*’. Amsterdam: EFSQ, October 2001.

²³ Social Development Department, ‘The Initiative on Defining, Monitoring and Measuring Social Capital: Overview and Program Description’. Washington: World Bank (not a formal publication), April 1998. Notwithstanding our questions, there is affinity between the ‘social capital approach’ and the ‘social quality

will help the poorest.²⁴ If this may be the case, for a coherent intellectual and policy development there should be a connection made between the social capital promotion and this neo-monetarist supposition. If that may be true, ZUMA is as well confronted with a theoretical problem with practical policy consequences. Therefore, our question seems relevant. In figure-2 we will present an illustration of the main drive of the social quality initiative. It will not address a 'neglect', but it will stimulate the development of a new paradigm.

Figure 2: the Social Quality approach to connect theories and policies²⁵



In many ministries of national states the drive is to privatise a lot of aspects of social services and especially the health care. But which theory do they apply in order to legitimise their proposals which aspects of social services can be distributed by the market and why other aspects not? In the Netherlands we are confronted with the idea of the competitiveness between hospitals in order to reduce waiting lists. Developing these types of proposals without a transparent theory about daily existence and – in this case – the role of hospitals in regions – paves the way for unclear operations. With regard to Germany Adalbert Evers and Christoph Strünck published outcomes of herewith-related research. They demonstrate that especially on the level of policy-making the 'contract culture' came into the footlights with which to introduce implicitly a quasi-market system for German social services with very restricted rights and incentives for political intervention of public authorities in the future. They notice, 'It is about imitating market mechanisms for getting more transparency of cost-performance relationships, more incentives for improvement and more incentive for a kind of entrepreneurial behaviour on the side of the service-providing organization (...) The impact of contracts beyond their role for managerial reform depends on clientilistic and personalized relationships with key figures (in the field and civil-servants) and not on a political a political contro-

approach'. It is very worthwhile to analyse the similarities and differences, to explain them and to understand the consequences for policy-makers and especially the role and positions of citizens.

²⁴ D. Dollar, A. Kraay, 'Growth is Good for the Poor'. Washington: World Bank, 2000.

²⁵ See note-7. This figure illustrates the ambition to develop a comprehensive theory with which to develop points of departure for theoretical based forms of communication between different disciplines in order to create a coherent and consistent systems of concepts.

²⁶ Societal policies regard comprehensive targets. Social policies are in fact 'social administration policies' and regard a specific or limited targets. They are in definition top-down approaches based on politics. See: A.C. Walker, 'Social Panning'. Oxford: Blackwell, 1984.

versies or a consented policy [referring to herewith related theories and politics] (...) The public authorities may be just concerned with getting rid of a political and social responsibility at lowest possible costs. In face of partners, which have just such reduced concern, those social initiatives will win, which serve this interest most successfully.²⁷

Social services are, according to Finnish civil servants and policy makers, an important target for the social protection policies. They accept a broad definition of social protection, including social services and its health care provisions. On European level these policies could be put high on the agenda if they should be functional for economic politics and policies. Therefore the Commission presented the idea of 'social protection as a productive factor'.²⁸ In other words policies for developing social services are especially welcomed if they appear as a productive factor for economic policies. In our opinion not the neglect of social aspects is the question. The question is the application of a specific political theory with which to define social services as a support for economic policies and outcomes. Aspects of this same political theory came implicitly into the footlights during the Lisbon Summit, but in this case turned upside down. This conference's papers referred to its outcomes, namely the acceptance of a new connection between economic policies, employment policies and social policies, the so-called Lisbon triangle. During this Summit a form of causal reasoning was produced. By connecting employment policies with economic policies and by developing Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world we will strengthen, according the outcomes of this Summit, the social cohesion of communities as well.²⁹ This causal relation is not explained, be it theoretically, or be it in an empirical perspective.³⁰ For this conference this is an important point because in this perspective the rationality of social services is derived from the acceptance of the handmaiden position of these services, as well as from a questionable causality.³¹

