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***Working-paper nr.9: Orientation, strategies and model (or experience)  
of the City of Hangzhou (Zhejiang province of mainland China)  
from a comparative perspective  
By Laurent J.G. van der Maesen<sup>1</sup>, 20th November 2012***

***1. Introduction: nothing is as practical as a good theory (ancient Greeks)***

It was a great honour for the European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ)<sup>2</sup> to present points of departure to discuss processes and experiences in the city (metropolis) of Hangzhou at the '2012 Life & Development Forum' of this city. This was done from an international oriented comparative perspective, namely the 'social quality approach' (see below). Hopefully this endeavour will further prepare collaboration between colleagues of the Zhejiang University and the Development Research Center of Hangzhou Municipality. Thanks to our common work until now we dispose of a manifold of Hangzhou documents<sup>3</sup> which address:

- The basic **orientation** of the work carried out in Hangzhou
- The **strategies** for the operationalization of this basic orientation
- And the recent outcomes which contribute to the so-called Hangzhou **model** for developing Life Quality of its citizens and, according some papers, for sustainable urban development

It is important to understand these documents in order to constructively discuss the Hangzhou ambition to function as an example for other cities/metropolises in China, in Asia and other Continents. As usually, at global level the English language is used, although this is rather problematic for non-native speakers. The Chinese culture as an important representative of the East has its own connotations and interpretations which cannot be easily communicated in English. People from 'the East' and 'the West' have a lot of work to do in order to really understand the Hangzhou work carried

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<sup>2</sup> See for the work carried out by the EFSQ: [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org).

<sup>3</sup> Many of these documents are published afterwards in: Development Research Centre (2012), '2012 Life & Development Forum: we make life better. Reference material' (Hangzhou: DRCHM).

out. Two years ago the EFSQ also participated in the 2010 Hangzhou Forum.<sup>4</sup> As a result representatives of the Zhejiang University and the EFSQ decided, first, to start and to elaborate the *International Journal on Social Quality*.<sup>5</sup> Second, with British colleagues, they decided to prepare a comparison of applied strategies in Hangzhou, the Dutch city of The Hague, and the British cities of Sheffield and Aberdeen. This comparison will be based on the conceptual framework of the social quality approach. Third, the EFSQ is recently engaged in the EU-China project concerning 'public participation of environmental governance' for understanding the Jiaxing Model, its applicability in the Zhejiang Province and the similarities and differences with interesting European models or experiences. The EFSQ is invited to stimulate other European environmental organisations to develop communication with representatives organisations of the Zhejiang Province about experiences with environmental 'public participation' and to contribute to the European-Chinese comparison as well.

In order to also elaborate these three types of activities, this working-paper aims to explore aspects of the Hangzhou orientation, its strategies and model. As said, this exploration will be based on the new social quality approach. Especially the recent third study by the EFSQ – published in the United Kingdom – will deliver points of departure for this exploration.<sup>6</sup> We will conclude with a new proposal concerning a fourth activity to support the three above mentioned activities, as well as the meaning of this reflection for practical work in daily circumstances.

## 2. *The basic orientation*

This basic orientation is summarized into: '**we** make **life better** in Hangzhou'. In the 2011 Hangzhou conference, papers have been presented to elaborate the 'we', 'life' and 'better'.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit a distinction is made between 'the East' and 'the West'. As argued, in the East the '**we**' is an outcome of human interactions and the accent is not laid upon the 'I' as in the West: *"if two persons can consist of 'We', a family, a community or a country all can also be 'We'. That is, everything in the world is a form of 'We', even the world itself. The huge and wide concept of 'We' reveals the integrity of human beings. The wide meaning of 'We' differ from the Western values that is centering individuals which limitations remain. The West pays more attention on discovering the nature and the present, ignoring the past and the future. As can be seen, the sustainable development is partly replaced by over-exploration, people do not be responsible for either ancients or descendants because they wonder that problems will be fixed by the developing of sciences and technology*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless it is explained that modern globalized capitalist production, financing and

<sup>4</sup> See the impressions of some outcomes: L.J.G. van der Maesen (2010) '*Impressions of the 2010 Hangzhou Forum*' (The Hague: EFSQ).

<sup>5</sup> This journal is published by Berghahn Journals, New York and Oxford. Already two issues are published: [www.journals.berghahnbooks.com/ijsq](http://www.journals.berghahnbooks.com/ijsq), and see [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org).

<sup>6</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen, A.C. Walker (eds) (2012) '*Social Quality: From Theory to Indicators*' (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). This book will be translated into Chinese by the National Taiwan University.

<sup>7</sup> See note-3.

<sup>8</sup> T. Weiming (2012) '*Exploring the philosophical meaning of 'We'*', see note-3, p. 84.

consumption patterns threaten the quality and power of the 'we' in the East as well.<sup>9</sup> Arguments are formulated as follows: *"first of all, 'I' is visible, while 'we' is invisible. That is to say, we always have a stronger feeling about ourselves rather than others. Secondly, the collapse of 'we' is an inevitable trend as the forming of private ownership and households in modern society. More attentions are paid on individuals than groups, which weakens the unity of human beings while brings benefits somehow. Actually, human beings need to make the choice of this dialectical and opposite social pattern."*<sup>10</sup> **'Life'** is the Eastern balance between 'we' and daily circumstances and this assumption is intrinsically related to the old cultural heritage. It refers to a holistic approach of the **four essential dimensions** of life: the socio-economic, the socio-political, the cultural-cognitive and the environmental. With the help of new strategies, this balance should constantly be renewed for addressing modern trends, contradictions and challenges in a constructive way. Especially the Hangzhou orientation is to go beyond current problems of 'life' and to strengthen again the 'we' and the balance of life as expressed in Confucianism. This will result in **better** modern life in Hangzhou as an important example for other cities and metropolises in China and the world. At the 2012 conference it was argued that 'better' refers to the increase of happiness, the good and the beautiful. This refers to remarks of the 2011 conference as well: *"The activity of life quality industry....aims to create a beautiful life by finding values, spreading brands and leading development through participation, refining communication, comments, publishing and so on"*.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. A question based on the social quality perspective

