

INTRODUCTION

Simona Beretta*, Mathias Nebel**

1. IMPLEMENTING A COMMON GOOD APPROACH TO MUNICIPALITIES

1.1. *Common good: a rhetorical principle or a practicable path?*

The expression “common good” is formed by two seemingly simple words: after all, we know what we mean when we say “common”, and we know what we mean when we say “good”. But we often feel that “common good” is just a figure of speech, a piece of rhetoric. We are likely to feel disturbed by the frequent and casual reference to the common good by partisan politics, and to disregard references to the common good by decent people as a form of naivety. So, why should we bother to explore the precise, analytical meaning of this expression? Or to provide a framework for assessing reality from a common good perspective?

The reason is straightforward: we need fresh thinking on how to practically live together in an interdependent world, where we have too much in common, for good and for bad, to pretend we can solve interconnected problems by facing each of them one at a time, in a piecemeal perspective. This is the motivation behind the work presented in this Special issue, devoted to making sense of defining the notion of common good in a practical, operational way, in order to provide some initial empirical evidence for assessing and measuring the quality and the dynamics of a concrete, specific “system of common goods” within specific communities. In particular, the Special issue provides empirical evidence for different Mexican municipalities.

Dealing with the foundational aspect of devising appropriate methodologies for assessing the systemic quality of living-together in concrete local communities provides interesting insights on other crucial issues. After all, interdependence is all around us, both in specific environments (say, firms) as well as in society at large. Thus, we are convinced that working on common good dynamics may also provide insights on appropriate methodologies for assessing development processes. The dynamic of development is indeed still poorly understood. While we do have

* Simona Beretta, Professor of International Economics at the School of Political and Social Sciences, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. She is also director of the Centro di Ateneo per la Dottrina Sociale della Chiesa. Email: simona.beretta@unicatt.it.

** Mathias Nebel is a full-time professor of Social Ethics and Christian Social Thought at the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla. He is the director of the research institute Instituto Promotor del Bien Común. Email: matthias.nebel@upaep.mx.

sophisticated tools to grasp many aspects of development process in any given society the question remains: how do these pieces fit together? How do they interact and where do they lead the whole of society? “Everything is connected”: this reiterated statement in Pope Francis encyclical letters *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti* calls for serious consideration.

1.2. *How did this special issue emerge?*

This Special issue of the RISS publishes the framework for a common good approach to development as well as some empirical applications of the same to municipalities in Mexico. It is the result of a longstanding research project headed by the *Instituto Promotor del Bien Común* at the UPAEP University in Mexico. The project started in 2017 and involved over 40 academics in Mexico and abroad, through the combination of a core research group in Puebla, four International Research Seminars and two Conferences.

The main objective of the project is to propose a common good approach to development, by which we mean an approach that centers on the systems of commons structuring a society and the dynamic of their equilibrium¹. How do these equilibriums of commons goods form, stabilize and evolve? How do commons goods organize and how do we govern them? Are there more human and less human systems of common goods? Moreover, can we eventually identify some normative key drivers controlling these complex equilibriums and driving them toward a more human coexistence? Rather than to focus on development conditions, goals or targets we assume that the quality of development process is central to achieve both a human and sustainable development.

A common good approach takes as starting point that a society can be described as a complex system of commons: what we call a “nexus”² of common goods. Some of these common goods will be more important than others, with the most basic ones involving almost all the population, like culture, language, religions, the state or the market. Any system of common goods is at least partially integrated and hierarchized, conforming a complex and dynamic equilibrium that constantly changes and evolves. Each country, each population has its own and distinctive arrangement of common goods. Some countries, for example, value more the market, others give to the State a predominant role. Some will recognize a major role to religion while others don't. The possible arrangements are many and hierarchies among basic common goods may differ from one country to another.

However, the equilibrium is not only about hierarchies. It is also and more im-

¹ We assume the equilibrium as being non-autopoietic, i.e. as a complex social construct.

