

Second Draft

EUROPEAN FOUNDATION ON SOCIAL QUALITY

Theoretical state of affairs

By Laurent J.G. van der Maesen and Alan C. Walker
Keizersgracht 324, 1016 EZ
Amsterdam, EFSQ @ Felix.Meritis.nl
www.socialquality.org
21st June 2002

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to present outcomes of recent discussions concerning the theoretical state of affairs of the social quality initiative and the herewith-related research strategies for the coming three years. At the same time the Foundation publishes its preliminary ideas about the institutionalisation of this initiative and its herewith-related policy strategies for the coming three years. It is based on the outcomes of the recent practical state of affairs.¹ Both documents are supplementary to each other. The debate on the theoretical aspects of the social quality initiative is a condition for steering the Foundation's actual main challenge. It regards the management of the new European Network on Indicators of Social Quality, started in October 2001. This Network with its 16 national reference groups all over Europe will complete its activities in October 2004. Especially the preparation of its first meeting stimulated to reflect upon the presented theory of social quality in the Foundation's second book, '*Social Quality: A Vision for Europe*'.² This meeting was prepared with help of its so-called General Paper.³ Thanks to this preparation and the debates since the Network's first meeting the actual theoretical gaps of the second book could be recognised and articulated. This debate is not completed. There are many questions unresolved. Therefore we will publish this document as a draft. We hope to renew this document in September 2002. Theorising social quality is in fact a long-term challenge. This document is based upon lectures, given in Florence, Dublin and Athens with which we tried to start this articulation.

This document - especially based upon the Foundation's second book – will open (i) with a short summarise of the nature of this initiative. Then some (ii) policy oriented arguments for this initiative will be presented. It follows with (iii) the actual state of theoretical affairs of this academic enterprise, namely the presentation of some basic principles of the theory on social quality. With this in mind some connections are made (iv) with the implicit theoretical oriented dialogue with the European Commission about the operationalisation of the decisions made during the Lisbon Summit in 2000. This excursion may function as a specific demonstration of the basic principles. This document concludes (v) with the Foundation's main motives and its recent research strategies with which to operationalise the social quality theory in the coming years.

¹ L.J.G. van der Maesen, 'A European Centre for Theorising, Debating and Applying Social Quality in the European Union'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, 21st June 2002.

² W.A. Beck, L.J.G. van der Maesen, F. Thomése, A.C. Walker (eds), '*Social Quality: A Vision for Europe*'. The Hague, London/Boston: Kluwer Law International, 2001.

³ W.A. Beck, M. Keizer, L.J.G. van der Maesen, D. Phillips, '*General Paper on Behalf of the first Plenary Meeting of the Network Indicators of Social Quality*'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, October 2001.

2. *The start of the social quality initiative*

2.1 *The initiative*

The social quality initiative was launched under the Dutch Presidency in 1997 in order to start an academic movement for a new approach of daily circumstances of citizens in Europe, the Member States, regions, cities and communities. It was based on the outcomes of three international meetings about economic and social transformations in Europe in the 1990s.⁴ Connections were made with participants of two European Observatories, on 'Social Exclusion' and 'On Older people'. Its Board works together with its Scientific Council of academics from all Member States and three Accession States.⁵ It began with the critique of the dominant policy paradigm, which subordinates juridical, welfare and cultural policies to economic policy and which fails to recognise, and therefore give expression to, the essentially social character of the needs and preferences of citizens. The Foundation sought, instead, to replace the dominant 'handmaiden' paradigm of these policies. In June 1997 the Foundation presented its first book, '*The Social Quality of Europe*'.⁶ The concept was intended to provide an alternative policy rationale as an analytical instrument for developing knowledge-based democratic, social and political relations. At the moment the theoretical ambition is also to deliver points of departure for interdisciplinary approaches with which to address all these policies from the same point of view. In other words it will contribute to a new Archimedes' point of reference. It is especially oriented on the participatory aspects of societal processes in order to support and enhance the role of organised citizens under the new economic and political circumstances.

2.2 *The main thesis*

The *main thesis* of the Foundation's first book concerns the supposition, that traditional approaches of policy making in Europe subordinates social policy (in the broader sense) to economic policy. It reflects a top-down form of governance, and cannot provide a secure basis on which to build either a socially just Europe or one that reflects the needs and preferences of citizens. The contributors of the first book sought to provide, instead, an independent rationale for economic, cultural, juridical and welfare policies at the same time. It sought also to develop a standard by which we might measure the extent to which the quality of the daily lives of citizens has attained an acceptable European level. That independent rationale is social quality.⁷ Since its publication the Foundation stimulated debates and studies with which to achieve *three aims*. First, by theorising social quality to develop new

⁴ These meetings were organised by SISWO, the Dutch Institute for the Social Sciences. They paved the way for the Foundation. In the context of SISWO it could develop its own juridical status. At the end of 2000 the Foundation left SISWO and started its office in the Felix Meritis building in the centre of Amsterdam. Since that time it is independent thanks to the support of three Dutch Ministries, the City of Amsterdam, different sponsors, the European Commission and especially thanks to the support 'in kind' of about fifty academic institutes all over Europe.

⁵ The Board's members are: prof. dr A.C.Walker (chair), dr L.J.G. van der Maesen (director/secretary), J. A. Winkelhuijzen (treasurer), prof. dr. A.Ph.C.M. Jaspers, dr P.Kapteyn, prof. dr C.P.M. Knipscheer, prof. dr G.Vobruba.

⁶ W.A.Beck, L.J.G. van der Maesen, A.C.Walker (eds), '*Social Quality of Europe*'. The Hague, London.Boston: Kluwer Law International, 1997 (the paperback edition: Bristol: Policy Press, 1998).

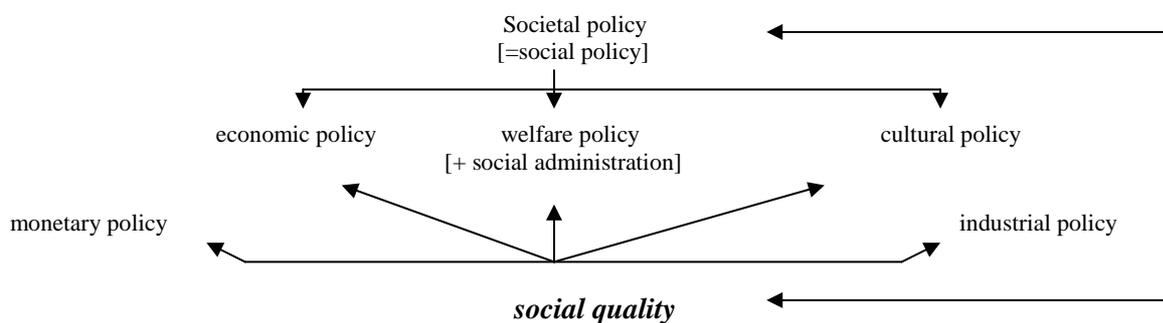
⁷ This refers to a normative based point of departure. The intention is to develop instruments with which to contribute to social justice and equity in the Member States and Accession States. The acceptance will have far reaching political and economic consequences.

scientific and analytical tools for transcending the present scientific disciplinary fragmentation. This may be seen as a condition for changing the unequal relationship between politics, economics, social policy and cultural policy. Second, to develop practical yardsticks – namely indicators, profiles, criteria - that can be used by researchers, policy makers and organised citizens in the EU for comparative research. This may be seen as a condition for understanding and assessing the impact of social, economic and cultural processes on the social quality of daily life. Third, to establish new autonomous benchmarks for policy-making and interventions of organised citizens, which move beyond the existing fragmentary policy approaches. This will enable citizens to relate more easily to politics and policy making and to connect politics with social quality.

