

Characterizing Demand for 'Beyond GDP'

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1. Executive summary

The aim of the BRAINPOoL project is to experiment with the enhancement of the development and the effective use of indicators that can balance the use of GDP so as to support the sustainable development policy process in the EU. In this report, we attempt to better characterize the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators, the institutional determinants of the uptake of new indicators, as well as the perceptions and actions of actors in that regard.

1.1. Objective

The objective of this report is threefold:

- Identifying the differentiations of demand for Beyond-GDP indicators across different target groups of users from various institutional and societal levels;
- Characterizing the specificities of the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators when compared to mainstream policy indicators;
- Categorizing the different factors explaining the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators.

1.2. Methodology

Two complementary research tasks provided the backbone to the empirical exploration of these research questions in WP2.

Task 2.1 consisted of characterising the institutional contexts of Beyond-GDP indicators in specific EU-member countries, as well as at the level of selected international/European organizations. The aim was to configure and compare with some precision the policy agendas that have built up around the development and promotion of Beyond-GDP indicators across different EU-member countries.

Task 2.2 aimed to investigate the perceptions of the existence, strengths and weaknesses of the Beyond-GDP agenda. This was developed by engaging directly with a series of policy actors. First, via a series of face-to-face interviews conducted with selected policy actors which are directly and explicitly linked to the Beyond GDP agenda. Second, through the organization of a set of “Road shows” (i.e. in-house workshops) with a small group policy actors in a selection of EU-member countries. The aim with these workshops was to reach policy actors who are currently not confronted with or directly concerned by the Beyond-GDP policy agenda and to explore their perceptions of the agenda itself.

1.3. Main Results: characterizing demand for ‘Beyond GDP’ indicators

The results of our analyses are organized along the lines of the 2 subtasks for WP2, first an analysis of the institutional settings, second an analysis of the actors’ perceptions on the demand for ‘beyond GDP’.

1.3.1. Cross-national pattern of institutional contexts

The understanding of the institutional contexts in each entity we observed, were compared to reveal any structuring trends, discern the main initiatives and actors, and provide background knowledge of drivers and barriers for the indicators’ uptake.

The **time perspective** shows that common time patterns are shared by all countries and supra-national institutions that were analysed. They can be presented around three main time periods influenced by four dominant concepts. We note, however, that when a new concept is put forward, an abrupt change is not observed but rather a gradual shift from one focus to another.

1 – Social Indicators Movement – It spans from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. It is characterized by studies and programs aimed at providing additional data about the environment and social realities to better inform the national accounts and broaden the scope of policies.

2 – Sustainable development approach – The second period is defined by the sustainable development approach that started becoming institutionalised after the release of the Brundtland report in 1987 crystallising a movement of thought in existence since the 1970s.

3 - Questioning of GDP – The third time period spans from the late 1990s until today and is characterized by the questioning of GDP as the symbolic indicator of an economic-political system that organises society around maximising economic performance.

The multiplicity of visions and varied academic approaches to solving the Beyond-GDP issue has led to conflicting stances that separated stakeholders between two main approaches. On the one hand are actors in favour of a more revolutionary questioning of the societal model, characterized by concerns for other forms of wealth and a striving for social and environmental sustainability. On the other are actors that plead for an adaptation of the current model, oriented toward the sustainability of well-being and of economic performance.

Regarding **the actors involved**, we observe that the debate generally broadened from an initially narrow audience of experts to a wide range of actors including academics, political actors, NGOs, civil society, etc. Among these stakeholders, academics are playing an important role by launching a critical debate, taking part in official processes and building critical reactions to the institutionalization of this debate. Furthermore, a common observation reveals the somewhat hazy role of civil society. The promotion and production of alternative indicators are driven by an informal demand for societal changes. Civil society appears as an informal stakeholder that influences trends without being directly committed in the debate.

Regarding **the methodology of indicators**, they clearly tend to increasingly include communicational assets. To that end, a consensus seems to appear on the need for developing synthesized indicators. However, members of official institutions are more in favour of sets of indicators that can better report on the complexity of reality. We observe a clear domination of the managerial conception of measurement that needs to be accurate instead of being simple enough to spread to the media. We also observe a general demand for comparability between indicators and/or territories. The recent trends are showing that indicators are increasingly intended to complement GDP instead of replacing it, which fits clearly with the current paradigms leading the debate.

Regarding the different **scales of experimentation and innovation** one needs to acknowledge the wide variety of Beyond-GDP initiatives that have been implemented. Indeed, the relation between scales is challenging the assumed need for comparability, about the needs of a territory to account for broader global concerns versus the ideal of fostering local uniqueness, and the probable influence of a hierarchy between geographical levels. Tackling these questions allows a proper evaluation regarding the type of indicators chosen, the relationship and distance to civil society, its degree of inferred action and the ultimate role of the indicator.

The complexity arising from the Beyond-GDP approach furthermore reveals the **variety of interpretations of the concept(s)** that drive different processes, and influence new ones. While sustainable development continues to be referenced by a large number of initiatives, it is often complemented by other concepts, such as the current trend for favouring or including concepts of well-being.

1.3.2. The perceptions of demand for beyond GDP indicators

The objectives of analysing the perception of actors of the demand are twofold: 1) to better characterize the types of demands for indicators; 2) to identify the factors enhancing or hindering the uptake of B-GDP indicators.

Better characterizing the types of demands

Assuming that to better characterize demand one needs at the same time to better characterize non-demand, we have targeted different sets of actors that we can respectively identify as belonging to the B-GDP sphere (that we have met through face-to-face interviews) and not belonging to the B-GDP sphere (that we have met through the organization of specific workshops).

► Who is formulating a demand?

This is the first question to be asked since the variety of actors is as numerous as the variety of reasons that lead people to show interest in new indicators.

Social demand – We identify a strong appetite from civil society representatives for a transformation of both world visions and also the system itself. Though this ‘bottom-up’ demand is never a demand for indicators themselves, a strong demand never-the-less exists for social change. This demand should be taken into account in the elaboration of new B-GDP indicators as these can be used to measure and enable the changes that are being demanded.

Political demand – An increasing political demand has also been observed. While some of these initiatives are observed at the national level, it appears that the political demand is stronger at local and regional levels.

High-level actors – Our studies have revealed that high-level actors cannot be exclusively considered as on the ‘demand’ side of the equation. They are often producers as much as consumers of indicators, which brings into question the relevance of analysing the uptake of B-GDP indicators in terms of supply and demand.

A more proactive approach among statisticians and decision-makers – We have witnessed increasingly proactive moves by these actors towards the production and use of indicators.

► What kinds of demand are observed?

Democratisation – All the discourses analysed argue for a general democratization of the construction and development phases of indicators and for greater access to statistical information. The recurrence of such demands strongly contrasts with the high technicality of debates.

Demands are often unclear due to conceptual confusion – Such confusion prevents us from observing a clear demand for indicators: the motives, the understanding of the issues and of their potential resolution as well as the role indicators should play are all understood in different ways by different actors. These divergences are on occasions so different that a

debate is not even possible due to a complete mutual misunderstanding. Conceptual clarifications are therefore a crucial requirement in easing the uptake of B-GDP indicators.

► What kinds of indicators are promoted?

The multiplicity of actors implies that a large range of indicators are supported, but this perception can be deceptive. Below is a summary of observations on the key criteria associated with the success or failure of an indicator.

The credibility of the indicator's creator – Typically, national statistical offices (NSOs) are regarded as reliable because of a perceived absence of political positioning while more "activists" producers are given less credibility with regards to the scientific bases of their indicators.

Indicators liable to fit within the current economic logic are more liable to be "successful" – If indicators are perceived as helping to serve/enhance/support the pre-existing goals of e.g. a company, they will be considered as desirable. However, that if only indicators that support the objectives of profitability and competitiveness are liable to be adopted and/or supported by companies, is their uptake desirable?

No consensus on indicators' structure 'dashboard vs. composite' – Composite indicators are often considered as good tools of coordination/communication while dashboards are often associated with policy-making. One relatively consensual position, also favoured in the Stiglitz report, consists of creating a dashboard including a limited number of indicators, which can be easily disaggregated.

► Why do some actors, outside the B-GDP, do not demand for B-GDP indicators?

Regarding the perceptions from the actors outside the B-GDP sphere, we have identified various factors liable to explain the non-demand for B-GDP indicators.

Weak knowledge of GDP's limitations – Actors regularly mention the lack of correlation between GDP and subjective wellbeing in rich countries and the negative environmental impacts of growth. In both cases, these limits are perceived superficially.

Weak knowledge of the existing alternative/complementary indicators – Awareness of international B-GDP initiatives is very poor in general, excepted for the "Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report". In contrast, the OECDs "Global Project" and/or "Better Life Initiative", as well as the "Beyond-GDP" conference and the EU's "GDP and Beyond" report are not well known.

No clear belief in the innovation offered by B-GDP with respect to existing indicators – Most of the participants considered that indicators already exist today that might enhance our knowledge of wellbeing and sustainability.

Pivotal place of GDP and growth – For most of the actors, it is the misuse of GDP, and not GDP itself, that has incorrectly produced the connection between economic growth and societal progress. Furthermore, the participants do not entertain the possibility of organizing economic and societal activities according to an alternative indicator to GDP.

Elements of distrust toward B-GDP indicators – Three elements of distrust have been identified during the workshops: *Distrust of subjective data; lack of realism of the hypotheses underlying these indicators; and the fact that B-GDP initiatives are perceived as 'one-shot'.*

Conflicting temporalities of agendas – If some measures that are desirable in the long run imply short term 'pain', they are less liable to be adopted. It is worth noting the exception of

Germany in this context, where indicators have been adopted despite decision makers knowing that they would not necessarily give them a good press.

Factors enhancing or hindering the uptake of B-GDP indicators

From the combination of the analyses of both types of actors, we have identified the following factors liable to enhance or hinder the uptake of B-GDP indicators.

► **User factors**

Conceptions about GDP – Though a consensus seems to emerge of GDP's abilities to guide certain policies aimed at maintaining the economic and social status quo, the various suggested methods of going "beyond" it vary to a large extent. What is interesting in terms of actors' conceptions is that the predominance of growth is so overriding in some spheres that the "alternatives" offered up as being progressive are in fact so anchored in the 'growth paradigm' that they are considered by other actors to be deeply conservative.

Link between the indicators and the societal model – One of the reasons why the B-GDP agenda and some of its indicators are held in low regard stems from a perceived lack of realism in the assumptions that underlie the indicators. While John Maynard Keynes offered a strong theoretical basis to national accounting regarding the functioning of the system, such theoretical rigour does not exist today for a potential alternative B-GDP model. This is a major barrier to the widespread uptake of new indicators.

Conceptual confusion – Major confusions are observed in the definitions given of well-being and sustainability respectively, as well as in the links made by actors between sustainable development and well-being. We have identified various conceptual confusions and divergences that should be systematically explained or highlighted as a prerequisite to any brokerage activity:

- Sustainability defined as the conditions for long-lasting well-being vs. sustainability as a purely environmental matter independent from well-being;
- Strong sustainability vs. weak sustainability;
- Subjective well-being vs. objective elements of quality of life (these two dimensions are not mutually exclusive);
- Green growth vs. green economy;
- Absolute decoupling vs. relative decoupling
- Monetary indicators vs. non-monetary indicators (and their implications)

Factors of distrust in B-GDP indicators – One of the major obstacles liable to hinder the uptake of B-GDP indicators lies in the lack of trust they encounter among some actors. Among these factors that should be tackled are the following:

- B-GDP indicators are often perceived as not innovative with regard to existing statistical measures.
- Subjective data is often regarded with caution given its arbitrary dimension and lack of comparability.
- The lack of realism of the assumptions underlying some of the current proposed B-GDP indicators tends to discredit all the initiatives.
- The lack of trust in B-GDP indicators lies in their uncertain longevity.
- The intentions of the institutions creating the indicator and how transparently they are diffused is a crucial factor of trust/distrust.

Political will – It has been observed that one of the major factors, if not the primary one, hindering the uptake of indicators is the lack of political will confronting most actors who are working proactively in this field. This lack of political will can be explained by the conflict between the agenda of winning elections versus the need to account for social/sustainability

issues; by resistance from those interests wishing to maintain the current functioning of the system and GDPs status quo; or by a distrust of the normative or political assumptions underlying the methodologies of some indicators.

► Indicator factors

Legitimate construction/development process – While questions surrounding the construction of indicators are pervasive in the discourse, we have observed that current practices tend not to be getting any more democratic. Such disconnection between discourse and practice does not constitute a barrier to the uptake of B-GDP indicators per se, but it includes the risk that indicators that are adopted suffer a strong democratic deficit.

Methodological aspects: classical requirements – The factors repeatedly mentioned as a source of quality are classical in nature: data availability, robustness, realism of hypotheses and methodology, recognition of the methodology by NSOs, theoretical relevance, scientific basis, verifiability, timeliness and non arbitrary weighting parameters.

Technical limits – Beyond the methodological requirements presented above, the uptake of B-GDP indicators can also suffer technical limitations. Given the novelty and increasing complexity of the issues to be tackled by new indicators, some statistical tools are not yet available. It is therefore crucial to orient future brokerage activities toward actors liable to finance long term monitoring activities.

► Policy factors

Ambivalent impacts of the financial crisis – The financial crisis appears to provide ammunition to various – often conflicting – beliefs. One position tends to assume that the crisis will enhance the B-GDP movement by clearly highlighting the current system's limitations. At the same time, many actors think that even though the system's limits are laid bare by the crisis, de facto the crisis prevents any concrete B-GDP agenda from being implemented due to the resulting lack of financial and political means to do so.

The influence of the 'Stiglitz Report' (CMEPSP) – While the report is not exceptionally innovative in terms of content – it largely synthesises pre-existing disseminated works – the synthesis it offers of the current state of the art is very clear, readable and has undeniably contributed in orienting many institutions towards the production and/or use of new indicators.

Structural/institutional aspects – One important political factor lies in the existence of political programmes, such as national sustainable development strategies, in which indicators have a specific/explicit role to play. The existence of such devices renders sustainable development indicators less dependant on the vagaries of policy cycles. In this regard, informing Members of Parliament and other policy-makers about the potential of the B-GDP agenda is particularly important. The existing MPs groups dealing with new indicators should also be enhanced and multiplied at various levels.

Motives for adopting indicators – It is worth noting that most policy-makers using/demanding indicators are not currently utilizing them to support a decision-making process. Indicators are, on the contrary, largely used as an information tool or in some other instrumental way in support of a pre-existing political agenda.

2. Introduction

2.1. Objectives and formal project layout

The objectives of BRAINPOoL's Work Package 2, of which the present document is the final report, are multi-layered, but can be most easily expressed in terms of their relationship with Work Package 1. BRAINPOoL - as a brokerage project - intends to develop a better understanding of the apparent gap between proposed and developed Beyond-GDP indicators on the one hand and their intended and potential users on the other. While WP1 explores Beyond-GDP indicators from the perspective of the people, indicators, organisations and institutions that develop, populate and publish them, WP2 complements this indicator-perspective through an exploration of the "users".

WP2 is therefore oriented towards gaining in-depth knowledge on precisely where the demand for alternative indicators is located, and consequently understand the nature of that demand and the "users" themselves. To be usefully operational within a brokerage project, such an exploration of the existing demand must also include an investigation of what could be labelled the "missing" demand. This premise indirectly assumes that a critical mass of people, organisations and institutions are calling for a change in our measurement tools and that a qualitatively sufficient (i.e. robust) and wide range of Beyond-GDP indicators¹ exists, but that the adoption and institutionalisation of alternative indicators remains patchy and currently limited to alternative, non-mainstream policy agendas and actors.

Formally, the general objective of WP2 is therefore to provide an improved understanding of the current level of institutionalisation of Beyond-GDP indicators and addressing more specifically the following issues and questions:

Identification of the differentiations of demand for Beyond-GDP indicators across different target groups of users from various institutional and societal levels, i.e.: Does demand for Beyond-GDP indicators differ for different target groups? Are the perceptions and representations of the strengths and weaknesses of Beyond-GDP indicators shared within or across target groups?

Characterization of the specificities of the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators when compared to mainstream policy indicators, i.e.: Is there a shared scenario within or across target groups in replacing or in complementing GDP? What are the assumed relationships between the alternative and the mainstream indicators?

Categorization of the different factors explaining the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators, i.e. Can we explain according to a simplified scheme of factors the nature(s) of the demand(s) for Beyond-GDP indicators? What factor(s) are identified by "users" as being decisive in the demand (and non-demand)?

Two complementary research tasks provided the backbone to the empirical exploration of these research questions in WP2. Task 2.1 consisted of characterising the institutional contexts of Beyond-GDP indicators in specific EU-member countries, as well as at the level of selected international/European organizations. The aim was to configure and compare with some precision the policy agendas that have built up around the development and promotion of Beyond-GDP indicators across different EU-member countries. Task 2.2, it aimed to investigate the perceptions of the existence, strengths and weaknesses of the Beyond-GDP agenda. This was developed by engaging directly with a series of policy actors.

¹ Deliverable 1.1 (WP1), as well as its annexes, presents an in-depth categorisation and analysis of Beyond-GDP indicators. Both reports are available at the project's webpage (<http://www.BRAINPOoLproject.eu/>).
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First, via a series of face-to-face interviews conducted with selected policy actors which are directly and explicitly linked to the Beyond GDP agenda. Second, through the organization of a set of “Road shows” (i.e. in-house workshops) with a small group policy actors in a selection of EU-member countries. The aim with these workshops was to reach policy actors who are currently not confronted with or directly concerned by the Beyond-GDP policy agenda and to explore their perceptions of the agenda itself.

In combination with the results of BRAINPOoL’s WP1, both these tasks provide the necessary information basis for later work packages (WP3 and WP4) to engage in effective brokerage activities; i.e. in activating selected policy actors to engage with Beyond-GDP indicators and the policy agendas which have formed around them.

2.2. On the origins of the Beyond-GDP discourse

For over sixty years, the objective of economic growth has been central in the construction of socioeconomic policies in western economies. Created in a specific post-World War II context, national accounting systems – whose major indicator is GDP – were largely fashioned to respond to the urgent need for reconstruction and for building a new image of national power (Fourquet 1980). From then onwards, GDP has progressively become a central feature in policy-making. It appears, however, that GDP’s golden age has been progressively eroded. Before exploring the reasons for this erosion, it is important to first understand the historical factors explaining the broad uptake of GDP in the aftermath of the Second World War (WW II).

The Golden Age of GDP

Cassiers and Thiry (2011) identify various historical factors, characterizing the post-World War II period, the combination of which explain the pivotal role GDP has been called to play: the fall out of crisis and war; social pacts; the rise of the United States; the two opposing models of market economy and planned economy; the Keynesian revolution; the projected role of the United Nations; the development of social security.

"After the Great Depression of the thirties (...) and after four years of war in which the economy disintegrated and the majority of the population underwent great hardship, Europeans wanted material wellbeing. Social pacts formed around the principle that workers would collaborate in the search for increased productivity, while employers would share the earnings of productivity between salaries and profit. Economic growth thus became the foundation of social peace. Reconstruction was assisted by the Marshall Plan (...). However, this assistance came with conditions. First of all, beneficiary countries had to adopt market economy principles (...). They also had to produce numerical justifications to support their applications (...). National accounting was explicitly conceived as a tool for a political economy in which control of growth became a major objective. J. M. Keynes provided theoretical foundations for re-conceptualizing the role of the State. (...) Socialist unions and public opinion influenced by the model prevailing in the East pushed the market economy towards a "mixed-economy" (...) It was (...) acknowledged that, even in a market economy, it is incumbent upon the State to guide economic activity to some degree. The State requires tools to do so and the logical basis for these was supplied by business accounting. National production is represented as a large circuit, tying businesses to consumers and if necessary passing through the State: a sort of blood system in which money is the fluid. (...) The role of the nation-state, as a centralized power, was strengthened. (...) The international monetary system was fashioned in a way that granted a great deal of autonomy to the exercise of national economic policies. (...)" (Cassiers and Thiry 2011)

In the aftermath of World War II, in western economies, all these elements combined to form a system that became dependant on the growth of monetary flows. Growth became pivotal for ensuring social peace, the legitimacy of union representatives, the expansion of the Welfare State through tax revenues, and for enhancing the symbolic power of the Nation-State internationally.

Questioning the foundations of GDP

If the post-war generation considered economic growth as an essential source of wellbeing and GDP as an indicator of progress, the context has changed and things appear far more complex today. In sixty years, a variety of factors have shed light on the inadequacy of GDP and economic growth in tackling fundamental problems in society. Three major crises have justified the search for new indicators beyond GDP: social crisis, crisis of meaning and ecological crisis, which we will briefly explore below.

Following the neoliberal shift in economic policy at the end of the 1970s, the economic growth objective decoupled from the principle of a fair division of the wealth being generated. The "golden age" (1945 to 1975) was characterized by decreased inequality (thanks to progressive taxation and expansion of social security); a situation in which many members of society identified as "average citizens". Beginning in the 1980s, however, the income spread increased, creating a dissonance between the image conveyed by the figures (GDP per capita) and the actual situation experienced by a large part of the population. (Cassiers and Thiry 2011) These evolutions started to cast doubt on the intrinsic relation between economic growth and social progress.

At the same time that economic growth was being accompanied by growing inequalities, GDP and social health had ceased to correlate. Citizens could not recognize themselves in the 'average' figures anymore. A disconnection was observed between GDP (and GDP per capita), continuously rising, and the subjective measure of life satisfaction which was generally stagnant and sometimes even diminishing. This phenomenon, formalized in 1974, is known as the Easterlin paradox (following the name of the first author to highlight it). Other explanatory factors can be added to those noted above, such as the fact that any measure of wellbeing is relative. Economic growth cannot in fact fulfil individual and collective aspirations because these are constantly compared to the achievements of others and upwardly revised (Cassiers and Delain, 2006; Van den Bergh, 2009).

As Jackson (2009) rightly notes it, we are confronted by "the paradox of growth": while growth is unsustainable, de-growth (economic contraction) would be unstable. To escape from this dilemma, the proposed solution is to decouple economic activity from its impacts on natural resources. However, in the current state of scientific knowledge, there is no evidence that an absolute decoupling between economic growth and resource use (a decrease of environmental pressure despite continued economic growth) might be possible. And relative decoupling (growth of environmental pressure less rapid than growth of GDP) appears very much insufficient to ensure strong sustainability. This situation leads a lot of actors to question the desirability of growth.

Emergence of beyond GDP alternatives

In reaction to these crises, a multitude of indicators have been developed across time, to offer new milestones for the orientation of societies. The WP1-report offers a good overview of the major initiatives currently in play².

² We invite the interested reader to see the *Review report on Beyond-GDP indicators: categorisation, intentions and impacts – Annex* (WP1 Deliverable), p.3, which details a long list of beyond GDP initiatives.
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If the Beyond-GDP indicators highlight, in their own way, factors that should be taken into account when measuring societal wellbeing, and therefore constitute an important move towards a better measure, none of them has yet succeeded in replacing GDP. "Their very diversity may be the cause of this impasse: the actors advancing the various indicators are sometimes antagonistic and their objectives and values are not always compatible. These differences are reflected in choices about quantification." (Cassiers and Thiry 2011)

There are a series of recurrent questions in the debates surrounding B-GDP indicators that have prevented any alternative indicators emerging to counterbalance the dominance of GDP. Firstly, 'what should count/be measured?'. This question goes to the core of what we value as a society and the issue of attributing a hierarchy to these values. It also naturally leads on to questions of legitimacy: 'Who decides what is valued/measured?'. Should the construction of indicators be a bottom-up or top-down process? How can we democratize the formulation of indicators? Is such a legitimization process compatible with the various geographical scales to which indicators are to be used?

Besides the 'what' and 'who', a crucial group of questions tackles how to measure what is valued. The variety of indicators shown above testifies to the multiplicity of possible disagreements: Dashboard vs. composite indicator? Subjective vs. objective indicators? What weighting scheme? Non-monetary indicators vs. monetary indicators? The permutations are almost infinite.

In the present study of the demand for alternative indicators to GDP, we shall try to clarify the most persistent questions of debate and identify the ones which constitute potential barriers to the uptake of indicators that go 'beyond GDP'.

2.3. Operational framework of analysis

While there is a wealth of analysis and commentaries out there on Beyond-GDP indicators (Stiglitz et al., 2010; OECD, 2011; CEC-COM, 2009; FAIR, 2008), as well as on the need to develop more appropriate alternative indicators to GDP, a precise understanding of how indicators percolate into the policy field and become effectively embedded in institutional processes remains missing (Innes, 1998; Ayres, 2000; Gudmundsson, 2003; Lehtonen, 2004; Hezri and Dovers, 2006; Rosenström, 2006; Boulanger, 2007; Rydin, 2007; Turnhout et al. 2007; Bauler, 2012).

Recent investigations are starting to explore this gap in our knowledge, but a commonly accepted theoretical framework does not yet exist. BRAINPOoL being foremost a brokerage project, does not aim to engage fully in the development of such a theoretical framework. Nevertheless, the present investigation of the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators does at least require a framework of analysis that allows discussion of what could be identified as factors of influence for demand and non-demand. We took an inductive perspective on the development of such an analytical framework to WP2, i.e. working from a set of knowledge perspectives.

Literature – as well as empirical explorations – on information used for policy-making (e.g. evaluations, scientific reports, expert advice...) often distinguishes between the "use", "influence" and "impact" of information. This categorisation separates the physical and/or administrative handling of information (i.e. "use") from the policy dynamics an indicator is affecting (i.e. "influence") and the outcome such influence might have on final policy decisions (i.e. "impact"). This distinction has resulted (e.g. Knott and Wildavsky, 1980, Rich and Oh, 2000, Denisov and Christoffersen, 2001, Keeble et al., 2003, Henry and Mark 2003; Boulanger, 2007) in a series of attempts to develop the interactions between information and policy into 'information pathways', i.e. a sequence of stages such as the existence of

information, accessibility, collection, uptake, digestion, use, influence, impact, and/or rejection of information.

The empirical investigation and analyses of such information pathways through institutional, administrative processes has gained some popularity at least since the early work of Weiss (1977) and more recently with Henry and Mark (2003), and remains a very straightforward way to develop a quasi-ethnographic follow-up of what happens to specific bits of information (and by extension, to individual indicators) once they enter policy-making institutions and processes. The more recent empirical explorations on indicator use – including on Beyond-GDP indices – refrain however from the development of a pathway-based analytical framework and propose to leave such a distinction at the level of circumscribing their methodological, empirical setting.