A specific remark about the quality of social services may end this section. From the side of our Foundation the quality of social services is highly important. They play an important role in the objective conditions of social quality, for example concerning socio-economic security, cohesion and empowerment. But as noticed earlier, especially users of social services will understand their meaning for support regarding the enhancement of well being and individual potentials of their personal conditions and circumstances. According to Maria Calloni, "quality derives from the Latin word *qualitas*, which comes from *qualis* that means 'of what kind'. Quality is thus a distinguishing attribute and 'essential' character, determining a specific 'property' belonging both to an object and subject. For this reasons it also refers to the 'nature' of human beings, i.e. their 'ontology'.³² In other words the concept of quality is immediately connected with the nature of the self-realisation of social beings in connection with their collective identities. Therefore we have to explain our ideas about human beings in order to discuss the theme of quality. It matters which propositions are accepted.

²⁷ A. Evers, C. Strünck, 'Answers without Questions' The changing Contract Culture in Germany and the future of a Mixed Welfare System', in: U. Ascoli, C. Ranci (eds), 'Dilemmas of the Welfare Mix: The New Structure of Welfare in an Era of Privatization'. New York/Boston/Dordrecht/London, Moscow: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2002, pp.165-195, p.180, p.182, p. 190

²⁸ European Commission, '*Modernising and Improving Social Protection in the European Union*'. Brussels; COM (97), 102, 1997.

²⁹ European Council, '*Presidency Conclusions*'. Lisbon: Press Release SN 100/00 EN, 2, March 2000, p.2.

³⁰ See for a clear comment on this theme Chapter 6 of the Foundation's second book (see note -4): K. van Kersbergen, 'Welfare State Theory and Social Quality', pp. 87 -103.

³¹ DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission published this 'Lisbon triangle' in the plans for the social Policy Agenda. On the top of the triangle is 'social policy' and its constitutional aspects are 'cohesion' and 'social quality'. Nevertheless, this DG's interpretation of 'social quality' is not in line with the social quality approach, presented by the European Foundation on Social Quality. See for an extensive explanation, note-7.

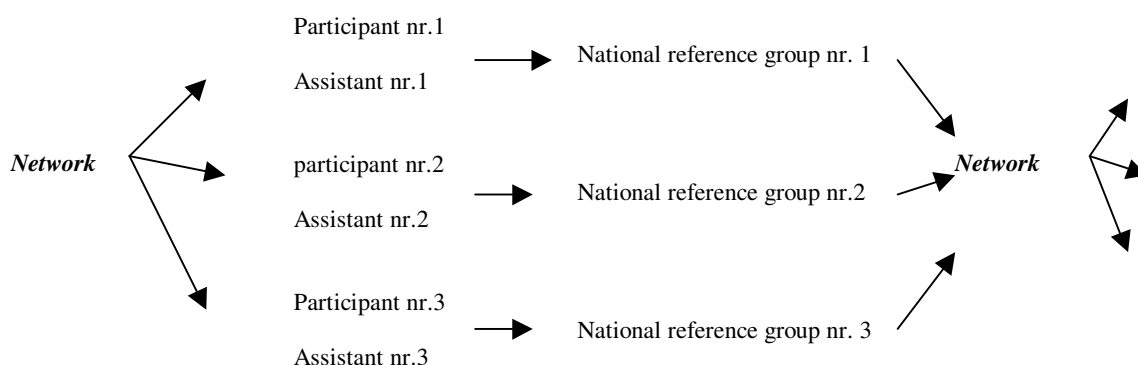
³² See note-8, p. 72.

Furthermore we have to ask which herewith related ideas are put forward in the 'quality of life' approach, the 'quality of society' approach and in discussions about 'social capital' and 'cultural capital'? The social quality initiative addresses explicitly the ontology of human subjects.

5. *The Foundation's search for indicators*

After completing its second study the Foundation started the process of operationalising its theoretical approach. With support from DG Research of the European Commission it created a European Network with fourteen scientists (and their institutes) and two European based NGOs, namely the European Anti Poverty Network and the International Council on Social Welfare (European Region). Each of the participants has appointed a scientific assistant. Both, participants and assistants will create a national reference group of scientist from different disciplines and representative of national NGOs, connected with both European ones. The purpose is to develop a permanent dialogue between the Network and the fourteen national reference groups, see figure-3.

