UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI FIRENZE

FLORE
Repository istituzionale dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze

Quality of life: reflections, studies and research in Italy

Questa è la Versione finale referata (Post print/Accepted manuscript) della seguente pubblicazione:

Original Citation:

Quality of life: reflections, studies and research in Italy / F.Maggino. - In: SOCIAL INDICATORS NETWORK NEWS. - ISSN 0885-6729. - STAMPA. - 104:(2010), pp. 6-8.

Availability:

This version is available at: 2158/437073 since:

Terms of use:

Open Access

La pubblicazione è resa disponibile sotto le norme e i termini della licenza di deposito, secondo quanto stabilito dalla Policy per l'accesso aperto dell'Università degli Studi di Firenze (https://www.sba.unifi.it/upload/policy-oa-2016-1.pdf)

Publisher copyright claim:

(Article begins on next page)

12 October 2024

SINET

Fall, November 2010 • Number 104
ISSN 0885 6729

SOCIAL INDICATORS NETWORK NEWS

A Quarterly Review of Social Reports and Research on Social Indicators, Social Trends, and the Quality-of-Life.
News Included of Research Committee 55 on Social Indicators and Social Reporting of the International Sociological Association.
Newsletter of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON AMERICA IN THE EARLY 2000S

The American Human Development Project of the Social Science Research Council recently published a report on the state of the United States using the capabilities conceptual framework of Amartya Sen and the United Nations Human Development Programme (UNDP). The lead authors of the report are Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis, each of whom has previously worked on human development issues at both the community and macro levels in over 40 developing nations. Patrick Nolan Guyer was chief statistician for the report and Ted Lechterman served as a researcher and contributing writer. This group was advised by a panel of social scientists and statisticians. This Human Development Report is the second produced for the United States, following the inaugural 2008-2009 report.

Lewis, Kristen and Sarah Burd-Sharpe. 2010. The Measure of America, 2010-2011: Mapping Risks and Resilience. New York: New York University Press. xvi+321pp.

Component Indicators and Overall Trends in the US HDI

The *capabilities approach* to the measurement of human well-being and the general UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) – with its overall components of *health* (a long and healthy life), *education* (access to knowledge), and *economic well-being* (a decent standard of living) – are, of course familiar tools to members of the social indicators and quality-of-life studies research community. For more developed societies, the specific indicators used as inputs to the UNDP HDI usually are modified, and this is the case in the present study. *Life expectancy at birth* is used as the key indicator of health in both the UNDP HDI and in the present study. But adult literacy and school enrollment at the elementary school level and above in the UNDP HDI are replaced as indicators of access to knowledge by *degree attainment and school enrollment at the preschool level and above.* And Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is replaced as the standard of living indicator by *median personal earnings*. The authors provide reasonable justifications for these substitutions.

Table 1 (pg. 3) of the report reproduced below gives the US HDI values and the specific numerical entries for each of the components (with four indicators for educational degree attainment) for the years 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2005, and 2008. It can be seen that the HDI value for 2008 is about four times the 1960 value, with the average American in 2008 living nearly nine years longer than in 1960, twice as likely to have graduated from high school, almost four times as likely to earn a bachelor's degree, and earning twice as much (adjusted for inflation). Of course, these indicator and HDI values generally do not reflect the full effects of the Great Recession of 2007-2009, which will either stall the improvements or result in deteriorations.

In brief, these indicators and the HDI show substantial improvements in human development in the US across the past half century. For instance, the HDI in 2008 is over four times its value in 1960, and some of the specific indicators show similar rates of improvement. In addition, there is evidence of slowing of improvements of some of the indicators in recent years; this is not unique to the US among developed countries and, in part, may be due to "ceiling effects" on some indicators, that is, to the greater societal effort (and costs associated therewith) needed to obtain improvements in certain segments of an indicator's scale than in others. For instance, the nearly doubling in the percent of the adult population with a least a high school diploma from 41.1 in 1960 to 80.4 in 2000 shown in Table 1 obviously cannot be matched in the 40 years from 2000 to 2040, as the percentage cannot go above 100. And increase from

(Continued on next page.)

In this Issue...