While being obviously attractive to both policy- and indicator-actors, the inherent prescriptive nature of such information pathways, i.e. the promise to be able to develop a limited set of patterns and conditions that trigger one or the other type of indicator use and impact, seems to highly underestimate the specificity and context-sensitivity of the process of indicator demand. More importantly for BRAINPOoL, grounding our analytical framework on information/indicator pathways – and the ensuing distinctions between use and influence of indicators – would not give a fundamental value-addition when exploring the “demand” for Beyond-GDP indicators; as typically demand as expressed by policy actors is not specific enough. A further distinction often made in literature when exploring the interaction of information with decision-making is the differentiation between the different natures of “use”.

In effect, the first-hand, linear and instrumental comprehension of knowledge use for policy-making where better and more information induces better decisions has been questioned for some time as being too rationalistic and functional (Vedung 1997; Weiss 1977 & 1999); such linear evidence-based narratives tend however to survive in some conceptualisations of daily policy practice (Owens et al 2004) especially in manuals to introduce and enhance evidence-based policy-making. Knowledge – and indicators in particular – develops much more frequently into unforeseen policy outcomes where it is impossible to detect the linear, direct influence of the many information sources that shaped a decision. These more prevalent, indirect ways of shaping processes and decisions have been discussed as “enlightenment” (Weiss 1999) or as the generation of “shared understandings” (Innes 1998). In both instances the process of indicator (co)development are seen as being highly influential. More generally, such indirect, non-linear natures of the use of indicators (and other forms of information) have been labelled as “political use” (e.g. to legitimise decisions that have already hardened), “symbolic use” (e.g. to substitute for decision-taking), and “tactical use” (e.g. to dismiss opponents). The analytical framework for WP2 basically consolidates all forms of “use”, not developing a differentiation between “use” and “influence” or between the different natures of “use”.

The policy use of indicators: factors that help to characterize demand

Our analytical framework explores the uses of indicators using three types of factors³. Much of the development of the factors which shape the analytical framework for the investigation of indicator use and demand has been described in detail in preceding works (see among others, Sébastien and Bauler 2013), so it is not necessary to report on these extensively here. But in summary, we build on Pregernig (2000), who suggested that knowledge/information uptake into policy arenas is configured according to three distinctive factors:

³ The analysis of projected and intended demand in WP1 has been equally influenced by a set of factors, but the obvious difference in perspectives between WP1 (i.e. indicator-developer perspective) and WP2 (i.e. indicator-user perspective) quite logically resulted into differentiated comprehensions of these factors.

- the quality of the information itself, which we hereafter call “indicator factors” and which relates to the quality of the attributes of the indicator itself (i.e. robustness, timeliness...). These include the quality of the underlying data, the configuration and nomenclature of the indicator and the variables which constitute it, the development of the weighting scheme (in the case of indices), the accuracy of the data sources used, the presentation and communication of the indicators... Indicator factors determine the validity, reliability, specificity and sensitivity of an indicator (and the underlying data) as well as the adequacy of the communication and dissemination processes.
- the level of experience and of expertise of the information receiver, i.e. the capacity and repertoires of the person effectively using the information, which we label subsequently “user factors”. User factors circumscribe the mental models, belief systems and expectations of the user with regard to the indicator, but also partly depend on the administrative/institutional cultures and practices the user belongs to. User repertoires have been conceptualised as “stabilized ways of thinking and acting (on the individual level) or stabilized codes, operations and technology (on other levels)” (van der Meer 1999, 390). User factors are crucial to understand the (mis)match between the conceptual models (implicit and explicit) which frame an indicator (and the way it represents and relates to reality) and the conceptual framework of a user and his/her organisation.
- the nature of the policy context and policy agendas/arenas which configure the procedural setting into which indicators are percolating (or not), which we identify as “policy factors”. Governance and actor coalitions as well as the policy issue at hand frame specific policy arenas/agendas, and this setting (which shifts over time and space) determines the processes and level of institutionalisation of specific indicators. It is the nature of policy factors which contribute to the legitimisation and formalisation of the concepts and methods underlying an indicator. Extending from the work of Kingdon (e.g. 1984) on the development and evolution of policy windows and opportunities, the use of a specific indicator can be explained via the (mis)match between the indicator-based reporting/monitoring of the policy problem and the main policy idea, as well as the existence or emergence of a favourable political environment.

These elements of the operational framework of analysis support the analysis of the empirical material we have obtained during WP2, and which we report on hereafter.

3. Characterisation of demand for 'beyond GDP'

The characterisation of demand is organised in a three-layered approach. The first section (3.1) configures the institutional contexts, the background, in which Beyond-GDP indicators have emerged. An analysis of the concrete initiatives undertaken in the countries and international organisations is provided. More fundamentally, this 'institutional settings' analysis provides a detailed sense of the context from which new indicators emerge. This should help to identify the structures, systems and interactions that explain, for instance, the coexistence of an important beyond GDP innovation and yet the absence of any direct uptake of alternative 'Beyond GDP' indicators in the decision-making sphere.

The second section (3.2) consists of getting a more precise image of the way institutional actors perceive the Beyond GDP indicators, and the wider agenda attached to them. The focus is thus on exploring perceptions of actors. This should allow us to fill a gap in the current research on beyond GDP indicators. An increasing body of literature does address the recent expansion of the 'Beyond-GDP' phenomenon, but largely focusing on an explanation of indicators or on the role they are to play in governance systems. However, few studies have questioned the way civil society and political and scientific actors perceive the 'Beyond-GDP' agenda from their respective positions inside and outside of the policy agenda.

Both of these empirical momenta and their analyses – i.e. the analysis of the institutional contexts as well as the analysis of actors' perceptions - have forgone an integrated analysis (section 3.3.) where we strive towards combining contexts and perceptions.

3.1. Cross-national patterns of institutional contexts

In the strive towards "Understanding the context" we place the emergence of new indicators in their institutional contexts, present the official political/societal ends they are to serve and more generally shed light on the type of governance they are supposed to be part of. We explore indicators in their dimension as "tools of government/governance". In that context, indicators are analysed through the institutional patterns we configured.

Conceptual insight: Indicators as tools of governance/government

"Si la statistique est et a toujours été une affaire d'État, on peut noter que le rôle qu'elle joue dans l'organisation de l'activité de gouvernement a totalement changé depuis l'époque de la construction des États-nations à la fin du XIXe siècle" (Desrosières 2007 in Ogien 2010: 24).

Basically, Desrosières, along with others, states that in order to understand the policy factors underlying the demand for Beyond-GDP indicators, a first step needs to clarify the role indicators and statistics are to play in the way societies are governed.

However, before considering the case of Beyond-GDP indicators, it is worthwhile understanding the recent evolution of the use of national accounting (out of which GDP emerged) more generally. Indeed, the interaction of national accounting – and more generally macro-indicators – with policy-making has quite seriously evolved over the last few decades, rendering it de facto impossible to hope to replace (or complement) GDP by imitating the processes which have once brought GDP in its prominent position. On other words, GDP has its own history tightly linked to the evolution of governance mechanisms itself, and Beyond GDP indicators will have to participate into their very own contemporary (and future) evolution of governance.

Even for the evolutions of the State-statistics relationship which accompanied, guided and were influenced by the GDP-era different interpretations and analyses do exist in literature. These divergences can be crystallized, for instance from a French perspective, in the contrasting readings of Vanoli (2002) and Fourquet (1980). While, for Vanoli, the history of national accounting since 1930-1940 takes the shape of a continuous scientific progress, where debate between experts have contributed to improving a meso- and macro-economic tool, Fourquet, in contrast, has a different reading. For him, it is politics and its vision of wealth and power that fundamentally determines the composition of national accounting and official statistics. In this vision, national accounting is the tool through which the power of a State could be intensified and made visible to other nations. While both authors depart from a very different epistemological, even methodological, position, hence it could be seen as normal that their perspectives diverge, there is something more profound to it. However diverging their starting point, and besides their diverging interpretations of institutionalisation processes, Vanoli and Fourquet share a common point of view with regard to the role of national accounting. This holds that within the Keynesian State⁴, grossly interpreted as the prevalent form of ruling which accompanied the definition and emergence of national accounting during and after WW2, the national accounts first aim to support macroeconomic policies before addressing individuals at the microeconomic level.

In contrast, the neo-liberal State – as Desrosières (2010) names the contemporaneous form of state – is based on market microeconomic dynamics and orients the latter through incentive systems, systematically referring to the rational expectations theory. The evaluation of the incentive processes result from surveys on individual data, aimed at modelling actors' behaviours, including actors from the public sphere (Desrosières 2010: 6). This issue, which points at an important difference between the neo-liberal state and a Keynesian understanding of economic governance, needs also to impact our understanding of the current interlinkage between B-GDP indicators, statistics and governance. In this neo-liberal form of the State, indicators contribute to orient individual thoughts and behaviours by increasingly entering societal/private spheres that were previously not under scrutiny by indicators. While the historical GDP had to rule – and did rule - at the macro-level, the future 'Beyond GDP' appears to be forced to address micro-levels too. From such historical readings of institutional contexts, 'Beyond-GDP' indicators should be understood in the context of the potential political and functional tools of a new form of government/governance. Politically, Beyond-GDP indicators might embody support for a new legitimacy discourse (Ogien 2010). Functionally, the comparison between various performances in terms of wellbeing or sustainability necessarily implies the definition of 'Beyond GDP' linkable quantified objectives for society.

Understanding the context: Our methodology

Constructing the institutional context of 'Beyond GDP' has been a quasi-archeological undertaking. Methodologically, the choice was made to develop in a first instance the institutional contexts in a number EU-Member states (France, Germany, UK, Czech Republic, Netherlands) as well as at the EU-level and within the OECD. OECD and EU have both been taken into account because these institutions are the two main supra-national driving forces behind the agenda. For each of these 7 entities, a set of foundational 'happenings' was selected. The main criterion of selection was for the 'happening' to be recurrently cross-referenced in the main policy documents of the policy agenda (such as in the EU Communication on 'GDP and Beyond').

⁴ Desrosières (2010 : 6) defines the Keynesian State as follows : "L'État keynésien a une responsabilité dans le pilotage macroéconomique d'une société dont le caractère marchand n'est cependant pas contesté. (...) La comptabilité nationale est son instrument central (...). Les systèmes statistiques publics sont réorganisés pour les besoins de celle-ci. (...) Les modèles macroéconométriques orientent des politiques portant sur des agrégats, en confrontant offre et demande globale." (Desrosières 2010 : 6)

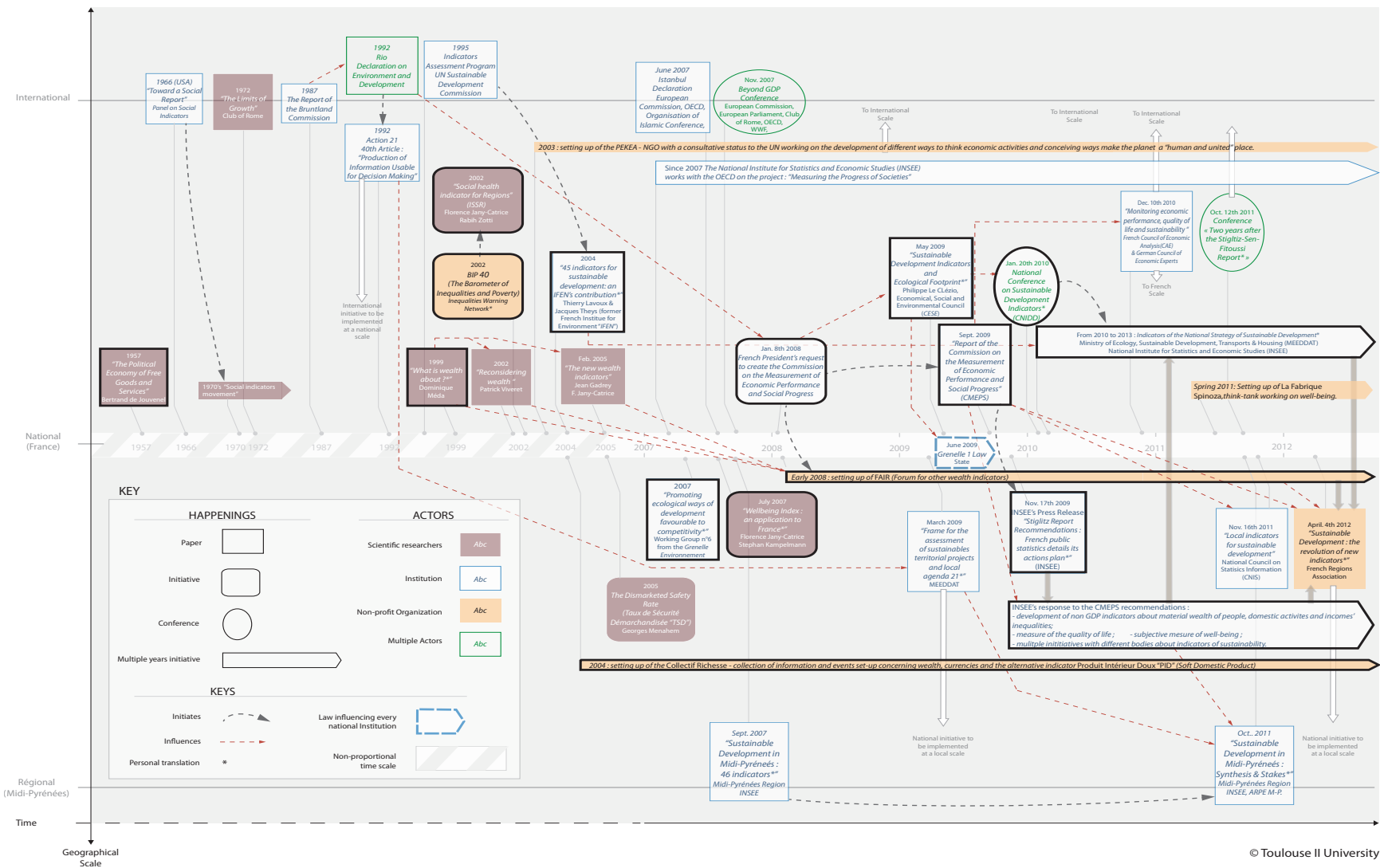
Considered 'happenings' were of three distinct natures: 'documents' (e.g. policy, scientific, societal), 'events' (e.g. conferences, meetings, workshops) and 'initiatives' (e.g. research projects/programs, technical working parties, interservice consultations). Each 'happening' is additionally described in a synthetic 'fiche', which comprises information on author/initiator/key actors, period/timing, objectives, reasons, scale of application, target groups, purpose/motivation, explicit citations of indicators. These 'happenings' are registered and organized within their respective national or supra-national 'timelines', providing a visualisation of the institutional contexts (see below for an example), which in turn allowed reflecting the various links between 'happenings'. The timelines cover three scales: local, national and international.

Once the national/supranational timelines were configured, we developed first an analysis of each of them at their respective level, i.e. within the timeline. In a second instance, the 7 timelines were brought together to undergo an integrated, cross-national analysis in order to reveal more thoroughly the interlinkages between countries, and between countries and the 2 supra-national levels. This analysis was conducted along a shared framework of elements consisting of :

- Time patterns – the analysis of each 'happening' (document, event or initiative) with respect to its place on the timeline. Several periods of time are identified according to the paradigms, the references and the relationships between actors.
- Differentiated actor visions – the analysis concentrated to unpick the theoretical context in which the 'happening' is anchored. This is done through analysing the theoretical background of each stakeholder responsible for initiating each of the observed papers, initiatives or events.
- Interactions between actors – the analysis provided an overview of the workings of the Beyond GDP debate and reveals the influence of each 'happening' or stakeholder in the context of that country or institution. The analysis of these interactions can show up unexpected links between different actors, or reinforce the picture of coherence of groups sharing the same theoretical approach. It can also define specific actors as being key stakeholders because of a great number of connections with others.
- Interactions between scales – the analysis listed the different links existing from one geographical scale to another. These links comprise the use by an actor from a specific scale of a reference from another scale, the adaptation of a concept developed at one scale to another scale, the influence of an initiative developed in a specific area on another area, the implementation of a decision taken at a certain level on other scales, etc.
- Appearance of indicators and their specified roles – the analysis explored the link between the choice of indicators selected by each actor and its background.

The objective of the analyses was to identify processes and their actors, and how they interact (both the actors and the processes) over a sufficiently long timeframe to be able to see how political and policy processes evolve and under what influences. The objective was to identify – and subsequently to discuss - 'happenings' that were of obvious influence and hence helped the debate on alternative indicators to evolve at different levels and to influence the production, promotion, diffusion and use of Beyond-GDP indicators.

The individual analyses – at their respective national and supra-national levels - can be found in the annexes, including the constituent material of these analyses, such as the timelines and 'happening' fiches. We report hereafter only on the cross-national, general analysis conducted. In this analysis, the case of France takes a somewhat particular place, in the sense that the French case constituted the measuring rod – the empirical standard - against which the other national and supra-national analyses were conducted.



An example of a timeline: the French case (partial)

3.1.1. Elements configuring institutional contexts

The analysis of the timelines is organised following the elements which constituted the framework (see above).

3.1.1.1. *Identification of time patterns*

The debate surrounding the need for alternative indicators first arrived during the 1960s with two pioneer economists and statisticians, Bertrand De Jouvenel in France, and Roefie Hueting in the Netherlands. They were both involved with research on the evolution of their respective national accounts with the aim of improving the accountability of dimensions ignored by the traditional economic approach, i.e. environmental consumption and degradation, and free and non-marketable goods. Their approach preceded the influence of the social indicators movement that reached France, Germany, the EU and the OECD between the second half of the 1960s to the early 1980s.

The Social Indicators Movement

Brought from the United States to France in around 1965, the movement really started to have a concrete influence in Europe from the early 1970s with Jacques Delors in France who tried to create a system for social accounting to balance the effects of economic development. At the same time the OECD launched a social indicators initiative to develop and perform the measurement of a set of indicators designed to reveal levels of well-being and to monitor changes over time. Meanwhile in Germany the SPES Project (1977) also set out to measure and monitor well-being, an initiative that later spawned the 'German System of Social Indicators' (late 1970s), and the Daten Report (1985), two widely used tools dedicated to monitoring well-being, social change and the quality of life in Germany. Another German initiative also influenced by the Social Indicators Movement was the Socio Economic Panel, launched in 1984. To some extent, this attention given to social issues was likely a contributing factor for Eurostat launching the first Eurobarometer public opinion survey in September 1973 with a goal that appears to closely match the function expected from the initiatives launched elsewhere.

During the 1980's the focus on social issues is slowly overwhelmed by the international context which was being overshadowed by a worsening economic condition. Finally, a new focus on sustainable development rose to prominence towards the end of the 1980s. This new approach still included social issues but increased the attention given to environmental concerns. In the country settings, no clear involvement of the Netherlands in the development of social indicators could be identified before 1994.

Late 1980s – early 2000s: the rise of environmental concerns and sustainable development

The release of the Brundtland report in 1987 and the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 as major global events influenced every country and supra-national institution studied by BRAINPOoL. According to the analysis, the 1990's was clearly a decade focused on sustainable development. Several official papers issued by the governments of France, Germany and the Netherlands, show that the SD agenda is starting to be addressed by governments from the late 1980s and the early 1990s. However, while in the Netherlands successive National Environmental Programmes were undertaken since the mid-1980s, none of the other countries studies actually developed any set of indicator dedicated measuring SD before the late 1990s.

In Czech Republic, meanwhile, the Velvet Revolution in 1989 spawned a broad concern for environmental issues in society and placed them as one of the most pressing challenges to tackle in the 1990s. As a result, the main progress relating to indicators during this decade were borne by several programs aimed at improving the quality of the environment and - by extension - improving the quality of living conditions and health of the population.

From the late 1990s, the eight entities studied converged on the same focus of sustainable development and on the need to assess their progress towards its implementation. The principle of sustainability was officially put forward in the Netherlands in 1997 (NEP4), in Wales in 1998 (Governmental Act) and in France in 1999 (LOADDT). Seeing that sustainability was becoming a major new priority in many of its member countries, the OECD carried-out a program to help countries in moving toward it and provide practical tools to undertake related policies.

However, the main catalyst pushing forward SD and related indicators occurred in 2001-2002 under pressure from the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development that required countries to present an SD strategy. Indeed, this resulted in the publication of the OECD Environmental Indicators: Toward Sustainable Development in 2001, the adoption of the first Welsh SD Scheme in 2000 with its first set of indicators in 2002, the launch of the first EU SD strategy in 2001, the implementation of the respective National Strategies of the Netherlands and Germany – complemented by their SD indicators – both in the Spring of 2002, the French National Strategy for SD in 2003 and the Czech Republic Strategy Framework for SD in 2004.

Beyond GDP: alternative measures of wealth, progress and development - late 1990s and 2000s

Sustainable development was not the only concern that impacted the alternative indicator movement during the 1990s. The questioning of measures of wealth, progress and development through economic growth had led to the development of Beyond-GDP indicators from the end of the 1980s and throughout 1990s by the United Nations and by North American researchers. These alternative tools had an influence on some of the European entities analysed by BRAINPOoL where various actors also started to tackle this issue. In 1999 French academics worked on the measurement of wealth and development, with research still continuing today on the development of theories and experiments to promote the replacement of GDP with alternative statistical measures. In 1999 a European conference entitled “Beyond Growth” gathered international ecological economists to discuss the decoupling of growth and progress.

The OECD Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies was also focused on the evolution of the use of statistics towards a better measure of progress. The series of events it carried out started in 2004 with the First World Forum and its clear focus on progress with its concerns broadening to include quality of life, societal progress, the measure of happiness, the improvement of life, and finally well-being in the late 2000s. This evolution of the agenda was given further momentum in 2007 with the International Conference ‘Beyond GDP, Measuring Progress, True Wealth and the Well-being of Nations’ organised by the European Commission, the European Parliament, the OECD, The World Wildlife Fund and the Club of Rome. The Beyond GDP approach was also taken up by new actors like the Foundation for Cultural Renewal in Germany that developed its own indicator, the Prosperity Quintet in 2007 and by the Centre for Societal Progress that developed its Progress Index in 2010.

All these initiatives are closely linked to the Commission for the Measurement of Economic Performance and Societal Progress (CMEPSP, also known as the ‘Stiglitz Report’, Stiglitz 2009) that spawned from the same background issues but created a new influential focal point for the Beyond-GDP agenda. Its approach spanning economic performance, well-being and sustainable development gave formalized an increasing trend – observed in Germany,

Characterizing demand for 'Beyond GDP'

France, the OECD, the UE, Wales and existing for more than ten years in the Netherlands – that considers SD through the sustainability of societal well-being. This approach considers economic performance and environmental preservation as constituents of well-being, an anthropocentric vision favourable to the traditional economic approach.

The sustainability of Well-Being and 'Smart Growth': since 2009

By formally linking the approaches of well-being and progress to sustainable development, the CMEPSP increased the involvement of other stakeholders in the development of indicators characterized by an absence in the questioning of the current political-economic paradigm. The previous sustainable development approach had as a primary objective the achievement of the reorganisation of society. But the CMEPSP's approach heralded a renewed emphasis on economic performance, with the challenge addressed to the measurement system of achieving a better distribution of the economic wealth. The concept of well-being, which is still often measured using a material approach, can favour a consumer society and reduce the perspective of progress to rather short term timeframes. The remaining dimension of sustainability is no longer focussed on the implementation of a system that can meet both social needs and natural viability, but addresses the management of natural resources to assure the maximisation of well-being.

In Germany, there is a direct influence of the CMEPSP approach with the Joint Report of the German Council of Economic Experts and the French Council for Economic Analysis, the Bundestag's Enquete Commission on Growth, Prosperity and Quality of Life, the Chancellor's Dialogue on Germany's Future, and initiation of the Progress Forum. In the Czech Republic, the general acceptance of this evolution appears in the name given to the book *Indicators of Well-Being*⁵, that gathers international indicators qualified as 'Beyond GDP indicators', 'New wealth indicators' or 'Indicators of Development' during the 2000s. The OECD Better Policies for Better Lives program is also clearly anchored in this new approach with its 'tools to measure well-being: Your Better Life Index'. Moreover, this OECD program is considered as the main vehicle of the Stiglitz Commission approach to pursue its recommendations at the international level.

In national strategies for sustainable development in the Netherlands, Wales, Czech Republic and the European Union, the concept of well-being and its common terminologies are increasingly used in official dialogues. Moreover, the Europe 2020 Strategy reveals a new orientation of the high level European bodies towards resolving the economic crisis by putting economic growth at the forefront of the strategy. This growth is, however, supposed to be smarter by including the elements of sustainability and well-being.

However it is important to note that this evolution is observed in recent initiatives and papers that discuss current and future processes and decisions. That is to say that – generally – previous institutional SD processes are not in question and continue to be carried-out without adaptation. We are thus experiencing the addition of concepts that merge to some extent with previous concepts without totally substituting each other.

3.1.1.2. *Entangled Actor Visions*

From the 1960s until the early 1980s, the pioneer researchers and actors of the Social Indicators Movement had the primary aim of providing statistical data to fill-in a lack of information needed to broaden the scope of policy-making. With a motivation to assess and monitor well-being, quality of life or environmental consumption, they largely appear to have

⁵ Zeleny Kruh (Green Circle), *Indikátory blahobytu* (Indicators of Well-Being), in Czech, Edice Apel, 2010. Available at: <http://www.zelenykruh.cz/dokumenty/indikatory-blahobytu-2010.pdf>

tried to supplement economic accounts with social and/or environmental data. Some of these initiatives were successful and long lasting (in Germany, in the Netherlands, the Eurobarometer), while others were cut short (in France and the OECD). Inside these alternative processes, the social approach was then predominant in France, Germany, the OECD and the EU while in the Netherlands environmental accounts were being developed to report on the consequences of economic growth. At that time, these actions were almost the exclusive preserve of economists and statisticians, except in Germany where sociologists were also involved.

