



The good society defining and measuring wellbeing between complexity and limit

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Premise

How societal well-being can be defined and measured?

- “ancient” debate (... Aristotle)
- “recent” scientific debate
 - Social Indicators movement (NASA)
 - ISQOLS (90s)
 - OCSE/OECD (2004 → Global Project)
 - ...



Premise

How societal well-being can be defined and measured?

- “recent” political debates
 - R.Kennedy → “what makes life worthwhile”
 - European Commission (2007 → Beyond GDP)
 - Sarkozy Commission (2008-09 → report)
 - ...



Premise

- New measures of wellbeing and progress
→ long tradition (many decades, many researchers)
- Risk → trivialization → what indicator may replace GDP?
- New elements to be taken into account



Summary

1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*
2. From definition to monitoring
3. Towards the fulfilment of a *good society*: what is needed?



Summary

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2. From definition to monitoring
3. Towards the fulfilment of a *good society*: what is needed?



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

Conceptual instruments
allowing emerging concepts to
be interpreted and classified



different classifications of conceptual
frameworks





1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

(A) STRUCTURE OF VALUES

Functioning and capability to select goods and services that one desires



Income considered as a mean to achieve an acceptable standard of living

Normative ideals



set of characteristics inspired by normative aims, grounded in moral values or policy goals

Subjective experiences



Individual's cognitive and affective reactions to his/her whole life (or specific domains) and societies



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

PROCESSES

- 📌 Growth
- 📌 Progress
- 📌 Development
- 📌

CONDITIONS

- ✓ availability of resources
- ✓ distribution of resources
- ✓ impact of policies
- ✓ ...

GOALS

- sustainability
- quality of life
- well-being
- ...

(B) OBSERVATIONAL PERSPECTIVES



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

(C) POINTS OF OBSERVATION

individuals



Quality
of life

societies



Quality of
societies

Source of this frame: Berger-Schmitt R. and H.-H. Noll (2000)



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

Quality of life

- resources approach
- capabilities approach
- subjective well-being approach
- basic needs approach
- objective living conditions and subjective well-being approach



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

Quality of societies

- liveability and quality of nations
- societal integration, solidarity and stability
 - o social cohesion
 - o social exclusion
 - o social capital
- sustainability
- human development
- social quality



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

Each approach

- shows strengths and weaknesses,
- adopts coinciding or overlapping concepts (partially or completely)
- is not able to face the **complexity**



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

Consequently,
in order to measure societal well-being

a **multidimensional definition**

and

a **comprehensive approach**

are needed

able to conciliate

- **micro** (individual) and **macro** (societal) level
- different concepts.



1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*

A POSSIBLE DEFINITION

A good and healthy society is that in which each individual has the possibility to

- *participate to the community life,*
- *develop skills, abilities, capabilities and independency,*
- *adequately choose and control his/her own life,*
- *be treated with respect in a healthy and safe environment and by respecting the opportunities of future generations.*



Summary

1. Attempts to classify different concepts on *good society*
2. From definition to monitoring
3. Towards the fulfilment of a *good society*: what is needed?



2. From definition to monitoring

Monitoring the national wellbeing

We need to define/identify:

- A. pillars and their dimensions
- B. ambits to be monitored
- C. indicators
- D. “space” for policies



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

The structured, consistent, and complex observation requires **three concepts**
(PILLARS)

1. Quality of life



Individual (micro) level

**2. Economic and
social
cohesion**



Community (macro) level

3. Sustainability



Relationship between
the previous levels,
environment and future



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

1. QUALITY OF LIFE

Lately, the concept has been

- submitted to many speculation about its meaning
- trivialized (QoL → happiness)
- simplified (QoL = “how do you feel?”)



