Social Quality – opening individual well-being for a social perspective

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Ní haon maith a bheith ag caoineadh nuair a imíonn an tsochraid[1]

Point of departure is the thesis that a clear understanding of the social vanished from social science itself. Over time, the interpretation of social and individual developed into a direction that confronts the two as distinct areas, relating as mutually external «faits sociaux» on the one hand and «faits individuels» on the other hand. Moreover, individuals are seen as the actual «core» of life, confronted with a society which is a seemingly superior power. The following presentation tries to oppose such a position, claiming that individual and social can fundamentally be grasped as constitutive entity. Furthermore, it is by taking such a relational view that we can understand the social – and its quality – as distinct from simple interactions.

This contribution will first aim on providing a framework for the analysis and development of policies – following the Social Quality Approach which will be introduced. In a second part this will be further developed, looking at what is underlying the process of negotiating the social. Finally, the current debate of the European Social Model will be discussed against this theoretical background.

The Analytical Dimension: the Debate of Well-Being versus Social Quality – the Meaning of the Social

Challenges set by Setting «Well-being and Social Justice» as core for Social Policy

A major issue of today's social science is the concern by issues of life styles and life situations, well-being, quality of life etc. And of course, there cannot be any doubt about the importance of such apprehension as it is finally the individual – as citizen with full rights or as person who is excluded from mainstream society – who is at the centre stage of social policy. It is the individual who is shaping by his/her demands, needs and political activities and inactivities alike actual social policies – and it is as well the individual who is meant to be «target» of any measures. However, life styles, living situations and life circumstances and well-being are highly individualist concepts. This is even true if we agree that they are admittedly concerned with the localisation of the individual in a «context of other people('s action)». The unanswered challenge is that the social is not only normatively assumed. In addition, it is indirectly defined as an external entity, not needing a clear definition or actually being constituted as part of this process.

It is neglected that individual and society are not in contradistinction. *Norbert Elias* pointed on this, using the words:

> To understand the obstruction which the predominant modes of thinking and feeling pose to the investigation of long-term changes of social structure and personality structure ... it is not enough to trace the development of the image of people as societies, the image of society. It is also necessary to keep in mind the development of the image of people as individuals, the image of personality. As has been mentioned, one of the peculiarities of the traditional human self-image is that people often speak and think of individuals and societies as if these were two phenomena existing separately – of which, moreover, one is often considered «real» and the other «unreal» – instead of two different aspects of the same human being.
>
> (Elias, Norbert: Postscript (1968) in: The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations; Translated by Edmund Jephcott with some notes and corrections by the author; revised edition, edited by Eric Dunning et altera; Oxrford/Malden: Blackwell, 2000: 449-483; here 468 f. – in the German edition Ueber den Prozess der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und pschogenetische Untersuchungen. Erster Band: Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes. Volume 3.1.: Norbert Elias Gesammelte Schriften; edited in the name of the Nobert Elias Stichting, Amsterdam by Heike Hammer et altera; Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1997 this text is published as Introduction)

Now, we could recently see in very blunt terms the consequences of such a social state that tries first to establish itself, thereafter «constituting» itself as a political entity and finally, then, «serving» the «individual citizens» – public opinion showed not only by the French *Non* and Dutch *Nej* regarding the suggested EU-constitution but as well in polls throughout the Union a widespread reservations regarding a constitution which had been by and large elaborated by a minority, not being concerned by a strong commitment to social quality.

Constituting the Social – Understanding Concerns around Well-Being and Social Justice Better

The rejection of the EU-Constitution is only one example from contemporary politics, showing the problems of an understanding of social policy that is not based on the social as central point of reference. Surely, what is usually seen as weak position of «social policy», subordinated under economic considerations was an important issue, resulting in the rejection in France and The Netherlands. Many other concerns, sometimes concerned with only small issues, can be summarised under the heading of lacking democracy and accountability.

However, the thesis here is that such an interpretation is only reflecting on one part of the problem. Looking more closely on the debates we can employ the following meta-methodological tool in order to understand the process.

Looking at this example we can see that the actual process of European integration is only concerned with a very limited approach. I do not mean what is frequently issued as the predominance of «economic policies» and subsequently the neglect of «social policies». Such a lack of balance is only a symptom. The following pictures suggest a more complex framework for analysing the constitution of the social. The social has to be understood as result of a complex of tensions, established along the following lines.

First, we have to emphasise that individual action is per se social action and vice versa. It is a fundamental assumption of the SQA that humankind is characterised by the fact that any individual action is – directly or indirectly – characterised by the fact that it is not simply an

interaction between a person and his/her natural environment but constituted by a triangular relationship between

* person A,
* person B (and likely person N) and
* the physical environment.