When the Sustainable Development approach emerged at the international level, the political sphere became broadly involved in the debate and committed to this new global concern. The SD strategies and indicator sets were decided upon at the highest political level in both member states and at the EU level and put into practice by governmental bodies and experts. Until the early 2000s these indicators were strongly based on the traditional definition of SD issued in the Brundtland report. This is observable in France, Germany, the Netherlands, the EU and the OECD. Wales also joined the SD trend with the Government of Wales Act 1998 that devolved the monitoring of SD from the UK Parliament to the Welsh Government. In Wales, the three traditional pillars Brundtland's definition (environmental, economic and social sustainability) were also used to structure the SD process until the mid-2000s.

In the Czech Republic, the SD approach was put into action at the national level later than in the other countries studied (2004). The programs dedicated to improving the quality of the living environment in the 1990s were mainly driven by a desire to improve quality of life and health and catch up with 'western' standards. However, SD appeared at a local level from the second half of the 1990s with the Healthy Cities initiative that consistently worked towards SD supported by local Agendas 21 chapters.

As seen above, the general focus on Sustainable Development evolved during the 2000s and lost ground to well-being in the alternative indicators debate. From 2001, for example, the Dutch advisory councils considered that sustainable development was becoming a synonym for "a broad measure of welfare". Similarly, from 2007, the new Welsh SD Scheme "One Wales: One Planet" treats SD as a way to reach a better quality of life and well-being for the long-term. Moreover, well-being is integrated as a 'fourth pillar' of the Welsh SD Scheme. These two examples are typical in showing a stance that favours an evolution of the current economic system, rather than developing an alternative vision. The two countries both keep the SD approach and process as an official objective, but the importance of well-being is growing within SD initiatives and is deeply influencing their goals.

This growing importance of well-being is also noticeable in the OECD Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies that showed an evolution in its focus from progress to quality of life, then the measure of happiness, the improvement of life and finally well-being around the late 2000s.

This trend from a focus on SD towards an additional (or an alternative) focus on well-being during the 2000s is not equally observed in all entities analysed. In France, Germany and the EU, SD processes remained pivotal until the late 2000s and alternative approaches that question the measurement system were undertaken in parallel. These enquiries involved new stakeholders such as scientists (philosophers, sociologists), NGOs and think-tanks. What they shared was a direct questioning of GDP, and indicators were engaged with as the critical tools to highlight broader dimensions of wealth and to widen the scope of policy in that direction.

These actors, while involved in the "Beyond-GDP" movement and all questioning GDP to some extent, did, however, hold very different expectations on the outcomes of the movement, ranging somewhere between two extremes:

- The replacement of GDP with another aggregated indicator, with the goal of reassessing the link between measurement and the evolution of society
- The addition of new indicators alongside GDP, with the goal of extending the existing statistical system.

For many, questioning the overriding importance given to the objective of growth while at the same time shifting the focus to environmental, societal and cultural wealth is the key objective. This is true of many of the French researchers working on this issue since the late 1990s, the International Conference Beyond Growth 1999 (on the European level), Platform DSE (since 2006) in the Netherlands, the Foundation for Cultural Renewal in Germany (since 2007) and the German the National Welfare Index (since 2009). On the other hand the approach of the Beyond GDP Conference on Measuring Progress, True Wealth and the Well-Being of Nations (2007), is driven by the need to adapt the measurement system to new societal dimensions such as environmental monitoring, well-being, etc. and move closer to the OECD's stance.

This evolution, influenced by the international debate, provided the basis for the conclusions of the CMEPSP's report confirming a general shift toward well-being and providing a new standard in the questioning of the statistical system (2009). This standard reaffirms a central role for economic growth in the prosperity of nations. Well-being is put forward as the main goal of society and sustainability is considered through the lens of managing various resources to guarantee this well-being.

The main outcomes of this turning point appeared in 2010 with the growing importance of the concept of Green Growth, the implementation of the CMEPSP approach in political processes in France (SD indicators, INSEE's adaptation), in Germany (Bundestag's Enquete Commission on Growth, Prosperity and Quality of Life, the Chancellor's Dialogue on Germany's Future), in the EU (Europe 2020 Strategy) and the advent of well-being as the catalyst of the debate. Similarly, since 2010-2011, think-tanks and foundations operating in this field are increasingly focused on well-being, such as La fabrique Spinoza in France, the Progress Forum in Germany, or Green Circle (in Czech Republic).

3.1.1.3. Interactions between actors

It appears that the actors involved in the alternative indicators debate have become increasingly broad and numerous if we look at the movement in the European Union, France, Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Wales and the OECD. However, when we look at the level of each entity, we generally find a small number of actors taking part in many differing activities that provide the debate with multiple actions. The debate is generally restricted to a few types of actors that are exchanging knowledge, information and opinions and creating a system of expert stakeholders that has difficulty engaging the attention of broader civil society. As a result, this system of actors is tightly structured and generates a large number of internal interactions.

A general observation can be made that initiatives are mainly addressed to or headed by governments who of course remain primary actors. National statistical offices are also central stakeholders, being at the forefront of the concrete evolution of the measurement system, and by providing most of the data and indicators used in the debate.

We notice that the outputs of national initiatives are generally targeted at a wide range of actors as follows: policy-makers, governmental bodies, statisticians, economists, scientists, NGOs, the business community and civil society. In many cases, the target groups are listed in the introduction as stakeholders expected to take advantage or to learn from these outputs. This situation appears somewhat optimistic given the levels of expertise that can be expected from such a broad range of actors.

In general terms, the EU and OECD do not address their outreach to actors involved at a lower scale than the national level, except for the OECD Better Life Index that is aimed directly at citizens. There is little evidence for strong 'bottom-up' social demand in the alternative indicators debate and there is no popular call for new indicators though this is not surprising given the complexity of these tools and their almost exclusive construction by experts. However, scientists, NGOs and governmental bodies do base their work on a genuine and often widespread social demand for solutions to various environmental, social and economic problems that face society. Their work appears as a technical interpretation of this demand. So civil society does play a role as an informal stakeholder that affects trends inside the debate, without being directly involved in the indicators production or promotion.

The fact that civil society affects the debate at all reveals a wider trend in the evolution of the movement from its origins until the modern day: in France, the Netherlands and Germany the early actors in the debate were almost exclusively statisticians and economists, who addressed their work at their peers. The emergence of the SD approach saw governmental bodies and political leaders becoming widely involved in both launching new processes and requesting statistical production from experts. Increasingly the Beyond-GDP approach has seen the lead taken by scientists, experts and private groups who aim to achieve their goals through the production of statistics and call on governments to make the necessary changes. A certain popular unease regarding the validity of the economic system, influenced by the economic crisis, an increasing awareness regarding the need for sustainability and the growing influence of the participatory approach has led actors within the debate to take into account the broader needs of society. Finally the well-being approach has seen initiatives generated from every type of actor with a desire to reach civil society through the use of an easily grasped concept.

The evolution of the trends in interactions between B-GDP actors has followed a different pattern in the Czech Republic. There, the initiatives of the 1990s were spawned by the societal demand for better environmental management and were addressed to the whole Czech people. During the 2000s, a new trend shows that studies and conferences dealing with statistical measures of progress and on the conditions to build SD indicators are primarily addressed towards experts, high-level policy-makers and scientists. Regarding the link to civil society, the Welsh initiatives show a predominance of actors from official institutions, except for Sustain Wales and Well-Being Wales, two non-profit organisations funded by the Government. The Welsh situation is a typical case where the group of actors engaged with alternative indicators remains small and are linked with a high connectivity between initiatives.

The experience gained in the analysis of the French settings and confirmed by the Welsh situation, invites to suppose that the high density of interrelations observed could be found in any country or entity analysed. Some specific experts, theoretical leaders or key happenings are repeatedly shown as drivers for various initiatives or are mentioned as references by almost every actor. However, the time spent on the analysis of each country and institution did not reveal the same (high) quantity of interactions as found in France. We suppose this high density to be demonstrable for most of the cases studied (especially Germany, the EU and OECD), but each analysis should be carried out more deeply to certify this hypothesis.

The factors responsible for this density of interrelations are the influence of key initiatives used as examples, the launch of widespread official processes that call for multiple levels of implementation and measurement and the involvement of the same actors in several initiatives (experts, NSOs, institutional leaders, etc.). Nevertheless, the entities studied are not isolated from one another. The debate has extended to the international level where activities and trends clearly influence national choices and major initiatives have a supra-national impact. For example, frameworks and studies developed by the EU – such as the European SD indicators – are feeding into national initiatives. The OECD Global Project and

the Beyond GDP Conference outputs influence the scientific and political debate at different scales, from global to regional. Some specific initiatives initiated at the national level are also of major influence for every entity: the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress recommendations have been found to be influential everywhere, while the innovations in the Dutch Environmental Accounts influenced the System of European Accounts which then developed tools to be implemented by other EU member countries.

Finally, the interactions between actors engaged in the alternative indicator debate are not limited to their geographical scale. Much of the influence observed depends on the relations between countries and between countries and supra-national institutions. The interactions between different scales appear, therefore, to be as important as the interactions between actors.

3.1.1.4. Interactions of scales

The varied B-GDP initiatives analysed in the countries and institutions are not necessarily bound to the specific geographic scale of the entity. They may often concern other scales, from the international down to the local. The deep observation of France led us to observe the importance of the interactions between intra-national scales. It revealed that the main initiatives are not only focused on the national scale and that structuring and non-hierarchical exchanges can exist between the regional and the national scales. However, we could not undertake a multi scale analysis in each country/entity. We can nevertheless observe the importance of this approach that reveals the influence and the role of various scales inside each entity. As a common example, the international activities, through various connections, clearly influenced the time patterns, the use and the evolution of concepts inside the five countries and the two institutions.

The regional scale, embodied by Wales, Ländern in Germany, Provinces in the Netherlands and Régions in France reveal variations on this theme. Often the adaptation of national initiatives to regional situations can be observed (as with the National Welfare Index adapted into a Regional Welfare Index in Germany) as well as the desire to implement processes such as SD at a more relevant scale (as with the devolvement of powers from the UK to the Welsh Parliament for the promotion of SD, the indicators for regional Agenda 21 and SD in France) as well as the study, development and implementation of fully fledged regional indicators (such as the dozens of initiatives in French Régions, and the SD Schemes in Wales). These variations of the debate not only widen the approach to regional needs and expectations but often bring new reflections and solutions that enrich the diversity of the whole debate (as we saw from BRAINPOoL's WP1 conclusions often the most impressive impacts result from local level indicators).

However, the hierarchical structure of geographical scales tends to be reflected in the importance given to regional initiatives at the national and international levels. Indeed, while some French regional initiatives demonstrate relevant philosophical and technical solutions, few are considered at the national level and none are implemented above the regional level. The top-down hierarchy between scales can be generally observed in the downward flow of concepts, always issued from international activities, then adapted to lower scales.

The local scale also contributes to a broadening of the debate with initiatives carried out at the level of cities, districts or towns' associations (Torfaen Sustainability Index in Wales, Healthy Cities and local Ecological Footprint in Czech Republic are examples). The analysis of this level raises an issue relevant to other scales: which goals should be targeted? Does the indicator aim at providing information about local specificities with the ultimate goal of adapting decision-making to its unique local qualities? Or does the indicator need to describe the evolution of local processes whilst also allowing comparisons with other territories? The second option can lead to comparisons between very different entities from different scales

(a county vs. a country). The question here is whether the widespread motivation to increase the comparability of indicators and to connect local initiatives with global ones is useful. Are localities comparable? Do they need to follow the same standards and methodologies? Is a common indicator relevant?

Nevertheless, international interactions are providing major breakthroughs for lower level scales such as with the development of the European Strategy for SD indicators that influenced the French and German National SD Strategies, the release of major alternative indicators such as the HDI, the Ecological Footprint or the Social Health Index. Furthermore, some national initiatives spread to the European level (as with the Dutch NAMEA that was developed and adapted for other EU countries).

The complexity of interactions between different scales within countries, enhanced by the need to adapt to international initiatives, does not affect the EU and OECD level to the same degree. They both focus the main part of their actions at the supra-national level, and on their member countries in particular. The products they release are mainly used at these two levels although the data they produce is also used in the construction of some lower scale indicators. Their influence is global and provides the international debate with reliable studies, but the span of their actions appears more limited than at the national level.

A look at the Beyond GDP movement from the perspective of geographical scales reveals the variety of stances that are dependent on the size and expectations of each territory. The various scales provide a wealth of variety in terms of the motivations, the choices and the uses of indicators in a multitude of situations. The challenges emerging from the interaction between scales seems to catalyse some of major issues within the alternative indicator debate.

3.1.1.5. The emerging role of alternative indicators

Every event, document, experiment or decision that makes up the body of work attempting to understand and develop the alternative indicators debate contains a particular perception of role that indicators play. According to the ideal, actors have a particular goal they hope to achieve with the means they can employ, and make various methodological choices with the expectation of obtaining particular results from indicators they use.

During the Social Indicators Movement (France, Germany, EU, OECD), and the work on environmental accounts (Netherlands, Berlin School of Political Science 1970s-1990s), the aim of developing and evolving the collection of statistical data was largely to correct and strengthen deficiencies in the data that could be useful for political decision-making. Social and/or environmental reporting was expected to provide national leaders with data that could make them aware of the consequences of their decisions, set and evaluate objectives, and complement economic information with a broader overview of national development. Pioneers in the questioning of GDP's dominance seemed to expect that the availability of additional data would, in itself, sufficiently influence political decisions, but these initiatives remained at the margins of high-level decision-making and merely succeeded in providing better information on resources management.

With the implementation of Sustainable Development programs such as Agenda 21 and other institutional SD strategies, the SD indicator sets were expected to account for much broader set of issue areas (environment, health, education etc.), and report on the evolution and successes (or failures) of the programmes they evaluated. They were – and, mainly, still are – developed as tools supporting the implementation of SD programs, and were therefore unlikely to transmit a particular vision. They primarily report on single aspects organised within a broader more complex dashboard used to drive a political process. The symbolic and communicational aspects of indicators are in this case overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information, which only supports a 'managerial' vision.

In contrast, the symbolic and communicational abilities of indicators are central to the Beyond GDP approach. The whole political and economic system is challenged through the questioning of GDP and alternative indicators are used to foster societal and political debate about values, to define societal goals and to structure decision-making. At best they are depicted and promoted as democratic tools that are aimed at better informing society on the different priorities available.

However, the need for clear communicational abilities in indicators is balanced by the need for accuracy, and this dichotomy leads to debates about the form indicators should take. Given the relatively clear picture they can convey, aggregated/compound indicators are easy to use and spread in the media, can facilitate simple comparisons and are therefore often accorded the potential to challenge GDP. Dashboards are considered to be more accurate by including measures of dozens of societal aspects and answering the need to have a better understanding of the wealth of complexity in society. However, they are not easily used as a communication tool and are primarily addressed towards experts.

The acknowledgement of the limits of GDP by many recent studies, and by the CMEPSP/Stiglitz report in particular, has undeniably enhanced the motivation of officials to improve its methodology and complement it with indicators of well-being and sustainability. This impetus has allowed an important evolution of the measurement system toward dashboards. These dashboards do, however, tend to keep economic performance as the central goal. Moreover, the indicators of well-being and sustainability that are added are often chosen according to their compatibility with this economic pre-eminence, and while the new terminologies used can suggest a profound evolution has taken place, they can often hide indicators that are still largely made up of economic data.

This situation reveals the difficulties of adapting measurement systems to the complexities of society and to concepts such as well-being, sustainability or quality of life. Key questions on the evolution of methodologies are raised: How does the reality measured influence the indicator and how does the indicator influence reality? What is the purpose of the indicator? Who is targeted?

The potential answers to these questions raise the problem mentioned above regarding the choice between the uniqueness of local factors and comparability. Do indicators need to allow comparisons between heterogeneous territories that can be ranked according to specific objectives? Do indicators need to fit with the uniqueness of each territory to effectively inform policies and achieve their goals?

With the growing importance of the concept of well-being which has a strong compatibility with the traditional economic paradigm, recent approaches often structure their innovations along more traditional economic lines. Thus, the emergence of the 'green growth' approach tends to convert environmental data into economic imperatives to improve the acceptability of this dimension by economic actors and monitor the sustainability of growth and well-being. Such indicators are alternatives to traditional economic indicators but are not offering alternative to the economic system itself.

This trend is reaching the sphere of SD strategies that tend to increase the anthropocentric orientation of the processes by placing well-being and welfare as core dimensions balanced with the management of resources.

Finally, recent evolutions in this field have revealed a desire to develop indicators that inform and promote evidence-based decision making while at the same time being seen as legitimate by a broad range of intended users. While traditionally indicators were aimed at governmental bodies and experts and primarily considered as tools to monitor policies, they are increasingly developed with the notion that among the legitimate end users is the

common citizen. Alternative indicators are progressively dedicated to civil society and are becoming more interactive, simple and targeted. At certain local scales, they are used to bring communities together and share at a glance what fosters or alters its prosperity. They are used as communication tools to advise and inform citizens and are depicted as being essential for good governance.

3.1.2. Mirroring the institutional contexts in documents

The mapping of the timelines into institutional contexts was helpful to elaborate linkages and interactions. However, a more thorough analysis of a series of important documents is a necessary endeavour, in order to be able to understand not only patterns and their interactions, but also content. Much of the Beyond GDP agenda is influenced – or at least produces – documents in which much of the respective actors/authors' understanding of the stakes is represented. The document analysis allows thus to mirror the analysis of the timelines, and more precisely to corroborate elements of analysis.

Among the timelines, key documents were selected (see annex for the extensive list of documents) and subject to an in-depth analysis, focusing more particularly on the following elements:

- Institutional Driving Forces – Institutional documents are produced following an official external request by a higher authority, or are the result of an internal institutional initiative, generally linked to a course of events and/or a series of publications. Identifying these types of driving forces can provide clues on the drivers towards the institutionalisation of alternative indicators.
- Conceptual Grounds – Each document tends to rest on a predefined global concept, which largely determines the structure as well as the content of the paper, and ultimately, the institution's take on how to tackle alternative indicators. More specific conceptual perspectives, such as the definition and role of indicators, are also analysed under this section.
- Observations on demand – Beyond the institutional driving forces presented above, the documents often base their legitimacy on the observation of a more global form of external demand, originating from civil society and/or from decision makers. Such information might provide additional clues on how to characterise demand. Moreover, whether the papers report in detail on this sort of demand, or not at all, can also provide a window on the positioning of the institution itself.
- Recommendation / Implementation – The documents selected can be differentiated according to their practical ambition or accomplishment: those that make recommendations; those that implement their perspectives by proposing new indicators; and those that do both. In all cases, the results highlighted by the documents can be considered as a form of institutional demand in how to deal with alternative indicators.
- Institutional Responses / Future Perspectives – When included in the document⁶, we shall present the institutional responses to the papers' contributions, and/or considerations or calls for further action (when advanced separately from the recommendations). This information can contribute in identifying the effective forces and actors behind the institutionalisation of alternative indicators in the entity being studied (country of international organization).

By following this structure, we provide a sequential perspective of the process of demand for alternative indicators: demand prior and towards the production of a document, demand reported on and expressed within the document and responses to the demand expressed by the document.

⁶ Generally, the specific analysis of each document is only based on the original material in order not to bias the results. External information is added at the stage of the global analysis.

3.1.2.1. *Institutional driving forces*

The three very different types of documents which are analysed – scientific, technocratic, societal – obviously emerge from very different motivations depending on whether they are produced by an official institution, the scientific community, or civil society. The study carried out for France, based on a large set of scientific and civil society documents, offers an in-depth analysis of the driving forces behind these different types of publications. Here, we will concentrate on the driving forces which underlie a selection of institutional documents. However, a few general observations can be made on the links between scientific and civil society documents on the one hand, and institutional documents on the other:

Scientific and civil society documents tend to launch a critical debate on GDP and the need for alternatives. This is observed in France, with the publications by “pioneer” academics Bertrand de Jouvenel (1968) and Dominique Méda (1998) – later involved in FAIR, the Forum for other indicators of wealth. In the Netherlands, a group of academics and experts (Keune et al, 2006) produced a critical paper on the Macro-economic outlook (MEV) which is published by CPB and sets an important framework for the government budget. The authors call for a transition from the MEV to an MEV+, which would better take into account the needs of both the human population and the natural environment. Organised into a network called Platform DSE, they pushed their involvement in the political arena by handing over a petition to Parliament. In the Czech Republic, meanwhile, a group of environmental NGOs and academics opened the debate on well-being indicators with a publication in the APEL edition (2010) – though their recommendations appear to be much less ambitious than in other territories. As one can see from the examples above, the border between the scientific community and civil society is often very narrow.

Once the issue has entered the mainstream arena, academics do take part in institutional initiatives, as noted in France: after the launch of the debate by the above mentioned “pioneers”, papers by academics appeared to be right at the borderline of what could be considered scientific work (Delors, 1971; Gadrey & Jany-Catrice, 2007; Viveret, 2010).

These actors have gone even further in reaction to the institutional treatment of the B-GDP issue by organizing networks and producing critical publications. This is again best observed in France, where the creation of FAIR by a group of academics was clearly a direct reaction to the formation of the CMEPSP, which did not entirely respond to their expectations.

These observations point to a process of regular interaction between Beyond GDP “lobbying” groups and official institutions. It is important to keep this in mind in the following analysis, and consider institutional driving forces within the more global context of scientific and civil society “catalysts” – which express what can also be considered as a form of demand for alternative indicators.

Beyond the specific involvement of decision-makers, a comparative analysis of the institutional publications that were selected points to the following broad currents of influence:

The OECD’s repeated involvement in the debate on well-being – Following a declaration from the OECD Council of Economic Ministers in 1970, which stressed that “growth is not an end in itself but rather an instrument for creating better conditions of life”, and with an eye on the growing consensus of academics and statisticians, the OECD produced its first report on the issue in 1976, that was in line with the social indicators movement. And although the report was not followed-up, it created a basis for future involvement when the interest for alternative indicators grew again in the beginning of the 21st century. With the strong contribution of eminent statisticians such as Enrico Giovannini, the OECD progressively pushed the agenda through the World Forums on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy (Palermo 2004, Istanbul 2007, Busan 2009), the establishment of the Global Project on Measuring the

Progress of Societies (2008), and the ensuing publication of a “Framework for Measuring the Progress of Societies” (2010). Following the CMEPSP report (2009), the OECD was designated to act as the international focal-point for the follow up of the commission’s recommendations. The launch of the Better Life Index in 2012 appears as a further development of these institutional initiatives.

The influence of sustainable development initiatives – Virtually all the documents which deal with the concept of sustainable development reference at least one of the following initiatives: the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (Stockholm 1972, Rio 1992 and its Agenda 21, Johannesburg 2002, “Rio+20” 2012), the European Sustainable Development Strategy, and the ensuing national sustainable development strategies. While the influence of sustainable development generally developed from the international level downwards, the case of Wales shows a joint influence, through the role played by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) in the international Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development. And although the territories we looked at all implemented the international recommendations by producing their own sustainable development strategies in the early 2000s, they also adapted the tool to their territorial specificities constructing their own indicators, as is the case in France and the Netherlands.

Moreover, a comparative analysis reveals the creation of very individual institutional architecture and approaches to decision-making on sustainable development in each territory studied, which seem to influence both the conceptual orientation and their choice of indicators.

The case of the Czech Republic appears exceptional with regard to both the high status and the representativeness of the Government council for sustainable development. It is comprised of the Prime Minister, as well as of the three ministers in charge respectively of the Environment, Industry and trade, and Labour and social affairs – thus representing the three dimensions of sustainable development. The Council also includes representatives of central and local government authorities, social partners, NGOs and academics. The organization into working groups allows effective interdisciplinary communication as well as pushing through legitimate interests. In fact, several alternative indicators are included in the last edition (2012) of the “Progress Report on the Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development”. One must note on the downside, however, that the indicators are subject to changes and amendments with each edition which results in the measurement tool lacking homogeneity over time.

In comparison, France and the Netherlands rely on a more conventional institutional architecture, and make use of advisory councils to guide/support their decisions. Two important reports on indicators (sustainable development, and well-being) were produced by such bodies in France (CESE, 2010 & CAE, 2010). While in the Netherlands, the reports by the Social economic council (SER, 2002) and the Scientific advisory council on government policy (WRR, 2002) both responded to the Dutch Cabinet’s request for advice on the National Strategy for Sustainable Development. The influence on the conceptual orientation and the choice of indicators generally corresponds to the specializations of the advisory council. For instance, in the case of the Franco-German report by the French Council of Economic Analysis (CAE) and the German Council of Economic Experts (GCEE), the economy clearly maintains a dominant position in relation to other dimensions, thereby impacting the choice of indicators of sustainability (macroeconomic, financial, and only third, environmental).

The role played by environmental policies (and actors) – The case of environmental policies which indirectly tackle the issue of alternative indicators (both sustainable development and well-being) is observed in France and in the Czech Republic. In France, the Grenelle Environnement, a political process initiated by President Sarkozy, resulted in a Programme and Implementation Law among others on sustainable development indicators.

In the Czech Republic, the third State Environmental Policy (2002) includes a few social and economic indicators; however, the 2004 draft State Environmental Policy 2012 - 2020 focuses only on environmental indicators. And where the role of environmental actors is concerned, as mentioned previously, it is environmental NGOs and academics that opened the debate on well-being.

The influence of the CMEPSP report – The CMEPSP report is widely referenced by the documents we analysed which were released following the reports publication. Its influence on OECD initiatives has already been commented on above. Where the EU is concerned, the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament (2009) regards the CMEPSP report as being equal to the Beyond GDP Conference in its degree of importance.

At the national level, it is naturally in France that the impact appears to be strongest. After the publication of CMEPSP report, one can see a direct increase in the involvement of French leaders in initiatives related to alternative indicators which further contributed to bringing the issue into the mainstream. Regarding the influence on civil society, as mentioned previously, FAIR was created in direct reaction to the formation of the CMEPSP, and one of the four founding objectives of the think tank on citizen well-being La Fabrique Spinoza (created in December 2008) was “to be involved in a watchful collaboration with the CMEPSP”.

In France as in the Netherlands, one can also note that after the reports publication, the issue of well-being starts to be seriously engaged in by official institutions (France: CAE, 2010, INSEE 2009, 2011, 2012; Netherlands: CPB, 2010). This is however not the case in the Czech Republic, where the Beyond GDP movement and debate is not as intensive. While in the case of Wales, although the first National survey on the issue dates from 2010, well-being had already become an essential dimension of analysis in Wales from 2006 onwards. This early adoption can be ascribed to the influence of the broader movement in the UK, which was early in adopting the concept of well-being.

