

# Measuring the progress of societies

Reflections from Mexico

Mariano Rojas

Coordinator

Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum

October 2009



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National System of Researchers Representative



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Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico, A.C.  
Insurgentes Sur No. 670, Piso 9  
Colonia Del Valle  
Delegación Benito Juárez  
Código Postal 03100  
México Distrito Federal  
[www.foroconsultivo.org.mx](http://www.foroconsultivo.org.mx)  
[foro@foroconsultivo.org.mx](mailto:foro@foroconsultivo.org.mx)  
Tel. (52 55) 5611-8536

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# Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum

The Science and Technology Law, published June, 2002, presents important modifications to legislation in this field, such as:

- The creation of the General Council for Scientific Research and Technological Development.
- The identification of CONACYT (National Council on Science and Technology) as head of the science and technology sector, and
- The creation of the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum.

The Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum (FCCyT) is the permanent autonomous consultative organ of the Federal Executive Power, of the General Council of Scientific Research and Technological Development and of the Board of Directors of CONACYT. Via agreements, it is advisor of the Congress of the Union and the Federal Judiciary Council.

The General Council for Scientific Research and Technological Development is the policy and coordination agency responsible for regulating the support that the Federal Government is obliged to give in order to promote, strengthen and develop scientific and technological progress in general throughout the country.

## The General Council is composed of:

- The President of the Republic who presides over it;
- The heads of nine State Departments;
- The General Director of CONACYT in his role of Executive Secretary;
- The President of the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum;
- Four members invited by the President of the Republic that act in a personal capacity and that can be members of the FCCyT.

The FCCyT takes the expression of the scientific, academic, technological and productive sector communities to the General Council of Scientific Research and Technological Development, to formulate proposals in terms of scientific and technological research policies and programs.

### The FCCyT is composed of:

The Executive Board, with seventeen members, of which fourteen are heads of several organizations and the three remaining are researchers chosen from the National Research System (SNI).

The President, who represents the FCCyT in the General Council, on the Board of Directors of CONACYT and who is responsible for requesting the outcome of the negotiations with the entities and offices on the recommendations made by the Forum.

The Technical Secretary who, among other activities, is responsible for aiding the President, the Executive Board and the Work Committees in the organization of their sessions, in the logistics of their regular work, as well as in the organization of any other activity of the FCCyT.

The sub-committees that are the operational form of the FCCyT and are composed of recognized experts in their fields. The outcome of their work sessions is the basis of the proposals, opinions and points of view that

the Executive Board presents to the various bodies making policy and budgetary decisions that affect scientific research or technological development.

The organizations constituting the Executive Board of the FCCyT are:

- Mexican Academy of Sciences (AMC)
- Academy of Engineering (AI)
- National Academy of Medicine
- Mexican Association of Directors of Applied Research and Technological Development (ADIAT)
- National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES)
- Confederation of Industrial Chambers (CONCAMIN)
- National Agricultural Council (CNA)
- A representative of the National Network of State Science and Technology Councils and Organizations (REDNACECYT)
- National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)
- National Polytechnic Institute (IPN)
- Research and Advanced Studies center of the National Polytechnic Institute (CINVESTAV)
- Mexican Academy of Language
- Mexican Academy of History, and
- Mexican Social Sciences Council (COMECOS)
- In addition, the doctors, Leticia Myriam Torres Guerra, Juan José Saldaña González y Antonio Eusebio Lazcano Araujo were chosen by members of the SNI to be members of the Board of Directors.



According to the Science and Technology Law, the FCCyT has the following basic functions:

- To propose and form opinions on the national policies, sectorial programs and the Special Program of Support to Scientific Research and Technological Development;
- To propose priority areas and actions and expenses that demand attention and special support in scientific research, technical development, training of researchers, dissemination of scientific and technological knowledge and international technical cooperation;
- To analyze, form an opinion, propose and disseminate the legal dispositions or reforms, or additions to these, necessary to promote scientific research and the development of technological innovation in the country.
- To formulate suggestions linked to modernization, innovation and technological development in the productive sector, and the link between scientific research and education following the guidelines that this Law (of Science and Technology) and other legal ordinances establish;
- To form an opinion of, and value the efficiency and impact of, the Special Program and the priority annual special attention programs, and formulate proposals for the best observance of these;

- To offer opinions and formulate specific suggestions that the Federal Legislative Power or General Council requests.

According to stipulations in the Science and Technology Law:

The FCCyT will have the faculties that the CONACYT Organic Law confers on it in relation to the Board of Directors and the General Director of this organization.

CONACYT should transmit the proposals of the FCCyT to the General Council and the offices, entities and other relevant authorities and inform it of the results.

At the request of the Federal Legislative Power, the FCCyT will be able to issue queries and opinions on affairs of general interest in science and technology.

Through the Technical Secretary of the Executive Board, CONACYT will authorize the necessary supports to guarantee the adequate functioning of the FCCyT. This will include logistic support and the resources for its permanent operation, and the necessary travel expenses to business meetings.



# Introduction

What should we consider as progress within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? How can we measure such progress? These are two provocative questions which the Global Project "Measuring the Progress of Societies: A Mexican Perspective" attempts to elucidate. This project was proposed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The importance of this initiative consists in the fact that it tries to develop the economic, social and environmental indicators which provide relevant information about societies' wellbeing and progress. This way, it supports in decision making of legislators, government and academic authorities as well as those in charge of the business sectors, in order to obtain a benefit for the societies themselves.

Ever since its creation in 2002, the Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum has had the main task of contributing to the regulation of the scientific and technological politics in Mexico, thus we are happy to take this opportunity to contribute to the OECD's Global Project.

Some time ago, the Forum created a research group which compiled a compendium of Statistics from the Science and Technology State System with the purpose of supporting those in charge of making decisions. Today, the Global Project promotes the development and the utilization of new tools and approaches in order to help leaders as well as citizens to develop a better knowledge of their society thanks to the use of the statistical information. This makes very clear the harmony of our efforts.

The panorama we see today in Mexico seems particularly critical and uncertain; it demands the active participation of every sector and the leading players of society, as well as the immediate implementation of creative politics which provide the reactivation of its economy and assure social wellbeing. A pending and urgent task since the days of old, is the terrible social inequality. It is no mystery that in our country there is a great educational, scientific, technological and economical lag; to this we should add the world's financial crisis background which hurts the stability of the great majority of Mexicans.

In the face of such circumstances, it is crucial to search for mechanisms which strengthen the links in the chains of value, quality education, technological development, process and product innovation, and the generation of knowledge and employment, which help the country to face successfully the adversity it is currently immersed in. While the achievements of Mexican science are produced in spite of the insufficient economical support it receives, they have a limited effect in society, thus we need to strengthen the government-academy-business links. This can be translated into a larger investment to boost those projects with a high added value, more employment and a greater competitiveness, richness and social wellbeing.

In spite of the fact that in recent time, we have promoted access to information accountability in our country, we still lack the proper mechanisms for making that possible; especially when the objective is to learn if the members of society have improved in their lives or not. In this sense, one of the recurring themes within the Forum's agenda has been the analysis of the link between science and society. We know that those countries which generate knowledge are the developed ones, in which two thirds of the budget for scientific research comes from the industrial world. It is true that there are scientists who only seek knowledge for the sake of it, but there are others who seek a solution for social problems. While the relationship with society has turned quite complex (and that is a fact which can not be avoided) it is a must to define the terms of **science's social commitment**, which may even be conceived as a social agreement. Here we have another motive for which the Global Project is of great interest for the Forum.

For almost the entire 20<sup>th</sup> Century we had the belief that economic growth was the indicator of progress: With a higher Gross National Product we have a higher social wellbeing. Thus, while the current indicators of progress measure it based the production and consumption of economical goods, the specialists who were summoned to the Forum so they could participate in this Global Project mention different factors which go beyond the GNP and which have something to do with interpersonal relations and with the values of a society. The OECD assumes that these researches may contribute to the conceptualization of progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, because measuring progress in such manner may help governments to focus what really matters, while promoting a serious debate concerning the current status of the society and where it wishes to go.

So, the Forum cooperates with the OECD in the realization of the Global Project "Measuring the Progress of Societies: A Mexican Perspective", looking into the different aspects, from what their communities call 'progress' during the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, to which concrete statistical methods and indicators have given a better outcome in measuring social progress, to which is the way to generate a wider and shared understanding of the current changing conditions. All of this is oriented towards the promotion of an adequate investment which generates a statistical capability, especially in those developing countries, with the aim of improving the availability of information and the necessary indicators to lead development programs and progress reports with international goals in sight, such as the Millennium Development Objectives.

*Juan Pedro Laclette, PhD  
President  
Scientific and Technological Consultative Forum*



# Point of Departure

To provide an answer to the questions of 'what is it we want to consider as progress' and 'how it should be measured' is a matter that corresponds to each society. This book gathers the thoughts made by a group of researchers from Mexico concerning the theme of progress. The objective is to make a contribution to the current discussion which is taking place within the *Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies* ([www.oecd.org/progress](http://www.oecd.org/progress)) regarding which set of new indicators ought to be used in order to measure the progress of societies; the book also aims to promote a general and desirable reflection in Mexico.

The initiative *Measuring the Progress of Societies: A Mexican Perspective* ([www.midiendoelprogreso.org](http://www.midiendoelprogreso.org)), supported by the *Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico*, surveyed the research done in Mexico about themes related to progress, and identified consolidated researchers which - by the themes they work on and the way they approach them - may be considered as key players for the reflection on progress. The selected researchers who were invited

to contribute come from different disciplines and have a great prestige for the research they have done and for their inclination to pursue the topics to be studied with approaches which go beyond their disciplinary formation. The selected researchers were invited to make a reflection; unfortunately not everyone had enough available time or motivation to make such a reflection within the required time frame.

Those who accepted the invitation reflected on the basis of the following two fundamental questions which guide the work of the initiative *Measuring the Progress of Societies: A Mexican Perspective*: 'What should we consider as progress in the XXI century?' and 'How can we measure it?' there were two available formats. The first format consisted a recorded interview which of we transcribed, edited and revised, and which then was corrected and approved by the researchers. The second format consisted of an essay written by the researchers. The mode of recording each reflection is portrayed in the style of the contributions; some contributions are much more formal than others

and they are better structured as well. The academic strength of each participating researcher guarantees that each reflection is backed up with a wide and solid knowledge of the topics under consideration.

We have a total of 28 reflections which without any doubt do not exhaust the worries and interests of Mexican academe, but they are indeed an important sample of those considerations about progress and its measurements from the Mexican academic world. The objective is not for these reflections to settle down the debate and to give a definitive answer to the fundamental questions of the initiative; on the contrary its objective is to stimulate the research and the discussion on progress which needs to take

place in the social and public-action spheres. It is also desirable to extend the reflection to all spheres of Mexican society.

To provide perspective to the general exercise, two chapters precede the reflections; the first one makes some general considerations on the concept of progress, while the second one makes an introduction to the global project. A final chapter in the book proposes a taxonomy to measure the progress of societies.

Let's hope for these reflections about progress to make a contribution to the progress of societies, as well as to promote the general reflection and productive dialog on the issue of progress.

*Mariano Rojas, PhD  
Coordinator*

*Measuring the Progress of Societies: A Mexican Perspective*

# 1 Considerations on the Concept of Progress

Mariano Rojas

## 1. Introduction

For centuries, the idea of progress has accompanied human activity and thinking. Great social thinkers have occupied their energies in the deliberation of what determines progress, as well as on the contemplation of what a society in which progress is present might look like. Scientists have occupied themselves with the task of advancing knowledge and technicians with the task of implementing it in order to generate progress. The idea that the progress of societies is the main social objective lies in political discourse and justifies the actions of policy makers and international organizations.

Progress is a concept which motivates and justifies human actions. Progress is also, in principle, intrinsically good, and therefore, convenient for societies. As such, progress represents a journey from what is considered as inferior towards what is considered as superior; it refers to the – not necessarily unique – course towards the

achievement of those aspirations which have been set in a determined moment and place for – and wishfully by – a society.

Progress is a useful concept in the justification of development strategies and public policy; it allows for the comparison of societies in space and time, as well as to judge different social organization schemes as good or bad. The public policy is good if it makes an important contribution to progress in a society. The evaluation of the degree of improvement in societies is based on the concept of progress.

Because of its nature, the concept of progress is inherently vague, and its conception requires a periodic revision with the purpose of representing that which in a specific society – in time and place – is considered superior and worthy of social aspiration. For that, the conception of progress may change in time and space;

and for this reason we can ask the question concerning what do we want to understand for progress in our societies at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The question makes reference to a decision that needs to be made by the members of a society.<sup>1</sup> Societies have a permanent responsibility to give some substance to the vague concept of progress and, therefore, to draw out a conception of progress for its time. However, it is common for the attention of the urgent problems in a society – which are not necessarily disassociated from a conception of progress – to limit our efforts in defining a specific conception of progress.

There are four topics which in a constant manner underlie the idea of progress along history: Trust in knowledge, optimism concerning the human being; the idea and conceptualization of a better society; and doubts regarding progress.

## 2. Trust in knowledge

At the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Xenophanes mentioned that "In the beginning, the Gods did not reveal everything to humans. But humans, through their own searches, find in due time that which is better".<sup>2</sup> In this manner, the journey to a society which is considered as a better one is linked with the search or generation of knowledge which humans do; this search reduces ignorance and allows us to access a situation which we consider as better. The idea that

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<sup>1</sup> The exercise requires many tasks. For example, we must think about which are the mechanisms of social decision-making – formal and informal – which define the aspirations and which qualify and discern between the superior and inferior states. We may also ask about the role which corresponds to specific communities, such as the academicians and politicians. We can also take into consideration the study of how political-economy factors can influence the definition of the conception of progress.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Nisbet (1979)

knowledge allows human beings to become free from ignorance so as to gradually attain better life conditions is presented in many Greek philosophers. In his *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus clearly depicts this idea that knowledge is valuable and that it allows humans to access a life considered as better and, in the Greek vision, closer to the life enjoyed by the Gods in the Olympus.

Plato (*The Statesman*, *The Laws* – Book III) and Aristotle (*The Politics*) thought that the expansion of knowledge allowed the gradual advance from an original or primitive state of nature towards the higher levels of culture, economy and politics. In this manner, the Greek philosophers were optimistic concerning the power knowledge had to lead humanity to states considered as superior. This optimism is something which persists until today and which signals the enthusiasm with which the scientific discoveries and innovations are received. Bacon (*New Atlantis*) imagines a society where science and research contribute to the wellbeing of human beings.

What is the appropriate manner of generating knowledge and how is it validated, are questions which have also entertained the great thinkers through history. Epistemology and philosophy of science have been in charge of studying what and how it is known. In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes proposes a method to know which is widely accepted nowadays. The advantages that the scientific method provides for obtaining and generating knowledge are highly recognized in contemporary societies. The scientific method has allowed us to corroborate hypotheses and support theories, and this corroborated knowledge has boosted the generation of inventions. In contemporary societies, human beings are frequently amazed by the scientific achievements and by the new discoveries and inventions; we live in a world in which knowledge is rapidly expanded and its implementations proliferate. However, current knowledge leans on knowledge

generated in the past; history shows that the advances have been practically immeasurable, and perhaps without the corresponding precision we can imagine the amazement and the benefits which humans experienced with discoveries, achievements and inventions such as their control over fire, the wheel, metalwork, the arrow, aqueducts, the carriage, the plow, paper, the press, the steam engine, navigation instruments, the use of electricity, airplanes, penicillin and x-ray (Williams *et al.*, 2000; Hellemans and Bunch, 2004). We must leave for the humans in the coming future the assessment of the benefits from recent developments such as nanotechnology and the study of the human genome.

It is possible to find some periods of scientific and technologic blossoming, in which the generation of knowledge seems to deviate from its long term trajectory. It is also possible to study the conditions and institutions which promote the generation of scientific knowledge and technological development. However, it is widely recognized that the process for accumulating knowledge is gradual and accumulative, and the achievements in the generation of knowledge today are not estranged from the achievements in the past. The accumulation of knowledge allows the generation of more knowledge as well as the generation of new technologies and products. The accumulation of knowledge necessarily points to the future. In the contemporary world we do not foresee a regression in the process of knowledge expansion; its development seems unstoppable, and we have no doubt that the future will bring more discoveries and inventions.

The control over nature, and especially of those events which threaten life and human wellbeing, has always been of particular concern in the assessment of progress. We consider that there is progress when we control, or at least lessen, the negative impact of natural events, such as floods and droughts; the exposure to extreme weathers, diseases and epidemics, and plagues which

destroy the agricultural production. For that we value the knowledge which has been corroborated by the scientific method and which is susceptible to being used in the solution of concrete problems (technology). Knowledge also allows increasing humans' possibilities to enjoy life; for example allowing for enhanced methods for food cooking and for communicating with distant loved ones.

The appreciation of knowledge is based on a great trust in reason and in the use of human skills, as well as in the general consensus that it is valuable to create a world which is further away from the threats of nature. Using the scientific method allows us to speak about hypotheses and corroborations; thus, scientific truths emerge. When we speak about progress in knowledge we are speaking about the expansion of scientific truths and their implementation in the solution of problems which threaten human wellbeing, as well as the development of innovations which allow us to expand the opportunity space in order to aspire to a more satisfactory life.