² Rather than the terms “network” or “web” now overused because of the internet and globalization we prefer the Latin term “nexus”, which means “relationship, intertwining or linkage of causes, connection, bond”, a term linked in Roman law to that of responsibility or duty.

portantly perhaps about the coherence existing between common goods and their integration as a functioning, practical way of living together (a unit of shared understanding and practices). No system of common goods is totally coherent and integrated, but none can survive if it is not at all. There will always be tensions between the different common goods, even in a relatively stable nexus. Take for example the duties owed to the state and those due to religion or the tensions between economic growth and the environment. Our specific interest is thus the following: how are the specific meaning, rationality and rules proper to each common good integrated within each system? We are interested in their “systemic coherence”, in the “unit of shared understanding and practices” created for the population by each nexus. Then something quite obvious appears as the key question of development process: we should aim at an ever more human living-together. Does this specific nexus of common goods allow us to coexist as human beings? Or does it rather exclude some part of the population from the practices of humanity? Are certain group of people reduced to live in hell while others enjoy consideration and respect? Rather than to focus on the formal, often legal definition of dignity, we are interested on how society are “doing dignity”³, that is on common good process.

1.3. *How the matrix of common good dynamics took shape*

In 2017, a first interdisciplinary research seminar in Puebla saw over 35 scholars discuss the theoretical possibility and practical feasibility of such an approach. During the following two years this discussion went on through a sequence of other research seminars and conferences in Barcelona (06/2018). Notre Dame (10/2018) and back in Puebla (03/2019; 02/2020). Each time a discussion paper prepared by the IPBC would gather the results of the previous event and propose some new inputs to be discussed in the next one. Soon the theoretical apparatus sustaining a matrix of common good dynamics took shape, corrected and enriched by the many participants insights. Here are the key elements of our approach.

First a common good approach to development builds on a specific anthropological position. It assumes that a person is given in relationships and achieve his/her own humanity through them. We assume with Aristoteles that human nature is a *shared* entelechy. To say it more plainly: we are either human *together* or *not at all*. Such anthropological stance rejects the pessimistic assumption of modernity about the origins of societies. The human condition is a social one and society is not born out of passions, fear or violence (Hobbes) but out of the need and the capability to cooperate (Arendt⁴). It assumes that my freedom and your freedom are not antagonistic but essentially complementary. Two important elements of our

³ Carozza P., Sedmak C. (Eds) (2020). *The Practice of Human Development and Dignity*. University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, IN.

⁴ Arendt H. (1998). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, pp. 175-176.

approach are derived from this anthropological stance: First, the overall normative horizon of societies is their own *humanity*. Second, *collective agency freedom* is the key element necessary for system of common good to exist. Both can be considered as key normative drivers of common good dynamics in a society.

Secondly, we define *humanity* as the systemic achievement of a common good dynamic, denoting the human quality of our coexistence in the system. More specifically, we characterize “humanity” as the achievement of a core set of social goods shared to the overall population both as common benefits and common practices. By *collective agency freedom*⁵, we refer to the capability of a population to mobilize, reach consensus, organize and achieve collective goal, i.e. the capability to *engage with others and act together freely, cooperating to the consecution of social goods*⁶. Accordingly, collective agency freedom can be seen as the main “engine” of common good dynamics whereas humanity may function as the “compass” or “normative horizon” of the same.

Thirdly, and building on Ostrom’s work and the experience of community-based development programs, we identified three further normative drivers, specifically linked to the integration of the system of common goods, namely: governance, justice and stability. By *justice* we mean the fair processes by which people take part to the common goods of the nexus, or in other words, justice as the fair generation of the different social goods making up the nexus, including a just distribution of its common benefits⁷. *Stability* describes the preservation and reinvention of the achieved humanity of the nexus and sees for its long future⁸. Finally, by *governance* we mean the capability for the system to preserve itself, to adapt and project toward an ever-more-human common future⁹. Together, Agency freedom, Humanity, Governance, Justice and Stability make up the five normative elements of our matrix of common good dynamics that is presented in more detail in Nebel and Arbesu’s article in this issue.

⁵ On agency and collective capability, see: Ibrahim S., Alkire S. (2007). Agency and Empowerment: A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators. *Oxford Development Studies*, 35/4, 379-403. Deneulin S. (2008). *Beyond Individual Freedom and Agency: Structures of Living Together*. In F. Comim, H. Qizilbash, S. Alkire (Eds). *The capability approach: concepts, measures and applications*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 105-124.