The role of the EU – The EU seems to stand at the crossroad of all these currents: it is influenced by them, and in return amplifies the movement. The selected documents from EU institutions do indeed refer to a very broad array of both sustainable development and well-being initiatives and indicators. In parallel, the EU’s Beyond GDP initiative is mentioned by several of the selected national-level documents.

3.1.2.2. Reinforcing timepatterns

Three defining conceptual movements can be identified in the selected institutional documents:

- The social indicators movement of the 70s and the appearance of the concept of well-being;
- Sustainable development, from the 90s onwards;
- The resurgence of broader concept of well-being, from the beginning of the 2000s.

The institutional contexts of these movements have already largely been described in the previous section, so we will now focus on the substance and influence of these concepts have had on alternative indicators.

The social indicators movement of the 70s and the appearance of well-being – Within the documents that we analysed, two papers stem from the social indicators movement of the 1970s: the previously-mentioned OECD report from 1976, and the report by Jacques Delors, published in 1971. In both the social dimension is obviously dominant, considered through

“social concerns” in the OECD report, and through “social development” in the report by J. Delors. Although the OECD report was not directly followed-up, it can be considered as underpinning future conceptual work as it puts forth the concept of well-being.

Sustainable development, from the 1990s onwards – Within this movement, two sub-themes can be identified:

- The traditional definition of sustainable development, based on the Brundtland report (1987). Documents which rely on this definition present a more or less integrated approach. For instance, the “Progress Report on the Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development” is considered to be weak on integration. While the report by the Dutch Scientific advisory council on government policy (2002) specifically adopts a stance against the integrated meta- concept of sustainable development, recommending “going back to basics” and focusing on environmental indicators. Moreover, depending on their specialization, institutions insist more or less on one or another dimension. For instance, the IFEN (2003) tended to emphasise indicators with an environmental dimension in its dashboard of 45 indicators of sustainable development.
- A vision of sustainable development as incorporating the concept of well-being. From the early 2000s the popularization of the concept of well-being, saw various documents on sustainable development (or the environment) include aspects of well-being, in particular quality of life. This is the case, for instance, in the Dutch report by the Social economic council (SER, 2002), and in the Scientific review report (2009); in the French report by the General Planning Commission (CGP, 2004); and in the Czech 2004 draft State Environmental Policy 2012 - 2020. In this respect, Wales is the territory which most incorporates well-being in sustainable development. In the report “One Wales: One Planet” (2006), well-being appears as one of the five founding principles, and both influencing and influenced by the other four sustainable development principles; moreover, “Action 1” recommends the development of measures of well-being in Wales.

The resurgence of well-being, from the beginning of the 21st century – In relation to the essentially social notion of well-being in the 70s, the concept has grown into a much broader concept linked to the notion of progress by the early 2000’s. In fact, the Dutch reports by the Social economic council (SER, 2002) and the CPB (2010) both refer to “broad welfare”. The concept seems to have crystallized with the publication of the CMEPSP report (2009) and of the OECD’s “Framework for Measuring the Progress of Societies” (2010). In both cases, well-being is presented as an all encompassing concept. This appears through the incorporation of the notion of sustainability (CMEPSP, 2009), through the inclusion of green growth (OECD, 2012), and, more internationally, through the terrain gained by well-being in measurement issues over the less contemporary concept of sustainable development, in the run-up to the “Rio+20” World Summit on Sustainable Development.

The more in-depth analysis of scientific documents carried out for France also reveals an appropriation of the concept of human development in the 90s by UNDP (Méda, 1998). However, this concept is rapidly merged with sustainable development, and academics further refer to the notion of “sustainable human development” (Gadrey & Jany-Catrice, 2009; Viveret, 2010). Only one official French institution, the General Planning Commission, refers to this last notion – which can probably be attributed to the presence of Patrick Viveret in the working group (CGP, 2004).

3.1.2.3. *Absence of explicitly addressing the issue of demand*

The selected documents are, on the whole, not particularly explicit on a demand for alternative indicators. When demand is in fact mentioned, it is done so rather vaguely, as our

study of the French institutional setting illustrates: references to specific demand/requests for indicators seem to appear randomly and therefore do not enable us to draw a conclusive picture; moreover, the reports mostly remain very unclear on the instigators of this demand, generally referring to 'citizens', 'civil society' or 'decision-makers'.

However, a few observations on demand are noteworthy:

- The more thorough analysis carried out for France points to more abundant references to demand for alternative indicators in the years 2000, and more particularly as from 2009 onwards. One explanatory link is that demand for alternative indicators is often related to the crisis (France, various publications; EU, 2009).
- One outstanding initiative which expresses societal demand is the reference by the Dutch CPB (2010) to the "Declaration of Tilburg", where over 500 citizens (including some economists and politicians) signed for the need to have other indicators than GDP to measure economic progress. This initiative was organized in 2008 by the previously mentioned network of academics and experts, Platform DSE.
- One specific form of demand related to alternative indicators appears regularly: the need for achieving a consensus on a compound indicator - or at least on a set of a few headline indicators - in order to render the information more accessible. This form of demand is observed in most of the Dutch documents, in Wales' first sustainable development scheme (2000), in the French report of the General Planning Commission (CGP, 2004), and in the CMEPSP report.

3.1.2.4. The conceptualisation of indicator implementation

The selected documents represent very different aims and are therefore presented in very different forms. However, it is noteworthy that the objective of assessment predominates throughout most of the documents related to sustainable development. This is the case in the Czech State Environmental Policy Documents (1991 - 2012) and in the 'Progress Report on the Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development' (2005 - 2012); in the French report by the General Planning Commission (CGP, 2004); in the Dutch Scientific review report (2009) and in the 'Peer Review of the Netherlands Sustainable Development Strategy', where the role of indicators in this respect (assessment) is particularly underlined, alongside communication.

Beyond such practical differences between the publications selected, a few recurrent recommendations appear. The more in-depth analysis for France generally reveals the following points of convergence (also noted in some documents from other territories): the need for a participatory approach, for geographical linkages between indicators at different scales, and for alternative indicators to be complements, and not substitutes, to GDP - even among academics. The main point of divergence appears to be the structure of indicators. As mentioned above, a demand to reach a consensus on a synthesized indicator or at least on a set of a few indicators does exist. And while contemporary academics tend to support this form of demand, institutional stances differ to a great extent on the issue – at least in France, where the case of the Ecological Footprint is symbolic of this divergent positioning. This is why we chose to focus our comparative analysis on the treatment of this notable composite indicator in different territories.

Among the territories we selected, it is in Wales that the Ecological Footprint seems to have had the greatest impact. Even the title of the important 2006 report, "One Wales: One planet", suggests from the start an association with the theoretical foundation of the Ecological Footprint. In fact, the Ecological Footprint is one of the strategy's five headline indicators of sustainable development, employed for the measurement of sustainable resource use. Moreover, "Action 4" of the report calls for further extension of the use of the Ecological Footprint in Wales.

In the Dutch strategy, the Ecological Footprint is included in their set of 36 indicators (Ministry for Spatial Planning and the Environment [VROM], 2002).

The Ecological Footprint is also present in the last edition (2012) of the “Progress Report on the Czech Republic Strategy for Sustainable Development”. Due to the collective organization of the Government council for sustainable development, NGOs together with university representatives proposed the inclusion of Ecological Footprint and pushed it through into the report. Back in France, however, the Ecological Footprint was absent from the last National Sustainable Development Strategy for 2010 - 2013. Following the Law proposition in support of the Ecological Footprint submitted by MEPs of the green party Les Verts in 2009, two ensuing reports were dedicated to studying the indicator: a report by the Department for observation and statistics (SOeS) of the CGDD (Ministry for the Environment) on ‘An Expert Examination of the Ecological Footprint’ (January 2010)⁷, and the report by the CESE on ‘Indicators of Sustainable Development and the Ecological Footprint’ (May 2010). The previous report is analysed in the French study, but briefly one can note that it confirmed the reservations, mostly methodological, expressed in the report by the SOeS. It is interesting to note that the SOeS report specifically dedicates one introductory chapter to the “political demand in favour of the use of the Ecological Footprint” (p. 5), referring to the recommendations issued from the consultation phase of the Grenelle Environnement, and to the debate on the above-mentioned Law proposition at the Assemblée Nationale (Parliamentary chamber).

Another interesting point is that the SOeS carried out its study by convening various stakeholders into a dedicated committee. The debate on the pros and cons of the Ecological Footprint, as well as the answers from the Global Footprint Network, are dutifully reported in the publication (p. 16-18). However, despite the large demand for the Ecological Footprint and the open debate which took place, the indicator failed to reach the stage of institutionalisation in France, at least at the national level (the Ecological Footprint is in fact used in regional and local dashboards).

In conclusion, one can note that although the use of the Ecological Footprint is implemented and supported in three of the four selected territories. Its use is always comprised within a set of indicators of sustainable development, at best as a headline indicator.

3.1.2.5. *Future perspectives on alternative indicators*

The comparative analysis generally reveals a progression within the Beyond GDP movement and debates in the territories we have analysed. The various drivers presented in Section 1 have resulted in a variety of institutional initiatives and publications. We have seen that the role of the scientific community is effective in launching the debate, but also in guiding the responses as well as the advances brought forth by official institutions. For instance, the recommendations of the Dutch Scientific review report (2009) have been taken into account in the next Sustainability monitor of 2011. Civil society actors also participated in the institutional debate and work when invited to, such as in the case of the French Grenelle Environnement or in the Czech Government council for sustainable development, thereby indirectly influencing the progression of alternative indicators. However, the more specialised civil society actors, often connected to academia, tend to exert pressure ‘from the outside’, thereby acting as complementary drivers (e.g. in the Dutch Platform DSE).

⁷ Department for observation and statistics, CGDD, “An Expert Examination of the Ecological Footprint. Extract from Final Report”, in *Etudes & Documents*, n° 16, January 2010, http://www.statistiques.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/fileadmin/documents/Produits_editoriaux/Publications/Etudes_et_documents/2010/An_expert_examination_of_the_Ecological_Footprint_03.pdf

More specifically, one can note that the progression of the debate and the ensuing institutional work are not at the same stage where sustainable development and well-being/progress are concerned. Even though the concept of well-being appeared first, the concept of sustainable development has spent longer at the forefront of the debate and its indicators have therefore resulted in a more advanced form of institutionalisation. Most of the documents selected are basically founded on the sustainable development paradigm. Moreover, all the selected territories have published their own sustainable development strategies and connected sets of indicators. In fact, the profusion of often overlapping documents can appear at best as signifying the energy and profusion of the debate, and at worst as a confusing waste of energy.

Where well-being and progress are concerned, while the debate has been started in all the selected territories, the institutional work on these issues is at its very early stages, or even non-existent, in the Czech Republic. However, strong support for the concept by key international organizations such as the OECD (with modern tools such as 'Wikiprogress'), the successful reception and diffusion of the CMEPSP report, and the relative 'newness' of the well-being concept compared to the sustainable development concept, are some of the many factors which are contributing to the success of well-being and suggest it has a positive future.

In reality, we have seen that these two concepts are often merged, not always for the best, in particular whereas sustainable development and its environmental dimension are concerned. Still one must also note that the simultaneous existence and uptake of sustainable development and well-being can result in interesting synergies. This is the case for example in Wales, with the integration of the concept of well-being in the 2006 sustainable development strategy 'One Wales: One Planet'. This was in turn used, along with its indicators, to frame the questions in the well-being oriented 2010 "National Survey for Wales", whose results will no doubt feed into the subsequent sustainable development strategy.

The more in-depth analysis for France reveals a rather different treatment of the two concepts. Institutional work on sustainable development indicators generally seem to evolve in the context of an open debate and with the participation of various stakeholders. An important drawback here is that progressive proposals also seem to be pushed aside, in particular when they concern structuring issues - as we have seen with the case of the Ecological Footprint. In comparison, both the debate and work on well-being appear to happen behind closed doors, within the restricted field of commissions, councils and NSO offices comprised almost exclusively of economists and statisticians. This despite a strong call from both the scientific community and civil society for a large democratic debate on alternative indicators, and more broadly on the type of society these indicators should reflect.

3.1.3. From contextual elements to institutional patterns: a cross-national, integrated analysis

The analysis of timelines and elements over the document analyses above was undertaken to gather and structure the information which constitutes the institutional, political and societal context for alternative indicators in five European countries, alongside the cases of the EU and the OECD. In this way, we aimed to understand the context in each observed entity and compare them to reveal the structural trends, determine the primary initiatives and actors, and provide some background knowledge on the drivers and barriers for the uptake of alternative indicators.

The time perspective showed that a common time pattern is shared by all countries and supra-national institutions we analysed. It is structured around three main time periods influenced by four dominant concepts. The first one is the Social Indicators Movement and

spans from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. It is characterized by studies and programs aimed at providing additional data on the environmental and social realities of societies to better inform the national accounting system and broaden the scope of policies. The second period is the major one with regard to its societal, institutional and political influence. It is structured around the sustainable development approach whose movement can be traced back to the 1970's but which became increasingly institutionalized after the release of the Brundtland report in 1987. Its original goal was the implementation of a new way of organising society through a different kind of development which respected economic, social and environmental sustainability. Indicators were integrated later on to monitor this process. The third time period spans from the late 1990s until today and is characterized by the questioning of GDP - as the symbolic indicator of an economic-political system regarded as needing a fundamental re-focus away from a model centred purely on economic performance. It was firstly influenced by the early UN Human Development Indexes and is referred in this analysis as the Beyond GDP movement. The multiple visions and studies carried out to solve this Beyond-GDP issue has led to conflicting stances that separate stakeholders between two main approaches:

- A questioning of the societal model characterized by concerns for other forms of wealth and aimed at social and environmental sustainability,
- An adaptation of the current model oriented towards the sustainability of well-being and of economic performance.

The crystallization of this second approach by the CMEPSP report in 2009 led to what we consider to be the fourth time period. It puts at the core of the debate concepts favouring a certain individualistic anthropocentrism and is consistent with the functioning of the traditional economic paradigm. These concepts are quality of life, welfare, green growth and well-being, the latter being the predominant concept.

The document analysis clearly corroborates these time patterns and adds some notable further information. It shows that during the Social Indicators Movement, the motivation to inform decision-makers about well-being was already in evidence and gave enough impetus to specific actors, such as the OECD, to take the lead on the approach during the 2000s. The document analysis also clearly validates the settings analysis in pointing towards the same international events as being major theoretical or methodological milestones in fostering and structuring the debate.

In fact, the evolution of the use of the various concepts shows that they tend to add to each other and merge to some extent to be consistent with current expectations. Thus, we do not observe an abrupt change when a new concept is put forward, but a slow shift from one central focus to another. The following diagram offers a visual interpretation of the addition of concepts over time and according to each countries' involvement.

Regarding the actors involved, we observe that the debate generally broadened from a close-knit audience of experts to a large number of actors such as academics, political decision-makers, NGOs, civil society, etc. Among these stakeholders, academics play an important role in launching a critical debate, taking part in official processes and building critical reactions to the institutionalization of this debate. They contribute to the strong interconnections that exist inside the system of actors involved in the debate. This trend is supported by the observation that a relatively small number of actors dominate the movement which only marginally succeeds in engaging the wider civil society.

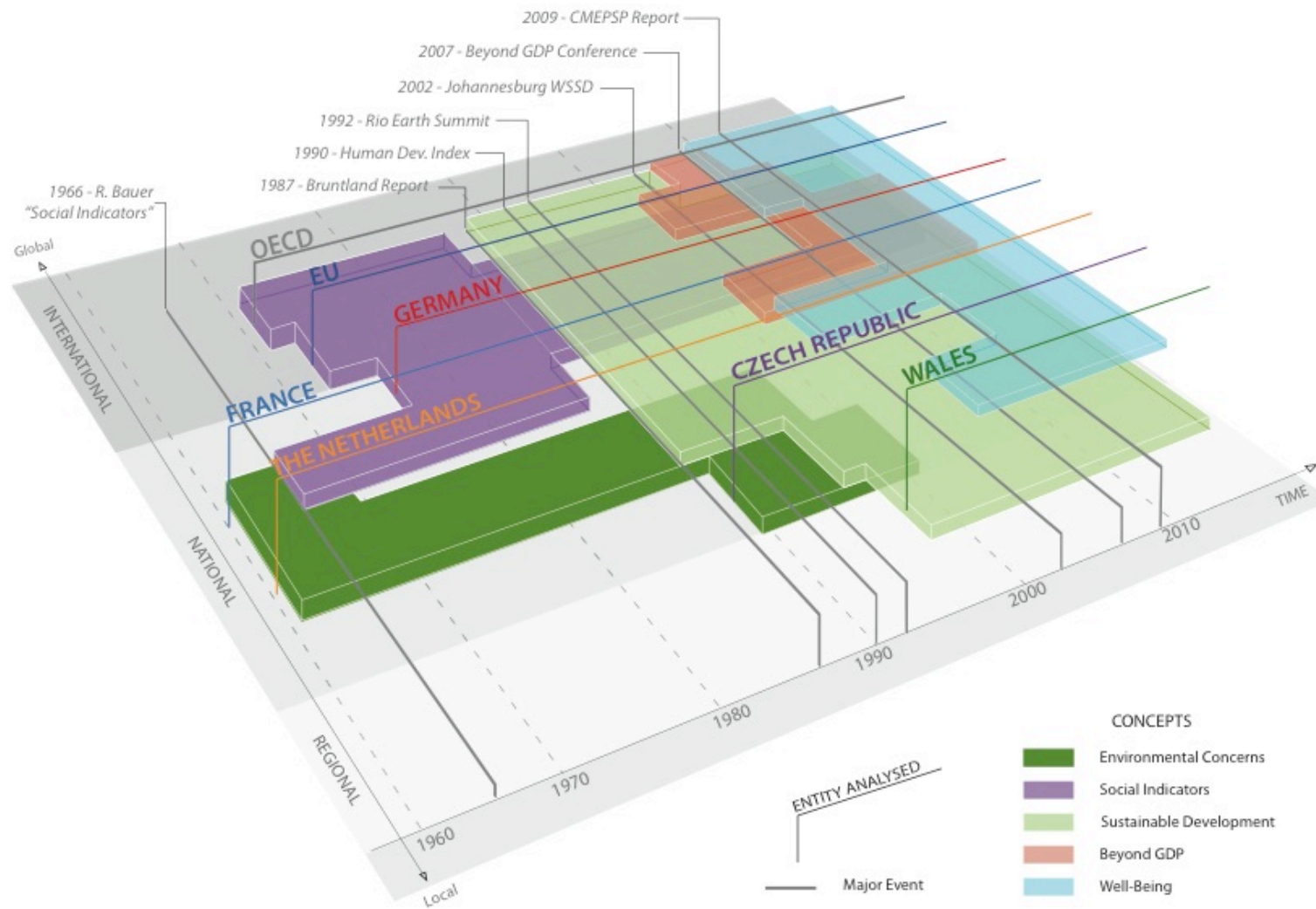
In terms of providing a wider understanding of the 'Beyond-GDP movement', the settings analysis and the document analysis are complementary. The former enabled an identification of the main actors involved while the latter provides understanding of the different visions held by these actors and deepened the analysis of their interactions.

Furthermore, a common observation of both reveals the rather vague role of civil society as an actor within the alternative indicators debate. The demand for statistical evolutions is almost never clearly expressed while at the same time, the groups increasingly targeted by initiatives are broad and often include the whole of society. The two analyses finally reveal the same impression that the debate, the promotion and the production of alternative indicators are driven by an informal demand for societal change. As a consequence, theorists clearly support the participatory approach and several attempts at broad participation are carried-out.

Civil society appears as an informal stakeholder that influences broad trends without being directly committed to the debate. Moreover, the methodology of indicators clearly tends to increasingly include communicational assets such as simplicity in order to be better accepted and used by non-experts. To facilitate this trend, academics seem to have reached a consensus on the need to develop synthesized indicators. However, at the same time, members of official institutions are more than ever now in favour of dashboards/sets of indicators that can better report on the complexity of reality.

This trend is demonstrated within the frame of both the various sustainable development processes and recent well-being oriented studies. The SD programs typically involve multiple dimensions that need to be taken into account in the assessment provided by SD indicator sets. In this situation, we observe a clear domination of the 'managerial' conception of measurement that needs to be accurate instead of being simple. As for well-being related initiatives, we observe that economists and statisticians are increasingly taking the lead and tend to limit the appropriability of the measure by using complex sets of indicators.

Addition of concepts and milestone events over time



Characterizing demand for 'Beyond GDP'

In some way, one can suggest that once a methodological breakthrough that is influenced by a clear concept happens within the debate, the author of the breakthrough can shape the paradigm and the measurements linked to this concept. In this way, the UN request to assess national SD strategies established SD dashboards as a reference for the measure of sustainability; actors in the Beyond-GDP approach, influenced by the UN Human Development Index, promoted compound indicators as a unique tool to overcome GDP; the CMEPSP committee, which felt the need to include data about well-being and sustainability into indicators of economic performance, now comprises an important reference in the development of statistical measurement systems.

However, previous visions and expectations in this area have not diminished and there are still specific needs for better policy-making at various geographical scales. In tackling the understanding of the whole indicators debate one needs to take into account the various scales of experimentation and innovation and acknowledge the wide variety of initiatives that have been implemented. Indeed, the relation between scales is challenging the assumed need for comparability, about the needs of a territory to account for broader global concerns versus the ideal of fostering local uniqueness, and the probable influence of a hierarchy between geographical levels. Tackling these questions allows a proper evaluation regarding the type of indicators chosen, the relationship and distance to civil society, its degree of inferred action and the ultimate role of the indicator.

The complexity arising from the Beyond-GDP approach furthermore reveals the variety of interpretations of the concept(s) that drive different processes, and influence new ones. So, while sustainable development continues to be referenced by a large number of initiatives, it is often complemented by other concepts, such as the current trend for favouring or including concepts of well-being.

3.2. The perceptions of demand for beyond GDP indicators

The construction and analyses of the institutional contexts we reported on before does give a precise representation of the interlinkages between 'objects' of the 'Beyond GDP' agenda. While an in-depth analysis of such 'objects' is per se necessary to understand the backbone of the agenda, it is foremost the actors within the agenda who will fill the contexts with meaning. In order to gather the actors' readings and interpretations of the demand for 'Beyond GDP', it is thus necessary to meet them. The present section will elaborate on what we gained from our empirical explorations of the actors' perceptions of the existence and vitality of the 'Beyond GDP' agenda. Demand for governance tools such as Beyond GDP indicators will also be spurred, or refrained, by the perceptions of policy actors.

Conceptual insight: Indicators as "objects of convention"

As with all tools, instruments and techniques of public authorities, indicators are 'objects of convention'; they carry meaning in a wider sense than their pure statistical nature, and in turn reveal the socio-political conventions that prevailed during their elaboration and which continue to influence their use in governance mechanisms. Simultaneously, being objects for public steering, indicators are fundamentally existing because they strive to influence existing socio-political conventions; the calls for 'beyond GDP' indicators are basically calls for a 'Beyond GDP' society, whatever the interpretation of the constituents of such a society are. Consequently, two issues need to be constantly highlighted. On the one hand, the attempt to develop our understanding of Beyond GDP indicators requires some harmonization around the common references and belief systems which are entangled into the indicators, exceeding – again – their reading as pure statistical objects. In our analyses, we have aimed to make these common, communal, shared points of reference more explicit. On the other hand, once being used, indicators contribute in creating and/or diffusing new common references and conventions. We have also tried to systematically identify the new conventions diffused through the emergence of new indicators.

We have noticed, throughout this study, that hardly any institutional initiative addresses both ends of the mechanic in an explicit way; there remains a rather strong focus of debate on understanding indicators as being relatively pure objects of measurement. Considering however that most actors seem very concretely to understand and comprehend the double-sided mechanic – as is quite apparent in some of the reactions we gathered notably on the linkages between indicators and world visions – one must ask oneself why these linkages are not explored in an explicit fashion. The framing of public discourses within the 'Beyond GDP' area clearly remains an avenue for future investigations.

Refining our analysis of this framing could be not only of scientific interest, but contribute to the governance of 'Beyond GDP' itself. Authors such as Desrosières (1993, 2008, 2010) state that quantifying consists first in convening (that is, getting an agreement on shared belief systems, i.e. on a 'world vision') and then in measuring (quantifying the belief system on which agreement was found). While Desrosières was himself of course deeply entangled in his own experience, era and professional background (i.e. he was a long-standing statistician within the national French statistical office), hence explaining potentially his mechanistic, fordist, sequential understanding of the dynamics between indicators and policy, we might today come to quite other conclusions on how to (co-)produce in the future discourse and object, convention and measurement. Whatever the interpretation, these double perspectives of the comprehension of indicator evolution within governance mechanics remain essential to be investigated, and certainly so in order to characterize the determinants of the demand(s) for Beyond GDP indicators.

The perceptions of demand for B-GDP indicators: Our methodology

We concentrated empirically to raise the perceptions of two distinct categories of actors. Those who 'belong' to the Beyond GDP sphere, who are driving forces or advocates of a renewal of GDP. And, additionally, a selection of policy actors who are external to the agenda. Hypothetically, demand for 'Beyond GDP' indicators will be configured by both families of actors. Empirically we used different methodological approaches for the two actor families. While the policy actors who belong, and are part of, 'Beyond GDP' were met in face-to-face interviews (section 3.2.1), those that are located outside of the sphere needed a different type of empirical configuration. Indeed, in order to drain the perceptions of actors external to 'Beyond GDP' - those who are not accustomed to the debate - it was felt necessary to provide them the space to get acquainted with the main bearings of the agenda and of the indicators. We used thus a series of workshops at national levels to gain the collective perceptions of those actors, assuming additionally that their individual perceptions would have no reason for being sufficiently mature as to be retrieved at face-to-face level, and that a group discussion would enable them to voice a deliberative, constructed, reflected, shared account of their perceptions of 'Beyond GDP' (section 3.2.2). In the final section (section 3.2.3) of the present chapter, we provide an integrated analysis of both types of actors' perceptions; highlighting in particular where we found convergence of perceptions and where both actor types diverge.

