

Towards a good life society:
when interdependencies confront atomism

International and Interdisciplinary Symposium on Good Life Indicators

GRENOBLE
From June, 29th to
July, 1st 2022



CALL FOR PAPERS

The symposium will be held during the 2nd
International Forum for Well-being.

forumbienivre.org



International and Interdisciplinary Symposium on Good Life Indicators

The symposium will be held in Grenoble from June 29 to July 1, 2022 during the 2nd International Forum for Living Well.

Towards a good life society: when interdependencies confront atomism

Context

This scientific symposium is part of the 2nd International Forum for Well-being, organized by the Economic Peace Chair of the Grenoble School of Management and the University of Grenoble Alpes, along with various partners representing local authorities (Grenoble Alpes Métropole and the city of Grenoble) and several NGOs (CCFD - Terre Solidaire, Forum pour d'Autres Indicateurs de Richesse).

The Forum is a continuation of the [research-action on sustainable territorial well-being indicators \(IBEST\)](#) in Grenoble, the [1st international forum for well-being](#) organized in 2018, and the creation of an online resource center "*Cap bien-vivre*" on well-being indicators. It is integrated into the programming of the [Grenoble Green Capital & Transition scientific committee](#). The Forum will offer time and space for sharing experiences, data and debates between diverse participants, from researchers and politicians, to NGOs, companies, and citizens, on the conditions for sustainable development and the good life in our contemporary societies.

In 2018, the Forum's scientific symposium dealt with the collective definition of the well-living (or the good life, among other terms), the methods and uses of good life indicators, along with citizen participation and the contribution of research to the good life. Building on these achievements, the second edition of the scientific symposium aims to go a step further towards exploring how a paradigm shift in favor of the good life might be supported, by emphasizing the topic of interdependencies.

The symposium is open to researchers from all disciplines (social sciences and beyond) with a theoretical, methodological or empirical interest in the topic of the good life, well-being, and its indicators. Participants in the scientific symposium may also contribute to Forum workshops, and could be solicited to participate in the more hybrid parts of the Forum.

The present call for papers focuses on four main topics.

Shifting the paradigm

In a context of major crises (social and environmental), which put the essential question of capitalism back on the table, various initiatives have emerged in an effort to capture what it means to live a good life, from sustainable wellbeing, to Ubuntu, Sumak kawsay, Buen vivir, or social health, among others. The challenge of these initiatives is to understand how they might accompany a radical transformation of the socio-economic organization of societies, in order to ensure the shift from a paradigm of infinite growth to a paradigm of care. For the latter, the economy would ensure the sustainability of immaterial and material conditions (biophysical and socio-institutional) for life's reproduction.

Responding to a single symptom of the current crises is not enough. This is why one of the ambitions shared by the initiators of various good life indicators is to apprehend such indicators in a multidimensional fashion, in order to disrupt the “silo” tendencies that are characteristic of much public or private action, and to promote the transversality of actions within and between organizations. However, thinking about the transversality of action requires considering interdependencies at several levels: 1) social, economic and ecological interdependencies; 2) interdependencies between individuals and collectives; 3) interdependencies between the local, national and global levels; and 4) interdependencies between present and future generations.

For researchers, accounting for these interdependencies poses a challenge. The term "interdependence" itself could be debatable, when it draws too tight a line around phenomena that are embedded and interrelated. The indicators currently developed do not integrate these interdependencies effectively, and run the risk of arriving at a juxtaposition of expertise and indicators (environmental, social and economic) that hinders the possibility to apprehend the complexity of situations and to design transversal responses adapted to the issues at stake. The hyperspecialization of disciplines makes it difficult to conceptualize these new frontier objects. Posing things in terms of interdependence is a temporary way of appreciating the complexity of phenomena, but this first formulation deserves to be surpassed. What are we theoretically missing by positing such dichotomies (individual/collective, local/national/global, social/economic/ecological)? To what extent do these categories of thought limit our field of vision and the hologrammic character of phenomena? How could other forms of conceptualization of these interdependencies be integrated into a process of quantification (agreeing and measuring) of well-being? How can we account for "values" in order to move towards a society the good life for all?