2.3 A short excursion

In the Foundation's second book the distinction between polity, politics and policy is made in order to understand the above mentioned points. Polity concerns the formal and informal institutional framework or context in which politics operates. Politics itself regards the game to be played and about settling the goals and the rules concerning processes and dynamics in which decisions are produced regarding the authoritative reallocation of resources. Policy concerns the content of outcomes of the operationalisation of the settled goals in the given framework. In other words, politics precedes and wraps up policy.⁸ Usually the distinction is made between economic, social, juridical and cultural policies. In that type of distinctions 'social policy' is synonymous with 'social administration'.⁹ Social policy in the broader sense – or better 'societal policy' – concerns therefore the content of outcomes of settled goals addressing the social dimension of human configurations and circumstances in regions, cities, communities and families. It concerns outcomes by (a) the state and its public organisations, (b) commercial firms and (c) non-profit organisations and foundations. The traditional and dominant interpretation equates social policy with collective action through government. It is oriented on health, education, social security, housing etc. In fact this is social administration. The following figure seems more attractive:

Figure 1: *the proposed role of social quality*



⁸ G. Therborn: 'On Politics and Policy of Social Quality, A lecture held during the international conference on social quality in Amsterdam, 8-10 June, 1997. Uppsala: SCASS, 1997.

⁹ This equation has serious limitations: it overlooks (i) important sources of social inequality, (ii) it ignores prevailing distribution of power, (iii) it denies social objectives of other policy domains, (iv) it is only focussed upon the central and local state and not industry, commerce and voluntary bodies, and (v) it says nothing about the welfare of citizens and the range of social institutions which have a bearing on welfare. Therefore we use the concept of 'welfare policies' instead of social policies. See: A.C. Walker, 'Social Planning'. Oxford: Blackwell, 1984.

2.4 *The definition of social quality*

In the Foundation's first book social quality is defined as 'the extent to which people are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well being and individual potential. In order to achieve an acceptable level of social quality four conditions must be fulfilled. They are accepted as the four components of social quality and presented in the first book's quadrant of social quality¹⁰:

- people have to have access to *socio-economic security* – whether from employment, social security, health care or other sources – in order to assure circumstances necessary for a dignified life, and to protect them from poverty and other forms of material as well as immaterial deprivation
- people must experience *inclusion* in, or minimum levels of exclusion from, key political, social and economic institutions such as the labour market, political systems and community organisations in order to realise their potentials,
- people should be able to live in communities and societies characterised by a sufficient level of *cohesion* as condition for collectively accepted values and norms which are indispensable for their social existence,
- people must be empowered in order to be able to fully participate, especially in the face of rapid socio-economic change. *Empowerment* means enabling people to control their own lives and to take advantage of opportunities.

2.3 *Dissemination of the initiative*

The Foundation's *first book* is discussed in a European conference of scientists and policy-makers during the Dutch Presidency in the beginning of June 1997. At that time the Foundation also published the '*Amsterdam Declaration on Social Quality*', based on its first book.¹¹ This document is discussed with 400 participants in a public symposium in Amsterdam. Since then it gathered nearly 1000 signatures of scientists all over Europe to support the Declaration. The signatures are presented to the President of the European Parliament. Between June 1997 and January 2001 representatives of the Foundation held lectures and workshops in many Member States and contributed to conferences and public debates from the perspective of the social quality approach. The European Department of the Kingston University in London started in co-operation with the Foundation the production of the *European Journal of Social Quality*, published by Berghahn Books in Oxford.¹²

Since 1998 the Foundation's Board paved the way for the exploration of some projects in order to begin with the confrontation of its theoretical suppositions with aspects of the daily reality. It started with two policy fields, namely employment policies and public health policies. Furthermore it made a begin with studies about cohesion and socio-economic security, two components or objective

¹⁰ In the fourth section we will refer to a new theoretical step. In the Foundation's second book these components are interpreted as the objective conditional factors of social quality. There are also subjective and constitutional factors of social quality. See note-2.

¹¹ '*Amsterdam Declaration on Social Quality*'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, June 1997 (see note-2, pp. 385-386 as well).

¹² Since 1999 six issues are published by Berghahn Books in Oxford: (i) Vol 1/Issues 1 and Vol 1/Issue 2 about the Social Quality, (ii) Vol 2/Issue 1 about Age and Autonomy, (iii) Vol 2/Issue 2 about Social Quality and Employment Policies, (iv) Vol 3/Issue 1 and Vol 3/Issue 2 about Citizenship and Welfare protection.

conditional factors of social quality.¹³ Furthermore, since 1999 the Foundation started in co-operation with three Dutch NGOs the project 'The Voice of Civil Europe'. Its purpose is to underpin the position of citizens from the perspective of social quality. This project's main topics concern the constitutional aspects of the European Union in the future and the consequences of the extension of the Union for the social quality of especially the new Member States. From the side of the Foundation the outcomes should be presented to similar NGOs in surrounding Member States. The ratio of these endeavours is quite clear. For developing the theory of social quality the confrontation with the praxis of human existence is a *conditio sine qua non*. The essential motive of the social quality initiative concerns especially the support of (organised) citizens coping with the nature and consequences of processes and applied policies. This also regards the main challenge of the project 'The Voice of Civil Europe'. And as noticed above, the Foundation published its second book in 2001. It is based on the outcomes of the manifold of debates about the first book

2.4 Its main theoretical challenge

In order to discuss the recent state of theoretical affairs it seems worthwhile to refer to some conclusions, presented in the Foundation's first book. Its contributors remark that the concept of social quality is theoretically important, as it emphasises that quantitative criteria which are used in research, should be clearly derived from more fundamental qualitative principles. But if no such connection is made, 'social quality' will remain an abstract and affirmative concept, of little use in theory and research on social problems in the widest sense. Furthermore, the ultimate challenge of the perspective of 'social quality' may be that it confronts European citizens, on the threshold of a new era, with the long and heterogeneous tradition of European thought about the quality of social life, starting 2500 years ago with Plato's *Politeia*. Moreover it does so by acknowledging the need to relate to (and partly include) other, also long established and heterogeneous traditions, thus finding a new configuration characterising and stabilising the diversity of 'European' identities.¹⁴

3. Some arguments for the initiative and its most essential choice

¹³ The first complete introduction of these types of exploration is presented in: '*Annual Report 2000*'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, June 2001.

¹⁴ J. Baars, K.Knipscheer, F.Thomése, A.Walker, 'Towards Social Quality in Europe', see note-6, p.348-349 (paperback, Bristol: Policy Press).

Why to look for a new theoretical framework in order to create possibilities for transcending disciplinary fragmentation and paving the way for comprehensive policies? Therefore the Foundation three arguments. But in order to assess this fragmentation a fundamental philosophical based choice is inevitable. That point will be addressed as well.