3.2.1. Charting individual perceptions on demand

While retrieving individual perceptions on the demand for 'Beyond GDP' via qualitative face-to-face interviews, the objective is to charter the multiplicity of perceptions. We develop thus the following analyses in particular at the level of the convergence/divergence of perceptions. Empirically, we developed this objective at two distinct institutional levels, or more accurately with two distinct sets of actors belonging to two distinct institutional actor categories.

A first exploration (section 3.2.1.1) is developed for the specific case of France. As the analyses of the institutional contexts showed before, France has – as a national case – a particularity in the debate on 'Beyond GDP', not the least because of the 'Stiglitz Report' and the impact it had on spurring a coherent 'Beyond GDP' policy agenda at its national level. The analysis we provide hereafter attempts thus to explore what could be existing of in terms of convergences of perceptions at an intra-national level. The underlying hypothesis being that a certain coherence of the institutional context would favour the emergence of certain convergences on the level of the actors' perceptions on the demand for 'Beyond GDP'.

A second exploration (section 3.2.1.2) is provided for a group of actors who could equally be thought of to have developed some form of convergence in their perceptions on demand. Namely, high-level participants and policy actors present at one of the major international conferences organised during our empirical timeperiod, the 4th OECD World Forum (New Delhi).

In a final section (section 3.2.1.3) we provide for a comparative analysis of the convergences of perceptions of both actor sets, trying to extract what could be common and shared in perceptions against any particular 'local' institutional context.

The interviews were thus conducted in different contexts with two main categories of policy actors. In total, we contacted about 150 actors for an interview: 108 in France and 34 that attended the 4th OECD World Forum (New Delhi). Among the 108 actors contacted in France, 21 accepted to be interviewed (with the collaboration of the think-tank La Fabrique Spinoza). Among the 34 actors contacted at the occasion of the OECD conference, 15 accepted and were successfully interviewed. A full account of participating interviewees - as well as respective interview guidelines – can be found in the annexes to the present report.

3.2.1.1. *Convergence at intra-national level: the case of France*

3.2.1.1.1. *Demand and non-demand for alternative indicators*

The results of the interviews point to a large convergence of perceptions on the existence of a demand for alternative indicators. The form of this demand appears to be prominently social, originating from society at large, and carried forward by civil society. A few interviewees consider this as no novelty however, such as representatives of the CAS, who note that demand has existed since the 70s, appeared again with the Rio summit, and is reflected today by groups like FAIR and La Fabrique Spinoza. Bringing nuance to the notion of societal demand, the representative of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs points out that the general public does not think in terms of indicators, but in terms of human dimensions. More profoundly, a Professor emeritus of Economy at University of Lille I considers that the demand for alternative indicators stems from the transformation of world visions and from the eruption of alternative visions and values from each time period. He notes that indicators have always arrived after the uptake of these values by a sufficient proportion of citizens or of leaders. Nowadays, civil society promotes projects on alternative indicators because they have integrated the values of the beginning of the 21st century. On the contrary, he considers that world visions which have influence at the highest level of political decision-making have not evolved enough, which explains why political demand for alternative indicators is weak. Along these lines, a Researcher at the OECD notes that political demand has appeared only because civil society has exerted sufficient pressure.

This rising political demand seems to be strongest at the local and regional level according to representatives of the CAS, because of, among others things, the objectives of sustainable development. This same observations led members of the OECD to point to a “gap between supply and demand, as work on indicators is mostly done at the national level, while the demand mostly originates from the regional level”.

The precise nature of this demand, beyond the rather vague notion of alternative indicators, is only vaguely specified by the interviewees. A few statisticians point to the demand for a unique, simple and yet multidimensional indicator - and also point to the obstacles faced by the creation of such a synthesized tool. The few specific requests which have been presented to producer interviewees were linked to environmental issues. While the demands expressed by user interviewees appear to be very specific to their respective domains of interest. One example stands out: the Chief-Editor of an economic magazine expressed the need for free and open financial indicators (such as on capital flows which transit in tax havens, on the real debt of financial institutions, or on who owns the French public debt). Beyond the issue of democratic access to information, this shows that social and environmental aspects are not the only criteria which can be used to express alternative visions of society.

Beside this rather vague and primarily social demand, the supply of alternative indicators is presented by a majority of interviewees as overly abundant, or at the least, very large. A few note that the abundance of indicators causes competition between producers, and pressure on users. If the main reason put forth is the multiplication of actors, decision-makers from the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and the Ministry of Economy also point to the growing complexity of problems and public choices, as well as to the different scales at which indicators are produced. This leads some interviewees to express the need for the stabilisation of indicators and actors, such as an Inspector at the CGEDD (Ministry for the Environment) who considers that we are currently in a stage of creativity, and that it is necessary to come to a more operational stage of consolidation.

However, a handful of interviewees express a more nuanced view on the supply of alternative indicators. A journalist considers that there is a discrepancy between the prolific discourse on indicators and their production, which is quite behind at the national level (as opposed to the international level where the production is sufficient). Representatives of the CAS consider that a large supply is problematic for the general public when indicators are not normalized or when they are produced by activists, but that it is not a problem for decision-makers because they are used to a profusion of data. However, they note that there is not enough use by decision-makers of the existing initiatives. While a Professor emeritus of Economy at the University of Lille I, and Co-President of FAIR, considers it is better to have the choice between too many solutions than not enough, especially as not all networks have the same priorities, and adds that it is rather good for democracy.

This apparent imbalance between supply and demand leads the representative of the DGCIS (Ministry of Economy) to point to a gap between producers and users. It is noteworthy that such a gap has been pointed to previously in relation to different contexts. Yet another interviewee, the Director of the Observation and statistics service at the CGDD (Ministry for the Environment) instead points to a lack of understanding between users' demands and producers' capacity to produce at the international level because the discussion does not happen early enough: the user forms his policy and expects the producer to quickly build a corresponding dashboard. On the contrary, the General-Secretary of the CAE considers that policy-makers should not ask producers to create certain indicators, and that indicators must be built separately from policy in order to ensure a long-term view.

Finally, on the issue of supply and demand, we must note that a few interviewees expressed some doubts on the relevance of such an analytical framework. Still, most interviewees seemed rather comfortable with this outline, such as the former Head of the CPVS (Ministry for the Environment) who considers that the challenge is to connect a change of cultural framework, a proactive supply strategy, and political demand.

Where the effective use of alternative indicators is concerned, a handful of interviewees consider that it is rather limited. Representatives of the OECD point out that in comparison to other countries, alternative indicators are not much used in France. Along these lines, the General-Secretary of the OECD notes that France is good at production, but not so good at use. Adding nuance to this observation, the Head of the Sustainable development delegation at the CGDD points out that the use of indicators in public policies is very unequally spread. More specifically, she considers that the use of the dashboard of indicators on sustainable development has been limited so far because it is a very young tool. However, she is upbeat about its positive reception, and notes that some MPs who don't know of its existence actually say it would be good if it existed! She adds that some of the indicators that make up the dashboard are more used than others because they represent a public policy agenda, or raise awareness (such as on artificial land development). This remark confirms the various examples of very specific uses of indicators related to the particular needs of user interviewees. So again we can return the observation made earlier about the various roles of indicators, according to which the function of an indicator depends on its use, and that all functions are in fact relevant.

This general account of the perceptions of French actors on the existence of a demand for alternative, beyond GDP indicators needs obviously to be finetuned. The next section deals consequentially with the necessary detailed analysis of the differentiated viewpoints that the interviews revealed.

3.2.1.1.2. Factors leading to uptake of Beyond-GDP indicators

In the subsequent analysis we follow our initial analytical framework, and distinguish between 3 sets of factors and how these are perceived by interviewees. We address ‘user factors’ as being in particular related to the perception of actors at the level of the conceptualisation of indicators, of the linkages put forward between concepts and indicators and of the visions on indicator roles and functions in policy processes. Second, ‘indicator factors’ will allow to highlight how actors perceive the performativity of the procedural configuration of the indicators, of the data collection mechanisms, of the methodological robustness, of the adequacy of indicators’ scale, of the choice of the level of aggregation. Finally, ‘policy factors’ relate to the institutional contexts in which the ongoing beyond GDP indicator discussion is inserted as well as to the institutionalisation processes which indicators undergo.

User factors – the perception of conceptual aspects

Three entries structure our analysis of the perception of conceptual aspects by interviewees: conceptual frameworks, the link between concepts and indicators, and the vision of indicators’ roles and functions.

Conceptual Frameworks

When questioned on the Beyond GDP concept or on GDP itself, the interviewees tend to point out the various limits and faults of GDP. However, if a convergence of perceptions is clearly held on the idea that GDP is not sufficient, some actors tend towards a more critical discourse of the traditional economic paradigm. A Professor emeritus of Economy at the University of Lille I, former member of the CMEPSP, and Co-President of FAIR, considers that our cult of progress is almost like a religion, and notes “it is interesting that the term ‘progress’ was used to start the CMPEPS”. While a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), representative of the ecological party Europe Ecologie Les Verts (EELV), talks of the “dictatorship of GDP” to which decision-makers are totally committed, and considers that new indicators represent a cultural revolution. In the same line of thought, the Coordinator of the Special commission for sustainable development at the General Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development (CGEDD, Ministry for the Environment) notes that through education, the very intellectual make-up of local and national public representatives and executives is “GDP”. Moreover, this interviewee considers that the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) is not well known and used because it differs too much from the traditional paradigm, and appears as a mere complement to the economy.

On the other hand, the Head of the Statistical coordination department at the INSEE considers that although GDP does not suitably capture well-being, it has the advantage of being very robust, and is certainly the best indicator to make comparisons at the international level. On another conceptual topic, the Head of the Department of general economic studies at the INSEE considers that with a traditional economic perspective, and GDP, one can still act to benefit the sector of environmental activities. Meanwhile, a handful of interviewees, including producers, users and promoters of alternative indicators, consider that the debate is excessively focused on GDP. They repeat that GDP was never meant to represent more than the value of production.

They also note that GDP is not the only indicator put forward, but rather an array of indicators, both at the economic and global level. A Chief-Editor at the INSEE, former Head of the Department of general economic studies, and former member of the CMEPSP, considers that the Beyond GDP debate has been blown out of proportions, and is not understood by statisticians because they produce all sorts of indicators, not just GDP, which explains why they are a bit reluctant to engage in the issue. According to this interviewee, the problem is the way GDP is used and broadcast to the general public. Furthermore, the President of the National accounting association (ACN) considers that we have drifted from

the criticism of the objectives of society - growth - to the criticism of the instrument used to measure the aggregate of production - GDP.

Link between concepts and indicators

The link between the objectives of society and its measurement tools is regularly underlined, though usually to express a different understanding. A Researcher at the OECD considers that the objectives must also change, not just the indicators, noting that GDP became so successful, partly because growth was the main priority – and was attached to such a simple indicator. While the representative of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs notes that one impact of the GDP+ agenda is that international declarations no longer mention growth by itself, but now always accompany it with adjectives such as “inclusive” or “sustainable”.

Beyond the understanding of the limits of GDP, there seems to be quite a lot of confusion surrounding the theoretical concepts which support the Beyond GDP agenda, primarily the concepts of sustainable development and well-being - only one interviewee, the Vice-President of the Bureau of Economical Information and Forecast (BIPE), expressed a preference for the notion of societal progress over well-being.

Firstly, the understanding of the link between these two concepts varies greatly, sometimes during interviews of representatives of the same organisation. Some of the actors who promote the sustainable development paradigm consider that the concept encompasses the notion of well-being, which is then merely regarded in terms of satisfaction of present needs. On the other hand, when questioned on sustainable development, one actor who commonly works within the well-being paradigm (fewer interviewees represented this group than the SD group) only refers to future sustainability. Moreover, many actors consider that well-being merely encompasses subjective aspects. An Inspector at the CGEDD (Ministry for the Environment) regards well-being as an anthropocentric and individual notion, which can sometimes be in contradiction with sustainable development - an approach considered by another representative of the CGEDD as collective and intergenerational.

Such biased views are highlighted by two actors who hold a global perspective on these parallel agendas. A Researcher at the OECD observes that well-being is focused more on social issues, while sustainable development was more concerned with environmental ones. Representatives of the Centre for Strategic Analysis (CAS) hold similar views on the indicators related to the two concepts. Moreover, linking the elements of time and content, the OECD Researcher points out that the present is generally related to subjective well-being, while the future is nearly always linked to the environment. However, she stresses the importance of also considering environmental aspects in the present, while suggesting that sustainable development should do more to integrate social issues and future well-being.

Differences of perceptions of these concepts can also be noticed when they are treated independently from one another. The case of well-being relating to subjective aspects alone or both subjective and objective aspects has already been mentioned. Though the more institutionalised concept of sustainable development seems to elicit less confusion, its very broad definition allows actors to focus on specific topics of interest. Under this all-encompassing concept, various interviewees can express very specific needs: indicators of energy sustainability for the Head of the Office for Strategic Intelligence at the General Direction for Competitiveness, Industry and Services (DGCIS, Ministry of Economy); indicators of economic and financial sustainability for the General-Secretary of the Council for Economic Analysis (CAE); cultural indicators for the representative of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs; indicators of poverty for the Co-President of ATD Fourth World France and so on.

Actors who have focused their work on the Beyond GDP agenda, and therefore can be considered as experts on the issue, generally hold a more standard and thereby stable

perception of the two concepts and their linkages. Where well-being is concerned, they refer to the CMEPSP' definition, and thus represent the concept both in terms of the present and in the future, and of subjective and objective issues. Where sustainable development is concerned, its promoters refer to the traditional definition of the Brundtland report, comprising the needs of both present and future generations, as well as an integrated approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions.

To conclude on this theme, we note that a Professor emeritus of Economy at the University of Lille I, and former member of the CMEPSP, points out that human development was the first notion to weaken the domination of GDP. However, he considers that "all concepts have their relevance, but it is important to be precise on their content and to acknowledge their limitations and ambiguities. We need to enrich our western vision of the world with other cultures if we want to produce truly international indicators. The large amount of existing concepts is not a problem, but it is necessary to reach a limited number of indicators, at each level of decision-making, following a democratic process."

The relative confusion regarding the link between sustainable development and well-being seems to extend to the actors' perception of the measurability of these concepts. Firstly, the interviewees tend to oppose these concepts on this criterion; secondly, divergences appear even within the same organisation on the perception of which concept is easier to measure. Two representatives from the INSEE consider that sustainable development is more difficult to measure than well-being because of the uncertainty related to the measurement of future sustainability. The Head of the Department of general economic studies points out that the INSEE works at adding well-being variables to household surveys. On the other hand, the Head of the Statistical coordination department at the INSEE underlines the difficulties of applying the CMEPSP recommendations, and notes that the National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) indicators are easier to measure. While the Head of the Office for Strategic Intelligence at the DGCIS (Ministry of Economy) considers that well-being is not measurable because it is linked to the happiness of people, and that this difficulty is increased by cultural differences: happiness in France is not the same as happiness in Bhutan.

Visions on indicators' roles and functions

There appears to be more of a convergence of perceptions regarding the interviewees' understanding of the conceptual role of indicators. A majority of actors consider that indicators influence users' world visions, and a few underline that the nature of this influence operates in various directions. The Head of the Department of general economic studies at the INSEE considers that although indicators are scientific tools, through the selection of categories their very creation reflects world visions. The Head of the Sustainable development delegation at the General commission for sustainable development (CGDD, Ministry for the Environment) notes that not only indicators are chosen according to a world vision, but that indicators themselves influence world visions.

Moreover, the representative of the DGCIS points out that this influence also depends on periods and events which shape public opinion, causing certain indicators to be over- or under-estimated, which makes it difficult to maintain stability over time. However, a few interviewees rejected the link between indicators and world visions. A Chief-Editor at the INSEE states that indicators must be objective and go beyond people's perceptions. An MEP considers that indicators must reflect reality in all its diversity, beyond the market dimension, and offer a common diagnosis. And the Co-President of ATD Fourth World France notes that indicators must be the result of a change in direction, not the other way around.

A large majority of interviewees consider that indicators are important decision-making tools, and that the role of alternative indicators in this process is essential. Two interviewees however express nuanced views on this political role, both on its effectiveness and on the

scales at which it operates. According to the Head of the Department of general economic studies at the INSEE, indicators are not real decision-making tools because they arrive too late in the process, except for international comparison through which they influence decisions. An Inspector at the CGEDD (Ministry for the Environment) considers that at the moment, alternative indicators do not play an important role in the decision-making process, partly because the relation between indicators and decisions at the national level is not always obvious. However, he notes that alternative indicators do play a role in public policy assessment - and communication. While representatives of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region consider that indicators are useful both at the macro guiding and micro decision-making levels.

Concerning the connection between the conceptual and the political role, a Researcher at the OECD notes that indicators first bring conceptual change, and then instrumental (political) change, which can't happen without conceptual change first. She adds that conceptual changes are ongoing, and that practical changes are more visible at the local level.

Although less emphasised than the political role, the communicational role of indicators is also underlined, particularly by the representatives of the CGEDD who point more specifically to the importance of the educational role for transition.

Indicator factors – the perception of instrumental aspects

The analysis of indicator-related factors is conducted at the level of a series of issues which are generally taken to be 'technical' aspects: procedural configuration of the indicators, of the data collection mechanisms, of the methodological robustness, of the adequacy of indicators' scale, of the choice of the level of aggregation.

Procedural configuration

Where the indicator's construction process is concerned, there is a clear convergence of perceptions on the importance of establishing a multi-actor consultation in order to achieve legitimacy. However, divergences appear on the extent of such a consultation, primarily on the question of citizen involvement, on the approach to adopt, and on the combination of actors to involve.

To start, we note that various initiatives linked to sustainable development indicators are held up as being good examples of multi-actor consultations. According to the Coordinator of the Special commission for sustainable development at the CGEDD, the very origin of the participatory approach is linked to sustainable development: it emanated from Rio '92 (the Aarhus Convention), was translated into a European directive, and into French national law with the Constitutional charter and the Environmental code. The Coordinator refers to the consultation phase of the Grenelle Environnement, which resulted in the Laws Grenelle 1 & 2, and more recently, to the decisions taken at Rio+20: the launch of a working program within the UN statistical commission (experts), the establishment from 2012 of UN Committees for the creation of decisions (decision-makers) and of a high-level political inter-governmental forum to replace the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (high-level political representative) with the participation of civil society, enabled to amend propositions.

The main initiative put forth by a number of involved actors, however, is the establishment of a Consultation commission to identify indicators of state as a complement to the indicators of the NSDS, and the organisation of the National conference on indicators of sustainable development (enacted by the Grenelle 1 Law) to validate the Consultation commission's decision. The Head of the Sustainable development delegation at the CGDD points out that the Consultation commission was comprised of representatives identified by or including the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), the Grenelle Committee, and the

Characterizing demand for 'Beyond GDP'

National Council for Statistical Information (CNIS) – all multi-actor institutions. She considers that the work carried out was efficient, and notes that the end result was not what the statistical services had proposed at first. The President of the Consultation commission and representative of the CESE considers that the conference was interesting because it enabled the consultation of intermediary actors: NGOs, trade unions and the private sector. However, he notes that the recommendations of the report by the CESE to organise a public consultation of citizens to check if they agree with the dashboard, was never implemented, even at the regional level. The Co-President of ATD Fourth World France, meanwhile, considers that there is lots of talk about participation, but that it is effectively practiced only by local initiatives, resulting in a gap between producers and users.

In fact, the main actors who call for the consultation of the general public during the production process are representatives of civil society. As mentioned earlier, the Co-President of FAIR insists on the notion of democracy, and refers to the citizen consultation implemented in the region Nord-Pas-de-Calais. While criticising the Better Life Index, he considers that the concept of "better life" should be built collectively, and not only by experts from the OECD. And the Co-President of ATD Fourth World France calls for "shared indicators" which would involve those who experience poverty in the construction process – leaving statisticians to intervene only at the last stage. Other types of actors, the CAS and the OECD, point out the difficulties of organising a democratic process. Representatives of the CAS consider that such a consultation is easier to organise at the local level, and also refer to the well-known experience of Nord-Pas-de-Calais. They add that at the national level, the consultation of stakeholders functions through the CNIS - though political will is needed to support this. On the other hand, a Researcher at the OECD notes that at the international level they carry consultation processes through forums, meetings, and networking with researchers and civil society.

Further divergences appear on what approach to follow: while the majority of actors, mostly experts, call for a mix between bottom-up (in terms of needs) and top-down (for technical reasons), a few decision-makers favour one or another approach, again occasionally within the same organisation. Such inconsistencies can partly be explained by the fact that these approaches inform the role of the actors involved. For instance, amongst both bottom-up and top-down defenders, some happen to consider that NSOs should be the last actors to intervene in the construction of indicators. On the contrary, statisticians consider that they should be involved at the very beginning of the construction process for technical reasons. On this theme, the Director of the Observation and statistics service at the CGDD (Ministry for the Environment) characterises four legitimate groups of actors according to their expertise: civil society which highlights issues and challenges, researchers and economists who use indicators and know the risks of bad use, decision-makers who express needs for policy-making, and statisticians as producers who hold technical knowledge; he considers that the inclusion of these four groups in indicator production provides winning results.

In conclusion, the interview results seem to point to very different ideas about the combination of actors to include in the construction process. As the Head of the Office for Strategic Intelligence (DGCIS, Ministry of Economy) notes, if consultation is essential for consensus, it is a difficult issue because who you chose to put around the table is already a form steering the result.

Data collection mechanisms

On the more specific issue of data collection, the interviews produced very few results, probably because of a general conviction that public statistical offices are the most obvious actors to undertake this role. The Head of the Economy and Finance Department at the CAS considers that the institutional set-up in France, with the INSEE and Banque de France as collectors and producers of data, cannot really be changed, and is also essential for legitimacy (in opposition to the UK where other actors can produce data). Only one interviewee, the Co-President of ATD Fourth World France, considers that data collection should be undertaken not just by the INSEE and administrations, but also by NGOs, local governments, private companies and unions.

Methodological robustness

Where methodology is concerned, a large convergence of perceptions is held on the importance of robustness and only a few actors balance this view with other arguments. An MEP and representative of the ecological party EELV, considers that if robustness is to be met, it is essential to employ a method which covers all dimensions of reality. The Vice-President of the BIPE notes that GDP, considered in volume, is not an especially reliable indicator, but that it holds the advantage of being a standard measurement. A Professor emeritus of Economy at the University of Lille I, meanwhile, considers that robustness is not the only important criteria but adds that the recognition of a methodology by NSOs is essential because NSOs can block innovation on that ground – which is why it was necessary to "get things moving" at the INSEE. However, one remark, made by the representative of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs, calls for prudence where methodological criticism is concerned: he points out that methodology is often used as an excuse to reject an indicator which a user dislikes due to the ranking results.

Adequacy of scale

When questioned on the most appropriate scale for alternative indicators, from local to international, a large number of interviewees answer that all scales are relevant and that it depends on the challenges and needs relative to each level. However, a Professor emeritus of Economy at the University of Lille I considers that the uptake of alternative indicators works better at the local level than at the national or international level because local leaders tend to be closer to civil society, referring specifically to the initiative of the Association of the Regions of France (ARF). At the same time, various interviewees point to the lack of available data at the local level, and to the high cost of producing data at this scale.

On the question of whether the same indicators should be used at different scales, a majority of interviewees reply that although there is a need to deconstruct data, using precisely the same indicators at different levels is difficult because the objectives are not always the same. They therefore recommend the use of a general framework to allow comparison at each level, with the possibility of selecting specific indicators according to specific local, regional or national needs. Moreover, the Director of the Observation and statistics service at the CGDD (Ministry for the Environment) notes that although the structure can be the same, the construction at the local and regional level needs a different dialogue process and engineering. At the same time, various interviewees insist on the strong need for coordination at the regional scale. Representatives of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region point out that a lot of pilot projects exist, but that a lack of coordination prevents comparability and use in public policies. Moreover, the Coordinator of the Special commission for sustainable development at the CGEDD notes that the fact that the ARF worked independently from public authorities constitutes an obstacle to further cooperation with the INSEE. At the international scale, while most interviewees consider that a harmonised framework for European countries is necessary, they also point out that building a common basis for the

whole world is more difficult because both the means and the objectives of developing countries are very different.

Levels of aggregation

The main focus relating to the aggregational structure of indicators concerns the dilemma of opting for a dashboard of indicators or a single composite indicator. Far from revealing a convergence of perceptions on this question, the results of the interviews instead point to two ill-defined stances. The interviewees can be categorised into two rough groups: one half which is rather in favour of the dashboard option, and the other half which adopts a balanced stance. This different positioning does not seem to strictly correlate to the type of actor, as once again, different opinions sometimes appear within the same organisation. For instance, while statisticians are generally in favour of the dashboard option - or more specifically dislike compounds, as three interviewees point out - the Head of the Statistical coordination department at the INSEE surprisingly adopts a balanced stance. Moreover, even within the groups identified above, various interviewees express arguments which would fit better in the opposite group. We therefore chose to present below three types of recurrent arguments: those in favour of the dashboard option (expressed predominantly, but not exclusively, by group 1), those in favour of a composite indicator (expressed predominantly, but not exclusively, by group 2), and those in favour of both dashboards and composite indicators (expressed predominantly, but not exclusively, by group 2).

The arguments in favour of the dashboard option can be summarised using three interlinked issues: complexity, transparency, and methodology. The General-Secretary of the CAE points out that the concept of well-being is quite broad and therefore can't be measured like GDP by just one indicator. While an Inspector at the CGEDD (Ministry for the Environment) considers dashboards to be more interesting because they better represent complex realities. Where transparency is concerned, the President of the Consultation commission on indicators of sustainable development, and representative of the CESE, points out that compounds can hide crisis situations due to their weightings. The Head of the Statistical coordination department at the INSEE, which adopts a balanced stance, makes a similar observation. Moreover, the President of the ACN and the MEP we interviewed point to the issue of choosing dimensions, and of favouring one dimension over another respectively.

The main argument in favour of a composite indicator is communication. The Head of the Statistical coordination department at the INSEE highlights this perspective. She considers that GDP is successful because it gives the 'temperature' of the whole economy through a single number. Pointing to the definite advantage of a composite indicator, she considers that there is no reason not to build such a tool, as long as one remains very transparent on the choice of weightings, and it can be decomposed like Russian dolls. Moreover, she notes that we all have the ingredients to build it, and that the main issue is to identify a good communication tool. This could be done by statistical offices, such as Eurostat and the INSEE, in order to agree on a harmonised presentation, as with GDP.