### 3. Optimism regarding the human being

The idea that society moves towards a superior social state reveals another constant in the concept of progress: optimism in human beings. Progress is a human subject not only with regards to the ones who benefit from it but also with regards to those who generate it. For that, the concept of progress requires an optimistic vision of human beings.

Then it is assumed that in human beings there is a vocation for improvement, both at the personal and at the group level. The optimistic vision emphasizes the desire humans have of making a contribution to human progress, as well as leaving a proof of their existence. In most cases this contribution is believed to be small – yet not negligible – and it is believed to be big in just a few cases. However, it is acknowledged

that it is by means of accumulation – within time and space – of these contributions that humanity travels its journey towards a stage which is considered superior. The fact that human beings have a positive influence in their fellow citizens – whether in the present as in the future – does not necessarily require an altruistic consideration in their purposes. More than two centuries ago Adam Smith asserted that the interest for the personal benefit may, under certain institutional circumstances, lead to human beings having a positive impact in the life of their fellow citizens. Karl Marx also argued that the interaction between human groups may create a social dynamic which helps societies reach a stage which is considered as superior.

For some, progress is unavoidable and humanity can be certain of attaining a superior stage in the future. For others, it is necessary to act upon, intervene or even transform societies to generate progress and reach the desired final stage. The issue of progress being unavoidable is ever present in an implied way within the political debate. Those who think that progress is unavoidable and that there is a underlying process which favors it reject public intervention; they may accept that there are mistakes, regressions and learning processes in the way towards progress; however, they believe that any intervention tends to make more harm than benefit while affecting the natural way of progress. Therefore, it is affirmed that the best strategy to reach the superior stage is to let progress follow its own path. Those who reject State intervention even uphold that freedom of action and decision are important components of the desired society, and consider that these freedoms – and thus the progress of societies itself – are obstructed by State intervention. However, it is possible to be optimistic regarding human beings without accepting the unavoidability of progress. It is believed that the way towards progress is plagued with traps, dead ends, detours and failures, and the achievement of a situation which is considered as ideal is not yet guaranteed.

For that, State intervention is necessary to generate progress, and optimism in human beings is reflected in the belief that they are capable of realizing the appropriate intervention. Comte thought that social scientists had the knowledge and social responsibility to lead the process in transformation. Saint Simon trusted the skills and knowledge of the industrialist and businessmen. Those who believe that progress is in no way unavoidable are more prone to demand social actions to achieve it. Within this vision, human freedom is not conceived as a simple dissociation from the government's actions; on the contrary, public intervention is required to achieve and ensure that humans really have freedom for acting and deciding.

There are those who argue in favor of a radical break from the past, and they propose a radical transformation of the social organization. Phrases such as "new times" and the forging of "a new man" have been used by Marxist thinkers and anarchists as well as by religious movements. In many cases a radical transformation of the social environment's conditions is suggested, while in other cases a radical transformation of the human being is proposed under the premise that within his nature he/she is imperfect but improvable, or rather that his/her original perfection has been undermined by historical events and social processes. This idea that it is necessary to realize a radical transformation of society or the human being with the aim of perfecting it and taking it to that desired stage, is generally accompanied by the belief that the current and prior social organizations are abundant with mistakes, deficiencies and obstacles for human improvement. In some cases this idea generates a disposition of destroying the existing order with the aim of building a new one which is considered superior. A disposition to submit human beings to make them better, freer and closer to the conceived perfection is even possible.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this is what Jose Clemente Orozco shows in a masterly way in his mural "The wheel of progress" (La Rueda del Progreso).

It is mainly during revolutions when this idea of radical change and achievement of a qualitative jump in the journey of progress gets exacerbated. Revolutions such as the French, Russian and Mexican ones can come to mind; however, it is necessary to acknowledge that world history is full of revolutions and those who have lived them must have experienced the sensation of qualitative change and hope – in the case of the winners – or regression and despair – in the case of the losers. It does not come as a surprise that with the passing of time hope and hopelessness give way to their opposites.

#### 4. A better society and a better human being

Without doubt the main topic in the idea of progress is the conception and definition of the better situation we aim for. The idea of a better society or a reachable and better personal situation is another recurring theme in the reflection of progress. That idea of a better society usually refers to a state where “*the liberation of humans from all physical compulsions which torment them turns complete*” (Nisbet, 1929). Olympus served as a reference to the Greek in order to conceive the superior place towards which we ascend or have the desire to ascend to. Thus the Greek had the desire of emulating the life conditions which they considered superior and which they had envisioned for their Gods. The myths of Shangri-la and the lost paradise also make allusion to a stage where human beings live without tribulation and in harmony, as well as the obvious desire to reach that stage once more.

Saint Augustine (*The City of God*) and Joaquin de Fiore speak about stages in the path humanity is taking towards superior states, and conceive a final state where they are full of happiness, absolute joy, spiritual quietness and peace. The arguments of Saint Augustine and Fiore postulate three very popular ideas in the discussions about progress: The idea of stages – maybe even sequential-; the idea that there is a final stage

which is highly superior; and the idea that humanity is moving in an inexorable way towards such a stage.

Many thinkers have entertained themselves imagining how society would look in that final and future stage. This gave way to the utopian formulations. (Moro, Bacon, Campanella, Saint Simon, Comte, amongst others) (Claeys and Sargent, 1999)

Without any doubt the wellbeing of humans is a fundamental issue in the reflections about a better society. In some occasions the concern is focused in the nature of relationships between human beings (ethical and moral progress); in many it focuses on the capabilities of consumption and on the satisfaction of material needs (material or economic progress); in not a few occasions the interest is in the distribution of material goods and in the existence of the minimum conditions which are considered as necessary for the wellbeing of people (social progress); the interest for expanding the freedom for doing and being, as well as the interest for the wellbeing experienced by people, are topics which have had some relevance during the last decades.

##### 4.1. The good life. Ethics and moral progress

Philosophers have argued for years about what constitutes the good life and the attributes such a good life should have in order to be judged as such (Bourke, 2008; MacIntyre, 1998). It is important to note that ethical judgments focus on those attributes and behaviors of a person which have to do with his/her coexistence amongst humans. The ethical judgment is usually made by a third party, generally the philosopher, and it is about the way a person ought to lead his/her life and the way he/she should coexist with his/her kindred. Ethics debates what a good life is and how one ought to live it; in general, it provides a substantive definition of the good life, generating a listing of the good life's attributes. In this way,

progress is measured based on the proliferation of acts and behaviors judged as good ones. In the ethical judgment the interaction between human beings is central; for that, the fraternity between human beings and the respect and defense of everyone's dignity, including our own, are relevant ethical issues.

#### 4.2. Material progress

The social capacity of producing goods and services, as well as the proliferation of commodities, has been considered as an indicator of the progress of societies. Although economic theory provides weak fundamentals for studying wellbeing, it is common in economics to associate the progress of societies to the consumption possibilities of their citizens. It is argued that the availability of goods and services allows for a greater satisfaction of needs, and it is expected that this will result in a greater wellbeing. For that, even before the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* book, economists were already concerned about the nature and causes of the increase in the wealth of nations. Economic growth (the increase during time in the production of a country) acquired great relevance during the last decades, and it ended up being associated (almost as a synonym) to the concepts of economic development and progress.

The studies of economic development are mainly focused on those countries considered as under-developed, less developed, or developing; however, the underlying conception of progress is based on the idea that these countries move towards a situation which is similar to the one of those countries considered as developed (Arndt, 1987). Hence, in this manner the situation of abundance of material goods and services in the countries considered as economically developed defines the aspired social goal and, as a consequence, the conception of progress. For that, progress is also associated with the required transformations for less

developed countries to resemble the developed ones. Modernization theory associates progress with a movement from the traditional society towards the modern society; which requires not only economic transformations but also some very important cultural and institutional changes with the aim of promoting the availability of goods and services.

#### 4.3. Social progress

The dislike of the exclusive use of economic indicators for measuring progress is common in social science. This dislike gives way to a couple of important movements in the conception and measurement of progress: The 'social-indicators' movement and the 'capabilities and functionalities' movement.

The social-indicators movement is concerned about the habitability conditions of a person's environment (Estes, 1984; Veenhoven, 2000). This movement defines a list of conditions which are considered relevant for people to have a good life and, based on this, follows a substantive approach to conceptualize progress: Progress ends up being associated with the achievement of those habitability conditions considered as relevant. The list of habitability conditions considered as relevant may grow considerably; and this takes place within the frame established by the disciplinary compartmentalization of knowledge. For that, it is possible to talk about political indicators (fulfillment of civil and political rights; characteristics of the electoral system; counterweights in the public administration; transparency of public decisions); health indicators (availability of hospitals and doctors per person; expenses in health care; expenses in nutrition; anthropometric indicators, and so on); social indicators (access coverage for the education; sewage and drainage; street lighting; social cohesion; inclusion of particular groups; social and ethnic discrimination; mobility within the income groups; rates of violence



and crime, and so on); and environmental indicators (noise pollution; air quality; availability of urban parks; water quality, and so on). The list of economic indicators is also expanded beyond per capita income (income distribution, unemployment, inflation, consumption, possession of durable goods, housing's physical characteristics, etc.). To the ever-expanding number of dimensions and sub-dimensions one must add that there are no clear criteria of aggregation; for that, a proliferation of social indicators is observed (McGillivray and Noorbakhsh, 2007).

A literature which overlaps with the social-indicators movement is the one of 'welfare regimes' (Vogel, 1994). This literature is mainly focused in the nature of the state's intervention (regulation of labor markets; providing public education; price controls; universal social security; pension system; political regime; social-decision mechanisms and others). It is assumed that these welfare conditions are relevant for people's wellbeing.

The 'capabilities and functionalities' movement focuses on people's access to those capabilities that allow their freedom to choose their functionalities (Sen, 1979, 1993). The movement is critical of the use of income as the single indicator in the evaluation of wellbeing and progress. In principle, income is a result of human decision, and people may decide to pursue higher income or not to do so (income is a functionality, in Sen's terminology); thus, what is important is to evaluate the capabilities people have in order to generate income in case they decide to do so. Within the capabilities and functionalities movement it is fundamental for people to have the freedom to access any possible functionality they may opt to; even if the functionality is not exercised, what is important is to have the freedom or capability of exercising it. For that, according to this approach, progress should be measured in the expansion of

people's capabilities and not in their functionalities. However, the approach is not clear regarding which is the list of relevant capabilities; and in most cases the capabilities considered are justified based on a substantive definition of the good life: It is argued that good life is, casually, defined by that list of capabilities. In other cases, the list is based on the assumption that those capabilities are relevant for people's wellbeing.

#### **4.4. Human realization. Progress as human fulfillment**

In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle argued that the fulfillment of human beings is a desirable goal. This fulfillment is understood as the situation in which human beings realize whatever is distinctive of their nature. Aristotle believed that the use of the intellect, by means of reasoning and reflection was distinctive of human beings and, as a consequence, it is by means of the intellect that humans can reach that state of fulfillment, which he called *eudaimonia*. Although the precise translation of the term *eudaimonia* is a matter of discussion, it is common to find that term translated in some occasions as fulfillment and in others as happiness. Aristotle concludes that philosophers are the happiest human beings on earth because they fully exercise the attributes of thought and reason.

The idea that human fulfillment is an ultimate objective shows up in many philosophers. Nietzsche (*Zarathustra*) even mentions a superhuman figure, which is understood as a superior human with qualities which deserve to be sought after and which define the state towards human beings should go to.

Three central ideas follow suit from the Aristotelian formulation. First, human fulfillment has intrinsic value and constitutes a state we should desire to attain. Second, it is the task of philosophers and experts to identify those attributes which define the complete

fulfillment of human beings. Third, human beings may be compared against the completely fulfilled human who is imagined; thus, it is possible to talk about different degrees of improvement on the basis of the gap between the goal and what currently exists.<sup>4</sup>

The reason for fulfillment having intrinsic value to human beings is not clearly explained. It is assumed that human beings are better off when they are fulfilled, without providing any explanation for the nature of such improvement. The authority for judging what constitutes a full life is placed in hands of the experts; somehow it is implicitly assumed that the majority of human beings are not in a position of judging their own lives. This approach gives rise to a long tradition in which the experts not only evaluate the determining factors of a full life, but they also define what a full life actually is.

The idea of human fulfillment refers to the full use of those attributes which are proper to the sort, and thanks to that there is an important difference, although subtle, between the ideas of fulfillment and perfection of the human being, since the latter refers to the incorporation of new attributes to the human being with the purpose of his/her enhancement. The idea of human being's perfection is approached by the Transhumanism literature (Kurzweil, 2005), which studies the possibilities for modifying the human race with the end of generating an enhanced species.

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<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche (*Zarathustra*) presents a clear example of the implementation of the comparison approach when he compares human beings as they are to his imagined superhuman: "Until now every being has created something above themselves: Do you want to become the undertow of this great tide and recede towards the animal instead of improving humans? What is the ape for humans? A ridicule or a shameful pain. And humans should precisely be that for the superhuman: A ridicule or a shameful pain"

#### **4.5. The experience of wellbeing. Progress as satisfaction with life**

Progress is also associated with the idea of a situation where human beings have greater wellbeing. The association between progress and wellbeing raises the questions of which wellbeing to consider, how to measure it, and whose is the wellbeing which is being considered. The conception of progress as wellbeing differentiates between progress and its determining factors. Progress refers to the increase of people's wellbeing, while its determining factors have to do with conditions of habitability and life-abilities, with greater knowledge and its proper utilization, with the availability of material goods and with the existence of certain rules for coexistence. This conception allows identifying and qualifying the determining factors of progress according to their influence in wellbeing; for that, it is possible to talk about a favorable habitability or an unfavorable one for wellbeing; of relevant or irrelevant life-abilities for wellbeing; of an appropriate or inappropriate use of knowledge; of the wellbeing contribution of material goods; and of which are the necessary coexistence rules for people's wellbeing.

Within this approach, the relevant wellbeing is that which is experienced by people (in a hedonic, cognitive and affective manner) (Rojas, 2007). The relevant question is: How is such wellbeing assessed? People summarize their life experience by means of concepts such as happiness or life satisfaction; this synthesis of their life experience is useful for them in evaluating how well their life is going on and also for undertaking important life-changing decisions (Veenhoven, 1991; Hayborn, 2003). For that, it is stated that the best way to know a person's satisfaction with life is by means of a direct consultation of the subject.

As a consequence, within this approach, progress refers to the movement towards a situation where people are more satisfied with their lives. This situation may be

evaluated in the life satisfaction area, as well as in the satisfaction people experiences in those domains where they exercise as human beings.

## 5. Doubts concerning progress

Another constant in the idea of progress are the doubts concerning its existence and goodness.

In times of war, of using sophisticated devices for death and destruction, of ethnic cleansing, of hunger which coexist with abundance and extravagance, and of defrauded hopes, it is reasonable to be pessimistic concerning human beings and the goodness of their motivations. World Wars, launching of atomic weapons in Japan, the ethnic cleansing in Rwanda, and hunger in many countries within the Sub-saharan Africa are recent events which lessen humans' optimism. An existential pessimism rises in those people who have been defrauded in their hope of human goodness by atrocities such as the ones mentioned above. In addition, it is not necessary to make a thorough revision of history to find it full of similar events and that, at least from the perspective of those who lived and suffered it, are of the same magnitude than the recent events previously mentioned. For that, an elevated dosage of pessimism always accompanies the optimism regarding human beings.

The trust in scientific knowledge and technology has been questioned throughout history as well. Knowledge and technology can be appreciated on the basis of two criteria: One is purely aesthetic and it refers to how people become amazed by human ingeniousness and by the sophistication of the products they can come up with; another one, which is consequentialist, is more concerned by the impact of knowledge and innovations in people's wellbeing. From an aesthetic point of view, human beings may be marveled by the knowledge and ingeniousness which is present in the construction of war airplanes, but the utilization of

this knowledge may be questioned when it conflicts with the wellbeing – and maybe even the life – of human beings. Trust in knowledge is questioned by those who believe that human beings do not use it wisely, as well as by those who distinguish between knowledge and wisdom.<sup>5</sup> Global warming and the destruction of the ecosystem exemplify the fact that the use of knowledge in transforming nature may have harmful consequences and they support the argument that some wisdom is required to understand that humans are an integral part of the ecosystem and not just a transforming agent which is alien to such an ecosystem. The use of new knowledge to conquer territories and destroy civilizations also shows that advanced knowledge in the hands of unwise and non-benevolent human beings may cause great prejudice.

As a consequence, greater knowledge can not be qualified as progress by itself, since this qualification is contingent on its use in accordance to social and human aspirations. For that, judgment can not be done only in the space of instruments, but rather it requires an evaluation based on the predetermined ends in sight.

The emphasis for transforming the environment may also distract human beings' focus on deepening in the Socratic maximum of *'know thyself'*. In other words, a greater knowledge of how the exterior world works is not necessarily accompanied by a greater knowledge of that thick and complex 'interior world'.