At this stage it does not matter to which extent and in which way this relationship is shaped – at a later stage in this contribution this will be issued a little bit further. At this stage, it is only important that as a result of the historical development one important aspect of humans leaving the realm, of animals is the societation of individual action and at the very same time the individualisation by the embedding in social relationships – characterised as the first dialectic, resulting in a constitutive interdependency.
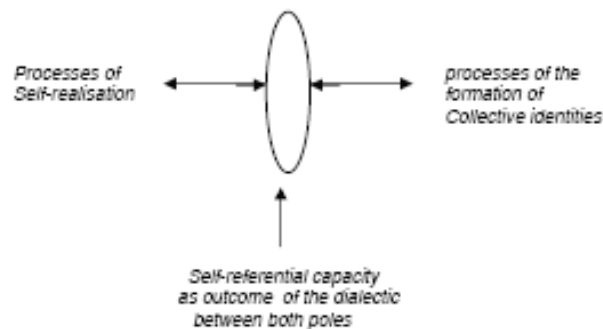

Figure 1: First dialectic, resulting in the constitutive interdependency

Second, we have to look at the fundamental «productive tension» between
1) biographical on the one hand and societal development on the other hand and
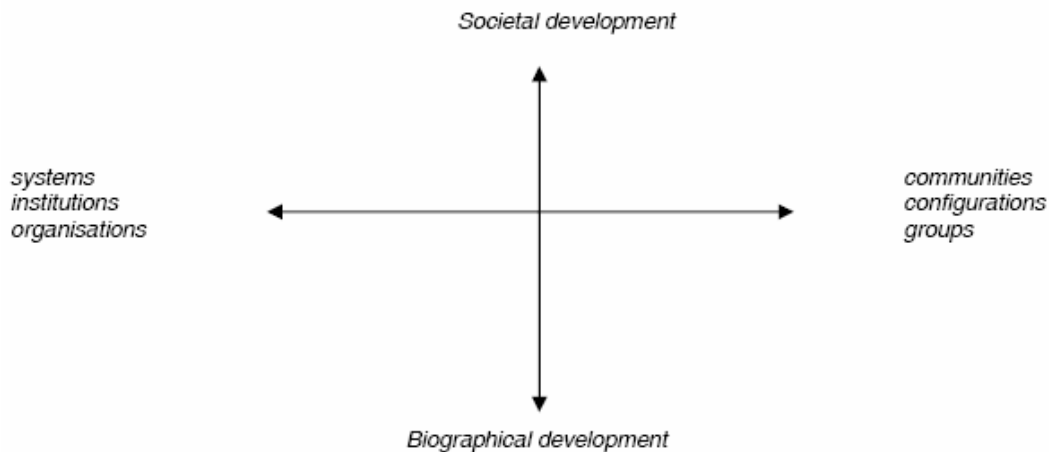2) systems on the one hand and communities on the other hand – this is visualised in the following figure 1.

Figure 2: The dialectic between the two basic tensions

Third, these two dialectical tensions are, however, only frameworks, of which the analysis remains so far in the realm of a formal approach as the one provided for instance by *Georg Simmel.[2]* To be meaningful it is important to look at the substantial dimension, namely to answer the question which factors actually determine the social togetherness. Fundamentally the interaction constituting the social starts from objective factors, namely
* socio-economic security,
* social inclusion

* social cohesion and
* social empowerment. The following figure 3 shows how these are related to the dialectic between the two basic tensions
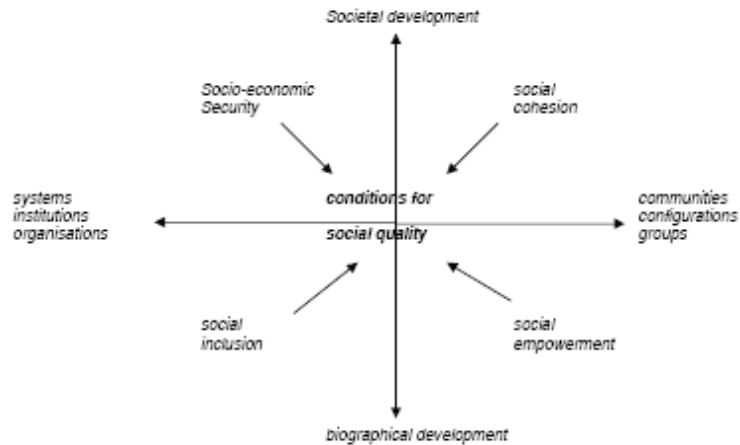

Figure 3: Objective Factors and the Interaction of Constituting the Social

At least for these objective factors there are rather clear definitions established by the work of the *Foundation.* As well, indicators had been elaborated. Although these are to some extent tentative the following gives an overview:

Socio-economic security

is the degree to which people have command over material and immaterial resources over time in the context of social relations.

DOMAINS	SUB-DOMAINS
Work	«workfare», employment security, quality of employment
Financial security	social security, income, dependence on income support
Housing	quality of housing, affordability, quality of environment
Health	quality of health & care services, lifestyle, physical and mental health
Education	levels and distribution of education and skills
Social Networks	dependence on family, friends and charity
Time	time spent on care (unpaid work), travel time

Social Inclusion

is the degree to which people are and feel integrated in the different social relations (systems, institutions, organisations and structures) that constitute everyday life.

DOMAINS	SUB-DOMAINS
Citizenship rights	constitutional/political rights, social rights, civil rights
Labour market	access to paid employment, quality of employment
Public services	health services, transport, commercial facilities, leisure services
Social Networks	Friendships, neighbourhood participation, family life

Cohesion

is the strength of social relations between people (including networks) which are a function of the integration of the integration between integrative norms and values (including trust and solidarity) in society.

DOMAINS	SUB-DOMAINS

Trust	generalised trust, specific trust
Integrative norms and values	altruism, justice, commonality and reciprocity
Social networks	horizontal network, vertical networks, cross-cutting ties
Identity	national/European, regional/community/local interpersonal

Empowerment

is concerned with the means and processes necessary for people to be capable of actively participating in social relations and actively influencing the immediate and more distant social and physical environment.