⁶ Cfr. Nebel M., Nebel-Herrera M.T (2018). *Measuring the Meta-Capability of Agency: A Theoretical Basis for Creating a Responsibility Indicator*. In F. Comim, S. Fennell, P. Anand (Eds). *New Frontiers of the Capability Approach*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 82-115.

⁷ Cfr. Walzer W. (1985). *Spheres of justice*. Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 6-10. Walzer M. (1994). *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*. Notre Dame University Press, ND, pp. 32-36. Hess C. (2008). “Mapping the New Commons”, 38-40. Riordan P. (2015). *Global Ethics and Global Common Goods*. Bloomsbury, London, pp. 159-178.

⁸ Cfr. Bergson H. (1950). *Time and free will*, George Allen, London, pp. 100-128. Arendt, H (1972). *La crise de la culture*. Gallimard, Paris, pp. 223-252. Nebel M. (2013). Peut-on éduquer à la charité. *Transversalités*, 126/2, 131-144.

⁹ Ostrom E. (1994). *Neither market nor state: governance of common pool resources in the twenty-first century*. International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC, pp. 1-33.

1.4. *The application of a metric of common good dynamics*

On the ground of this theoretical framework, IPBC presented in 2019 a first version of a *metric*, derived from our matrix, and intended to capture common good dynamics at the level of municipalities. The idea was to show that the matrix could actually be brought to practice, providing a new set of data that could help assessing development process. A first instrument was issued in February 2019 by the core research group in Puebla and subsequently revised till we reached the present version. For each dimensions of the matrix, we carefully elaborated and discussed questions through regular meetings of two hours every 15 day over eight months (See article by Garza-Vásquez and Ramírez).

Simultaneously we approached several municipalities from the State of Puebla and asked if they would be willing to help us apply the instrument. We validated the instrument through a pilot survey in February 2019 in the town of Atlixco and applied several cognitive interviews to fine-tune the questionnaire. A revised instrument was then drafted and applied as a second pilot probe during July and August in the municipality of Ocotepéc, State of Puebla. This second pilot probe was directed at testing the capacity of the instrument to capture the desired information and helped us understand how we could process the resulting data. Finally, during fall 2019, two full probes were applied to the municipalities of San Andrés Cholula and Atlixco, respectively a peri-urban and a rural municipality both in the state of Puebla (Articles by Ramírez and Garza-Vásquez; Ávila-Valdez and Castro-Manzano; Garza-Vásquez, Aranda-Vargas and Roy Nuñez). This issue of the RISS presents the results of these different empirical applications of the metric¹⁰.

2. DEVELOPMENT AND COMMON GOOD

2.1. *Beyond the rhetoric of the common good: addressing the multidimensional nature of development*

The “nexus” approach to the common good, still preliminary in its empirical results, has an original feature: it practically tackles the task of implementing the analytical insight that “everything is connected”. Much has been written and dis-

¹⁰ Preliminary drafts of the articles in this Special issue were presented at a research seminar in March 2020 in Puebla, where the authors had the opportunity to discuss their results with experts in the field of national statistics (INEGI), human development (UNDP-LA) and poverty measurement (CONEVAL). We were praised for the originality of our approach of development process and received many useful criticisms and remarks, mainly addressing the statistical methodology of our probes. We are grateful for these comments that decidedly improved the present articles. We are currently planning to further apply the metric in 2021 to two Mexican cities, namely Puebla and Queretaro, as well as to follow up the first application in Atlixco and San Andrés Cholula with a second one in 2021 or 2022.

cussed about the multidimensional nature of development, but multidimensionality is often practically translated into drafting lists of goals and targets. This is surely a better strategy than simply focusing on economic growth, but actually falls short of an accurate representation of the *integration process* of this multidimensionality.

As described above, this Special issue elaborates on multidimensionality starting from a vision of development as systemic change, where many dimensions are intertwined to form one “nexus”. We emphasize that complexity in the nexus cannot be addressed according to piecemeal procedures, such as aggregating individual information relative to conditions or outcomes in a number of dimensions. However rich and articulated, a list of dimensions will never capture the systemic, dynamic phenomenon of development.