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

1. QUALITY OF LIFE

A bi-dimensional model → W. Zapf (1975, 1984)

- **OBJECTIVE LIVING CONDITIONS**
 - Outcomes
 - Resources and capabilities
 - External circumstances
- **SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING**
 - Cognitive and affective components
 - Positive and negative components



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

Two different dimensions

- **SOCIAL EXCLUSION → welfare distribution**
 - inequalities among individuals, groups, societies (genders, generations, disabled, races, citizenship groups, ...)
 - regional disparities
- **SOCIAL INCLUSION → integration of individuals, groups and societies**
 - social and political activities and engagements (associations, organizations, ...)
 - quality of relations (shared values, conflicts, solidarity)
 - social relations (informal networks)
 - trust in institutions



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

3. SUSTAINABILITY

defined by five components and two perspectives:

| | | | Present generations' ... | Future generations' ... |
|------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| Dimensions of sustainability | physical | individual level | ...behaviours affecting individual health | |
| | social | individual and community level | ...behaviours affecting social relations and networks | |
| | economic | individual and community level | ...processes affecting welfare | |
| | human | individual level | ...processes affecting individual skills, training, education, health | |
| | natural | community level | ...processes affecting natural resources | |
| | | | Perspectives of sustainability | |



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

CROSSING DIMENSION → THE LIMIT

Each pillar's aspect shows and needs to identify where the limits are.

The limit concerns all the dimensions
(not only sustainability)



2. From definition to monitoring

A. Pillars and their dimensions

AN ADDITIONAL (CONTEXTUAL) DIMENSION → SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

- ✓ Demographic and socio-economic structures
- ✓ Values and attitudes
- ✓ ...



2. From definition to monitoring

B. Ambits to be monitored

AMBITS OR LIFE DOMAINS

The relevant concepts (pillars) and their dimensions have to be assessed and observed within each *life domain*



2. From definition to monitoring

B. Ambits to be monitored

AMBITS OR LIFE DOMAINS

- 
1. Households and families
 2. Housing
 3. Transport
 4. Leisure and culture
 5. Participation
 6. Education
 7. Labour market and working condition
 8. Income, standard of living and consumption patterns
 9. Health
 10. Environment
 11. Social security
 12. Crime and safety
 13. Total life situation



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

FROM CONCEPTS TO INDICATORS

For each dimension and each ambit /
life domain, observable elements have
to be defined



Indicators



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBITS)



| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| Quality of life | Objective living conditions | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Subjective wellbeing | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Economic and social cohesion | ↩ Disparities, inequalities and social exclusion | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ↪ Social relations and ties (social capital) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sustainability | Human capital | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Natural capital | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Socio-economic structure | Demographic and socio-economic structures | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Values and attitudes | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

1. Households and families
2. Housing
3. Transport
4. Leisure and culture
5. Participation
6. Education
7. Labour market and working condition

8. Income, standard of living and consumption patterns
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2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBITS)



| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| Quality of life | Objective living conditions | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Subjective wellbeing | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Economic and social cohesion | Disparities, inequalities and social exclusion | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | Social relations and ties (social capital) | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Sustainability | Human capital | X | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| | Natural capital | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| Socio-economic structure | Demographic and socio-economic structures | X | | | | | X | X | | X | | X | X | |
| | Values and attitudes | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |

- Households and families
- Housing
- Transport
- Leisure and culture
- Participation
- Education
- Labour market and working condition

- Income, standard of living and consumption patterns
- Health
- Environment
- Social security
- Crime and safety
- Total life situation