DOMAINS	SUB-DOMAINS
Personal Capability and relationships	general and political knowledge, access to information, availability of advice and guidance, job flexibility. «compensating socialisation», personal relationships
Civic rights	Availability of access points, openness of community towards new organisations ..., openness for «unorganised» action
Accessibility of the institutional system/civic control	electoral system and political accessibility, material independence of accessibility pf political system, availability of services supporting physical and social independence

However, It is only by (inter)acting people that (and in which way) these conditions objective potentials are actually realised. For this, attention has to be paid to subjective factors as actualising them. These are:
* participation,
* responsiveness
* social justice and
* social recognition.

They have to be seen as well against the background of the fundamental dialectic between the two basic tensions as we can see it in figure 4 which visualises the subjective factors and the interaction of constituting the social.
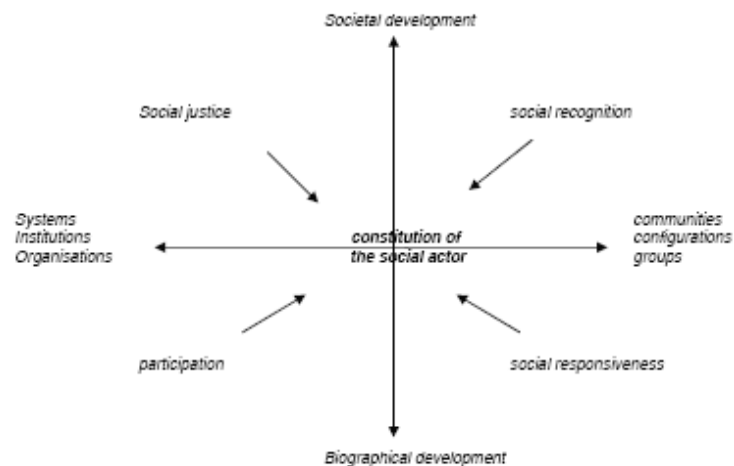

Figure 4: Subjective Factors and the Interaction of Constituting the Social

Design of Policies: The Social as result of Negotiations and Power

There is a difficulty which the SQA aims to overcome, however where the approach is equally in danger as others to start from a tautological, self explaining understanding of the social. Social Quality is defined as the extent to which people are able to participate in the socio-economic, cultural, juridical and political life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potentials for contributing to societal development as well.

Such a definition refers to the meaning of the substantive «the social» as the realisation and concretisation of the stable structures, practices and conventions through linking both types of factors by social actors in the context based by the interference of the first dialectic (figure-1) and the second dialectic (figure-2).

From here we can point in general terms on how the social is constituted. It is a process of relating the objective and subjective factors. The following order is proposed for doing so.

* Social empowerment will enhance, apply and therefore contribute to these potentials by processes of responsiveness in the interactive setting between biographical development and the world of daily life. This requires a degree of mutuality. As such it is complemented by social cohesion.
* Social cohesion will enhance, apply and therefore contribute to these potentials by processes of recognition in the interactive setting between societal development and the world of daily life. This requires a degree of reciprocity. The objective basis is found in socio-economic security.
* Socio-economic security will enhance, apply and therefore contribute to these potentials by the institutionalisation of social justice in the interactive setting between societal development and the world of systems. This requires a right based constitutional framework. This refers to social inclusion.
* Social inclusion will enhance, apply and therefore contribute to the participation in existing structural environment of the interactive setting between biographical development and the world of systems. This requires an institutional framework allowing individual people to act socially. This refers to back to social empowerment.

However, this is only a somewhat general statement on which agreement had been reached. If we look at the definition of social quality, we can easily accept that this is normative insofar as it is based on «high quality», i.e. aims on what we might call balancing the factors in order to come to a harmonious relationship between the different factors but as well between the different axes of the tensional fields. However, looking at the definition of the social (substantive) we have to go beyond a normative view, looking at the process of its actual constitution. This can only be done by taking a «neutral» approach by starting from the factual potentialities.

Taking the fields as such, we can locate action with the different «optional»[3] points of reference. On the basis of this approach, the social cannot be taken as normatively given. Rather, we have to consider its different markedness and mouldings. Doing so, requires to locate action of different actors in the tensional fields, investigating if, to which extent and how the action of different groups can be located in these fields and then how societation actually takes place. – Thus, a perspective is opened on how the social is produced. This refers to the very general issue of «the social». In addition it is on this ground possible to develop two further perspectives, namely

a) the process of producing «social mechanisms» and «instruments» as for instance social services, social professions, social policies, social management etc. and

b) the question of how these mechanisms actually contribute to the production of the social.

It is only briefly possible to point out this connection. It is immediately visible that a distinction between economic and social action is not useful. It had been already *Karl Marx* who rightly emphasised that economic action is nothing else than (the constitution of) a social relationship. For this reason we can take the matrix from above and go further, suggesting four «patterns of social action».

