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Social cohesion development division

Methodological Guide to the development of social cohesion indicators

General introduction and first part

General introduction

GUIDE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL COHESION INDICATORS, PRODUCED BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

1. *Social cohesion in the context of human rights and the exercise of democracy*

This methodological Guide to the development of social cohesion indicators reflects the values promoted by the Council of Europe ever since its inception, namely the rule of law, human rights and the exercise of democracy. The development of the Council of Europe since the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights on 4 November 1950, the establishment of the European Court of Human Rights in 1959 and the adoption of the European Social Charter in 1961 and of other instruments[1] led it to embrace the concept of social cohesion in 1997 as "one of the foremost needs of the wider Europe and (…) an essential complement to the promotion of human rights and dignity"[2].

With its focus on social cohesion, the Council of Europe is responding to changes in society that exacerbate the risk of inequality and instability. Social cohesion, which is very much a part of human rights, makes the individual, as a vehicle of rights in modern society, an element of a social process leading to the development of the substance of these rights through collective participation, a consideration of the distribution of social benefits and the recognition of the need for diversity. Social cohesion thus takes account of how the various social players interact and the degree to which they succeed in ensuring the well-being of everyone.

2. *Social cohesion in modern societies undergoing change*

Social cohesion is essential for the stability of a modern society centred on the rights of individuals and remains crucial for our societies undergoing rapid and radical changes that are upsetting the mechanisms that have traditionally ensured the maintenance of social bonds in Europe. It is acquiring more importance as a complex element in the search for equilibrium[3], which responds to people's needs for both personal development and a sense of belonging and links together individual freedom and social justice, economic efficiency and the fair sharing of resources, and pluralism and common rules for resolving all conflicts by peaceful means.

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[1] Other institutional and legal instruments have been progressively introduced to ensure the full implementation of human rights. The most noteworthy are the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (signed in November 1987), the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the so-called "Venice Commission"), set up on 10 May 1990, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (signed on 1 February 1995), along with the many recommendations drawn up by the Council of Europe in the course of its existence. Appendix 3 provides information about the main Council of Europe recommendations drawn up over the last few years on the major issues relating to human rights and social cohesion.

[2] Final Declaration of the Second Summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government, Strasbourg, 1997

[3] See: Alaluf Mateo**,** *Demographic trends and the role of social protection: the idea of social cohesion,* http://www.ulb.ac.be/project/tef/cohsocen.html. "Through the concept of social cohesion, the idea of "equilibrium" and of "norms" assume major importance. Equilibrium is the guarantee of the social cohesion produced by shared values. Those values, internalised by individuals, are not, however. They are the norms that society gives itself. As a consequence individual is assessed in accordance with social norms, in the light of habits and customs which are those of a given group".

Modern European societies have a structural need for social cohesion. In the course of their history, they have sought to meet such a need in different, and often "negative" ways, for example by glorifying the fact that their citizens belong to a strong nation or by engendering "us" and "them" confrontations, especially by means of inciting mistrust of foreigners or immigrants. Following the experience of two world wars, they have tried to achieve cohesion through human rights, of which the constituent elements are freedom, equality and solidarity – ie, through the development of positive cohesion.

Since **freedom** has become more and more accessible in the form of personal autonomy, everyone exercises it within the limits defined by the autonomy of other people. Although it is based on the individual, freedom is in practice a *relational concept*: I cannot be free if others are not. This idea of freedom implies **equality** and takes on concrete form in the provision of equal access to material goods and social and cultural amenities. **Solidarity** stabilises the coexistence of individuals and is a manifestation of their need to co-operate through collective commitment, whereby each and every person exerts their *influence* on collective decision-making[4].

Beyond the individual dimension, European societies consider that rights also have a collective dimension. Such cohesion has helped to create a sense of belonging, trust and security and has supported aspirations to improve living conditions, which are a crucial factor for economic development, trade and economic transactions in the market context. This aspect of the sense of belonging, which is manifested by the possibility of being a **free** element of a group of **equal** subjects, has, on the one hand, helped to create wealth and, on the other hand, facilitated access to the fairest possible distribution of its fruits. As a **political objective**, built around the idea of the well-being of each and every person, social cohesion becomes an international challenge within the framework of a global economy.

The challenge is to find out if the forces leading to globalisation contribute or not to consolidating social cohesion within nations. It is too early to tell.

Firstly, because globalisation is still perceived as a factor for insecurity in that, through its excessive support of neo-liberal values, it destabilises the reference points and institutions which guarantee social cohesion. It also accentuates poverty and social divisions.

Next, because the capacity of states to master societal questions of a global range is brought into question as their role is limited to their territorial space. With the "de-territorialisation" of capital, any internal decision is subject to external interests and influences. This calls into question the **legitimacy of the state**, which used to stem from the fact that decision-makers and citizens living in a territory (national, regional or local) formed a united whole. In addition to this, the massive migratory movements of poor people are creating pressures at Europe's borders. In this context, social cohesion is a concept that may "balance" the "opening up" of the economy by seeking a certain

[4] Colombo, Arrigo, "Il nuovo senso dell'utopia, La costruzione della società di giustizia, Il movimento per la società di giustizia e per la speranza".University of Lecce, Interdepartmental Centre for Research on Utopia (http://www.we-are-church.org/it/attual/Colombo.societ%E0.giustizia.htm).

[5] G. Sartori, *Pluralismo, multiculturalismo ed estranei. Saggio sulla società multietnica*, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, Milan 2002.

amount of political "closure" or control[5]. It puts back on the agenda the mediation necessary between the individual, who is the focus of liberal theory, and equity, the hallmark of democracy. It can contribute to the formulation of new relationships of responsibility between citizens themselves and between citizens and public bodies[6].

The search for social cohesion thus reflects the concerns of the Council of Europe: through its commitment to upholding the rule of law, human rights and democracy, the Council of Europe has always contributed to creating common standards in this area, which are shared by the governments and citizens of Europe. Today, more than ever, in the face of globalisation, it is vital to recognise the need to identify with a geographical unit that shares such a concept of social cohesion. The development of social cohesion, the principles of which are shared by the Council of Europe member states, is thus becoming a priority political objective.

3. *Purpose of the Guide to the development of social cohesion indicators*

In the context of this crucial transition, the Social Cohesion Development Division of the Council of Europe wanted, with the support of the member states' governments, to design and produce a guide for the analysis of social cohesion in the light of the Council of Europe's Strategy for Social Cohesion, which was approved by the Committee of Ministers in 2000 and revised in 2003[7]. The Strategy is in the Organisation's tradition of affirming that equity and non-discrimination in access to rights are the basic principles for ensuring dignity, autonomy and the participation of individuals in the building of a *"just society"*.

This Guide has three objectives:

- to serve as a **frame of reference** that can become a joint instrument providing pointers for the political choices of the various private and public players and social bodies;
- to make it easier to **combine an understanding of the general trends and a knowledge of the areas and social groups that are the subject of political action**;
- to put in place **relevant instruments that can be adapted to different contexts and facilitate the implementation of action plans to assess social cohesion**.

The Guide incorporates numerous questions that can help its users search for information and select the most appropriate indicators for responding to the specific needs of the players and bodies concerned. It has been subject to much partial testing by government services: the findings of these exercises are included in parts IV and V of the Guide.

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[5] Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation*. Details at http://www.theglobalsite.ac.uk/review/107jahn.htm.

[6] See in this connection the idea of the new social pact proposed by Habermas. Ibid.

[7] Full text of the revised strategy can be consulted at : www…

4. *Method of analysis*

"Measuring" social cohesion is in itself an extremely complex exercise. Social cohesion is first and foremost a "qualitative" concept and reflects the consistency and quality of the social and institutional bonds necessary to ensure the well-being of everyone. In order to tackle such a complex task, the Guide distinguishes between two different assessment stages:

- firstly, the establishment of a **standard definition** in which the idea of social cohesion selected corresponds to the requirements of a general political goal (in our case, the democratic stability of modern societies);
- secondly, the **descriptive stage,** during which there is discussion of the various components and areas of society that contribute or do not contribute to social cohesion and on which it is necessary to base political action.