It is also possible that knowledge is not only a transforming instrument of the human being's environment, but that it also creates the conditions for human beings transforming themselves. The possibility that human beings transform themselves in a conscious

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<sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot captures this very well in his poem *The Rock* when he assures that: "Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

or unconscious manner gives way to fundamental questions which the trans-humanism literature has tried to address (Parens, 1998).

A progress which focuses its attention in the stages to come, which refers to the completion of a last and ideal stage to be reached by humanity in the far away future, and which calls for current human beings to make a contribution may as well bring danger in the present. There is in this view a risk for human beings of the present ending up being instrumentalized and becoming simple gadgets in the machinery which leads humankind to the desired stage. Thus, there is a risk for the concrete person in the present to end up vanishing in this way of managing the concepts of humanity and future. This implies that without forgetting the importance of thinking about long-term objectives, it is also necessary to think about a progress which refers to the concrete people of the present. Thus, the concept of progress deliberates amongst the temporal dimensions of the future and the present, and amongst the general perspectives of humanity and of concrete persons.

There has also been doubt about progress being intrinsically good. The concept of progress has been associated to concepts such as civilization – and to verbs such as civilizing. In this manner, the concept of progress has been used by powerful countries to justify destruction of civilizations and to impose their culture, values and scheme of social organization in other societies. Ethnocentrism, the notion of superior societies – and even of superior races – and the emphasis in emulation – and even in assimilation – are risks that the notion of progress drags along. It is clear that this risk magnifies when a top-down approach is followed, which makes the conception of progress alien to its presumed beneficiaries.

Many are the critiques done on the conception of progress as economic growth. A traditional critique points towards the problems involved in measuring

income; it is stated that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita – or any of its variations – is an imperfect indicator of the availability of economic goods and services in a country (Easterlin, 1974; Hirsch, 1976; Mishan, 1976, 1977; Offer, 2007). Some of its deficiencies are: It does not contemplate for the availability of free time; it does not contemplate for the self-production of goods and services; it does not contemplate for some social and environmental costs; it contemplates for the production of goods of a doubtful reputation such as weapons of mass destruction; and it may be calculated on the basis of distorted prices. Another traditional critique to the use of growth in the GDP per capita as an indicator of progress refers to the fact that it is an indicator of central tendency, and for such reason it hides problems of distribution within societies. This critique makes it relevant to calculate income-distribution indicators, as well as social-exclusion indicators in order for being able to appreciate whether the benefits of economic growth reach every one in a society.

A critique which has acquired relevance during the last decades is that material progress makes complete omission of the sustainability of the planet and, as a consequence, it does not contemplate for the situation of future generations. Global warming, the depletion of non-renewable resources, the over exploitation of renewable resources, and the deterioration of the ecosystem are aspects which threaten the future of humanity, as well as of many other species which populate the planet.

Within some recent critiques on the use of growth in GDP per capita as an indicator of progress, the weakness of microeconomic theory to deal with topics of wellbeing stands out. Microeconomic theory has been focused on explaining choice rather than wellbeing. For that, it is not clear how much additional wellbeing is obtained when the production of goods and services increases. Although it does not derive from microeconomic theory,

economists generally accept that there is a ranking of needs. Some needs are considered as basic and it is believed that their satisfaction is necessary because not doing so will threaten the functionality of human beings or even of their life (Doyal and Gough, 1991). However, it is not clear enough what lies beyond the needs which are considered as basic and which are the benefits or the progress which is obtained with their satisfaction. The literature of poverty is founded in this distinction; however, microeconomic theory does not allow for making a clear distinction between the needs which are basic and those which belong to the realm of desires and whims.

It also happens that purchasing is not the same as consuming and that a high purchasing power does not guarantee a high economic satisfaction (Scitovsky, 1976; Rojas, 2008). For that, it is impossible to infer wellbeing from the purchasing power in a society, and it is necessary to know how the additional income is used.

A more recent critique of the conception of progress as availability of economic goods and services starts from the acknowledgement that human beings also have psychological needs, and that some of them are considered as basic (Kasser, 2002; Kasser and Ryan, 1999). If these needs are not properly satisfied then the person will be in a wellbeing-deprivation situation. The needs of competence and relatedness can be satisfied through selfless and close human relations, and for that the literature talks of the existence of relational goods. This literature maintains that an increase in people's purchasing power does not necessarily imply an increase in their availability of relational goods; on the contrary, it may happen that economic growth is accompanied of a reduction in the availability of relational goods. For that, it is possible to imagine a situation where a greater income is accompanied by a lower wellbeing (Lane, 2000; Sudgen, 2005).

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# 2 Measuring the Progress of Societies

Paola Cubas Barragán\*

*[Today] our life expectancy is higher,  
we seem healthier and smarter  
and many countries are richer.  
But are we really making progress?*

Enrico Giovannini

There has been a growing interest in the last decades to develop a more comprehensive view of progress that does not focus only on economic indicators such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP is an important measurement of economic activity; however, it was not created to be the only way to measure a country's progress. This is why it is necessary to find consensus

through which to include social, environmental and economic aspects in the definition and measurement of progress.

International organizations have developed a plethora of indicators in practically every social dimension; resulting in a proliferation of publications and databases. Non-Governmental Organizations have also developed their own indicator systems to monitor economic, social and environmental trends, as well as for the application of government promises. In some countries, civil society is gaining leadership in the call for the creation of progress measurement sets; meanwhile, the governments are searching for new ways to collaborate with civil society in order to legitimize their actions.

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\* Educated in Mathematics and Economics, her interdisciplinary formation and interest in the subjects of Wellbeing, Quality of Life and Values have led to her collaboration with various NGOs, through which she has participated in Gender Projects at the UN-NY, as well as in Local Development Projects in indigenous communities in Mexico. She has been Visiting Fellow of the Department of International Development at Oxford University.



A global movement is emerging to reevaluate the measurement of progress, and there is consensus on the fact that this is of great importance due to the close relationship between the construction and availability of statistical indicators, the design of public policies, and the democratic evaluation of a country's (region's, city's, etc.) performance.

The global project *Measuring the Progress of Societies* ([www.oecd.org/progress](http://www.oecd.org/progress)) was originated with the consensus that there is a great opportunity to join forces between many local and international initiatives that are focused on the issue of the conception and measurement of progress in our societies. The starting point for this initiative is the premise that the formation of a more coherent and structured network that gathers all the regional initiatives and efforts will allow us to find a more solid answer to the question that more and more societies (and individuals) are asking: what direction do we want to take?

### Global Project: "Measuring the Progress of Societies"

In 2004, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognized that there is a world-wide proliferation of initiatives for the measurement of progress and related concepts, such as quality of life, wellbeing, sustainable development and others. With this in view, that year the OECD organized the First World Forum on "Statistics, Knowledge and Policy" in Palermo, Italy, with the objective of promoting an adequate framework for the development of discussions on progress.

In March 2006, the OECD organized a meeting in Bellagio, Italy, with 26 experts selected from international and supranational organizations (UN, World Bank, European Central Bank and the OECD), from national administrations and from the academic world, to dialog on the measurement of the progress

of societies. The meeting prompted the OECD to start the Global Project on "Measuring the Progress of Societies".

The Second World Forum took place in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2007. Several regional events in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Arab countries preceded this Forum, as well as the execution of a few specialized workshops on the measurement of relevant variables. More than 200 world-class speakers presented their ideas at the Istanbul Forum, and 1200 people from 130 countries were present, including high-ranking public officers, researchers and civil society leaders.

At the end of the Istanbul Forum, the OECD, the European Commission, the Organization of Islamic Countries, the United Nations Organization, the United Nations Development Program, and the World Bank signed the Declaration of Istanbul, with calls to:

- encourage communities to consider for themselves what "progress" means in the 21st century;
- share best practices on the measurement of societal progress and increase the awareness of the need to do so using sound and reliable methodologies;
- stimulate international debate, based on solid statistical data and indicators, on both global issues of societal progress and comparisons of such progress;
- produce a broader, shared, public understanding of changing conditions, while highlighting areas of significant change or inadequate knowledge;
- advocate appropriate investment in building statistical capacity, especially in developing countries, to improve the availability of data and indicators needed to guide development programs and report on progress toward international goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals.



In the months following the Istanbul World Forum, other organisms signed the Declaration, including: Environment Europe, Gallup Organisation Europe, International Statistical Institute, The Lisbon Council, UNESCO, United Nations Office for Partnerships, and UNICEF. Guidelines were also established to conduct the work of the Global Project; a project aimed to promote the development of economic, social and environmental indicator sets, which will be used to obtain a clearer image of the wellbeing of societies. It also attempts to promote the use of these indicator sets to inform and promote the decision-making process in the public, private and civil sectors, based on evidence. The global project is open to all sectors of society working in favorable practices and in innovative research. The Declaration of Istanbul urges "statistics offices, public and private organizations and academic experts to work with the representatives of their communities to produce high quality information based on facts, which may be used by the entire society to create a common view of social wellbeing and evolution in time."

This is why the objective of the Global Project is to help societies with the following questions:

### **What to measure?**

Discussions should be motivated regarding "what", because in order to measure progress we need to know what is understood by progress. There is no doubt that progress can mean different things in different societies, and the Global Project searches to help societies achieve dialog on the meaning of progress in each one.

### **How to measure?**

By working with experts from around the world, the Project will develop a deeper understanding of how progress can be measured, especially in emerging and complex regions that have not been covered in the statistical standards.

### **Ensuring that the measures are used**

The Project promotes the development and use of new tools and approaches to help leaders as well as citizens to widen the knowledge of their own society with the use of statistical data.

The Global Project is a "network of networks"; this means that it functions in cooperation between organizations based in different regions of the world, with different approaches, objectives and mandates. The Project's activities are carried out voluntarily by a group of interested organizations, such as: international organizations, public and private organizations, foundations, universities and research centers.

The Project has a long list of Members, Associates, Correspondents, Sponsors and Technical Advisors, who help revise the work plan, design the general agenda and define specific objectives. A secretariat is formed to carry out and coordinate the Project's activities, called the Global Office, sponsored by the OECD.

Regional work groups are being established in every region of the world (Latin America, Africa, the Arabic Region, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Central Asia, OECD countries – including the European Union). The regional groups carry out activities in all the dimensions that have been identified by the Global Project. Each regional group is responsible for the establishment of the agenda and priorities, and the available resources, existing processes, etc, must be considered. In order to minimize overlapping and wastage of resources, these activities are coordinated with those of other regions at the Global Office.

The Regional Groups aspire to involve a large variety of possible interested entities: national statistics offices, governments, parliaments, NGOs, academic circles and research circles, business and union associations and experts in communication media. The

relationship between Regional Groups and institutions that may finance the work (regional development banks, foundations, companies, etc) is of particular importance. It is expected that the Regional Groups:

- Identify good methodologies for the measurement of social progress in the region, whether this is in national statistics offices, academic circles or NGOs and so on; and present the report to the rest of the world by way of the Global Project Office.
- Identify relevant issues in the region that require the development of better models and statistical methodologies.
- Share their needs with other participants in the Global Project by way of communication tools.
- Contribute by way of research to the recommendations on how to measure specific aspects of social progress.
- Contribute to the development of an international survey on what citizens and experts are capable of evaluating regarding progress in their country.

Ever since the Istanbul Forum, and in view of the Third World Forum which is to take place in Busan, Korea, in late October 2009, conferences, workshops, work groups and meetings at different levels have been organized in all regions of the world. The Third World Forum will be centered on three main questions: What does progress mean to our societies? What are the new paradigms in the measurement of progress? And how may better public policies be designed within these paradigms to promote the progress of our societies? The Forum will attract high level participants in the public arena, leaders of opinion, Nobel Prize winners, statisticians, academic, journalists and representatives of the civil society of many countries.

The Global Project continues to benefit from the participation of individuals, organizations and governments. Every two years – in cooperation with a host country – a World Forum will be organized, preceded by the execution of regional and thematic events. The aim is that these events may become a world-wide reference for those that wish to measure and evaluate the progress of societies.



# 3 Reflections from Mexico about Progress



# José Luis Tejeda\*

## Thoughts on Progress\*\*

When we speak of progress we are referring to one of the principal aspects of modern life. A traditional society turns its sights towards the past. Modernity moves from project to project, it looks towards the future and history is open in a forward direction. Instead of returning (regressing), we want to progress. Instead of recovering from or living constantly in the mythical world of our origins, we are thrust towards the future; it does not matter whether it is a rising or falling movement, we do not want to go backwards. A

\* José Luis Tejeda has a graduate degree in Sociology (UANL) and he is Master and Doctor in Political Science (UNAM). He is Research Professor at the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM), in Xochimilco, Department of Politics and Culture, and a member of the National Researcher System (SNI), Level II. He is the author of the following books: "El proceso de democratización en México, 1968-1982", "Las Encrucijadas de la democracia moderna", "Las Fronteras de la modernidad", "La Transición y el pantano. Poder, política y elecciones en el México actual, 1997-2003", "La Ruta de la ciudadanía" and "Latinoamérica fracturada. Identidad, integración y política en América Latina" (publication in process).

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay

one-directional image of progress has been questioned of course, as it can move in zigzag, retreat and stop for some time; and learning takes place and then progress returns on its path. There are different ways to progress and we are no longer so naive as to think that we will always move forward. There is no guarantee that we will continue to progress indefinitely, or that we will always have a positive image of the open history that lies in the future. For the moment we propose that we continue to progress and that we pass on our interpretation of the world and of history to future generations so that they may continue to make advancements.

The idea of progress is linked to our views of man and of history. This is how periods are built along the history of humanity if we consider that we go from what was behind to what it in front, from backwardness to progress. This is how we come from savagery and barbarity to civilization. Once we reach this point there are difficulties as there is not one single civilization, but several that learn from each other, confront each other, and clash or cross paths. Eurocentric and western visions created and appropriated the history

of philosophy in their desire to see the world from their point of view. They impose, inculcate and teach other cultures and civilizations to look like them. We must imitate, copy, and assimilate that which comes from regions with established progress. The philosophy of history is charged with Eurocentric parameters. The central roles of *logos* and reason appear in contemporary discourses and narrative. It is inconceivable to us that humans should live in chaos, in the absurd, without reason, in the absence of sense and direction.

We come from somewhere and we must have a place to reach. We find it unacceptable to live day to day, by the instant, in the immediate. When modernity broke its ties with the religious field, transcendence was searched for elsewhere. We would need to find an internal form of rationality for the historical future of humanity. Philosophical models consecrate said rationality and have a progressive vision that always aims for something better, something yet to come. This is the case in the Hegelian/Marxist model where in the end one reaches either a constitutional monarchy as in Hegel or communism as does Marx. There is similar reasoning in the origins of sociology, and more specifically in Comtean positivism, with progressive stages in the evolution of human communities; starting from a religious state, progressing to a metaphysical state and eventually to a positive state. This is observed similarly in anthropology, sociology, philosophy, economy or political sciences.

The values of cultural and political modernity have succeeded and, although the vanguard is exhausted and projects for the future are weakened, we do not look back or even desire to stop historical time in a world administered in the present and without progress. And on a par with the predominant progressive views, fundamentalist expressions are manifested of people searching for a return, a regression to a lost world. In religious and conservative views, modern and civilizing progress is seen as a fall, an endless decadence, where the strongest hope is that of the return of humanity

and harmony and the lost paradise. The world was created and established a long time ago, once and for all, and this means that nothing new can or should be added to it. In this way, there is no point in progress if there is no substantial advance, and in fact the very possibility of progress is doubted. In a different tenor and from a different perspective, in post-modern views and the criticism of modernity it is believed that progress ends, it becomes exhausted, it is carried out and then reverted. The image of progress is discussed and questioned, it becomes relative and ceases to be the strong motor of modern life. This criticism of modernity leads to a redefinition of progress, to a new view of progress in which we see that it is not one-directional or a panacea, that it represents different facets and implies dialog and openness between different cultures and civilizations if we do not want to reduce it to its western interpretation.

But let us take a closer look at what we mean by progress. When we speak of progress we almost automatically think of economic, technological and material progress. That is, the necessity of humans to be elevated beyond their immediate needs and overcome the hunger, fear, cold, diseases, superstition, pain and tragedies which make life unbearable, hard and adverse. The development and evolution of humankind has been marked by technical and material progress. Discoveries such as fire, the wheel, writing, have been noted advances for man and for social communities. Regardless of whom makes said discoveries, at one point in time they extend to other towns and other cultures and eventually become patrimony of the world. As is evident, the modern era lives by constant inventions and discoveries, which are the motor of economic development and of the civilizing process. The invention of the mechanical loom and the steam engine caused an accelerated expanse of economic and social progress; doing what previously took centuries to achieve. This is why the idea of progress seems so familiar to us at present. There is a series of inventions,

discoveries, innovations and applications between one generation and the next which makes us feel the vertigo of modernity and incessant progress. Seen in this way, technical, material and economic progress is unavoidable. Who would dare to deny human progress when we live in a world with electricity, highways, airplanes, means of mass communication, internet and cellular phones? Who would deny and reject the advancements of modern man when looking at works of infrastructure, health and education? Could anyone deny that we have progressed when mankind has traveled to the moon, can condense information onto a microchip and has carried out research on the human genome? Even though no one should have any doubt of the progress of societies as they mature; there are, however, motives for redefining the discussion of progress in order to find a wider and more integrated view of what it means.