REVIEWS:

A Human Development Report on America in the Early 2000s 1-4

NEWS:

Quality of Life: Reflections, Studies and Research in Italy 6-7

Obtaining Weights: From Objective to Subjective Approaches In View of More Participative Methods In the Construction of Composite Indicators of Well-Being .. 5

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Call for Abstracts, 3rd International Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators, "Children's Well-Being: The Research and Policy Challenges," 8

Call For Papers Applied *Research in Quality of Life*, The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies 4

Editor's Note: This issue commences with a review of a major new social report on well-being in America in the early 2000s. Next up are news reports by Filomena Maggino on a recent conference in Florence, Italy on quality of life in Italy and recent developments in the study thereof. This is followed by a news item from Filomena on a session on statistical issues in the construction of composite indicators to be held 2011.

SINET
Social Indicators Network News

EDITOR EMERITUS:
Abbott L. Ferriss,
Atlanta, GA

COORDINATING EDITOR/
PUBLISHER: Kenneth C. Land,
Duke University, Durham, NC

MANAGING EDITOR:
Rob Marks,
Duke University, Durham, NC

CORRESPONDING EDITORS:

Children, Youth and Education:
Donald J. Hernandez
Bureau of the Census,
Washington, DC

Health and Aging:
Linda K. George and
Deborah T. Gold,
Duke University, Durham, NC

General Social and Cultural Trends:
James A. Davis,
National Opinion Research Center,
Chicago, IL

John P. Robinson,
University of Maryland,
College Park, MD

Marketing/Quality of Life Research:
M. Joseph Sirgy,
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
& State University

Social Forecasting/Futurology
Joseph Coates,
Coates and Jarratt, Inc.
Washington, DC

Subjective Well-Being and the Quality of Life:
Ed Diener,
University of Illinois
at Urbana-Champaign

International Correspondents:

Asia and the Pacific:
Mahar Mangahas, Philippines,
Social Weather Stations,
Quezon City, The Philippines

Dudley L. Poston
Texas A&M University,
College Station, TX

Europe:
Maria Ciechocinska,
University of Agriculture & Education, Zytni, Poland

Lief Gouledo
Stockholm, Sweden

Wolfgang Glatzer
Frankfurt, Germany

Zsolt Speder
Budapest, Hungary

(Continued from previous page.)

the 85 percent in 2008 shown in Table 1 will be harder because, in 1960 much of the adult population had been educated in the early part of the 20th century when school attainments were low and thus cohort replacement of older birth cohorts with relatively low high school graduation rates with younger cohorts with higher rates in the period 1960 to 2008 was part of the demographic metabolism. Today, those older cohorts by and large are extinct and the remaining 15 percentage points to achieve the maximum possible high school diploma rate requires addressing difficult challenges that involve schools, parents, neighborhoods, and communities.

Population and Geographical Diversity and Disparities in Well-Being

Another major theme in the report is a documentation that the US has enormous variability in the modified HDI and its component indicators – variability by geographical region and residential location, gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Here are some key findings:

Health

- While overall life expectancy at birth in 2008 was 78.6 years, Asian Americans live, on average, 13 years longer than African Americans, more than 12 years longer than Native Americans, more than 8 years longer than whites, and nearly 4 years longer than Latinos. These differentials are the subject of active research programs in demography and epidemiology, some of which is cited in the report.

- The 11 states with the shortest life spans are in the South.

- Life expectancy in Virginia's 8th Congressional District, in suburban Washington, DC, is 10 years longer than in nearby West Virginia's 3rd Congressional District, in the rural southern part of the state.

Access to Knowledge

- • In every racial and ethnic group studied except Asian Americans, women have higher educational attainment and enrollment than men. Again, this is a subject of many social science research studies, some of which is cited in the report. These studies highlight such things as changing gender roles in the last half of the 20th century and differentials in the jobs at similar pay levels available to women (more white collar) and men (more blue collar) and the associated incentives for educational attainment in recent decades.

- Washington, DC, scores highest on the Education Index developed for the report; 85.8 percent off adult residents are high school graduates, and 26.7 percent have graduate or advanced degrees. Arkansas ranks last, with 82 percent and 6.3 percent, respectively. Thus, the greatest disparities among the US states on educational attainment are not at the high school graduation level, but rather in the attainment of graduate or advanced degrees.

Standard of Living

- Washington, DC has the highest medial earnings, at $40, 342; Arkansas has the lowest, at $23,471; note the similar rankings on the previous bullet.

- The highest income quintile (upper 20 percent) of US households received slightly more than half of the nation's total income. The poorest quintile receives 3.4 percent. These disparities have grown over the past four decades with changes in the distribution of jobs in the US associated with the transition to a post-industrial society; i.e., towards more professional and technical jobs at relatively high incomes and fewer unionized, relatively well-paying jobs at the middle and lower ends of the income scale.

