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### ***The Development of Social Quality between 1994 and 2014***

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## ***THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL QUALITY between 1994 and 2014***

### *Introduction*

This document presents an overview of the development of social quality theory, methodology and approach since the 1990s. It addresses questions related to the aims, the background and the results. The presented results are those of a collective endeavour. In one way or the other, a large number of scientists in Europe, Asia and Australia contributed to this work. Of all them were inspired to present something new to address current and upcoming societal questions. The rationale was (and is) to contribute to an increased emphasis on humanity and humility instead of the incessant 'look-at-me-ethos' as a modern expression of hedonistic egocentrism. From the start the aim was and remains to make the ideas applicable to key societal questions as expressed in policy areas at local, national, regional and global levels. The main motive remained to **support citizens** to play a responsible role in the development of their daily lives. In the context of social quality theory this refers to the 'social empowerment of citizens'. This document encompasses an overview of the 'pre-stage' and subsequent four stages of the elaboration of the theory, methodology and approach. In the beginning the focus was directed towards issues related to European Union issues. As a result of the extension of collaboration with scientists from other continents the focus turned upside down. In the beginning of the fourth stage this resulted in the orientation towards the interrelationships of 'development toward sustainability', the 'change of societal complexities' and 'sustainable urban development'. In the context of this encompassing 'problematique', processes in policy areas (employment, housing, public health, ageing, migration etc) in Europe, Asia, Australia and other continents should be analysed. They are expressions of this context and cannot be understood in isolation or as 'sui generis'. This represents a challenging scientific journey to contribute to new politics and policies.

### ***The EFSQ's History and its European Orientation***

#### ***The establishment of the EFSQ***

The European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ) was established at a European wide

conference, which took place at the Dutch Presidency of the European Union on social quality in Amsterdam, June 1997. The conference was organized by the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports with support by the European Commission, in collaboration with SISWO (the Dutch University Institute for the coordination of research in the social (and economic) sciences). Its restricted networking research infrastructure – supported by different Western European universities and especially from the beginning until now by the University of Sheffield in the UK - was financed by SISWO until 2000. The possibilities for starting the theory of social quality were created by different research practices in the 1990s. First, at a European level by an international conference on the issue of ageing in Stockholm – June 1992 – and by the work carried out by the European Observatory on Social Exclusion and the European Observatory on Older People, both organized by the European Commission. They brought together scientists who were looking for a new orientation. Second, six lively international oriented Dutch symposia on the future of the European welfare states and three international expert-meetings on the socio-economic transformation of Europe. They were initiated by SISWO and connected the scientists who participated in the first round of meetings. The third expert-meeting in 1996 resulted into a tentative articulation of the concept of social quality. It was intended to comprehensively explore the quality of societal complexities (economic, juridical, political, cultural etc).

### ***The EFSQ's first main book***

This new orientation was articulated in the first book, *The Social Quality of Europe* (Kluwer Law International, 1997), contributed to by 25 authors from all over Europe. It concerns a preliminary start of the comprehensive theory on social quality and various articles about aspects of the European unification, which delivered the inspiration for this fresh start. The purpose was to present an alternative to the one-sidedness of European unification and the lack of an adequate theory to address it. The authors argued that because of the exclusive focus within the European Union on economic and monetary questions it was moving towards a policy deadlock. As the EU's *Comité des Sages* concluded at that time: this one-sidedness will not create a citizens' Europe. The call for a creative dialogue between economic policies and all other policies to enable acceptable societal circumstances - the sine qua non for a citizens' Europe – will come to nothing without a clear focus and a realistic vision which sets aside the traditional divisions between economic and all other policies. These other policies remain in a handmaiden position of economic policies. This is also the basic lesson of the crisis of the European Monetary Union (EMU) since 2009; economic integration cannot function without political integration and vice versa. A simple example may underline this. Dealing with 'bad loans' is a major political challenge for all members of the EMU. Without this, the banking system, which caused the current financial crisis, cannot be

transformed at all. This also implies a change of the current dominant economic paradigm, which hinders a likewise connection between the economic and the political is also needed.

### ***The Amsterdam Declaration on Social Quality***

On June 10th 1997 at a public ceremony in Amsterdam, after the European conference, a group of European scientists presented the **Amsterdam Declaration** on the social quality of the European Union and discussed it afterwards with a lively audience of scientists and policy makers. The intention behind this Declaration is to remind policy makers and citizens about the unique nature of the Western European approach, which comprises both economic development (and acceptable forms of competitiveness) and equity and solidarity. But the current dominant emphasis on economic processes, based on neo-liberal (and also hedonistic) principles which do not recognise central values such as human dignity or equal value, will lead to a downgrading of a comprehensive approach and, with it, to a loss of legitimacy for the Union. More than 1000 scientists from all over Europe gave their support to the Declaration. It was presented to the President of the European Parliament in October 1997. It claims that:

*'Respect for the fundamental human dignity of all citizens requires us to declare that we (...) cannot countenance a Europe with large numbers of unemployed, growing numbers of poor people and those who have only limited access to health care and social services. These and many other negative indicators demonstrate the current inadequacy of Europe to provide social quality for all its citizens'.*

For instance, currently, these negative signs lead to extreme inequalities in the USA which according to the **New Herald Tribune** (September 2013, 9) are poisoning that society and its democratic institutions.

### **Summary**

In the previous sections the 'what' and the 'why' of the start of social quality thinking was explained. From the European Commission, the Dutch Government, SISWO and many universities in Europe support was given to make an interpretation of policy processes which delivered arguments for new scientific orientation and related scientific research (the 'how'). The outcomes of this 'pre-stage' are the increasing support by representatives of universities in Western European (including Northern and Southern countries) and Eastern European countries. The research affirmed a thorough fragmentation of scientific work, which frustrates a comprehensive understanding of the problematic results of the European unification thus far. This work inspired the start of the first stage.

## ***The EFSQ's first stage (1998-2001)***

### ***Theorizing 'the social'***

In 2000, the EFSQ left SISWO and started a collaboration with the Felix Meritis Foundation, located in its Amsterdam Centre for Sciences and Culture (since the 18<sup>th</sup> Century) as an independent legal body. From here it has grown to become a large network committed to the social quality of the European Union. During the first stage, European scholars started theorizing the concept of **'the social'** to reformulate an alternative point of departure to the utilitarian propositions underpinning the current dominant economic paradigm. The EFSQ's first book and the European conference on social quality stimulated the organization of a series of workshops. This resulted in the assumption that human people are essentially 'social beings' and that this demands a new understanding of 'the social' as a noun and the 'social' as an adjective. The theoretical work carried out during this stage referred to the non-sofist Aristotelian roots of thinking about human beings. The arguments for this stage of social quality studies were threefold. First, a critique of the reduction of the European unification into economic integration as a technical project. This resulted into politics for stimulating economic growth - expressed with the help of GDP-outcome variables - to reduce poverty and finance welfare provisions. However, according to the social quality advocates, the European Union should be primary a 'political project' for developing the EU into a constructive world-player for increasing social justice and solidarity. This is expressed in the Amsterdam Declaration. Second, a critique of the European discourse to degrade all politics and policies into the handmaiden of specific (neo-liberal) economic politics and policies. This is of course a logical consequence of the first. It implies a Copernican changeover of the current "autonomous" financial systems at a European (and global) level. Third, a growing commentary on comparative approaches (see below).

### ***Comparison with other approaches***

The third, and at this early stage rather implicit, comment concerned the existing analytical approaches such as: quality of life, social capital, social and human development, human security and the capability approaches. All of them miss a conceptual understanding of 'the social'. In these discourses, the adjective 'social' functions as an unclear metaphor for 'the good', and 'the acceptable' seen from existing theoretical work on 'social justice' which results, logically, in a

tautology. All of them are also oriented to contribute to 'social progress' without delivering any understanding of this adjective of progress. 'The social' does not describe an independent identity nor is it an aggregate of individuals. It is an outcome of the interaction between people (constituted as actors) and their constructed and natural environment, summarized as the 'productive and reproductive interrelationships of people in everyday life'. Afterwards, these comments stimulated analyses of the various quality of life approaches, and social development, as well as a constructive comparison of the human security approach and the social quality approach in the third stage. As will be argued further, this issue played a central role in the debate on social quality indicators in comparison with indicators, connected with other approaches.