* First we find two main policy features. However, these have to be divided into two sub-patterns.
  ➤ One is focusing on economic growth, assuming an automatic link between this and the development in all other areas. This is in the strictest sense a mathematically lead functionalist model. The social seemingly does not exist as both inclusion, cohesion and empowerment appear to be outcomes of (socio)economic development. This can be called economism, being build if not on a *Keynesian* so at least on a macro-economic approach. Here, welfare-policy is reduced on an annex to economic policies. In other words, social policy has the classical productive function of social policy.[4]
  ➤ Another pattern is a kind of complement as it concentrates on empowerment, following a liberalist approach. Though «economically driven», here the enhancement of the other factors is not seen as functional outcome in a strict mathematical fashion. Rather, individual action is centre- stage, reminding a little bit of *Karl Friedrich Hieronymus, Baron von Münchhausen* and his story about pulling himself out of the morass by taking hold of his shock of hair.[5] It is a pattern that can best be described as individualist approach based on rational choice options. In other words, it is the classical micro-economically oriented approach of liberal and neo-liberal «welfare policies», accepting if any then a well-being orientation of social policy. Looking at the classical functions of social policy, this approach can be seen as fulfilling the protective and productive function. However, it has to be stated that the protective orientation is actually largely driven by a productive notion (as it can be seen for instance in the work of *Adam Smith)* or it follows an ethical notion of good-doing, typical for old and currently revived charitable ideas.
* A second set of policies is concerned with what can be seen as classical social policies as they developed in a second phase of the welfare state. Broadly, this second phase can be characterised as a shift flanking the process of industrialisation and compensating for its worst malfunctions to a more «human oriented» and to some extent rights-based understanding, based on forms of social paedagogisation and implementing social rights.[6]/[7]
  ➤ Though the debate on overcoming social exclusion and the orientation on social inclusion is in the strict sense only a recent one, there is actually a longer tradition which prepared such a renunciation of a strictly defensive «war against poverty» as it had been characteristic for the early years of capitalism – the time which is best described by the term «Manchester capitalism». The emergence of such an «inclusive society» was more concerned with a vision of a social fabric in which the individual, still being mainly a productive force,[8] has increasingly as well a right in its own terms, as individual with own rights. Looking against such a background at the understanding of social policy and taking the classical functions of social policy, we can speak of a mainly protective and distributive function.
  ➤ Social cohesion gained increasingly a value for the «modern capitalist society». On such a stage we are still very much concerned with a one-sided perspective insofar as for – now in general richer – societal development needed to overcome the increasing «gaps within society». This is strongly linked to the problems around the increasing role of «relative poverty» – individuals being relatively rich in terms of basic «means of survival» had nevertheless been poor in terms of their relative position in society. Looking here at the function of social policy, societal politics and a distributive function plays a major role.

It is important to note that these orientations do not only show the strong link between the «production of the social» and the different factors. In addition, they follow as well the two axis of the dialectic between the two basic tensions (see figure 2).

As mentioned, this is to a large extent a heuristic perspective – idealtypes to some extent; but valuably showing that to-date we did not reach a stadium where we can really talk of any social quality orientation, building on an integrative understanding of social policy, social political and professional action, taking its different angles with equal importance into consideration.

In other words, «producing the social» always meant something different. It had been concerned with flanking economic policies, with promoting individual development and or with social integration. However, social policy – as any other social professional action had never been concerned with producing social quality.

The European social Model – Challenges for the Future

Setting the Framework

Currently there is much talk about the European Social Model – an impressive term, and – cynically spoken – an impressive meaningless term. Reason for being meaningless is the fact that it is largely an empty notion which is open for any interpretation. To make it a useful concept, there are at least the following different dimensions that have to be taken into account.

The ESM as Historical Reality

Although there are no clearly defined borders that fence in a spatial entity which justifiably carries this name there is a European continent with sometimes blurring borders, however with a distinct socio-politico-cultural history. Mies describes this continent, going back to the Greek mythology as a continent which has been more aggressive, more expansionist, more violently racist than any other. (Maria Mies: Europe in the Global Economy or the Need to De-Colonize Europe ; in: Peter Herrmann (Ed.): Challenges for a Global Welfare System: Commack , New York : Nova Science Publishers, Inc.; 1999: 153-171; here: 161).

Now, as significant as such statement is we have to consider as well the other, though highly ambivalent side of European history. It is the continent of enlightenment, calling for the emancipated individual, solidarity rather than super-powered institutions as church and state and – a double-edged sword as it was – calling as well for the competitiveness of (Social-)Darwinist survival of the strongest, the rationality of bureaucratic systems and leading to what *Horkheimer* called the Eclipse of Reason.

The ESM as Political Declaration and Vision

From the outset of the EU there had been a political dimension going hand in hand with the then declared *European Economic Community.* Thus, *article 3* of the original *Treaty of Rome* states that the aim is on

> «an increase in stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between the States belonging to it.

This has to be seen as well in connection with the words foregoing the actual *Treaty,* amongst others stating that the Heads of States had been resolved by thus pooling their resources to preserve and strengthen peace and liberty, and calling upon the other peoples of Europe who share their ideal to join in their efforts.

At least on the declaratory level this had been increasingly widened by concrete steps how to establish such a political entity, later including as well explicit social measures. As such, even the germinating political character has to be seen in the context of the so-called *Jean Monnet method*:

* Point of departure is a predicament, given by the political and economic situation after World War II.

* In consequence the founding and original member states laid down some basic economic and political regulations in regard of economic recovery and political stabilisation.