Social, economic and ecological interdependencies

Existing experiments – in terms of well-being indicators, the good life, or alternative accounting – aim to develop a holistic approach that account for the good-life as a multidimensional phenomenon in order to observe, evaluate and steer actions. Each experiment does not cover exactly the same fields of analysis and use. To take just a few examples, alternative accounting can lead organizations to reexamine the notions of added value, performance, capital, profit, etc., while "alternative" indicators of territorial well-being broaden the spectrum of understanding of inequalities, social relations, understanding of needs, etc. Quality of life and well-being indicators in the health care sector support a trend towards more preventive measures, while better adapting care to a patient's daily experiences. Environmental indicators can be useful to monitor biophysical flows or stocks, making it possible, for example, to apprehend the nature of a territory's metabolism, the extent of pollution generated, or the degree of resource depletion. Thus, rather than search for one "right tool", a promising way forward would be to capture the contributions and limitations of diverse approaches, and consider how they might mutually enrich each other, depending on needs.

Further, how modular are the different existing approaches and tools? Can they be encapsulated in a global review of our socio-technical systems? To what extent could the reconciliation of social, economic or environmental indicators from different fields of expertise (clinical, public policy, organization, environments, etc.) and from different disciplines allow for a better identification of the incompatibilities between the different socio-economic and ecological issues and/or, on the contrary, the paths to follow in order to make them more compatible (in law and/or in action)?

Initiatives aimed at reflecting on what is the good life within planet boundaries abound: some allow for the identification of pathways towards socially and ecologically safe boundaries for a dignified

human life¹. Others, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), propose diverse means and ends that can result in contradictory objectives. In light of this myriad of approaches and tools aimed at taking social and environmental issues and/or effects into account, one may ask: do they serve to reinforce other rationalization logics? Or are they instruments used to invest in new fields of profitability within a capitalist logic? To what extent do these instruments maintain or introduce an economic and managerial logic in fields where other logics of action are being introduced or preserved? The temptation to reduce the social and environmental dimensions to the economic aspect, as is the case with ecosystem services or certain impact indicators, deserves to be discussed. This question of planetary limits cannot be conceived simply as a constrained optimization of the good life, but must integrate the societal limits that allow us to orient societies towards the well-living of all. Such reflections must instead lead us to revise our conception of nature, temporality, human and non-human relations, and the power relations that underlie the status quo, among other issues. In the words of the anthropologist Descola, it is undoubtedly an opportunity to question our cosmological system and the dividing lines that we draw between the animate, the inanimate, the solid and the immaterial.

Interdependencies between individuals and collectives

The current social and environmental crises have a “supra-liminal” quality, using the term coined by philosopher Günther Anders. The “supra-liminal” refers to what cannot be easily assimilated by our consciousness, because of the scope of the phenomenon. In this respect, indicators play an essential simplifying role in approaching complex phenomena. They make it possible to reduce the heterogeneity of reality and thus, through this process of homogenization, make it more controllable. Indicators are thus objects of knowledge, but also objects of power that frame the representations and actions of actors. More and more, actors are becoming the objects of data, rather than solely deciding on their use. How can we collectively reappropriate data to avoid its commodification? How can we avoid forms of above-ground regulation that are disconnected from people's lives and needs, and instead promote the construction of communities that are united around the commons, towards addressing social and environmental issues? How can we resist the rise of the control society and promote collective dynamics of emancipation? How to prevent regulations and data developed in the name of social and environmental sustainability from serving new forms of oppression, especially for those who are already dominated?

Experiments in the participatory development of indicators are already providing some initial answers to these questions about how to collectively construct indicators and open the “black box” of quantification. These experiments tend to consider indicators as transactional objects and seek to turn them into commons at the service of a broader reflection on the good life. This participatory science, based on the transversality of knowledge, questions the relationship between expert knowledge and non-academic knowledge. How can we accentuate this rise in citizen expertise (as shown by the citizen conventions on climate in France)? How can we revise our conception of “knowledge” to better integrate its experiential dimension? How can we ensure the development of alliances and communities of actors around the good life and associated indicators? How can these communities transform the structure of all economic activities (market, non-market, domestic)? Beyond making the violence generated by the current socio-economic organization of societies more visible, how can indicators of the good life be used to rebuild systems of solidarity, protection and redistribution? How can they help accompany transformations of social structures that favor individuation (and not the individualism) and the sublimation of negative affects, rather than