The notion of “integral” development captures the systemic nature of development, expressing the idea that development is neither a situation, nor an outcome: it is a dynamic process unfolding in time and space. It cannot be reduced to checking whether basic preconditions are in place, nor to measuring achievements on a predefined list of desirable outcomes. Assessing preconditions and measuring outcomes can obviously provide very useful information, of the kind that allow – to use a familiar expression in Economics – a comparative statics analysis; but not a truly dynamic account of what is in fact happening along the process, in real time and real space.

2.2. Development is about systemic change: dynamic and relational

Measuring change in comparative statics terms does not amount to understanding the drivers of change, and the process of change. Understanding (and measuring) development is (or ought to be) an intrinsically dynamic endeavor. It mirrors the process of generating development, where actual people, in the here and now of history, mysteriously drive history. In other words, development is a practical, intrinsically dynamic process where people are protagonist.

The expression “people” is often used in casual way, but it deserves attention. Speaking of people implies that there is a “we” of some sort; for people to be protagonist, such “we” has to be consciously pronounced by a number of persons that mean something real, concrete, operational when they speak that word. They have something in common, so that saying “we” resonates with their personal experience. “We” may have in common material things, non-material institutional settings, personalized and generalized relations, symbolic meanings.

“I” and “we” are two indispensable polarities (to use the expression by Romano Guardini¹¹) of any realistic representation of how development occurs, dri-

¹¹Sound anthropology recognizes that we are persons-in-relation: we can tell who we are by referring to the narrative of our personal history of contingent, multifaceted encounters: from birth (her genealogy) through all subsequent encounters (with things and people), thus, persons are “I-in-relation”, to use A. Scola (2012) building upon Romano Guardini’s reflection on “po-

ven by the dynamism of personal and group agency. When “I” act, my decisions materialize not in the void (we are not “brains in a vat”), but in a concrete material, relational and symbolic space where “we” live. More accurately, the human artefact we call the world is a space where we inhabit “in common”. Hence, development needs to be considered as a concrete process, occurring in a specific time and space, intrinsically relational in nature. Development is a path people are actually walking together, not an abstract destination, a goal set for the future.

2.3. The role of communities in development: theoretical insights and practical approaches

The “we” dimension is often neglected not only in macro development theories, which typically focus on aggregates such as countries or regions; but also in micro development perspectives that build on the idea of representative (anonymous) individual agents. Even when groups and group agency have been investigated, as in the vast and multifaceted literature on Social capital, Social choice theories and Game theory, most analyses tend to look at relationships between players within an overblown sense of (narrowly defined) rationality, often revealing a rather superficial treatment of “I-we” relations.

However, one should also mention some recent strands of economic literature where interpersonal and social relations matter for individual decisions and actions; for example, contributions in game theory and behavioural economics that emphasize the importance of personalized, repeated interactions in achieving cooperation (including in reaching development goals)¹². In the field of theory of choice under ignorance and deep uncertainty (Gilboa and Schmeidler, 2001; Gilboa et al., 2009) highlight that there is a “relational” dimension in reasonable choices under uncertainty. This occurs, for example, when practical decisions refer to “default” choices that have been developed within a community (as it happens in health professions). In Gilboa and Schmeidler perspective, a decision taken on the basis of purely subjective beliefs can comply with a sound notion of rationality, when that decision can be justified with a persuasive narrative to those who ask for its reasons.

lar oppositions” as constitutive of one’s inner self (Guardini R. (1925). *Versuche zu einer Philosophie der Lebendig-Konkreten*. Mainz. Italian transl. *L’opposizione polare. Tentativi per una filosofia del concreto-vivente*, in Id. (2007). *Scritti di metodologia filosofica*. Morcelliana, Brescia, pp. 65-241). Beretta S., Maggioni M.A. (2012). The Whole Breadth of Reason: A Step Towards Rethinking Economics and Rationality. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*, **3**, 241-262

¹² Game theoretical models and behavioral economics models actually provide clashing interpretations on the nature and dynamics of interpersonal cooperation, ranging from strictly defined rational self-interest, as (Binmore, 2006), to evidence of other-regarding preferences in human beings (widely studied by Fehr, including Fehr, Hoff and Kshetramade, 2008).

