



Web-COSI
Web Communities for
Statistics for Social Innovation
INCREASING TRUST IN COLLECTIVELY
GENERATED STATISTICS

Web-COSI EU FP7 Project

- **Towards the integration of official and non-official statistics beyond GDP**

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The information and data from civil society to empower the policies

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Starting point

- Statistical information, in order to be followed and implemented by political action and decision makers, needs a certain degree of **legitimacy**.
- **civil society** engagement through public deliberation is increasingly becoming a **fundamental tool** in order to grant legitimacy to well-being and sustainability indicators beyond GDP.
- But what do we mean exactly by the terms 'civil society' and 'public deliberation'?

Public deliberation

Public deliberation can be understood as a ***discursive process of exchange of information and opinions among a public facing a common decision.***

- It represents the discursive dimension through which collective preferences are formed and expressed.
- If aimed at the reaching of a free and reasoned agreement, it can generate legitimate and binding norms.

Conditions for public deliberation

- ***Equality*** of participants to the deliberative exchange.
- ***Inclusion*** of all those involved in the application of the norms to be deliberated.
- The ***free, public and peer introduction and expression of interests***.
- The pursuit of ***discursive agreement***.
- The orientation towards ***public good***.

Thus, full legitimacy of public decisions cannot be exclusively produced and ensured by formal institutions connected with the activity of the state or of international organizations, but it has to be based as well on **civil society activation, involvement and contribution**.

Civil society

- Civil society is a third sphere in respect to the state and the market: instead of power and money it aims at **social solidarity**, which can only be achieved through discursive agreement.
- Among civil society actors: informal groups (neighbourhood, self-help, consumption...), associations and committees, NGOs, groups of interests, cooperatives, social, political and cultural movements.
- Civil society is characterised by the ability to make possible a **pluralistic participation and a free, open and inclusive deliberation** leading to a reflexive, informed and demanding public opinion.

The political dimension of civil society involvement (1)

«Non-governmental organizations play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy ... and possess well-established and diverse expertise and capacity in fields which will be of particular importance to the implementation and review of environmentally sound and socially responsible sustainable development.»

(United Nations Environment Programme, *Agenda 21*, ch. 27)

The specific contribution of CSOs to the definition of development and well-being perspectives beyond GDP is a **political contribution** which links the **participatory** and the **cognitive** dimension.

Over the last decade, **major bottom up experiences have been developed** by civil society groups aiming at collecting and disseminating non-official statistical indicators other than GDP for measuring human well-being and societal progress.

The political dimension of civil society involvement (2)

- Today there are **hundreds of alternative indicators to GDP** developed through the involvement of civil society actors and based on different models (social/subjective well-being, sustainability, progress, development...) and methodologies.
- The switch towards alternative measures of well-being is rather a **cultural/democratic process** than a pure methodological challenge: the concept of well-being concerns and reflects peoples' values and preferences.
- The involvement of civil society actors is important in **determining, legitimating and sharing** scientific, political and cultural objectives such as the elaboration of public policies, the priority setting of local government action, the definition of the concepts of 'well-being', 'social progress', 'development'...

Civil society and the construction of alternative indicators to GDP for measuring well-being and social progress

CSOs stress that growth, taken in its narrow sense as a mere increase in income, level of industrialization or investment, **can have distorting and negative consequences** for the quality of life of a given population if it is not combined with appropriate social and environmental policies: to be able to talk about 'development', growth **must be *qualified*** i.e. accompanied by increased well-being.

In supranational, national and local contexts we are now witnessing the flourishing of many initiatives:

- indicators developed by CSOs;
 - community indicators;
- national civil society consultations.

Some examples of well-being indicators

- *Basic Capabilities Index* (Social Watch World Coalition)
 - *The Happy Planet Index* (New Economics Foundation)
 - *Genuine Progress Indicator* (Redifining Progress)
 - *The Gender Equity and Quality of Life Index* (Center for Partnership Studies)
 - *QUARS – Index of Regional Quality of Development* (Lunaria/Sbilanciamoci!)
- + many specific indicators such as:
- *The Child Development Index* (Save the Children)
 - *Footprint Index* (WWF - World Wildlife Fund)
 - *Corruption Perception Index* (Transparency International)
 - *Gender Equity Index* (Social Watch)

Some examples of community indicators

Community indicators are:

a democratic resource for engaging citizens and communities in informed discussions about shared goals and priorities;

a policy resource guiding evidence-based planning and action to address the issues identified as important by communities, and

a reporting resource tracking and communicating progress towards agreed goals and outcomes.