3.1 *Three arguments*

In this subsection we present three arguments for endeavours to transcend the existing disciplinary fragmentation. The *first* regards an empirical question. Notwithstanding the plea for the so-called 'liberalisation' of social relations by market mechanisms we may notice an increase of inequality. See for example the message of the United Nations Development Programme in 1999. In 1960, 20% of the world's people in richest countries had 30 times the income of the poorest 20%. In 1997 this had increased to 77 times as much.¹⁵ An isolated and fragmented economic approach does not address the needs of millions of people. The *second* regards societal processes. We may notice a structural based distinction between growing international based networks (and their political and economical interests) and local based communities as source for democratic based politics. The strengthening of this distinction undermines these politics. The *third* regards an analytical question. Notwithstanding the clear consequences of the relations with societal processes – and see the ongoing unification of Europe – we lack a common based interpretation of important concepts with which to interpret these processes. One of the reasons is also a thorough fragmentation of economic, sociological, juridical and cultural thinking. A clear example was given during the conference of the European Parliament on social quality in March 2000. The applied concepts during this conference were economic progress, social protection, economic security, social exclusion, social cohesion, inclusion and economic growth. But these and other concepts are applied in connection with different oriented frames of references and therefore causing essential confusion. What is missing is conceptual coherence between applied concepts. Therefore discussions about the European social model in contrast to the social model of the USA- a main theme of this conference - remain unclear because this lack of coherence.¹⁶

3.2 *The heuristic meaning of the connection between the three arguments*

Especially, the third point (lack of conceptual coherence) and the first point (increase of inequality) undermine the understanding of the second point (consequences of the structural based distinction). Realising the process of understanding implies, according to Habermas, a minimal balance in power, positions and information as well as common accepted concepts for interpreting our world.¹⁷ It supposes in other words a specific level of equity. But this conditions is not institutional, nor a social reality. By analysing the transformation of capitalism Castells provides an elucidation of this conclusion. He explains the mechanisms responsible for the breaking up of relationships on an individual level, the social level and with regard to environmental aspects. The nature of the recent social transformation stimulates a "fundamental split between abstract, universal instrumentalism, and historically rooted, particularistic identities (...) In this condition of structural schizophrenia between function and meaning, patterns of social communication become increasingly under stress".¹⁸ The

¹⁵ UNDP, 'Human Development Report 1999'. New York: United Nations, 1999.

¹⁶ A.C.Walker, L.J.G. van der Maesen, 'The European Social Model and Social Quality: a Discussion Paper on behalf of the Conference on Social Quality, European Parliament'. Amsterdam: EFSQ, March 2000.

¹⁷ J.Habermas, 'Theorie des Kommunikativen handelns. Band 1'. Frankfurt am Main: shurkamp, 1981, p.387.

¹⁸ M.Castells, 'The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Volume 1: The Rise of the Network Society'. Oxford; Blackwell Publishers, 1997, p.3

reciprocity between the third and first point legitimises the fragmentation between disciplines because their functionality for dominant interests to prevent equity. Nevertheless, because of the consequences of this transformation, the necessity to create a process of understanding will be a condition to cope with this coming structural schizophrenia. The social quality initiative may be appreciated as an endeavour.

The third point (lack of conceptual coherence) blocks an understanding of the first point as well (increase of inequality). Certain key elements of the globalisation process are indisputable, precisely what nation states and supra-national bodies like the EU can do in response to them and to mitigate their worst impact. Nevertheless, contradictory conclusions by prominent and well-known institutes are presented to the world without any hesitation. On the one hand, for example, World Bank economists argue that the free market and economic growth will help the poorest.¹⁹ On the other hand, for example, the Washington Centre for Strategic and International Studies says, that the theory and practice of the free market on a global level will destroy the identities of historically rooted communities. The abolition of National labour protection regulations stimulates production and distribution and, therefore, the realisation of profit for the new economic giants. Representatives of the Washington Centre conclude, that this 'turbo capitalism' reduces human beings to objects of profit making and causes the commodification of all manifestations of nature and culture.²⁰ This is not contested because the lack of an acceptable point of Archimedes with which to transcend this contradiction.

3.3 *The necessity of a choice*

With these three arguments in mind the Foundation accepts scientifically critics on the post-modernist comments on ideological based points of view. According to Bauman, instead of to be proud of not concerning ourselves with any coherent vision of the good society and of having traded off the worry about the public good for the freedom to pursue private satisfaction, we should be essentially ashamed of this type of ideas and herewith-related actions of new populist parties and movements.²¹ One of the main motives for theorising social quality is to develop new starting points for which to build consensus, with the help of modern forms of communication, and, thereby, to influence democratic norms and values. This means in terms of Bauman, that social quality has to be a goal, or a moving target, offering something positive to all the major forces of Europe. This regards especially the consequences of globalisation. Therefore, we have to understand what this means empirically as well in order to prevent confusing types of ideologies concerning globalisation. The need for analysing these questions concerns the essence of the social quality approach. We need yardsticks for measuring and interpreting the consequences in order to contribute to the translation of consensus about visions for the good society. This motive refers to the main choice, related with the social quality initiative. Because the hedonistic character of populism this choice is evidentially not between populism or non-

¹⁹ D.Dollar, A.Kraay, 'Growth is Good for the Poor'. Washington: World Bank, 2000.

²⁰ D.H. Lamparter, F. Vorholz, 'Das WTO-Fiasko: Der Kapitalismus macht ungleich. Der US-Okonom Edward Luttwak uber den globalen Vormarsch des Turbokapitalismus und uber Gerhard Schroder and Tony Blair'. *Die Zeit*, 1999, 9 December, 50, 25.

²¹ Z.Bauman, 'In Searching of Politics'. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, p.8. He calls for a positive concept of ideology: "the name of ideology has been assigned to the cognitive frames, which allow various bits of human experience to fall into place and form a recognisable, meaningful pattern", p. 118. It has to be confronted with the outcomes of the so-called schizophreni (see Castells, note-18). Locality becomes devalued and capital becomes exterritorial. For Bauman globalization means, among other things, the progressive separation of power (related with global network systems) and politics (related with local based communities).

populism. The choice is between the proposition of human life as merely an external association of elements without intrinsic connection (the utilitarian anthropology) or the proposition of individual subjects as intrinsically social beings (the expressivist anthropology).²² The concept of social quality refers to the second proposition. Therefore, we have to know what we mean with 'the social'.

4 *The actual state of theoretical affairs*

4.1 *The meaning of 'the social'*

The Foundation invited scientists to comment on the Foundation's first book from their disciplinary point of view (economy, law, political sciences etc) as well as to reflect upon the application of the concept. It invited also other scientists to present their ideas concerning main processes on European and national level and to connect this presentation with their suppositions about the social quality approach. Both invitations paved the way for respectively the first part and the second part of the Foundation's second book, published in the beginning of 2001.²³ Thanks to both parts the editors were enabled to renew the social quality theory as presented in the first book. One of the main criticisms of this first formation of social quality is that it lacked a theoretical foundation. Further work in response to this criticism led to the search for a scientific framework, which establishes whether or not the *social* is an authentic entity in its own right with which to determine the nature of social quality of aspects of daily life.