- At the end of the 2007-2009 recession, the unemployment rates among the bottom tenth of US households was 31 percent – higher than the overall unemployment rate during the worst year of the Great Depression; for households earning $150,000 and over, the unemployment rate was just over 3 percent.

In brief, the US, with its great geographical and population diversity also has huge differentials and disparities in human development. One of the strengths of this theme in the report is its use of maps and other graphical devices to illustrate the disparities. For instance, Map 2 reproduced below shows years of life expectancy at birth by each of the 435 Congressional Districts.

Map 2 documents some of the geographical disparities in life expectancy cited above – with gaps of about 8 years between the lowest and highest levels among the districts. There also is a substantial positive correlation by Congressional District of the HDI and the estimated life expectancies; in other words, the development of human capabilities in education and standard of living dimension is associated with increased life expectancy at birth.

Reducing Risks and Increasing Resilience

The first *Measure of America* volume focused primarily on the introduction of the human development idea to a US audience. The present volume begins a theme of risks and resilience – threats to human well-being in the United States such as events and conditions

(Continued on next page.)

Table 1 Historical Trends in Human Development, 1960-2008

YEAR	AMERICAN HD INDEX	LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH (years)	AT LEAST HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA (%)	AT LEAST BACHELOR'S DEGREE (%)	GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE (%)	SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (%)	MEDIAN EARNINGS (2009 DOLLARS)
2008	5.17	78.6	85.0	27.7	10.2	87.3	29,755
2005	5.05	77.9	84.2	27.2	10.0	86.8	29,994
2000	4.67	77	80.4	24.4	8.9	82.8	30,085
1990	3.82	75.4	75.2	20.3	7.2	80.8	25,451
1980	2.86	73.7	66.5	16.2	5.6	71.9	23,548
1970	2.10	70.8	52.3	10.7	3.6	73.3	22,648
1960	1.23	69.7	41.1	7.7	2.5	76.9	17,285

(Continued from previous page.)

that chronically hamstring the development of fundamental capabilities, as well as those that erode capabilities that people already have.

Accordingly, the second parts of the chapters dealing with the three pillars of the HDI are focused on the reducing risks and increasing resilience theme. For instance, Part II of the chapter on the health component of the US HDI contains sections on risks facing everyone (obesity), men, people with low socioeconomic status, persistent and severe mental illness, African Americans, and Native Americans. Part II of the chapter on access to knowledge focuses on risks pertaining to the importance of preschool education, and success in high school and college. Part II of the chapter on the standard of living signals risks at three intervals of the life course – for children and adolescents, the working years and family balance, and retirement security. Each of these sections of the chapters ends with policy reviews, suggestions, and recommendations. Most of the latter are parts of the general American policy discourse, but it is good to have them articulated side-by-side with the statistical data on human development.