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBITs)



| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| Quality of life | | Objective living conditions | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | | Subjective wellbeing | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Economic and social cohesion | 👤 | Disparities, inequalities and social exclusion | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| | 🏠 | Social relations and ties (social capital) | X | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Sustainability | | Human capital | X | | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| | | Natural capital | | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | |
| Socio-economic structure | | Demographic and socio-economic structures | X | | | | | X | X | | X | | X | X | |
| | | Values and attitudes | X | X | | X | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBIT)



| | | education |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Quality of life | Objective living conditions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Level of Education and Vocational Training<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.1. Attainment of at Least Upper Secondary Education1.2. Attainment of Tertiary Education2. Educational Performance<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1. Pupil Literacy<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1.1. Reading Literacy (PISA)2.1.2. Mathematical Literacy (PISA)2.1.3. Scientific Literacy (PISA)2.1.4. Problem Solving (PISA)2.2. Adult Literacy<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.2.1. Prose Literacy (IALS)2.2.2. Document Literacy (IALS)2.2.3. Quantitative Literacy (IALS)3. Accessibility of Educational Institutions |
| | Subjective wellbeing | |



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

| CONCEPTS | | DIMENSIONS | LIFE DOMAINS (AMBITS) |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------|---|
| ↓ | | ↓ | ↓ |
| Quality of life | Objective living conditions | | education |
| | Subjective wellbeing | | 1. Subjective Perception and Evaluation of Education 1.1. Evaluation of Own Current Education 1.2. Evaluation of the Level of Education Attained 1.3. Evaluation of Educational Opportunities in the Country 1.3.1. Evaluation of the State of Education in the Country |



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBITS)



| | | education |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Economic and social cohesion | Disparities, inequalities and social exclusion | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regional Disparities of Education <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Regional Disparities of Access to Education and Vocational Training 1.2. Regional Disparities of Educational Performance 1.3. Regional Disparities of Investment in Education 2. Equal Educational Opportunities of Women and Men <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Sex Ratio of Reading Literacy 2.2. Sex Ratio of Educational Attainment at Upper Secondary Level 2.3. Women in Tertiary Education 2.4. Sex Ratio of Educational Attainment at Tertiary Level 3. Equal Educational Opportunities of People with Different Social Background <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Dependency of Reading Literacy on Mothers' Education 3.2. Dependency of Reading Literacy on Wealth 3.3. Dependency of Reading Literacy on Family Type 3.4. Equal Educational Opportunities of Nationals and Non-Nationals <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.4.1.1. Dependency of Reading Literacy on Parents' Nationality 3.5. Social Exclusion <p>Level of Education below the Minimum National Standard</p> |
| | Social relations and ties (social capital) | |



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBITS)



| | | education |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Economic and social cohesion | Disparities, inequalities and social exclusion | |
| | Social relations and ties (social capital) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Trust in Institutions<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.1. Trust in Education System2. Europe-specific Concerns<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1. Exchange of Pupils and Students<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1.1. Foreign EU Students in Tertiary Education2.1.2. Students in Tertiary Education Studying Abroad2.2. Knowledge of European Languages<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.2.1. Knowledge of a Foreign Language2.2.2. Knowledge of English |



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

THE MONITORING MATRIX

CONCEPTS



DIMENSIONS



LIFE DOMAINS (AMBIT)



education

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---|
| Sustainability | Human capital | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participation in Education <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. General Education <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.1. Enrolment Rates of 18-year-olds 1.1.2. Participation in Tertiary Education 1.2. Continuous Education <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2.1. Participation in Adult Education and Training 1.2.2. Participation in Adult Education 1.2.3. Participation in a Vocational or Training Course 1.2.4. Participation of Employees in Continuous Vocational Training 2. Investment in Education <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1. Public Expenditure on Education <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1.1. Expenditure per Student in Primary Education 2.1.2. Expenditure per Student in Secondary Education 2.1.3. Expenditure per Student in Tertiary Education 2.1.4. Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of GDP 2.1.5. Public Expenditure on Education as a Percentage of Total Public Expenditure 3. Private Expenditure on Education (under preparation) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1. Human Resources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1.1. F5231 Students-Teacher-Ratio in Primary Education 3.1.2. F5232 Students-Teacher-Ratio in Secondary Education 3.1.3. F5233 Students-Teacher-Ratio in Tertiary Education 4. Subjective Importance of Education |
| | Natural capital | |



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

The system can be *observed* through different **monitoring dimensions** ...