Progress is not neutral. It is inscribed into social relations, power, communication, domination which complicates the acceptance and assimilation of new technologies and new tools. This means that if a novelty such as fire, gunpowder, ceramics or writing could be produced without any social or political costs maybe there would be no problem. This is in fact the way it occurred in the past, and this explains, in part, the predominance of one given community over others. Material and technological progress is accompanied by the destruction of natural and traditional environments and the gestation of new forms of human relations. Even though there should be a contribution made by a person, community or country in benefit of the rest of the world, in reality it becomes a civilizing progress in which one culture or civilization imposes itself on the others. This is very common in the relationship of the western world and industrial countries with the rest of the world. It explains the resistance to, and rejection of, civilizing progress. There have been experiences of cultural communities that reject material and technical progress and conceive it as an external

aggression or interference. The self-centered image of the industrialized western sector is also negative as it looks only at itself and considers other towns or countries as inferior and that they must adopt an advanced culture which it pretends to portray.

There are those who repudiate technical and material progress from religious fundamentalism or from an identity or cultural resistance; however, opinions against progress increase regarding other characteristics also. Disagreement is due to the control of the northern Atlantic over the rest of the world, and its economy, where liberalism and Marxism come together, where the world is measured according to property, possessions and material wealth. Progress is identified with the economy and material development, and other social expressions exist around these ideals. Material progress is the most evident, visible and accepted manifestation of progress and it presents these problems; the discussion is thus further complicated when considering education, culture, politics or institutions. How much have we progressed in terms of values, institutional improvement and operation, or greater social or political participation in community matters? There are emblematic values such as freedom, fraternity and equity, which are accepted by those who place themselves in cultural and political modernity. There are sectors and portions of humanity that do not accept these values, and simulate acceptance or openly deny them and block them. These unresolved disputes take place even within the western world. The meaning of progress for some is seen as regression to others. There is an extreme relativity that makes it impossible to establish universal civilizing actions for the good of the public. The elements of historical progress that have relative consensus today are emphatically denied by their detractors when considering high values such as freedom, human rights, democracy or justice. In metropolitan nations a limited and restrictive approach to progress may emphasize technical or material progress and neglect human freedom or justice. What

good is it to be surrounded by properties or possessions if we lose freedom, live oppressed or accept injustice?

As progress becomes more visible, it also becomes easier to measure and ponder. The issue here is that progress does not only correspond to material or institutional aspects, or valuable or cultural parameters. It also has an existential and emotional component that is difficult to evaluate and ponder. If progress intends to make life easier, generate more happiness and provide more satisfiers, it becomes more complicated to move among the dimensions of human subjectivity. The aspects involved in subjective rights, intimacy, interpersonal and sexual relationships are on the balance with human, civilizing progress. The degree of subjectivity it carries makes it imponderable, even though it must guarantee a minimal social environment that makes it possible. For example, a forced or arranged marriage now sounds reprehensible, even though there are human communities that used to practice it and even continue to do so. In western culture progress is accepted if there is an increase of women's participation in public life, even when other cultures practice oppressive gender relations. We could continue to provide examples of the observation of this subjective dimension of progress or regression; but it is still conceived as a place that one wishes to reach, and the movement away from that which we leave behind. Without a doubt, the idea of progress implies civilizing forces and the triumph of lifestyles, forms of social organization seen as better than others – which are left behind – without manifest impositions and without resorting to violence, or by recurring crudely to the same old forms. As there are no universal agreements on what makes the best

civilization, the issue has been solved by persuading and convincing, with small doses of violence sometimes or without any at all when the civilizing process is on a good path. It has not always been so; in fact I believe it has only been so on rare occasions as the common event is that one culture or civilization imposes itself on the rest through violent ways, downgrading its intended improvement proposal.

Consequently, the definition of progress must confront traditionalist and fundamentalist views, with the help of cultures and civilizations that offer a different approach to progress or do not give such importance to modern life and have the capacity for critical reflection and self-criticism provided by those who have lived the experience and see it as something that is being carried out and value its positive and negative implications. As there is not one consensual idea of progress, we can limit it to that which would be most appropriate, to the western world and its margins; and more specifically to the modern lifestyle we have lived for the past five centuries. Seen in this way, we must be aware of the limitations of our western progress, we must be willing to recognize and accept the good things that other cultures and civilizations can provide to help us achieve higher levels of civilization, without taking them by force and exploiting them. We must understand that progress can not be reduced to its material components – even though these are important – if these are not complemented by a sense of progression of culture, values, institutions or existential parameters; they will serve little purpose in turning the planet into a more inhabitable and agreeable place, which is the ultimate goal of this comprehensive view of progress.



# Alba González Jácome\*

## Old and New Concepts of Progress\*\*

The concept of progress is not really appropriate as it is an old idea used long before the concept of development and it has moral connotations.<sup>1</sup> The original idea of progress resulted from the effects of the English industrial revolution and it meant to create a positive change in societies, a change that moves them forward. I assume that it is being used again because the concept of development has raised many questions; it appeared at the beginning of the 20th century – in 1900 – and meant to “...exploit, obtain benefits from...”

\* Dr. Alba González Studies human groups, societies and cultures dedicated to agricultural activities; whether they are farmers or countrymen who live in rural environments. She is interested in the relationships between these human groups and the environment in which they live; their natural, social, cultural and human resources; with their production; genetic resources; health; traditional knowledge; formal education; local and regional markets; and their organization with national and international markets.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview

<sup>1</sup> See the (now classic) book: Nisbet, Robert; *Historia de la idea de progreso*. Barcelona, Editorial Gedisa, 1991 (original in English 1980).

(Wallerstein 2004)<sup>2</sup> and followed the supposition that Europeans carried out a set of concrete actions to exploit resources outside of Europe. Industrialized nations support those that are not industrialized so that they may “catch up” with their lifestyle. The concepts of progress and development – in their beginning – implied that the western way of life is the ideal that must be reached and that other societies must somehow live as societies with similar needs and access to the monetary resources that may permit this. Other concepts are derived from this such as underdevelopment or the so-called emerging economies.

So, what are the positive aspects of the concept of progress? The countries that already present better or optimal economic conditions and have abundant resources of all kinds at their disposal to fully cover their basic, social, ideological and cultural needs, are aware somehow that other human societies do not have the same living conditions and that they barely

<sup>2</sup> Wallerstein, Immanuel, “Después del desarrollo y la globalización, ¿qué?”. Talk in the Conference: *Development Challenges for the 21st Century*. Cornell University, October 1st 2004.

cover their basic needs. In other words, that there is economic, social, political and educational inequality as well as in the quality of life. This inequality prevents human groups from having access to healthy and diverse nourishment, formal education, housing and health; elements that make up our quality of life.

### Proposals for a new concept of progress

In this respect, first we must define that which we will call progress. In my opinion the use of this concept is inappropriate; however, as it is being used, we must give it a new definition. Even so, it has a long history and a moral background that stems from inequality, based on the idea that all societies must be similar to the model society, without asking the people if they wish to do so or not, or whether the exploitation of resources, excessive energy consumption and acquisition capacity of unnecessary things is desirable in social terms. We would have to analyze whether this is a sustainable ideal in ecological terms. This is why all development projects have failed; because people's beliefs about poverty, inequality, health, education, the environment, etc., were not considered. They also failed to consider that each society has its own culture derived from their basic and non-basic needs.

I think that we all agree that certain parameters of injustice must be discussed. One of these is moral/ethical, and it is the right of everybody to have certain things. Another that is real considers people's right to have broader economic, environmental, legal or political levels. For example, we cannot speak of the right to democracy if people do not understand democracy in the same way; therefore, the first thing to do is learn how people understand these concepts. There are differences of opinion as seen with the concept of sustainability, which is used to speak of sustainable quality of life; however, its ecological meaning must forcibly consider the time variable – and this is not in a short cycle, or over the period of one year or even

a decade.<sup>3</sup> Ecological sustainability is non-existent if a system is not maintained over long periods of time (decades or even hundreds of years). Notwithstanding, when economists use the concept they refer to the maintenance of productivity over one year, or from one year to the next, which generates a short term profit.

First, we would have to establish what is understood by progress and by progress measurement. From here, we would have to define what people from different social groups understand by progress, and what they wish to be and have in order to consider that they are on the road to progress. This is where we have difficulties because the first type of concept – established from the outside, by the academy, the tribune, political practice or the media – may possibly be merged into one. Whereas the second type of concept, the one established by social and cultural units at a local scale, varies greatly. If people do not understand the same thing by progress, the same will happen as we saw with development policies; whether they were more or less successful, in the end they only functioned partially.

Therefore, I consider that this initiative for the measurement of the "progress" of societies seems correct, as long as the concept is discussed and defined first. Perhaps we should consider defining progress as a social process and not expect it to be implicit in the concept. Also, the concept moves on two scales: (1) macro – global – established by politicians, lawyers, investors, project and program leaders, academics, professionals, technicians, researchers and other persons involved (or who may become involved) working at an external level and high up on the social pyramid. In this case, although reaching agreements may be difficult, it is also – relatively – possible.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see the definition in Gliessman, Stephen R.; *Agroecology. The Ecology of Sustainable Food Systems*. CRC Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2nd Edition, 2007.

But there is another level: (2) the micro-scale, which includes local and regional situations and populations, and is harder to reach, especially if we do not have a clear idea of what people want and what they understand; the people we wish to help to "progress", those in the lowest segment of the social pyramid. Both of these scales represent the two extremes of the different levels of integration; however, we do not ignore that there are intermediate scales of definition, even though statistics explain horizontal organization of economic, social and cultural phenomena that have a direct impact on local populations.

This would be the first question regarding the very idea, the concept, of progress. **Two important factors for progress would be consensus regarding its meaning – the goal towards which we are aiming – and the existence of a clear reference regarding the social basis that we wish to achieve.** This implies a series of discussions in both respects, aimed at trying to see how they connect in such a way that they are not only logical and congruent, but also inclusive – and not exclusive – of the different human groups involved and considered. Once we have an updated idea of the old concept of progress it must be one of the rights that humans have to attain material, social, health, and cultural improvement, and everything that contributes to life without discrimination and with justice, in the broadest sense of the word. Furthermore, the base of society is the segment that has the right to decide what type of progress it wishes to achieve.

### Progress in Mexico

The countryside has been – almost completely – abandoned by the most necessary economic and social benefits, and not only by people in government who deal with the country's agricultural and economic politics, but by a number of institutions of all kinds, such as credit facilities for farmers who are not subject to benefits because they belong to small scale

institutions (land ownership, little or no savings capacity, investment), especially since 1992. We must, of course, include health, formal and informal education and the other elements that we have already mentioned. Thousands of migrants who leave their towns and farms to work on a daily, seasonal or permanent basis are only considered when calculating the remittance they send back to support their families. The voracity of those who exhaust these money deliveries (by using connections within the national political or banking system, or their membership in groups with economic power) makes them beneficiaries of this money. In this way, a significant part of remittances goes to those who have not worked hard to earn them; and the part taken is substantial.

The countryside has been abandoned because it is seen as a negative ideological element at the lower base of society. Being a farmer is something that is not liked by people; everybody wants to be urban, not rural. Farmers or countrymen are seen pejoratively as poor, dirty, backward people with no formal education. Since the 19th century, at least, efforts have been made to eradicate farmers and peasants in Mexico; for the country to become industrial and modern. The central idea is that they cease to be farmers; that they may become proletariats with salaries (with low remuneration so that they may be competitive in the capitalist world). It has been argued that in order to develop we must stop being farmers and that every day we must have less people living in rural communities and more urbanized and modern people connected to the "ideal" national system. To be country men, regardless of whether they are indigenous or of mixed race, is to form part of the least favored and least appreciated group of the national society.

What we have forgotten, however, is that our organism has not learnt to feed on oil or its derivatives; that we consume foods that are produced in the countryside, and that the wellbeing of all people – the new notion

of progress – depends on the food products we have, on how they are produced, their quality, prices, availability in the economy and the food culture of the population that forms the base of the social pyramid (a base which grows wider in Mexico day by day). The first issue is therefore to change the image of the people who produce foods; this is difficult to achieve because media propaganda, generally, supports the ideology of the groups of power.

Nevertheless, the practical question is how do we support these people so that they may acquire their own monetary resources, so that their own earnings and salaries may be fair and sufficient to reach the lifestyle they desire, so that they may improve their lives in the way they wish.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps **self-management** must be reconsidered so that **it may be understood** as the capacity of the population to not only receive but also actively participate in that which they consider useful and desirable; formal education would also have to be in harmony with the environment in which they live and its conservation.

Progress would also necessarily mean **not destroying the environment**; the conservation and management of resources, especially those that are scarce, or those that degrade without the appropriate technology for their conservation and management, such as water, soil, natural or cultivated vegetation, and especially forests, fauna and the atmosphere. Other resources are also important, such as those derived from traditional and scientific knowledge, ordinary experimentation and controlled experimentation. A noteworthy example is that of plant species and varieties, such as corn that has a 9,000 year history and has resulted from the process of domestication and adaptation to the local conditions of Mexico's population over time; not from transnational companies, which make use of our

<sup>4</sup> Cernea, Michael M.; *Primero la Gente. Variables Sociológicas en el Desarrollo Rural*. México, FCE y Banco Mundial, 1995 (First edition in English 1985).

carelessness, laziness and lack of understanding of its importance. But we must also consider that managing and conserving are not synonyms, even though they are both based on a deep knowledge of local resources and the way in which they are used to achieve wellbeing in the population and health in the systems in which they carry out their ordinary lives.

Another important point would be to gain **experience from what has happened before, in order to build the future. In this regard it is difficult to think that the population, or specialists and technicians**, may ignore what has occurred and always start from scratch, as if there were no experience or knowledge from previous times. This is true of both positive and negative experiences: we can learn from both. We cannot build on the basis that nothing has been done before. Knowledge is not isolated, neither is it personal; it is cumulative, a product of previous experiences. Science is not built up every time, isolated from the whole; it is constructed on the basis of what has been established by the academic world and it is communicated between the different fields of knowledge.

We must propose a form of progress based on science,<sup>5</sup> including basic sciences, social sciences and applied sciences;<sup>6</sup> but, it must be comprehensive and embrace all that has already occurred in the past and all that is being carried out at present; it must consider the importance of experience, so that we do not continue to "reinvent the wheel", a tendency that costs time, money and human lives. And last of all, we must consider including environmental capital and cultural capital in this new concept of progress.

<sup>5</sup> You may consult the volume edited by Raymond, U. Susan; *Science-Based Economic Development. Case Studies Around the World*. New York, The New York Academy of Sciences, vol. 798, 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Del Amo Rodríguez, Silvia (Coordinadora); *Lecciones del Programa de Acción Forestal Tropical*. México, SEMARNAP, PROAFT, CNEEB, Plaza y Valdés, 2001.

# Juan Ramón de la Fuente\*

## How to Measure the Progress of Societies\*\*

The concept of progress is diverse and therefore the task of defining it or measuring it is not easy. However, regarding the Millennium Development Goals, and more specifically the Istanbul Declaration of 2007, several multinational organizations including the United Nations, the European Commission, the World Bank's Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and others, have renewed their interest in the subject.

The concept of progress is often associated with wellbeing, prosperity, quality of life, sustainable development, personal and collective realization and so on. It is important to mention that these concepts,

even when they share elements, are not synonymous. It is, without a doubt, desirable to promote and measure the progress of societies; however, it is equally complicated. The cultural diversity of societies constitutes the natural point of reference for the development of ideas. This explains why the same ideas may have greater importance in some contexts than in others. For example, the idea of equality as a universal right is much more important in a full democracy than in a tribal organization. Therefore, finding a universally accepted definition of progress may become a real problem and may not be that important in the end.

In any case, the task is to identify the common elements which allow us to build an operational and measurable concept that will eventually be complemented with specific criteria of particular cultures, making sure that these are not in opposition to those of other cultures. This means, to build a frame of reference with universal elements along with other local or regional elements and to develop measurable, quantifiable indicators based on this framework. From the methodological point of view, the challenge is considerable.

\* Juan Ramón de la Fuente is the President of the International Association of Universities, Council Member of the United Nations University and Director of the Cátedra Simón Bolívar at the Alcala de Henares University. He has been the Mexican Minister of Health and Rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he has been professor since 1980.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay

But this issue is as attractive as it is important. To a certain degree, this explains the reason why the project has awakened such interest. One thing that has been clear from the beginning is that economic indicators per se say little about progress. Information, for example, a fundamental element of the analysis, has its limitations. The same happens with more complex ideas such as democracy, development or sustainability. It would therefore be desirable that elements derived from these concepts could be incorporated into the construction of indicators of progress; in the end the problem to be overcome is subjectivity. **What is the relationship between science and progress?** It is not easy to establish such a relationship accurately; however, it is much harder to answer the question: **what is the relationship between progress and happiness?** In view of the objectives of this global project, I believe that it is much more relevant for us to answer the first question before we answer the second. Let this be the case in many countries where science is still considered a secondary issue; science must be more relevant in public and private policies as well as in the desire for progress. Nevertheless, I find the second question highly important, as a natural and genuine aspiration of our nature – albeit idealistic – is to be happy.