The conclusion of the theoretical endeavour is that the heart of what is 'social' concerns the self-realisation of individuals as social beings, in the context of the formation of collective identities. In other words, 'the social' is the outcome of constantly changing processes through which individuals realise themselves as interacting social beings. The herewith-related dialectical processes will create or *constitute* the social world.²⁴ The main question is which policies or interventions of citizens do we need in order to contribute to the self-realisation in the context of the formation of acceptable collective identities and vice versa? The social quality approach is essentially oriented on (i) formal policy making processes (ii) collective actions and interventions by systems, institutes, companies as well as organised citizens, and the way (iii) they address real human needs and acceptable preferences and wants. The reason is the overall neglecting of this aspect. Answers to this questions will create a more solid and authentic basis for these different policies and interventions. The nexus of policy-making, actors and needs regards the so-called 'genetic code' of social quality, explained in section-5.2

Thanks to this renewal of the theory by accentuating the concept of 'the social' we are enabled to explore the *constitutional factors* of social quality, namely the processes concerning the above-

²² C.Taylor, *Hegel*. London/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp 10-50. See as well: R. Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse for Freedom*. London: Verso, 1993. According to Bhaskar, the call for an expressive unity, lost since the idealized Greek world, "paid due heed to diversity, which would be in effect a unity-in-diversity, and to the constitutive role of subjectivity", p.18. This essential choice is put forward in the second book's Chapter-XV11, see note-2.

²³ See note-2.

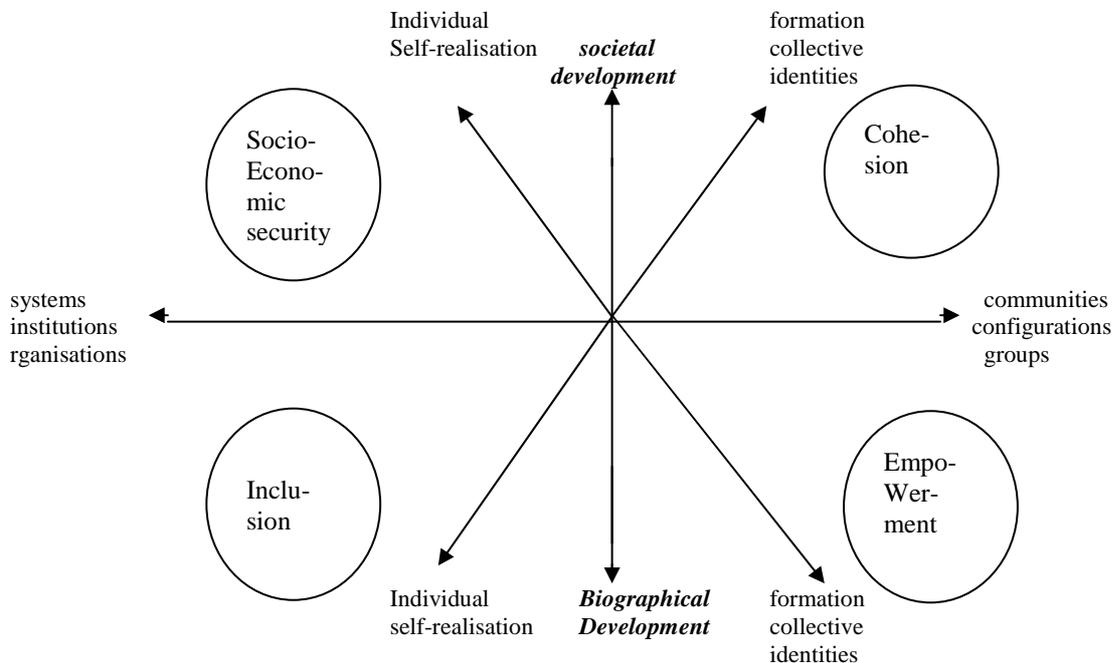
²⁴ This refers as well as to; A. Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts*. Cambridge: Polity press, 1995. According to Honneth, a political community can only fully succeed to the degree to which it is supported, on the part of members of society, by cultural customs that have to do with the way in which they deal with each other reciprocally.

presented dialectic. Second, these processes (and herewith-related dialectic) take place in concrete public spaces. This concerns the four components as *objective conditional factors*. They may be appreciated as key-points for orientation in order to construct a composed set of indexes. Because the recognition of the constitutional factors these components, already introduced in the first book, may receive their theoretical based dimension. Third, individual subjects orient themselves on basis of forms of self-references. The applied assumption is, that 'the social' as a result of interacting individuals in the context of objective conditions is also determined by the interrelated dynamics of these individual subjects. That means, we also have to take on board the cognitive, motivational and affective aspects of self-interpretation because they are in definition crucial aspects of interacting human beings. This concerns the *subjective conditional factors*. They may be seen as a logical consequence of the recognition of the constitutional factors as well.²⁵

4.2 The connection of the constitutional and the objective conditional factors

As noticed above, the social quality quadrant in the second book is based on the interpretation of 'the social'. It presents the four components or objective conditional factors, highly influenced by the above-mentioned dialectic, determining the subject matter of each component see figure-2:

Figure 2: The main dialectic and the objective conditional factors²⁶



²⁵ The distinction between the three factors determining social quality is introduced in the second book and elaborated in the General Paper (note-3). In fact the elaboration of this distinction concerns the main challenge of theorising social quality.

²⁶ See note-2, p. 315.

Compared with the presentation in the first book, the meaning of the vertical axe is changed. It does not regard the tension between macro and micro circumstances and relations, but between societal developments and biographical developments. Especially both changes pave the way for connecting the social quality approach with the question of human needs, preferences and wants, as well as the judgement about their relevance. Because the essential role of the dialectic, the intrinsic connection can be discovered between the subject matters of the components. This renewal of the social quality theory paves the way for the development of the conceptual coherence between well known concepts as protection, cohesion, inclusion, security, economic growth, welfare, etc, thanks to the new comparability of their subject matters. In other words, the concept of cohesion is on abstract level related with inclusion or socio-economic security.

According to this presentation, the actual nature, content and structure of social relations is a function of the relationship between two axes. The horizontal axis represents the tensions between systems, institutions and organisations, on the one hand, and communities and groups on the other. The vertical axis represents the tension between social processes at the societal level and biographical ones at the individual level. The interaction of these twin tensions paves the dynamic behind both self-realisation and the formation of collective identities which in turn, leads to the *production* of the social world. With this in mind this figure is not quite clear. The dialectic between the self-realisation of the individual subject and the formation of collective identities is operating in each component. It is circling in the quadrant. In the presentation it seems a static question concerning the whole quadrant and not each component. The outcomes produce different aspects. Therefore, socio-economic security is an outcome of the confrontation of the dialectic and the dynamic between societal processes and systems. Cohesion is an outcome of the confrontation of the dialectic and the dynamic between societal processes and the world of communities, and groups etc. Thanks to the recognition of these dialectic processes in the 'public spaces' the second book opens the exploration of the way needs, preferences and wants of human subjects are addressed. Implicitly it reformulated the heart of the matter of social quality.

The point of this brief excursion into social theory is to explain the scientific rationale for the idea of social quality. Because the heart of the social world concerns the self-realisation of individuals as social beings, the main point of reference for quality must be the circumstances of daily life. Therefore, quality is a function of permanently changing interactions among actors in everyday life and cannot be reduced to processes between systems and communities and groups. Furthermore, quality does not have a one-dimensional nature. There are no quality standards independent of the dynamic historical and situational circumstances in which the social world is manufactured. Finally, the interpretation of quality in terms of minimum standards for everybody is not an option. In Therborn's terms social quality implies an 'open horizon' rather than a 'social floor'. Fifth, quality depends on capacity. In other words, quality will be realised if people are enabled to develop communicative capacities in ever more complex circumstances. Sixth, quality is not only a question of outcomes but of processes as well. The nature of interventions, the choice of strategies for action, and the type of organisation have an important bearing on the quality of the process.