Figure 3: *Co-operation between (European) Network and national reference groups*³³



The Network starts with the elaboration of the four objective conditional factors or components, presented in figure-1: (i) socio-economic security, (ii) cohesion, (iii) inclusion and (iv) empowerment. With this in mind it defines related domains, their sub-domains and herewith-connected indicators. In October 2001 it started with the component 'socio-economic security'. The main question is to explore the meaning of 'indicators' for grasping the social quality with regard to these four components. These are not measures expressing values calculated in monetary terms. They have to be appropriate for pronouncing outcomes of processes in the context of the four components as objective conditional factors with which to enhance individual well being and individual potentials. These processes are logical interwoven with the main dialectic between self-realisation and formation of collective identities. The function of these indicators is to deliver points of departure for concluding about processes concerning citizens as acting subjects. Do they augment or reduce the social quality of the four components.³⁴

³³ M. Keizer cs, 'Working Paper Network Indicators Social Quality'. Amsterdam; EFSQ, June 2002.

³⁴ They concern objective conditional factors. The subjective conditional factors should be analysed by profiles to present the user's impression about their feelings of the outcomes of policies, provisions etc, see note -6 and 7.

The outcomes will be discussed in the national reference groups and both, participants and assistants, will start the search of existing data, relevant for the articulated indicators. The Network and its national reference groups will not start the search for new data, if relevant ones are missing. Therefore, it will try to co-operate with, for example, ZUMA and especially the Dublin Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions. The challenge is to address all theoretical questions I put forward in this speech. If the social quality approach is really new, than the final indicators related to this specific theoretical approach should create new knowledge with which to underpin public policies in the near future.³⁵

We hope it may be clear that up till now the accent was laid upon the development of a theory with which to approach our daily reality. Therefore we need indicators (and profiles and criteria) in order to conclude about the nature or quality of this reality. To be able to make conclusions with respect to 'quality' we need an acceptable theory of the ontology of individual subjects as social beings. Therefore, the meaning of 'indicator' - what do we mean by it? - is highly determined by the theory we apply in order to approach daily reality and the outcomes of policies for stimulating or preventing processes in daily circumstances. In our opinion there are four questions - and see the forgoing sections - which are important for developing indicators, their meaning and their applicability. In our opinion we can not speak about 'indicators' as such, referring to unquestionably evidence.³⁶

- (i) What is the political ambition of the institute, group or network with which to address aspects of daily circumstances?
- (ii) With help of which ontological based theory do they operationalise this ambition?
- (iii) Which ethical standards will be applied for confronting ad-ii with daily circumstances?
- (iv) Which indicators are supposed to clarify ad-iii (and what is the precise meaning of those types of indicators with ad-ii and ad-i in mind)?

6. *An endeavour for comparison with ZUMA, the Belgium Group and the Dublin Foundation*

Before addressing this theme of my speech I like to make two remarks. First, from the side of our Foundation the work done and the work proposed by ZUMA, the Belgium Group and the Dublin Foundation is highly appreciated and seems impressive. That is the reason why we hope to co-operate with their representatives as much as possible. Second, our Foundation is a real small enterprise, notwithstanding that we are very enthusiastic. We are not afraid for choosing difficult pathways. We also are completely independent. But we suppose, as I tried to explain, to open interesting pathways for getting a new vision about the future of Europe, see therefore the Foundation's second book. Furthermore, we suppose to differ from the approaches of the institutes, mentioned above, without losing our appreciation. In other words we try to challenge our scientific colleagues, policy-makers, experts and groups or organised citizens. If we discuss social cohesion, or social inclusion, social protection, public health, social economics, social market, social exclusion, public and individual poverty etc you have to know what the individual, the social and the public is. In the Western debate, public health has nothing to do with the public but with bio-physiological questions of individual

³⁵ Thanks to DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission our Foundation tried to address employment policies from the perspective of social quality. Nine universities in Europe contributed to this challenge. In fact this project started too early. It could not refer to the Network Indicators. Nevertheless their outcomes demonstrate the new perspective, presenting the need for a new approach of policies. See: '*Joint Report: Social Quality and the Policy Domain of Employment*'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, April 2002.