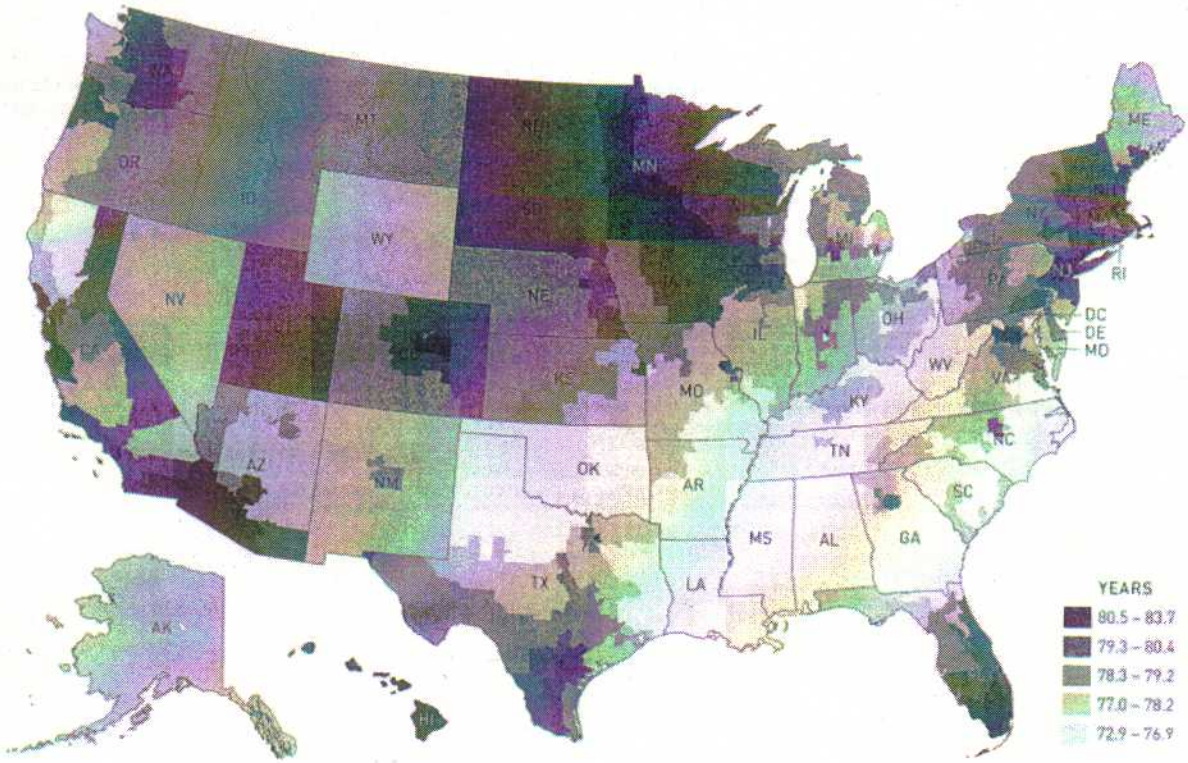
Some of the policy recommendations are already part of the American scene. For instance, the section on health policy recommendations includes such items as improving the nutrition food quality in schools, expanded bans on smoking in public places, and regulations of the amount of fats, salt, and sugar in commercially produced food. What has occurred across the US in recent years is the adoption of such policies in some communities and states (e.g., bans on transfat in New York City and Chicago), but not in others. Accordingly, future editions of *The Measure of America* series perhaps should examine the statistical associations of such policies with differential community, state, or regional human development indicators – or cite studies in which this is done.

International Comparisons

The focus of this volume is on the study of human development indicators in the US and not on international comparisons. The appendix tables do include, however, comparative data on a number of indicators for the 30 member countries of the Organisation for Economic

(Continued on next page.)

Map 2 Life Expectancy by Congressional District



(Continued from previous page.)

Co-operation and Development (OECD). Specifically, these tables contain data on 14 indicators related to a long and health life, 12 related to access to knowledge, and 15 related to a decent standard of living (detailed tables on the US indicators and HDI also are contained in the appendices as well as descriptions of the statistical methodology used in the report). This compilation of data, from OECD and World Bank reports is useful for putting human development in the US into cross-national comparative perspective.

Among the OECD countries, the US is by far the largest and most racially and ethnically diverse. Given this and the huge geographical and population disparities in human development documented in the report, it perhaps is not surprising that the US generally does not rank near the top of the 30 countries only any of the 41 indicators except when the direction of the indicator is indicative of poor performance (e.g., obesity, child poverty). The exceptions are the percentage of the population ages 25-64 who have at least tertiary education, where the US ranks second and indicators of research spending (% of GDP and US$ per capita).

In view of the huge geographical disparities in the human development indicators documented in the report, however, it should also be noted that there would be a number of the US states that would rank at or near the top of the OECD tables and others that would be at the bottom. In sum, US diversity and disparities in human development is inescapable.

Comment

This is an extensive document well within the long-standing social reporting goals – to inform the public and policy makers and officials about social conditions, well-being, and possible responses thereto – of social indicators and quality-of-life research. Its content has only been briefly identified in the foregoing description. There is much, much more detail in the volume, including many creative graphical and other displays of data. Overall, the report is well-written. It also is well-documented, with many citations to other publications and careful descriptions of its statistical data sources and methods.

The volume stands up well as a social report. Early on (pp. 12-14), it contrasts the traditional approach to understanding progress in America, which focuses solely on the economy and economic indicators like GDP and the human development approach, which focuses on how people are doing, and argues for the replacement of the former with the latter, or at least that the latter should be used alongside GDP. With its creative use of data displays, associated descriptive text, and case studies, my judgment is that it succeeds quite well as a social report and in making the case for the importance of measuring well-being.