From a 'Western' point of view a question can be raised how to interpret the 'we' as discussed in the Hangzhou documents and the recent 2012 Hangzhou Forum. Some Chinese experts explained that it concerns a philosophical and religious oriented dimension to reflect on the meaning of existence of human beings in the context of daily circumstances. It functions as the source of ethical standards. In the new social quality approach a distinction is made between aspects of the self-realisation of people (the constitutional factors), aspects of societal structures (conditional factors) and the ethical aspects (normative factors), see Figure-1; the so-called 'social quality architecture'. The Chinese debate on 'we' may be highly stimulating for deepening the philosophical based understanding of the normative factors. For both other aspects we should theorize at a scientific-analytical way the relationship of human beings and their interrelation in daily circumstances. The ambition of the social quality approach is to concentrate on exactly this topic as relevant for the four dimensions: the socio-economic, the socio-political, the cultural-cognitive and the environmental.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> H. Zhengyu (2012), *'We' in the Time of Life*, see note-3, p. 89.

<sup>10</sup> L. Weidong, *The return and rebuild of 'We'*, see note-3, p. 94.

<sup>11</sup> DRHM (2012), *Life Quality Industry Comment*, see note-3, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Herewith it differs essentially from comparable approaches: (i) quality of life, (ii) social capital, (iii) capability, (iv) social development, (v) human development, and (vi) human security. It is quite usual in debates to refer to one of these approaches in a confusing way, without demonstrating the understanding of their differences, see for the explanation, the EFSQ's third book, note-6, Chapter-11.

**Figure 1 The social quality architecture<sup>13</sup>**

<b>Constitutional factors</b> <i>(processes)</i>	<b>conditional factors</b> <i>(opportunities + contingencies)</i>	<b>normative factors</b> <i>(orientation)</i>
<i>personal (human) security</i>	<i>socio-economic security</i>	<i>social justice (equity)</i>
<i>social recognition</i>	<i>social cohesion</i>	<i>solidarity</i>
<i>social responsiveness</i>	<i>social inclusion</i>	<i>equal value</i>
<i>personal (human) capacity</i>	<i>social empowerment</i>	<i>human dignity</i>
<i>profiles as instruments to analyse the change of the nature of these factors</i>	<i>indicators as instruments to analyse the change of the nature of these factors</i>	<i>ethical based criteria for deepening and understanding these factors</i>

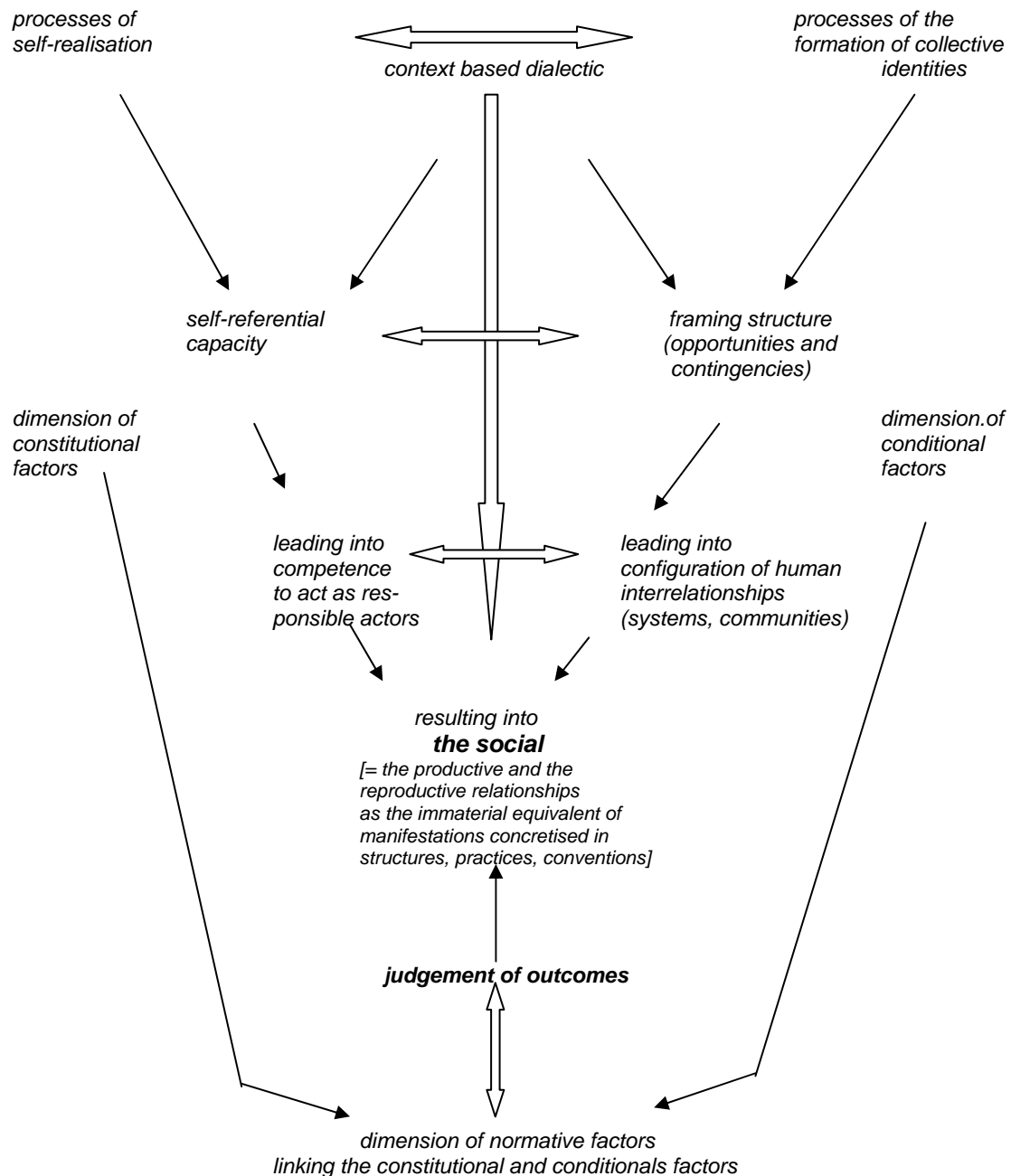
According to the social quality theory, we need a deep understanding of the concept of 'the social' in order to understand the position of human beings and the nature and outcomes of their interrelationships resulting into daily circumstances. The self-realisation of human beings (referring to the 'I') will take place in a dialectical relation with the formation of collective identities as families, groups of communities, in business and sports (referring to the 'we'). In Figure-2 we present an illustration to explain the three stages of the processes between the outcomes of self-realisation (left side) and the formation and working of societal wholes (right side). Thanks to this interpretation of processes resulting into 'the social' we may distinguish between the working of three types of factors as summarized in Figure-1. In combination with Figure-2 we may summarize the following points:

- This approach goes beyond the theoretically used duality between 'I' and 'We'
- The social is explained and defined in analytical terms and may be appreciated as synonym with 'Life' as is done in the Chinese debate,
- All twelve concepts of the 'social quality architecture are defined on the basis of a definition of 'the social' and therefore have an intrinsic relation to each other. This is innovative in science.
- The normative factors should determine whether changes (concerning the constitutional and conditional factors) are better; they deliver the criteria,
- The well-known duality between 'the economy' and 'the social' is rejected. The 'economy' is an aspect of 'the social'. In the social quality theory 'the social' as a holistic concept, includes the: socio-economic, the socio-political, the cultural-cognitive and the environmental dimension.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See for the explanation, the EFSQ's third book, note-6, Chapter-3.

<sup>14</sup> This has a lot of affinity with Chinese interpretations. Therefore the concept of 'Life Quality' has a lot of affinity with 'social quality'. But until now we could not find an extensive theoretical elaboration of the concept of 'Life quality'.

**Figure 2:** *The constitutive interdependency (dialectic) between human beings and societal wholes*<sup>15</sup>



#### 4. Western orientations

Western scientific discourses are not really oriented on the duality of 'I' and 'We'. The focus is usually on processes of self-realisation (referring to the Eastern 'I') or processes and outcomes of collective

<sup>15</sup> See for an explanation, the EFSQ's third book, note-6, Chapter-3.

identities (referring to the Eastern 'we'). In Figure-3 we will illustrate two important ground patterns which accentuate in a highly different way the position of the human being, namely the utilitarianism of Scottish philosophers c.s. (as fundament for the current neo-liberal capitalistic approaches) and the highly different German inspired voluntarism, see the work by Max Weber c.s. (as fundament for the social market approach). Two other important ground patterns respectively refer in a highly different way to processes oriented on the collective based nature of human interrelationships. It concerns the dialectical materialism by Karl Marx c.s. and the structural functionalism by Emile Durkheim c.s. Both accentuate – in Eastern terms - the 'we' side of the discourse.

**Figure 3: Four Western basic orientations<sup>16</sup>**

	<i>Accent 'I'</i>	<i>Accent 'We'</i>
<i>(Scottish philosophers) Vilfredo Pareto</i>	<i>mechanical utilitarianism</i>	
<i>(I.Kant) Max Weber</i>	<i>constructive voluntarism</i>	
<i>Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels</i>		<i>dialectical materialism</i>
<i>(French philosophers) Emile Durkheim</i>		<i>structural functionalism</i>

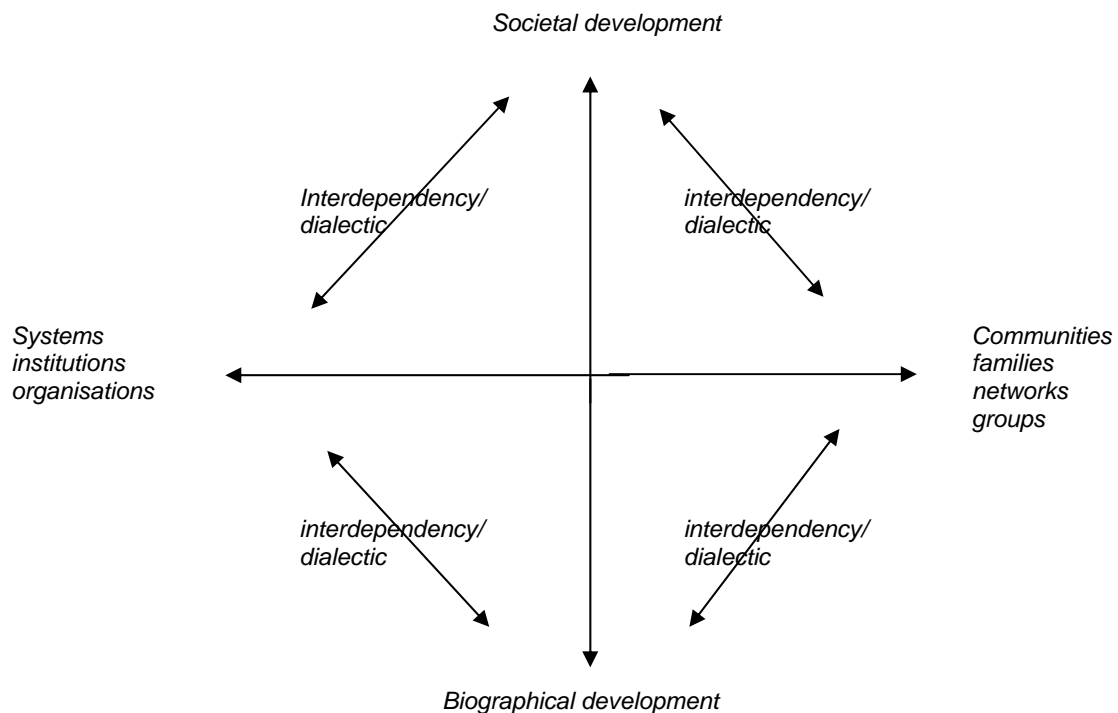
Except Durkheim all were economists, also strongly oriented on philosophy, political science and – in terms of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century - on sociology. Figure-3 may be appreciated as a comment on the popular distinction between East (accent on we) and the West (accent on 'I'); in the 'West' it is more differentiated. In connection with this 'Eastern' supposition', there is a weak cohesion in Western family configurations. But for example in Western Europe we may distinguish between countries with a strong and a looser accent on cohesion and the role of families which determines the nature of psychological and cognitive characteristics of human beings. Notwithstanding this distinction, in a general sense Western families differ from Chinese families. In China, traditionally the accent is on the family as a strong collective identity, while in 'the West' more accent is laid on the possibilities for the self-realisation of family-members. Possibly it may be seen as a Chinese characteristic of traditional rural collective identities. But what will happen with families as an outcome of the immense migration processes in this country from the rural side to urban circumstances? Expected is that also in the near future 300 million people will migrate to cities. This will increase enormously the geographical distance between family members. That will threaten the Chinese family bonds as well. If that is the case, what is the answer for creating an alternative? This question refers to the nature and change of the conditional factors, influencing the nature of the constitutional factors, respectively the right and the left side of Figure-2.