* By concentration on areas where common and mutual efforts had been essential, namely public goods and mutual interest goods and the reinforcement of the basic principles it had been envisaged that common efforts would be sufficient as basis for

  ➢ the development of common economic politics and policies

  ➢ the emergence of collective welfare

  ➢ the concatenation of political relationships

  ➢ the evolution of public support.

* Institutionally European entities would originally exist side by side with national institutions; however, in the medium and long run the national institutions would be substituted by supranational institutions, namely the *Council* and the *Commission* – the latter would thus emerge as points where European competence would crystallise.

* The institutional success – namely depending on the interaction between *Commission* and *Council* – would show especially successful by progression in the following three areas:

  ➢ stimulation of good ideas and appropriate entrepreneurs – the latter would act as innovators and act as an avant-garde of Europeanisation;

  ➢ provision of practical solutions in regard of important questions, which had been generally acknowledged as relevant and requiring action;

  ➢ support of the immediate interests of the actors, in particular the elites, in regard of the emerging European system had to be met.

The ESM as Analytical Prospective and Project

In a more analytical perspective, *A.S. Milward (The European Rescue of the Nation State; London: Routledge, 1992)* translated this into – and traced it back from – very concrete terms of rational interests behind the action of the founding individual Member States. In the words of *Brendan P.G. Smith* the Treaties of Rome

> *provided a politico-economic framework to control a renewed Germany, after American pressure had ensured that a permanently weakened Germany was not an option. For France, the Treaty of Rome promised, perhaps, a chance to control German renewal more subtly than occupation ever could. For German, it was a dignified ascent towards respectability and renewal after the abyss of fascism. For the Benelux countries the treaty was a promise that there would be no return to the post-war protection that had so devastated their export-based economies. For the Belgians, it was a look away from simmering internal division. For Italy, it was a means of attaining French and German markets so badly needed to recover.' (B.P.G. Smith: Constitution Building in the European Union. The Process of Treaty Reforms; The Hague/Ldn./N.Y.: Kluwer Law International, 2002: 23 f.)*

In this institutional structure and against the background of these interests the *Commission* was conceptualised mainly as «acting institution» whereas the *Council* had the equally important role of identifying the problems and challenges from the national perspective and articulating the respective interests. In the *Treaty of Rome* the basic structure had been only put down in term of a general framework. Nevertheless, at the same time some stabilising factors had been included. In particular these can be named as *Court of Justice* and the *European Parliament.*

There had been different analytical perspectives applied – (neo-)corporatist, (neo-)functionalist, normativist, voluntarist etc. In any case, what always was and is important is the dealing with a new political entity that developed in unpredicted ways, having a huge, though in many case hidden and in many cases even more so unwanted influence on the national entities.

Current Debates

In particular after the referenda in France and the Netherlands and the overwhelming scepticism expressed the EMS is again en vogue. *Commissioner Wallström* announced a *Plan D,* thought to be a plan for democracy. And the British *Prime Minister Blair* – while holding the Presidency – convenes a special summit, dedicated to a debate on the European Social Model. These two major and top-level activities go hand in hand with activities on a lower level of political authorities: Conferences on the national level as the one in Germany in November 2005, titled *The Future of the European Social Model: A German Perspective* can be mentioned as well as the conference organised by the Irish *Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice,* concerned with *The Future of Europe – Uniting Vision, Values and Citizens?* and addressed by the Irish *Taoiseach Ahern.*[9] Many other events, including a row of strategic meetings by European NGOs, are historical imprints, expressions of an obvious crisis. Still, it is open what kind of crisis this is.

This cannot be fully discussed here. And it is naïve to expect the solution from Americans who stand aside, dreaming their own European dream as new edition of the previously held American one which suggested dishwashers as presidents.[10] What is clear is that different aspects are involved – there is a little bit of the three levels mentioned before in it,

* a discontinuity of the historical development,

* the increasing gap between political declaration and proclaimed vision on the one hand and political and societal reality on the other hand and finally

* the actual lack of a proper analytical perspective that is guiding the existing visions.

Here it it not the place to look at the large amount of inconsistencies. Instead, the following will briefly look at some major shortcomings of the present debate. An important point of reference is the address *Blair* delivered to the *European Parliament* on *June the 23rd, 2005.* There he mentioned that

> *This is a union of values, of solidarity between nations and people, of not just a common market in which we trade but a common political space in which we live as citizens.*
>
> *It always will be.*
>
> *I believe in Europe as a political project. I believe in Europe with a strong and caring social dimension. I would never accept a Europe that was simply an economic market.*
>
> *(http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page7714.asp – accessed October 1st, 2005)*

But then, when it comes to mentioning the actual substance of this project we do not learn much. The *British Prime Minister* suggests not to talk about the crisis. Instead,

Let us first talk of achievement. When the war ended, Europe was in ruins. Today the EU stands as a monument to political achievement. Almost 50 years of peace, 50 years of prosperity, 50 years of progress.

(ibid.)

Blair gets, however, caught in a fundamental contradiction. On the one hand, he rightly draws attention to fundamental changes and speaks of

a crisis of political leadership. People in Europe are posing hard questions to us. They worry about globalisation, job security, about pensions and living standards. They see not just their economy but their society changing around them. Traditional communities are broken up, ethnic patterns change, family life is under strain as families struggle to balance work and home.