The arguments in favour of utilising both dashboards and composite indicators rests on the existence of different needs, underlying the importance of being able to decompose composite indicators. On the first issue, the argument is similar to the one which proposes different indicators for different scales, and is partly linked to this question. The interviewees who adopt a balanced stance consider that both dashboards and compounds are useful, and that the choice between one structure or the other depends of the user's objectives in terms of communication and of scale. For instance, despite favouring the dashboard option, the representative of the DGCIS (Ministry of Economy) considers the Human Development Index a very useful international level indicator, while suggesting the need for more detail at the national level. On the idea of answering specific needs, the representative of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs considers that the existence of open data could enable each actor to build his own composite indicator.

On the second issue, the possibility of deconstructing composite indicators appears as a necessary condition of their existence. Moreover, representatives of the OECD consider that the success of GDP is partly linked to the fact that it can be broken down into various elements, while the Vice-President of the BIPE links GDP's success to the underlying System of National Accounts. In support of both of these options, a Researcher at the OECD draws on the image of a pyramid: one single indicator for the general public, with the possibility of deconstructing this macro-data into micro-data. While the former Head of the Centre for foresight and scientific monitoring (CPVS) of the Ministry for the Environment calls for a complete and coherent account system. Along these lines, the Co-President of ATD Fourth World France calls for an articulated system of indicators, usable according to needs, while others, like the representatives of the CAS warn that at a certain point deconstructing indicators is not possible due to scoring.

To conclude, it is noteworthy that interviewees of both groups acknowledge the dilemma between dashboards and composite indicators, and call for a compromise between the two approaches. A Chief-Editor at the INSEE, and former member of the CMEPSP, considers that simple solutions are false, and complicated ones are unusable, at least at the macro level. As representatives of the CAS phrase it, "there seems to always be a tension between reflecting complexity and synthesizing reality". The consensual representation of dashboards that comprise only a limited number of indicators could provide a possible resolution to this ongoing debate.

Policy factors – institutionalisation processes for alternative indicators

The institutional aspects of alternative indicators are explored below through two main entry points: an investigation into the link between the beyond GDP agenda and the current socio-political contexts, and the mechanics of institutionalisation such an agenda.

The influence of the current socio-political context

The effect of the economic crisis on the Beyond GDP agenda is viewed in both positive and negative terms - sometimes by the same interviewees. On the positive side, an array of actors consider that the ongoing crisis has played a role in weakening the credibility of GDP as a leading indicator and has increased the need for alternative measurement tools, to counterbalance, among other things, low or stagnating GDP figures.

On the negative side, a few actors express the opposite opinion: representatives of the BIPE suggest that alternative indicators have not seen an increase in use to reveal alternative/better figures in times of crisis; on the contrary, they note that history shows that when growth levels are high there is an interest in the negative impacts on other dimensions, while when growth is low there is an obsession with how to increase it again. A Chief-Editor at the INSEE, and former member of the CMEPSP, also notes that since the crisis, GDP is again at the forefront, just as it was in the 70s. Representatives of the OECD point out, similarly, that the debate on the crisis has focused on austerity and growth, and left no place for new indicators. Moreover, an equally varied array of actors considers that the crisis has been unfavourable for the Beyond GDP agenda, essentially because it reduces the resources of statistical services.

The crisis is also considered by the representative of the Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs to have played a role in the launch of the CMEPSP, set up "to tackle the divergences between the perceptions of citizens and statistical measures". While President Sarkozy's involvement in the formation of the CMEPSP is underlined (especially by the General-Secretary of the CAE), some interviewees point to the social demand which spurred this

political request (a representative from the CGEDD, and the Co-President of FAIR), while a Researcher at the OECD considers that this top-down approach legitimized the previous bottom-up demand.

The institutional processes

When questioned on the institutionalisation of alternative indicators, interviewees come up with a very wide array of observations. Assembled, synthesized and presented hereunder as factors, observations focused on institutional aspects, and to a lesser extent, political aspects. Finally, issues surrounding communication, in particular the importance of the media channel, are also broadly addressed.

The strength of institutions is universally considered to be an essential factor, more particularly where NSOs are concerned, and in this regard a key issue widely referenced is budgetary continuity. Linked to this question, the issue of data availability also appears to be fundamental, and divides interviewees on the question of whether there is or is not a general lack of data.

More generally, various interviewees stress the importance of reaching agreement on common tools through harmonization at the European level, coordination at the regional level, and consensus on a single alternative indicator such as GDP – though some of these issues can be considered as exceeding the boundaries of institutional factors. Amongst the array of institutions put forward, the CESE again stands out, not only as a key partner for consultation, but also as an institution whose role should be extended.

These suggestions for the CESE are expressed by two very different actors, the President of the ACN and the Co-President of FAIR, which shows the broad level of trust conferred on this institution. The Co-President of FAIR and the Coordinator of the Special commission for sustainable development at the CGEDD also express the need for institutional innovations, and refer more specifically to a proposition by Dominique Bourg to create a body dedicated to addressing long term issues, which would not only be composed of public representatives but also of scientists.

Though also widely referenced as a key institution, the Parliament itself obviously also embodies political factors, which is why we chose to treat it last. Moreover, French Members of Parliament (MPs) can, so far at least, be primarily considered as potential users of alternative indicators, and do not yet play as active a role in the institutionalisation process as the CESE does for instance. In fact, the concrete case of the attempt by MPs from the French green party Les Verts to institutionalise the Ecological Footprint through legislation suggests that such projects do not succeed if they do not have the support of key reference institutions. The Rapporteur to the report on sustainable development indicators and the Ecological Footprint, which was ordered by the CESE following the Law project, reiterates that the report recommended not using the Ecological Footprint for as long as it was not perfected, and points out that the Ministry for the Environment was satisfied with this position. At the European level, an MEP and representative of the green party EELV, confirms that although the Ecological Footprint has been imposed in the debate by the ecologists, it does not have any official status.

Still, if one considers MPs as (potential) users of alternative indicators, a few noteworthy observations can be made. The General-Secretary of the CAE points out that MPs are more likely to be receptive to the promotion of alternative indicators than governmental decision-makers who fear judgement, and adds that in France, the Sénat is less political than the Assemblée Nationale. While considering that MPs are the ideal “clients” for alternative indicators, the Head of the Sustainable development delegation at the CGDD notes that they have very little time, and therefore recommends using the specialized parliamentary commissions as points of entry.

More generally, political motivation is widely put forward as an essential driver to the institutionalisation of alternative indicators - and the lack of it is at this stage considered by many of the interviewees as an important barrier. As mentioned earlier, some interviewees consider that the dominant ideology is not favourable to the uptake of alternative indicators. This was expressed by the representative of the DGCIS (Ministry of Economy) who referred to Keynes' general theory on policy-makers which presents them as oblivious victims of dead economists: they have learned to build their world vision at 25, and make decisions at 50.

Beyond the global convergence of perceptions on the necessary consultation of civil society in the indicator construction process, only a few interviewees point to any movement at this level of action. Noting that decision-makers are mostly conservatives, the Coordinator of the Special commission for sustainable development at the CGEDD believes that they will "play the game" only if they feel that civil society pushes enough in this direction. Where the general public is concerned, representatives of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region consider that one of the main challenges is attaining a balance between statistical relevance and engagement by citizens, while the Head of the Statistical coordination department at the INSEE suggests that one potential catalyst would be to organise a wide public debate on the issue.

Communication is considered as a major factor influencing institutionalisation by many experts, and a larger number of interviewees stress the importance of the media channel. As mentioned earlier, the level of diffusion is highlighted by some interviewees as a major cause of the excessive focus on GDP, and of the insufficient focus on alternative indicators. The President of the Consultation commission on sustainable development indicators thus points out that their dashboard has merely been spread at the rate of some 3000 copies in a 2 to 3 year time period. Where media channels are concerned, two interviewees, including a journalist, considers that the media lacks the relevant education to ensure any effective diffusion of alternative indicators.

However, the journalist adds that diffusion also depends on supply, and notes that for the moment GDP is readily available and comments on the indicator easy to obtain. On the supply side, the Head of the Department of general economic studies at the INSEE considers that GDP is focussed on by the media because it is published every three months, and that it would be complicated and expensive to do the same for household statistics. The importance of regularity is underlined by a handful of interviewees, such as by an MEP (representative of the green party EELV), and former Chief-Editor of the newspaper "Le Monde" and by the Co-President of FAIR, who call for the diffusion of alternative indicators at regular or even monthly intervals. The issue is considered at a more institutional level, and on a different time span, by the General-Secretary of the CAE who calls for a European treaty imposing the yearly diffusion of well-being indicators (as is the case in Germany).

Finally, on a more general note, various interviewees point out that indicators tend to settle on a long term span, referring to the System of National Accounts as an example. Along these lines, both the President of the National Accounting Association, who was the main actor behind the construction of the SNA, and the former Head of the Centre for Foresight and Scientific Monitoring of the Ministry for the Environment, consider that there are two ways to move forward: through one-shot actions, and by investing in the long term. Representatives of the CAS note, meanwhile, that institutionalisation is not a linear process, but functions with clear feedbacks, and considers, along with other interviewees, that it is through its use that an indicator will eventually impose itself.

3.2.1.2. International convergence: the case of high-level policy actors

The present section will report on an analysis of the perceptions on demand of a second set of policy actors, namely those present to the OECD World Forum “Measuring Well-being for development and policy making” (16-19 October 2012, New Delhi). 15 interviews were conducted, with a number of high-profile participants (see list below, and more extensive bios in the annexes). The opportunity was taken to meet in a very intense mode at the edge of the conference. For reasons of feasibility and timing, a specific, adapted short interview guide was developed focusing primarily on the three types of factors – user, indicator, policy factors – influencing the up-take of Beyond GDP indicators.

<i>Name of interviewee</i>	<i>Institutional affiliation</i>
Susan Brutschy	Applied Survey Research (npo)
François Roubaud	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (R&D)
Sabina Alkire	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (R&D)
Enrico Giovannini	Italian Statistical Institute (NSO)
Serge Allegrezza	STATEC Luxembourg (NSO)
Everett Glenn	UK Office for National Statistics (NSO)
Yagur Amitt	Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (NSO)
Romina Boarini	OECD
Karl Falkenberg	DG Environment, European Commission
Jon Hall	HDRO, UNDP
Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos	European Agency for Fundamental Rights
John Martin	OECD
John Evans	Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
Bina Agarwal	University of Manchester (R&D)
Jean-Paul Fitoussi	Institut d'Études Politiques (R&D)

User factors – the perception of conceptual aspects

Three types of user factors were perceived to influence the uptake of B-GDP: the fact that the criticisms towards GDP are often regarded as invalid or poor; the evolution of the awareness and reflexivity of statisticians and decision makers; the various interpretations/definitions of the concepts of wellbeing and sustainability.

Parts of the criticism of GDP is considered meaningless by institutional actors – First and foremost, it appears that for most institutional actors, primarily those coming from national statistical offices, the criticisms of GDP as a milestone in assessing the development of society appear very poor. Most of the actors interviewed consider that GDP is indeed imperfect in its methodology but do not question the consistency of its use in decision-making. Most of them are in favour of “completing” GDP rather than replacing it.

What is fundamentally questioned by the actors that are sceptical about the criticisms of GDP is the lack of realism surrounding the proposals that emerge from that criticism. More precisely the ideas of zero-growth (e.g. “décoissance”) were rejected by many interviewees, given the lack of congruency between such an objective and the effective functioning of the current economic system. It is worthwhile noting that of the 15 interviews that were conducted, only one interviewee mentioned the strong vs. weak sustainability debate. Most of the other interviewees were implicitly aligned with a weak sustainability paradigm.

From the interviews, a diversity of positions appears regarding the definitions of the concepts of wellbeing and sustainability and of their interactions. Two features of these divergences are worth noting: the opinions of the interviewees on the measurability of both these concepts, and the perceived link between them.

Wellbeing and sustainability: Are they measurable?

The percolation of measurability appears to depend fundamentally on the way wellbeing and sustainability are conceived and defined. As far as sustainability is concerned, some actors consider that given the uncertainty characterizing the future conditions of societies, sustainability is impossible to measure. The proponents of that perspective often consider that the risks of collapse are not worthwhile and that therefore the posture to support is one of precaution, including, for some of them a revision of the growth-led model of development.

In opposition, for actors supporting the possibility of assessing nature and risks through monetary valuations, sustainability would be measurable and defined as the result of an inter-temporal problem of utility maximization under constraint. This conception underlies major indicators such as the adjusted net savings (ANS, World Bank) and the Inclusive Wealth Index (IWI, UNEP).

As far as wellbeing is concerned, once again, the perception of the possibility of measuring it is strongly related to what this concept means to the actors. However, the divergences in opinion are not as deep as for sustainability, since the parameter of "uncertainty" is seen as less pivotal in the definition of wellbeing than in the definition of sustainability. The divergences rather relate to how one measures it rather than on the possibility of measuring it. One position consists of considering wellbeing as a purely subjective concept. At the other extreme, one conception emerging from the interviews is rather in line with Sen's capabilities approach. In that perspective, wellbeing is a far more inclusive concept, conceiving wellbeing in terms of freedom and not only in terms of achievements. While subjective wellbeing appears, though imperfectly, quite easily measurable, a more inclusive and multi-dimensional definition of wellbeing seems far less easy to implement and operationalize through quantification.

What link between wellbeing and sustainability?

Related to the perception of measurability, these concepts, the way their interactions are regarded fundamentally depends on the way actors defined them. On this point, two major positions were observed.

In the capabilities' perspective, sustainability is defined as the achievement of a wellbeing that can be perpetuated across many generations. Sustainability is conceived as the conditions for sustaining the possibility of people having freedom. Such conditions have to do with different types of factors, but include nature and environmental resources.

In contrast, many actors consider these concepts as independent from each other. As we have seen before in this study, while wellbeing refers to subjective life satisfaction, sustainability is perceived as a matter of environment. In this perspective, wellbeing and sustainability might potentially be contradictory. Indeed, nothing ensures that the conditions required for subjective well-being also meet the conditions required for sustainability.

On a different level, it has been noted several times during the interviews, that the rise of initiatives related to "going beyond-GDP" has changed the way statisticians perceive themselves and their function. It is very interesting to note that most of them have observed an increase in the reflexivity of the profession toward their roles in the quantification in societies. At the EU level, for instance, it is observed that the various DGs have become increasingly proactive regarding the demand for new indicators from Eurostat. While formerly the DG's attitudes tended to be rather passive in waiting for Eurostat statistics, it increasingly appears that various DGs now actively engage Eurostat in explicitly expressing their need for specific kinds of data. The vital role of quantification, as a potential driver of action, is progressively recognised by these institutional actors.

However, two drawbacks to an increased reflexivity and proactivity toward indicators have been pinpointed at. Firstly, this increase is seen as belonging to a restricted part of the professionals dealing with indicators: the statisticians and economists that explicitly consider themselves as being progressive. Dialogue with those they identify as "traditional" economists remains extremely difficult. In the view of the progressives, it appears difficult for classical economists to question what they have been taught and practiced for years, namely growth models and the relationship between growth and societies' development.

The second obstacle to an increased reflexivity lies in the fact that what is considered to be "increased reflexivity" or "progressive posture" by the actors interviewed remains their own perspective. These actors are themselves anchored in institutional contexts and modalities of thought and action that might be considered by others as far from progressive.

Indicator factors – the perception of instrumental aspects

As for the methodological - and the more technical - aspects of indicator configuration, a series of convergences in perceptions appear at the level of quite typical firsthand questions: datasets underlying the indicators should be verifiable, regular monitoring should enable timeliness of the indicators, methodologies should be transparent and justified scientifically, and the configuration and organisation of weighting schemes in index construction are a matter of shared concern.

More fundamentally, however, an exploration and discussion of the indicator factors with the interviewees give rise to a series of antagonistic perceptions on configurational aspects in indicator configuration.

In this sense, diverging perspectives have been observed on the necessity and feasibility of developing indicators using subjective wellbeing as their conceptual grounds. While some actors - mostly those coming from civil society and academic spheres - consider that subjective well-being is the only way to tackle the question of measuring quality of life, other actors - mostly national statisticians - are rather sceptical about that drive. For this latter group of interviewees, the quality of an indicator lies in the possibility of anyone checking what it contains and relating it to an observable objective reality; characteristics which are obviously difficult with subjective indicators.

Furthermore, no convergence in perceptions has been observed on the correct level of aggregation that should be aimed at when constructing indicators that go beyond GDP. We note some convergence of perceptions among those interviewed that the level of aggregation of indicators to promote primarily depends on the purpose of the indicator. If the indicator has a communicational purpose, most tend to support the most aggregated form of an indicator and note that this synthesized form has been a primary strength of GDP. If indicators are to be used for policy-making, most actors support the adoption of an indicator as specific and deconstructed as possible. If these purposes are not considered by the actors as being mutually exclusive, the adequate level of aggregation remains difficult to be articulated in a coherent way.

However, when addressing the construction of an indicator, the interviewees did not consider methodological issues to be the only important aspects; the process of construction has also seen as vital. Questions of who is to be considered as legitimate participant in the design of indicators come to surface, and are put into relationship by interviewees to processes of legitimization of the indicators themselves. Appearing divergences of positions on participation seem to be in line with the different functions/status of the interviewees. Most of the national statisticians - though they recognize the importance public consultation - consider NSOs as the definitive legitimate institution for indicator construction. In their opinion, non-experts should be consulted ex-post, that is, after that the indicator has been created. In contrast, most actors representing civil society, as well as those involved in field

research on indicators, perceive that civil society should be given the option of playing a more proactive ex-ante role, that is, at the stage of creating an indicator. Most interviewees perceive that both bottom-up and top-down processes should not be mutually exclusive; but as far as how to effectively realise this in practice, no real solution emerged.

Indicators are created and implemented at various geographical scales. When asked whether they consider whether an optimal scale exists, the interviewees presented various opinions. Four types of arguments, non mutually exclusive, were put forward during the interviews, usually dependent on the focus of the interviewee. For proponents of 'localized' indicators, indicators only carry legitimacy if they result from a democratic process of construction, hence designed at the local scale. The focus here being democratic issues underlying the construction and use of indicators. Proponents of the more 'globalized' approaches, link the scale of indicator production to the scale of the problem under measurement; problems such as sustainability are global they need to be tackled at the global level. The actors that support 'nationalized' approaches tend foremost to care about the feasibility of the effective uptake of B-GDP indicators. To them, this points to favouring the national scale. A number of interviewees questioned more fundamentally the consistency of the national scale (at which GDP is typically built) given the need for accounting for new dimensions of life such as wellbeing, often perceived as locally anchored, and sustainability, often thought of as needing accounting at the global scale. Additionally, even though various actors favour various scales, most of them agree on the respective importance of other scales when regarding the indicators' purposes.

Policy factors – institutionalisation processes for alternative indicators

New actors at the table of negotiations

For the interviewees, one of the main evolutions accompanying the emergence of the Beyond GDP agenda, lies in the opening of the debate on quantification to a wider set of actors. While GDP restricted the scope of discussions to economic issues and therefore limited the number of concerned actors to the economic sphere, beyond-GDP indicators, in contrast, address a far broader range of issues including social, human and ecological factors which inevitably implicate new actors. The broadening of this scope has impacts that go far beyond the content of the discussions on quantification. It implies that the status of the discussion on new modes of quantification has changed. If new actors are to take part in the elaboration of indicators, and if these actors obtain their legitimacy from factors outside of traditional scientific expertise, it raises some interesting questions. These issues were not openly raised when only economic factors were at stake since legitimacy was, almost logically, attributed to economists at moments of configuring the measure and to statisticians when operationalizing the measure.

New coalitions and new social contract

The multiplication of actors might lead to assume that just as social compromises between employers and employees emerged around GDP and economic growth at the end of WW2, a new such social compromise could be developing around a new indicator (or set of indicators) today. Such perceptions lead quite directly to enquire the interviewees on their perception of emerging coalitions of social actors. When addressing the question of interactions between social partners (e.g. in a wider sense, between social actors), some interviewees shed light on an ambiguity relating to the use of indicators

On the one hand, it has been perceived by our interviewees that some employers are reluctant to develop or use qualitative indicators within their firms. They fear that such indicators might provide a negative image of the workers' situation within their business,

which would create pressure on the employers for remedial action. However, it has also been noted that many firms show a genuine interest in using such indicators and the reason seems to be quite straightforward. If new qualitative indicators reveal that the wellbeing of workers does not only depend on wage increases but also on other factors (e.g. a larger understanding of social/human capital), they could provide employers with a reason to increase these other factors while still satisfying their workers, possibly at a lower cost. In this case, the adoption of subjective indicators by firms would serve to move the focus from wages to other variables; they would serve a new kind of social contract that would seemingly not be in contradiction with the search for profitability and competitiveness.

Survival of the beyond GDP movement

For some of the interviewees, a more fundamental question needs to be asked when confronting the Beyond GDP movement: Beyond GDP initiatives are tied to fashionable current trends that may have dubious longevity. For others, however, the alternative indicators movement has introduced a genuine change through, among other factors, the process of awareness-raising.

Beyond these divergent perceptions on the nature of the movement (superficial trend vs. deep societal change) all the actors interviewed share a similar fear on the 'sustainability' of the movement. The crucial importance of institutional and political support - in order for these indicators to reach their objectives - is often mentioned. One interviewee suggested that if not enough resources are devoted to the development of new indicators, operational and pragmatic arguments might prevail. These arguments consist of favouring indicators that already co-exist with GDP (such as 'unemployment rates') and using them as proxies for what one wants to know about wellbeing. Such a position would render social innovation more difficult, and impoverish the potential for social change carried by the B-GDP movement.

3.2.1.3. Comparing the convergences of perceptions

Both series of interviews – at national level for France and at international level for the participants to the OECD-conference - have been made in obviously different institutional contexts. Convergences in perceptions might in both cases be grounded on different mechanics; the participants to the French set of interviewees could be assumed to converge because the French policy arenas are sufficiently coherent as to have developed already forms of shared perceptions. On the other hand, the participants to the OECD-conference could be taken as a particular, hence relatively coherent, set of high-level experts related to a particular policy object. In other words, convergence in one case could be linked to the interviewees stemming from one particular national setting, whereas in the second case, convergences would be stemming from the malstroem of international expertise.

We saw however, that at both levels, convergence of perceptions is not necessarily the rule, which calls thus quite directly to engage into a wider, overarching analysis of convergences of perceptions. In the following, we engage thus with bringing together a first comparative analysis across both levels.

In particular, we want to shed light on the emergence of converging perceptions, on common, shared perceptions as found in both groups of interviews, as well as on the divergences of perceptions. This comparison is structured along the same lines as the above analyses, following the three "user", "indicator" and "political" factors, but we emphasize more directly the convergences or divergences in perceptions.

User factors – the perception of conceptual aspects

Characterizing demand for 'Beyond GDP'

Perceptions appear quite unambiguously to converge on 2 aspects: the anchoring of criticism of GDP as a measure of wellbeing, and the way interviewees argued about the conceptual linkage existing between wellbeing and sustainability.

The criticism of GDP is considered by most interviewees – of both sets of actors - as quite poor in its quality. From the comparison of both the FR and OECD interviews, four major reasons seem to appear to support this view. First, the fact that the criticism is exclusively focused on GDP implies, to many actors, that it misses the point. Most of the interviewees, both in France and in the OECD forum, mention the high number of other indicators which influence decision-making. Second, for most of the interviewees, GDP is one of the only indicators that is methodologically robust and hence probably the most useful one for international comparisons. That is why, in their view, GDP should be 'completed' but certainly not replaced. A third often repeated argument - formulated mainly by interviewees coming from national statistical offices - is that GDP is often used to inform areas for which it was not initially created. In that sense, the criticism of GDP is simply meaningless as it is misuse that is at fault, but not the indicator itself. Fourth, and most fundamentally, the lack of credibility given to most criticisms of GDP lies in the lack of a proposed alternative societal model. As long as there isn't a clear societal model underlying the search for new B-GDP indicators, any alternative indicator will not appear as credible. The strength of GDP on the other hand, is strongly related to a clear model of the economy.

A second set of convergences of perceptions over our 2 sets of interviewees appeared at the level of the conceptual linkages to be established between wellbeing and sustainability. For the proponents of the capabilities' perspective, sustainability is conceived as the achievement of wellbeing that can be perpetuated across generations. On the other hand, in both series of interviews, many actors instead consider both concepts as independent from each other. Wellbeing refers to subjective life satisfaction while sustainability is perceived as primarily an environmental matter. As we noted above, in this perspective, wellbeing and sustainability might be potentially contradictory, since nothing ensures that the conditions required to obtain subjective well-being will meet the conditions required for sustainability.

Notwithstanding these convergences, a series of perceptions did diverge consistently over both sets of interviewees, and which could simply be linked to the configuration of our two samples of interviewees.

A divergence observed between the two series of interviews regards the perception of the current societal model and, as a corollary, the type of alternative that should be put forward. It appears that a large range of actors, adopting a large diversity of positions toward GDP, have been interviewed in France while a less extended range of actors have been met during the OECD World Forum. In that respect, while various interviewees in France at least evoke the possibility of – and for some of them, the need for – a cultural revolution or change in the current productivist model, the actors met during the OECD World Forum defending such radical position were far less numerous. This divergence is not entirely surprising since most of the actors interviewed in Delhi were already conceptually wedded to a weak sustainability paradigm while, in France, some of the interviewees were specifically chosen for their strong positions on sustainability (both ecological and social). There are many other possible reasons that can explain the remaining difference but one factor stands out. Since the actors defending strong sustainability mostly belong to institutions such as NGO's, universities or civil society groups, which are often not close to institutions like the OECD, it is likely that they were less represented at high-profile events such as the OECD World Forum.

Second, interviewees connect the perceived roles indicators are to play with, among other things, people's conceptions of the world. We have noted in both series of interviews, that most of the actors have a vision of the impact indicators might have on society and therefore adopt a proactive attitude in regard to the quantification of societal ends and means.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the reflexivity of actors towards indicators (their awareness of the role they are to play in societies) takes on different meanings in the interviewees. Given the scope of opinions/positions adopted by the FR interviewees, it is not surprising to observe a divergence with the OECD interviews. In that respect, while actors interviewed at the OECD forum perceive themselves as progressive, through their proactive demand for new indicators, their conception of "progressive" strongly diverges from the one conveyed by the most radical FR interviewees.