³⁶ See our four preliminary remarks, section-1.

subjects. Social epidemiology is oriented on individual bio-physiological questions as well and does not worry about the social.³⁷

During discussions on European level concepts as social cohesion or social inclusion seem to be evident. Nevertheless, we miss definitions with which to create theoretical and political consensus about their meaning. We lack a consistent and coherent conceptual scheme. Therefore, we do not really discuss and dispute with each other because the lacking of a common frame of reference. Policy-makers are not happy with this comment. They will act and always as soon as possible. The consequence is that we apply for years on European level incoherent and inconsistent concepts with, in fact, unacceptable forms of causal reasoning.³⁸ The enlargement of the European Union causes extra problems, because Poland or Hungary is confronted for decades with a totally different paradigm about, for example, the position and role of citizens, their rights and possibilities. Their acceptance of unclear concepts used in Western Europe will stimulate additional confusion.

In the following sub-sections I will refer to the four questions I made in the foregoing section, namely about the political ambition (ad-i), the ontology referred to (ad-ii), the ethical dimension (ad-iii), and the herewith-related methodological question (ad-iv). In the context of the European Foundation on Social Quality three scientific contributions are related with this methodological question. We did some preparatory work already.³⁹

6.1 Some questions with regard to ZUMA

In the fourth section I referred to the work of ZUMA. Their political ambition (ad-i) is to address a neglect, namely the missing of attention for social and ecological aspects. Therefore we should also analyse these aspects because not only economics matters. ZUMA refers (ad-ii) to the theoretical framework of the 'quality of life'. We made some comments on this referral and, on this occasion, we may ask what is the connection between this approach with the political ambition? This institute published (ad-iii) important papers concerning cohesion and referred to the ongoing debate in Canada as well. We have to discuss the question what the theoretical relation is between the supposed interpretation of 'social cohesion' and the concept of 'quality of life' and therefore ZUMA's ambition. Finally, ZUMA (ad-iv) produced a high standard index of indicators. They are based on far-reaching methodological considerations. Nevertheless some questions remain. First, what is the precise meaning of applied 'indicators' with the outcomes of point-iii in mind? Second, which data are relevant for the chosen indicators in order to underpin the theoretical approach (ad-ii) for realising its political ambition (ad-i). Third, which understanding of the dynamic of daily reality (ad-ii) is

³⁷ L.J.G. van der Maesen, H.G.J. Nijhuis, 'Continuing the Debate on the Philosophy of Modern Public Health: Social Quality as a Point of Reference'. *European Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, (2000), 54, nr.2, pp. 134-14

³⁸ See for example Jan Berting's serious comment on the meaning and application of the concept of social exclusion. J. Berting, C. Villain-Gandossi, 'Urban Transformations, The French Debate and Social Quality', in the Foundation's second book, Chapter-10 (see note-4), pp. 173-194.

³⁹ (i) D.Bouget, 'The Empirical and Policy Relevance of Social Quality', in the Foundation's second book, Chapter-7 (see note-3), pp. 105-124; (ii) D. Phillips and Y. Berman, 'Definitional, Conceptual and Operational Issues', in the Foundation's second book, Chapter -8 (see note-4), pp. 125-141; (iii) I. Svetlik, 'Some Conceptual and Operational Considerations on the Social Quality of Europe', in: *European Journal of Social Quality*, (1999), Vol. 1, Issues 1 & 2, pp. 74-90.

underpinning the nature of the chosen indicators in order to choose relevant data for interpreting the nature of daily circumstances?