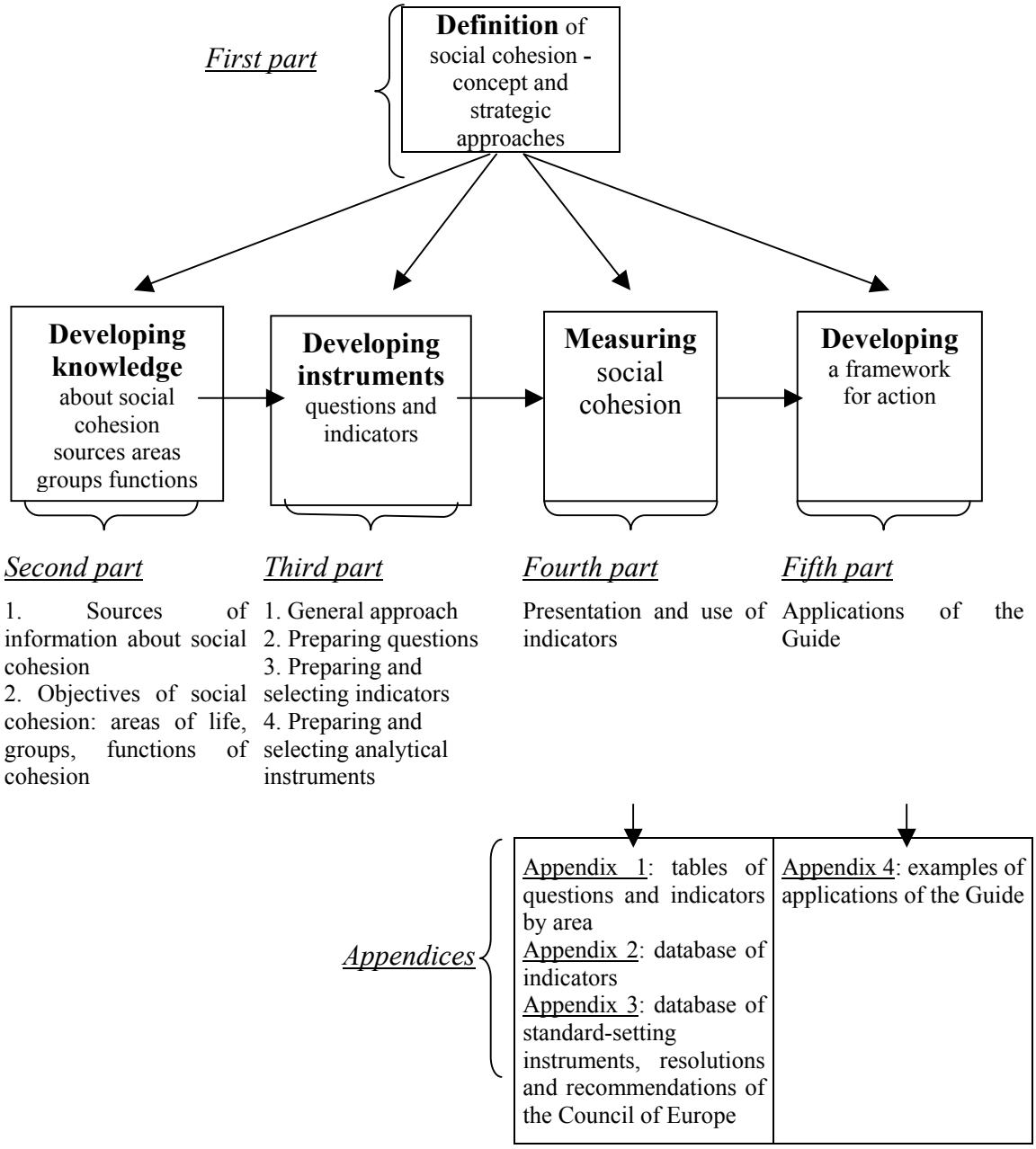
A standard definition takes account of the **way** in which the various social players interact and whether or not they succeed in ensuring everyone's well-being in the context of the rule of law. Such a definition, which places more emphasis on the ***spirit*** of the institutions, intervention policies and collective and individual choices, differs from a descriptive definition of social cohesion.

The standard definition thus reflects the ***understanding*** that we (governments, decision-makers, players, etc) have of society as a whole and of how to guide it in the light of democratic achievements in terms of human rights. The descriptive stage reflects the level of ***knowledge*** we have of each of the component elements of society on which it is necessary to act. While the standard definition refers to the *ideal situation* and sets out *the objective to be achieved*, the descriptions of the areas and components correspond to the level of knowledge each society attains through the political choices made in the search for social cohesion.

5. *Layout of the Guide*

The first part of the Guide is mainly devoted to understanding the need for cohesion appropriate to a modern society (one that is constantly modernising itself) and aims to provide a **standard definition** for subsequent use as a general benchmark. Secondly, it highlights the **political choices** made when one approach is preferred to another as a means of promoting social cohesion. On the basis of a general framework for the processes and living spaces that ensure the cohesion of a modern society, it will be possible to comprehend the strategic approaches to social cohesion, starting with the simplest one (interpreting cohesion on the basis of a single significant area) and proceeding to the most complex one (promoting cohesion on the basis of different activities of general interest, their interrelations and their impact in and on society as a whole).

On the basis of the first part, the questions dealt with in the Guide are in the following logical order:



The appendices represent the "practical" part of the Guide and are designed to facilitate the construction of a system of indicators by the various operators concerned and perhaps to guide them as they select and apply priorities.

6. *Results expected*

The Council of Europe's main purpose in producing this Guide is to contribute to the establishment of a common frame of reference for member States. It also wishes to foster knowledge of social cohesion on the basis of the choices made by the various players or institutions in the exercise of their social function.

This Guide does not therefore claim to be exhaustive or definitive but merely offers a frame of reference for devising a strategy for a cohesive society and therefore for defining the areas where action is required and existing knowledge needs to be further developed .

With due regard for the diversity of approaches to social cohesion, the various players/authorities/organisations will each find certain questions and indicators among the ones proposed that, in addition to those already at their disposal, may help them to improve their understanding of their role in a general context and assess the contribution of the action they take.

The ***Social Cohesion Development Division*** thus regards this Guide as a means of sharing experience and fostering discussion on the concepts and practices between the players concerned with social cohesion. Also, that its application should contribute to a strengthening of political support for social cohesion and of everyone's responsibilities in the face of the challenges a modern, cohesive society poses. It should also serve to check that the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society are correctly taken into account.

First part

DEFINING SOCIAL COHESION
Elements of a conceptual approach

CHAPTER 1
CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL COHESION

There are many different *conceptual* approaches to social cohesion. They vary according to period, culture and the prevailing political ideas and differ from one another mainly in terms of the role of the players involved, the areas of life or groups concerned and, finally, to the methods they employ to foster this cohesion.

The search for a *clear and coherent concept* of social cohesion reflects a need specific to a modernised society in which the standards co-ordinating individual and collective action are the subject of *complex legitimisation procedures*. The changes that continually occur in such an open and plural society must, in turn, be the subject of in-depth analysis to ensure they do not lead to "cohesion crises" or, indeed, forms of cohesion that are weaker because they are based on exclusion rather than the consensual inclusion of individuals and groups. The concept of social cohesion sought should respond to all these requirements at the same time.

Social cohesion thus proves to be a primarily *political concept*, and one that is fundamental for putting into perspective the "strategy" that underpins any modern society that considers itself legitimate and sustainable.

In order to help explain the issue, Chapter 1 of the Guide will take three groups of common definitions and systematically compare and contrast them with the idea of social cohesion based on the principles of the Council of Europe (the rule of law and its legitimisation through the full range of human rights and democracy as a collective and participatory exercise) and on the strategy for a "modern and sustainable society" that emerges as a result. While the usual methods often take account only of one or other aspect of a cohesive society, the standard definition proposed by the Council of Europe draws on them and incorporates them in a dynamic and integrated approach that makes it possible to grasp complex situations.

1. *Proposal for a* standard definition *based on the principles of the Council of Europe*

The Guide proposes defining the social cohesion of a modern society as ***all the relationships and bonds that help to strengthen society's ability to secure the long-term well-being of all its members, including equitable access to available resources, respect for human dignity with due regard for diversity, personal and collective autonomy and responsible participation .***

This definition, which implies social commitment to reduce disparities to a minimum and avoid polarisation, is based on the four principles that are essential for the functioning of societies that recognise human rights and democracy as underpinning their organisation: fair access, individual (and collective) dignity, the autonomy of the individual and participation in community life. These principles determine the **"quality"** of the bonds between individuals and between them and the community to which they belong.

In this context, social cohesion is not, as some would maintain, a "nostalgic" concept aimed at restoring a "lost social harmony"[8], but a highly topical one that encompasses key aspects of a political strategy for a modern society based on the recognition of rights: sustainability and freedom in equity, coexistence in diversity, an active concern for human dignity, autonomy and the freedom to map out the present and the future both as an individual and as a community.

2. *Other definitions of social cohesion: analysis of contributions and their limitations*

a –*The* etymological sense *of cohesion*

In its original etymological sense, cohesion is defined as the characteristic of a group all of whose parts are closely united. Just as in biology a living organism's cohesion results from the links between its elementary parts (the molecules), social cohesion results from links between individuals and bodies. Cohesion is the opposite of disintegration or division. The key words here are **links** and **unity**.

This approach, taken literally, risks hiding the fact that several types of link, unity and cohesion are possible between the elements of a social system and that, far from being something that exists naturally, the cohesion of a society depends on the elements that come into play and the specific types of process that establish themselves between those elements and with society as a whole.

Emile Durkheim was aware of this complexity in his research on the elements that *hold together* a complex society. After identifying in "shared loyalties and solidarity" the key factors of social cohesion, the sociologist also distinguished ***mechanical solidarity***, which is based on the *traditional* uniformity of collective values and beliefs, from ***organic solidarity***, which is the result of *modern* relationships between individuals who are able to work together while developing an autonomous and even critical personality with respect to tradition.

In the light of this preliminary consideration, one can readily appreciate partial contributions, and even certain definitions of social cohesion, based on community bonds, the sharing of values, a sense of belonging and the ability to work together.

b - *Definitions based on* community bonds

The approach based on community bonds more often than not produces the following type of definition:

"[Social cohesion is]… the promotion of stable, co-operative and **sustainable communities** " (Matarasso & Shell,1998[9])

[8] Alaluf, Mateo, 1999, op.cit

[9] Matarasso, F. and Chell, J., 1998, *Vital signs: mapping community arts in Belfast*, Comedia, Stroud, Gloucestershire, UK.

With respect to the definition based on the principles of the Council of Europe, those who put forward this type of definition forget to indicate the **specific quality of the bonds of** solidarity that will become established in a cohesive society in the modern sense of the term. Nor do they give any indication of what characterises the stability, co-operation and sustainability of a modern society in the sense of a **society of individuals** (N. Elias).

c - *Definitions based on shared* values *and* a sense of belonging

The approach based on shared values and a sense of belonging produces the following types of definition:

- "Social cohesion is the ongoing process of developing a community of **shared** values, **shared** challenges and **equal** opportunities based on a sense of hope, trust and **reciprocity** " (social cohesion network, cited by Stanley, 2001[10]).
- "Social cohesion involves building **shared** values and **communities of interpretation**, reducing disparities in wealth and income, and generally enabling people to have a sense that they are engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges, and that they are members of the same community." (Rossel, 1995, quoted in Omariba, 2001[11] and Judith Maxwell, quoted by Stanley, 2001[12]).
- "…a society which offers opportunities to all its members **within a framework of accepted values and institutions** ." (Dahrendorf et al, 1995).
- "Social cohesion focuses on **whole** communities, on participation and governance, as well as on the needs of those who are excluded" (Miller, 1998[13]).