Another important line of research on relations concerns “social” (macro) determinants of human decisions¹³, that can be observed when social groups and socially diffused mental models shape individual preferences, influence individual choices and feed back into social group dynamics¹⁴. Micro-social relations also matter, as it is commonly perceived to happen within community-based initiatives (say, Alcoholics Anonymous and many other forms of group treatment) that can transform personal agency¹⁵; this micro-social perspective emphasizes the importance of non-material determinants of material development¹⁶.

Thus, both economic theory and empirical analysis are increasingly dealing with relational dimensions in development, and real-world initiatives of development are more and more incorporating the “we” dimensions in their practices. The theoretical and practical inputs from Elinor Ostrom¹⁷ led to recognize the importance of commons and communing practices to further sustainable and embedded forms of development. Community Driven Development (CDD) approaches are gaining growing attention, and attracting significant funding – including from big donors such as the World Bank¹⁸. CDD practices are normally activated for specific interventions, in response to a variety of development needs including access to clean water, rural roads, school and health clinic construction, nutrition programs for mothers and infants, and support for micro-enterprises¹⁹.

One reason for the growing importance of CDD is that community driven development operations are perceived to be more effective, when compared with alternative implementation modalities that apply standardized, bureaucratic top-down delivery procedures; in many cases, however, community-based development practices are simply the only viable way to deliver development support with the desired outreach (as the image goes, it takes community involvement for someone to

¹³ As in Akerlof, Kranton (2010). “Identity economics”, and in the notions of “experience and exposure” (Hoff, Stiglitz, 2016; Maggioni, Rossignoli, Beretta, Balestri, 2018).

¹⁴ In this line of research, economic behaviour is portrayed as a “reflexive interplay between economics and social forces” (Snower, 2016: 1), where identities, norms and narratives influence individual beliefs, and consequently choices

¹⁵ Maggioni and Beretta (2016); Maggioni et al. (2018).

¹⁶ For example, Ray (2006) focuses on aspirations; Duflo (2012), Glewwe, Ross, Wydick (2014) on hope; Bernheim, Debraj, Şevin (2015) on self-control; Lybbert, Wydick (2016) on aspirational hopes.

¹⁷ Ostrom E. (1990). *Governing the commons*. CUP, Cambridge, pp. 61-70. Id., *Beyond markets and states: polycentric governance of complex economic systems*. In K. Grandin (Ed.) (2010). *The Nobel Prizes 2009*. The Nobel Foundation, Stockholm, pp. 408-444.

¹⁸ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/communitydrivendevelopment>. “These programs have consistently shown an ability to deliver an increase in access to quality infrastructure and services in a cost-effective manner, in ways that have broad community support”.

¹⁹ King E. (2013). *A Critical Review of community-driven development programs in conflict affected contexts*. The International Rescue Committee, New York, pp. 1-55. Wong S. (2013). *What Have Been the Impacts of World Bank CDD Programs? Operational and Research Implications*. World Bank Social Development Notes.

walk “the last mile” in order to reach the most peripheral and vulnerable persons and groups)²⁰.

Beyond localized development projects, community involvement has been used in some instances as a pillar of a sector-wide approach to development. One prominent example concerns WHO efforts at ending Tuberculosis (TB) in low income countries. Explicit reference to the role of communities in TB prevention, care and control started with the systematic review of practical experiences of community involvement within TB national partnerships in a number of countries; this review led WHO to adopt new guidelines in 2008²¹ specifically concerning community involvement in TB care and prevention, as TB is not just a medical challenge. More recently, the WHO Global TB Strategy 2015-2035 “Ending TB” addresses (for the first time in a high-level document) the social determinants of TB as key for TB prevention, care and control. This dramatic shift in the global approach to TB, from a largely medical to an explicitly integrated medical and socio-economic approach, includes “Building a strong coalition with civil society and communities” among its four founding principles. That is, community involvement is highlighted as one of the key principles that countries need to apply as they implement their national TB policies²².