6.2 Some questions with regard to the Belgium group

In order to prepare the past Belgium Presidency its Minister Vandebroucke took the initiative to clarify ideas about poverty in the Member States. The purpose was (ad-i) to create a common European point of departure for combating poverty in the Member States under the stage-management of its national governments. This is called the open method of co-ordination. The outcomes were presented in the book about Social Indicators.⁴⁰ In his Foreword the minister noticed, that ‘the set of statistical concepts and definitions included in this Indicators report represents in effect a toolbox of instruments that will allow member states to use a common language for assessment in the area of poverty and social exclusion (...) This will enable policy -making to be more transparent for the citizens of Europe.’⁴¹ During the Laeken Summit the outcomes played an important and constructive role. The conference’ papers refer to this Summit’s acceptance of ten primary indicators about poverty in the Member States.⁴² For participants of this conference as well as for the elaboration of the German Observatory for the Development of Social Services in Europe this book is very important. Our Network Indicators Social Quality will take on board not only the outcomes of ZUMA up till now, but this book as well.

The contributors did explicitly not refer (ad-ii) to a theoretical point of departure: ‘Important work has been undertaken on ‘the Social Quality of Europe’ (...) and this is now being taken further in a Network on Social Quality that forms part of the Fifth Framework programme [as well as] the Eu-Reporting Project, co-ordinated by ZUMA in Mannheim (...) It is not our purpose to cover the same field here. Our aim is more pragmatic: to take forward the development of indicators for social inclusion at this crucial stage for the European social agenda’.⁴³ In other words, they claim to remain as practical as possible. The book addresses questions of poverty, social exclusion, social inclusion but we may ask what the difference is between these concepts and its consequences for the nature of indicators? We mentioned above the herewith related problems. The Belgium Ministry of Social Affairs and Pensions and the contributors of this book seem to be clear with regard to the ethical standards with which to address daily reality (ad-iii). Nevertheless, they remain rather implicit. They referred to European based strategies for establishing ‘standards of excellence’ in the social policy area as ‘a common value of the European social framework.’⁴⁴

Finally, the contributors of the book presented their principles of indicator construction (ad-iv): ‘the social performance indicators should in principle be concerned with outputs rather than inputs. The aim is to measure social outcomes, not the means by which they are achieved. The focus on outputs is stressed since statistics on inputs are more readily available than those on outputs.’⁴⁵ One of the

⁴⁰ A. Atkinson, B. Cantillon, E. Marlier, B. Nolan, ‘*Social Indicators: the EU and Social Inclusion*’. Oxford; University Press, 2002.

⁴¹ See note-40, p. viii.

⁴² Social Protection Committee, ‘*Report on Indicators in the Field of Poverty and Social Exclusion*’. Brussels: European Commission, October 2001

⁴³ See note-40, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ See note-40, p. vi. Especially to understand what this means is the question. See our referrals to ‘social protection as a productive factor’, the lack of theoretical instruments to approach economic policies, social policies and cultural policies from the same point of view, the neo-monetarist dominance in European economic policies etc.

⁴⁵ See note-40, pp. 20-26.

principles is that ‘indicators should identify the essence of the problem and have a clear and accepted normative interpretation.’⁴⁶ This exercise is crucial for all people – scientists, policy-makers, experts, and citizens – who are engaged with the development of indicators in order to address aspects of daily reality. But analysing their proposals we have to ask ourselves how to articulate the ‘essence of the problem’ without clarifying the connection between political ambition (ad-i), theoretical propositions (ad-ii) and the applied ethical standards (ad-iii). As noticed before, indicators do not refer to unquestionable evidence. What does a pragmatic aim concerning the construction of indicators mean?