<sup>16</sup> This question is elaborated in the EFSQ's third book, see note-6, Chapter-4. Referred is to the work by Roy Bhaskar, who also discussed these ground patterns extensively.

## 5. A second question based on the social quality perspective

In order to understand the similarities and differences between these four ground patterns we should know more about the basic tensions in societies. According to the social quality theory – and see Figure-4 - the vertical concerns the tension between societal and biographical developments and the horizontal between systems/ institutions and communities/ families/networks of citizens etc. Each ground pattern (see Figure-3) demonstrates more or less a choice of an accent on one of the four positions of these interrelated tensions.

**Figure 4: Two basic tensions (in social quality theory) as point of reference<sup>17</sup>**



The point is that in the Hangzhou documents at the end of the day an important accent is given to governmental and party positions and industry (see Figure-5) thus on 'systems and institutions'. The aims of the social quality theory are to address all four points of Figure-4 at the same time. Thanks to this it appreciates the position and the role of 'human beings' (the 'I') as influenced by (i) communities/families, (ii) systems and institutions, and (iii) by general societal developments and their contradictions. The Hangzhou ascent is formulated as follows: *"enthusiasm and creativity of the masses has become a major issue for current social management. In recent years, efforts have been made in Hangzhou city to expand social communication and participating and improve the social*

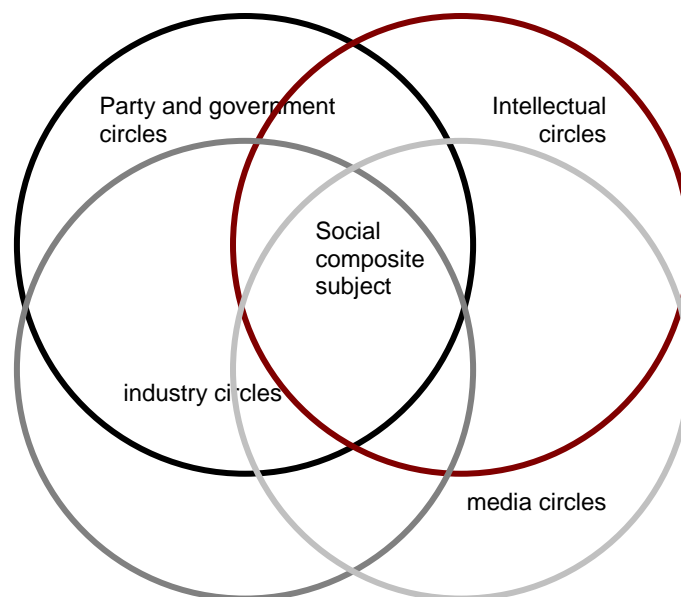
<sup>17</sup> See the EFSQ's third book, see note-6, Chapter-3. Of interest is to notice that Jürgen Habermas restricted himself to the horizontal axis (tension between the world of systems and the life world). The social quality theory extends this.

management pattern featured with the CPC committees playing a leading role, the government taking charge, social coordination and public participation. There present the following characteristics: the first is dominance. The main tasks of the CPC Committees and the government are to set up the communication platform, establish the communication mechanism and play the dominant role.”<sup>18</sup> As we will see in the following figure, communication strategies are determined by the local government. Interesting is that this accent in Hangzhou documents differs from many considerations about the responsible role of citizens for the development of this city. The societal role of communities, families and networks of citizens are highlighted many times in the Hangzhou contemplations. This seems in contradiction with the quotation above.

## 6. The Hangzhou strategies

The Hangzhou strategies are illustrated as follows:

**Figure 5:** The four Hangzhou circles.<sup>19</sup>



**Graphic 1: The Hangzhou Social composite with the participation of multiple elements**

<sup>18</sup> Development Research Center (2011); “*Strengthen Social Communication and Participation, Promote Social harmony and Stability*” (Hangzhou; DRCHM)

<sup>19</sup> This is presented by the Development Research Center of Hangzhou Municipality in 2010, see further note-20.



The way of reasoning in the previous section seems to be important to reflect on the Hangzhou strategies. How do Chinese scholars and policy makers – implicitly and explicitly - cope with both main tensions as illustrated in Figure-4? To discuss this it is worthwhile to reflect on the Hangzhou graphic on the four circles as presented above, Figure-5. This is forthcoming soon in an article by the International Journal of Social Quality.<sup>20</sup> It is of interest to remark that in this article a connection is made with Western considerations on social innovation and in which way the Hangzhou strategies contribute to the so-called social innovation (or better: societal innovation). As already argued, our interpretation of these strategies is – and see the Graphic of the Hangzhou Social composite – that the focus is on the left side of the horizontal axe (see Figure-4). See the important role of the ‘party and government circle’, the ‘industry circle’ and the ‘media’ (the systems, institutions and organisations). It does not explicitly address – in the documents – all four points of this graphic. Strong attention is given in the documents to projects as outcomes of governmental initiatives (the ‘system side’). No accent is given to questions related to (i) the contractions and convergencies within and between the four circles and (ii) how to analyse these contradictions and convergences, (iii) and how to cope with the consequences. Answers are highly important to understand the nature of the ‘Hangzhou Life Quality’.