- **TIME DIMENSION** → cadence and continuity of data collection
- **TERRITORIAL DIMENSION** → size of monitored areas
- **GROUP DIMENSION** → sample of individuals



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

... in order to carry out different
monitoring perspectives allowing

- comparison between years, months, ... → **TIME PERSPECTIVE**
- comparison between areas (regions, ...) → **TERRITORIAL PERSPECTIVE**
- comparison between groups (genders, generations, ...) → **GROUP PERSPECTIVE**



2. From definition to monitoring

C. Indicators

In other words, the **MONITORING SYSTEM** should allow

- changes to be observed
- effects of decisions to be checked
- future activities to be planned



2. From definition to monitoring

D. Goals

THE “SPACE” FOR POLICIES

The policy proposal → **AIMS:**

- *Conceptual aims* (**GOALS**) → what has to be achieved
- *Operative aims* (**OBJECTIVES**) → how reach the goal
- *Planning aims* (**ACTIONS**) → specific activities to accomplish the objective



2. From definition to monitoring

D. Goals

THE “SPACE” FOR POLICIES

The policy proposal → **AIMS**:

- *Conceptual aims* (**GOALS**) → defined at different levels (local, national, ...)
- *Operative aims* (**OBJECTIVES**) → instruments and temporal prospects (monthly, annual, ...)
- *Planning aims* (**ACTIONS**) → developing changes in policies, institutions, ...



2. From definition to monitoring

D. Goals

THE “SPACE” FOR POLICIES

Goals for each pillar → examples

1. QUALITY OF LIFE

- improving objective living conditions
- increasing subjective wellbeing
- ...

2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COHESION

- ✓ strengthening informal ties
- ✓ increasing the role of institutions in encouraging social and political participation
- ✓ ...

3. SUSTAINABILITY

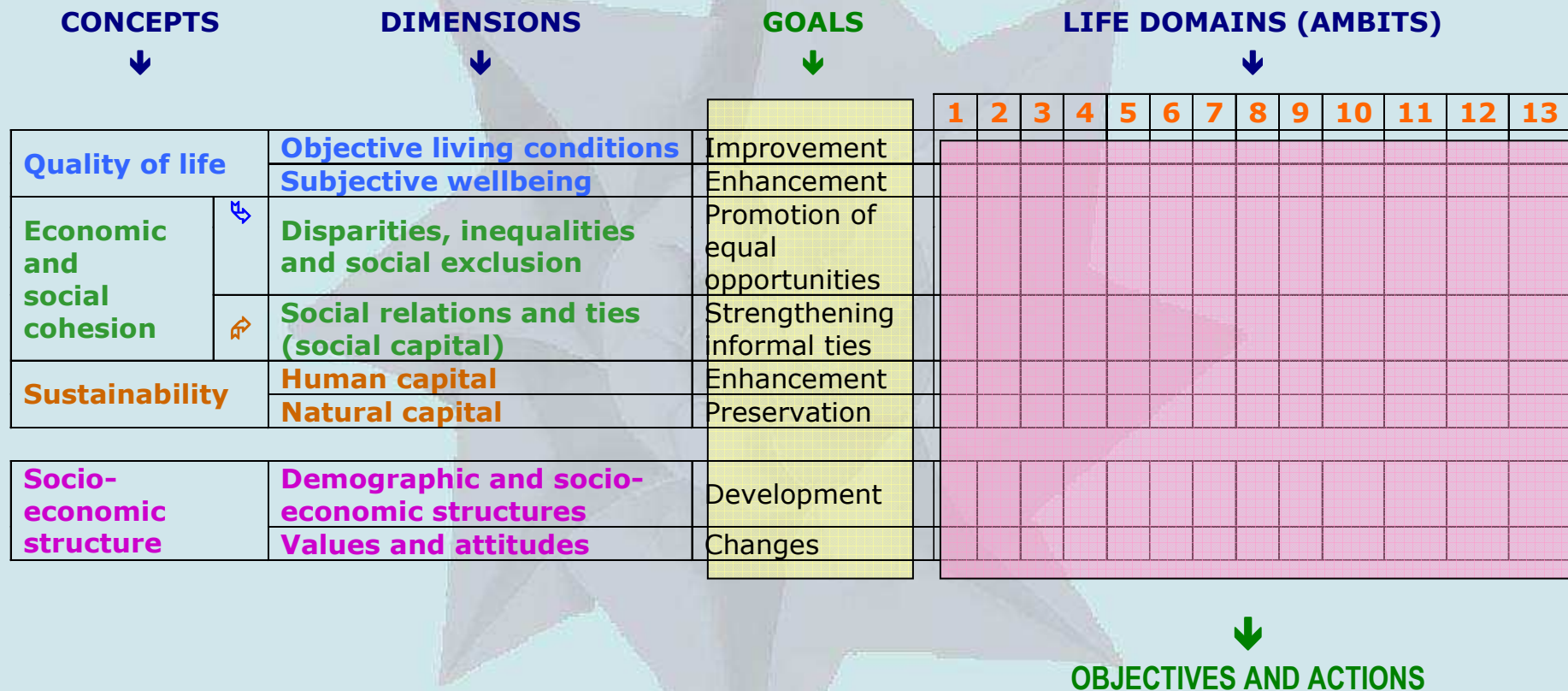
- o increasing and enhancing human capital (education, training, ...)
- o preserving natural capital
- o ...