6.3 Some questions with regard to the coming activities of the Dublin Foundation

Up to recently the European Foundation in Dublin for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions was especially oriented on working conditions. In the coming years it will concentrate itself on livings conditions as well. The main argument is that not only economics matters (ad-i). This Foundation notices a lack of understanding by neglecting non-economic affairs on European level and therefore the underdevelopment of data for concluding about the nature of living conditions. It is the motive to assess a fundamental neglect. Thanks to the European Commission the Dublin Foundation will dispose of important facilities to develop panel surveys all over Europe in order to gather new data. Its political ambition will be operationalised by the application of the theory of ‘quality of life’ (ad-ii). It published a document for explaining this choice.⁴⁷ But this document only mentioned this theory without clarifying the reasons for this choice. We read that this concept may legitimise a set of core aims as: (a) raising living standards and improving living and working conditions, (b) strengthening social cohesion and combating exclusion, (c) promoting equal opportunities, and (d) safeguarding sustainability. But especially this legitimisation implies a clear understanding of the applied conceptual framework and its coherent and consistent connections of herewith related concepts. But this is lacking. In order to accentuate the normative aspects of indicators – and see the plea of the Belgium group – the applied ethical standards (ad-iii) have to be articulated in order to understand the political ambition (ad-i) in connection with the theoretical approach (ad-ii). This implies a very precise articulation of the herewith-related causality. But in the Dublin Foundation’s document we read, that “there is substantial evidence that an analytic approach to social and economic processes can generate knowledge that contributes to the policy making process without the need to become bogged down in philosophical discussions of causality”.⁴⁸ The authors suppose that its conceptual framework may identify ‘twelve quality of life domains’.⁴⁹ Important is the distinction between descriptive indicators and analytical indicators (ad-iv). The purpose is to understand with the analytical ones processes that influence the distribution of the ‘quality of life’ indicators within and between countries. This referral is important for the Network on Social Quality Indicators. But for understanding we have to know how to connect its attention for analytical indicators with the nature of its normative approach (ad-iii), its theoretical point of departure (ad-ii) and political ambition (ad-i). How to explain, for example, the choice of the twelve domains and which consequences have these domains for the nature of indicators?

⁴⁶ See note-40, p. 21.

⁴⁷ T. Fahey, B. Nolan, C. T. Whelan, ‘Monitoring Living Conditions and Quality of Life in Europe; Developing the Conceptual Framework’. Dublin: EFILWC, August 2002.

⁴⁸ See note-47, p. 1.

⁴⁹ See note-47, p.2.

7. Some considerations

I presented four points with which to approach the ZUMA-activities, the Belgium initiative and the Dublin Foundation's plans. Implicitly I compared this with the approach of the Network Indicators Social Quality. This Network just started to define these indicators by articulating the empirical and political consequences of the theory on social quality. In other words, the fourth point – the development of indicators – is just leaving its antenatal phase. The outcomes of the three approaches mentioned above are more than welcome. Nevertheless, the Amsterdam Foundation and its Network accentuated the connection between the first, second and third point, namely the (i) political ambitions, (ii) the theory about the subject matter of this ambition and the applied ethical standards in order to apply the theory to daily circumstances. Its participants suppose, that a clear, coherent and consistent conceptual framework with which the approach daily reality is a *conditio sine qua non* for developing 'herewith-related indicators' as points of departure for new public policies.

For this German Observatory it seems important to explore the differences and similarities between ZUMA, the Belgium initiative, the Dublin Foundation and the Amsterdam Foundation. As a link between German suppliers of social services, policy-makers, and scientists it may be able to develop judgements about these differences and similarities seen from the position of users as well. It is not sufficient to analyse outcomes of policies and market instruments seen from the perspective of policy-makers and producers. Highly important is to develop measure instruments to approach these outcomes from the perspective of citizens as users and consumers, as well as members of collective identities. With the political ambition of the European Foundation on Social Quality in mind we have to analyse herewith related processes. To which extent are people enabled – thanks to the herewith-related processes – to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions, which enhance their well being and individual potential? For the Amsterdam Foundation this question is essential because its theory addresses especially the social and democratic quality of societies, regions and cities. By playing this role in Germany this Observatory will present an important example for other Member States how to contribute to knowledge and public policies with which to stimulate equity and dignity in the European Union and its Member States. Therefore we need specific indicators and other instruments to for developing this knowledge.. By playing this role, we obtain information on European level how to address a specific policy domain, namely concerning social services. This delivers an example for addressing other policy domains as well.