These concepts are to be found in the official definitions adopted by governments. For example, the French government's National Planning Commission (1997) considers that social cohesion "is a set of social processes that help instil in individuals the sense of **belonging to the same community** and the feeling that they are recognised as members of that community" (cf. Jenson, 1998, 5[14]).

The advocates of this type of definition seem to forget what J. Rawls called **"the fact of pluralism"**, ie the fact that modern societies are composed of individuals who are autonomous in their choices of lifestyle. In proceeding on the basis that cohesion involves belonging to a "community of values", there is, however, a risk of focusing attention on the alleged *unity* to the detriment of the *agreement process*, which is the

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[10] Stanley, D., 2001, *Holding the centre: what we know about social cohesion*, Strategic Research and Analysis and the Social Cohesion Network, (http://www.criteres.umontreal.ca/Stanley-communication-e.pdf)
[11] Omariba, W., 2002, *Social cohesion in Europe: a bibliography*, (http://www.ssc.uwo.ca/sociology/ftsc/Bibliography%20of%20Papers%20on%20Social%20Cohesion%20in%20Europe.PDF).
[12] Stanley, D., 2001, op.cit.
[13] Miller, C., *Managing for social cohesion*, Office for Public Management Discussion Paper, 1998, (http://www.opm.co.uk/download/soc-ex1.pdf)
[14] Jenson, Jane, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research*, Ottawa, 1998.

only way to ensure the peaceful coexistence and even interaction of different world views in accordance with rules that are legitimate because they are *acceptable* to all concerned. No indication is given of the elements (such as the exercise of rights and participation) that make such behaviour and the consensus on fundamental values possible.

d - *Definitions based on* the ability to work together

The approach based on the ability of the members of society to work together produces a different type of definition of cohesion:

- "Social cohesion is a state of affairs in which a group of people (delineated by a geographical region, like a country) demonstrate an aptitude for collaboration that produces a climate for change." (Ritzen et al, 2000[15]).
- "Social cohesion is the extent to which people respond collectively to achieve their valued outcomes and to deal with the economic, social, political or environmental stresses (positive or negative) that affect them." (Reimer et al,[16]).

Some public bodies have adopted similar definitions. For example, the Canadian Senate considers that "social cohesion is defined as the capacity of citizens living under different social or economic circumstances to live together in harmony, with a **sense of mutual commitment**" (cf. Dragojević, 2001)[17].

Compared with the aforementioned approaches, this takes account from the outset of the plurality of human beings and its implications for collective responsibility as a structural element of any cohesive society. However, it considers the ability to work together without apparently giving any thought to the *conditions* that make this ability *possible.* In particular, it disregards the disparities that may constitute obstacles to incorporating individual autonomy in a collective approach, without considering the question of fair access to (economic, social, cultural and political) resources as one of the key elements that give meaning to freedom and thus form the basis of the cohesion of a modern society.

3. Justification for a standard definition

The definitions that have just been analysed come closer to a "mechanical" conception of social cohesion. They tend to leave aside the key question of the *plurality* of conditions, interests and identities as well as any *process* enabling autonomous and different individuals to work together. "Institutionalising" this type definition may in

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[15] Ritzen, J., Easterly, W., Woolcock, M., 2000, *'On "good" politicians and "bad" policies: social cohesion, institutions and growth'*, (http://wbln0018.worldbank.org/Research/workpapers.nsf/568b4463f7c6e237852567e500514be6/ecf6a93d3c4126fe8525695f006fb0ef/$FILE/wps2448.pdf)

[16] Reimer, B., Wilkinson, D., Woodrow, A., 'Social cohesion in rural Canada: a book outline and notes', 2002, (http://alcor.concordia.ca/~reimer/files/socobook4.pdf)

[17] Dragojević, S., *Social cohesion and culture: contrasting some European and Canadian approaches and experiences*, Culturelink review, no. 33/April 2001 (http://www.culturelink.org/review/33/cl33dos.html).

theory lead to social cohesion being regarded as "the absence of differences" and, indeed, to a disregard both for conflicts and for ways of settling them as part of the consensus-forging process. These definitions are, moreover, based on bonds that appear "natural", while in our societies social cohesion – a concept that covers a complex set of social relations – involves processes of "exposure" to a variety of different, and even contradictory, interests, views and insights.

In short, **in societies characterised by a *plurality* of interests and identities, cohesion mainly results from the ability to develop non-violent consensual processes to resolve any *conflict*, with regard either to *distribution* (the allocation of resources and the means of using them autonomously) or to the question of *identity* (the recognition of dignity in the various lifestyle choices and traditions and in the context of equitable access to rights**).

Social cohesion is thus not a "scientific" or technical concept. Rather, it results from "interpretative" exercises that the institutional players and autonomous individuals carry out as they shoulder their collective responsibilities in order to resolve conflicts. Rather than a concept, social cohesion should therefore take the form of a **frame of reference** that institutions and active citizens adopt and renew to provide themselves in turn with shared and relevant political objectives that prevent social conflictuality and ensure the democratic stability of society as a whole. **More than the sharing of identical values, social cohesion thus focuses on the "sharing of the political objective of achieving equity" – where equity must also be understood as the "equity of capabilities"** (Sen) **necessary to develop as an individual in the context of existing social relationships.**

In modern democratic societies, **the political objective shared by all is that of the creation of an institutional and political environment appropriate to the development of an autonomous life for everyone**. Individual autonomy is reflected in social cohesion when the fair and non-discriminatory sharing of resources, goods and services as well as the recognition of the dignity and skills of each individual are guaranteed by society, which gains legitimacy as a result.

The conditions needed for such a guarantee have been created in the West by states subject to the rule of law: citizen participation and the democratic approach to the resolution of conflicts have been the mechanisms whereby the law has progressed from being legally binding to being legitimate, and formal rights have been given more and more substance and been differentiated according to the groups concerned (women, children, migrants, minorities, etc). On the other hand, in the former communist countries, where *equality* was not subject to a societal consensus but, rather, an imposed system that refused to acknowledge any individual effort, social cohesion risked being rejected when there was a change of regime and only re-entering the citizens' lives in the form of "nostalgia for the past". This nostalgia was fuelled in turn by the major sacrifices generally demanded by the "transition".

Social cohesion is therefore not a "natural" condition in modern societies but results from "interrelations" between free individuals and private and public institutions within a framework of standards and laws recognised as legitimate by the community. The standard definition proposed in this Guide takes account of precisely this framework,

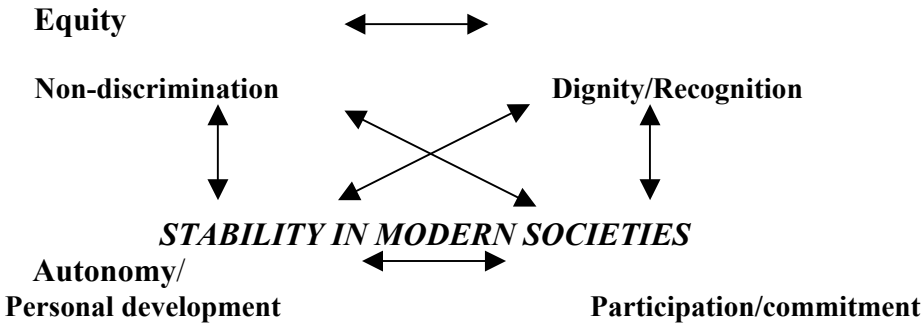
which is highly appropriate in this **"age of rights"**[18]. There is a fundamental societal consensus on this standard definition in the democratic countries that have institutionalised human rights. By contrast, the consensus must be further developed when it comes to *putting the concept into practice* and *evaluating* the results. The consensus sometimes depends too much on the political climate, the availability of resources and the criteria adopted for their allocation to the various priorities chosen.

Thus, for example, a country or group of countries (such as the European Union) can choose to define social cohesion by reference to respect for one of the fundamental rights, such as access to employment. This political choice becomes legitimate to the extent that it corresponds to a widely felt need and meets with a response in the community. With respect to the standard definition proposed in this Guide, such a choice may be regarded as a contribution to social cohesion insofar as, in the objective of attaining full employment, the criteria of equity, dignity and participation are taken into account, together with that of personal autonomy.

In other cases, a municipality may, for example, decide that social cohesion is first and foremost reflected in the satisfactory provision of services for the elderly or young children. Moreover, by including these "partial" responses in the frame of reference, the same municipality could determine that, in addition to launching policies aimed at the sections of the population that are most vulnerable in terms of their age, it is indispensable to take account of any social divide in order to ensure social cohesion.

4. Conclusions

The standard definition thus becomes a kind of "gauge" for all political measures, used to assess their contribution to social cohesion - irrespective of the institution using the definition and the specific area of intervention. The four elements represent the inseparable dimensions of "citizen well-being" and the conditions for the peaceful resolution of societal conflicts.



The main question we have attempted to answer is: **what type of social cohesion does a modern society need?** The reply focuses on the development of "organic cohesion", which must be fostered through the participation of everyone in attributing "substance" to the rights of each person. Such a construct can only be based on the substantial capital of collective learning accumulated and the methodological and political work done by our societies in the course of their modern history. For example, the analysis

[18] N. Bobbio, *The Age of Rights (L'età dei diritti)*, Polity Press, 1996.

carried out at the Council of Europe on the application of human rights, with the many recommendations subsequently made - an analysis naturally involving other conclusions drawn on the basis of different frames of reference and civic practices - is of inestimable value for proposing the parameters for understanding and measuring social cohesion in the various contexts[19].

The *second part* of the Guide will focus in particular on the **sources of knowledge** that social cohesion needs in order to be actively promoted.

[19] The body of collective work done at the Council of Europe has been used to draw up proposals for indicators in various areas of social cohesion. See appendix to the Guide.