## **7. A translation of the Hangzhou circles**

In order to compare the Hangzhou strategies we translate the graphic into a comparable way with applied strategies in the Dutch city of The Hague, see Figure-6. We use ancient Greek words: Politeia, Oikos, and Academia:

- Politeia refers to the Government, political parties and political administrative systems,
- Oikos refers to industries, companies, organisations and institutions for education, health care, housing, sport etc,
- Media refers to the institutions and organisations for communication, information, marketing etc,
- Academia refers to the knowledge institutes and systems.

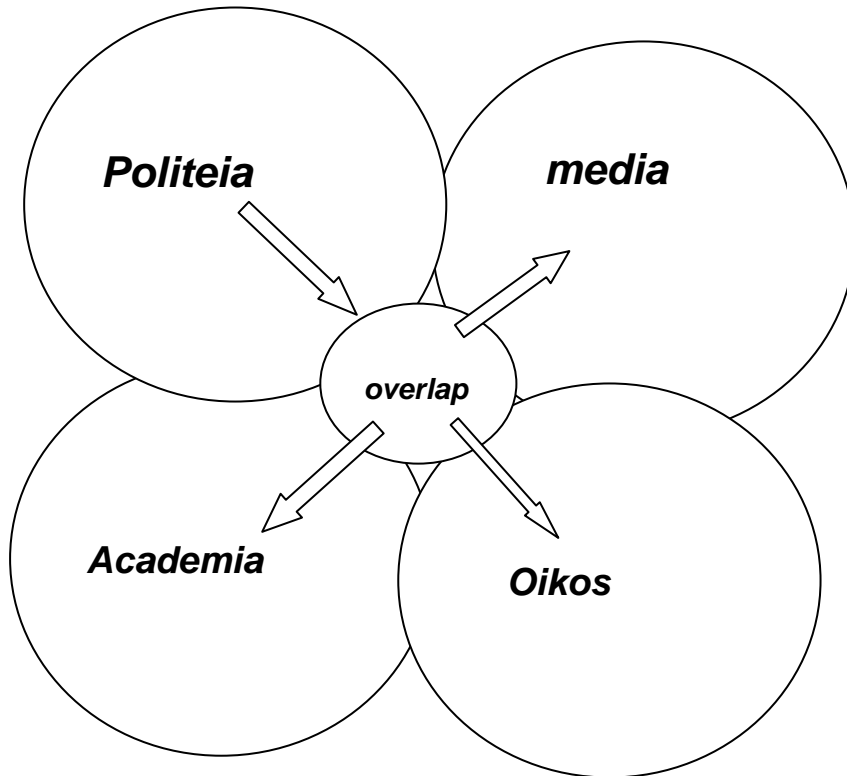
According to the Hangzhou documents, these circles overlap each other and the Politeia is enabled to use this overlap for initiatives in collaboration with representatives of the Media, Academia and Oikos. And these initiatives – related to the basic orientation to enhance the ‘Life Quality’ of Hangzhou; thus developed in a highly orchestrated way – are impressive. Examples are: (i) Hangzhou Online Meeting Hall (for communication with citizens), (ii) the Hangzhou Round Table Conversation with citizens, organisations, (iii) the Lawyers into communities & Network Legal Team, (iv) the Hangzhou city brand

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<sup>20</sup> L. Yong, S. Ying and L. Ka (2012), ‘Social Innovation, Local Governance and Social Quality: the Case of Intersectoral Collaboration in Hangzhou City’, *International Journal of Social Quality*, Vol. 2, issue 1, pp. 56-73.

Network Group. Silk & Women's Dress Industry Alliance, (v) Culture and entertainment Brand Promotion Association, etc, etc (at least more than 300 of such innovative projects).<sup>21</sup>

**Figure 6: The Hangzhou strategies presented in a comparable way**



These initiatives indeed address the four points of the graphic about the two tensions (Figure-4), but initiated from the left point of the horizontal axe. They concern a 'function' of the urban conditions of Hangzhou as metropolis. Seen in a global perspective **four aspects** of the orchestration of these initiatives are highly relevant. First, the municipality articulated a 'moral high ground' as orientation for realizing the 'beautiful', resulting into the 'Oriental Quality city'.<sup>22</sup> Second, the municipality stimulated more than 13.000 enterprises with the help of this orientation to realise a determined standard of harmonious labour relations, to pave the way for 'Social Responsibility' of citizens of Hangzhou.<sup>23</sup> Third, the municipality constructed a model for a comprehensive evaluation of the outcomes of the manifold of functional initiatives in relation to labour circumstances as well.<sup>24</sup> Fourth, the municipality designed a system of communication with citizens for this 'social evaluation' with the help of annual surveys, discussion groups, television round table meetings etc: *'to sum up, Hangzhou has constructed a monitoring and performance evaluation mechanism existing in multi levels, covering the public, the superiors, the departments established for monitoring, and the third party (such as media),*

<sup>21</sup> See Hangzhou document, note-3.

<sup>22</sup> 'The Most Beautiful Phenomenon of Hangzhou', see note-3, p.54.