On the other hand, with the exception of its connection to the work of Amartya Sen and the UNDP HDI through the authors' prior work, the report exhibits relatively little knowledge of the vast array of prior research and development work on the measurement of social conditions and well-being in the social indicators and quality-of-life research communities. Members of the Advisory Panel to the report are distinguished social scientists and statisticians, but none of them are central participants in the social indicators and quality-of-life research community.

What difference does this make? For one thing, there is some reinventing of the wheel in the report. This could have been reduced with some knowledge of the prior literature. Secondly, there is some too facile dismissal of important lines of research, such as on measures of subjective well-being (pp. 26-27). Third, there are substantial lines of research of which the authors seem unaware. For instance, take a topic close to my research agenda: indices of the well-being of children and youths. On page 55 of the report in a sidebar, the question "Does the American Human Development Index Measure Child Well-Being?" is addressed and it is indicated that the American Human Development Project is currently developing a "Tots Index" to gauge the well-being of infants and children from birth to age 5. This discussion seems unaware of, or at least does not acknowledge the existence of, the long-standing Kids Count Project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which produces annual estimates of a number of child well-being indicators and a state-level composite child well-being index (based on the CWI work cited in the next sentence) for the 50 US states and the District of Columbia that could have been correlated with the state-level HDI values to address the question of the extent to which the HDI measure child well-being. Similarly, the commentary is either unaware of, or ignores, the substantial peer-reviewed work underlying the annual reports of the Foundation for Child Development's Child and Youth Well-Being Index (FCD-CWI), one annual report of which focused precisely on the construction of age-specific indices, including one for children ages 0 to 5.

In sum, this is a very impressive social report. These comments should detract from the authors' outstanding accomplishments. However, let this be an open invitation to key members of the Social Science Research Council American Human Development Project to become members of, and active participants in, the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) and Research Committee 55 on Social Indicators of the International Sociological Association. They will find communities of scholars who are concerned with many of the topics discussed in this report and on whom they can draw for ideas and advice.

~ Kenneth C. Land

Call For Papers

Applied Research in Quality of Life

The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

The aim of this journal is to publish conceptual, methodological and empirical papers dealing with quality-of-life studies in the applied areas of the natural and social sciences. As the official journal of ISQOLS, it is designed to attract papers that have some direct implications for or impact on practical applications of research on the quality-of-life. We welcome papers crafted from inter-disciplinary, inter-professional and international perspectives. This research should guide decision making in a variety of professions, industries, non-profit, and government sectors such as healthcare, travel and tourism, marketing, corporate management, community planning, social work, public administration, human resource management, among others. The goal is to help decision makers apply performance measures and outcome assessment techniques based on concepts such as well-being, human satisfaction, human development, happiness, wellness and quality of life. The Editorial Review Board is divided into specific sections indicating the broad scope of practice covered by the journal, and the section editors are distinguished scholars from many countries across the globe.

Authors interested in submitting manuscripts for publication should consult the website http://ariq.edmgr.com. Manuscripts should be directed to the relevant Section Editor of the Editorial Review Board. If an appropriate Section Editor can not be identified, direct the manuscript to the current Editor in Chief, Alex Michalos.

OBTAINING WEIGHTS:

From Objective to Subjective Approaches in View of More Participative Methods in the Construction of Composite Indicators of Well-Being

A Special Topic Session to be Held at the 58th ISI World Statistics Congress Dublin, Ireland, August 2011 By Filomena Maggino

The methodology defining the whole process aimed at constructing indicators is very often presented in terms of "technology", by asserting the need to have specialist training in order to apply the procedure in a scientific and objective way. Actually the construction procedure, even though scientifically defined, is far from being objective and aseptic.

As is known, the consolidated methodology aimed at the construction of composite indicators states particular approaches allowing differential *importance weights* to be determined and to be assigned to the indicators composing the synthesis. In this ambit, it is always asserted that the choice of weights should be preferably derived from objective principles. In recent work, Hagerty & Land (2007) introduced an additional view about weighting in the context of composite indicators construction—that they should take into account the agreement among citizens concerning the importance to be assigned to each indicator. The final composite should maximize this agreement.

Even though some decisions to be taken in composite indicators construction are strictly technical, it is quite difficult to make these decisions objective since they may involve different kind of concerns. Generally, they are taken through a process accepted and shared by the scientific community. However, in certain cases, the choice and decision may be shared by a larger community. One of the ways to obtain this is that to involving individuals in the process of social indicators construction. In other words, indicator construction is not simply a technical problem but should become part of a larger debate concerning how to construct indicators, thus obtaining a larger *legitimacy*. Seen in this perspective, this topic can be placed in the ambit of an improvement of democratic participation to decisions ("res publica").