CHAPTER 2
STRATEGIC APPROACHES TO SOCIAL COHESION

The fact that the establishment of lasting social cohesion presupposes a climate of equity in which to ensure respect for the dignity and autonomy of individuals and their participation does not mean *ipso facto* that modern societies can or have the necessary resources to satisfy such a demand *automatically*. Experience of past and present distribution conflicts, with the inequalities, marginalisation and collective insecurity that accompany them, shows precisely the opposite: modern cohesion must be **actively fostered** by those concerned, since the absence of such efforts will lead sooner or later to the destabilisation of society.

These active efforts, which involve society in all its complexity, call for a **preliminary and ongoing examination** of the processes that enable a modern society to exist, to reproduce itself and to deal with the changing risks resulting from a modernisation process that is never complete.

This examination, which must involve public institutions, the markets, the private / family sphere and all organisations of civil society, is necessary to make the conceptual frame of reference that has just been presented operational. It should make it possible to turn this into a practical political tool with respect to the many different **factors, players, levels and areas** that contribute in practice to social cohesion.

To this end, it will be possible to assess the differences in scale and depth between several **approaches** and **cohesion strategies** (combating exclusion, the promotion of social and territorial integration, creation of social capital, access to rights, consideration of social interaction and its development, etc). The political choices implied by these strategies will thus be highlighted in order to define what constitutes the development of social cohesion.

The ***Strategy for Social Cohesion*** adopted by the Council of Europe will then be presented as an approach capable of integrating the many different components of social cohesion, by emphasising their interaction and the responsibilities of the subjects concerned in the frame of reference adopted. The benefits of this strategy when it comes to understanding the present and future aspects of cohesion in Europe will also be set out.

1. *Spheres of modern life and development of social cohesion*[20]

The societies in which we are living deserve to be called *modern* because, unlike other forms of societal organisation, they are not based on models of lifestyles and knowledge that gain their legitimacy from *tradition*. Social relations, knowledge and standards gain

[20] For this reconstruction of modern societies, cf. J. Habermas, Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1981 ; for the notion of law as a factor making for a balance between the various spheres of life and, therefore, a creator of civic solidarity among the members of democratic societies via access to rights, cf. J. Habermas, Die Einbeziehung des Anderen, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1996.

respect through complex **legitimisation processes** that, in principle, must be open to criticism and allow for the reasonable consideration of the interests of everyone concerned. The conflicts associated with this pluralism and the search for stability and security have led modern societies to organise the actions of their members into different **spheres of life,** each governed by regulations that are rational in the light of the aims pursued. Modernised societies thus distinguish between[21]:

- the **private** and **public areas** of life, as places of individualisation/socialisation and association, where behaviour patterns become accepted by virtue of an *agreement* among those concerned ;
- the **markets**, which are responsible for regulating economic and monetary interaction through the *price system*;
- the **public authorities**, which are charged with ensuring legal stability and social order through the *system of positive law*.

Social cohesion resulting from *balanced communication* between the aforementioned spheres and is the result of a consensus between the various forms of regulatory provisions.

The development of social cohesion is thus always linked to politico-economic processes and coincides with the **ongoing democratisation of the public authorities and the economy**, ie the continuous influence exerted by the public and private spheres on the government and the markets through respect for human rights. The divisions that can open up in trying to preserve such a fragile balance will therefore be dealt with in accordance with an ethic of joint responsibility and reasonable restrictions on sectoral interests: a genuine **public ethic** that will continue to be necessary as the modernisation of society progresses.

It would seem that it is the assumption of responsibility for dealing with this complexity and conducting the active examination it requires in order to become operational that enables modern societies to become cohesive. As a framework for the sound health of society, both as a whole and in its various parts, it thus constitutes a valid yardstick for **comparing the different approaches** set up to permit the active promotion of social cohesion.

2. *Levels of analysis: comparison of social cohesion approaches and strategies*

The fact that, with respect to social cohesion and its development, the *shared meaning* only partially corresponds to the framework for interaction that has just been outlined is not very surprising. It is difficult, especially where structural changes are involved, to ignore the given context in order to imagine alternative ways of shaping society as a

[21] The importance of taking into account these spheres of social cohesion was already recognized in 1998 by the Council of Europe in its project on Human dignity and social exclusion directed by Katherine Duffy. In this report social exclusion is defined in relation to a social model based on three dimensions of integration: the state, the markets (particularly work) and civil society (particularly family and personal networks and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The report nonetheless concentrates results on the evolution of the state. Council of Europe, Opportunity and risk: trends of social exclusion in Europe. Project on Human dignity and social exclusion, directed by Katherine Duffy, Strasbourg, April 1998.

whole, including the relations between the different areas of life. What is perhaps more striking is that social cohesion development policies do not necessarily correspond to this framework either. These policies, which sometimes themselves derive from conflicts between public authorities, markets and society, are always the **result of a choice**: diverse interests and the resulting political opportunities, and the knowledge and financial resources available at a given moment, are all factors that mean that the players assume responsibility for certain aspects only.

As in the case of the health of an individual, where the level of diagnosis and treatment may vary according to the different intentions and the resources available, the development of social cohesion may use approaches and strategies, whether sectoral or systematic, that are based mainly on the treatment of symptoms (cf. **A - *Negative* approach**) or those geared to *sound health* or all the conditions that determine it (cf. **B – *Positive* approach**). These differences, which also emerge when it comes to risk assessment, the adoption of priorities and concern for durability, are very instructive and an analysis of them may gradually lead to the development of a social cohesion strategy more appropriate for dealing with the complexity of modern society and its changing challenges.

2.1 *The negative approach*

This approach focuses on the *negative* features judged responsible for inadequate social cohesion rather than on all the processes that establish and reproduce bonds in our societies. These features thus become symptoms or "alert" or "alarm" indicators of the state of health of society. In turn, the picture of society's state of health corresponds to its collective awareness of its *normal state* or even of the standards of living generally considered acceptable and desirable.

Starting from these premises, this approach is liable to result in limited conceptions that focus only on one aspect or a group of aspects, often the most visible ones (**social exclusion/inclusion approach**). In particular, the absence of any in-depth questioning of the structural and evolutive processes that produce these "pathologies" limits the collective search for other forms of society and, in general, restricts the development of cohesion based on the *positive* resources that a society possesses.

Given that the societies of western countries are based on employment - indeed full employment - it is not surprising that the **"alert"** indicators they have developed mainly relate to unemployment and poverty, to the number of people excluded from employment, to the imbalances between regions or to any other factors that make a society **dysfunctional with regard to work, which is an excellent factor of integration**. Under an entirely analogous approach, an attempt to preserve the institutional form of these societies – ie the democratic law-based state - produces **"alarm"** indicators that record reductions in freedoms and rights, increases in violence, conflicts, intolerance and racism, etc where a **deterioration in community life** as such is taken into account.

In general, the member states of the **European Union** fit into such a framework. Following the Lisbon European Council meeting (March 2000), these countries set up the Social Protection Committee, whose remit is to develop "common indicators".

While it has mainly worked on the indicators of poverty and social exclusion, the indicators produced can definitely be described as "alert" signals[22]. Various areas of application have been considered: the Union as such (with 10 primary indicators[23] and 8 secondary ones proposed[24]) in the pursuit of a commitment shared by all the countries, both individually and collectively, with the aim of enabling everyone to deal with the aspects specific to them according to their resources and abilities.

The "alarm" indicators aimed at identifying the symptoms of the "pathologies of society" also serve as a common frame of reference for more heterogeneous group of countries. Several indicators proposed by the **OECD**[25] to provide a comparative overview of developed societies are of this type.

In the two cases of the European Union and the OECD, the recourse to these indicators is justified by the search for a **lowest common denominator** to enable comparisons between countries to be made in spite of the difficulty that a common definition of social cohesion often involves[26].

It must be borne in mind, however, that the simple *act of pointing out* an alarming situation is not in itself a *basis for action*. While emphasising the need for intervention, it does not clearly indicate the approach or the actual measures to be adopted. It is in fact more a basic diagnosis: the results of the indicators should serve as a pointer for a suitable policy, or even the sharing of responsibilities between the various players. As regards unemployment and poverty, which are the focus of the strategies mentioned, an analysis of the *nature* of these two phenomena could lead to a sustainable policy without any undesirable effects on social cohesion.

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[22] European Union, Social Protection Committee, Report on Indicators in the field of poverty and social exclusion, October 2001.

[23] These are: 1. Low income rate after transfers with low-income threshold set at 60% of median income (with breakdowns by gender, age, most frequent activity status, household type and tenure status; as illustrative examples, the values for typical households); 2. Distribution of income (income quintile ratio); 3. Persistence of low income; 4. Median low income gap; 5. Regional cohesion; 6. Long term unemployment rate; 7. People living in jobless households; 8. Early school leavers not in further education or training; 9. Life expectancy at birth; 10. Self perceived health status.

[24] These are: 11. dispersion around the 60% median low income threshold; 12. Low income rate anchored at a point in time; 13. Low income rate before transfers; 14. Distribution of income (Gini coefficient); 15. Persistence of low income (based on 50% of median income); 16. Long term unemployment share; 17. Very long term unemployment rate; 18. Persons with low educational attainment

[25] The 16 social cohesion indicators proposed by the OECD are: 1. Divorce rate; 2. Fertility rates; 3. Incidence of lone parent families; 4. Group membership; 5. Election participation rates ; 6. Foreign-born population; 7. Mixed marriages; 8. Asylum-seekers; 9. Suicide rates; 10. Age of women at first childbirth; 11. Working mothers with children; 12. Crime rates; 13. Death rates from drug usage; 14. Work stoppages; 15. People in correctional facilities; 16. Acquisition of nationality. Cf. OECD, DEELSA/ELSA, Social Indicators: A Proposed Framework and Structure, October 1999.

[26] "Social cohesion is often identified as an over-arching objective of the social policies of countries, but its definition is rarely attempted and there is no cross-country agreement on what precisely it means. However, it is possible to identify various pathologies which have been mentioned as causes of the lack of social cohesion, which do have resonance as objectives of social policy, albeit not ones where cause-and-effect of social policies is straightforward. This is true, for example of crime rates, industrial strikes and family stability." – Source: Society at a Glance, OECD. Is should also be noted that the OECD proposes other indicators that form part of a positive view of social cohesion.