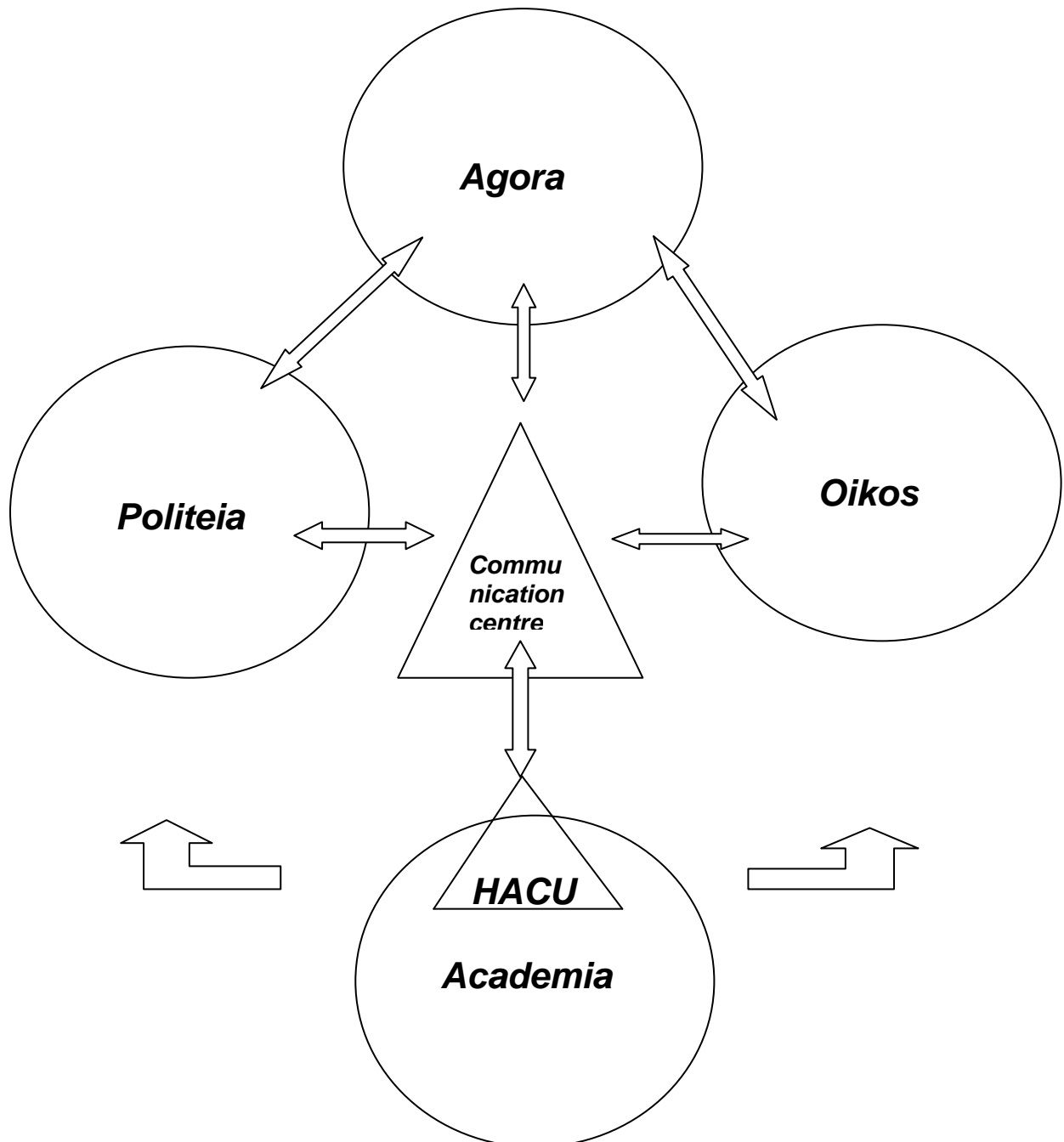
<sup>23</sup> 'Construction of enterprise Social Responsibility', see note-3, p.73

<sup>24</sup> 'Citizen – Oriented Comprehensive Evaluation in Hangzhou', see note-3, p. 62.

resulting in a significant improvement in government governance and thus performance of government in Hangzhou'.<sup>25</sup>

### 8. A comparison with the principles of the The Hague strategies

**Figure 7: Principles of the Strategies of the Dutch city of The Hague**



<sup>25</sup> L. Weidong, F. Liangcong, (2012) 'Experience summary and theoretical connotation of 'Hangzhou Model'', see note-3, p. 139.

Figure-6 enables us to make a comparison with the strategies of the Dutch city of The Hague, see Figure-7. With support by the European Commission, the municipality of The Hague and different stakeholders decided to start innovative projects in the neighbourhood of 'Laak' of this city. The EFSQ as part of the Academia played a stimulating role for preparing this enterprise since 2006. It is recently called 'the demonstration project Laak' and it started in September 2011.<sup>26</sup> There are at least four interesting differences with the applied strategies in the Hague compared to Hangzhou.

First, although we also see four circles, the media has been changed into Agora, namely the daily life of citizens (their families, their communities, their networks).<sup>27</sup> This difference can be explained. As demonstrated above, the Hangzhou strategies concern functional innovative projects on behalf of the whole metropolis. The strategies of the city of The Hague and its different stakeholders are oriented on **one neighbourhood** of more or less 70.000 inhabitants. These strategies concern a comprehensive approach of this neighbourhood. The innovative projects in this neighbourhood of the Hague should be integrated in order to contribute together to the 'sustainable urban development' of this part of the whole city. The Agora concerns the daily circumstances of this neighbourhood and is appreciated as the main 'object' of this demonstration project.

A second difference is that the four circles are presented as 'different worlds' without any overlap. Each world uses its own specific terminology (professional and non-professional language), and has different interests and power. Also in the Western world, the Agora is – under modern capitalist relationships – dependent of the Politeia and Oikos. The Academia in the West usually supports the position of the Politeia and Oikos, because they are financed from this side. The most essential aspect of the social quality theory is the accent on 'social empowerment' of citizens which differs from the 'individualistic' oriented accent on empowerment'.<sup>28</sup> In Chinese terms the question is, how can we strengthen the 'we' of citizens in the Agora in order to enable people, families, communities and citizen's networks to determine – with the basic orientation in mind - the nature of their daily circumstances?