### ***The start of research projects***

During the first stage, the EFSQ was (financially) supported by the Dutch Government and especially the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, the European Commission and (in kind) by many universities in other Member States of the European Union for exploring changes of policy areas from the perspective of the preliminary social quality thinking. There were research projects on: public health, ageing, employment, the urban context, and the role of citizens (the issue of citizenship). The outcomes were communicated with universities all over Europe. Among other things this led to an invitation by the social democratic members of the ***European Parliament*** to contribute to a conference on 'the social quality of Europe' in March 2000. This also evoked the interest of DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission. Different meetings were organized in Brussels to explain the relevance for policy making of the new social quality thinking. The outcome of these discussions was the inclusion of social quality as a goal in the first EU Social Policy Agenda (2000) and the emphasis on quality of employment. With regard to public health, a start was already made during discussions between Canadian and Dutch public health experts in Canada in the 1990s, which resulted in a study about the philosophical foundation of 'modern public health' as related to social quality thinking. It is compared with 'traditional public health' (which is in fact epidemiology and biophysically oriented) and 'new public health' (based on the healthy cities' movement with its emphasis on renewing individual lifestyles in line with the quality of life approach). The outcomes were applied later in the city of The Hague (see below).

### ***The European Journal of Social Quality (EJSQ)***

The theoretical work thus far and its application to different policy areas stimulated Kingston University in London and Berghahn Books to start the *European Journal of Social Quality* in order

to publish the first outcomes of these explorations. From this side a lot of investments were made: in kind (editorial board) and financial. The purpose of this independent, peer-reviewed journal was to promote the discussion and analysis of contemporary societal issues in Europe. It was intended to stimulate a European dialogue. Six volumes and twelve issues were published. All contributions addressed in one way or another: (i) the one-side economist approach to develop the future of Europe; (ii) the current lack of conceptual coherence in the scientific world collaborating with and financed by the European Commission; (iii) the development of interdisciplinary approaches by the new social quality theory, trying to address this lack of coherence; (iv) the endeavours to apply the outcomes to different policy areas and (v) to stimulate a dialogue about the role of citizens in shaping the new identity of Europe. This latter point is of particular interest, since an appreciation of citizenship in the context of social quality plays a crucial role in the social quality theory: it delivers the foundation of identity in the societal contract within a modern democracy, as well as the principle by which relationships between individuals and their communities are organised.

### ***A choice of some relevant publications of the first stage***

During the first stage also the following studies were published, four of them in the journal:

- On the philosophical foundations of modern **public health**, *International Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 54 (2), 1999,
- On the exploration of the social quality of Europe (thematic double issue), *European Journal of Social Quality*, 1 (1&2), 1999,
- A European wide exploration of the question of **ageing** (thematic issue), *European Journal of Social Quality*, 2 (1), 2000.
- First explorations of the policy area of **employment** (thematic issue), *European Journal of Social Quality*, 2 (2), 2000.
- A study about **citizenship** and welfare protection (thematic double issue), *European Journal of Social Quality*, 3 (1&2), 2001.
- A study about **urban development** processes from the perspective of the new social quality theory, *EFSQ*, 2000.

### ***Public debates in the Netherlands: finger exercises***

At the same time, the European Commission as well as the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the European Foundation to start analyses and public debates on the overall consequences of European policies, namely the Economic Monetary Union, the extension of the



Union and the European Constitution. This took place in the framework of the project **'The Voice of Civil Europe'**, consisting of five Dutch NGO's, coordinated by the EFSQ. Its motive for the collaboration was to apply some essential aspects of the social quality theory to the side effects of the European policies at national level. As a result of this project a new Dutch journal was published by volunteers, called **'EUforum'**, coordinated by the EFSQ. It published eight issues about a range of issues concerning the relationship of The Netherlands with the European Union. Also, with support from the EFSQ more than ten public debates were organized in the Felix Meritis building in Amsterdam. With regard to the introduction of the Euro a conference was organised in this building with support by the President of the Dutch Central Bank and a Dutch newspaper, which published a hundred poems about the 'end of the guilder'. In the end these investments demonstrated the lack of 'democratic quality' in the European Union at a national level. This delivered a new inspiration for 'social quality thinking'. They also clarified the necessity for the EFSQ to operate much more on a European level and to look for collaboration with national organizations. Later, this was the argument to leave Felix Meritis in Amsterdam (focussed on public debates) and to start a project collaboration with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague (focussed on scientific explorations and the education of students from all over the world, see third stage). The EFSQ became focused on scientific work to contribute to new politics and policies.

## **Summary**

Based on the 'pre-stage' the purpose was to elaborate the social quality theory and approach, as well as to apply the preliminary results to some policy areas with the help of research projects. From the beginning endeavours were made to develop the reciprocity between deductive (theorizing social quality) and inductive forms (analysing changes of policy areas) of explorations. This implied a rethinking of 'the social' as a new leitmotiv for a comprehensive understanding of economic, juridical, political and cultural processes. The aim was to go beyond traditional European discourses. As explained, advocates of social quality thinking were enabled to find some financial support at European and Dutch levels as well as impressive support in kind by many universities in Europe, to organize or participate in workshops and seminars in different Member States as well as to produce articles. The accent on the above mentioned reciprocity stimulated the the comparative work with other approaches (see below). A key outcome was the growing interest of policy makers at European level. As the President of the European Commission - Romano Prodi – argued in 2001, the great merit of this theory is that it promotes an approach that goes beyond production, economic growth, employment and social protection and gives self-fulfilment for individual citizens a major role to play in the formation of collective identities. The different research projects affirmed the existing fragmentation between scientific disciplines (and sub-disciplines) and

serious misunderstandings of (utilitarian oriented) suppositions about the empowerment of citizens. All of this legitimated the understanding of the European Union as a technical-economic project and, implicitly demonstrated its lack of democracy.

## **The EFSQ's second stage (2001-2006)**

### **The EFSQ's second book**

This first stage ended with the publication of the EFSQ's second main study, ***Social Quality: A New Vision for Europe*** (Kluwer Law International, 2001). The purpose was to reflect on the outcomes of the first European conference on social quality in 1997, the first main book, the conference of the social democrats of the European Parliament on social quality, and to integrate this reflection with the new theoretical work and results of recent research projects. This integration resulted into a more explicit *design* of the social quality theory. Twenty scientists from all over Europe contributed to this book. With the first book as frame of reference they published studies on the European Union (the economic, juridical and political aspects of the unification); the current welfare state theory and practices; the role of the 'third sector'; the empirical and policy relevance of social quality; urban transformation processes; and on the social-philosophical, the theoretical, political and practical meaning of the interpretation of 'the social'. Anna Diamantopoulou – European Commissioner for Social Affairs at that time – wrote in the Foreword, that:

*'the first book has widely welcomed by European policy makers as well as Scientists across Europe. It played an influential role in the development of the new Social Policy Agenda [of the European Commission] (...) This [second] book extends and deepens our understanding of social quality and, therefore, will be an invaluable resource in both the implementation of the new Social Policy Agenda and in the modernization of the European social model'.*

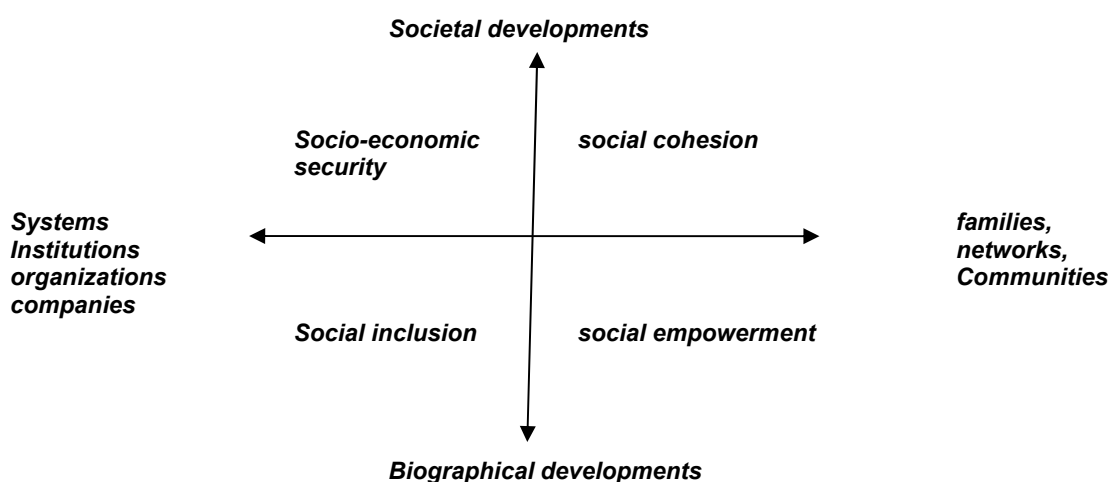
### **A new theoretical point of departure**

Among other things, the second book elaborated the idea of an interplay of two basic tensions delivering the context for the main dialectic resulting into 'the social'. This is the dialectic between processes of self-realization of human beings and the formation of collective identities. The consequences of the interplay of both tensions (the horizontal and the vertical, see Figure 1) and this dialectic is demonstrated in the change of four conditional factors, namely socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment (see Figure-1):

The theory with regard to the two basic tensions goes beyond the theory on the relation between

the world of systems and the life world (daily life). The four conditional factors are situated in four quadrants respectively. Their position refers to their main tendency. All these factors can be distinguished in domains, and these domains in sub-domains. With the help of social quality indicators we can explore the changes of these sub-domains.