Science does not guarantee progress, just as progress does not guarantee happiness; likewise, wealth does not guarantee wellbeing and development does not guarantee health. We are talking about relative categories that may have certain elements which could contribute to the development of operational categories.

If progress means different things in the plural and diverse world we live in, the best we can do is to start to have a dialog on the meaning of progress for each of us. This dialog will doubtless be beneficial in itself, but if it is organized and systematic, it can prove much more useful.

With this in view, it is also relevant to ask: what must be considered as progress in the 21st century? Let us then begin this dialog, to see if we can reach a consensus. In a country such as Mexico, how much importance would we give to security, human rights, equity in health and in education, when measuring the progress of our society? In some cases, statistics – provided they are reliable – can be of great help; in others, however, we need to develop new instruments that reflect what we are really trying to measure.

Our work is facilitated by the knowledge that the global project's promoters have been quite clear in establishing the aim of the project. We are not attempting to establish progress measurements that apply to all, or to simplify complex phenomena; there is however a trend that seems quite attractive: to examine new ways of approaching progress that go beyond the traditional economic perspectives that we now know say far less than was thought. We must combine multiple disciplines and attempt subjectivity without bordering on speculation, analyze the diverse phenomena in their multi-dimensional perspective, and reinstate values and principles that "progress" itself has marginalized. We must also recover the individual and social sense of ethics, in both private and public life.

Progress is a mirage if we apply it only to a few. **Progress must be shared** or it is not progress. To progress is to advance, to improve, but not at the expense of anything. "Amor, orden y progreso" (Love, Order and Progress) is the motto that Gabino Barreda used to christen the National Preparatory School. The same slogan, minus love, was used in the Porfirian period, which resulted in the first social revolution of the 20th century, proving that order does not necessarily lead to progress.

Progressive governments are those with a **marked social orientation and supportive attitude towards marginal groups; aimed at a better distribution of**

**wealth and more equitable provision of opportunities for individual and collective development.** Progressive people are open and sensitive to the social reality that surrounds them, open to change and generally unsatisfied with the state of things.

**Progress is therefore to move forward. To advance towards something better.** In my opinion two obstacles in the path of progress are poverty and ignorance. Poverty is the greatest injustice and ignorance prevents us from knowing in what direction we must advance. **Progressive people are those who fight against poverty and ignorance,** says Fernando Savater. Progress is not a random event. But this does not mean

that everything that is now is progressive. **In order to progress we must innovate, but also conserve that which permitted advancements in the past.**

Does "regressive progress" exist beyond the simple play on words? When only a few experience advancement in the context of a plural, diverse society, can we speak of progress? As progress has an economic dimension, it also has political, social, ethical, cultural, moral, regional and global dimensions to state just a few.

To imagine progress, build utopias, and try to make them a reality is inspiring and may be a step in the right direction: in the direction of progress.





# Jorge González\*

## Cybercult@ and “Progress”.

### Notes on the Symbolic Dimension of Social Life\*\*

#### Introduction

During the research and development of *cybercult@*<sup>1</sup> we have found a constant which although it might be obvious, it is not: that *the social way in which we*

\* For nearly 35 years Jorge A. González, PhD has dedicated himself to study Mexican culture. His research investigates the way in which people portray to them the world in life, seen from the areas of psychology, communication, anthropology, social psychology, cultural history and epistemology. González, PhD has tackled the study of very interesting questions such as: “What makes up this culture?” “Why do we cry when we cry?” “What touches us, what do we get connected with and what joins us when something joins us?”

(Laboratory for Research and Development in Complex Communication. Epistemology Program for Science and Information and Communication Systems. Center for the Interdisciplinary Research in Science and Humanities. Mexican National Autonomous University)

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview

<sup>1</sup> The prefix (Kyber) “Cyber”, designs the capacity of self determination; “cultur”, with the meaning of development and cultivation of that capacity; and the sign “@” we selected it by its similarity with a helicoid, as a way of representing the intelligence that helps us to solve closed and dead end situations. By means of this, we take distance from the literary and journalistic use of cyberculture, understood as everything that happens between machines that form cyberspace.

*are organized to create knowledge remains incarnate in the very product of knowledge.* This is why, in the knowledge process, immigrants always appear as “objects to study”; they do not read the immigration books – and women who are raped and beaten – up everyday do not read the books which depict the reason for their demise. It seems that migrants and raped and beaten women do not read them and they just appear within these publications and the analysis as “objects” to be studied.

The problem also points to the fact that we are not generating a *critical mass* of scientists who are connected with the “non scientists” and who could be capable of changing these practices and representations.

The way in which we are organized to produce social knowledge in this country is tense, vertical, slow and in general, authoritarian. The philosophers, anthropologists, communication theorists and economists have organized to interpret the world in a variety of ways, but – as they wrote some time ago— *what we need is to change* (the “world” and the way it is organized to know it better as well).

With this in mind, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, several colleagues from different disciplines and I formed a unit which we call the Laboratory for Research and Development of Communication in a Complex Manner (LabCOMplex) where we research and develop *cybercultur@*.

Progress, seen in this perspective, seems to have something to do with "moving forward" as well as with change in the way that we coordinate for that "going forward" and in the way in which we define what "forward" is.

The perspective we call *cybercultur@* claims that in the construction of the social bond (every existing society, which existed or has the possibility to do so) there is a three-dimensional component which is formed by *information, communication and knowledge*, the three conform an unbreakable structure which operates like the basic molecule of the symbolic dimension of every society. This composition exists before us as an *objective structure* which in an independent manner from our will or taste makes us be as we are, but it may also be *structured*, developed, cultivated to modify the condition of what we are and what they have made with us, certainly helped by our own skillful complicity.

### Culture of Information

The information culture is the way in which people relate with the world and their experiences by means of signs and codes; experience-signs-code, code-signs-experience and in that manner we start forming a sort of matrix, a configuration which gives an interpreted sense to life experiences. When we cultivate our *culture of information*, we can take control with a better relational management of the world; and let us remember that our species is the only one which lives from tales – of course not only from tales, but without them we can not survive. That is, we must

tell each other tales to survive. In these tales we narrate past, present and future. The implementation of memory and possible worlds is also linked to the capacity for registration of the present time. Without cultivating the information with others – this capability of relating to life by means of signs and codes – life goes ever further away from our own determination. We exist as nations which have been told tales about "our" tales, and tales about "our" history itself. Such was the case with many women until they said "let us tell our tales", "we are not appendices, we did not emerge from a rib" and many other things; a process of empowerment began, a gender perspective, which implies the acknowledgment of the difference and the struggle against inequality or in favor of equity.

This perspective which we call *cybercultur@ development* has a strong agency and cultural component that can lead to a social empowerment which affects directly the way in which we use our capacity for symbolic representation of experiences and things.

### Culture of Communication

In every social species, the *coordination of actions* (by means of biochemical reactions, signs or texts) is what defines communication processes. For that need of association which always has a determined *configuration*, we can not separate the social way in which we are organized to communicate from the product of communication itself.

In the common Mexican culture there is not much space to "move around" when we are confronted with differences because (in the tale we were told and we keep telling ourselves) differences from others threatens us, it terrorizes us; There may be many reasons, but we may be sure that we have some sort of installed technology to transform all *difference* into *inequality*: Indians are not Indians, they are *less*

than white people; women are not different, they are *less* than men; homosexuals are not different, they are *less* than heterosexuals; people with limited capabilities or challenged are not different, they are *less*, they are worth *less*.

In our every day culture of Communications we are almost exclusively used to see *upward* or *downward*; we are and we do not treat each other as equals, we do not converse, we do not listen to each other.

Developing a **culture of communication** does not mean to speak "correctly" with a strong voice, but rather learning how to coordinate ourselves while listening and integrating everyone who is different, and who, by definition was always excluded or were stereotyped; this means to organize ourselves to *realize that we do not realize*, realize that determined social manners guide us in a non - balanced relation with others.

It is just like the river's flow: It is not the water itself that winds; it is the river's creek bed which makes it go that way. We are not equal, fortunately we have heaps of differences, but we can organize ourselves to be equal; we may talk, and that has very strong influences in knowledge as well as in social life. For example, in social life, it is very hard for an old person to have eight year old friends (leaving all perversions aside), even friends of eighteen or thirty years of age. A friendly relationship should be balanced or it is not a friendship.

We develop a **culture of communication** when, by means of conversation and listening we are capable of being objective regarding what and how guided us to making every difference unequal, because we need to talk to each other in such a fatal way: Whether you boss me around or I boss you around; whether you manipulate me or I manipulate you; you are less and I am more.

## Culture of Knowledge

The docile governments of Latin America, poor Asia and poor Africa swallowed the entire speech which says: "You are on the other side (the wrong one, by the way) of the digital divide...poor you...". What are they missing in this new knowledge society? "High speed computers and networks.

The most reasonable way of *accessing* the World Knowledge (which *others* have created about, and for, us) is through a computer connected to the World Wide Web. The answer is in the ICT's (Information and Communication Technologies).

However, from our perspective, we propose that all information and communication technology is also and unavoidably a knowledge technology (which in any case may be abbreviated as "ICKT"); still almost always "knowledge" appears to be amputated (which some countries do in a geopolitical manner for other countries) and we are left with just the information technology and communication.

The knowledge we may generate on our side does not really matter (we do not need to invent warm water if it has already been invented and patented), and thus, those "saving" technologies become huge **lack-of-knowledge technologies** (disorientation, de-territorialization, de-temporalization, etcetera).

However, when we use those same technologies (ICKT) within an environment and in a collective organization way in small entities, where they operate as active nodes in-between networks, then those lack-of-knowledge technologies may become knowledge-generating platforms.

Within the genetic epistemology, also called constructivism, developed by Jean Piaget and later

by Rolando Garcia,<sup>2</sup> it is stated that no one can know reality in a positive manner; reality is unknowable *in toto*, we only cut out objects from our action schemes, filled with interpretations which are not "included" in the objects we know. The interpreter is the one who always constructs them, within concrete social conditions which are located in space and time.

Then people are capable of organizing themselves to better coordinate their actions in order to better develop the relationships between their different experiences with information codes. This effect, in the face of concrete problems, helps to *understand* the situations which appear as meaningful problems for a community, in a more relational manner.

**Information** is a relationship that we establish between experiences and codes that appears as a configuration in modular aggregates. Information is a *way*, a relationship system which we unforgivably impose on those objects with which we interact, and which gives *sense* to every data.<sup>3</sup>

When we build relationships between several information configurations then we can say **we know**. The effect of knowing something is that we are able to understand why it is what it is, and how it operates. But according to our idea, the effect of making something evident and showing it together with knowing and understanding, is permanently lined, even from the beginning, by the way in which we organize to make it happen; that is, by the way in which we coordinate our actions (**communication**) inside which we generate the information and knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Garcia, Rolando (2000) *El conocimiento en construcción. De las formulaciones de Jean Piaget a los sistemas complejos*, Barcelona, Gedisa.

<sup>3</sup> From Latin "datum" what is given, evident and out there; but there is nothing given, everything is constructed.

The final step, the *desideratum*, the utopia, as a limiting concept, of this process is the construction of **wisdom** margins, so when we know we have the capability of making a better decision, precisely because we listen and understand amongst several options, to be able to, initially, solve concrete problems and situations, and then, without any doubt, the abstract ones as well. Regardless, in these countries that want progress, we have a very creative culture, very florid and open to find solutions to specific problems. But that does not compete with THE Scientific Knowledge.

Knowledge becomes wisdom only if it helps us when we have a problem in front of us and we have the capability to discern and decide.

Therefore we maintain that the cultivation or development of cybercultur@ stimulates empowerment, because when we change the way we are organized (communication) in order to "tell tales" (information), it increases our capacity of re-narrating the past, to reorganize the present, and open *possible worlds* (knowledge) so in the future we are able to act and decide with wisdom.

Therefore, we maintain that such development increases our degrees of self determination.

### Cybercultur@

If we grant people access to computers and the Internet, instead of working and developing **with them** their own *culture of information*, then the computers will not help to solve the problem, since we will not be able to turn the people into active agents, but rather they will stay permanently as "users" and passive consumers in the establishment of links which they need to document their concrete situation (information).

Using the internet's resources only and "simply" *à la carte*, without developing **with the people** their

own *culture of communication* (which allows them to improve their way of coordinating themselves in order to realize when and how they got caught in vertical and authoritarian relations) far from automatically generating "knowledge", usually generates more submission. The lack of cultivation of a *culture of knowledge*, only generates the acknowledgment of submission and thus many other things. The development of cybercultur@ has to do with a key principle: to learn how to listen, listen to the other one and change each other to better name things.<sup>4</sup>

That is why we study in a privileged manner the existing relation between technology (understood as a strength with orientation, that is, as a *vector*) and the several *symbolic ecologies* of people, but especially with the social sectors veered away from material supports used for generating their information and knowledge. They live immersed in relations into which they coordinate their actions without understanding them in order to be able to challenge and change them: Poor, Indians, women, unemployed, migrants and a huge inter-related group of those who suffered in their own flesh and history the collateral damages of the organization of the world we have.

Developing cybercultur@ implies working while listening from *bottom up*, and it helps us to facilitate a process in which people appropriate those cultural artifacts in order to solve specific and locally meaningful problems. From there, these communities learn how to appropriate technologies in order to create their **local knowledge**. If we follow what we proposed before, the idea is to facilitate **networks of emerging local knowledge communities**, so the initially **local**

knowledge may become **situated** knowledge. That is, understand that my *selfness* always has a *communal* dimension because people outside a community hurt others and are more vulnerable, because each one experiences problems their own way: "I can only see *what's in front of me* I don't care about *anything else*".

Developing a cybercultur@ is a way of re-weaving damaged, torn or directly destroyed social "networks"; not because it "re-integrates" people to their communities, but because it gives a collective and participative sense to such link.

People always go from being always fatally a passive *object of study*, towards an active *subject of knowledge*.

The next challenge is **how** they get (if they decide to) from *local knowledge* to *situated knowledge*.

Until now I have spoken about how we can build knowledge from the local force; but to understand and understand oneself within the process, we must weave a configuration of networks. And only then the intensive use of computers and the World Wide Web makes sense. But the dominant and suggested model for its appropriation and use is solipsistic and individualistic. However, by the way the World Wide Web is knitted and organized at a global scale, the most attracting thing about it, apart from pornography, is the so called "social" networks, like Facebook, MySpace, Hi5, etcetera, where millions of people may interact and exchange ideas, text, images, music, express feelings and make "virtual friends".

### How can we measure how much cyber culture we have?

We have not been able to materialize (and maybe we will not do it) a measuring unit, because it is an *emerging process*. Some time ago a *technological competence*

<sup>4</sup> Lenkersdorf, Carlos (2008) *Aprender a escuchar. Enseñanzas Maya-tojolabales*. México, Plaza y Valdés. See (2007) "The Maya-Tojolabal perspective of tradition" in *Tradition and tradition theories: an international discussion* / Thorsten Larbig, Siegfried Wiedenhofer (editors) Imprint Münster: Lit ; Piscataway, N.J.

index, which measures in three dimensions the way in which people (in this case, school teachers) perceive themselves in front of 40 technological information and communication devices<sup>5</sup>. However, our objective cannot and must not be to build an index for measuring who has "more" *competence in cybercult@*. That is, tools to show how much a community which develops its own information, communication and knowledge systems as powerful tools, like intelligent artifacts to improve their action and empower their social being in the world.

Maybe it can be "measured" by comparing the way in which they used to narrate (or were told) *before* they became **emerging local knowledge communities** with new ways of retelling themselves their own past; to define its action in the present; and to design possible worlds, which could be more open and inclusive. We may probably compare it with the reconstituted thoughtfulness which has modified a symbolically-occupied territory by a diverse symbolic, collective and inclusive occupation of its notional space<sup>6</sup>.

Based on experience, we can assume that a group or a community in which *cybercult@* has been developed, is a more connected community, a much more "loving" one. Love is a choice, it does not get spent in a "feeling", it is a choice where different ones get found and where the growth of one nurtures the other one, and growth from any one of them does not subtract anything from the other one, on the contrary, it grows with him/her. Love is similar to a special kind of game. We think there are two big types of games: The finite and the infinite games. *The finite games*

require finite players. These games have by definition, a beginning and a formal end, and the goal of a finite game is always *winning*. And if someone wins, someone loses, that is plain and simple. But there are also *infinite games*, in which the objective is not to win, but to create conditions so every one of us can keep playing<sup>7</sup>.

Put in other words, the measure of "increase" in cyber culture, if we choose to speak about it, will not come from a questionnaire or from a macroeconomic study, but from the practical action of several communities to affirm themselves as subjects of knowledge and as social agents. We will get to know it because of its concrete fruits from the social organization, in the everyday co-existence, in the solidarity with *others like us*.

### About Progress

A society which **progresses** is capable of achieving a better distribution of life's energy: Food, water, housing, desire, culture goods and in our case the knowledge and the tools to think with others and to create information. It is a society capable of improving and intervening its ways of relating in a communication process in order to improve each other's lives, to get better, to solve problems, first we must understand these problems.