2.4. *The political role of communities*

There is an obvious political side to all said above. The growing literature on political and social “disintermediation” (lack of “intermediaries” between individuals and the state, or the individual and the market) highlights the social transformations brought about by the diffusion of new communication technologies, that allow the build-up of virtual communities with floating, self-selected members, contributing to sever social ties and reinforcing the formation of close circles that may not be interested in being part of a broader, society-wide conversation on common interests and common destiny.

Opposite to community participation, disintermediation may ultimately fail people in their hopes of inclusion and progress. This idea is epitomized in the subtitle of a recent volume by Raghuram Rajan: *How markets and the state leave the community behind*²³. The main title, *The third pillar*, refers to the crucial role of the

²⁰ Narayan D. (1995). *The contribution of people’s participation: evidence from 121 rural water supply projects*. Environmentally Sustainable Development Occasional Paper. World Bank, Washington, DC.

²¹ WHO (2008). *Community involvement in tuberculosis care and prevention. Towards partnerships for health. Guiding principles and recommendations based on a WHO review*. Geneva.

²² WHO (2015). *The End TB Strategy*. Geneva. https://www.who.int/tb/End_TB_brochure.pdf.

²³ Rajan R. (2019). *The Third Pillar. How markets and the state leave the community behind*. Penguin Press, New York, NY.

community (in his definition, a social group whose members reside in a locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage). His interpretation of recent trends can be summarized as follows: disruptive technological change led to concentrating economic and political power, with state and markets scaling up in parallel and peripheries progressively suffering, prompting populist reactions. He thus proposes strengthening the power and the vibrancy of local communities, and provides interesting suggestions on whether and how this can happen on the basis of a wide array of examples, historically and geographically diverse. As it happens, so much depend on the quality of community relations in terms of ability to act together for the common good.

2.5. How do ‘communities’ come about?

The economic, social and political role of communities can be taken, in a sense, as self-evident. However: Can we understand how it happens that people effectively act together? And how this common action feeds into social dialogue and political change?

The vast and serious debate confronting liberal and communitarian perspectives, while extremely important, seems to be about which of the two polarities, the ‘I’ or the ‘we’, should be ultimately given priority. Our perspective tends to be different, as we consider that the ‘I-we’ tension cannot be definitely solved in favour of one or the other polarity, as that tension is permanently constitutive of human personality and social dynamics. That tension sustains the inner dynamism that drives human decisions and actions. In other words, we need fresh thinking about how communities come about. Communities should not simply be taken as given, they are constantly generated by actual personal agency in a well-defined relational setting. Economics and social analysis of the fact that ‘everything is connected’ has much to gain from interdisciplinary conversation with philosophers and theologians, inspired by precious intuitions such as the ‘I-we’ tension at the core of community life – as in Guardini’s polar oppositions; and the deeply poetical yet realistic ‘I-Thou’ perspective in Martin Buber²⁴.

The centrality of the relational dynamism that lay at the roots of a vibrant community driving development and active participation is both a theoretical and very practical point²⁵.

In facts, we can observe that ‘political capital’ (the ability of a community to act together, in order to move forward desired change) can wear down very fast. As an example, take the experience of Eastern European countries in their transi-

²⁴ Buber (1923). Other philosophers and theologians can also be mentioned, such as Emmanuel Mounier with his insights on the relational nature of human work, or Emmanuel Levinas.

²⁵ Schegloff E.A. (2006). *Interaction: the infrastructure for social institutions, the natural ecological niche for language and the arena in which culture is enacted*. In N.J. Enfield, S. Levinson (Eds). *Roots of human sociality*. Berg, London, pp. 70-96.

tion from being USSR satellites to their post-communist economic, social and political organization. Vibrant communities were key: small communities of people resisting homologation, and personally paying for “living in truth” (Vaclav Havel). vast and effective popular movement such as *Solidarność*. The strength of these communities did not obviously lay in material means, but in a burning personal desire (“I”), shared with friends and companions (“we”) and kindling a contagious social dynamism: to pursue a common path of non-violent resistance to oppression and falsehood, to achieve a “better world”.

Where do we see this happening, today? Who can we join in pursuing the common good? These questions are not intended to be judgmental; they are a serious and urgent question that any member of a community needs to ask herself, if she cares about living in a “better world”.