Indicator factors – the perception of instrumental aspects

As far as indicator factors are concerned, both series of interviews show identical patterns of convergence/divergence in perceptions. We briefly reiterate here the major elements that were persistently noticed, both in France and during the OECD World Forum. Hence, we focus somewhat on the convergences which are shared by both sets of interviewees.

In terms of methodology, there is a convergence of perceptions among almost all the interviews on the importance of robustness, verifiability, timeliness, scientific validity the need for weightings to be adopted on a systematic basis. Within the series of interviews, a major point of debate concerns the consistency of using subjective wellbeing in public statistics. As said earlier, while some actors consider that subjective well-being is the only way to tackle the question of measuring societies' quality of life, other actors' think that the quality of an indicator lies in the possibility of anyone checking the results and to relating it to an observable objective reality.

In both series of interviews, patterns of perceptions converge in as much as the interviewees' perceptions vary regarding the best methods to follow when constructing indicators. It was observed, both in France and during the OECD Forum that most civil society actors and academics were in favour of bottom-up approaches, while national accountants were giving more credibility to a top-down process. However, these positions are nuanced: almost all the interviewees, whatever their first preference, mentioned the importance of combining both approaches to ensure both legitimacy (through bottom-up consultation) and technical proficiency.

While no crude divergences were observed between the series of interviews, very different opinions did emerge within each series. Most of the time, interviewees balanced the transparency of an indicator with its communicability. In this regard, some interviewees favour the more transparent (but less communicable) dashboard while others favour the global image provided by a composite. Beyond these divergences, once again, the arguments are more nuanced: many interviewees mention the importance of linking the structure of the indicator to its expected use (policy-making, communication, decision-making, etc.).

Finally, no strong divergences were observed between both series of interviews on the issues of scale, and a correlation might exist between the sphere from which the interviewees come and their perceptions. People closer to civil society support the idea of the local scale, members of governments and of national statistical offices favour the national scale, while representatives from international institutions instead favour international scales, or dimensions that can be compared on an international basis.

Policy factors – institutionalisation processes for alternative indicators

A comparison of both series of interviewees on issues related to policy factors did not reveal fundamental divergences. We highlight four issues addressed in both series of interviews.

In both series of interviews actors are quite divided on the impacts of the financial crisis. Some see a positive expansion of the B-GDP agenda based on the discredited old model, while others think that any form of social innovation tends to get disregarded in times of austerity, while a third set are unable to decide which impact is likely to prevail. The potential positive effects of the crisis, lie in the discrediting of the growth model given its endemic instability, which opens the space for a new social critique. Others note, meanwhile, that history tends to show that the social effects of the crisis lead the decision-maker to re-double their focus on growth (growth being perceived as the engine of employment), which leaves little space for alternatives. Moreover, structurally, the crisis implies cuts and reallocations in the public budgets, which impacts national statistical offices' budgets leaving fewer resources for the elaboration of new statistical tools. Today, it appears difficult for many actors to decide whether the movement will continue or not.

The B-GDP agenda is recurrently questioned in both interviewee sets in terms of longevity, with some actors regarding it as a real driver of a change in mentalities and practices, while others see it purely as a fashionable trend. The question of longevity is certainly an issue that the financial crisis has co-generated through resource constraints that make new statistical tools harder to justify.

Last but not least, one major drive which succeeded at both levels to facilitate the uptake of B-GDP indicators – or at least the agenda - is the Report of the Commission for the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP), often known as the "Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission". It has been consistently quoted as the major reference on which any B-GDP initiative should be built.

3.2.2. Capturing shared perceptions and representations on 'demand'

In contrast to the previous section which was targeted at rendering perceptions and representations of individual actors from the policy arena of Beyond GDP, a second, complementary empirical material was raised which targeted to investigate shared, common understandings of the arena, and in particular with actors which could not be taken as being predominant participants to the Beyond GDP arena. The generic question raised is thus: what shared perceptions do prevail on the Beyond GDP arena from the 'outside'? More specifically, the objectives were to:

- Make '(non)demand' for Beyond-GDP indicators explicit (e.g. better understand the reasons for a potential lack of demand); in particular, characterizing demand for Beyond GDP also means characterizing the constituents of 'non-demand'.
- Understand the elements that lead to the emergence of a potential demand for Beyond-GDP indicators, and in particular as seen from 'mainstream' policy actors.
- More fundamentally, enquire into an external, 'mainstream' viewpoint on the Beyond GDP movement. Better understanding how Beyond GDP initiatives (and their indicators) are perceived from the outside could reveal crucial in evaluating the potential these initiatives have to genuinely influence policy-making.

Methodologically, the construction of shared perceptions was developed via the organisation of a set of workshops throughout Europe. These workshops have been led on the basis of a specific procedural framework, investigating the participants' knowledge, their understanding

and their experience/use with and of the Beyond GDP sphere. On a secondary level, these experiences, the knowledge base and the belief systems were revealed against the Beyond GDP agenda itself (political events, initiatives and programs organized around the world, e.g. the OECD World Forum in Delhi), the alternative indicators themselves as well as the societal model which underlie the indicators (i.e. the conceptions and/or visions of the world discussed within the Beyond GDP debate).

Each of the workshops were divided into three distinctive moments of interaction, addressing consecutively the:

- *B-GDP Agenda*: participants were confronted with the timeline (see annexes) representing the various B-GDP initiatives from the country hosting the workshop and encouraged the participants react to it. The material gathered from this first stage allowed to perform an analysis of the participants' practices, perceptions and knowledge about the Beyond GDP agenda.
- *B-GDP indicators*: participants were encouraged to react to the Beyond-GDP indicators presented in BRAINPOoL's WP1 report in order to analyse their practices, understanding and knowledge regarding specific indicators.
- *B-GDP model*: finally, participants were confronted with a synthesis of results regarding the document analysis and interviews (i.e. tableing the individual perceptions we revealed), focusing on main discussion points. The objective here being to integrate participants' practices, understanding and knowledge regarding different societal models (e.g. mainstream/ alternative) which are underlying the different indicator proposals.

Methodological framework to structure enquiry into shared perceptions

	<i>Beyond-GDP Agenda</i>	<i>Beyond-GDP Indicators</i>	<i>Societal Model</i>
<i>Knowledge</i>	Ex. What do you know about ... (a series of events mentioned in the timelines)?	Ex. What do you know about ... (a series of indicators mentioned in the timelines)?	Ex. What do you know about the major points of debates (ex: strong vs. weak sustainability)?
<i>Representation</i>	Ex. What do you think about these events/initiatives?	Ex. What do you think about these indicators?	Ex. What do you think about the current model and/or the suggestion to move the model?
<i>Experience/use</i>	Ex. Have you ever had the occasion to take part in such an event? Potentially: do you think that attending such events might be of interest regarding your activity?	Ex. Have you ever had the occasion to use Beyond-GDP indicators? Potentially: do you think that such indicators might be of interest regarding your activity?	Ex. Have you encountered situations where you were invited to question the current socio-economic model?

Between the 15th of January 2013 and the 13th of February 2013, workshops (aka Road Shows) were organized in the following countries: Germany (15th January 2013); France (17th January 2013); UK (12th February 2013); Czech Republic (23rd January 2013).

3.2.2.1. Characterising reasons of 'non-demand' for B-GDP indicators

Factors related to knowledge

From the workshops, three main knowledge-related factors emerged which could be held liable to characterise a certain lack of demand for B-GDP indicators: weak knowledge of the limitations of GDP; weak knowledge of the existing alternative/complementary indicators; prevalence of important terminological confusions.

Weak knowledge of GDP's limitations

It appears from the workshops that the limitations of GDP for policy making are not entirely clear to many actors. When asked what they consider the weaknesses of GDP to be, the most regular responses are the lack of correlation between GDP and subjective wellbeing in rich countries and the negative environmental impacts of growth. In both cases, except for some of the actors that have been involved in the use and elaboration of new indicators, these limits were perceived quite superficially in the sense of not being a strong enough argument to attempt at overthrowing or complementing GDP in a fundamental fashion.

Weak knowledge of the existing alternative/complementary indicators

If the limits of GDP appear to be weakly identified by the participating actors, the existing indicator alternatives are even less well known. It has been observed in the four workshops that most of the participants did not have any awareness of international B-GDP initiatives such as publications, conferences and/or indicators. The only initiative that was almost unanimously known was the "Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report". Surprisingly, in contrast, the OECDs "Global Project" and/or "Better Life Initiative", as well as the "Beyond-GDP" conference and the EU's "GDP and Beyond" report were not known by many of the participants. While one was to assume that only profound academic and local initiatives would not be known to participants, it appeared that even the existence of strong institutional support was not sufficient for the visibility of the indicators to those outside the B-GDP sphere.

Important confusion in terminologies

A knowledge-related factor that could explain the lack of success, or at least of visibility, of B-GDP initiatives lies in the conceptual confusion underlying the debates and the – often conflicting – societal visions underlying them. The concepts of quality of life, human development, sustainability, sustainable development, wellbeing, subjective wellbeing, living standard, etc. contribute to increased confusion among the actors on the definition of a B-GDP agenda. Such confusion corroborates the one observed during the individual interviews we reported on earlier.

Factors related to representation

A series of factors related to the representation held by participating actors of indicators, agenda and societal model could be identified during the workshops. These factors can be gathered under three major headings: no clear representation of the innovation carried by B-GDP; pivotal place of GDP and growth; elements of distrust toward B-GDP indicators; lack of political motivation for change.

No clear belief in the innovation offered by B-GDP with respect to existing indicators

One of the impressions encountered among many participants of the workshops was the idea that B-GDP initiatives do not really offer any social and/or statistical innovation. Most of

the participants considered that indicators already exist today that might enhance our knowledge of wellbeing and sustainability. The nature of existing indicators is therefore not questioned but rather the strength of their use.

Pivotal place of GDP and growth

For most of the actors participating in the workshops, even though GDP is considered imperfect with regard to various social and ecological issues, it should not be criticized for these deficiencies. Indeed, the participants argue, GDP is basically not designed to tackle these issues. It is the misuse of the indicator that has incorrectly produced the connection between economic growth and societal progress. Furthermore, the participants do not entertain the possibility of organizing economic and societal activities according to an alternative indicator to GDP. For instance, for almost all the participants, it is impossible to think of quality of life improvements – on the social, human and ecological level - without assuming the pursuit of economic growth.

Elements of distrust toward B-GDP indicators

Three elements of distrust have been identified during the workshops:

- *Distrust of subjective data:* for most of the participating actors, the quality of subjective data is doubtful. Among the main reasons invoked are the lack of verifiability, difficulties with comparability of data and their lack of time-consistency.
- *Lack of realism of the hypotheses underlying these indicators:* a second element of distrust lies in the important role of underlying assumptions and models during indicator computation. Given the high level of uncertainty underlying the issues of sustainability, most of the participants consider such dependence on assumptions as problematic: it might lead to arbitrary choices, lack of transparency and the 'massaging' of numbers.
- *Initiatives perceived as 'one-shot':* in all the workshops, the lack of confidence in the possibilities of monitoring indicators in the medium/long-run was raised. Such a concern corroborates the one observed in the individual interviews.

Lack of political motivation for change

Some of the participating actors explicitly perceive a lack of political motivation for change. It is worth noting that this argument was only rarely mentioned and only by actors coming from the media. This factor could, however, be crucial when searching for the optimal conditions for the uptake of B-GDP indicators.

Factors related to experience

From our analysis, we identify the following families of factors related to the experiences of various actors: indicators carry normative and political values; conflicting temporalities of agendas; technical limits.

Indicators carry normative and political values

Some actors - mostly working in political spheres at national but also international (diplomacy) levels - highlight the normative and political values underlying the choice of an indicator. It is worth noting that these political and value-based aspects of indicators have not often been explicitly mentioned in the actor constellation of the workshops.

Conflicting temporalities of agendas

One of the major identified elements blocking the demand for B-GDP indicators is the conflict of temporalities between the sustainable development agenda – designed on for the long run – and the short-term focus of the political/electoral agenda. Participants noted that if some measures that are desirable in the long run imply short term ‘pain’, they are less liable to be adopted. It is worth noting the exception of Germany in this context, where indicators have been adopted despite decision makers knowing that they would not necessarily give them a good press.

Technical limits

Many technical limits regarding the use and adoption of B-GDP indicators have been mentioned by the workshop participants: lack of data; difficulty of computing stocks; difficulty of dealing with uncertainty. All these elements corroborate what has been observed in the interviews.

3.2.2.2. *Towards the mainstreaming of B-GDP indicators*

Factors related to knowledge

Two distinct knowledge-related factors can be identified, liable to enhance the uptake of B-GDP indicators: the communication around B-GDP indicators and the existence of political and scientific support of B-GDP initiatives.

Communication around B-GDP indicators

Given the lack of knowledge among participants on alternative/complementary indicators to GDP, it was pinpointed to be important to enhance the communication around these initiatives. The two major indicators that were known by participants were the Ecological Footprint and the Human Development Index. These two indicators are supported by systematic and large-scale media operations: through the WWF's campaigns, on the one hand, and through the annual publication of the Human Development Report, on the other.

Existing Political and scientific support

Besides communication, a second important factor enhancing the visibility and the credibility of B-GDP indicators was pinpointed at and which lies in the political support they receive. In that respect, the case of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi report is noticeable: the Commission was created at the demand of the President of France, was chaired by three high-level economists, including two Nobel-Prize winners, its members were high-level economists and the commission as well as the report have been strongly promoted in the media. This has had the consequence that all the indicators discussed in the report, even though most of them have existed for a long time, could experience a "second birth" in terms of their public recognition.

Factors related to representation

Two major factors related to the representation of the Beyond GDP agenda/indicators/models have been identified during the workshops as being potentially liable to enhance the possibilities of uptake of B-GDP indicators: the perceived correlation between profitability and the use of B-GDP indicators; and the credibility/reputation of the institution creating the indicators.

Perceived correlation between a logic of profitability and the indicators

It has been observed, during the workshops that most of the indicators that were mentioned spontaneously by the participants as potentially usable were in fact indicators that are relatively in line with business-related objectives. If indicators are perceived as helping to serve/enhance/support the pre-existing goals of business (e.g. profit maximising), they are considered desirable.

Credibility/reputation of those creating the indicator

Most of the participants place more trust in institutions such as NSOs, the UN, the EU, the WB or the IMF, than organisations that appear more explicitly engaged as representatives of one or the other position in politics. It appears that that reputation of the institution elaborating the indicator is as much a factor as, for instance, the intrinsic methodology of the indicator.

Factors related to experience

On top of the points of view expressed by the participant actors, three factors could be highlighted that were felt to influence the effective use of indicators: the methodology steering quantification; the existence of structural programmes in which indicators have an explicit role; and the existence of binding/legal constraints regarding the use of the indicators.

Content/ methodology of the indicator

When asked of effective initiatives taking place in the area of sustainability, most of the participants mentioned indicators fit for integration into cost-benefit analysis and indicators of resource efficiency. In both cases, these indicators are monetised, i.e. rely on monetary valuation of out-of-market dynamics, flows or stocks.

Existence of structural governance mechanisms

It was noticed during the workshops that where a structural program existed formalizing the construction and insertion of indicators, these were de facto declared to be used more. It is the case, for instance for the various National Sustainable Development Strategies, namely in Germany, France and the UK. Linked to these mechanisms, unsurprisingly, it has been observed from the workshops, that the existence of legal/binding frameworks allowed indicators to be declared to be more used and systematically monitored.

3.2.3. Integrated analysis of individual and shared perceptions on 'demand'

The objectives of the research activities underlying the present report are twofold. On the one hand, it should allow us to better characterize the **types of demand for indicators**, and on the other, it should help us to identify **the factors enhancing or hindering the uptake of B-GDP indicators**. This subsequent section aims to synthesize and integrate the analyses conducted at individual levels of perception, as well as the shared, workshop-based perceptions and representations of the demand for Beyond GDP.

The first sub-section is devoted to characterizing the types of demands (3.2.3.1). We devote some attention to separate out the perceptions of actors who one can assume to belong to the (wider) circle of the Beyond GDP policy arena and those who could be considered to be (relatively) non-involved. The following sub-section presents the various factors liable to enhance or hinder the uptake of B-GDP indicators (3.2.3.2); we organize the discussion along the lines of the already referred to triptych of user, indicator and policy factors.

3.2.3.1. Emergent types of demand

Characterizing demand for B-GDP indicators implies exploring the positions, experiences and perceptions of various actors, whose involvement in the search for or use of new indicators may vary quite substantially. Assuming that better characterizing demand needs concomitantly to better characterize non-demand, we address different spheres of actors that we can respectively identify as belonging to the B-GDP sphere and not belonging to the B-GDP sphere. The former have been met in the context of face-to-face interviews (see section 4.2.1), while the latter have taken part in workshops we have organised (see section 4.2.2). The presentation of the major results allowing us to better characterize demand(s) for B-GDP indicators is structured according to these two groups of actors. More specifically, we first characterize the demand(s) observed among the actors who belong to the B-GDP sphere. We then undertake a comparative analysis of the demand between actors “inside” and actors “outside” of the B-GDP sphere.

Within the B-GDP sphere

Who is formulating a demand?

From our analysis, we identify a strong ‘appetite’ from civil society representatives for a transformation of both world visions and the socio-political system supporting these. Though this ‘bottom-up’ demand is never a demand for indicators themselves, a strong call nevertheless exists for social change.

One of the most recurrent observations, in the interviews and the workshops, is the pivotal influence of the ‘Stiglitz Report’. The ‘Stiglitz Commission’ has not only given B-GDP issues a greater visibility, but more fundamentally, has enhanced the demand for indicators by highlighting the importance of the indicators issue. While an increasing political demand over time has also been observed, and some of the underlying initiatives are observed at the national level, it appears that the political demand is stronger at local and regional levels.

Individual interviews revealed increasingly proactive moves at the interaction between statisticians and civil servants towards the production and use of indicators. The most salient example regards the European Union, where a major change of attitude has been observed among the various DGs: from an initial relatively passive attitude towards indicators (waiting for Eurostat propositions), many DGs have progressively gained awareness of the role of quantification in policy-making and now request the supply of specific indicators from Eurostat.

In many of the discourses analysed an agreement prevails on the need for a general democratization of the construction and development phases of indicators, and at large for greater access to statistical information. The recurrence of such demands strongly contrasts with the actual context in which they are commonly formulated: high technicality of debates, only high-level actors targeted, frequently costly processes, events and conferences without media coverage and with low civil society representation. On this question of ‘demand for democratisation’, the contrast between the explicit expectations and the actual practices should somehow be better apprehended.

In many of the discourses of many interviewees “growth” remains a central concept and, for most of the actors observed continues to be the major framework within which a B-GDP agenda should be elaborated, with concepts such as “smart growth”, “green growth”, or “inclusive growth”.

The strong conceptual confusion that underlies the debates constitutes one of the major factors hindering the uptake of indicators. To a certain point, such confusion prevents us from observing a clarified demand for indicators: the motives, the understanding of the issues

and of their potential resolution as well as the role indicators should play are all understood in different ways by different actors. These divergences are on occasions so different that a debate appears to be not even possible due to a complete mutual misunderstanding. Conceptual clarifications are therefore seen as a crucial requirement in easing the definition of demand for B-GDP indicators. As a corollary of these conceptual confusions, where actors are aware of them there is an emphasis on the importance of education about new indicators at various stages: in universities (economic curricula are often cited), among political leaders and parliamentary representatives, and in institutions such as national statistical offices or national economic observatories.

What kinds of indicators are promoted?

The multiplicity of actors implies that a large range of indicators seems in principle to be equally supported, but this perception can be deceptive.

The credibility of the indicator's creator is as important as the indicator's intrinsic quality. One of the major criteria that should be taken into account in the search for enhancing the uptake of indicators appears to be the credibility of the institution/organisation that creates and/or disseminates indicators. Typically, national statistical offices (NSOs) are regarded as reliable because of a perceived absence of political positioning while more "activists" producers are given less credibility with regards to the scientific bases of their indicators. We have noticed a contrast between the focus placed by researchers, social movements and progressive national statisticians on the intrinsic methodology of their respective indicators, and the high importance given by many actors to the institutional reputation of its creator. One specific issue related to the credibility of an indicator's creator lies in the increasing trend toward privatising the production of indicators.

Indicators liable to fit within the current economic logic are perceived to be more liable to be "successful". As mentioned in our analyses, most of the indicators spontaneously mentioned by the participants as potentially useful for the business community were indicators the use of which would be in line with the current objectives/principles of most companies. If indicators are perceived as helping to serve/enhance/support their pre-existing growth objectives, they will be considered as desirable.

A prevalence remains towards an inexistence of consensus on indicators' aggregational structures, i.e. 'dashboard vs. composite'. Composite indicators are often considered as good tools of coordination/communication while dashboards are often associated with policy-making. Nonetheless, in the view of some actors, mostly national accountants and statisticians, composite indicators that encompass topics as diverse as social, economic and environmental issues would be impossible to analyse and thus constitute a bad communication tool. One relatively consensual position, also favoured in the 'Stiglitz report', consists of creating a dashboard including a limited number of indicators, which can be easily disaggregated.

Divergence and convergence of the positions of actors inside and outside the B-GDP sphere

The differences between actors Inside and Outside the B-GDP sphere are probably not as important as many would expect. Most often, the positions adopted by the participants of the workshops were in line with some of the position encountered in the face-to-face interviews. Still, some differences exist, that need some detail.

For the sake of clarity, the following pages trace a comparative table of the major convergences and divergences with regard to the factors enhancing or hindering the uptake of B-GDP indicators. These factors organize alongside with the way the workshops were

analysed before: factors related to knowledge, to representations and to experience. For each factor mentioned, we show if it is shared by both groups of actors or, on the contrary, if divergences appear.

Divergence/convergence of positions "inside" and "outside" the b-gdp sphere

	Actors INSIDE the B-GDP sphere	Actors OUTSIDE the B-GDP sphere
Factors related to knowledge		
<i>Knowledge of GDP's limits</i>	Relatively good knowledge	Relatively weak knowledge
<i>Knowledge of existing alternatives</i>	Even though actors "inside" have a better knowledge of the alternatives than actors "outside", knowledge remains quite poor in both groups. Probably due to the huge number of initiatives.	
<i>Knowledge of the meaning of the concepts mobilized in the B-GDP debates</i>	Lots of confusion in both groups, though for different reasons.	
<i>Communication around B-GDP indicators</i>	In both groups of actors, communication around B-GDP initiatives appears an important factor in enhancing the visibility of new indicators.	
<i>Existence of political and scientific support</i>	In both groups of actors, political and scientific support for B-GDP initiatives appears important to enhance the credibility of new indicators.	
Factors related to representation		
<i>Perceptions of the innovation of B-GDP indicators with respect to existing ones.</i>	Most of the actors "inside" perceive the B-GDP agenda as innovative, though some interviewees mention that the innovation is one of format, not of content.	Most of the actors "outside" perceive the B-GDP agenda as not innovative; though some of them show a real interest in the dissemination of the movement.
<i>Remaining pivotal place of GDP and growth in representations of Progress/Well-being</i>	Though GDP and growth have very different associations to those of progress/wellbeing, GDP non-the-less remains central for almost all of the actors "outside" and for most of the actors "inside".	
<i>Representations about subjective indicators</i>	There are contrasting views on subjective well-being. Some interviewees are favourable to their adoption and take actions in this direction (namely at the OECD level) while others, mostly statisticians, are doubtful about the intrinsic quality of such indicators. Another type of "inside" actors are quite cautious about such indicators, believing their use might lead to undesirable outcomes.	Subjective indicators are mostly regarded as unreliable, for they are not comparable and based on arbitrary variables.

<i>Hypotheses underlying new indicators</i>	In both groups, some indicators are regarded with caution because actors see their underlying hypotheses as unrealistic.	
<i>Longevity of the initiatives</i>	Among the actors "inside", while many hope that the movement has longevity, most of them are very aware of the risks of abandonment due to a potential lack of political and financial support.	Most workshop participants see the B-GDP movement as a "one-shot" initiative with limited longevity.
<i>Reputation of the indicator's creator</i>	Among the actors "inside", some come from recognized institutions (OECD, EU), while others do not enjoy such credibility. Focus is aimed on the intrinsic quality of the indicator rather than institutions due to them being relatively better known.	In the discourse of actors "outside" the movement, the credibility and reputation of the institution creating the indicator(s) is as important as the indicator's intrinsic quality.
Factors related to experience		
<i>GDP and growth are still structurally necessary in the dominant economic models</i>	Though the conclusions drawn from this observation are very different, both groups of actors are very aware of the difficulty to go beyond GDP in the current system.	
<i>Indicator carry political and normative values</i>	It is precisely because of the values carried by indicators that they are mobilized, developed and demanded. However, the normative nature of quantification choices is in some case not explicit and/or not understood by users.	Such normative elements might constitute an obstacle to the uptake of new indicators outside the B-GDP sphere, since such indicators are often perceived as unrealistic or unwanted.
<i>Conflicting temporalities</i>	In both groups, the problem of conflicting temporalities between short-term political cycle and long-term social and ecological issue has been experienced as problematic.	
<i>Content / methodology of the indicator</i>	Robustness, verifiability, timeliness, theoretical foundations are the major criteria effectively used in both groups of actors to assess an indicators quality.	
<i>Binding/legal scope of indicators</i>	In both groups, the existence of legal framework ruling the use of indicators has been mentioned as an important factor of uptake.	

Better characterizing demand: is it the right issue?

Considering our analysis and regarding the objective of better characterising the demand for indicators, the concept of "demand" itself should be revised or at least carefully used. The research done so far quite clearly illustrates that the uptake of indicators – whether Beyond GDP or not – depends on more complex mechanisms than a simple reaction to the state of a demand.

Demand and supply appear to be very reductive concepts compared to the reality of the production, diffusion, discussion and use of indicators. Our interviews highlight this aspect as none of the actors considers themselves to be a "user" or a "producer". Most of them appear to be in the middle of the process, part of demand and supply, production and use, and into discussions about new indicators of progress. Actors in general are not comfortable with the notions of demand and supply to describe the landscape of processes about new indicators.