It seems that the fact that water can be represented as H<sub>2</sub>O in concrete life does not interest us for a thirsty journey. But when people dies because they drank H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (hydrogen peroxide) or H<sub>3</sub>O (heavy water) instead of H<sub>2</sub>O (plain water), we should **know it**. This knowledge could avoid more deaths, and if we know, then we just need to place the conventional symbol of danger: a skull with the following text: "do not drink this".

<sup>5</sup> González, Jorge A. (1999) "Tecnología y percepción social. Evaluar la competencia tecnológica", en *Estudios sobre las culturas contemporáneas*, Época II, Vol. V, Núm. 9, pp. 155-165.

<sup>6</sup> González, Jorge A. (2001) "Cultural Fronts: Towards a dialogical understanding of contemporary cultures", in Lull (2001) *Culture in the communication age*, London and New York, Routledge, pp. 106-131.

<sup>7</sup> Carse, James P. (1986) *Finite and infinite games*, New York, McMillan.

We do progress when we are organized (communications) to take the step of information which shows us what we couldn't see before, and the knowledge which makes us understand it, the wisdom to take the right progressive and considered decisions.

The problem is that if we do not get stimulated and we do not connect in a deeper manner, we will not agree with each other. Intelligence is not a "gift", but rather an *emerging characteristic*, which emerges not from the mind of a beginner, but from the conversation and coordination of many people, who, just like the poet said, for talking, first I ask and then, I listen.

The more isolated a community or a family is, and as long as they have less connectivity, then they demand with greater force an external power which **informs** them, which gives them some configuration.

As long as there is better connectivity, as long as the relationship is deeper, as long as the link is horizontal, as long as it is more even – not equal, just more even deeper – then there is less of a need for action from this external power – in general deaf and blind – and therefore we can create greater degrees of self determination.





# Benjamín Domínguez\*

## The Socioemotional Mind\*\*

Benjamín Domínguez Trejo, Doctor of Psychology, defines emotion as "energy in movement". An emotion "is an intense feeling – a feeling such as pain, anger, joy – which drives us. Life and our surroundings become saturated with importance, or lose such importance, when we feel emotions. They transform our world from

\* Benjamín Domínguez Trejo's professional work as a psychologist has always been linked to social problems of national interest: he worked with patients with schizophrenia undergoing criminal proceedings (1967-1979), provided treatment and rehabilitation of jail and custodial institution populations (1972-1986), and since then he has concentrated on the application and design of non-invasive psychological treatments for health problems (addictions, post-traumatic stress, chronic pain, hypertension, asthma and others). He has contributed to reaching a greater understanding of the relationship between stress, health and negative emotional states as well as chronic pain and posttraumatic stress; and he has also worked on the adaptation – and sometimes the design – of non-invasive technologies for their measurement. International Level with PBB ([www.psychologybeyondborders.org](http://www.psychologybeyondborders.org)) Board of Directors. Webpage [www.psicol.unam.mx/profesionales/psicclinica/iem](http://www.psicol.unam.mx/profesionales/psicclinica/iem)

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview

a series of uniform facts and events into a memorable experience." Despite their importance in our lives, we are not always conscious of the impact of emotions on our body. Contemporary psychological science (Gazzaniga, 1998, Gigerenzer 2007) is firmly based on the premise that the mind is built into the body: mental processes influence the body's physiological states while changes in the body's physiology influence our thoughts, feelings and motivated behavior. Recently, new forms have been developed to observe the way in which feelings affect our body more objectively; this is done among other modalities by studying changes in cardiac rhythm or hand temperature. When emotions are intense, they can be detected in the pattern of change in our cardiac rhythm and in some cases in peripheral temperature. Research in the area of neuroscience has reported that the heart and mind are connected (Thayer & Lane, 2000) and that a calm cardiac rhythm, for instance, facilitates clear thinking and making better choices. And conversely when we are angry, frustrated, scared or worried, cardiac rhythm and hand temperature become uneven and irregular. This uneven and irregular cardiac rhythm can be observed on a computer screen and it

looks like mountain peaks. In these circumstances it is more likely to have difficulty thinking and acting appropriately; and even survival and healthier life are closely linked to a predominant emotional state (optimism), as has just been reported in a study (Tindle, *et al.* Circulation, 2009) of 97,000 women of ages 50 to 79 who presented 14% less likelihood of dying than the pessimist group they were compared with.

Homeostasis is a fundamental guiding principle: motivations arise from the physiological need to preserve the integrity of our organism by way of processes which include thermoregulation, fluid maintenance and nutrient balance, as well as avoiding the consequences of harmful stimuli. Therefore, the way in which we process or react to our social environment depends on our internal bodily state. For example, if we are hungry or thirsty, the way in which we behave towards food stimulus is different and perceptions are "permeated" in their hedonic value, as well as cognition and memory. Motivations guide behavior while changes in the body's internal state anticipate, facilitate and accommodate the consequences of motor action. The result is a system (the individual) in a state of internal dynamic flow that contributes to physical and social interaction with the external environment.

Consequently, outstanding events and emotional stimuli in our environment (from the most evident, such as urban development, to the most subtle, such as the quality of coexistence in an apartment block) influence our internal bodily state. The automatic nature of these physiological reactions, especially when faced with threatening situations, leads us easily to conceive of the autonomy between emotional reactions and "rational" thoughts. The James-Lange theory of emotions proposed that emotional feelings arise from the mental perception of bodily changes in response to emotional stimuli in order to "color" our thoughts (James 1894; Lange, 1885). As a result, the obligatory changes in bodily responses

are seen as definitive to the emotions and the observed automatic nature of the body's reactions is seen as a primary indicator (precognitive). Another implicit notion of the above mentioned theory is that different bodily states accompany different subjective emotions.

Emotions are produced mostly in areas under the cerebral cortex in the region called the limbic system, whereas some of the most evident bodily effects are unleashed at a level below the limbic system, in the brain stem, located at the top of the spine. Therefore, if we hear a stress-inducing phrase such as "this is a hold up!", two reactions are triggered in our minds: our language center and our memory decode the meaning and bring it to consciousness; and at the same time, the subcortical system unleashes a stress reaction, releasing cortisol and other chemical products into our brain and body. The first is related to the definition of consciousness; that which the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1999) calls "the sensation of what is occurring". The second has to do with the branch of evolutionary psychology, according to which our brains have a kind of mental tool box (Gigerenzer, 2007). However, our scientific vision reaches its limits when we try to explain the way in which these neurochemical activity parameters create our experience in the first person of this view: the "transparency" of a loved one's face or the "**emotionality**" of an emotional feeling. Consciousness theorists call these properties **qualia**. This is the representation in the brain of both the external world and the internal bodily state: the taste of wine, the sight of light reflecting on water, the sudden feeling of fear/insecurity that takes over our body, the satisfaction of coexisting or relating with others, etc. In other words, the qualia are a property of matter itself and the human mind is simply the most advanced **qualia** registering apparatus developed to date. The interactions between bodily reactions and cognitive processes have remained on the outer scope of psychological sciences and have even been frequently treated as a confounder side effect.

Damasio and his colleagues have re-strengthened this field with their brain observations of patients with brain lesions and of healthy individuals. These observations led to the formulation of the "somatic marker" hypothesis: cognitive processes and decision making are guided by central feedback of the body's activation response (Damasio *et al.*, 1991; 1994; 1999). A starting point to understand this affective, cognitive and autonomic integration is to identify the brain mechanisms that participate in the generation and representation of the body activation response feedback during cognoscitive and affective behavior. Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) permits the measurement throughout the brain of hemodynamic changes reflecting local neural activity. The technique has restricted space (a few millimeters) and time (in seconds) resolution due to the distribution and responsiveness of brain arterioles. Even with these limitations, fMRI has permitted significant progress in understanding the brain processes that support cognition and emotion (Frackowiak *et al.*, 2003). Our research group in Mexico has combined the findings of these techniques and the national advancements in psycho-physiological monitoring of autonomic patients in our clinical work with patients with chronic pain, and we have been able to broaden and complement the interactions between some neural bases and their integration in affective, cognitive and autonomic processes, supported by works carried out in international laboratories (Critchley, 2005).

The studies result from the neural images and the clinical observations highlight the dynamic relationship between the mind and the body and help to identify the neural substrates that can transfer thoughts to autonomic activation and bodily states to feelings that may be shared by combining brain imaging data with autonomic monitoring during clinical evaluations that require cognitive and emotional processes. We are in view of the possibility of identifying the coordinates of the interaction mechanisms that take place in the

embedded mind. At this point, certain patterns of neural interaction of affection and cognition and of visceral responses are evident. First, we must reconsider the notion that the processes and autonomic control are restricted to the brain stem. Second, a discrete set of cortical brain regions including the anterior cingulate cortex and the anterior insulate cortex orchestrate the response and representation of bodily states in specific behavioral contexts. The intermediate "generating" system probably has a very close interaction with the lateral "representational" systems (Craig, 2003). The amygdala contributes at the representative efferent and afferent levels of autonomic affective response and there is evidence that these intervene in the judgment declaring emotional significance.

Despite the autonomic evidence of a hierarchical organization of the system, low-level autonomic changes may have a direct impact on high-level cognitive functions; and at the same time, cognitive representation of anticipated or erroneous activation may have an impact on the first stages and the peripheral part of emotional responses. By analyzing the neural image studies and the clinical studies, the dynamic relationship of the mind and body is highlighted, helping to identify the neural substrates that can transfer thoughts to autonomic activation and bodily states to feelings that may be shared. The reach of these findings in the task of detailing the fundamental psycho-physiological processes and the bases for differences in genotypic expression between individuals anticipates new interventions that will have a real impact in the field of community health, somatic medicine and socio-psychological research.

Over the last 30 years I have been interested in the negative effects of extreme situations in behavior and in the human mind; I have been particularly interested in understanding how the physical privation of freedom (not metaphorical, I refer to incarceration) affects people. In order to achieve this we have been working

in practically all of the country's jails. For the purpose of conceptual organization, we have separated all the negative effects of physical privation of freedom into two large groups: intellectual/social deterioration and deterioration caused by stigmatization. The effects of stigmatization have been studied in depth by specialists in the field of sociology. Erving Goffman (1975) studied the way in which prolonged physical privation of freedom generates a series of disorders and phenomena of social interest. A curious fact is that we carried out these studies for almost fifteen years (1967-1980) with the idea that we studied social phenomena that only take place within prisons; but we were wrong. In the 60's and the beginning of the 70's, with the urban explosion, and specifically in Mexico City, we realized that many of these phenomena were attributed to overpopulation and overcrowding. Some examples of this are the social and cognitive forms of deterioration common in prisons that started to manifest in urban life.

For instance, in the case of a person who is not deprived of physical freedom, the normal delimitation of personal space is almost automatic (Dominguez y Olvera, 1989). This is something we do each day and to which we do not give much importance, it involves the assessment of the limit of distance to which we let a stranger approach us. With our friends we permit closeness, we hug them and kiss them. But when a strange person is not our friend, we keep a physical distance. Under conditions of physical privation of freedom, this is the type of normal human adaptation process that is completely distorted. People in prison do everything possible to mark their space, it could be just half a meter or 30 cm, but they physically mark their space through aggressive behavior or the use of weapons.

The normal personal spaces that we define every day are very important as they are the raw material that holds the information of our individuality, our "self". If we do not have personal space we don't really know who we

are. When our personal space is touched or invaded we do not have the raw material we require to define exactly who we are. Where is it I end and others begin? The issue of defining the personal spaces of identity is a crucial matter on the subway, the "metrobus" and other massive modes of transportation.

We have identified that this line of research is part not only of human adaptation, but also human survival. This fact is closely related and has a series of background points to which greater study is dedicated each day: phylogenetic background refers to the way we behave under extreme circumstances, which include the way in which we survive accelerated urban modifications. These reactions are not willful; they are the product of evolution. Every day we obtain greater scientific evidence of the way in which each of us reacts and uses his or her skills to survive extreme situations, which are becoming more and more frequent (Sapolsky, 1996). In the past this kind of situation was only seen in jails; however, now we are surrounded by situations such as theft of personal property, armed robbery, kidnapping, torture, physical humiliation on the part of an authority and sexual harassment.

The way in which we can survive these extreme situations is defined by phylogenetics, an evolutionary response that we share with many mammals. Survivors of adverse situations are called resilient. Therefore, the question we need to ask is: who has the characteristics that make them resilient and who hasn't? From the point of view of epidemiology we know, for example, that of every 100 Mexicans who have an extreme traumatic experience, on average 70 survive it without any form of specialized support (Medina Mora, et al. 2005, Domínguez, Pennebaker, & Olvera, 2008).

Economists have practically convinced us that material wealth is synonymous with human development. The study of the relationship between emotional state and health in different populations documents more

and more that this is not exactly true. It is clearer to us every day through public research as well as personal experience that material progress does not increase with human wellbeing (for example: Sahar, Shalev and Porges, 2001). If this were the case people in Switzerland and Japan would be happier; however, the suicide rate is very high in these countries. Drug use has also increased; and the most preoccupying observation is the percentage of people who are emotionally vulnerable.

If we are to speak of progress, from now on we must stop worshipping the existing economic and material parameters, which are important indicators of certain aspects of life but need to be combined with indicators of education, longevity and **emotional status of individuals**. By emotional status I am referring to a set of phenomena responsible for the above mentioned adaptations, successful adaptations, costly ones, or adaptation failure. There is no way of understanding, evaluating and anticipating the path of progress if we do not monitor the emotional status of the population. In a non-systematic way, we have been doing this for the last 15 years by way of our psycho-physiological clinical research, and for the last 35 years by way of observational-behavioral research.

We carry out clinical research with people who are handicapped, sick with cancer, diabetes mellitus or arterial hypertension. These diseases concern us in the first place because they are becoming more and more frequent, and in second place because they are very costly to a country such as Mexico. A person with chronic pain is a person who cannot continue to carry out his or her social role. If the person is the head of a family or an intellectual worker, chronic pain will limit the possibility of development and the person will fail to comply with his family role. If we consider for example that ten years from now it is probable that cancer will be the main cause (Lujan, Borja, Castañeda Barrientos & Tera, 2009) of incapacity and death

among Mexicans in their productive life, and that 70 or more of every 100 people with cancer have chronic pain, the connection is critical. On top of this, the number of specialists, physicians and psychologists are not sufficient to attend to the problem of chronic pain (pharmacologically or psychologically, and it is preferable if both are used). At present there is one specialist physician – one "something-ologist – for every 800,000 inhabitants.

Another important factor for progress is a country that guarantees a therapeutic sleep for its inhabitants. If there are sufficient economic resources but people do not sleep at night, there is no progress; this is because the quality of sleep is directly related with a person's emotional status, their performance and wellbeing.

### Chronic Pain and Stress

Why pain? Why stress? Because they are a reality that competes with and completely blocks wellbeing. Elevated stress directly affects emotional processes of adaptation. For example, if one has the abilities needed to survive the negative effects of forced overcrowding in many situations in contemporary life, but is under stress, such abilities will not be properly used. If stress is not so elevated, these abilities may be used.

When we speak of emotional functioning we have to start to define which indicators can help us to reveal emotional status. Which are indicators of altered emotional status? Which indicators reveal that adaptation is too costly? Which are the indicators that show that a person does not belong to the resilient group? We have been investigating the possible answers to these questions for the past 25 years. For example, we have made psycho-physiological measurements of changes that take place under the skin in order to gain certainty of the emotional status of a person confronting an extreme adverse situation such as cancer or chronic pain.

The most traditional method we use as both physicians and psychologists is cardiac frequency. If it goes up (above 75 per minute for adults without extreme physical activity), we know that the person is under stress; if it goes below certain limits we know the person is calm. Another tool is the galvanic response, which corresponds to hand sweat, respiratory rhythm and tension in certain muscles. When a person is under intense stress the cervical muscles are harder to the touch than when the person is relaxed. This can be measured with precision even before the person has realized they are tense. This type of measurement of emotional status is more and more precise as computer technology develops.

We use qualitative information together with the autonomic clinical information. In the case of pain, for example, we always try to obtain the patient's estimate of the pain's intensity. We ask the patient to indicate the degree of pain on a scale of 0 to 10, 0 being no pain and 10 maximum supportable pain. The subjective data does not always correspond with what is really going on under the patient's skin, but the information may complement or guide additional exploration.

In order to know the quality of sleep of our patients, we can measure their rectal temperature and foot temperature. Clinically, when people are resting or in a state of serenity, their peripheral temperature rises. If peripheral temperature does not rise, then the patient is not resting. These measurements indicate emotional status in various ways.

### Emotional Status Indicators (resilience levels)

The limits of survival, resilience and human adaptation are the ones that have to be monitored on a large scale in order to truly complement and obtain a panoramic view of current events among populations. In psychology over the last two decades there has been significant growth in research of the social

basis of health. Marked advances have been made regarding body-mind connections, and new ways have been identified in which our social life has traceable effects on our body systems and our health (Cohen, 2004; Kiecolt-Graser, McGuire, Robles, & Glaser, 2002; Sapolsky, 2004). While health measurement – usually from the criteria point of view – has been improved by non-invasive physiology technology and endocrinological and immunological evaluation (e.g., Cacioppo, Tassinary, & Berntson, 2007), social constructs related to social health – usually on the side of prediction – are still mainly based on one method: patient self-reporting (Coyne & Gottlieb, 1996; Somerfield & McCrae, 1997). When self-reports are not complemented systematically with other methods of evaluation, the obtained scientific diagnosis lacks dimensionality, it depends on what the participants think of themselves and of how they build their social behavior and relationships.