2.6. *A common good perspective for development*

We are convinced that the practical, dynamic common good perspective we try to spell out and to (initially) empirically assess provides a possibility for fresh thinking. A common good approach to development, and a common good approach to democratic participation, can offer an interesting setting for moving ahead the conversation for a “better world”. We do need to reflect on “integral development” – and, most importantly, to move forward the practice of a well-rounded economic, social and political progress. Equally, making sense of the common good perspective remains key in actual policy making, within small and large communities, realizing the practical experience of democracy.

Finally, a vibrant community does not simply reach agreements on priorities and means, but overall values the process of deciding together, and ultimately values the same fact of “living together”. The essential common good of a community is indeed experiencing the possibility of living together, sharing and supporting each other both in good times and in challenging times. A vibrant community is indeed a potentially sustainable and resilient community. In practice, community agency, whether in realizing micro-projects or sector programs or political action, requires personal agency. The two are not confused, and no one is dominated by the other; their tension provides the inner dynamism of common agency²⁶.

Participation and reciprocal trust are obviously key in community involvement, but we need to remember that these attitudes cannot be mandated, and do not materialize by simply invoking them. Hence, community-based policy actions require a “we” that already exists, either because of long-time existing traditional bonds, or because of meaningful relations that make it reasonable to structurally think of

²⁶ Beretta S. (2020). *Freedom and agency: Time and relations matter for development*. In P. Carozza, C. Sedmak (Eds). *The Practice of Human Development and Dignity*. University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, IN.

“I” as in relation with “we”. Any community has obvious visible and measurable features; however, its inner nature is non-material. There is a mythical dimension to being a community, according to a suggestion by Pope Francis: “To be part of a people is to be part of a shared identity arising from social and cultural bonds. And that is not something automatic, but rather a slow, difficult process... of advancing towards a common project but also a mythical one” (*Fratelli tutti*, 158).

3. CONTENT OF THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

Nebel and Arbesu-Verduzco’s article in the present issue offers a quick introduction to the approach and the metric. It then discusses the methodology through which the data can be interpreted and closes with some examples at how this information may be relevant for municipalities. The second article by Garza-Vázquez and Ramírez covers the genesis of the instrument applied in the municipalities of Atlixco and San Andres Cholula. They describe how questions were formulated and the how the instrument got tested and applied. This article will introduce the reader to the rationale behind the instrument. A third article by Ávila-Valdez and Castro-Manzano gives a first statistical investigation of the approach based on the results of Atlixco. It provides the reader with information about the statistical methodology implemented. While the last two articles, one by Garza-Vázquez, Aranda-Vargas and Roy Nuñez and the other by Ramírez and Garza-Vázquez both present an analysis of the results of San Andres Cholula and Atlixco respectively. They show how common good data may allow us to understand the strength and weaknesses of development process in municipalities.

REFERENCES

- Akerlof G.A., Kranton R.E. (2010). *Identity economics: How identities shape our work, wages, and well-being*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ
- Arendt H. (1992). *The human condition*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago
- Arendt H. (1972). *La crise de la culture*. Gallimard, Paris
- Bergson H. (1950). *Time and free will*. George Allen, London
- Bernheim D.B., Debraj R., Şevin Y. (2015). Poverty and Self-Control. *Econometrica*, **83**, 5, 1877-1911
- Binmore K. (2006). Why Do People Cooperate? *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, **5.1**, 81-96
- Buber M. (1923). *I and Thou*. English transl. by Smith R.G. (1937). Morrison and Gibbs Ltd., Edinburgh and London. <http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/iandthou.pdf>
- Carozza P., Sedmak C. (Eds) (2020). *The Practice of Human Development and Dignity*. University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, IN
- Deneulin S. (2008). *Beyond Individual Freedom and Agency: Structures of Living Together*. In F. Comim, H. Qizilbash, S. Alkire (Eds). *The capability approach: concepts, measures and applications*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 105-124
- Duflo E. (2012). *Hope as capability. Tanner lecture, human values and the design of the fight against poverty*. Mahindra Humanities Center, Harvard
- Fehr E., Hoff K., Kshetramade M. (2008). Spite and development. *The American Economic Review*, **98**, 2, 494-499
- Gilboa I., Schmeidler D. (2001). *A Theory of Case-Based Decisions*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK
- Glewwe P., Ross P.H., Wydick B. (2014). Developing hope: The impact of international child sponsorship on self-esteem and aspirations. Retrieved from: <http://repository.usfca.edu/econ/9/>
- Guardini R. (1925). *Versuche zu einer Philosophie der Lebendig-Konkreten*, Mainz. Italian transl. *L'opposizione polare. Tentativi per una filosofia del concreto-vivente*. In Id., *Scritti di metodologia filosofica*. Morcelliana, Brescia, 2007, pp. 65-241
- Hess C. (2008). *Mapping the New Commons*. Available at SSRN: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1356835> (accessed 12.2020)
- Hoff K., Stiglitz J.E. (2016). Striving for balance in economics: Towards a theory of the social determination of behavior. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, **126**, 25-57