**Figure 1: Two basic tensions and the conditional factors**



### ***The policy area of employment: a project concerning nine Member States***

As a result of the previous studies on employment (see above) and its second main book, the EFSQ was commissioned by DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission in 2001 to apply the first design of the social quality theory to the policy area of employment in nine Member States. The main thrust of the research concerned the significance of the 'adaptability-pillar' of European employment policies. The objective was to elaborate and apply the concept of adaptability to Europe's labour markets and especially to assess the tension between flexibility in working time and employment security. It referred to the conditional factors of social inclusion, and socio-economic security.

The Project chose the area of flexicurity as its core focus. This involves the lifelong combination of secure and flexible employment and lies at the heart of the partnership for a new work organization. Ultimately, secure employment comes down to employability, to a worker's employability throughout her/his career, whether she/he works for only one employer or for more than one. The challenge was to recognise or to determine functional indicators of flexicurity as a *domain of adaptability* and to link them to the social quality approach. The procedure was to

distinguish between its sub-domains and to choose the indicators to explore the changes in these sub-domains. By applying these functional indicators (or monitoring devices) the research found a rise in flexibility (in terms of contracts and employment conditions and of temporary work) which is not, or not systematically, tied to an updating of the conditions of security (socio-economic security). Furthermore they found that in the post-war era women's growing participation in the labour market has put increasing strains on the performance of care work (which is in general sense not taken on board by men). This has highlighted an inherent fundamental inequity and prevents the inclusion of women in other aspects of society (social inclusion). It is society's collective responsibility to alter the imbalance in traditional societal arrangements and to organise the sharing out of care work, as well as its adequate remuneration and fiscal and societal recognition.

This final conclusion based on inductive forms of reasoning – the question of this fundamental inequity - paved the way for a *new (and methodologically oriented) theoretical step*, proposed by the participants of the Project. First we should make a distinction between functional indicators to explore policy areas and indicators to analyse the changes in the conditional factors in societies. Second, the latter indicators (thus social quality indicators) are necessary but not sufficient to determine (in a quantitative sense) the nature of social quality in communities. Profiles for a qualitative based exploration of cognitive and emotional aspects – the so-called constitutional factors - are important as well. Furthermore we need ethical standards – or normative factors - to judge the outcomes of the linking of the quantitative and qualitative oriented explorations with the help of criteria. This new step enhanced the theory of social quality in a decisive way.

### ***Publications about the policy area of employment***

The participants of the EU's Employment Project published the following studies:

- the study about 'Flexicurity of Employment in the European Union', as published as the project's Final Report, *EFSQ* ([www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)), 2002.
- nine National Reports about 'Flexicurity of Employment', *EFSQ*, ([www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)), 2002.
- the study about 'Flexicurity and Security in Employment' (thematic double issue), *European Journal of Social Quality*, 4 (1&2), 2003.
- A 'Proposal for Developing Indicators, Profiles and Indicators' to analyse the nature of social quality in societies', *EFSQ*, 2002.

### ***Indicators of Social Quality in Fourteen Member States***

In a following major European project 'Network Indicators of Social Quality' (ENIQ)- financed by DG Research of the European Commission (FP5) and fourteen participating institutes in Europe and two international NGO's – a start was made with the elaboration and application of social quality indicators of the four conditional factors (see Figure 1). It has provided the basis for a holistic and theoretical approach to the social quality of daily circumstances of citizens in all Member States of the EU. The participants of ENIQ constructed, on the basis of deductive and inductive forms of reasoning, a set of 95 indicators to analyse changes in fourteen European societies. The rationale was to compare the impact of trends and contradictions in the context of global, regional and national levels on societal structures, collective practices and conventions, and the consequences for everyday life. Policy makers lack instruments to recognise and answer concerns raised in everyday life as consequences of these trends and contradictions. Furthermore they are not assisted to acknowledge the real significance – and the underlying propositions – of other approaches such as 'quality of life', 'social capital' and 'capability'. This is undermining any systematic and holistic policy development because of its technical-reductionist nature. Governance and evidence-based or indicator-oriented political practices are then very much an issue of helplessly dealing with existing and recognized complexities. They propose a misleading understanding of indicators as measurement instruments per se. ENIQ took on board the first aspect of the new step of the Project Employment to develop an alternative. It developed a theory of social quality indicators and focussed on the difference between functional indicators or monitoring devices and social quality indicators.

### ***An outcome of one of the national reports in 2006: Greek society***

The indicators study demonstrated an already highly problematic state of affairs in the Greek society in the middle of the 2000s. The social quality analysis explained that Greece has little tradition of contractual relations, collective solidarity and universal values underpinning its society. Instead 'statism' and 'clientelism' - extensive interventions of the state in the economy and a widely observed process of creation and distribution of revenue through political, rather than market criteria – have been prevalent for a long time. For example with regard to health care, missing is a systematic public health policy, instead there is inefficient operation of public hospitals, unlawful practices (e.g. under table payments to hospital doctors) fragmentation and deep inequality of health care. The unstable nature of Greek society was already clear for years and also demonstrated with the help of social quality indicators. The ostentatious refusal to interpret socio-political circumstances and take appropriate actions led to the Greek economic disaster in the second decade of this century. More or less comparable problems are recognized in Italy, Spain

and Portugal. In other words, this is a logical result of the rigid separation of the economy from its socio-political context, paving the way for reductionist types of economic causalities.

### ***The first publications about social quality indicators***

The outcomes of the work of ENIQ were published as follows:

- the Network's Final Report about 'Social Quality Indicators for Europe', *EFSQ* ([www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)), 2005.
- in fourteen National Reports, presenting the outcomes of the application of social quality indicators, *EFSQ* ([www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)), 2005
- in reports by the 'European Anti-Poverty Network' and by the 'International Council on Social Welfare', *EFSQ* ([www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)), 2005.
- and in the study 'Indicators of social quality: applications in fourteen European Countries' (thematic double issue), *European Journal of Social Quality*, 5 (1&2), 2005.

The editorial conclusion of the double issue was that it is clear that any project for producing internationally comparable operational measures of social quality faces huge intellectual and practical difficulties. However the papers in this double issue show that great progress had been made by the network and that an empirical framework for social quality research had been successfully established. Indeed, very soon this work paved the way for the extension of social quality work in the Asia-Pacific (third stage).

### ***Further theoretical work***

In the meantime some social quality scholars elaborated the second aspect of the new step, made by the Project Employment. Its participants made a distinction between three sets of factors (Figure 2). The nature of the conditional factors - reflecting the objective conditions of daily life – is constituted by human beings. Therefore a distinction is also made between four constitutional

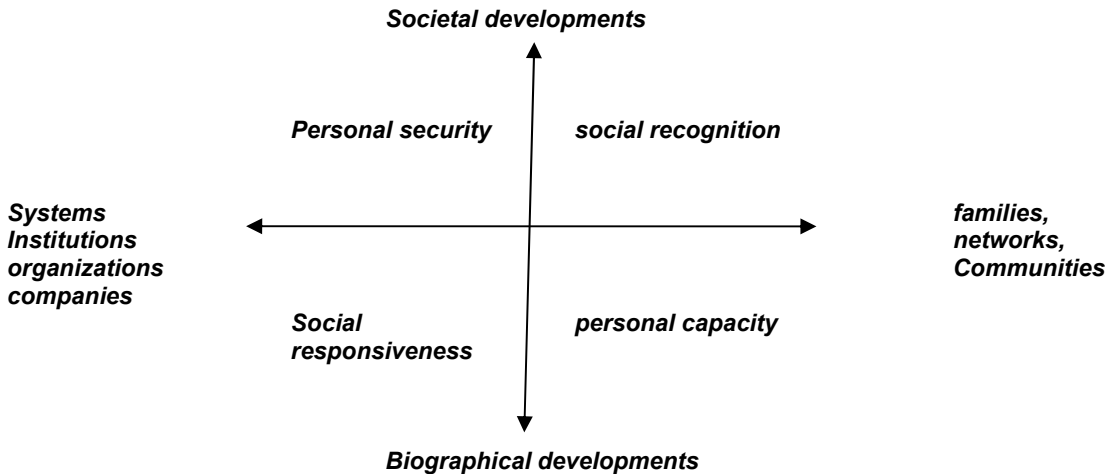
factors. In other words it is important to accentuate that since then the theory strongly recognizes two sides of the same coin, namely the cognitive and emotional (constitutional) side and the objective (conditional) side. It is based on the supposition of the role of the central dialectic between the processes of self-realisation (the first side) and the formation of collective identities (the second side).