Although these are without doubt significant dimensions, they do not show us the complete phenomenon of the quality of coexistence – for example – or the level of emotional wellbeing. Human memory is not a perfect storage system with files of all perceptions and experiences, and furthermore, the human cognitive apparatus does not process perfectly, the information it provides of our social world is impartial (Stone *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, social research on health may benefit from 'broadening the coverage of psychological evaluation' (Trull, 2007) in order to capture a wider spectrum of social information, with a large set of methods ranging from simple to complex, and attain a multidimensional understanding of the social structure of health.

According to one deep and updated review of methodological issues about behavioural observational procedures on health studies from the Social Psychology field from Mehl of Arizona University (2004), since the beginning of the 80's, momentary assessment methods

– commonly called ecological momentary assessment (EMA) (Stone & Shiffman, 1994) in health research, and known in other contexts as experience sampling methods (Hektner, Schmidt, & Csikszentmihayli, 2006), diary keeping methods or ambulatory assessment methods (Fahrenberg, Myrtek, Pawlik, & Perrez, 2007) – have opened up a new path regarding global and retrospective self-reports. In the last decade EMA methods have become the standard psychological evaluation for everyday life (Conner, Barret, Tugade, & Tennen, 2007).

With EMA, participants report their thoughts, feelings and actions all the time and at the moment in which they occur (Conner *et al.*, 2007). In some cases they keep a diary of their activities (electronically or in pen and paper); in other cases they are given an electronic assistant (palm or electronic agenda) and they write all their emotions of the day at the time they occur. The impact that EMA has had on psychology is difficult to ignore. With EMA it has been possible to study the phenomenon 'live' and 'in real time'. EMA methods have been used exhaustively in social health research (Smith & Stone, 2003; Tennen, Affleck, & Armeli, 2003).

Method proposals and data of this kind will allow us to develop preventative or restorative actions to face the inequality that we live in. When we talk of these limits, the factors we must observe are socioemotional phenomena such as collaboration, friendship, and family support, which can be measured objectively and are emotional status indicators.

A person's emotional status is one's defense shield used to adapt to ambiguous or unpredictable situations. We know, for example, that a patient with cancer pain is not capable of a deliberate rise in peripheral temperature; that is, the patient is not capable of changing emotional status voluntarily, and in these cases the patient's prognosis is usually poor despite the application of the best medical treatment (Turk, 2002).

## Universal and Specific Aspects

A survey was carried out on 130 students of the Faculty of Medicine and Psychology of UNAM on the universality of the concept of progress. There was a recurrent response regarding the importance of measuring the universal parameters while attending to the specific aspects of each region. To a great extent we share this opinion.

## Progress in Mexico

If we use the traditional concepts of progress based on economic indicators, Mexico shows very uneven progress over the last decades.

In terms of people's social status, Mexicans are experts at survival; we are a special case regarding survival and adaptation. I am not sure of the convenience of being so skilled at survival. The earthquake of 1985 is an example of this: it was a devastating earthquake that could have resulted in greater material, social and human cost; this did not occur because of the social support networks that exist and function optimally here.

Given the disastrous governments we have had, we should no longer believe in any of that, and yet people continue to have a degree of trust, of hope and expectation that it can be done. The conservation of faith, the belief that something is going to change or improve, is a very important ingredient. In order for a person to feel content and with a will to live, there must be some of the above mentioned changes in his organism – under the skin. The data derived from this type measurement constitutes a new "window" into ourselves and a historic review of our emotions. It provides basic information on how the different parts of the brain work together, how emotional memory affects our behavior, the way in which emotions and the central nervous system (CNS) and the autonomic nervous system (ANS) are related, and how the brain



and heart communicate with each other. These facts help us see why it is important to learn to identify and monitor, by way of advanced technological equipment, the effects of emotions to individuals suffering from different chronic diseases such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, asthma, autoimmune diseases, and others; as well how people are affected by having to experience and handle situations of urban insecurity, discrimination or forced displacement, aspects now referred to as "social pain" (Eisenberger, 2003).

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# Rodolfo Stavenhagen\*

## What Should we Consider as Progress in Mexico in the 21st Century? \*\*

We start from the basis that there is the notion that progress is a change that takes place along a single line, that one goes from less to more; from few to many; from below to above; from inferior to superior; from simple to complex, etc. The literature produced in sociology in the last decades has defined this view as a modernization process that is related to forms of production, levels of consumption, social relations, various institutions, lifestyles, processes such as globalization, relations between societies, and so on.

With this model of progress we would have to look at what it is that truly benefits people; to me this is the main issue when talking about progress: it is what benefits people. But this does not take place with people as atoms or in abstract; it is seen with people in their current, cultural, social, geographical and historical contexts.

\* Rodolfo Stavenhagen, PhD is an Anthropologist and Sociologist. In recent years he has dedicated his work above all to issues of human rights, and more specifically, to human rights among indigenous peoples.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

In the case of indigenous peoples we have a very clear dilemma. The general idea in Mexico since the 19th century, and more specifically during the 20th century, is that the indigenous people of the country have been at the margin of progress; they have been segregated, outside the nation, beyond the concept of nation, outside of economic progress and modernization, etc. The mission of public policy in this respect is to incorporate them into the country, to Mexicanize the indigenous peoples, to integrate them into the monetary or commercial economy, starting from the subsistence economy which they practice. This would mean their transformation from "marginal", "primitive", "isolated" and "traditionalist" groups into full citizens, modern individuals with equal conditions to those of the rest of the population. This is the myth of the government, the myth of ideologies, and the myth seen in a lot of anthropological, sociological and economic literature. A series of public policies are built upon this myth. The result has been disastrous; it has resulted in the opposite of its intended goals. This is precisely where criticism of the concept of progress comes in. What do we understand by progress? We must also ask: for whom, how, where, under what circumstances, and regarding what objectives?

The subject may be analyzed from several levels. At a personal level: a person progresses. A child who goes to school learns Spanish, learns to read and write; this way it can go to high school and then university, and may become an engineer or doctor. That child achieves progress in its life, in its profession. That is one way to analyze the issue; but there are others.

We may speak of significant social units. For example, there is a community that lives according to certain regulations, certain customs and traditions, defined identities, cultural organization, etc. When the policies I have mentioned arrive at this community, the community as such disappears within a few years; this means that the social life, cultural life, the very social fabric has disappeared. Some would say that the individuals of the community now have more freedom, especially women and girls. There is no doubt that they can make decisions; but the community as such has disintegrated, and individual interests are deprived. This may be observed regarding land, consumption, and general attitudes towards social life. Many have said that this is not progress, that it is disorganization and disintegration; that we have lost something from our ancestors, of our vision of the world, of our relationship with the earth, with mother earth. And what have we gained? We go to the shopping mall if we are lucky; but we have no money to purchase anything, we are just looking. Instead of dancing, singing or telling stories, we are stuck to the soap operas on television, as is seen a lot in the urban middle classes. So, has there been progress or not? I refer principally to indigenous peoples, but there are clearly other social groups suffering from the same effects.

The third level is what occurs to the country, at a national level. When we speak of modernity, we speak of competitiveness and productivity, as if these were the fundamental criteria. Despite their greater importance, there is less discussion on the growing inequalities, the growing gap between those who

have a lot and those who have little or nothing; and of the growing dependence that is being created. One example of many is tourism, a sector that we have bet a lot on, especially in the south-eastern region, in Quintana Roo and the Mayan Riviera. Enormous amounts of steel, concrete and cement, and large hotels to attract tourists; this is supposed to be a great model for the country, and there are many interests for this to continue. The values are around 35,000 rooms and one and a half million tourists each year.

What has occurred with the local population, the Mayan people? They have lost their land, their mangroves. Tourism exists because nature is being sold to tourists; but as soon as this sale takes place, nature begins to be destroyed. In a few years there will not be much left, not even for tourism; more will disappear and we will be left with a pile of steel and concrete in the Cancun hotel resort zone and other similar places. And what happens to the people? They are taken out of their communities. Instead of having public policies which may help them to improve their living conditions according to their own norms, desires and aspirations, they are told "you will go and be a waitress, gardener, or guard, in one of the hotel resorts." And in the case of a crisis we just say: "Go back to your village; we don't want you here because there's no work for you." Is this progress? Some would say it is; this is the progress that is available to everybody and the crisis will pass: this is progress. And then there are those of us who say this is not progress. This is the alternative that must be considered: alternative forms of conceiving progress. We should include the concepts of collective wellbeing, social wellbeing and cultural identity, which is more than the limited concept of human development used by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

In some of the places where I have worked with indigenous peoples, they have said that this kind of development, of progress and modernization, is not useful to them; it is not what they wish. We need,

they say, "development with identity" (a concept that is already used by the United Nations). However, we are not speaking of adding anything to our form of development; we refer to finding a different form of development. In some populations, such as certain indigenous communities in Colombia, they are working together on "life plans". Here, the indigenous people want to create their own life plans, they do not want tourists to come, or a dam to be built, an airport inaugurated, or to work a mine and cause local pollution; instead, they want to build a future for their children with autonomy. To decide for oneself what kind of life one wishes to lead is a concept of human rights. They might make the wrong decisions, but they make them for themselves, and these are not imposed by way of external criteria that might be economic, globalizing, technocratic, bureaucratic, or governmental, as has been the case up until now.

In synthesis, this is a criticism of the predominant concept and model of progress and modernization, as well as of traditional development. This with the acknowledgment of the need to consider the three previously mentioned levels: first, the level of the human individual and her freedom of choice. Society must be respectful of this freedom, the individual right of each person to make decisions regarding what is most convenient for her own development, with full knowledge of the facts. Society must not impose its own model on other societies. The *community* is the second level, a concept that has already lost its principal references in the globalized level. It is an intermediate collective unit; it can mean many things to many people, regardless of whether it is in the Amazon, New York or the Arctic. It has shared cultural and social foundations, and sometimes religious, territorial or ethnic bases. For indigenous peoples, the concept of "community" is of basic importance for their survival as viable societies linked to their land and territory, a shared history and a social and cultural network that provides a sense of belonging, direction, orientation and

way of life. The problem with the concept of "progress" is that today the importance of the community is no longer considered in the definition of the meaning of an individual's life. The third level is very important; it is the society that is called the nation, it is an obligatory reference as it forms a focus of power, of public policy decision making, although it has also lost some of its significance in the globalized world. This is the level where decisions are made regarding whether progress will contribute to greater integration or fragmentation and social disintegration; therefore, it will determine the degree of internal and external stress and conflict of these national units we call countries.

The two main concepts used today are individual freedom and the possibility that every individual has of making decisions regarding her own life and future. Because the individual exists, she is in principle free, but this may be limited by the person's impossibility of exercising the right to make decisions (an example illustrating this would be the decision to study a professional career when one lacks the means to do so). One thing is freedom as a purely individual act – as it is defined by many today as an essential right – another is the collective freedom to make free choices on what the community wishes to do. This has not been permitted to indigenous peoples.

I recently gave a talk in the University of the Caribbean in Cancun, an institution created by the government as well as the private sector, to help prepare people for regional tourism services – i.e. hotel management, restoration, supply services, transportation, etc. Many people from other parts of the country and Central America come here searching for work in this sector. However, they are not well prepared to do it. The large transnational companies that dominate the sector do so with financial criteria involved in decisions made at their head offices which are far from these shores. When the investment is no longer convenient, they will withdraw and leave only garbage, pollution and

unemployment. The world-wide recession that began in 2008 has already had negative consequences for many people who depend on the well-being of the tourist sector. Although studying for a career in the tourist service sector may seem like a great opportunity for many young people, it is not necessarily a model for long term development that will bring well-being to the population and its communities. This is where we must be more discriminating regarding the concept of progress, which indicators must be used to measure what we call progress and the level of the units that will be involved in our objectives.

### What indicators should we use?

Equality and inequality indicators; and not just income and material goods, but access to satisfiers as well. Inequality is to be understood not only as material goods but also services and their quality – such as in education, health and housing. Anecdotal evidence proves categorically that indigenous communities have schools that have been built but do not have teachers, clinics without a single nurse and no medical equipment, and broken promises of cement floors to be placed in the insalubrious earth-floored huts that people live in. The statistics provided by the government concerning their “achievements” in social services are useful in filling out the reports sent to international agencies, but reality is different. Not to speak of corruption, we can simply mention the public officials who habitually disappear with the money. If we stick only to income inequality, we lose sight of half of the events of real life. We usually forget to include qualitative indicators because they are more difficult to construct and manage; but if we don't do so we will lose sight of a large part of the knowledge that we need.

In my own experience, I can confirm the difficulty of finding indicators on the health levels of indigenous peoples in either the health ministries or in global organizations. The same goes for education. There are indicators of terminal efficiency, number of classrooms, teachers and students. Yet, there is very little information on the quality of education. Is the provided education appropriate to the needs of the local people or isn't it?

A few kilometers from the above mentioned university center is the Intercultural University of Yucatan, which is part of a new experiment in intercultural and bilingual universities established by the federal government and some state governments, and designed for indigenous students. This university in Yucatan – located at the center of the peninsula – receives students from 70 Mayan communities and other indigenous groups of Yucatan, Campeche and Quintana Roo, who hope to work on alternative models for the region.

We must improve our indicator systems, our statistical collection systems, and quantitative analysis systems used for the precise measurement of these growing inequalities seen in the country's modernization and globalization process. Just to give one example: in Mexico only 1 in every 100 people has access to the Internet, and in the United States 1 in every 10 has Internet access (recent press news). Does technological progress mean social and cultural progress for the country? This is yet to be seen, and the challenge has been presented.

# Mariano Rojas\*

## Progress and Wellbeing as it is Experienced by People\*\*

Progress is understood as the passing from a state considered as inferior to a state considered as superior. Therefore, the important thing is to propose the criteria to classify some situations as inferior and others as superior. Then we must ask ourselves about the paths and strategies to move between situations. I think that the most desirable situation and thus the superior one,

\* Mariano Rojas is professor at the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, in Mexico and in the Autonomous Popular University from the State of Puebla. His research during the last decade has revolved around the topic of happiness. His studies deal with the relationship between life satisfaction, income and consumption, the concepts of quality of life and economic development, and on poverty and well-being.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.

is that in which people have satisfactory lives, this is: Where people experience a high level of wellbeing. For people to have a satisfactory life is not only a situation wanted by myself, but also, and I think even more importantly, it is a desired situation by people themselves. In this manner, I think that progress should not break free from the wellbeing experienced by human beings. I am talking about a wellbeing which is truly experienced, and I refer to concrete human beings.

First, I would like to elaborate about this concept of concrete human beings. I am thinking of humans made *of flesh and blood* (as in Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*) and who *are within their circumstance* (as in Ortega and Gasset's *Meditations of Quijote*). I am thinking about those human beings with a spouse, children, parents, illusions, love, frustrations, traumas, values,

beliefs, opinions, colleagues, political affiliations, work, deceptions, memberships to groups and organizations, health problems, interests and entertainments, hobbies, friends, neighbors and many other activities and experiences. Sometimes I refer to these humans by saying that they are *'people just like you and me.'* I like to make a distinction between persons and individuals; individuals are generally described outside every social context; the functionalist fundaments of some disciplines, such as economics, see society as a conglomerate of individuals which, hence, can be conceived in a pre-society situation. When I talk about persons I understand that they are in society, and this implies that they can not and must not be conceived outside their interpersonal relationships or their other environmental circumstances, such as their material and social conditions, and those of values and culture. When I say "concrete human beings" I also refer to the fact that people are much more than those disciplinary agents which the disciplines themselves are used to taking care of. For example, sometimes persons perform as consumers, but they are more than just consumers; and persons sometimes perform as citizens, but they are much more than just citizens. For that, the wellbeing of a human being is not completely covered by disciplinary and compartmentalized concepts like the consumer's wellbeing, the worker's wellbeing, or the citizen's wellbeing. Besides, far from few occasions, the academic constructs on have the result that the wellbeing of concrete human beings vanishes or spoils within the academic analysis. I recognize the importance of these constructs for the academic analysis, but at the moment of speaking about wellbeing it is necessary to refer to concrete people, since they are the ones who experience wellbeing. I occupy myself with the wellbeing of concrete human beings, from those who live in the present as from those who will live in the future; as a matter of fact the topic concerning sustainability refers to taking care of those conditions which allow us to maintain the wellbeing of the following generations.