2. From definition to monitoring

D. Goals

THE “SPACE” FOR POLICIES





2. From definition to monitoring

D. Goals

THE “SPACE” FOR POLICIES

After goals, objectives and actions have been defined



evaluation

e.g. QoL → *Evaluating taxonomy* (W. Zapf, 1975 & 1984)

| | | Subjective wellbeing | |
|-----------------------------|------|----------------------|--------------------|
| | | high | low |
| Objective living conditions | high | <i>well-being</i> | <i>dissonance</i> |
| | low | <i>adaptation</i> | <i>deprivation</i> |



Summary

1. Attempts to classify different concepts of *good society*
2. From definition to monitoring
3. Towards the fulfilment of a *good society*: what is needed?



3. Towards the fulfilment of a good society

The monitoring of societal wellbeing should be grounded on:

- a solid *democratic system*
- a transparent system of *information (media system)*
- *education* of the citizens



3. Towards the fulfilment of a good society

In this, an important role is played by ...

- the **EDUCATION AND UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**
- the **OFFICIAL STATISTICS**

... two strategic and institutional sectors

... both should meet social consensus



3. Towards the fulfilment of a good society

ARE INDICATORS ENOUGH?

We could image the policy-maker like a pilot sitting at the flight desk ...



Statistics have the task of defining, constructing and developing the instruments located in the cockpit.



3. Towards the fulfilment of a good society

ARE INDICATORS ENOUGH?

This activity needs:

- a clear definition of destination (→ *goals*)
- a democratic process allowing the community to take a shared decision concerning destination (→ *democracy*)
- a deep knowledge of pre-conditions (→ *resources*, ...)
- a constant monitoring of flight conditions (→ *monitoring*)



3. Towards the fulfilment of a good society

ARE INDICATORS ENOUGH?

This activity needs:

- a continuous transmission and sharing of information on flight conditions (→ *communication and information system*)
- a cultural environment available to support *scientific research* (basic and applied) to improve the whole system's conditions
- a system allowing the community to face and manage emergencies (→ *welfare and social security, ...*)



3. Towards the fulfilment of a good society

ARE INDICATORS ENOUGH?

If even just one of these items is missed, pursuing a *good society* is seriously damaged.



References

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Thank you for your attention

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