**Figure 2. The Social Quality Architecture**

<b>constitutional factors</b> (processes)	<b>conditional factors</b> (opportunities + contingencies)	<b>normative factors</b> (orientation)
<p><i>personal (human) security</i>  <i>social recognition</i>  <i>social responsiveness</i>  <i>personal (human) capacity</i></p> <p><i>profiles for the qualification</i>  <i>of their nature and changes</i></p>	<p><i>socio-economic security</i>  <i>social cohesion</i>  <i>social inclusion</i>  <i>social empowerment</i></p> <p><b>indicators</b> for analysing  <i>trends and changes</i></p>	<p><i>social justice (equity)</i>  <i>solidarity</i>  <i>equal value</i>  <i>human dignity</i></p> <p><i>criteria to judge the outcomes</i>  <i>of the linking of constitutional and</i>  <i>conditional factors</i></p>

The outcome of the linking of the changes of the conditional and constitutional factors is judged by applying the normative factors. This theory transcends the traditional Western discourses (concerning the welfare state and the European Social Model) in two ways. First because all twelve concepts of the architecture are, in an ontological sense, related to the conceptualisation of 'the social'. Therefore all these concepts are intrinsically related. Second the cognitive, objective and normative factors of human existence (daily life) are related in an epistemological sense. These three sets of factors may be appreciated as intellectual instruments to analyse the results of the interference of the above mentioned dialectic and the interplay between two basic tensions (Figure 1). The constitutional factors add a new aspect to social quality explorations as illustrated in the following figure:

**Figure 3: Two basic tensions and the constitutional factors**



### **Summary**

In the previous sections we explained the ‘what’, the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of the work carried out during the second stage. The organisation of various workshops, expert-meetings and participation in conferences of social quality scholars led to a great number of results. The European project on employment deepened, first, specific knowledge about this policy area and, second, it also functioned as a lever of the theory. Schematically this resulted into, third, the social quality quadrant as a new methodological perspective. All of this stimulated the recognition of the difference between indicators as monitoring devices oriented on produced facts in societies or communities and the nature of social quality indicators oriented on the consequences of societal processes. The conceptualisation and application of social quality indicators to analyse changes in the four conditional factors concerning daily life represented a decisive step for the elaboration of the social quality approach. These new steps should later present new arguments for analysing the policy area of employment and all other policy areas from a substantial new perspective (stage four). These arguments would be explained in the EFSQ’s third book, published at the beginning of the fourth stage. This work prepared collaboration with the Italian Institute for Economic, Political, and Social Research, Eurispes. In its conferences the question was raised what social quality thinking could say about discourses on the ‘European Social Model’. Finally, the work carried out is used as an argument to start working with stake holders of the Dutch City of The Hague to analyse the current urban conditions and to contribute to the City’s sustainable development. In other words, the Dutch social quality team made a start on the confrontation of the theory and its methodology with daily praxis.



### ***The EFSQ's third stage (2006-2011)***

#### ***Extension to Asia and Australia: the Asian Consortium for Social Quality***

The second stage of the EFSQ opened the way for collaboration with scholars in Asia and Australia. The initiative was taken by the Chiba University in Japan. Ground work was carried out thanks to the long connection between the University of Sheffield and Hong Kong Baptist University as well as the link between Sheffield and Chiba. With a well-prepared first Asian conference in Japan the start was made for the collaboration between scholars in Japan, mainland China, South-Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Australia. The scientific journey of European scholars in articulating the social quality theory, methodology and application was compared with the contributions by Asian scholars about human security and the different policies for enhancing welfare. This social quality conference in Japan was followed by conferences in Taiwan, Thailand, mainland China and South Korea. It resulted into the construction of an Asian Consortium for Social Quality (ACSQ) as the basis for stimulating social quality research in the Asia-Pacific region. One of the questions raised was if social quality indicators – as an outcome of the second stage - are useful for analysing trends and contradictions in societies worldwide. Do central values (assumptions and propositions) underlying these indicators, differ between the 'West' and 'East'? It is assumed that the collective emphasis in Asian ontology is indeed compatible with the notion of the social as being absolutely central to and the *sine qua non* of social quality rather than the individualistic orientation of the English speaking countries. Also it was assumed that its conceptual framework is in tendency universal in nature and will be commensurable. This is a condition for international application and comparison.

#### ***The project collaboration with the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague***

In 2007 the EFSQ changed its base from Amsterdam to The Hague. It was enabled to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to start a project collaboration with the International Institute for Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague. This is an international institute for political, economic and cultural research in so-called 'developing countries' and to educate postgraduate students from Asia, Africa and South America. Of special interest is its attention towards human security approaches and the theme of sustainability. This collaboration underpinned the following activities: (i) the start of research on daily circumstances in the City of The Hague, also seen from an international perspective, (ii) to elaborate the comparison between human security and social quality, (iii) to support the start of a new international journal, and (iv) to start the attention on the

problematique of sustainability. This change of focus compared to the 'Felix Meritis orientation' functioned as an intellectual support to enhance the collaboration with Asian and Australian universities. The ISS implicitly stimulated a broadening of the original European focus to global interrelationships and changes. This demanded an exploration of European transformation processes from a global point of view. It also implied an inversion of the implicit Euro-centric orientation. The project collaboration delivered possibilities for coproduction with staff-members, invited social quality scholars to present their ideas in seminars and workshops and resulted in facilities for the EFSQ's office and meetings. The results are demonstrated in the following subsections.

### ***The focus on politics and policies of the city of The Hague: the quarter of Laak***

Stimulated by the collaboration with the ISS and with support by the Municipality of this city, members of the EFSQ board constructed the 'The Hague social quality team' to investigate urban questions of this city: how can the social quality theory, methodology and approach address these issues? A start was made with this productive triumvirate. The investments could be related to past research during the first and second stage about the policy areas of ageing, public health, migrants, urban context and employment. In the meantime - because of the end of the European indicators' project - the EFSQ staff was halved. For different reasons a choice was made for the concentration on the 'quarter of Laak', a part of the city with a more than 50% migrant population and classified on the lowest rank of liveability (determined by traditional monitoring devices). Thanks to four series of interviews by the EFSQ – made on request and financed by the Municipality - with different key-persons in this city, two decisions were made in 2009. First by the Municipality to start the 'Project development Laak' with support from four organisations (for social-housing, intramural and extramural care deliveries, wellbeing facilities, and education) for creating new urban perspectives in this quarter for their respective policy areas and their interrelationships. Second - with support from the ISS, the Municipality and these organisations - the start of 'The Hague Academic Coalition for Sustainable Urban Development' under the lead of the EFSQ, called the HACU. It connected (for the first time in The Netherlands) university departments and other knowledge institutes for an orchestrated support of a suburban territory, in this case the 'Development of Laak'.

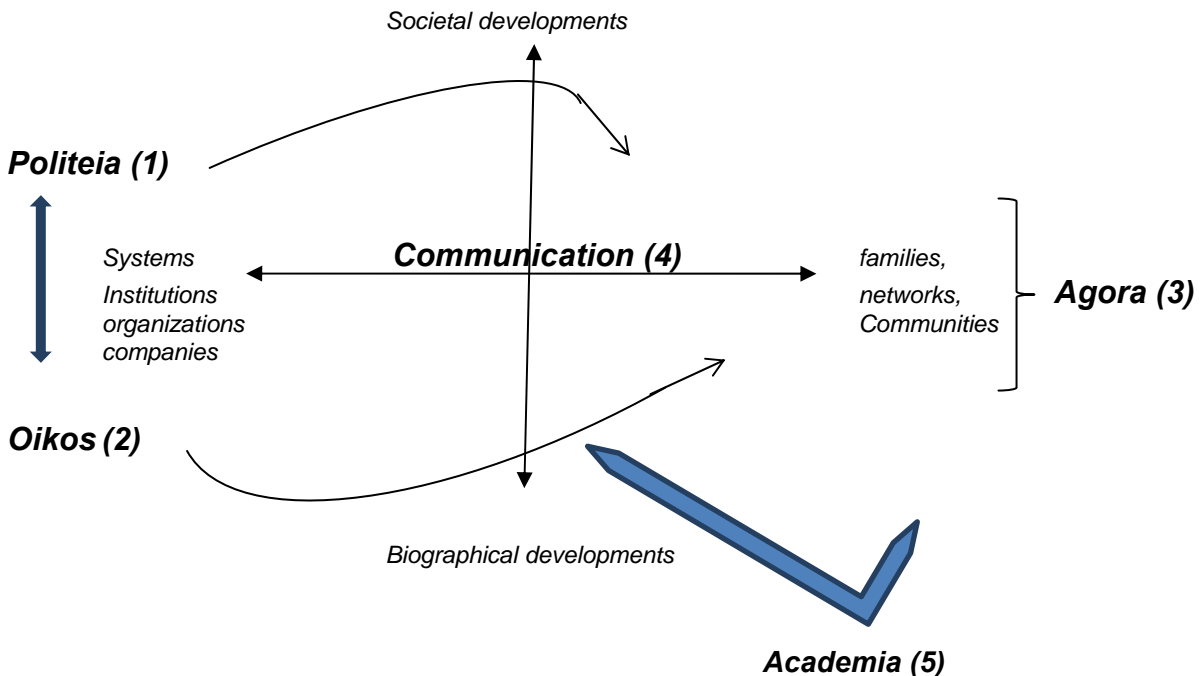
### ***Theorizing urbanism***

The reciprocity between the 'Project development Laak' and the HACU resulted in a distinction between five 'worlds' which could be situated differently in the interplay of the two basic societal tensions (Figures 1 and 3). The reflection of these situations and related societal functions

concerned the first theoretical work by the The Hague social quality team. Supposed is that this involves different methodologies, together resulting into the 'urban methodological framework.