The fact of regarding a lack of cohesion as equivalent simply to **social exclusion**[27] shows, for example, the consequences of an approach targeting negative factors, based on a diagnosis which could be inadequate. More often than not, **social inclusion strategies** are geared only to *remedial action* aimed at integrating the excluded into the existing labour market or into the existing development frameworks. This could well create jobs or even bring about a certain improvement in living conditions, although it would entail risks for the social cohesion of the community as a whole. Like any policy based too much on "target groups", such an approach risks accepting exclusion as a fact of life and not as the outcome of social processes, ie the result of a too **unequal sharing of wealth** for which society as a whole is responsible.

At the same time, any assessment of failures with regard to universal access to rights (deficiencies in the legislation, neglect of the most sensitive or vulnerable groups, absence of supervision and transparency of the authorities, etc) should always take account of the structural conditions that ensure the *ability* of a society to secure its cohesion.

This approach would seem to be gaining in importance for western countries and resulting in greater thought being given to the changes to which our nationally controlled wage-earning societies, with a heavy emphasis on state intervention, are exposed by the post-Ford model and globalisation. In addition, it appears to be increasingly relevant for the countries outside the European Union, which face mass poverty, in the light of which the negative indicators lose their significance as a measure of *symptoms to be cured*. When the social fabric is affected, as is the case, by structural vulnerability, a collective strategy will be necessary to rebalance the relationships between the various spheres of life and the institutions of society in all its complexity.

[27] In the 1960s, the term "exclusion" related to the notion of poverty. In 1974, Renoir showed in his book *Les exclus* that exclusion was not specific to poor people. However, it was not until the 1990s that the term made a comeback after being adopted by the EU, which made combating exclusion and poverty one of its priorities, especially in the Social Title of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the European Employment Pact. There is nevertheless no single definition of exclusion as it has many different facets. Closely connected concepts are often used to explain the same phenomena: social vulnerability, poverty, insecurity, stigmatisation, discrimination or social marginalisation. A distinction is thus drawn between different forms of exclusion: economic (with respect to consumption, employment and services); social (with respect to housing and social protection); cultural (failure at school, illiteracy, contempt for a sense of belonging and for information); physical (alcoholism, physical disability); and legal (lack of access to the justice system, lack of papers, etc).

2.2 *The positive approach*

Moving from a "negative approach" to a "positive approach" is a crucial step for the active development of social cohesion. It is not a question of making sure that no one is excluded or unemployed but of ensuring that society as a whole has the *ability* to provide all its members with access to a reasonable or even good quality of life. Accordingly, the central issue is to give appropriate form and substance to aspirations for a *life of quality*.

Different levels and approaches are also possible here. With respect to the picture sketched of modern societies, it is helpful to try to rank the various social cohesion strategies in terms of depth, breadth and complexity. For example, the strategies based on living conditions (ie employment, health, income, etc) that **visibly** contribute to the creation of a cohesive society could first of all be distinguished from strategies that, by contrast, take account of the almost **invisible** basic components of cohesion (bonds, values, etc).

In addition, an attempt will be made to identify several levels at which it is possible to take account of the two aspects, with examples of corresponding cohesion strategies: a *general* consideration either of the visible effects of cohesion (cf. **a - *territorial cohesion* approach**) or of its positive, invisible components (cf. **b - *social capital* approach**); or else a *more systematic consideration* either of the interaction between the components and of their specific quality (cf. **c - *quality of life* approach**) or of the joint responsibilities of the various players in the establishment of a durable social balance (cf. **d – *access to rights* approach**).

This comparison will lead to us to propose the ***Strategy for Social Cohesion*** put forward by the **Council of Europe** as the one that, on the basis of the rule of law/democracy/human rights triad, provides the most elements for understanding and addressing the changes in our societies while safeguarding their fundamental principles.

a – Territorial cohesion *approach*

This approach, which is now employed by the European Union following its institutionalisation by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (cf. Articles 158 to 162), is based on the principle of "territorial" solidarity between the EU member states and regions. Its aim is the balanced development of EU territory, a reduction in the structural gaps between the regions of the EU and the promotion of genuinely equal opportunities for individuals, irrespective of where they live.

In this approach, the question of choosing a relevant operational level (the reference territory) arises in the context of a systemic approach that includes an analysis of the specific characteristics of the territories chosen[28]. In particular, the proclamation of territorial solidarity in the European Union seeks to reduce the inter- and intra-regional development disparities. The reorganisation of EU territory is pursued in order to bring about more balanced and sustainable polycentric development. In this connection, particular attention is paid to the regions suffering from a permanent geographical

[28] See, for example, http://www.pace-rural.org/avenir/EN/seminars/ffPrelimPh.htm.

disadvantage (islands, mountainous areas, region with a low population density), to the most outlying regions and to certain regions with particular characteristics (rural, periurban, transfrontier).

Although this approach covers very different problems (cohesion around a territorial identity, cohesion through a reduction in differentials, cohesion through the development of co-operative activities, etc), the resulting indicators by zone or territory more often than not lead one to compare the situations in terms of such variables as per capita income (in relation to the EU average) and population density, which also serve as reference values for the distribution of EU development aid. Taking account of the ***regional non-disparity of the inhabitants in terms of their well-being*** is in itself a necessary step for analysing and fostering social cohesion. Nevertheless, focusing on certain aspects of the complex social situation sometimes entails the risk of making the approach inadequate, especially when such questions as "quality" with regard to access to social rights (ie services for individuals, which tend to follow the distribution of the population) remain crucial to the success of a policy of non-discrimination.

b – Social capital *approach*

The most common definition of social capital refers to the stock of mutual trust and shared standards and values, in short to all the *networks of relationships* that people build to resolve joint problems, obtain collective benefits (neighbourhood networks, co-operatives, clubs, etc) or exercise a certain amount of control over the environment. Social capital is thus composed of factors which are hardly visible or may even be *invisible*, and are to be found in any group (institutions, social groups, communities) with shared goals. They are therefore factors that facilitate the co-ordination and co-operation of the various people concerned[29] and make the group more efficient. Moreover, manifestations of social capital can be identified in all societies, even where inequality of access to goods and resources is glaringly obvious.

At the same time, there are different types of *indicators* of social capital. Most of them focus on assessing networks and forms of association, while others, by employing a more systemic approach, propose indicators that focus on the institutions, rights and

[29] For one of the most interesting uses of the concept of social capital, cf. Putnam, Robert D. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton University Press, 1993); Portes, A. and Landoult, "Downside of Social Capital" in *The American Prospect*, No. 26 (May/June 1996), 18-21 ; Putnam, Robert D. "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life" in *The American Prospect*, No. 13 (Spring 1993). For an overview of the possibilities provided by this concept, see the *Report of Findings from the Interdepartmental Workshop on Social Capital* (19 June 2003) drawn up in the context of the Policy Research Initiative launched by the Canadian Federal Government (http://policyresearch.gc.ca/page.asp?pagenm=socap).

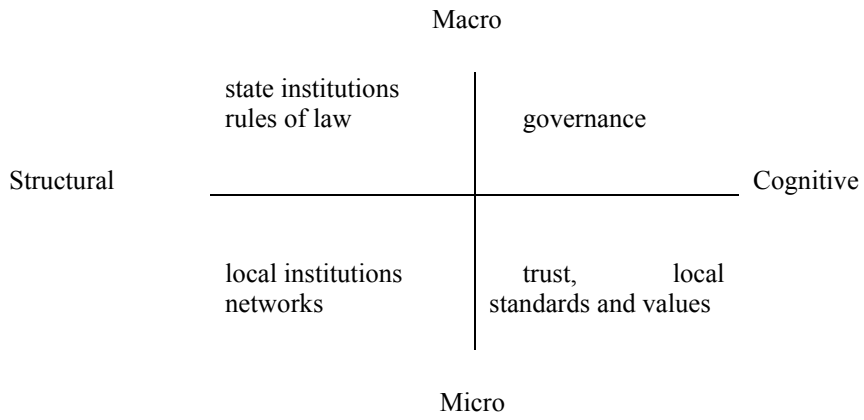
social participation. Such a set of indicators is provided, for example, by the ***IAOS*** (*International Association for Official Statistics*) section of the *ISI* (*International Statistical Institute*) in Voorburg (Netherlands)[30]

Political institutions	political rights corruption freedom of the press
Human rights	civil liberties
Social participation	distribution of daily newspapers TV sets Internet connections

For its part, the ***World Bank*** launched the *Social Capital Initiative* (SCI) in 1996 in order to assess the impact of social capital on the effectiveness of development projects and contribute to the establishment of indicators for monitoring social capital and methods for assessing its effects. The projects carried out have resulted in an analysis framework that focuses on the impact of social capital (micro, meso and macro) and on its different forms (cognitive and structural)[31].