- The Boston Indicators Project
(Boston, USA)
- Guelph Community Wellbeing Initiative (City of Guelph,
Ontario, Canada)
- Community Indicators Victoria (CIV) (Victoria, Australia)

Some examples of national civil society consultation

- Canadian Index of Well-being (Canada)
- Measure of Australia's Progress (Australia)
- Measures of National Well-being (UK)
 - Social Progress (Hungary)
 - Israel's Progress Index (Israel)
- **Benessere Equo e Sostenibile - BES** (Italy)

Some information about Lunaria

- Lunaria is an independent and non profit organization **founded in 1992**. According to the current Italian legislation, it is an Association for Social Promotion.
- Lunaria's activities focus on **research and action research, training and communication** on several social issues such as fair economy, the development of third sector, the study of migration flows, globalisation trends and the links between democracy and participation.
- We test new forms of active citizenship and non-violent social change inspired by the principles of justice, solidarity, democracy and the respect of human rights for all.

Lunaria and the Sbilanciamoci! campaign

- In 2000, Lunaria has launched the **Sbilanciamoci!** (“Let's get unbalanced!”) campaign, currently involving **50 Italian associations and networks** active on globalisation, peace, culture, human rights, environment, fair trade, ethical finance.
- Sbilanciamoci! publishes yearly reports (**research activities**), meets policy makers (**advocacy**), organizes seminars, conferences and public events aimed to promote a socially useful and sustainable public spending (**political and cultural animation**).
- Since 2000, Sbilanciamoci! has proposed **alternatives to the Italian budgetary policies**, arguing for social and environmental priorities, and **new collective paths in the measurement of well-being ‘beyond GDP’** at the national and local level.

The experience of Lunaria and Sbilanciamoci! in the measurement of well-being

Since 2003, the work of Lunaria and Sbilanciamoci! on the issues of well-being and the 'quality' of development is addressed to:

- *stimulate* public debate and *orient* policy priorities and decisions (raising awareness and claiming cultural-political legitimacy);
- *turn* CSOs widespread and specific knowledge into statistics;
- *identify* and *monitor* the most relevant indicators and the progress of key variables for an equitable and sustainable well-being.

This process has led to the realization of a shared measure of well-being for Italian regions - the **QUARS (Quality of Regional Development) Index**.

The QUARS (Regional Quality of Development) Index – 1. Definition of well-being

The **normative idea of well-being** that drives the realization of the QUARS Index refers to a territorial area in which:

- the *economic system of production, distribution and consumption* has a minimal impact on the environment and is instead directed towards sustainability;
- the *distribution of wealth and income* among the population is as much as possible equitable and the right to 'good employment' is granted;
- the *health and social services* are well-distributed and have high-quality standards;
- the *participation in cultural, social and political life* is a distinctive character of the community;
- *inclusion, equal rights and opportunities* are at the basis of the 'social contract'.

The QUARS Index – 2. Aims

At the base of the QUARS Index there is **an idea of well-being as an equitable and sustainable development:**

a multidimensional conception that heeds not only economic variables but also social, environmental and distributive aspects of development.

The QUARS Index aims at providing:

- a **composite indicator** able to grasp the multiple dimensions of well-being;
- a **systematic comparison** on the quality of development **between Italian regions** in order to identify their relative weaknesses and strengths;
- a **useful and user-friendly information and advocacy tool** based on a large dataset.

The QUARS Index – 3. Methodology

Representatives of CSOs + researchers and academics contribute to:

- 1st phase: **define the theoretical/scientific framework** (concept of well-being, applied methodology, selection of relevant macroareas).
- 2nd phase: **identify the key indicators and variables** (there is a lack of conventional and unconventional data at the regional level).
- 3rd phase: **find the equilibrium between indicators within each macroarea**: a set of 41 variables grouped in 7 dimensions of equal statistical weight.

The QUARS Index – 4. Dimensions

1. **Environment:** environmental impact and good ecological practices.
2. **Economy and labour:** working condition and income distribution.
3. **Rights and citizenship:** social inclusion and basic rights.
4. **Equal opportunities:** women participation to economic and political life + access to social services.
5. **Education and culture:** level of education, quality of structures, access to cultural events.
6. **Health:** quality and efficiency of health services, health status of population.
7. **Participation:** citizens' participation to social and political life.