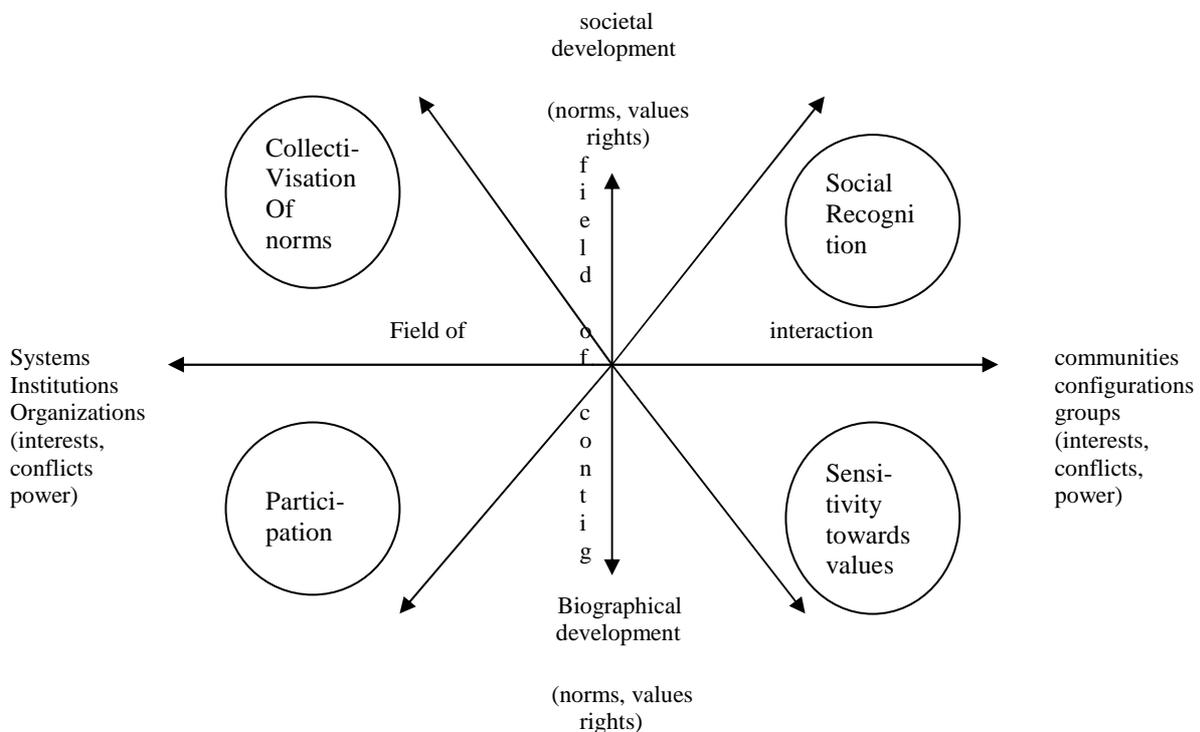
4.3 *The connection of the constitutional and subjective conditional factors*

We have to take on board an important paradox. First, the individual subject is dependent on the social appreciation of his/her social environment. Second, at the same time, his/her subjective judgement determines if such an appreciation is a reality. Daily injuries in word and gesture – for

example on the street, during an interview, at a policy station, in shops, between generations – have a negative impact on this determination. This refers to the subjective conditional factors which are influencing essentially the nature of the dialectic between the self-realisation and formation of collective identities because the self-referential role during the construction of self-realisation. This important dimension was lacking in the first book. Because social quality analysis accentuate the interrelationships between interacting human subjects as social beings and the participatory characteristics of policy-making it has to take on board this dimension for developing yardsticks and hereupon based benchmarks for steering the process of policy-making and interventions of (organised) citizens. Herewith it addresses the well-known tension between the rational technical and a value based constructivist approach with regard to the development of ‘social indicators’ thus far.

We presume that both axes presented in figure-2 and the tensions they represent, produce points of gravitation with regard to the subjective dimension of social quality of daily circumstances. The horizontal axis provides the code for analysing processes taking place in the field of interactions, namely interactive communication about interests, power, and conflicts. It concerns the field of contingencies. The vertical axis provides the code for analysing values, norms, principles, rights and conventions. In combination with the working of the main dialectic they produce the four points of gravitation, see figure-3.

Figure 3: The main dialectic and the subjective conditional factorsⁱ

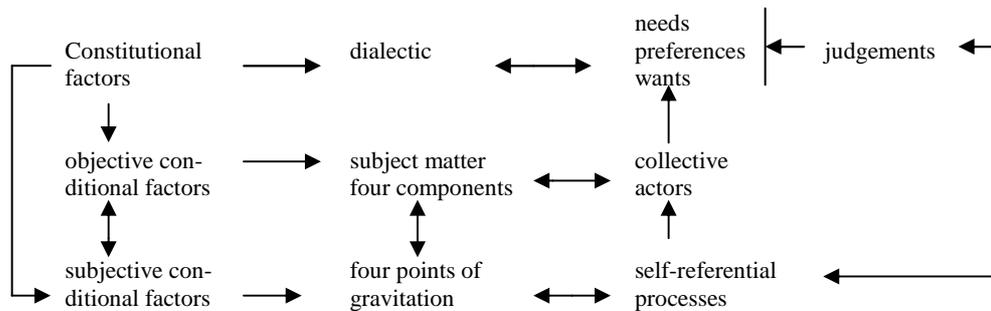


The four points of gravitation are primarily responsible for the concretisation of the social. This means that processes concerning participation, social recognition, collectivisation of norms and the sensitivity of values determine the nature, the extension, the range and the morphological structure of the social.

Thanks to this determination the social will become a concrete form, a 'Gestalt'. The evaluation of this very complicated set of processes and interrelationships with regard to the subjective conditional factors requires its own specific methodological instruments, namely profiles.

With help of both figures presented above we may illustrate the connection between the three factors as follows, see figure-4. This may pave the way for our assumptions about the genetic code of social quality (see section-5.2), by connecting these factors and their essential characteristics with needs, collective actors and self-referential processes.

Figure 4: *The three factors of social quality*

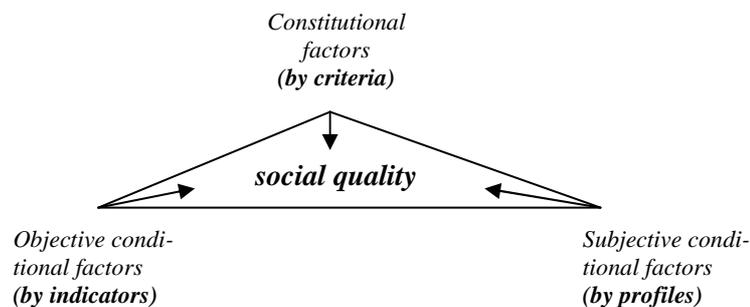


4.4 The start of the operationalisation

A concept that focus at the same time at individual and societal level, objective living conditions and subjective well being, requires a multidimensional frame of measurement. That frame should combine quantitative and qualitative, material and immaterial indicators, facts and satisfactions, general and specific indicators. They have to address issues, situations, life domains, area based or policy specific questions. The connection of these three types of factors – see figure-4 - is new in the context of indicators research. The four components or objective conditional factors should be analysed by objective *indicators*.²⁷ In the form of *profiles* we will tackle the subjective conditional factors, namely the role of life scripts, the biographical oriented story of the acting individual subject. With help of a matrix of *criteria* we will combine the judgement of the beholder of social quality with the objective verification of the expert. This combination constructs our methodological triangle. It will demonstrate that the construct of classical indicators can not be sufficient for measuring social quality.