In indicator construction, weights aim at assigning differential *importance* weights to be determined and to be assigned to the indicators composing the synthesis. In this ambit, it is always asserted that the choice of weights should be preferably derived from an objective principle (Nardo et al., 2005; Ray, 2008; Sharpe, 2004). However, since developing and defining weights can always be interpreted in terms of **value judgments**, the procedure should include and involve individuals' contributions in attributing importance to different domains.

This constitutes the conceptual background on which a Special Topic Session (STS) has been proposed to (and accepted by) the International Statistical Institute (ISI) to be included in the main programme of the 58th ISI Conference, which will be held in Dublin from 21 to 26 August 2011. This Special Topic Session has been organized by Filomena Maggino (in the role of ISI member) in cooperation with Social Indicators Research Committee (RC55) of the International Sociological Association (ISA). This partnership was discussed in Gothenburg at the RC55 Business Meeting during the ISA World Congress (11-17 July 2010) in order to define the support as "collaborating society." At that meeting, the proposal for RC55's support of the STS at the ISI Conference received a wide consensus. The current RC55 President affirmed the positive support of the initiative also in consideration of the opportunity that it can give for a social indicators session at the ISI meeting.

The panel has been organized as follow:

Anne Boesch (Swiss Federal Statistical Office – Project Manager – Swiss) *Visual aggregation of an indicator system - the MONET Approach*

Chang-Ming Hsieh (University of Illinois – Chicago – USA) *Beyond multiplication: Incorporating domain importance into measures of global well-being*

Kenneth Land (John Franklin Crowell Professor of Demography and Sociology – Duke University – Durham – USA) *Statistical Properties of Equal-Weights Composite Indices*

Heinz-Herbert Noll (Director of the 'Social Indicators Research Centre' - GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, Mannheim - Germany) Discussant

Andrew Sharpe (Executive Director – Center for the Study of Living Standards – Ottawa - Canada) *The Weighting Issue in Composite Indicators: The Experience of the Index of Economic Well-being.*

Stefano Tarantola (European Commission – Joint Research Centre – Italy) *Ranking through composite indicators: Voodoo or science?*

Zhanjun Xing (Director – Centre for Quality of Life and Public Policy Research Shandong University – China) *Constructing composite indicator of wellbeing for Chinese people*

The proposed topic emerged as really interesting during the discussion at a Special Topic Contributed Paper Meeting (STCPM) – ***Subjective Data Analysis in the Perspectives of New Approaches in Measuring Well-Being of Societies***, organized by Filomena Maggino at the 57th ISI conference in Durban (South Africa). That discussion raised the necessity to go into more depth. The 58th ISI conference in Dublin seems to offer the right opportunity for that. The topic is also discussed in other scientific meetings and conferences (e.g., International Sociological Association, and so on). The idea is to involve in the discussion scholars with different experiences and expertise in this (technical, but not only) topic, in a multidisciplinary perspective. The speakers' competences are strictly related to Applied Statistics, while their wide experiences predict an interesting and significant discussion among them at the ISI conference.

References

Hagerty, M.R., Land, K.C. (2007) "Constructing Summary Indices of Quality of Life: A Model for the Effect of Heterogeneous Importance Weights", *Sociological Methods and Research*, Vol. 35, n. 4, 455-496.

Hsieh, C.M. (2003) "Counting importance: The case of life satisfaction and relative domain importance", *Social Indicators Research*, n. 61, pp. 227–240.

Hsieh, C.M. (2004) "To weight or not to weight: The role of domain importance in quality of life measurement", *Social Indicators Research*, n. 68, pp. 163–174.

Nardo M., M. Saisana, A. Saltelli and S. Tarantola (EC/JRC), A. Hoffman and E. Giovannini (OECD) (2005) *Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and Userguide*, OECD, Statistics Working Paper. Sharpe A., J. Salzman (2004) *Methodological Choices Encountered in the Construction of Composite Indices of Economic and Social Well-Being*, Center for the Study of Living Standards, Ottawa, CAN.