... The world is unrecognisable from that we experienced as students 20, 30 years ago. When such change occurs, moderate people must give leadership. If they don't, the extremes gain traction on the political process. It happens within a nation. It is happening in Europe now.

(ibid.)

When it comes to looking for answers on the changes, on the other hand, he shows his fundamental conservatism. His attempt to «demolish caricatures» ends at best in individualist wellbeing policies. Despite the claim to develop a long-term strategy, the structural obstacles of the current situation are not looked at.

First, *Blair* – as most of those who contemporarily reflect on the ESM – remains in the realm of an economist view. There is of course some sympathy for his emphasis of the fact that

Political Europe and economic Europe do not live in separate rooms.

(ibid.)

However, the question remains who is the head of the household. The main difference between *Blair* and traditional neo-liberal thinking is that *Blair* has a wider understanding of what productive factors are. Still, the fundamental pattern is very much the same: production is understood as economic-technical relationship rather than a social relationship. This falls back behind an approach of classical liberalism which acknowledges at least the fact that any economic relationship is in actual fact a social relationship. This notion is in general lost by neo-liberals. And this fact is not made less worrying by the fact that claimed social democrats jump on the bandwagon of «modernisation». One can try, of course, to look for a more optimistic reading. To remain in the picture of the household,[11] we can see that there is a progression from earlier approaches: the economy is not anymore a caretaking host; instead it is the subordinating head of the household.

Second, as such, the *Blairite* perspective is politically oriented backwards – actually following *Thatcher* who claimed in 1987 *that there is no such thing as society.*

The strict appeal on individualist approaches towards responsibility and the reinterpretation of solidarity as immediate exchange relationship which had been announced with alarming clarity by the then German Minister for Economy and Labour, *Clement* on a conference organised under the Dutch EU-Presidency in November 2004 is politically falling behind the degree of societation and socialisation of human rights which had been achieved in a more or less long and definitely over periods hard struggles of the citizens across Europe. In the words of *Brie,* contemporary trends are as follows.

At the centre of the more recent «social reforms» in the EU member states stands the aspiration to restructure the social state ever more in accordance with the principle of individual responsibility of

the single individuals and to extend the duty to individual self-provisioning. Thereby the principle of collective insurance and (limited) redistribution is pushed back. The ideal that the social state has to guarantee «inalienable claims» and the realisation of social citizens' rights is many times riddled with holes. The principle of equality of opportunity and chances - which was always aimed at the elimination of the causes of social discrimination and at equal «chances at the start» as well as post facto correction of market results reinforcing inequalities – is transformed into the principle of justice of opportunity. The latter sees social inequality as an indispensable and welcome catalyser for economic growth and increase in economic well-being, whereby following the principle of individual responsibility, only at the level of «chances at the start» (for example education, promotion of «employability» etc.) state intervention could be legitimated. As the example of education and the investments into human capital shows, opportunity of chances also not necessarily wages upon social state means, but on market stimuli and the promotion of private postgraduate training. The principle of equality of distribution («policies of material equality») and the goal of producing almost equal life conditions must of necessity fall by the wayside in the framework of such a reevaluation of priorities.

(André Brie: European Social Policy: The Demolition of the Social State Historical Roots and Processes. Current developments; Brussels/Schwerin, May 4th, 2004;

http://www.rosalux.de/cms/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Themen/Sozialpolitik/Beitrag_Brie_Andr__e.pdf– accessed September 1st, 2005)

Third, what *Blair* has to offer sounds over large parts of his address rather populist – pointing on the future and aiming on winning seemingly lost battles is a notion which is tempting as well for politicians, especially if they feel lost on a ship that is in danger to sink. The following formulation cannot be interpreted differently.

I have sat through Council Conclusions after Council Conclusions describing how we are «reconnecting Europe to the people». Are we?

It is time to give ourselves a reality check. To receive the wake-up call. The people are blowing the trumpets round the city walls. Are we listening? Have we the political will to go out and meet them so that they regard our leadership as part of the solution not the problem?

(ibid.)

Such statement – in connection with the foregoing arguments and proposed solutions – is well suitable to divert from actual misconceptions of EU-policies and provide an easy way out. We can look at two famous statements staring *Marxist* thinking. *Marxist* philosophy clearly states that human beings make their own history but they do so under certain historically given conditions. However, it is stated not less clearly that philosophers had interpreted the world differently and it is necessary to change it. The way *Blair* is pointing on the necessity to adapt to changing conditions shows his limited understanding of societal change – and unfortunately he is not the only one doing so.

If Europe defaulted to Euro scepticism, or if European nations faced with this immense challenge, decide to huddle together, hoping we can avoid globalisation, shrink away from confronting the changes around us, take refuge in the present policies of Europe as if by constantly repeating them, we would by the very act of repetition make them more relevant, then we risk failure.

(ibid.)

Such an approach neglects the fundamental fact that globalisation is not fundamentally new; moreover, such a viewpoint neglects the fact that globalisation is not a process without actors. Both, globalisation itself and the direction and shape of globalisation are subject to political decisions. The alternative put forward by *Blair* is simply misleading, an expression of ignorance which would lead a EU strategy into a willing executor of political goals defined by others, neglecting that another world is possible.