¹ Cf. the works around a good life within the limits of the planet: <https://goodlife.leeds.ac.uk/>; Donuts Economics Action lab: <https://www.kateraworth.com/deal/>; or Consumption Corridors: <http://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780367748746>

resentment? How can we move from a warlike economic paradigm based on exploitation, conquest, appropriation, expropriation, and indifference to a paradigm of economic peace based on caring, cooperating, community building, the pooling of resources, and fulfilment through and for the collective? How can we broaden our understanding of value beyond the economy to consider heterogenous values?

Territorial, interscalar and historical interdependencies

Good life indicators have thus far been developed for spatial units that are coherently delimited in relation to existing administrative boundaries. What is outside the territory remains invisible, which tends to produce a form of spatial (and temporal) atomism. How can spatiality, territories, their historical dynamics and their interrelationships be better taken into account in the construction of indicators of the good life? How can we better understand the relations of power and cooperation between actors that hinder or, on the contrary, participate in the emergence of a new socio-economic organization? How can we avoid the juxtaposition of scales? Their reification? Is it possible to develop such cross-scalar indicators? Multiscalar representation tools, developed by geomatics for example, could be extremely useful in addressing these questions.

Moreover, our conceptual and abstract categories of apprehension of territoriality (North/South, local, global, national) minimize multiple spatialities. How can we better understand specific regional processes and articulations in the construction and use of indicators, while at the same time conceiving of their embedding in a "whole"? How can we better catch territorial interdependencies, networks and cooperation between territories? Territories also have different capacities that also deserve to be discussed.

Finally, the question of competition in the use of space leads us to reconsider the ways in which a local economy can be designed to serve the needs of the inhabitants. How can we develop a human-centered economy? Which activities should be limited or abandoned? Which activities are considered socially useful and should be supported in their development on a local scale? How can companies make the changes necessary for the socio-ecological transition, in terms of governance, management, strategy, etc.? What indicators at the level of private and public organizations can accompany this transformation of socio-economic organizations and sectors? What roles should public and private action play in the management of the commons (air, water, data, knowledge, etc.)?

Languages

Proposals may be submitted in the following languages: French, English

Key dates

10 February 2022 New deadline 18 March: submission of proposals (3,000 signs) together with a one-page CV.
End of March 2022: selection of proposals.

Scientific committee

Tom Bauler, economist, chair « Environnement & Economie », Université libre de Bruxelles
Thomas Boccon-Gibod, philosopher, IphiG (EA 6988), UGA
Grégoire Feyt, geographer, PACTE (UMR 5194), UGA
Jérôme Gensel, computer scientist and geomatician, Steamer LIG, UGA
Gazi Islam, management, GEM
Bruno Lamotte, economist, CREG (EA 4625), UGA
Le Nhu-Tuyen, accounting, chercheuse associée à la chaire Paix économique, GEM
Nelly Niwa, architect-urbanism, environnement, UNIL, Université de Lausanne
Fiona Ottaviani, economist, chaire Paix économique, GEM
Frédéric Parrenin, glaciologist/paleoclimatologist, Institut de Géosciences de l'Environnement, CNRS/INSU/IRD/UGA/INP
Hugues Poissonnier, management, chaire Paix économique, GEM
Michel Renault, economist, CREM (UMR 6211), Université de Rennes 1
Clémentine Rossier, demographer, institut de démographie et socioéconomie, UNIGE
Marlyne Sahakian, sociologist, UNIGE, Genève
Rebecca Shankland, psychologist, DIPHE, Université Lumière Lyon 2, LIP/PC2S - UGA
Dominique Schneider, biologist, Tree TIMC, UGA
Magali Talandier, urban and regional planning, PACTE (UMR 5194), UGA

Contact and submission for the summary concerning the scientific symposium:

Fiona.ottaviani@grenoble-em.com

Researchers can also propose a **workshop in the general forum**: [Call for proposals](#)