On behalf of the quarter Laak of The Hague, the HACU started to function as a crystallisation point of the Academia. In the meantime – and thanks to the input by the EFSQ - the new plan was made to develop a 'Communication Centre' in order to understand the nature and consequences of politics and policies by the Politeia and Oikos and as a condition for developing initiatives in the Agora to enable their actors (cooperations of citizens) to cope with these politics and policies from their perspective of daily life. The HACU (=Academia) and the Communication Centre are central instruments for the empowerment of these actors of the Agora; in terms of social quality both instruments will enhance and strengthen 'social empowerment' in the Laak. This implies the development and application of five different methodologies, constituting the urban methodological framework.

**Figure 4: Application of two basic tensions to urban life**



- Politeia, namely the political system on city level and its departments,
- The Oikos, namely companies, non-for-profit organisations and professional NGO's,
- The Agora, or the complexity of daily circumstances on local level and its actors,

- The communication system which connects representatives of the different worlds, and conveys their interests, cognitive orientation and languages,
- The academia of fragmented or connected knowledge institutes.

Since the last decade many European cities aim to enable sustainable urban development. European wide research demonstrates a lack of consensus about this framework as well as a lack of consensus about the adjective 'sustainable'. Addressing this question is the main challenge of the HACU. The rationale is to reverse the subordinated position of the Agora which cannot suffice with only representative democratic rules in the face of severe societal challenges. Two working papers were published (see below) on these interventions to explain their nature and first results.

### ***The International Journal of Social Quality: a new start***

At the end of the second stage the publication of the *European Journal of Social Quality* ended. The decisive argument was the change of perspective as referred to above, namely from the European point of view to a global point of view. The Asian Consortium for Social Quality (ACSQ) gave a strong support to produce a global journal. The Zhejiang University in China decided to take the initiative and to deliver the conditions in collaboration with the EFSQ for the financing and production of the new *International Journal of Social Quality*, also published by Berghahn Journals. It is a multidisciplinary journal dedicated to promote research on social quality. It publishes papers addressing crucial problems encountered by societies of the contemporary world. The Journal will also be a platform for addressing interconnected issues concerning, for example, health care, education, migration, urban development, employment, ageing and pensions and citizenship. It will also be a forum for dialogue between social quality thinking and other approaches. Soon afterwards the editorial board added the issue of sustainability to its list of aims. The reasons for starting this international journal are at least threefold. First, to interpret the transition to global interrelationships requires journals which transcend a national or continental scope and which should contribute to a common understanding of societal processes which are commensurable. This concerns one of the most important challenges of the scientific world, to transcend the differences in understanding of our world. Second, to publish results of societal processes thanks to applied strategies of the developed and developing countries in a comparable way. Do they deliver arguments for changing the social quality theory in order to better underpin politics and policies? Third, to dispose of an extra instrument for stimulating and publishing social quality studies. The journal can extend the connections within the scientific world.

### **Specific publications of the new journal**

Examples of these studies mentioned above are:

- On social quality and welfare system and welfare society sustainability, *International Journal of Social Quality*, 1 (1), 2011.
- On social quality and the question of modern forms of citizenship, *International Journal of Social Quality*, 1 (1), 2011.
- On the prototype of social quality and its applicability to Asian societies, *International Journal of Social Quality*, 1 (1), 2011.
- On the comparison between human security and social quality, *International Journal of Social Quality*, 1 (1), 2011.
- About social quality and the social innovation discourses and strategies, *International Journal of social Quality*, 1 (2), 2011.

### **The Asian Consortium of Social Quality**

Seven international conferences on social quality in Asia have been organized by participants of the Asian Consortium of Social Quality: in Japan (1x), Taiwan (1x), Thailand (2x), mainland China (1x), South Korea (1x), Hong Kong (1x). The EFSQ contributed lectures and made strategic inputs. One of the side effects was the start of surveys which are carried out and financed by universities in seven countries in order to apply and to test social quality indicators. They were based on the original European list but amended to fit the different cultural context. An original second wave of these surveys has been carried out. Seoul National University coordinated this innovative collaboration. The first wave of surveys are oriented on different societal issues. For example in Australia, trust as an indicator of social cohesion, is found to be low. Mistrusting relationships may result in conflict and subsequently lead to inequalities in health. In Taiwan the difference in social inclusion between typical and atypical workers leads to insufficient social protection for the latter. The huge amount of Asian and Australian work demands an interpretation and comparison at a global level. What are the similarities and differences with the European data on the application of social quality indicators? How to proceed in Asia-Pacific and Europe in order to analyse societal trends in a comparable way, and what can we learn from the recent Asia-Pacific surveys? With this in mind the discussion is started about new strategies for developing further the theory, its methodology and applications.

It is also of interest to refer to explorations as to why people in Southern Korea are not satisfied with their daily lives although this society demonstrates an impressive improvement in both economic growth (based on GDP-variables) and democratization. By applying the social quality indicators on social cohesion researchers recognised a growing distrust between different societal classes and a weakening of structural empowerment. Furthermore, they also recognized that trust in public institutions has declined over the last decade. Political parties are the least trusted, followed by the government and the judicial system. The problem is that trust in these institutions is getting lower. This study received an OECD-award for its contribution to ideas about 'social progress' as connected with the interpretation of 'the social'. Debates in the Asian conferences on social quality stimulated also a change of orientation. First of all, the original Eurocentric orientation hinders a real comparison of processes globally. Second, it is highly important to understand the nature of complementarity of the human security and social quality approaches. Third, important issues of global processes refer to the sustainability issue; they should be taken on board in social quality studies. To address this question we should, fourth, orient ourselves on the issue of sustainable urban development because 'sustainability' will be (or not) realised in the urban context where very soon more than 80% of humankind will live. All this stimulated the final change (in the fourth stage) of the EFSQ into the International Association on Social Quality (IASQ).

### ***The compatibility of human security and social quality***

With regard to the complementarity between the human security and social quality approaches, the conference of the Human Development and Capability Association in Delhi dedicated two sessions to this issue in 2008. This association promotes research on poverty, justice and well-being, building from ideas in the capability approach and the related human development approach (seen in the annual Human Development Reports from UNDP and some national and local authorities). Those ideas include a central concern with life opportunities that in reality are open to individual persons and opportunities to do and be things that the persons or their representatives have reason to value. The human development perspective has been extended into 'human security' thinking, which has spread quite widely outside the UN system. The two sessions considered: (1) The treatment of 'the social' in work on human development, well-being and quality of life; (2) Whether the human development approach, including as extended in human security thinking, and the social quality approach have significant potential complementarity. Contributions to this conference were prepared at expert-meetings at the ISS in The Hague. It may be appreciated as the first endeavour to thoroughly compare the human security and social quality approaches. Compared to other existing approaches both seem to have the most affinity (see publications below).

### ***Theoretical work during the third stage***

Thanks to the outcomes of the second stage and highly inspired by social quality work in Asia-Pacific, a German, Dutch and UK-group of scholars started the preparation of the EFSQ's third main book (published in the beginning of the fourth stage). They were permanently in contact and their work inspired to participate in seminars and workshops all over Europe and to publish in working papers and articles about relevant issues connected with social quality thinking. In this context Routledge published a book about 'Quality of life' with an inspiring chapter about social quality in 2006. Also important is the development of collaboration with the Italian Institute for Political, Economic and Social Research, Eurispes. It delivered a platform during its conferences to discuss ideas about the European Social Model from the social quality perspective, questioning the nature of 'the Model' and its lack of understanding of the adjective 'social'. In the meantime the EFSQ started with a new instrument, namely the publication of working papers on its website for disseminating outcomes of theoretical work and their policy implications. These studies were taken on board in the EFSQ's third main book (see below).