Outlook

It is interesting to look at *Blair's* address – and other relevant political statements, not least the *Kok-Report (http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/pdf/kok_report_en.pdf),* the *Report of the High-Level Group of the Future of Social Policy in an Enlarged European Union (http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2004/jun/hlg_social_elarg_en.pdf)* and the *Social Agenda 2005-2010*

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2004/jun/hlg_social_elarg_en.pdf – all accessed October 1st, 2005) alike – through social quality glasses. We frequently find reference to concepts and even terms which could be found as well in a SQA-context. However, taking the individual concepts in context, we find a shift in the balance sheet. Ideally, social quality can be taken as a kind of equilibrium between the various conditional and the constitutional factors. We can speak of high social quality if all these factors are related according to the order which had been suggested above (s. page 21). The following graph visualises this by positioning a kind of optimum in the centre of the circle.[12]
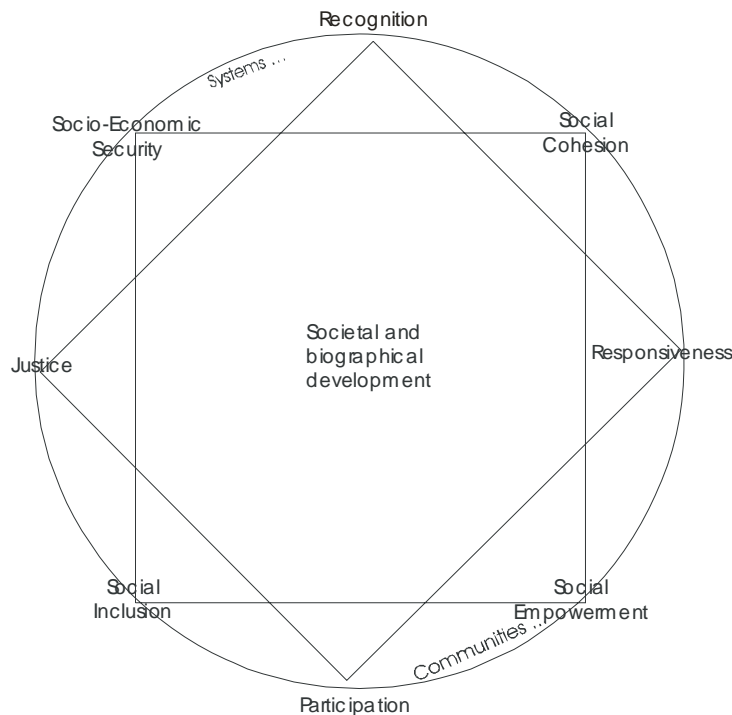

Figure 5: Objective and Subjective Factors in their Ideal Interaction

It brings together the two quadrangles presented above. From here, further debate has to show if and how far we can establish exact links between the factors. For the time being it is suggested that we have the constitutional factors, again i.e.

* socio-economic security,

* social inclusion,

* social cohesion,

* empowerment

as objective factors and

* justice

* participation

* responsiveness and

* recognition

as subjective factors. Both, objective and subjective factors are constitutive for social quality as they both dialectically constitute societal and biographical development. At the same time, they constitute each other in a way that objective and subjective factors dialectically interact.

It is important that the eclectic and economically driven policy orientation of the debate on the European Social Model as outlined throughout the third part of this paper cannot be seen as one which is pushing for an ESM of high social quality – the documents mentioned before are proving exactly the opposite. What we find is first and foremost a shift of the centre of gravitation to socio-economic security. This links into very specific perspectives on the tensions between systems and communities and as well the one between societal and biographical development. Here we find a reversal in the sense that actually the development and structuration of systems and communities gains the superiority and are established as focus whereas societal and biographical development are established as «serving peripherals». Part of the overall process is not least that the individual dimensions are being re-defined. By this overall shift, socio-economic security is getting dominant for all dimensions. Being relevant for the individual and the societal development – all dimensions are actually defined in their reference to this one dimension. Furthermore, this dimension is undressed of its character of being a genuinely *social* relationship. Its isolation from the general social sphere allows dominance on the one hand and impoverishment on the other hand – a simultaneously upcoming characteristic of a European Social Model which is more and more in danger to fail.

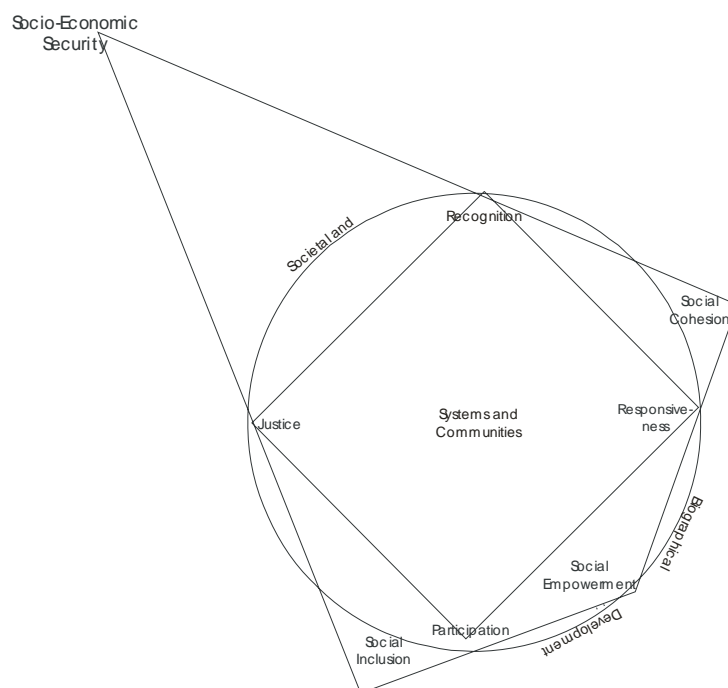An attempt to graphically illustrate this shift is provided here.