A third related difference is the fact that the strategies in The Hague regarding this demonstration project prioritize the creation and working of a new instrument, namely the **Communicationcentre**. This centre as one of the innovative projects should connect the different languages, plans, policies, interests in such a way that representatives of the Agora are supported to enhance their 'life quality' in communities and neighbourhoods. In terms of The Hague, communication processes should not be

<sup>26</sup> See the EFSQ's third book, note-6, Chapter-10 and: L.J.G. van der Maesen (with support by P. Herrmann) (2012) 'Welfare Arrangements, Sustainable Urban Development and new forms of Governance: the Demonstration Project Laak of the City of The Hague' (The Hague: EFSQ, working-paper series nr. 8, [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org))

<sup>27</sup> The interpretation of the ancient Greek words has changed. Originally the Oikos referred to the place of families, oriented on the reproduction and production of daily circumstances. In modern times both functions have become separated. In a general sense the family does not have a real 'production function', only a 'reproduction function'. We situate the family in the Agora as 'market/public place' for communities, families, citizens and their (micro-economic) networks etc.; autonomous concerning the Politeia and Oikos.

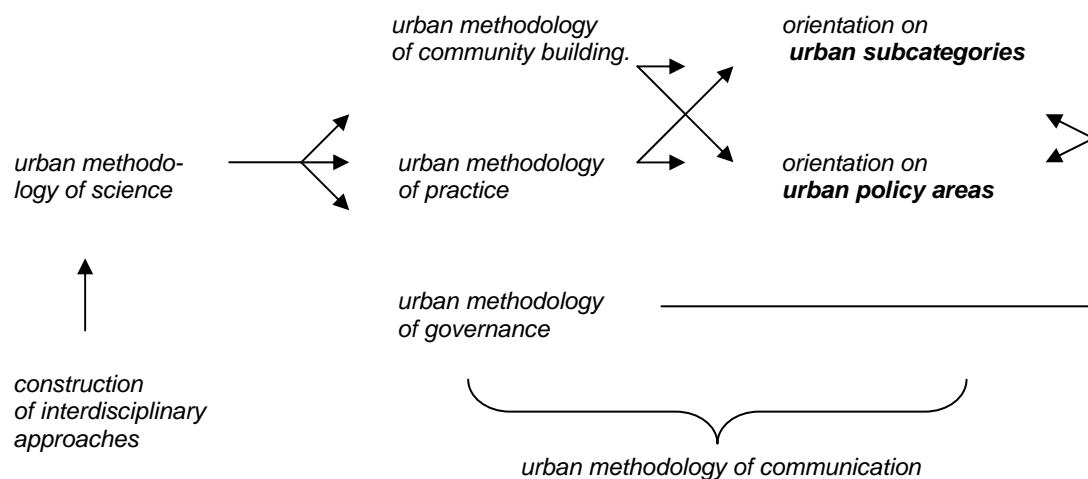
<sup>28</sup> P, Herrmann (2012) 'Social Empowerment and its Indicators', see EFSQ's third book, note-6, Chapter-9.

monopolised by the government or by large market players and organisations for housing, education etc. These processes should play an essential role for developing the 'social empowerment' of citizens of the Agora.

A fourth related difference is that with the start of the orchestration of innovative projects for this neighbourhood it has been decided in the Hague that knowledge institutes should play a supporting role regarding the development of the Agora. This implies another innovative project, namely a new point of crystallization of different knowledge institutes in the city of The Hague and its surrounding region. It is called the **Hacu** (see Figure-7), namely: 'The Hague academic coalition of knowledge institutes for sustainable urban development (of the demonstration project)'. Usually in Western Europe, academic institutes do not participate in comprehensive approaches of neighbourhoods and cities. They are more or less obliged to obtain research projects to strengthen their own position. The Hacu aims to go beyond these policies and their consequences.

A fifth difference is the accent on the distinction and final connection of the development of five methodologies to prepare an 'urban methodological framework'.<sup>29</sup>

**Figure-8: The five layers of the urban methodological framework<sup>30</sup>**



- **urban subcategories** concern: adults, women, migrants, handicapped, young people, elderly etc.
- **urban policy areas** concern: health care, housing, education, sport, employment, income, safety etc.

<sup>29</sup> Such an urban methodology framework implies a conceptual framework as fundament. The thesis is that the social quality approach will deliver such an adequate conceptual framework.

<sup>30</sup> This figure is an elaboration of the comparable figure in: L.J.G. van der Maesen (2010) 'Justice, migration and sustainable urban development of Laak (North); neighbourhood of the city of The Hague (The Hague; EFSQ), working-papers series nr. 6.

It is not clear where to find a debate in Hangzhou about this topic. The distinction is connected with the 'four worlds' and both its instrumental innovative projects, namely the Communicationcentre and the Hacu (see figure-7):

- Methodology of community building (concerning the social empowerment of the Agora),
- Methodology of new governance (concerning the change of forms of government of the Politeia),
- Methodology of practices (concerning innovative projects of the Oikos, supporting the Agora),
- Methodology of science (concerning the change of scientific policies of the Academia/Hacu),
- Methodology of communication (concerning the role of the Communicationcentre).<sup>31</sup>

## 9. **The Hangzhou Model**

Highly interesting and intriguing is the thesis from Chinese colleagues that the Hangzhou Model – compared to the '**Wenzhou Model**' and '**Sunan Model**'- delivers a real perspective for sustainable urban development thanks to the Hangzhou strategies, which are rather unique for China. As argued, these strategies concern the productive and reproductive interrelationships, realized in the socio-economic, socio-political, cultural-cognitive and environmental dimensions of Hangzhou. We read: *"In the first 20 years after the reform and opening up in China, there were at least two regional economic growth models which attracted broad attentions and widespread replications: the 'Wenzhou Model' and 'Sunan Model'. The former is a spontaneously grown market economy and the latter is a government-led industrial economy. Regarded as the most representative economic growth experience in China in the past few decades, the two models have attracted most of the attentions from the international community. However, as these two regions pay their attentions mainly on economic growth but not the development of the region, they are now getting into much trouble in pursuing of sustainable regional development. Upon these accounts, a variety of noteworthy regional economic development models came into being in recent years. Among them, the most steering and most noteworthy is the 'Hangzhou Model'. 'Hangzhou Model' roots deeply in traditional values of the Chinese people. (... ..) the interpretation of the Hangzhou Model will have a significantly impact on the choice of the development path for the emerging regions in China and even in the world".*<sup>32</sup>