²⁷ In October 2001 the Foundation started its 'Network Indicators of Social Quality', financed by the European Commission (DG-X11). Experts from 16 Member States and Accession States participate in this Network. All of them will create a national reference groups in order to confront the outcomes of the Network with circumstances in their own country. Especially this Network will develop the indicators of the objective conditional factors. See its General paper, note-3.

Figure 5: *The methodological triangle*²⁸



The indicators are the measurement instruments for the objective conditional factors of social quality. Profiles concern expressions of subjective self-estimations with regard to the degree of participation in public affairs. This is also connected with social recognition by the social environment, the degrees of openness towards values and acceptance of collective norms. But the most fascination question is who decides what quality should be? Are they experts from institutions, using instruments for peer reviews, inspections, indices and systems of monitoring? Or do we have to refer to bottom-up methods regarding new relationships based on citizens and consumers' control and participation? The essence of social quality is determined in human praxis. Therefore we need methodological based criteria in order to decide. In the second book we refer to the proposal of Grunow how to construct criteria we need for this judgement.²⁹

5. *From social quality to policies: the genetic code as intermediary*

5.1 *An implicit dialogue*

In this section we will confront the outcomes of the initial phase of theorising social quality with suppositions, underlining European policies. Especially, we will refer to the decisions made during the Lisbon Summit in 2000 and the outcomes of endeavours, to operationalise these decisions by the European Commission (DG-V).³⁰ With help of this confrontation we try to clarify some of our main assumptions and how to use them for processes of policy-making and interventions by (organised) citizens. The step from abstract reasoning (see above) to, in this case, policy-making will be made with help of our assumption concerning the *genetic code* of social quality. This genetic code, and see figure-5, is derived from figure-4, namely the connections between the three factors of social quality. Thanks to the genetic code we can connect the social quality assumptions with suppositions referring to the translation of the Lisbon Summit decisions by the European Commission. Herewith we will start the debate about differences and similarities. Up till now, this debate or dialogue is rather implicit.

²⁸ This triangle is for the first time presented in the General paper, note-3.

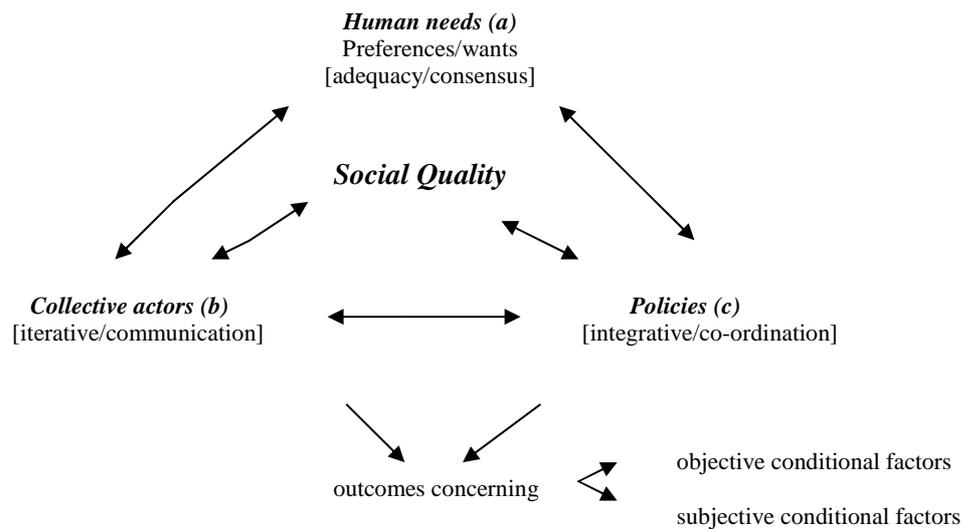
²⁹ See note-2, Chapter-XV111

³⁰ European Council, 'Presidency Conclusions'. Lisbon: Press Release SN 100/100 EN, 20 March (2000), p.2

5.2 *The genetic code of social quality*

The genetic code represents the central working hypothesis of the social quality approach linking theory with different policy fields and herewith-related policies (for example employment policies, or public health policies, etc). The collective actors (political parties, bureaucratic institutes, firms, companies, social configurations and organised citizens) should be invited, enabled or pressed to design policies which address recognised individual and collective problems, needs, wants and preferences. The nature of the outcomes - the level of social quality – will be determined by their consequences for the constitutional, the objective conditional and the subjective conditional factors as well the conditions for their reciprocity. This process of determination will be visualised by the ‘genetic code of social quality’. With help of the following figure we may illustrate this as follows:

Figure 6: *The genetic code of social quality*³¹



All policies (ad-c) – economic, cultural, agricultural etc – have to be linked with the ‘actors’ in the systems, institutions and organisations as well as groups, informal configurations and communities (see ad-b), and with ‘human needs’ (ad-a). This is also the case with social policies. This is the case for employment policies or public health policies as well. These policies have respectively to be linked with a manifold of actors and needs. In summary, figure-6 concerns (i) all policies. It concerns (ii) all phases of policy-making as well (acknowledgement, design, application, development and evaluation). The interrelationships of this figure will (iii) produce success if the basic conditions are existing (forum, a specific level of public ethics, systems for communication and understanding). The actors should (v) stimulate policies developing social quality with an iterative method (search process); a basic condition is inter-human communication and dialogue. These policies have to be (v) integrative in order to produce social quality: a condition is the existence of mechanisms for co-ordination. Finally, needs, preferences, wants etc. have to be (vi) adequate (legal, legitimate and functional). A condition is the creation of consensus with regard to the notion of justice.

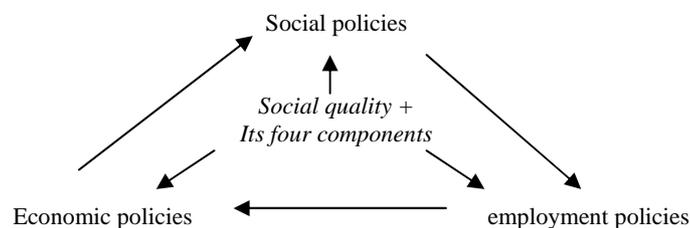
³¹ See note-2, p.370.

5.3 *The elaboration of the preparation and conclusions of the Lisbon Summit in 2000*

During the Lisbon Summit of the European Union in 2000 decided is to develop this Union as the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy with which to stimulate cohesion as well. DG Social Affairs of the European Commission operationalised this with help of the new Policy triangle. It concerns the illustration how to co-ordinate in an open way three types of policies, namely social policies, economic policies and employment policies.³² For the first time, the social quality approach was taken on board formally as well. It may contribute to mainstreaming the Policy Agenda's operationalisation (see figure-7). The commissioner of DG Social Affairs, Mrs Anna Diamantopoulou, explained the function of the social quality initiative for the European Commission. In the foreword of the Foundation's second book she says, 'The first book of the European Foundation on Social Quality, *The Social Quality of Europe*, has been 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, which emphasises the promotion of quality with regard to social policy, work and industrial relations. A key message is that economic growth is not an end in itself but essentially a means to achieve a better standard of living for all. I firmly believe that extending the notion of quality to the whole of the economy and society will facilitate the improvements in the interrelationship between economic and social policies that are so vital for the future success of Europe. The idea of social quality captures perfectly what Europe has achieved and continues to aspire to. It also allows the everyday concerns of citizens to be reflected in the highest policy circles. The Foundation's 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 modernisation of the European social model'.³³

In line with this comment the Foundation received illustrations of the interpretation of its first book from the side of DG Social Affairs in April 2000. These illustrations should be connected with the preparation of the Lisbon Summit. One of the illustrations is presented in figure-7:

Figure 7: One of DG social Affairs' illustration of April 2000



³² Commission of the European Communities, 'Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; Social Policy Agenda'. Brussels; COM (2000), 379 final, 2000.