Conference in Florence

Florence, 9-10 September 2010

Quality of Life. Reflections, Studies and Researches in Italy

QUALITY OF LIFE: REFLECTIONS, STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN ITALY

By Filomena Maggino[1]

The Quality-of-Life Movement in Italy

Alongside international network development, theoretical reflection and applied research on quality of life found it hard to take shape in Italy, especially in the academic field. However it should be pointed out that several local administrations promoted numerous studies and research projects on liveability of cities and regions. In fact, many pioneer territorial experiences were accomplished during the 1970s, promoted by cities, provinces and regional administrations (e.g., the Bilanci Sociali d'Area, Regional Social Balance, in Milan), which testified to a wide interest in quality-of-life studies at local level. Other efforts occurred, even though their nature is typically journalistic, such as the annual report on quality of life in Italian provinces realized by "Sole 24", a national daily business newspaper.

More recently, a campaign (***Sbilanciamoci!***) involving 39 associations, NGOs and networks working on globalisation, peace, human rights, environment, fair trade, ethical finance, urged the development of an alternative index for analysing the quality of life, to be used by Local Authorities to guide public actions. The ***QUARS*** is a synthetic index that takes into account different dimensions of development at the regional level (quality of production and consumption, environmental sustainability, democratic participation, and so on). During the past several months, the *Sbilanciamoci!* campain promoted a national roundtable on using indicators of social and environmental quality in public policies. The document, produced through a discussion among a huge group of Italian experts (academics, scholars, researchers, and so on) and supported by many civil society organizations, aims at urging national institutions to use different perspectives in assessing country wellbeing. The document will be submitted to the Italian Parliament and Government.

In the end, all those experiences were fragmentary, with low comparability and theoretical and methodological reflections.

At the same time, Official Statistics have been developing important experience in quality of life research, like the Multipurpose Survey project, introduced by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) during the 1990s, which continues to today. The System of Multipurpose Surveys provides Official Statistics with important subjective data, completing the monitoring of country wellbeing, perfectly in line with the perspective emerged during the satellite meeting "Measuring subjective well-being: an opportunity for National Statistical Offices?", held in 2009 in Florence (http://www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it/Content_en/Collateral_1.htm).

The 2010 Florentine Conference:

"Quality of life: Reflections, Studies and Research in Italy"

Given this background, organizing a national conference on quality of life seemed to be a precious occasion in order to evaluate the state of the art and to take stock of the development of quality-of-life studies in Italy, by comparing different experiences, also referable to different scientific disciplines, and trying to reconsider and reassemble them into a single and joint frame. In a long-run view, the conference's goal should have been creating an Italian network of scholars working in the quality-of-life field, allowing exchanges of experiences and the ability to create opportunities for training and education, by involving also national and international organizations and research centres in the quality of life field.

The conference "Quality of life: Reflections, Studies and Research in Italy" took place in the magnificent setting of the CISL National Study Centre in Florence on September 9 and 10, 2010.

The event was supported by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), the University of Florence, the University of Milan-Bicocca, the Catholic University of Milan, the Istituto degli Innocenti, the Italian Statistical Society, the Italian Sociological Association, the Cultural Foundation for Ethic Responsibility, the CISL – National Study Centre.

The conference involved 150 scholars from all over Italy, from academic institutions, national (Ministries), and local institutions (Regions and Cities), and civil society organizations. A big and well-qualified research delegation from ISTAT participated, testifying to the relevance of the meeting. The meeting was joined also by Italian researchers working abroad (Ireland, Finland, Switzerland), who found the conference a valued opportunity to get in touch with colleagues living and working in Italy. Statisticians, sociologists, psychologists,

(Continued on next page.)

CISL – National Study Centre, Florence (Conference venue)

[1] Professor of Social Statistics – University of Florence. Vice-President of the International Society of Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS). Chair of the *IX ISQOLS* conference (2009 – Florence) and *Quality of life. Reflections, studies and researches in Italy* conference (2010 – Florence).

(Continued from previous page.)

physicians, economists, architects, communicators, educators, civil servants and other experts made the discussion captivating and engaging. The participation of many young scholars, submitting excellent and original work, revealed a promising future for quality-of-life research in Italy.

More than 80 papers were presented, all of high quality, organized in parallel sections focusing on several topics, testifying to the multidisciplinary nature of the conference theme. In particular, there were sessions on:

- Quality of life, happiness and wellbeing in the history of sociology and philosophy
- Quality of life and research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches
- Quality of life in official statistics: consolidated and emerging approaches
- Quality of life: databases and local researches
- Quality of life, civil service and civil society: strategies for analysis and intervention
- Quality of life: consultation and deliberative processes
- Quality of life and sustainability: health, environment, and wellbeing
- Quality of life and welfare
- Quality of life and work
- Quality of life and human development
- Children quality of life: society focusing on childhood
- Quality of life in developmental age
- Quality of life and urban context: individuals, society and architecture

A picture from the meeting.