This systemic approach is well represented in the following diagram:

Dimensions of social capital



Source: Grootaert and van Bastelaar, 2002

Throughout the approaches mentioned, the idea of "social capital" progresses from the simple *establishment of the existence* of bonds and networks to systemic approaches that take account of the *consequences* of the structural dimensions of society (legal rules at the institutional level for the recognition of political and participatory rights through access to the media). Its immediate identification with social cohesion should be avoided for at least two reasons. Firstly, the social capital approach involves a constant risk of social bonds being understood only as static data rather than processes.[32] Secondly, this approach risks not taking sufficient account of the specific substance,

[30] See in this connection: www.statistik.admin.ch/about/international/spicher_final_paper.doc
[31] See in this connection: http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/index.htm
[32] Hong Kong activity

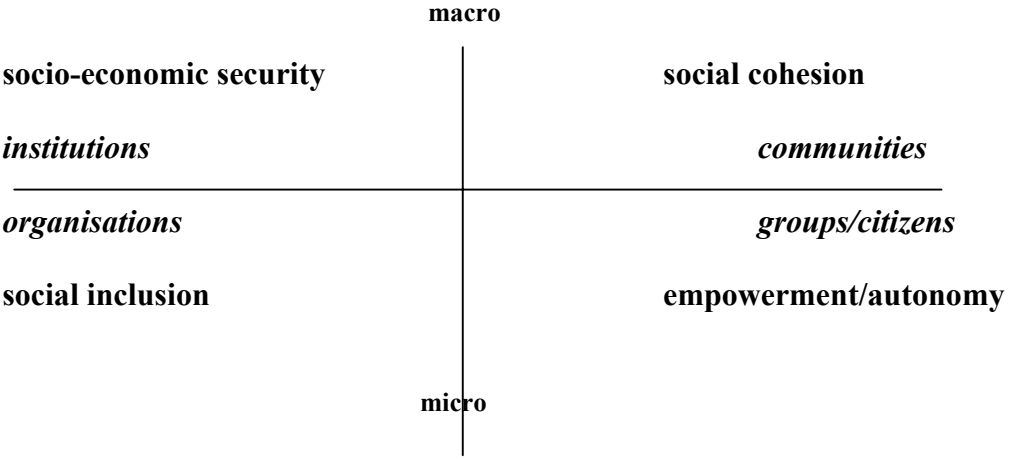
indeed the *social quality*, of the bonds. It is, for example not clear that the goal that binds a community together is the well-being of all its members.

In connection with a critical approach of this kind, the ideas put forward by Bourdieu are particularly noteworthy. He analyses the concept of social capital from the point of view of the social construction of individuals and warns against its *pernicious* effects, namely the fact that the inequality, lack of recognition and exclusion existing in the relations between social groups are reproduced from one generation to another On the other hand, the strategic concept of social cohesion put forward below seeks to avoid these weaknesses by considering equity as one of the key factors of socially sustainable development.

c – Quality of life a*pproach*

This approach was introduced by the European Foundation for Social Quality, which was set up in response to the Amsterdam Declaration on Social Quality of 10 June 1997. It defines social quality as a standard for evaluating economic and social progress in the European Union and assessing whether the living standard attained by citizens in their daily lives is acceptable. Under this concept, the social quality of citizens' lives depends on four social characteristics that have an impact on individuals: the degree of economic security; the degree of social inclusion; the extent of social cohesion; and the degree of autonomy or empowerment. These four components are represented in the following quadrant.

Social quality quadrant[33]



For each of these components, indicators have been proposed and classified as input, process, outcome or impact indicators.

For each component in this approach there is a different area of implementation: the socio-economic security of the institutions, social inclusion in connection with the organisations and so on. Social cohesion is the objective of the community and becomes a component – among others – of social quality[34]. While presupposing a certain interaction between the different dimensions of life in society, the approach lays the

[33] For an interpretation of this quadrant by the European Commission see: European Commission, DGV Call for Proposals No. VP/2000/006, Official. Journal of the European Communities, Brussels, March 2000

[34] Beck, W. et.al., op. cit., p. 145 for those corresponding to social cohesion

emphasis on an objective of achieving well-being that is dependent on the role of various players in their specific functions rather than on the ability of society as a complex entity to ensure well-being. Accordingly, it incorporates the definition of social capital that stresses the players' ability to defend their own interests. Moreover, like the social capital approach, it makes social cohesion the political objective of the various communities.

The approach proposed in this Guide aims precisely to transcend these two approaches by combining them so as to make social cohesion the ultimate reference element and not, in its restricted sense (social dialogue, civil society, local partnerships, development of cultural and sports sectors, voluntary activities, etc), simply one component of social quality.

Moreover, while the territorial cohesion, social capital and quality of life approaches are understood from the point of view of the *rights* that each entails, the actual ability of society to ensure the well-being of its members will be considered in terms of the *joint responsibility* of the different players who are active in either one or more areas of life (public authorities, markets, public and private spheres of life).

d – Access to rights *approach*

The aim of the *access to rights* approach adopted by the Council of Europe is to analyse the level of public recognition of needs in terms of rights, the appropriateness of legal provisions and of the facilities and resources for promoting access to all rights, developments in conditions of access, obstacles, etc.

The indicators established as a result of this approach focus on various aspects at the same time: the appropriateness of legal provisions (level of precision, limitations vis-à-vis certain population groups, holes in the social security net, absence of a basic threshold or minimum criterion, restrictive conditions for enforcing the right, discrepancy between the nature of the provisions and the need to be met, etc), the suitability of the monitoring and enforcement systems, the appropriateness of the financial and human resources (priority of social investments in relation to public investments in general, etc), the adaptation of the systems of management and of the procedures (dilution of responsibilities between the different tiers of government, lack of co-ordination, presence of defects in the management procedures, etc), the adaptation of the information and communication systems (number of citizens reached by the information mechanisms) and the appropriateness of the mechanisms for taking account of the more vulnerable groups and more disadvantaged regions[35].

C – *Thoughts on the* development of *social cohesion* strategies

The developments in strategic approaches to social cohesion may be represented in the form of a shell, as in the diagram below. This shows that the first, and most common, approach is "negative" and focuses on the development of knowledge of, and political action to deal with, the **visible negative effects** of the absence of social cohesion (unemployment, exclusion, poverty, crime, conflicts, etc). Targeted, so-called *social inclusion* measures are the political response.

[35] For a detailed analysis of this approach and the functioning of the organs that provide access to social rights, see *Access to social rights in Europe*, Council of Europe, October 2002

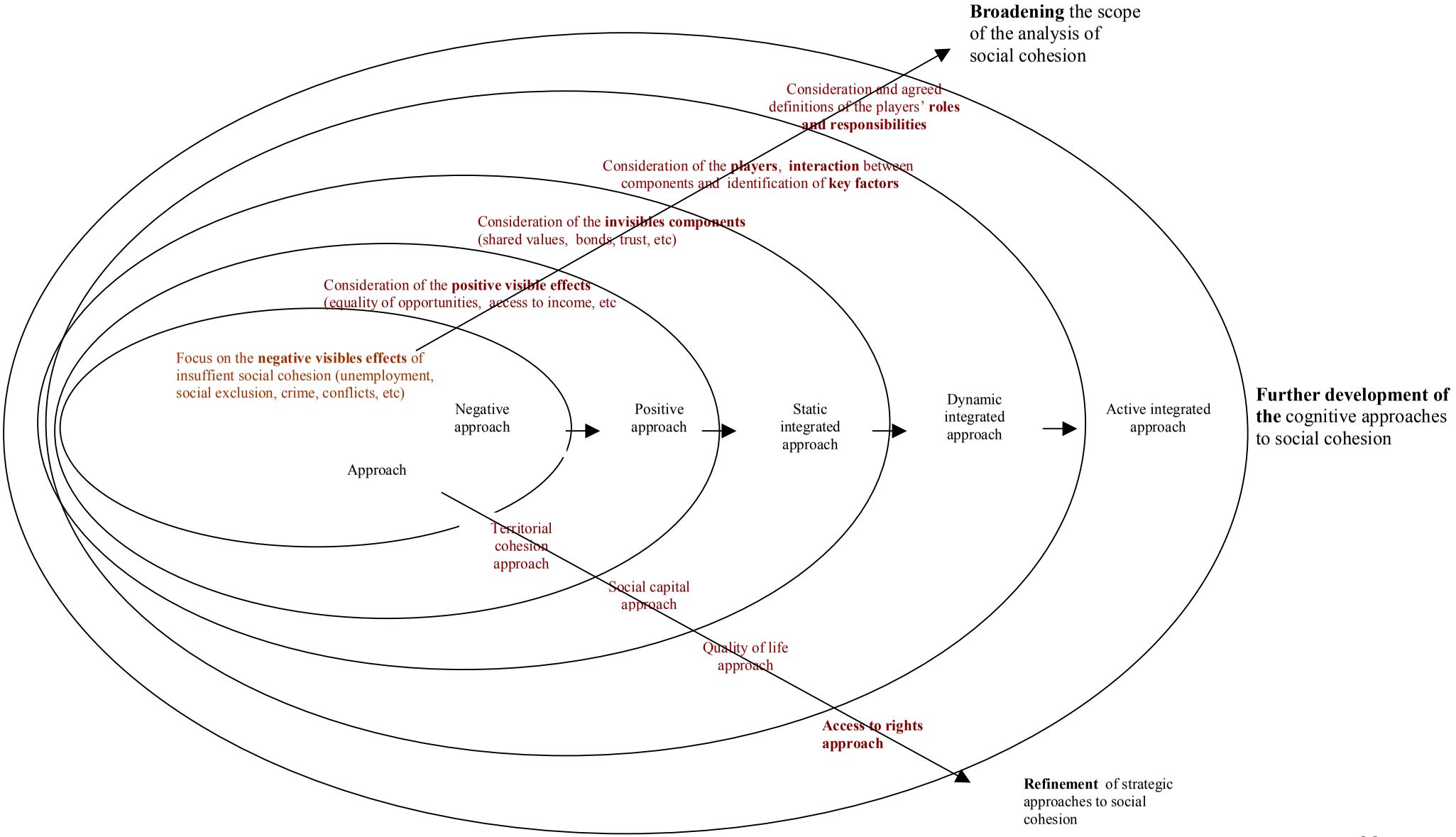
The “positive” approaches, which start by taking account of the **visible positive effects** (equal opportunities as regards access to income, employment, basic rights, etc) - an example of a political response to this is the European Union’s search for *territorial cohesion* - may incorporate other aspects of society’s complexity. For example, if **invisible components** (such as shared values, bonds, trust, etc) are taken into account, a rather more detailed, albeit still static, picture of social cohesion is obtained. Certain *social capital* approaches are possible examples of this.

If the **roles of the players and possible interaction** between components are to be taken into account and **key factors or elements**, ie elements that sum up the objective pursued, are to be identified, it is necessary to go over to dynamic, integrated approaches. One example of such an approach is that proposed by the analysts of *social quality*. This divides “quality” into four factors (or policy objectives): economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and empowerment/autonomy, correlated with the players “separately” responsible for their implementation. Some social capital approaches also fall into this category.