³³ See note-2, Foreword.

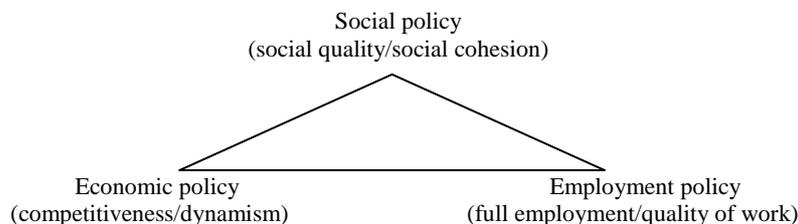
It is explained by the following text: “in the vision of a co-ordinated strategy, structural and labour market are to be interrelated to the frame of a co-ordinated macroeconomic strategy for growth and employment. This is the foundation of the Cologne process. The main critiques against this vision are: (i) the absence of reference to the specific social dimension within the employment strategy; (ii) the absence of independent rationale for social policies: the main mention being ‘social protection as productive factor’, with a risk of entrapping social developments within a narrow economic frame, as justifications for social policies are based on purely economic criteria; (iii) the limitation to the economic model in order to boost efficiency; equity or solidarity are considered as competing issues, not as funding principles”.³⁴

5.4 *The EC's new social Policy Agenda*

In the presentation of the final Policy Agenda the European Commission presented a triangle which differs from figure-7, as well as from the Foundation's first and second book. In figure-8 we present this official triangle. The differences regard:

- in this figure ‘social quality’ does not function as a link between a manifold of policies (see the genetic code). In the ECs presentation it is connected or associated with social policies only.
- It is equalised and synchronised with social cohesion. This differs essentially with the social quality quadrant. Cohesion is one of the objective conditional factors of social quality.

Figure 8: *Final proposal concerning the EC Policy Agenda*³⁵



In other words, placing ‘social quality’ at the top of the triangle under ‘social policy’ reflects a different understanding of the idea of social quality to that presented in the Foundation's second book (as well its first book). Furthermore, this EC triangle is not clear about abstract instruments with which to connect the three aspects, namely social policy, employment policy and economic policy. It seems to lack a rationale and particularly one, which will appeal to and bring on board European citizens. According to the Foundation's second book, that rationale could be social quality. In other words. improving the quality of the life of citizens, social quality could be the driving force behind each of the policies and also their relationship. Thus the abstract and the practical connection between economic policy, social policy and employment policy will be provided by their interrelationships with actors and needs. Both, namely actors and needs (and see the genetic code) cause the intrinsic existing reciprocity of the sides of the triangle and other triangles.

³⁴ European Commission (DG Social Affairs), ‘Illustrations of the Foundation's first book’. Brussels; DG-V, April 2000

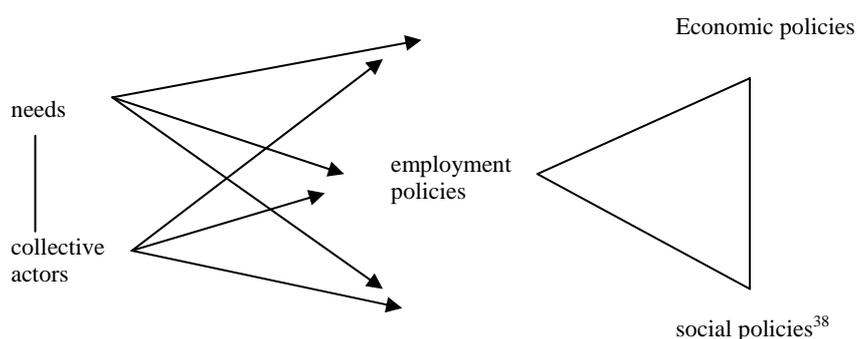
³⁵ See note-32

In the Report on the social situation in the European Union in 2001 we may notice a connection between suppositions underlining figure-7 and suppositions underlining figure-8 and therefore producing confusion. In its Introduction we read: “The social Agenda as agreed at the Nice summit provides the political basis for the consolidation of a comprehensive strategy of mutually reinforcing economic, employment and social policies [or ‘social administration’, see note-9]. It pinpoints the promotion of quality in all areas of social and employment policy as a driving force behind a thriving economy with more and better jobs and an inclusive society and as a key way to secure that the European Union achieves the goals it has set itself regarding competitiveness, full employment, living standards and quality of life. The strengthening of the European economy and its social model will result from policies promoting synergy and positive interaction between economic growth, employment and social cohesion”.³⁶ This Introduction published and explained the same triangle, namely figure-8 with the words: “the policy mixes to be established to create a virtuous circle of economic and social progress should reflect the interdependence of these policies and aim to maximise their mutual positive reinforcement”.³⁷ The comments presented above can be applied for commenting this aspect of the Report. Nota bene, the concept of ‘social cohesion’, used in this official triangle, is an aspect of ‘social administration’ and therefore in definition an outcome of a top-down policy processes. It lacks the referral to a subject matter, connected with the dialectic between self-realisation and the formation of collective identities, namely the constitutional factor of social quality..

5.5 Social quality for analysing employment policies: an explicit dialogue

To understand employment policy from the perspective of social quality we may connect the genetic code (figure-6) with the original EC triangle (figure-7), see the following figure.

Figure 9: Connection of the genetic code and the original EC triangle



In the genetic code a distinction is made between policies, collective actors and needs. These policies intervene or change the resources and context of the objective and subjective conditional factors. The actors are a part of these context and resources. Some of them are responsible for employment policies

³⁶ EUROSTAT, European Commission, ‘The social situation in the European Union’. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2001, p.7

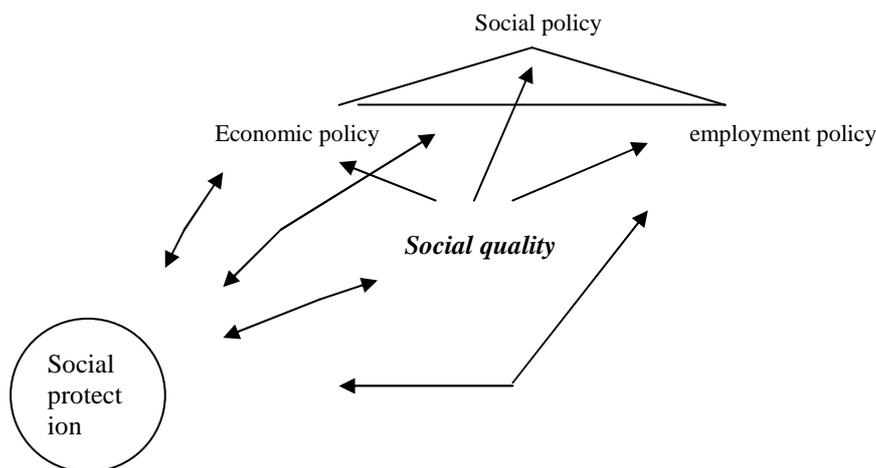
³⁷ See note-36, p.7.