- Ibrahim S., Alkire S. (2007). Agency and Empowerment: A Proposal for Internationally Comparable Indicators. *Oxford Development Studies*, **35/4**, 379-403
- Libbert T.J., Wydick B. (2016). *Hope as aspirations, agency, and pathways: Poverty dynamics and microfinance in Oaxaca, Mexico*. National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper N. 22661, Issued in September, <https://www.nber.org/papers/w22661>
- Maggioni M.A., Beretta S. (2017). Life's about change. How Relations Transform individual Attitudes, Choices and Behaviours. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*, **3**, 249-276
- Maggioni M.A., Rossignoli D., Beretta S., Balestri S. (2018). Trust behind bars: Measuring change in inmates' prosocial preferences. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, **64**, 89-104
- Nebel M. (2013). Peut-on éduquer à la charité. *Transversalités*, **126/2**, 131-144
- Nebel M., Nebel Herrera M. (2018). *Measuring the Meta-Capability of Agency: A Theoretical Basis for Creating a Responsibility Indicator*. In F. Comim, S. Fennell, P. Anand (Eds). *New Frontiers of the Capability Approach*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 82-115
- Ostrom E. (1990). *Governing the commons*. CUP, Cambridge
- Ostrom E. (1994). *Neither market nor state: governance of common pool resources in the twenty-first century*. International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC
- Ostrom E. (2010). *Beyond markets and states: polycentric governance of complex economic systems*. In K. Grandin (Ed.). *The Nobel Prizes 2009*. The Nobel Foundation, Stockholm, pp. 408-444
- Rajan R. (2019). *The Third Pillar: How markets and the state leave the community behind*. Penguin Press, New York, NY
- Ray D. (2006). *Aspirations, poverty, and economic change*. In A.V. Banerjee, R. Bénabou, D. Mookherjee (Eds). *Understanding poverty*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 409-421
- Riordan P. (2015). *Global Ethics and Global Common Goods*. Bloomsbury, London
- Scola A. (2006). *Antropologia Cristiana*. In AA.VV. *Conceptualization of the Person in Social Sciences*. Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Acta 11, Vatican City. Scaricato dal sito: www.pass.va/content/dam/scienze-sociali/pdf/acta11/acta11-scola.pdf
- Scola A. (2012). The good reasons for a broader reason. *Rivista Internazionale di Scienze Sociali*. Special issue *The Whole Breadth of Reason: A Step Towards Rethinking Economics and Rationality*, **3**, 263-268
- Schegloff E.A. (2006). *Interaction: the infrastructure for social institutions, the natural ecological niche for language and the arena in which culture is enacted*. In N.J. Enfield, S. Levinson (Eds). *Roots of human sociality*. Berg, London, pp. 70-96
- Snower D.J. (2016). Thriving though balance. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, **126**, 1-4

Walzer W. (1985). *Spheres of justice*. Blackwell, Oxford

Walzer M. (1994). *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*. Notre Dame University Press, ND

WHO (2008). *Community involvement in tuberculosis care and prevention. Towards partnerships for health*. Guiding principles and recommendations based on a WHO review, Geneva

WHO (2015). *The End TB Strategy*. Geneva