In that respect, we identify a set of factors liable to explain the uptake (or the non-uptake) of indicators, which cannot be encapsulated in the concept of "demand". First, we should mention the awareness of existence of indicators: there remains quite a widespread ignorance of the exact content of the Beyond-GDP basket of indicators. A second factor is the trust in the indicators' impact (i.e. self-fulfilling prophecy?): indicators might just not be perceived as the main driving force for policy development, hence investing heavily into the reformulation of the indicators might not be the most effective strategy. The third factor relates to the actors' legitimacy: once a proper demand has been articulated politically, who has the legitimacy to develop the ensuing indicators through their process of institutionalisation? Finally, one should also focus on administrative capacity-building and the ability to support indicator measurement over longer timeframes. Once alternative indicators have become institutionalized they will likely rely on the development of new data collection and treatment capacities, a process whose long term financial support is still to be secured, a point of particular concern to those responsible for present (and mid-term) public budgets.

3.2.4. Discussing the uptake of B-GDP indicators in policy debates

When it comes to analyse results of the individual and the shared perceptions on indicator uptake, a specific point can be made on the insertion of indicators into policy debates; i.e. the more general insertion of indicators to debate policy ideas and options, more than to assess policy outcomes and outputs. The analysis is structured along the 3 sets of factors, *user-indicator-policy* factors extensively used before.

User factors – the perception of conceptual aspects

Though a certain convergence seems to exist of GDP's abilities to guide certain policies aimed at maintaining the economic and social status quo, the various suggested methods of going "beyond" it vary to a large extent. While some actors see the B-GDP movement as a path toward a cultural revolution, towards a deep revision of our current economic and societal system, others, on the contrary think that GDP is still a very robust indicator, probably the best for making international comparisons. For the latter actors, GDP should therefore only be completed with more precise indicators, bringing in spheres that are so far not covered by national accounting. Such a divergence of perspective on how to go beyond GDP could have prevented the uptake of new indicators. More specifically, given the strong weight of the voices in favour of 'completing' GDP and given the structural dependence of our current economies and societies on GDP, it seems that complementary indicators are far more liable to be adopted. What is interesting in terms of actors' conceptions is that the predominance of growth is so overriding in some spheres that the "alternatives" offered up as being progressive are in fact so anchored in the 'growth paradigm' that they are considered by other actors to be deeply conservative.

One of the reasons why the B-GDP agenda and some of its indicators are held in low regard stems from a perceived lack of realism in the assumptions that underlie the indicators. More specifically, in all the workshops and during many of the interviews, the discussions have shown an important awareness from actors (even those belonging to the B-GDP sphere) regarding the lack of connection between the new indicators currently being suggested and the existing economic model. While Keynes offered a strong theoretical basis to national accounting regarding the functioning of the system (circular flows -monetary and real - in the economy), such theoretical rigour is not perceived to exist today for a potential alternative B-GDP model. This is a major barrier to the widespread uptake of new indicators.

As already mentioned above, one of the factors hindering the uptake of indicators, lies in the conceptual confusion underlying the current B-GDP debates. This confusion is observed in the definitions given of well-being and sustainability respectively, as well as in the links made by actors between sustainable development and well-being. Such confusion has important implications in terms of measurement. The major conceptual areas where confusion/divergences exist can be listed as follows:

- Sustainability defined as the conditions for long-lasting well-being vs. sustainability as a purely environmental matter independent from well-being;
- Strong sustainability vs. weak sustainability;
- Subjective well-being vs. objective elements of quality of life, and any combination thereof;
- Green growth vs. green economy;
- Absolute decoupling vs. relative decoupling;
- Monetary indicators vs. non-monetary indicators.

Furthermore, it appeared that B-GDP indicators are often perceived as not innovative with regard to existing institutionalised statistical measures. The link between methodology and societal ends should therefore be better highlighted. Likewise subjective data is often regarded with caution given its arbitrary dimensions and lack of supporting comparability. More widely, as we have already mentioned, the lack of realism in the assumptions underlying some of the B-GDP indicators currently on offer tends to discredit a much wider set of the existing initiatives; alternaiveness is taken by definition as heterodoxe.

The intentions of the institutions creating the indicator and how transparently they are diffused are a factor of trust/distrust. In that respect, one observed phenomenon that creates distrust among institutional users of indicators lies in the current tendency of private actors (including NGOs, CSOs, and otherwise lobbying actors) to create and spread their 'own' indicators. They tend to use the indicators to facilitate the spread of their societal vision or interpretation of an alternative world model/vision. In such contexts, the configuration of the methodology of these indicators can evolve into a process of "branding", where – in extreme cases – private actors hide methodologies as well as data for reasons of intellectual property and capital. If indicators become a tool that can be used to hide compliant methodologies, the question of their regulation by public actors might become an issue (e.g. for ensuring future access to important information).

Finally, from various interviews and some of the workshops, it has been observed that one of the factors hindering the uptake of indicators is the lack of political motivation confronting most actors who are working proactively in this field. This lack of political will could be explained by the conflict between the agenda of winning elections versus the need to account for social/sustainability issues; by resistance from those interests wishing to maintain the current functioning of the system and GDP's status quo; or by a distrust of the normative or political assumptions underlying the methodologies of some indicators.

Indicator factors – the perception of instrumental aspects

While questions surrounding the legitimisation/democratisation of the construction processes of indicators are pervasive in the discourses, we observed that current practices tend not to be getting any more democratic/participatory. Such disconnection between discourse and practice does not constitute a barrier to the uptake of B-GDP indicators per se, but it includes the risk that indicators that are adopted suffer a strong democratic deficit.

Policy factors – institutionalisation processes for alternative indicators

The financial crisis appears to provide ammunition to various – and to a certain extent conflicting – beliefs. One position tends to assume that the crisis will enhance the B-GDP movement by clearly highlighting the current system's limitations. At the same time, many actors think that even though the system's limits are laid bare by the crisis, de facto the crisis prevents any concrete B-GDP agenda from being implemented due to the resulting lack of financial and political means to do so. In times of crisis politics turns its focus back on growth and employment. GDP therefore remains pivotal, in designing the budget, in elaborating fiscal policies, in expressing deficit and or debt targets, etc. In terms of resources, the crisis implies budgetary cuts that jeopardize the conditions of survival of the B-GDP indicators.

The strong political support, the eminent scientific backgrounds and the wide media coverage of the 'Stiglitz Commission' have played an important role in allowing B-GDP indicators to gain access to political agendas, not only in France but also at the EU and OECD levels. While the report is not exceptionally innovative in terms of content – it largely synthesises pre-existing already disseminated works – the synthesis it offers of the current state of the art is very clear, readable and has undeniably contributed in orienting many institutions towards the production and/or use of new indicators.

One policy factor lies in the existence of governance processes, such as national sustainable development strategies, in which indicators have a specific/explicit role to play. The existence of such processes renders sustainable development indicators less dependant on the vagaries of larger policy cycles.

4. Discussing ‘demand’ at the level of a set of ‘meta-questions’

The past couple of decades have seen a multiplication of environmental and sustainability indicators designed to improve the evidence-base for policy-making. More recently, Beyond GDP's political agenda has also led to a large increase of indicators in every sector and at every scale of decision-making, which aim to replace or complement GDP with indicators or variables that take social and environmental issues into account. Several high profile initiatives such as the OECD's 'Measuring Progress' initiatives, the EU's 'GDP and Beyond', the French 'Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress' (CMEPSP), the UK's 'Measuring National Well-Being' and Bhutan's 'Gross National Happiness' have all lit up the debates.

On the scientific side, an increasing literature addresses the recent expansion of this "Beyond-GDP" phenomenon through various approaches, mainly focusing on improving the elaboration of the indicators themselves, the comprehension of the linkages between these indicators and societal phenomena (e.g. link between subjective well-being and unemployment), or on the role they are to play in governance systems. Linked to this latter, a first set of studies started to question the way civil society and political and scientific actors expect to integrate the "Beyond-GDP" agenda in their visions and actions, and how these actors formulate these expectations. The present report strives – at least partially – to fill the gap of knowledge and understanding on the actors' demand for alternative, Beyond GDP indicators. The assumption being of course, that once we grow into a better comprehension of the terms of that demand, we could contribute to steer the elaboration and communication of a future set of Beyond GDP indicators to explicitly meet these expectations. And, in the end to steer our society – with the impetus of these alternative indicators – into a renewed understanding of 'development', of 'progressiveness', of 'growth'.

B-GDP indicators have multiple identities: in short, they are multi-concept, multi-actor, multi-scale, multi-task and multi-vision. A discussion of these multiple identities of indicators leads us to investigate issues that go beyond methodological or political factors; we have seen before that the debate around 'beyond GDP' can serve as a basis to investigate 'social change' at the level of an apparent methodological debate. The following discussion is meant to try to understand what our observations in this realm could imply for the brokerage activities of BRAINPOoL. Brokering with the 'Beyond GDP' arena fundamentally means to tackle, grasp, experiment within the demand-supply nexus.

The space of intervention is potentially wide, but effectively it might be small, and within a project such as BRAINPOoL it certainly needs to be very tightly circumscribed. In particular as a simple change in perspective might induce a change in understanding the size of the levers with which to play: what can be seen as a driver to the demand and uptake of B-GDP indicators from one perspective, could at the same time constitute a barrier from another perspective. This leads us – in fine - to question more fundamentally the desirability of promoting any type of B-GDP indicators (!) and, more pragmatically, to pinpoint towards the need for distinguishing and in the end selecting between different indicators.

4.1. Indicators are ‘multi-concept’

Disparities on conceptual grounds

The different concepts which underly different Beyond-GDP indicators, whether complementary or alternative, appear to lead actors into confusion. First, our study revealed an overall confusion between sustainability and well-being indicators, the latter having become very popular since the ‘Stiglitz report’. Decision makers, stakeholders and indicator producers appear to be somewhat puzzled by this emerging notion. For some actors, wellbeing represents the social part of sustainable development; for others, it constitutes a combination of the economic and social spheres. Some think that wellbeing is similar to sustainable development, just not presented in the same way; others assume wellbeing is in opposition to sustainable development. It is evidently not easy for many actors to clearly differentiate these two concepts.

Second, besides this conceptual confusion, well-being seems for many to lead to bypassing environmental concerns and to a focus on present generations. Methods to evaluate wellbeing through indicators are assumed to contain subjective data/variables. Actors are generally intrigued by this relatively new approach to measurement; while they only seldom criticize well-being indicators, they remain unsure about the interrelations which exist or are ascertained between sustainable development and well-being indicators.

One of the voiced explanations of this confusion may be that these two concepts – and their respective indicator sets - are simply not at the same stage of institutionalization and ‘socio-political’ evolution. The various wellbeing indicators are still being proposed on a relatively broad basis and discussions are taking place at the level of their definition and the role they should play within society. As ‘emerging’ indicators, they generate clear signs of interest, surprise and dialogue, whereas sustainability indicators, as ‘established’ indicators, lead more to conflicts amongst producers and stakeholders about their potential use. As similar issues can potentially be covered by both sets of indicators (e.g. social problems), actors remain somewhat torn between the two conceptual underpinings. It appears that some actors have become disillusioned with sustainable development indicators, whereas well-being indicators embody new emerging hopes for the wider movement of questioning GDP.

In that respect, the analyses of interviews and documents have shown on the surface that the interest in well-being measures is progressively dethroning the call for sustainability indicators. This finding could be explained by two factors. First, sustainable development never succeeded in becoming a unifying concept. Its formal institutionalisation in 1987/1992 rapidly led to conflicts about setting targets and about pathways of reaching them. Initial cooperation on defining the concept led to competition between countries, industries, towns and regions with hundreds of indicators and scoreboards appearing. Second, wellbeing as a rather new concept has as yet not become hackneyed. Notions of quality of life, of well-being, and of social progress are slowly but surely encroaching on domains once inhabited by sustainable development. The ‘Stiglitz report’ helped these new notions gain credibility, legitimacy and salience, factors which have been delineated to affect data use. Like the ‘Brundtland report’ for sustainable development, the ‘Stiglitz report’ initiated renewed reflection on the way societies should think about their future and manage their priorities. Wellbeing and social progress were placed on the front row and gave rise, credit and popularity to a series of well-being indicators.

Can the apparent terminological confusion become meaningful for a consensus-finding process?

While the above-mentioned confusions in themselves are not surprising considering the number of institutions and actors which populate the domain, policy analysts have interpreted that policy agendas tend to institutionalize once a consensual interpretation of the nature of the agenda has been reached. Hence, in the case of the 'Beyond GDP' realm, the potential future closure of conceptual confusion could lead to a hardening of 'Beyond GDP'-policies. Without any doubt, the emergence of such a consensus around the policy agenda depends, at least to a certain extent, on the existence and performance of a common and recognized Beyond GDP "label" which sets out the perimeters of the policy domain (what's in/out?). If such an analysis of institutionalisations stands the test of time, this could be particularly important for the framing of the indicators. Some of the early initiatives undertaken, notably at the level of the EU-institutions, can certainly be interpreted as attempts to constitute such a common understanding of the perimeters of 'Beyond GDP'.

Conversely, it might be just as well that the entire 'Beyond GDP' field seems to be open to divergent interpretations. Addressing a change as fundamental as the (economic) model might necessarily be linked to the existence and pursuit of profound debate on the alternatives. Hence, beyond the question of whether a consensus is attainable, lies the question whether it is desirable as a process of foreclosing the debate on other "alternatives". One of the major drawbacks attached to GDP itself is its hegemony; it might simply be a matter of prudence and collective learning to refrain from re-entering a world of hegemony at the level of our main societal indicator.

4.2. Indicators are 'multi-structure'

The promise of opening up the framing of indicators – or at least the framing of the demand for indicators – to a wider set of societal actors, is obviously that such a move would open up the way indicators are configured. Directing participation towards new actors would or could entail new, alternative indicators. However, the evolution of the framing of indicators – as revealed in the configurations of the institutional contexts - reveals somewhat that for the past 40 years, the idea of complementing GDP has become increasingly more acceptable than developing an alternative to GDP.

Hence, the calls for deliberation and participation are somewhat disempowered by the prevailing practices.

At the beginning of the 70s, the erosion of GDP's "golden age" empowered academics to question economic growth itself; and vice-versa. But following the severe economic crises of the 70s, the social indicators movement merely resulted in the establishment of satellite accounts, with the purpose of complementing the central system of national accounts. The onset of sustainable development brought with it the Brundtland report's call (1987) to complement GDP with a powerful index, and related dashboards were progressively developed at different geographical levels. In parallel, the various initiatives presenting alternatives to GDP failed to activate an effective institutionalization process at the national and international levels, at least at a similar scale to GDP. Such indicators were generally criticized for methodological aspects, among others for the arbitrary choice of dimensions and variables put forward.

When the debate on indicators was relaunched around the year 2000, the main institutional initiatives at the European and national levels developed a stance of supporting complementary indicators. The change of name, from the initial "Beyond GDP" conference in 2007 to the European Commission's Communication "GDP and Beyond" in August 2009, is somewhat indicative of this shift in framing. The Stiglitz/CMEPSP Commission further

embedded this position, as its very title sets economic performance and social progress side by side. The resulting Stiglitz report (2009) tended to close the debate on compounds versus dashboards, leaving aside the idea of a new global indicator which could reach the general public, and thereby greatly narrowing the potential indicator audience. Globally, while these contemporary initiatives recognize the limitations of GDP and the need for new indicators, they only marginally question the productivist paradigm underlying GDP, and call hence for relatively incremental innovations; complementing/correcting GDP instead of replacing it.

Probably as a result of this mainstream call for complementary indicators, national statistics offices, civil society and academics have adopted a somewhat pragmatic approach: while arguing in favour of measuring the economy through a broader, multi-dimensional perspective, they support compound initiatives as complementary tools to dashboards. Yet some actors still strongly question the traditional economic growth paradigm, and closely link the debate on measurement instruments to the more profound debate on the model of society indicators should support.

4.3. Indicators are ‘multi-actor’

Since ‘Beyond GDP’ indicators typically aim to tackle issues that go beyond production, consumption and monetary wealth distribution, the creation of ‘Beyond GDP’ indicators requires the expertise of disciplines outside economics and statistics, and competences which are sitting outside academic and technic knowledge.

The emerging roles of intermediate actors

Resulting from the recognition of this opening, it appears from many interviews that traditional actors, mainly economists and statisticians, change their vision of themselves, applying greater reflexivity in their function and more specifically, on the roles they attribute to statistics, data and indicators. Other institutional actors interviewed also noticed greater proactivity in the use of statistical tools. As noted already, there has seen a shift in many EU-level DGs from passively waiting for Eurostat delivering data to actively meeting Eurostat members to ask for the creation of specific indicators related to policy goals/mission.

In parallel, one observes that the multiplication of actors on the indicator scene implies a greater legitimacy of the NSOs in the eyes of institutional actors. Many actors interviewed or observed point at the progressive "privatization" of the methodology of indicators by businesses (such as a lot of "footprint" indicators) and in a wider sense by NGOs. Such an evolution can create conflicts of interests, where an indicator's methodology remains somewhat hidden and is subject to certain forms of branding&marketing.

The debate about B-GDP indicators appears to slowly shift towards an attempt to extend the measurement tools to civil society, from a previously very narrow set of actors composed of experts and policy actors. One major explanatory factor for this disparity between supply and demand might be found at the level of the original motivation of producing the indicator in question. A number of traditional composite indicators (not least GDP itself) were elaborated and produced by experts upon a specific demand by decision makers. These traditional composite indicators were clearly top down indicators, but were built on relatively clear terms of reference defined by policy-makers. This situation has somewhat evolved lately, partly with the emergence of sustainability issues (and the need to position the indicator on a wider knowledge-base), and partly because the evolution of our information tools which have revolutionised access to data and calculation power. As a result, indicators are promoted to decision makers by a variety of actors.

'Beyond-GDP' indicators could, on the other hand, be labelled "middle-up" and "middle-down" indicators; they are more and more produced by stakeholders such as NGOs or think tanks and occasionally during independent academic exercises which are then developed and communicated further through NGOs. The Ecological Footprint is a good example here, having been developed and conceptualized during a PhD thesis, which was then rapidly taken up by WWF. These "Mittelfeld" actors are the ones who construct the various visions for society, and who try to communicate their visions towards the 'top' and 'bottom'. It has been observed that these Mittelfeld-stakeholders start by diffusing their ideas/indicators horizontally (i.e. between each other) in order to build a network or coalition of actors, with the aim of proposing their indicators to decision makers (middle-up) and/or to civil society (middle-down) at a later stage.

If the opening of the debates to new "intermediate" actors has been interpreted as a positive consequence of the search for new indicators, the increasing complexity of the issues, which justifies the entrance of new voices in the debates, must not hide a potential downside for democracy. Indeed, given the technicality of the debate, there could be a possible drift from substantial issues around social choices towards methodological questions on how to weight or aggregate the indicators. This situation would again give experts a dominant position in the choice of indicators.

New factors for social negotiation

Besides the entrance of new actors into the debates, the development of new indicators is modifying the principles which social partners use to meet and negotiate. From various interviews, we have noticed that a surreptitious change is occurring in the terms of social negotiations. Historically, as has been shown earlier in the report, it was growth that assured social harmony between social partners, through a systematic distribution of the productivity gains. Today, the relationship employers have towards new indicators reveals more ambiguity. On the one hand, interviewees have suggested that employers were initially sceptical about new indicators, since they might shed light on social dysfunctions and stimulate social conflicts. But on the other, some of them see the opportunity of gaining from both the promotion of subjective wellbeing and logics of profitability. If new indicators can shed light on new factors of wellbeing at work, other than wages, like social capital and the positive effects of team building, etc., then employers might invest more in these aspects and be less constrained by wages increases. The scope of such moves to modify the foundations of social negotiation could deserve some attention.

The framing of demand for "bottom-up" indicators

Decision makers, stakeholders and producers of indicators recurrently use the notion of "bottom-up" indicators. The vast majority of our interview sample agrees that to be efficient and useful, indicators should be elaborated according to a bottom-up approach, which is most often translated for a call for participatory processes during the construction of indicators. Our interviewees acknowledge that societies' belief systems and values should be transferred into the production process of indicators, in order to improve the way that indicators reflect a society's reality. Equally, document analyses confirm the framing of indicator production in terms of deliberation or participation. As stated – for instance – in the EC communication about attempts to provide alternatives to GDP, "citizens can feel distanced from statistical information. Complementing GDP with additional concise metrics that reflect wider public concerns would demonstrate greater linkage between EU policy and citizens' preoccupations" (COM 2009 : 433). The wider scientific literature also tends to state that participation and deliberation can – or should and could - enhance indicator use, and recurrently a series of case studies are used to demonstrate this at least at the local level. Authors have addressed this dichotomy between expert-driven and community-driven indicator processes. They classify frameworks according to two broad methodological paradigms: expert-led and top-down in contrast to community-based and bottom-up. Their

contention is that these two approaches need to be integrated for a more nuanced understanding of system interactions. The process of engaging citizens to select indicators could ensure that they are relevant to the community, while government involvement can enhance data reliability.

When being questioned on the operationalization of their call for “bottom-up” approaches, or how it would be feasible at the European and national levels, or if they already use bottom-up indicators in their work or if they could give examples of bottom up indicators, interviewees tend not to be able to answer the question. This could be explained by the fact that such bottom-up indicators do not in fact exist at the EU or national levels.

Obviously, we identify a clear gap within the discourse between a desire for bottom up indicators in theory and the absence of attempts to attain these bottom-up indicators in practice. The implications of this debate on top-down and bottom-up indicators are not to be underestimated. In a Desrosières-like understanding of governance, it points to the question of who should elaborate visions on the future of societies, and more generally to the question of the place for technocracy in contemporary governance operations. Some argue that policy institutions should keep their responsibilities in defining the directions for a country, or a region. Others think that it is time to empower citizens in designing guidelines for society (and for their political leaders) and to reduce the role of technocrats and experts.

However the implications of recognizing the principal actor of framing is interpreted, however the question of the “who” is answered individually and in theory, the currently existing experiences contribute themselves to the framing of the demand for Beyond GDP indicators.

4.4. Indicators are ‘multi-scale’

The production of B-GDP indicators generally reveals a sharing of knowledge and methodologies allowed by the permeability of geographic scales. Initiatives developed at specific scales are all based upon the background knowledge of initiatives practiced at every scale, but in most cases, some fundamental adaptations need to be carried-out. These adaptations are necessary to satisfy both the particular needs of the scale and the availability of data. This is important because the ideal objective of the Beyond GDP perspective is to provide reliable indicators for coherent monitoring of a specific geographical entity. In this sense, the diversity of scales and territories restricts the opportunity of implementing a common indicator relevant for each entity.

As new indicators promoting social progress, B-GDP innovations face a paradox: they aim to be comparable at the international level as well as revealing local level aspirations. The importance of the connection between indicators at the different geographical scales – regional, national, European and international - is an issue expounded by practically all the reports we analyzed and was mentioned in the majority of interviews. Key words are interconnection, comparability, harmonization and international cooperation. But the question of how to do it without jeopardizing contextualisation, locality, specificity remains unanswered. On one hand, indicators reflecting local issues are considered vital but cannot be transferred directly to higher scales for methodological reasons; on the other hand, B-GDP indicators proposed at the international level are considered as robust but where the issues dealt with are too general to satisfy local concerns. This scale issue represents a barrier that should not to be underestimated for the implementation of B-GDP indicators.

The influence of scales is, therefore, a limit to the implementation of a unique statistical ‘revolution’, but it can also be considered as a rich area for debate because of the multiple approaches it provides. The multitude of activities held at different scales could even be

considered as a safeguard that allows the debate and movement to thrive, while a single scale phenomenon could be more easily ignored or restricted

4.5. Indicators are 'multi-vision'

What are the fundamental goals of the B-GDP agenda?

Indicators, in the way they are built, carry very different implicit visions of the world and societal models. Obviously. It has been voiced that if 'alternative' indicators are to become new signposts for decision-making, their underlying values should be explicit. This is all the more important to take into account in brokerage activities such as the ones carried by BRAINPOoL. Indeed, when talking about B-GDP indicators, we need to be explicit in what we mean. Or - for the impossibility of value-neutrality - does the call for clarity of underlying value systems and world visions also count for those who merely want to facilitate dialogue?

From the interviews and workshops, it could be inferred that policy actors find that indicators are most liable to be "successful" (in terms of becoming a larger reference point for a critical mass of mainstream policy actors) once they meet the following criteria:

- Be perceived as in line, or at least not contradicting, the wider discourses on evidence-based policy making and regulatory reform agendas.
- In the arena of commerce, alternative indicators should not conflict with on-going managerial and accounting processes, and hence the struggle for profit, competitiveness and innovation.
- That the effective methodology be in line with conceptions and actions anchored in the current economic model and be directly linkable to existing economic instruments and tools (e.g. cost-benefit analysis, resource efficiency).

This inevitably leads to question the fundamental goals and motivations of the B-GDP agenda, in terms of implementing a world vision which is Beyond "economism". Short-term pragmatism with respect to the operationalization of alternative indicators has been voiced to prevent the more alternative methodologies from emerging and ultimately being institutionalised.

Questioning the longevity of 'beyond GDP'

One fundamental point revealed by the combination of institutional analyses and actors' perceptions relates to the long-term durability of the 'Beyond GDP' movement itself. On this point, perceptions are divided. While some voices consider the Beyond-GDP movement as a fashionable trend, others believe some fundamental conceptual changes are occurring.

Whatever the opinion on the depth of the changes at work, most of the actors have shown some concern about the possible demise of the movement. These doubts rest on the fear that public authorities and national statistical offices do not have the leverage to support the creation of new indicators as they did in the more or less recent past. Experimentations at the level of indicator constructions, whether by academic, statistical or societal actors, are becoming relatively rare; often because of the impression that a wealth of alternatives and past experimentations do already exist, and that the issue 'today' is more one of choosing the correct one(s) than developing the correct one(s).

Especially with the above discussion on the silent forces of discourse framing in mind, the disappearance of 'Beyond GDP' will certainly not mean a disappearance of the quest for indicators. Historically, this quest appears to co-exist since the appearance of GDP itself. However, the potential disappearance of 'Beyond GDP' as a framing apparatus will undoubtedly have its influences on this quest.

5. References

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