³⁸ In this case it regards ‘social administration’, see note-9.

with which to change these resources and contexts. Others have to cope with these changes in a way they decide to do and or as the nature of resources and context will enable them to do so. Thanks to this genetic code these types of policies and thus the manifold of herewith-related policy fields can be connected in abstract way. This will facilitate the understanding of the outcomes of processes in daily reality comprehensively and to contribute to different types of policy making and actions of organised citizens coherently.

Thanks to this position, particular policy fields like 'social protection' can also be connected with social policy, economic policy and employment policy with help of the intermediate function of social quality. Therefore, the nature of social protection may be analysed, and its changes can be understood in a new way. According to the social quality approach it does not function as the 'handmaiden' of economic policy.³⁹ This is illustrated in the following figure:

Figure 10: *Intermediate analytical and conceptual function of social quality*



Notwithstanding the fact that the concept of 'social protection' is used in different way in Member States, the principle may be clear in figure-10. According to the Foundation's second book, social protection regards an aspect of the socio-economic component of the social quality quadrant. It may be distinguished in different domains and herewith related indicators. This will be the task for the new 'Network Indicators of Social Quality' and its 16 national reference groups (see below). Social protection concerns concrete aspects of daily life. Employment policies intervene in (other) concrete aspects of daily life, and so do general social policy and economic policy. By interpreting these manifold of concrete aspects by one conceptual scheme of reference the ratio, nature and consequences of these policies may be connected with policies concerning (the interpretation of) social protection. This is always the case, but usually in an implicit and unarticulated way. The European Foundation on Social Quality (its participants) is (i) explicating this question, and (ii) proposes to

³⁹ See note-2, p.332: In the official presentation "social-protection operates on the border of a 'causal loop'. In many EU documents about social protection we see the presentation of assumed causal relationships. For example, social protection should 'provide people with income in times of need and allow them to accept and embrace economic and social change. In this way they promote both social cohesion and economic dynamism'. The vulnerable part of such arguments is, that events are explained by their consequences to the extent that an effect does not so much become a cause but is a cause. "

develop this conceptual and analytical connection explicitly in a specific way, namely with help of the social quality approach. This is illustrated in figure-10. The challenge for commentators on this approach is to articulate their implicit analytical intermediaries they use to apply and to compare it with the social quality approach. This is a rational invitation, because intermediaries are applied in every case. This point concerns the debate with the European Commission with regard to the new social Policy Agenda. In its triangle, see figure-8, it does not explain its implicit conceptual and analytical intermediary. In the following section we will explain the way, the Foundation elaborated the explicit dialogue about the nexus employment policies and social quality, seen as an intermediary.

6. *Concluding remarks*

6.1. *The normative position*

The social quality initiative is based on an explicit normative position, explained in the second book. According to a commentator on this book, it does not reduce its scientific quality: “In fact, by stating their normative paradigm the authors open up their work for critique in a better way than those who conceal their position behind a veil of neutrality and use their norms much more implicitly or as pretended common sense. The book gives an honest overview of the critique on the concept of social quality, as it was defined in the first volume. It sums up ways to overcome this critique and defines the domains where solutions must be found. It offers descriptions; it discerns aspects of the problem; and it points to relations between the aspects and to further ways of deploying the concept as a scientific and political theme. It outlines the framework within which this should be done (...) this conclusion contains a fundamental critique of the dominant views in the European Union and in the Member States, which are mostly governed by politicians who represent social-democratic political parties but are implementing and supporting neo-liberal ideas. So the book may not only be seen as an excellent example of interdisciplinary and internationally co-ordinated social research on the basis of a clear normative paradigm, but also as representing the inner struggle within European social democracy with its own inheritance. The results open a view on a real Third Way, a way between casino-capitalism and state-controlled social security systems. The book shows that, at least on a theoretical level there is an alternative. Sooner or later this insight may become a part of the political programmes too”.⁴⁰

The normative position concerns a second point as well. The Foundation tries to pave the way for inter-subjective acceptable judgements about aspects of daily life in the Member States and Accession States of the European Union. By developing the hereupon-oriented measurement instruments (indicators, profiles, criteria) daily circumstances are comparable all over Europe. It also measures the nature of the role of citizens they can play in order to influence their own societal based circumstances in such a way, that they develop their individual capacities with help of the outcomes. Therefore, if successful, the social quality initiative will challenge policy makers to create points of departure for The European Union for developing equity and life chances in all regions and cities of Europe. This fundamental drive does not stop at the borders of Europe. The Foundation tries to develop measurement instruments, which are applicable in every societal circumstances and social relations. Therefore, it will also deliver political-economic instruments for starting the dialogue about the

⁴⁰ K. Klop, ‘Book Review (‘Social Quality: A Vision for Europe’), *Acta Politica* (International Journal of Political Science), Vol.36, Winter 2001.

and the tension between security and flexibility that underpins it. It offers an unique way to explore its indicators for measuring tendencies in Europe, which are important for analysing the nature of inclusion [one of the components or objective conditional factors of social quality] in economic subsystems. Moreover, it gives real meaning to the guiding principle of 'quality' on the European social Agenda. With this preliminary research they have demonstrated different approaches to flexicurity in the Member States and, especially, different models of family/employment relations (...) what is required now, we believe, is first of all new empirical work on this topic in order to develop robust variables or sub-indicators on flexicurity that can be translated directly into tools for both policy makers and citizens. Second, to co-operate with the Dublin Foundation on the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in order to elaborate European based data for analysing the dynamics between security and flexibility. Third, to start the co-operation with the European Foundation on Social Quality's new Network Indicators of Social Quality in order to connect the research of indicators on flexicurity (the policy approach) with indicators inclusion (the component's approach). Such work will enable the European Union to reconcile the goals of competitiveness and quality and provide a way to begin to accommodate the social models of the Accession States into the European Union".⁴³

6.2.2 *confrontation with the components*

The Network on Indicators of Social Quality started in October 2001 and it will especially develop indicators for the objective conditional factors of social quality or its four components (see figure-2).⁴⁴ It decided to start with the elaboration of the component 'socio-economic security' by distinguishing its domains, the relevant sub-domains and the indicators of some of these sub-domains, which have a heuristic meaning for the social quality approach. In fact it has decided to restrict itself with regard to the empirical confrontation concerning one of the components. With help of the 16 national reference groups it will define and apply these indicators in order to elaborate this component during the second phase. That means, that this confrontation and especially the exploration of the preliminary indicators will enable the Network to construct the theoretical bridge between the subject matter of this component and its domains and sub-domains. This theoretical bridge is, due to this initial phase, not articulated. Thanks to this empirical approach the participants of the Network suppose to receive new knowledge in order to elaborate this theoretical bridge as well as to pave the way for the elaboration of the bridges with regard to the components 'cohesion', 'inclusion' and 'empowerment'. After completion the elaboration of indicators of all the four components may be started and their confrontation with the empirical world as well (see figure-11).⁴⁵ The Network will finish its work in October 2004 by presenting indicators social quality and new points of departure for the theoretical development of the social quality initiative.

⁴³ See note-41, pp.114-115.

⁴⁴ See note-3.

⁴⁵ This will be prepared and explained in the coming Working Paper of the Network Indicators of Social quality.