Finally, the **definition of the players’ responsibilities** with regard to a single cross-sectoral objective involving joint responsibility leads to active integrated approaches, such as the “*access to rights” approach in the broad sense.*

The diagram shows that decisions to broaden the scope of the analysis of social cohesion lead on the one hand to the further development of the cognitive approaches and on the other hand to the refinement of the strategies for its promotion.

Progressive development of social cohesion strategies



3. *The Council of Europe's* Strategy for Social Cohesion*: an* interactive *approach* based on the joint responsibility of the players

The Strategy for Social Cohesion revised and adopted by the Council of Europe in November 2003[36] sees the desired cohesion as the result of social processes linked together to ensure the **well-being of all the members** of a society by firmly avoiding any disparities and polarisation. Both the coherence of this policy and the durability of its outcome are based on the recognition of, and respect for, rights and individual freedoms in the context of a socially committed attitude towards common aims and their achievement through a democratic consensus. The well-being of everyone can therefore be considered the outcome of successful interaction between the different areas of life and, indeed, the result of the joint responsibility of all social players.

The *Strategy* recognises that during the 20th century it was mainly the responsibility of the state to look after the general welfare of the population, apart from the crucial role that the family and its traditional bonds could still play, while companies were simply responsible for economic development. The structural changes of the last few decades (especially the loss of the identity provided by a full-time job, the loss of job security and prolonged unemployment, the appearance of new and long-standing forms of poverty, increasing inequalities in income distribution, migration, the ageing of the population, etc) are making this model of the "division of social labour" inadequate when it comes to taking account of a number of issues related to well-being. The ***well-being of everyone*** **should therefore become more the *joint responsibility* of all the social players, on the basis of a renewed examination of the interaction needed between the public authorities, the markets and citizens' private and public spheres of life.**

In the Council of Europe's *Strategy*, the development of shared responsibility does not mean *disengagement on the part of the state.* On the contrary, as they remain the guarantors of human rights and democracy, the public authorities are committed to clarifying and even strengthening their cohesion functions in the light of new social demands, starting with the important request from citizens to be allowed to become involved in choosing the kind of society they want to live in. In this participatory approach, the question of *corporate social responsibility*, whereby companies take account of the environment, territorial cohesion and the general well-being of the workers and their families, is only one aspect of the new trends associated with any form of *solidarity-based economy*[37].

By enhancing the public-spiritedness of citizens' daily behaviour as consumers or savers, this type of *citizen involvement in the economy* results in a profound change both in the satisfaction of individual needs and in the establishment of horizontal solidarity, which cuts across the vertical solidarity organised by states. Subject to the implementation of a policy drawing together employment, social bonds and public areas, citizens could develop new capacities to generate work. Such practices would highlight the role of the region "in a new type of local development, which would at

[36] See www… for link to the Strategy

[37] For an overview of this approach, see the theoretically sound and pragmatically relevant presentation by J.-L. Laville in *L'économie solidaire*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1994.

the same time guarantee economic efficiency and social equilibrium"[38]. This would result in closer links between economic development and social cohesion.

4. Conclusions

On the basis of the analysis of the different cohesion strategies and the basic thrusts of the Council of Europe's *Strategy*, the authors of this Guide provide an interpretation of social cohesion that involves the following dimensions:

- a description of social reality encompassing three components:
  - the **living conditions of** individuals and groups, dealt with in turn in connection with different key areas (Eight life areas and six vulnerable groups have been taken into account – see part II of the Guide);
  - the various **areas of life** (public authorities, markets, public and private spheres of life) and the activities of general interest that are set-up, in particular founding, regulatory, reparative and facilitating activities (see part II of Guide for definitions)
  - the **basic ingredients of life** (the "lifeworld"), made up of informal bonds, relations of trust, values, emotions, shared basic knowledge, etc);
- an analysis framework constructed from the key elements of social cohesion, based on the well-being of everyone and on society's ability to ensure it:
  - **equity**, **autonomy**, **participation**, **recognition of dignity**;
- a framework of goals and results expected from such a social cohesion strategy, namely:
  - the **well-being** of each and every person with respect to living conditions;
  - the **shared responsibility of the players**, with respect to the interactions of the various areas of life and an all-round commitment to ensuring the collective well-being;
  - the **integrity of the "lifeworld"** ie. The preservation of the integrity of individual and societal values working for cohesion in the face of the evolution of the markets (monetary instruments) and public authorities (legal instruments).

The multiple interaction of these three key dimensions of social cohesion can be represented using the image of a tree:

- the **roots of the tree** correspond to the "lifeworld", to the very essence of the ability to find a **consensus without violence** on the idea of well-being for everyone;
- the **trunk** and the **branches** represent the **players** and their actions in the context of joint responsibility for the well-being of everyone. Four branches are analysed: the public authorities, the markets and the public

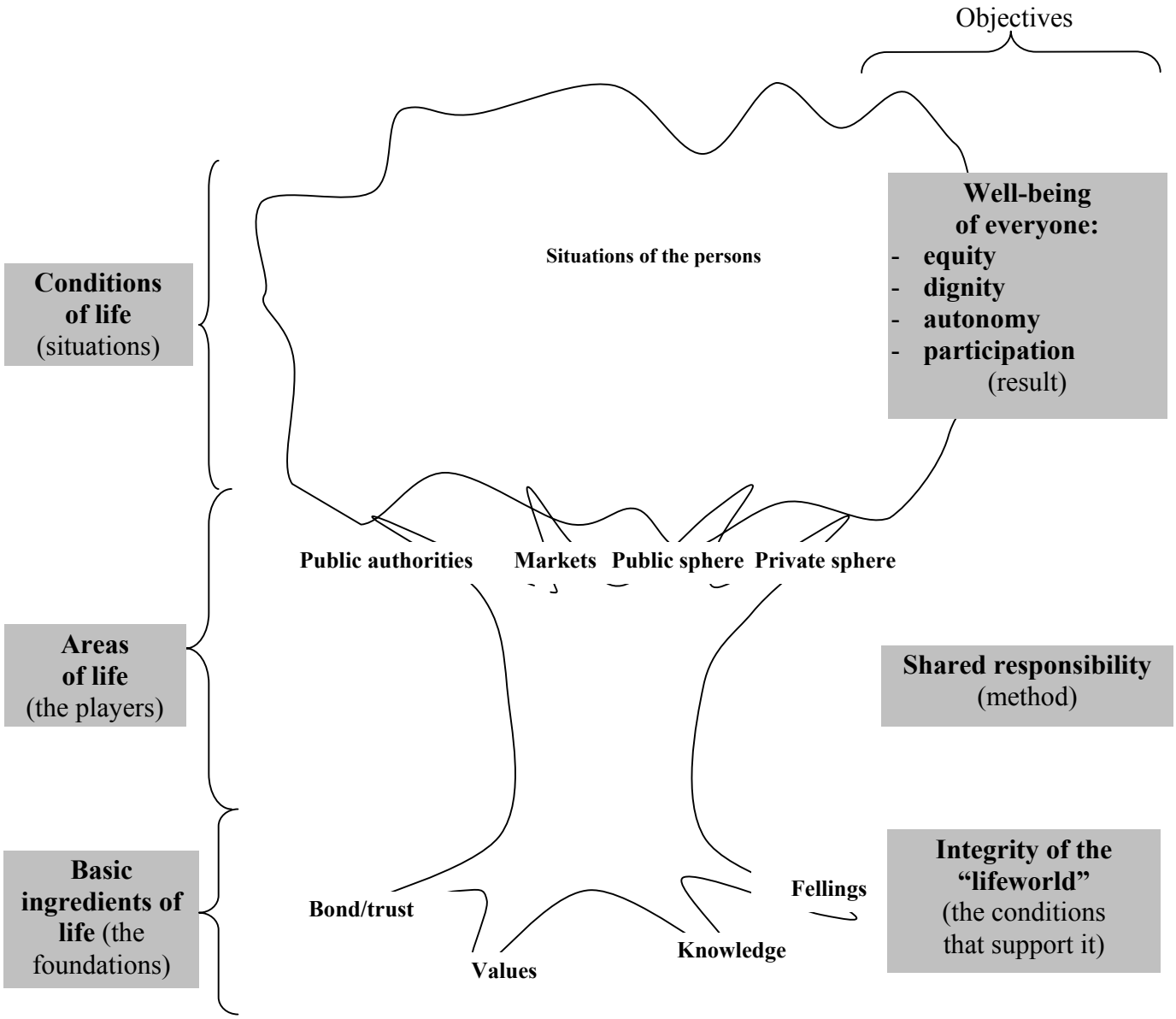
[38] A.M. Alcoléa, *De l'économie solidaire à l'économie solidaire territoriale: quelles figures économiques,* Journées d'études: "Les autres figures de l'économie", 24 June 1999, Faculté des Sciences Économiques et de Gestion, La Varenne.

and private spheres of citizens' lives and four types of general interest activites for social cohesion;

- finally, the **foliage**, the most visible part of the tree and the manifestation of its general state of health, represents **well-being** as a stable living condition for people.

In the light of these considerations, the question of joint responsibility becomes clearer. It naturally covers the concepts of a "stakeholder society"[39] and of improving the real "capabilities" of individuals (Sen), but also goes further by implying the assumption of responsibility in the public sphere for the definition of a consensual strategy for the well-being of everyone.

Social interaction and *quality* of social cohesion



[39] See, for example: Marquand, David, The Stakeholder Society www.netnexus.org/library/papers/marquand.htm ; Sikka,Prem, Shareholder Capitalism: What happened to the stakeholder society?: www.visar.csustan.edu/aaba/news15Dec2000.html

4. *Joint responsibility and the interaction of the players: how to ensure social cohesion in the light of the structural changes in society*

An approach aimed at identifying the *quality* of social cohesion through the interactions of its key dimensions and through the degree of joint commitment and responsibility of the players also has one considerable advantage: it is particularly sensitive to social changes precisely because it considers from the outset the mechanisms whereby which society reflects on itself and on the processes of modernisation-changes it is continuously undergoing.

a – Compatibility of the key elements of social cohesion

In the present context, several questions arise in connection with the *compatibility* of the four key elements of social cohesion (equity, dignity, autonomy and participation) and the changes underway, especially as regards their viability in the macro-economic framework chosen and the sharing of responsibilities between the institutional and private players.