Figure 6: Objective and Subjective Factors – Threatening the Balance

At best, it can bring about an improvement of individual well-being, of short-term improvements of the living situations of citizens. However, even with this regard we all know that it does not do so in general. The income and welfare gaps increase, the well-being of the few is reached by at least the precarity of many. Another factor is that regional disparities are ongoing and increasing *(see. e.g. Haase, Trutz/Pratschke, Jonathan: Deprivation and its Spatial Articulation in the Republic of Ireland. New Measures of Deprivation based on the Census of Population, 1991, 1996 and 2002; Dublin: Area Development Management, June 2005).*

Instead of the withdrawal from a definitive European responsibility in social policies and the subjugation under the rules of globalisation in the interest of TNCs, Europe has to accept the necessity of

an alternative economy-wide policy mix:

* *enhanced cooperation between the European Central Bank and the EU Member States with regard to wider economic policy guidelines, specifically pertaining to fiscal and wage policies;*

* *a more relaxed monetary policy;*

* *a productivity-aligned wage policy;*

* *a sustainability strategy for the internal market;*

* *a budgetary policy, which strengthens public investments, research and education as well as the development of human resources;*

* *a common social policy.*

(André Brie: Means of Achieving a Modern, Economically Sustainable European Welfare State; in: European Policy Centre: What Future for Europe's Economic and Social Model?; Brussels: EPC, March 2005: 31-45; here 41)

Notes

[i] The following is a fundamentally revised version two different presentations by the author, one given on the Annual Conference of the Social Policy Association in Bath (June 2005); the other given on the Bundeskongress fuer Sociale Arbeit in Muenster (September 2005). It is based on the involvement in the work of the European Foundation on Social Quality. Some few of the definitions and statements are taken without reference directly from working documents. I delightfully acknowledge the work by the colleagues from the Foundation, in particular from my esteemed colleague Laurent van der Maesen. I want to include Sabine Herrenbrueck, Fachhochschule Nordhausen in my gratitude for her comments on this work. However, the responsibility is entirely with me.

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[1] There's no good in keening when the funeral has moved on.

[2] See *Simmel, Georg: Sociologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung (1908); Westberlin 1968*

[3] The use of this term actually suggests a degree of «voluntariness» which is in actual fact not given as any political and scientific action is based on objective conditions of the historical situation in which is located.

[4] With regard to the four classical functions of social policy see e.g. *Herrmann, Peter: Social Services under Economic Threat; in: Thole, Werner/Cloos, Peter/Ortmann, Friedrich/Strutwolf, Volkhardt (Hrsg.): Soziale Arbeit im öffentlichen Raum. Soziale Gerechtigkeit in der Gestaltung des Sozialen. Wiesbaden 2005: 215-225*

[5] See *Bürger, G.A.: Münchhausen; in: Till Eulenspiegel und Münchhausen; Göttingen: W. Fischer-Verlag; nd 29*

[6] Looking at the work of *T.H. Marshall (Citizenship and Social Class; in: Marshall, T.H. and Bottomore, Tom; London et altera: Pluto Press 1992)* is in some regard helpful in particular as his work falls to some extent into the trap of interpreting the development as a linear and automatic process of developing modern industrialist societies, and seeing «class conflict displaced with the development of citizenship» *(Nash, Kate: Contemporary Political Sociology. Globalization, Politics, and Power; Malden/Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000: 161)* – a contradiction in the work of *Marshall.*

[7] This is a rough outline only. Despite the fact that these two phases cannot be seen as clear-cut division another important point is that such a development was and is not in any kind a linear process of progress – the recent developments are only too clear ;showing the opposing fact.

[8] For instance economic theory of *Adam Smith* and *David Ricardo* talked in the 18th/19th century basically in the same fashion of the «factor of production» and their costs as it had been later the case in the Austrian economic school of the early 20th century *(s. for instance Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk)* and then as well in the middle of the last century where we can see *Friedrich Hayeck* as one of the proponents of the factor theory. Such a perspective is true

though the latter largely changed the view by focussing on behavioural factors. The fundamental approach of a methodological individualism remained favoured and was even strengthened by the latter.

[9] September 27th in Croke Park, Dublin

[10] Obviously alluding to *Jeremy Rifkin's The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream; Tarcher Penguin: 2004 and the image of the earlier American society of which the freedom and the full application of the performance principle of the competitive society supposedly allowed everybody to take any job simply according the principle of qualification.*

[11] A much justified metaphor, thinking back to the origin of the term economy which is related to the οτκου (oikos), meaning the household as foundation of society in ancient city states.

[12] This is a revised version of an earlier attempt, published e.g. in *Herrmann, Peter : Perspectives on the Social – Searching a Meeting Point for Difference or: Combating Social Technocracy; in: Herrmann, Peter (Ed.): Human Beings – Between the Individual and the Social; New York: Nova, 2005*