### ***Publications of working-papers in the third stage***

- On the complementarity of human security and social quality, *ISS Working Paper Series nr. 462*, 2008.
- On the differences and similarities of social quality, quality of life, and human development, *UK Working Paper Series, University of Sheffield*, 2008.
- On social quality indicators and their implications for Asia, *UK Working Paper Series, University of Sheffield*, 2009.
- The European Discourse on Precarity in relation to the Policy Area of Employment: a Social Quality Perspective , *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr.1*, 2009.
- The start of Social Quality work on behalf of the Development of the Quarter of Laak of the City of The Hague, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr.2*, 2009.
- Reflections on the first set of Social Quality Indicators of the 'European Network Social Quality Indicators' ENIQ, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr.3*, 2009.
- About Social Cohesion and the Sustainable Welfare Society, *UK Working Paper Series, University of Sheffield*, 2009.
- Different studies about migration, identities and social quality, *UK Working Paper Series, University of Sheffield*, 2009.
- Proposals on behalf of the fourth Asian conference on Social Quality: from Social Development to Social Quality, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr. 4*, 2009.

- Local Welfare Arrangements favouring sustainable Cohesiveness and the Urban Case of Laak North of the city of The Hague, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr.5*, 2010.
- Justice, Migration and Sustainable Urban Development: the Case of Laak (North): Neighbourhood of the city of The Hague, *EFSQ Working Paper Series, nr.6*, 2010.
- (Unfinished) Explorative Comparison of Quality of Life, social Capital, Human Security, Capability Theory and Social harmony with some principles of the Social Quality Approach, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr. 7*, 2010.

### ***Evolution of the theory including issues of sustainability***

The preparation of the EFSQ's third main book stimulated a new question: '**social quality for what**'? Seen from a particular perspective, a determined extent of social quality in local or national circumstances can be highly attractive for the people concerned. However, from a regional or global perspective we should apply standards which concern human mankind.

Why should we accept high living standards for only a proportion of the USA and Canadian populations or the population of the European Union? And if the same standards will be made accessible for the poor in these regions and the poor in other continents in the near future - with the help of a tremendous GDP-determined economic growth - all people on earth will make the same 'ecological footprint' (in global hectares per capita). In that case, from an ecological point of view this globe will be exhausted if these standards are to be realized everywhere. However, circumstances are also changing. The European Commission summarized scenario's which connected the effects of the equalization of standards and the new changes. The global population as such will increase at great length. At the same time there is a strong ageing of the population world-wide and an increase of migration for political-economic reasons. Therefore global energy demand will increase by around 40% with the vast majority of the growth coming from non-OECD countries such as China, India and Brazil. In absolute terms, the largest increase in energy demand will be met by coal-based power generation. Furthermore, the growth in consumption of many of the world's main metals is also on the rise. By 2025 two-thirds of the world's population are expected to be living in water-stressed regions. Its conclusion in 2011 is

*'incremental changes, small adjustments to the current policy framework will not do the job. In order to avoid catastrophic declines, bold ambitious and coordinated policy actions are required, and must be formulated in such a way that they speak directly to citizens, in order to stimulate the emergence of a fully-fledged European[and global] mind and identity'.*

At the end of the third stage – and also stimulated by theoretical work on 'sustainable urban development' of the Dutch project in Laak - the EFSQ in collaboration with the ISS took the

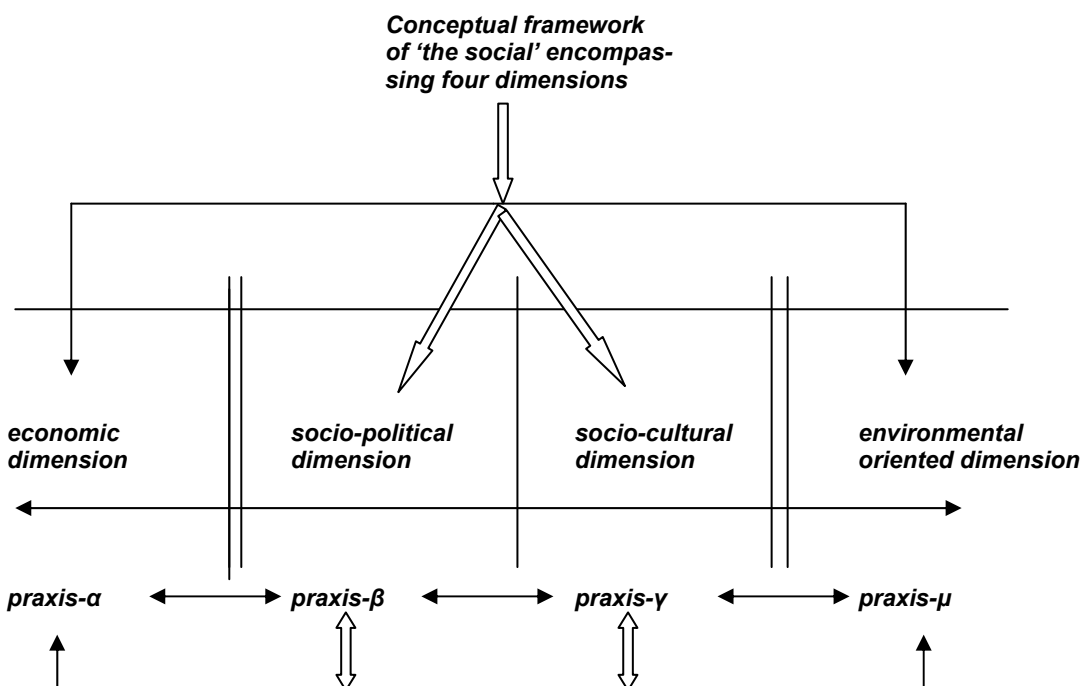


initiative to start a Dutch ‘think tank’ in order to analyse the global debate on sustainability and discuss what social quality thinking has to add? The purpose was to present participants of the Rio+ Conference in June 2012 with a report elaborating the answer. The EFSQ received financial support from different funds for taking on board this challenge. It concerned the opening of a new horizon to open the fourth stage of social quality thinking.

### Summary

The original focus of social quality thinking concerned the European problematique of the dominance of the economic dimension and its utilitarian paradigm. Recently it has become refocused on the lack of a genuine understanding of ‘the social’, encompassing the economic dimension, as well as the socio-political, socio-cultural and environmental dimensions. Economics are defined as a constituting aspect of ‘the social’; as an outcome of the productive and reproductive relationships of people as ‘social beings’. The utilitarian propositions underlying the current dominant economic paradigm are changed into expressivist propositions underlying the conceptual framework of ‘the social’. The ontological characteristics of praxis- $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ ,  $\gamma$ , and  $\mu$  - see Figure 5 - deliver the arguments of the new propositions, determining the conceptual framework of ‘the social’. With this in mind the traditional ideas about the ‘social dimension’ of sustainability are rejected because they cause a fundamental confusion in research, debates and policy making. As a logical consequence, this framework (and its specific paradigmatic content) is applicable to all dimensions and, therefore, it delivers points of departure for integrative research. This way of reasoning resulted into the following figure:

**Figure 5: Social quality and the four dimensions of sustainability**



By applying this conceptual framework to all four dimensions respectively their reciprocal relations can also be analysed by applying this framework. Thanks to this point of departure, instead of the traditional dominance of praxis- $\alpha$ , a plea can be made here for a dominant influence of praxis- $\beta$  + $\gamma$  and their normative orientation derived from this conceptual framework. Thus policy interventions may subordinate praxis- $\alpha$  to the natural based conditions of the 'object' of praxis- $\mu$ . With this in mind the 'green economy' is a demonstration of the subordination of praxis- $\alpha$  to praxis- $\beta$  and  $\gamma$ . It obtains a heuristic significance in the context of the changed economic paradigm. In the context of the current economic paradigm, 'green economy' is only mitigating environmental hazards.

This turn over implies a better understanding of at least two aspects of globalisation: (i) the increased density of relations and (ii) the increased relational interdependencies. For this understanding we should change the existing 'methodological nationalism' (which takes the nation state and its sovereignty and powers of its government for granted). This reduces globalisation to an adjunct of nationalism. This methodological principle is strongly based on 'methodological individualism'. It supports the affinity between wings of neo-liberalism and social democracy. To go beyond this stage of affairs it is necessary to develop 'methodological mondialism' to change the role and perspectives of existing societies. This assumes it is possible to achieve global comparisons of societal trends, the development toward sustainability and related issues of sustainable urban development (see Figure 6). Furthermore, relational interdependency (as a genuine form of globalization) is strengthened by the ICT-revolution which will radically transform the generation of knowledge and information and, thus, the productive and reproductive relationships. That also means a transformation of urban life. Therefore we should go beyond the obsolete orientation on the nation state. A growing share of this generation of knowledge will also fall prey to the outcomes of this ICT revolution. The projects and theoretical work during the third stage paved the way for this turn over. Therefore a start is made to change also the European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ) into the International Association on Social Quality (IASQ).