Enrico Giovannini – ISTAT, President-Giampaolo Nuvolati – University of Milan-Bicocca, professor of SociologyFilomena Maggino – University of Florence, professor of Statistics

The two plenary sessions turned out to be of high level. The first one, organized at the beginning of the conference, hosted Enrico Giovannini's enchanting opening lecturer on *Measuring wellbeing: future opportunities and perspectives*. The global movement urging new approaches in measuring wellbeing of societies does not find Italy unprepared, also from official statistics point of view. Giovannini, the President of ISTAT illustrated how the huge amount of information and data on quality of life collected by Italian Official Statistics offers promising perspectives in measuring and monitoring the national wellbeing and requires and urges the improvement of fruitful exchanges with academic research in a mutual growth.

Linda Laura Sabbadini – ISTAT, Central Director

The second plenary session hosted two invited lecturers. First, Linda Laura Sabbadini (ISTAT – Central Director) painted *Social transformations in Italy through Official Statistics* in a fascinating lecture. She showed how Official Statistics allow social changes to be observed, identified and monitored through a comprehensive framework. Then Enrica Chiappero-Martinetti (University of Pavia), Vice-President of the Human Development Capability Association, gave a lecturer on *Human development and quality of life: reflections after twenty years from the first UNDP report on human development*, by introducing important elements of discussion, also from the methodological point of view, on human development approach.

Results of the Italian Conference

The Florentine event was judged by the participants a precious occasion allowing exchanges, discussion, and comparisons. In this sense, the goal of creating an Italian network of quality-of-life researchers and scholars was completely reached. Future developments of the network were discussed by all the participants during a working session. Firstly, a proposal to establish an Italian Association of Quality of Life Studies found unanimous consensus. This new association – whose activities should also require the organization of an annual conference – can find linkages also with other national and international organizations and research centres involved in quality-of-life field. The participants also discussed opportunities to organize a series of laboratories, in which competences and knowledge can meet local experiences and realities in useful discussions and exchanges. Particular attention will be paid to the creation of special training and educational modules through a deep co-operation between universities and national institutions, like ISTAT.

The conference showed once again (as happened in 2009 with the IX conference of the *International Society of Quality of Life Studies*) that the Florentine group – with its activities – is a key and leading team in Italy in quality-of-life field. (http://www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it/). Moreover, the Florentine meeting testified that the topic has definitively emerged from the academic field and now has a firm presence in policy agendas and among policy goals in Italy.

More information about the conference [in Italian]: http://www.statistica.it/qol

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS
3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CHILD INDICATORS
CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING: THE RESEARCH AND POLICY CHALLENGES
UNIVERSITY OF YORK, UK.
27-29 JULY 2011

You are cordially invited to submit abstracts for papers to be presented at the 3rd International Conference of the International Society for Child Indicators to be held at the University of York, UK 27-29 July 2011. Information about the conference and registration is available on the conference website at http://www.york.ac.uk/conferences/ISCI2011/

Abstracts on any topic relating to child indicators would be welcomed. Papers with a comparative content are encouraged. Methodological papers would be received with pleasure. We hope to organise themed parallel sessions on the following subjects during the conference:

National and international surveys of children
Subjective child well-being
International comparisons of child well-being
National child well-being strategies
National reports on child well-being
Child well-being in developing countries especially Africa, Asia and Latin America
Combining qualitative and quantitative measures
Indicators in evaluation studies
Community level child well-being indicators
Constructing indices
Longitudinal studies
Different domains of child well-being
Listening to children/child participation in research
Inequality among children, intergenerational transitions
Policies services that achieve good outcomes for children

Abstracts from graduate students are also welcomed. There will be student reductions for the conference fee but there is no other funding available for delegates. There will be opportunities to present posters.

Please send abstract as an email containing

Title of paper:
Author(s):
Organisation:
Abstract (300 words max):
To: isci2011@events.york.ac.uk
Deadline: 31st January 2011

SINET

Social Indicators Network News

Kenneth C. Land, Editor
Department of Sociology
Box 90088, Duke University
Durham, NC 27708-0088 USA
151-1057-6936-22940