In contradiction to both other models, the Hangzhou Model treats the improvement of people's life quality as the primary goal of development and strives to achieve a balance between the four dimensions of sustainability. In our terms in fact the focus primarily concerns the quality of the Agora. The strategies – see previous sections – are to renew the orientations of the Politeia (responsible for the socio-political dimension) in order to strengthen the 'environmental democracy', to stimulate citizens (as the kernel of the cultural-cognitive dimension) to construct a balance between human existence and nature, referring to old Chinese traditions. The Oikos (responsible for the socio-

<sup>31</sup> These methodologies are discussed in the EFSQ's third book, see note-6, Chapter-10.

<sup>32</sup> L. Weidong, F. Liangcong (2012), see note-25, p. 126.

economic dimension) should be instrumental as well and already demonstrates its strong difference with the Oikos in the Wenzhou and the Sunan Model. According to Chinese scholars, it is important to understand the significance of the Hangzhou Model in order to address the most important challenges of human people on earth: how to create sustainable (urban) conditions. Therefore the Hangzhou Model should be made comparable to other Chinese regions, other Asian countries and other Continents.

It is not quite clear from the Hangzhou documents what the significance of the concept 'model' is. Some 'experiences' with the outcomes of the applied strategies are referred to. For the time being the concept of 'model' may be appreciated as the comprehensive totality of applied strategies to orchestrate the manifold of functions of the innovative projects.

### **10. A new proposal and some considerations on the Hangzhou Model/experiences**

This working-paper will conclude with some questions and a proposal related to the Hangzhou Model from the social quality perspective. **First**, in order to take on board the plea by Chinese scholars to interpret and to understand the Hangzhou model we should reach consensus about the interpretation of sustainability. Usually, it is used in a highly confusing way. In June 2012 a Dutch think-tank of experts sent their ideas on sustainability to participants of the Rio+20 conference in order to contribute to a consensus about this concept with the help of the social quality perspective. At the same time this contribution may clarify our comprehensive understanding of the 'sustainable urban development' issue.<sup>33</sup> How to understand its four dimensions (the socio-economic, the socio-political, the cultural-cognitive and the environmental) and how to integrate them?

**Second**, which theory backs the Chinese concept of life quality and how to incorporate this in the concept of sustainability? Is the social quality theory helpful to answer this question? Compared to the theoretical work for developing the social quality theory, we miss documents or references to theoretical work to deepen the concept of 'life quality'. We suppose, this popular concept seems to be synonymous with social quality.

**Third**, which theory is applied in Hangzhou for understanding the contradictions and convergencies of the four worlds (see Figure-6) and – with this in mind – how to interpret the differences with the strategies as applied in the city of The Hague, referring to some essential aspects of the social quality theory? These contradictions refer to manifestations of inequality (between the urban and the rural), differences in health care all over the country, differences in circumstances producing security or insecurity etc.

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<sup>33</sup> L.J.G. van der Maesen, J. van Renswoude, P. Herrmann (2012), *Development toward Sustainability: The need for a Comprehensive Conceptual and Methodological Framework for new Politics and Policies: A Social Quality Perspective* (The Hague; EFSQ), see: [www.socialquality.org](http://www.socialquality.org)

**Fourth**, which instruments are created in collaboration with citizens to strengthen the position of the Agora? Why do we miss the circle of the Agora in the presentation of the Hangzhou strategies? Of interest to notice is that in the Dutch political culture more than the Politeia, the Oikos and the Agora function as sources of societal initiatives. This also differs from France with its accent on the Politeia.

These and other considerations are important to go back to the Hangzhou's basic orientation '**how to all make the daily life of citizens better in Hangzhou as example to other places of the world**'? Which new theory do we need to support citizens, policy makers, civil servants, etc to address the most important challenge, to make human existence on earth sustainable? Without sustainability we will not reach 'better life' for all and for future generations. What can China and the rest of the world learn from the Hangzhou approach? As we learn from Hangzhou documents, in terms of the social quality approach - the 'social empowerment' of citizens should be enhanced.<sup>34</sup> This implies to strengthen the role and position of the NGOs in the Agora and Oikos. **NGO** means: non-governmental organisation. The application of this concept implies that 'governmental organisations' function as a source of orientation. At the end of the day 'NGO' is in fact a negative concept. Worldwide we should apply – in the context of the methodology of community building to strengthen social empowerment – a new concept, namely **PO's**. This means '**people's organisations**'.

Figure-8 will illustrate that in the end the social quality theory is strongly oriented on **practical changes of daily circumstances**. The five layers of the urban methodological framework are oriented on the position of urban categories and urban policy areas. The first are rightly connected with the nature of the constitutional factors (see Figure-1), the second with the conditional factors. To understand the position of urban categories we can apply profiles as instruments. To understand the results of interventions in policy areas we can apply indicators as instruments. Both are connected with questions of societal wholes. This differs from the traditional so-called 'social indicators', which are eclectic and descriptive and not based on a grounded theory.<sup>35</sup> As a consequence of the 'social quality architecture' (Figure-1) this theory makes a distinction between profiles and indicators and not between subjective and objective indicators.

Our fourth proposal (see Introduction) refers to the thesis, that the Hangzhou Model/experiences are rather unique in China and present an example for other metropolises in China, Asia and other continents. With this in mind it is highly worthwhile that the municipality will invest in the presentation of these experiences on a 'global level', in order to be understandable in other continents. Therefore we need to apply a conceptual framework for this global communication and comparative work. We need a common 'point of Archimedes' to analyse and to understand the Hangzhou experiences.

<sup>34</sup> L. Weidong, F. Liangcong (2012), see note-25.

<sup>35</sup> This is extensively discussed in the EFSQ's third study, see note-6.