### ***The start of the fourth stage (2011)***

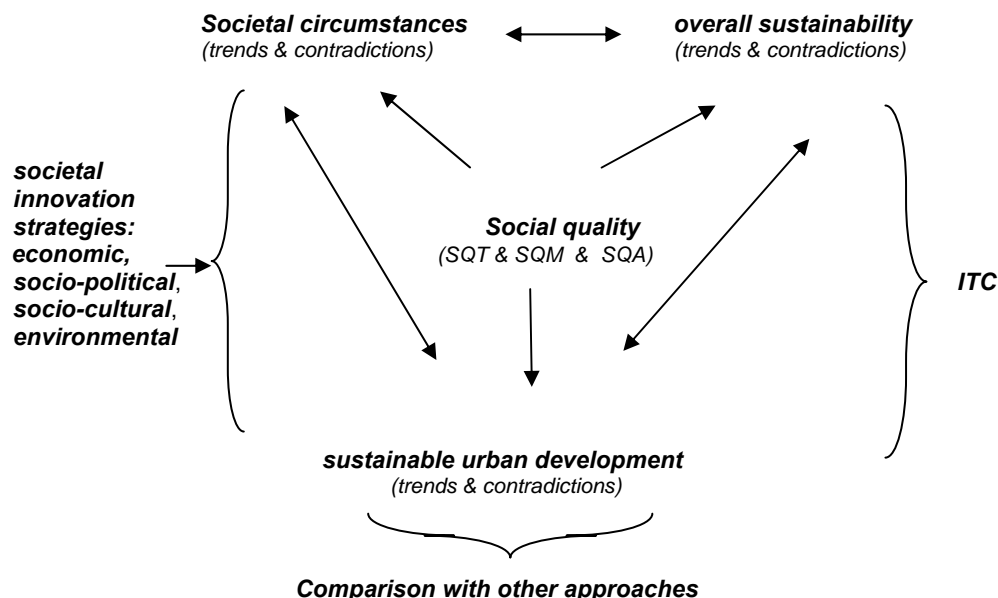
#### ***The European and Asian newsletter connecting three major issues***

With the launch of the shared newsletter of the European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ) and the Asian Consortium for Social Quality (ACSQ) the fourth stage of social quality work started. In this newsletter also the following three relevant issues are discussed:

- The preparation and operationalization of the surveys in Australia and six Asian Countries to apply and test the social quality indicators. The subject concerned the outcomes or consequences of changes in societal circumstances in these regions due to new trends for socio-economic security, social cohesion, social inclusion and social empowerment. In Thailand this opened the horizon for exploring the relation between social quality and democracy.
- The issue of overall sustainability in order to prepare a contribution to the forthcoming global Rio+ 20 conference,
- The related issue of sustainable urban development and especially the function of the forthcoming 'demonstration project' of the urban quarter Laak of the city of The Hague.

These three different issues became related during the beginning of the fourth stage. A start was made in the EFSQ's third main book (see below) and during expert-meetings on the overall sustainability in The Netherlands. This resulted into the following figure. A working-paper afterwards explained that the 'social quality theory (SQT), the social quality methodology (SQM) and the social quality approach (SQA), have a heuristic significance for analysing these three issues respectively and to analyse the outcomes of their reciprocity. Therefore social quality thinking can be of interest for the global debate on 'development toward sustainability'.

**Figure 6: Attention for relevant interrelationships**



As a logical outcome of the orientation on societal circumstances in connection with the question of overall sustainability, studies and new practices about 'sustainable urban development' are a condition sine qua non for understanding the changes of both major themes. It is in the urban context where changes will be 'realised'. These outcomes of the EFSQ's attention to urban issues

since the beginning of the 2000s, and especially in the city of The Hague since 2006, inspired the plan for a collaboration with different cities in Europe. This was also inspired by the UN Habitat Forum. It explains the necessity to *'address the challenge to cope with the unprecedented growth of towns and cities, setting the social, political, cultural and environmental trends of the world. (With this in mind) sustainable urbanisation is one of the most pressing challenges facing the global community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century'*. A similar conclusion was made at the European DG Research conference on sustainable development: *'City governance linking all levels of urban society has to be established if sustainable development is to be achieved. Improved governance should not address only climate change adaptation measures, but also have a critical role to play in ensuring social equity and resource sustainability'*.

### ***The 'demonstration project' for sustainable urban development***

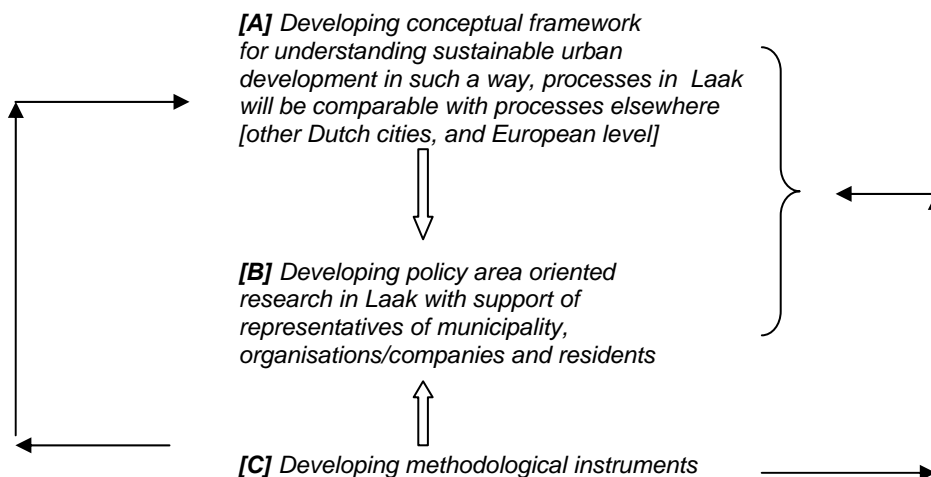
Also in 2011 and afterwards the EFSQ contributed to two strategies to assist the endeavours of the municipality of The Hague and other organizations to start of a 'demonstration-project of the quarter Laak' as a context for innovative projects. The EFSQ carried out pre-work in the previous stage (see above). The overall aim is, first, to contribute to the sustainable urban development of this part of The Hague; an area with more than 50% migrants and with a very low ranking compared to other areas. Second to take the responsibility for a platform of knowledge institutes, called the HACU, as one of the innovative projects for deepening the understanding of what is sustainable urban development, and to research which knowledge is needed for realising this development with all engaged partners: residents, policy-makers, civil-servants, representatives of companies and societal organisations. The outcomes of these strategies are accepted by the European Commission. In collaboration with the municipality of The Hague and different stakeholders it financed a 'demonstration project' for three years. The second strategy implied the elaboration of the Platform as an innovative project of the 'demonstration-project'. It formally started in September 2011. Its challenges are:

- to develop and apply a conceptual framework for sustainable urban development of Laak in such a way the outcomes could be understood on the national and European level and beyond (see *ad-A of Figure-7*). This already resulted in a 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the EFSQ (concerning The Hague), University of Sheffield (concerning the **city of Sheffield**), the Zhejiang University (concerning the **metropolis Hangzhou**), later completed by the University of Aberdeen (concerning the **city of Aberdeen**),
- To stimulate 'practice oriented research' for addressing the reproduction of fragmented public service delivery in Laak by creating new knowledge. It aims to empower citizens in

their capacity to define their own public good, complementing and correcting top-down professional service delivery (see ad-B of Figure 7). In other words, especially this aspect of the Platform HACU's work aims to create an open access forum where expert knowledge on political issues can be supplemented (and changed) by local knowledge and local knowledge by expert knowledge,

- To develop an adequate methodological framework on behalf of ad-A, an adequate methodological framework on behalf of ad-B and to interrelate both frameworks (see ad-C of Figure-7). The plan is made to formalize and to extend the interdisciplinary social quality team of The Hague to develop the first framework. Furthermore a study is made about the second framework, namely the distinction between four regimes of evaluation (see below).

**Figure 7:** *The relationship between science and practice: the challenges of the Platform HACU of the city of the Hague*



### **Outcomes of the Dutch Think Tank on Sustainability**

The start of the Dutch think-tank 'development toward sustainability' was discussed earlier. Also in 2011, the EFSQ was enabled to get support from funds in order to finance a scientific director for this project. As a result of this and with support by the members of the think-tank – as well as the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) and scholars from other European countries, Asia and Australia – a Report on the development toward sustainability could be presented to many participants of the Rio+20 conference in June 2012. It may be appreciated as a major investment by the EFSQ. Based on social quality thinking it presented a definition of 'overall sustainability'. The Report concludes that, over the last 20 years, it has become clear that anthropogenic climate change is

under way (as evidenced by rising average global temperatures and increased frequency and severity of droughts and floods, melting of polar ice sheets and retreat of glaciers). The loss of biodiversity is progressing, an increasing scarcity of clean water is threatening the lives of hundreds of millions of people and other living beings, on average global deforestation continues and marine ecosystems are on the decline (see for instance the work by the Plastic Soup Foundation). The science and policy worlds are not able to go beyond eclectic and separated strategies to stop the continued worsening of environmental degradation. Without a fundamental change the vast complex of human activities will become more unsustainable.