Addressing the question, *how to ensure the compatibility of social cohesion, political freedoms and economic growth*, Dahrendorf ascribed to the western democratic societies the ability to achieve this while fostering a social consensus that ensures equity without producing violent conflicts.

According to the democratic model of nation-states developed in the West, the state is the "guarantor" of social equity, and enjoys legitimacy by virtue of the generally accepted principle that economic efficiency is compatible with social justice. The intervention of the public authorities in the various socio-economic areas through redistributive fiscal and welfare systems has developed in precisely such a context. At the same time, in the post-war period employment undoubtedly became "the great integrator" (Castel) of modern societies and was the pre-eminent mechanism for access to social recognition, well-being, social protection/security and "public goods", which were experienced as actual *symbols* of social belonging and citizenship.

b – Democratic paradigm of well-being put forward for discussion

Employment, the social state and public goods have thus been the constituent elements of the *well-being triad* in the democratic post-war societies. Citizen participation centred (and still centres) on the defence of these three pillars, especially their content in terms of equity. It was mainly the responsibility of the state to provide *leadership* in the resolution of conflicts in this area: under its aegis, the political parties proclaimed themselves as the legitimate vehicles for various social interests, and especially for the allocation of public resources. At the same time, the trade unions shared with the employers, as "social partners", the responsibility for taking decisions on production/wealth distribution.

This societal model, with the consensus it was able to bring about with respect to general well-being, is increasingly facing a crisis as a result of the current globalisation process. Based on the *flexible production/distribution of wealth* and, indeed, of the

risks and benefits this flexibility entails, the *globalisation model* developed up to now advocates dismantling the state protection structures.

Here, "social justice" risks being seen only as a factor *distorting* the free movement of workers, savings and investments The public institutions set up to assure everyone of the right to a secure life are accused of bringing about the social exclusion of significant sections of the population as a result of the *rigidity of the social standards* they uphold. At the same time, employment is no longer capable of ensuring the same identity and social recognition as before and the *crisis of full employment* means it is being associated less and less with the long term and the acquisition of skills. On the contrary, inter-occupational mobility, the personalisation of contracts and salaries have become the mechanisms that ensure integration into the new labour market for an ever-larger section of the working population.

c – A new paradigm for social cohesion

In this current discussion on the social state[40], the weakening of the structures that have traditionally guaranteed equity, the major challenge of social cohesion both now and in the future is the construction of a *new paradigm* on which there is a genuine collective consensus.

Thus, new concepts are being introduced that make it possible to perceive a number of options for the organisation of a social consensus, especially in terms of "sustainable development", "corporate social responsibility" a "welfare society", "local development initiatives", a "stakeholder society", "division of labour", "citizen involvement in the economy", and so on. By means of different strategies, these approaches seek to reaffirm social cohesion in the change from *national welfare societies* – structured around the social state, paid full-time employment and access to public goods – to *globalised societies* that nevertheless effectively ensure justice and cohesion and, as a result, their sustainability and complete legitimacy.

Several of these "transition concepts" call for forms of **collective responsibility** capable of **rebalancing the economy and society** in a decidedly *preventive* rather than simply *remedial* approach. They also extend to areas that were once the exclusive province of the state, the markets or the trade unions. While the traditional company had no function with regard to *social well-being* beyond the payment of wages and

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[40] "Negative liberty" encompasses rights and freedoms that each citizen has vis-à-vis the public authorities' powers of intervention. Formally recognised and, indeed, encouraged regardless of whether the means are available to implement it, this freedom does not take account of the contribution each individual can make to the "collective choices of society" ("positive liberty").

[40] two alternative conceptions of social justice are juxtaposed: for those who would like to *preserve* and *breathe new life* into the social state, justice is mainly re-distributive and intended to ensure fair access to well-being for citizens. On the other hand, those who would like to *reduce* or even *abolish* it see the social state and distributive justice as obstacles to individual freedom of choice, a freedom granted *irrespective of its effects on the other members of society*. In fact, the only acceptable idea of justice in this connection is commutative justice: the state is legitimate only when it ensures the enforcement of the rules governing transactions and individual choices. Otherwise, according to this neo-liberal paradigm, the market is not only the sole economic area of activity consistent with the protection of "negative liberties"[41] (Veca 1998) but also the model for any other form of interaction and social integration.

taxes, "corporate social responsibility" encourages a more civic attitude to, and a social awareness of, economic processes. At the same time, citizen involvement in the economy, or any other means of achieving a *solidarity-based economy*, goes beyond the area of traditional political participation exercised through the right to vote or trade union representation: it ascribes to citizens, as consumers, a much keener *social conscience* in relation to their daily "market choices" and the effects of these on the other members of society.

Other concepts, such as that of "sustainable development", focus on the long-term management of "public goods" by putting back into the political arena the question of the use of natural resources to guarantee the well-being of everyone, both present and *future generations*. [41]

All these concepts reflect the radical nature of the changes taking place in the behaviour of individuals and social structures as far as sharing responsibilities and powers in our societies is concerned. **This is reflected in the Guide, which makes the shared responsibility of the public authorities, the markets and the public and private spheres the focus of the building of social cohesion.**

As has already been pointed out, this shared responsibility does not mean "ousting" the state or transforming it into a "minimalist" state responsible only for security and legal matters, and therefore both weak and authoritarian at the same time[42]. If we look at the recent past of the western democratic societies, the public authorities, apart from guaranteeing the transparency and efficiency of the market, have made it possible for citizens to participate in politics, trade union activities, voluntary work and cultural life in conditions of relative freedom and equilibrium with regard to their need for protection and fair access to resources. On the other hand, the "disengagement of the state" means there is a risk that it will no longer be possible to avoid the "marginalisation" when it comes to the exercise of full democratic citizenship of an ever-growing number of people[43].

The joint responsibility of the players does not therefore go hand in hand with the disengagement of the state. The concept of a *welfare society* that paves the way for a new form of **socio-economic governance** (by including from the outset the idea of co-responsibilities of families, organised citizens and companies) cannot be divorced from a state that is able to define and guarantee rights under a renewed social contract. Here it is necessary to consider in detail what kind of contract can be drawn up between such a "revamped state" and a society committed to the further development of its ability to ensure the well-being of its members.

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[41] Starting from an ecological view of social issues, which are mainly posed in terms of environmental protection, this concept has evolved to the point of taking account of the "degradation of the human being" and of the loss of dignity resulting from poverty and exclusion. This shows how far "social cohesion" as a guarantee of fair access to well-being, and to all the conditions necessary for a secure life, is the basis for a sustainable society and, in general, for balanced development now and in the future.

[42] As far back as the early 1980s, Norberto Bobbio, in his essay *Il futuro della democrazia. Una difesa delle regole del gioco*, Einaudi, Turin, 1984 (Translated as *The Future of Democracy. A Defence of the Rules of the Game*, University of Minnesota Press, 1994), considered this neoliberal trend towards a state that is both minimalist (with respect to its socio-economic role) and strong (with respect to its public security role), while warning against its pernicious effects on the rules of democracy.

[43] See in this connection the debate on "Competitiveness and social justice" held in Rome in December 2002. (http://www.deputatids.it/documenti/Competitivita/3Modello.htm).

The transformation of the *welfare state* into a *welfare society* involves attaching greater importance to general well-being. This type of society tries to be a catalyst for new form of social organisation that, while promoting a new linkage between the various levels of participation (local, national, international), are able to respond to the current challenges, especially the changes in the world of work (from continuous and protected to interrupted and unprotected employment) and the welfare system. The *welfare society* is thus a concept that involves innovation in terms of:

- a closer correlation between unemployment and employment, with recognition of any form of socially useful work, for example via the introduction of a "working persons' status"[44];
- a fairer relationship between the rights traditionally linked to welfare and these new forms of employment, establishing novel links between paid employment, part-time work and community service;

In addition, with this in mind, the question of joint responsibility of players for social cohesion will have to be examined in terms of a "plurality of identities" and well-being, and the ageing of the population and well-being: migration and the transformation of the population pyramid present considerable challenges to the organisation of well-being.

d – The challenges of shared responsibility

Briefly, some of the challenges of future social cohesion for which the social players should assume joint responsibility in future societies are:

a) **the search for alternatives to the crisis affecting state intervention**
Now that the legitimacy of state action is being called into question, as a result of the processes of privatisation/individualisation of social risks and their management, it is necessary to r**edefine the specific responsibilities of the state** as well as the nature of the contract between the state and its citizens;

b) **the search for alternatives to the changes in the *nature* of work**
Given the intertwining of employment and social rights, which tend no longer to be connected to a specific job, it appears necessary to review the question of access to the world of work and the welfare system in terms of opportunities and rights for all. In other words, we need to move from the narrow concept of opportunities, which are limited to the recognition of the legal conditions for access to work and social security/protection measures, to a consideration of the practical processes for their achievement, involving the citizens themselves;

c) **the search for effective policies for integrating migrants and elderly people,** by creating scope for participation in areas where their needs and potential, as well as their responsibilities, find expression;

[44] Several European analysts (from U. Beck and F. Archibugi to J.-L.Laville) believe it is imperative to take account of opportunities for both employment and community service in order to ensure cohesion in societies seeking lasting compatibility between "flexibility" and access to well-being.

d) **support for processes aimed at defining "public interest" activities by "contractual" and "consensual" means**
On the basis of the idea of joint responsibility of activities of general interest, this new contract should build more links between the various players rather than focus on the capacities of one of them.

By adopting joint responsibility for players as a method, the Guide seeks to make a contribution to this transition by focusing on the issues of main concern to the Council of Europe: **the building of social cohesion within democratic societies based on access to rights and the well-being of everyone.**