The QUARS Index – 5. Variables

ENVIRONMENT	Population density	ISTAT
	Air pollution	ISTAT
	Water and soil pollution	ISTAT
	EcoMafia	LEGAMBIENTE
	Differentiated waste collection	ISTAT
	Renewable energy	ISTAT
	Protected areas	ISTAT
	EcoManagement	LEGAMBIENTE
	Organic farming	AIAB
	Sustainable mobility	ISTAT
ECONOMY AND LABOUR	Job precariousness	SBILANCIAMOCI!
	Unemployment	ISTAT
	Income inequality	ISTAT
	Relative Poverty	ISTAT
RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP	Housing	MINISTERO INTERNI
	Access to basic services	ISTAT
	Social assistance	NUOVO WELFARE
	Disabled people LM participation	ISTAT
	Migrants Integration	SBILANCIAMOCI!
	School dropouts	ISTAT

The QUARS Index – 5. Variables

HEALTH	House health care	ISTAT
	Cancer screening	ISTAT
	Waiting lists	CITTADINANZATTIVA
	Hospital migrations	ISTAT
	Public health system satisfaction	SBILANCIAMOCI!
	Avoidable mortality	ERA
EDUCATION AND CULTURE	School Infrastructure	LEGAMBIENTE
	High school participation	ISTAT
	Education level	MIUR
	Third Education mobility	ISTAT
	Public libraries	ISTAT
	Theater and music	ISTAT
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	Consulting rooms	MINISTERO SALUTE
	Labor market participation	ISTAT
	Presence in politics	SBILANCIAMOCI!
	Kindergarten	ISTAT
PARTICIPATION	Civil Society	ISTAT
	Voluntary association	ISTAT
	Ombudsman	SBILANCIAMOCI!
	Newspaper diffusion	AUDIPRESS
	Voter turnout	MINISTERO INTERNI

The QUARS Index – 6. Results and the importance of communication

REGION	QUARS
Trentino-Alto Adige	0.75
Emilia-Romagna	0.56
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	0.51
Toscana	0.45
Valle d'Aosta	0.39
Umbria	0.37
Marche	0.36
Lombardia	0.35
Veneto	0.34
Piemonte	0.25
Liguria	0.17
Lazio	0.01
Abruzzo	-0,06
Sardegna	-0,18
Basilicata	-0,44
Molise	-0,44
Calabria	-1,76
Puglia	-1,78
Sicilia	-1,89
Campania	-1,96



Measuring well-being at the local level through QUARS methodology

In the last few years QUARS methodology has been applied to the measurement of well-being at the local level:

- Lazio Region;
- Piemonte Region;
- Province of Rome;
- Province of Arezzo;
- Province of Ascoli Piceno;
- Province of Trento;
- Municipality of Arezzo;
- Municipality of Cascina.

The results of these studies have been included in the economic and financial planning documents of the above mentioned local authorities for the discussion of their Budget Bill.

Lunaria and Web-COSI (1)

As we have seen, the assessment and measurement of well-being has a very **strong political significance**: the selection of statistics and indicators beyond GDP influences the evaluation of policies to be implemented.

In this light, the numerous experiences in the EU of CSOs involvement in the production of statistics beyond GDP are **relevant starting points** to enlarge the European debate on EU standards for the definition of well-being and social progress.

In the course of Web-COSI project Lunaria will:

➤ **review** existing practices experimented by CSOs to elaborate non-official statistical indicators alternative to GDP.

Lunaria and Web-COSI (2)

- **Select** a number of case studies (best practices) to be studied in detail: civil society networks involved in the production of statistical information on economic, social and environmental aspects related to well-being and driven by the objective to produce an impact on public policies.
- **Organise** a webinar and a public workshop with members of such networks and other key actors in order to promote mutual learning and disseminate the most incisive contents and methods implemented by civil society for societal innovation in the field of collecting statistics on well-being.
- **Summarise** these findings, leading to suggestions to: a) *civil society networks*, in order to increase their capability to engage in policy discussion and their ability to represent a broader range of CSOs; b) *EU policy makers*, in order to strengthen the consultation process on well-being related issues and make deliberative practices more structured and relevant.



Thanks for your attention

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