As the Report explains, one of the reasons for this disastrous state of affairs is the lack of consensus about the outcomes of the 'complex of human activities' for the ecosystem. This gap plays a major role in the increase in unsustainable activities and behaviour. In this Report the traditional distinction between the economic, the social and the environmental dimensions of sustainability – see the famous UN-Brundtland Report – is criticized. The 'social dimension' remains a black box, a ragbag of unknown aspects. This explains why no serious progress is made to explore the interrelationship between the economic and the environmental dimensions. This is further aggravated by the fundamental failure of the dominant economic approach to recognise the essential significance of the freely available ecosystem for human existence. There is a need for effective environmental legislation and new forms of global governance that protects the entire ecosystem. Since the framework of social quality is oriented on the analysis and understanding of these complexities and the interrelatedness of not three but four dimensions - the economic, socio-political and socio-cultural dimensions which influence the environmental dimension - this approach may contribute to fill the gap.

### ***The EFSQ's third book: a milestone***

In 2011 the EFSQ's third main book was completed by eight authors and published by Palgrave Macmillan in the UK, January 2012: ***Social Quality, from Theory to Indicators***. This book contains among others:

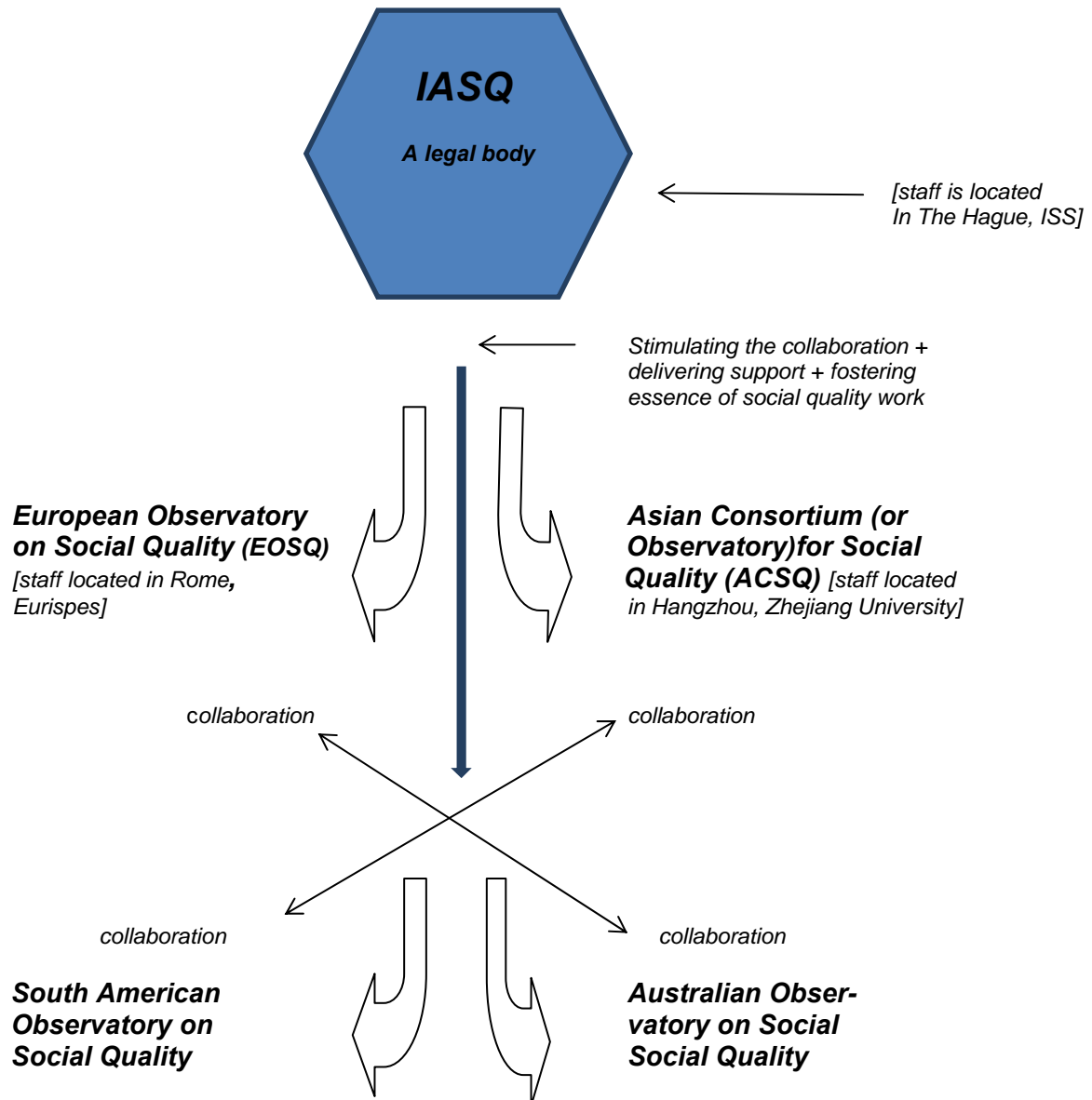
- the theoretical principles are articulated further on the basis of the design as presented in the second main book. This delivers new points of departure for the methodological framework.
- the application of social quality indicators in fourteen European countries in 2004 and 2005 was analysed in order to enhance the methodological aspects,
- both played a role in the articulation of the three major themes (Figure 6) as seen from the social quality perspective. Other theoretical work stimulated this articulation.

This book provides the most up-to-date account of the concept of social quality. It functions as the key reference point for the continuing search for alternatives to GDP as the (indefensible) supposed barometer of progress. It develops the theoretical foundations of social quality and locates it within the main theoretical frameworks of western social (and economic) sciences. It provides a clear account of the methods for measuring social quality, which include the initial indicators developed by a major European research project. This includes an in-depth analysis of the four conditional factors of social quality (see above). It also opens the enhancement and application of the four constitutional factors of social quality: personal (human) security, social recognition, social responsiveness, personal (human) capacity. In order to determine the nature of social quality the outcomes of the linking of the conditional and constitutional factors can be judged by the normative factors of social quality: social justice (equity), solidarity, equal value and human dignity. This book applies the concept of social quality to some of the most pressing policy challenges, including sustainability and the future of the European Union.

### ***The Asian-Australian work and the need to transform the structure of sq-work***

In the beginning of the fourth stage from the side of the EFSQ assistance was given to conferences and expert-meetings in Asia: preparatory reports, lectures and comments. As a result of these lively European and Asian/Australian contacts the idea arose to establish an instrument which could operate at global level. Also the extension of social quality thinking the issues of sustainable urban development and overall sustainability stimulated this idea. Exactly in this period – and thanks to contributions to different conferences in Hangzhou – the EFSQ and the Zhejiang University in Hangzhou started a collaboration for analysing the role of citizens in the Zhejiang Province with regard to environmental questions. It concerns an international oriented project, financed by the Chinese Government and the European Commission. This example demands a globally operating ‘social quality infrastructure’. The outburst of the application of social quality indicators in Asia and Australia to analyse changes of societal complexities demands for this change as well. Needed is the capacity to compare social quality work in different continents. The initiative is made by Eurispes in Rome, the Italian institute for Economic, Political and Social Research. In 2012 and 2013 workshops were organized resulting in the following structure:

**Figure 8: The International Association on Social Quality as successor of the EFSQ**



### **Publications in the first part of the fourth stage**

In the new International Journal of Social Quality and in working papers aspects of the work mentioned above are further explored. With regard to the Journal five issues have been published already. The Zhejiang University, the ISS and the EFSQ invested a great deal in this. It will



become an interesting instrument to start a global discussion on the interrelatedness of the three main issues (Figure 6) and the influences on this interrelatedness of the ICT-revolution. New forms of societal innovations are needed to address these new challenges. Many articles in these IJSQ-numbers address aspects of this overall question.

With regard to the working papers:

- Welfare arrangements, sustainable urban development and new forms of governance; the current 'demonstration project' of the city of The Hague as an example. The plans for the start of comparative urban studies between The Hague, Hangzhou, Sheffield (and Aberdeen), *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr.8, 2012*.
- Elaboration of a Lecture on the Orientation, Strategies and Model (or experiences) of the City of Hangzhou in the Zhejiang Province of mainland China, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr. 9, 2012*.
- Economic performance, social progress and Social quality: comments on the Report by Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, *EFSQ Working Paper Series nr.10, 2012* (published in the *International Journal of Social Quality, 2 (1) 2012*),
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