In second place I do not want to make an imputation or an assumption about humans' wellbeing and about what they are, and what is the importance of their explanatory factors. A large tradition in the studies of wellbeing leaves in hands of the philosopher or the expert the appraisal of people's wellbeing. In this tradition the philosopher or expert ascribes the wellbeing of a person – generally based on a listing of that which the expert considers of great value and which he/she justifies on the basis of elegant and very elaborate arguments. Something important is that the imputation tradition does not consider it necessary for such evaluation to be linked to the person's experience of wellbeing, since what the expert or philosopher values is considered superior to what people value. In most cases, the expert does not even make direct contact with the person, and yet, he/she evaluates his/her wellbeing based in the criteria established by him/herself. In other cases a person's wellbeing is assumed; this assumption is made based in a list of conditions and indicators which have been selected on the basis of several non corroborated wellbeing theories. Based on these indicators, the expert assumes that the person has a high or low wellbeing and classifies it as such; without even worrying for corroborating its presumptions. Many times, these points of views end up providing a definition of wellbeing which is based on the list of indicators used to measuring it. An example of this case is found when, at the moment of requesting for a definition of wellbeing, what we get is just a list of criteria such as the access to sewer services; having an income superior to a certain threshold; not being excluded from the mechanisms of social decision-making, etc. These indicators may be related to wellbeing, but they are not wellbeing per se. This is one more example were the concept ends up being defined by the indicators used for measuring it. I believe that first, we must define the concept of wellbeing, so later we can see which indicators are used for measuring it. I also think that the relevant wellbeing concept is that which directly concerns



to human beings, which has to do with how they experience life. The list of factors which are generally mentioned is not wellbeing, but these factors may be explanatory factors of the wellbeing experienced by people, and their relevance and importance depends on how and how much they affect people's wellbeing.

Rather than making an assumption or an imputation about people's wellbeing, I prefer to follow a different point of view in my research, which is known as the subjective wellbeing approach. This approach deals with the wellbeing which is experienced by the subject, this is: By how life is experienced by concrete persons, *'just like you and me'*. We can distinguish three types of experiences, which are related to our human nature; meaning that they are part of what makes us humans. The first one is the hedonic experience, which has to do with the use of our five senses and which we generally classify, in different degrees, like pleasurable experiences and painful experiences. Listening to music, enjoying a meal, watching a movie, expressing love, swimming, and many other human activities involve using our senses. A high wellbeing is associated with the intensity and frequency of pleasurable experiences. The second one is the affective experience, which has to do with what psychologists call positive and negative affections, this is: With emotions and moods. Human beings experience many emotions and moods; for example: Love, hard feelings, envy, affection, boredom, stress, nuisance, anxiety, compassion, joy, depression, despondency, elation, hatred, indignation, pride and many more. Some psychologists have spoken of basic psychological needs, which are linked to the experience of positive affections; if these needs are not satisfied, then the human beings wither and their wellbeing crumbles. It suffices to turn on the radio and pay attention to the lyrics in order to realize that the affective states are of great importance for human beings. The third one is the cognitive experience, and it has to do with setting oneself goals and having aspirations, as well as achieving them and having

success in what one undertakes. We human beings experience achievements and failures of different degrees. One can imagine the sense of achievement of a father at his daughter's commencement, or the sense of failure of a doctor after losing one of her patients. We experience high wellbeing when we reach our goals or aspirations and as a consequence we have achievements. A fourth type of experience which we have not yet studied is the mystical or spiritual experience.

People are not only capable of making a synthesis of their life experience, but also they need to make that synthesis since it serves them to make important life decisions and to recall the experience they had in specific events and situations. In general, this synthesis is made with phrases such as 'my life is going well', 'I am contented with my life', 'I am satisfied with my life', 'I lead a happy life' or 'I am happy'. People may also evaluate their situation in what academicians call domains of life; these domains of life are a construct which makes a reference to the areas where people practice as humans; for example, in their role of fathers or mothers, husbands, wives, workers, consumers, friends, etc. It is possible to speak of satisfaction in relation with the children, of satisfaction with the relationship as a spouse, of labor satisfaction, of satisfaction with the availability and use of free time, etc. Then what subjective wellbeing does is ask concrete persons – *of flesh and blood and who are in their own circumstances* – about their wellbeing. In general we ask them about their satisfaction with life or about their happiness; sometimes we also ask them about their satisfaction in the specific domains of life. In Mexico and Costa Rica we have applied in-depth surveys; the questionnaires made by companies such as *Gallup*, *Latinobarometro* and *World Value Surveys* allow us to have basic information about the subjective wellbeing for representative groups of people all over the world. The ones who answer the surveys are concrete persons, and it is with this

information that we study the wellbeing situation which people experience. Using statistical techniques we can understand which factors influence subjective wellbeing, as well as how they influence it and how important they are. It is important to note that this point of view does not make an assumption about which are the relevant – or explanatory – factors of wellbeing nor about their importance; instead of assuming that it is a wellbeing generator factor – or malaise –, what we do is to empirically corroborate it.

Let's observe that wellbeing is essentially a matter of personal experience, although its explanatory factors may and generally they do go beyond the personal scope to involve society-level factors. For that, explanatory factors may come out measured at a regional level or a societal level; but wellbeing is measured at people's level because they are the ones who experience it, and what can be done is building wellbeing indicators at an added level, like the typical indicators of average and distribution. It is also clear that the inequality and exclusion considerations which emerge while working with aggregates can also be valid when we speak of the wellbeing experienced by the residents of a society.

There are many given definitions of progress, but a progress which really gets connected to the life experience of people should be based in the wellbeing experienced by the person. For that, I think that progress is found in reaching a situation where we favor the conditions for people to have a satisfactory life and, in general, the experience of a high wellbeing. The only way of verifying if a group of conditions favor wellbeing is by directly measuring wellbeing and contrasting it to the existent conditions.

The studies performed in several parts of the world, and the ones I have done in depth by myself in Mexico and Costa Rica, as well as those I have made based in general Latin American surveys allow us to put forward a series of findings which I think are useful

for talking about progress and for measuring it. It is important to note that what I am going to mention are in fact findings and not assumptions; these findings emerge from empirical research which bases itself in the report people make about their life satisfaction. The response rate for the satisfaction of life is very high, and there are no reasons to suspect that people are not giving straight answers. The following are the findings I am most interested to point out:

First, the impact of income in wellbeing is bigger at low incomes and loses importance as we move to higher incomes. This does not come as a surprise, since with high incomes the consumption serves as a fundamentally positional function or a function of status, with a small impact in wellbeing. This indicates that it is important to increase incomes when countries have low incomes and especially when the additional income reaches those persons with a lower income. But the impact of economic growth on wellbeing is practically zero it takes place in a country with a high income, and especially if the growth goes mostly to high-income groups. For that, any measurement of progress as wellbeing which includes income must substantially reduce the importance of this component when there is a high income; we ought to also worry about how this additional income is used and about its distribution in the population.

Second, *'there is more in life than the standard of living, and for many people there are much more relevant aspects.'* With this I mean to say that wellbeing as it is experienced by people depends on the satisfaction attained in many other domains where people are active as humans and not only concerning their economic satisfaction. This does not come as a surprise, since we are talking about the wellbeing of concrete persons and not just consumers. We have found that family satisfaction is very important for wellbeing, just as health satisfaction, and the satisfaction with the availability use of free time. For life satisfaction

it happens that job satisfaction is just as important as economic satisfaction; from that finding we conclude that a good job means much more than a good wage. In the same manner, the satisfaction obtained in our relations with friends and neighbors is quite relevant for wellbeing, especially for singles and for people without children. In our research based on information from Latin American countries we have also found that economic satisfaction is, as expected, strongly related to the person's income. However, the relation between income and satisfaction in important areas such as the family (spouse and children), the availability and the gratifying use of free time, and friends, is very weak. For that, having a greater income does not guarantee a greater life satisfaction, and it is necessary to pay more attention to the situation concerning satisfaction in the other domains of life besides the economic domain. Foucault spoke about taking care of ourselves and of living life as if it were our main work of art. I think that in creating our own masterpiece we must particularly pay attention to the way in which we combine our efforts and activities to attain satisfaction in all domains of life, and especially avoiding looking for just a greater economic satisfaction. Although sometimes we forget – and even though there is an entire environment which sometimes insists that we forget about it – we must remember that we humans are much more than just consumers. Progress as wellbeing should not be limited only to the economic dimension of human beings; on the contrary, if we want to measure human progress we must have a very clear vision of the meaning of being humans. The construct of domains of life may be useful for understanding this and, especially, it allows us to speak about a progress which is not alien to the life experience of people.

Third, in analogy to the economic goods, we have started to talk about relational goods. The studies we have done concerning the importance of life domains show that human relationships – between a

spouse, children, family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and every one else – may be an important source of wellbeing. Adam Smith himself, in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, already spoke about the correspondence of sentiments. Psychologists have found that gratifying relationships contribute to the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and therefore contribute to substantially increase wellbeing. For that, and following the economic terminology which talk about goods, we can say that selfless interpersonal relationships constitute goods of relational nature, that is: They have the effect of causing people to experience greater well-being. In distinction to what we assume for the consumption of economic goods, the relational goods require the interaction between humans. It has been found that selfless interpersonal relations are more gratifying than selfish ones. But for that reason, it is not enough to have many personal relationships in order to achieve wellbeing; we must study the nature of those relationships as well, from home to worksite. In material societies there is always the risk for relationships to be selfish and, therefore, less gratifying. Besides, human relationships require time for them to grow and persist. Sometimes we work a lot and we have no time for the relational goods; this can be explained in some cases due to the very low salaries of the working class, but it is also common to find out people with high salaries working long hours. Some researchers have spoken of a situation in which we work and consume in excess while we relate in a way much under the desirable level. I think it is convenient to make a distinction between the concepts of social capital and relational goods; the social capital concept gives relevance to the human relationships, but only as a means of lowering the transactions costs, expanding the markets and making possible the increase in incomes. In this manner, within the focus of social capital, human relations end up being instrumental and stop being unselfish. The focus of relational goods is based in the idea that human relations have an intrinsically value, or put in other words: They are a direct source of wellbeing,

whether they generate more income or not. Progress as wellbeing must pay attention to the measuring of all these relational goods which – with different degrees of efficiency – we produce and consume, and which currently do not appear in the national account system.

Fourth, having available free time to undertake personal activities and carry on personal pastimes and gratifying group activities is of great relevance for wellbeing. Please observe that this is not a matter of having available time, but also of the existence of options for this time to be employed in gratifying activities as well. Many times the insecurity in the neighborhoods, the lack of parks and physical infrastructure for a proper recreation as well as the absence of organized activities such as sporting events, dances or music and art classes make that free time to end up being used in much less gratifying activities such as watching television shows or walking around in shopping malls. I want to clarify that the activities of high or low gratification are not defined by me, but rather they emerge from the studies made and which find that certain uses of time affect experienced wellbeing more than others. The use of time is a matter of personal choice, and forcing a different use would affect the basic psychological need of autonomy which humans have. Progress as wellbeing should place a particular importance to the existence of those conditions that foster the availability of free time as well as its use in a gratifying manner.

Fifth, we have found that education is important to experience wellbeing. But education is not only important because it allows us to access labor options offering greater income, it is also important because it allows us to have more gratifying interpersonal relationships – with the spouse, children, family, friends and neighbors – and because it also allows us to realize personal activities which are more stimulating. For that, we must pay more attention not only to the

years of education, but to the understanding of what kind of education provides the needed skills to lead a more satisfying life. The concept of human capital has emphasized the skills that contribute to increasing economic productivity, but this completely distorts the potential which education has to raise wellbeing. Progress as wellbeing must go beyond seeing education as a tool for creating greater income and it must be concerned for those productive skills to be taught, as well as skills for maintaining satisfactory interpersonal relationships, for being able to enjoy free time and to lead a healthy life.

Sixth, it is ok to pull people out of income poverty, but it is even better to place them in a satisfying life situation. We have found that getting people out of their income poverty does not guarantee that their wellbeing increases; it is possible to boost the impact from poverty-abatement programs if we realize that we are speaking of the well-being of human beings and not only of abstract consumers, and with that we ask ourselves what happens with wellbeing when a person gets out of income poverty and what can be done so that jump is accompanied by a substantial increase in experienced wellbeing. For that reason, progress as wellbeing should not be focused solely on the lack of income; we should also ask ourselves what happens with wellbeing when that deficiency is overturned.

Seventh, it is important to pay attention to the habitability conditions. The wellbeing experienced by people also depends on living in an environment of safety, transparency, participation in social-decision making, respect for civil rights, labor stability, access to good health services, availability of parks and zones for recreation and human interaction, distribution of wealth and many other conditions. The literature of subjective wellbeing has studied the importance of many habitability factors. All these factors are relevant for wellbeing, and their importance may be estimated by using statistical techniques. We refer to these conditions

as the habitability conditions for a person. Once more, what turns out to be relevant is not defined by an expert, but rather it is inferred from the life satisfaction people report. Progress as wellbeing pays attention to those habitability conditions which influence the experience of leading a satisfactory life in a community.

Eighth, values and the way of perceiving the world, have an influence in the explanatory structure of life satisfaction. With this I want to say that the relevance of the explanatory factors concerning life satisfaction may vary across people, and especially across cultures. For that reason we must be sensitive to this cultural and value differences. Furthermore, a wellbeing assessment cannot be based just on a set of explanatory factors, since the relevance of these factors may vary across cultures; it is important then to have direct information about the wellbeing experienced by people as well.

What should we measure in order to assess progress in societies? It is evident that we should not focus our entire attention to indicators of the production of economic goods. There are many indicators which are already available in other dimensions and they must be incorporated in the assessment of a society's progress. But, rather than answering the question about what variables should be incorporated, I would prefer to answer the question of what subjective wellbeing variables need to be incorporated into any measurement of progress in societies. What we do not measure tends to disappear from the public agenda or to be dominated by the approaches of imputed wellbeing and presumed wellbeing. For that, I believe that we must directly incorporate subjective wellbeing indicators in the assessment of progress in societies. The life satisfaction indicator is crucial and we ought to keep track of it in a systematic way; it is also important to keep track of satisfaction in domains of life such as family satisfaction, job satisfaction, satisfaction with availability and use of free time and many others. We can also keep track of affective variables, as well as

people's assessments of their success and achievement in life. I think that there are levels while measuring wellbeing; some variables belong to the level of appreciation of wellbeing, while other variables belong to the level of its immediate explanation. It is important to maintain the distinction so we do not confuse appreciations with explanations. In what concerns the explanations, there are very interesting proposals; for example the one made by the New Economics Foundations with its system of National Accounts of WellBeing: [www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org](http://www.nationalaccountsofwellbeing.org).

I also think that it is crucial to measure the production and availability of relational goods; literature has proven they are an important source of wellbeing, and we have a small amount of information about it. We have placed a huge emphasis in measuring the production of economic goods and we have done a lot of research on understanding productivity and competitiveness across nations in the production of these goods. However, economic goods are not the only existing goods, and they are not necessarily the most important ones in the generation of wellbeing. The few empirical studies we have on the basis of the limited information available suggest that interpersonal relationships constitute an important source of wellbeing in Latin America. It would be interesting to build indicators for the production of relational goods in the same way we do for the production of economic goods. This would even allow us to assess how efficient countries are in the production of relational goods and to study the institutional conditions which favor such productivity. Of course, it is important to consider the availability and use of free time as well, just as the existence of conditions which favor its gratifying use. And finally, of course it is necessary to incorporate the conditions for the habitability of the environment and the skills needed to lead a satisfactory life. Regarding this type of variables we find a vast literature and we have many indicators of the kind regarding human and civil rights, freedoms, citizen participation, schooling,

life expectancy and access to health services, amongst others. I believe it is important not to lose sight that these habitability and skills conditions must really contribute to the wellbeing experienced by people.

I must clarify that all previously mentioned variables underlie the conception of progress as wellbeing, but that does not mean that all those variables must be part of a group of indicators which measure progress of all societies. Some are variables which correspond to the explanation level rather than the appreciation level, and for that their measurement and gathering may be done within in depth studies with the purpose of understanding the behavior of the appreciation-level variables.

How do I conceive Mexico within a future where some progress has been achieved? I basically conceive a country where its citizens are mainly satisfied with their lives; that is: a country where these people

are basically having positive life experiences. We cannot avoid tragedies nor the existence of periods of dissatisfaction for specific persons; life presents difficult situations which in many cases are hard to revert and which on other occasions takes time to revert them. But we can work on creating a society in which we find the conditions that avoid dissatisfaction with life becoming generalized or structural. In the conception of progress as wellbeing we should worry about those societies with high percentages of people who are unsatisfied with their lives, or with people who are structurally doomed to unsatisfactory lives. There are many spaces for public action; for example, working on those conditions of habitability as well as on those abilities or skills that contribute to people being able of leading a satisfactory life. It is important not to lose sight of the final objective, which is that people – concrete, of flesh and blood – have a life they can be satisfied with.

# Haydea Izazola\*

## Progress Assessment / No Progress in Societies\*\*

Deliberation about the way to measure progress within societies seems as a very complex task. During the past decades there has been a strong debate about how to reveal progress achieved in societies through synthetic measuring devices. Some consensus has been reached regarding the human development index, which surpasses the tightness of the GDP.

However, the human development index still has serious problems for revealing the real progress

achieved by societies, since it includes conclusive measures of education, health and income, which hide the inequality concerning access to the basic services, which still is the common denominator in most developing societies, including Mexico.

For starters, we must define what we understand for progress in societies. To my judgment, progress must be understood as a process in which the population improves its life conditions, not only in material terms, but in aspects such as access to health care, education, social security, justice, democracy and free time as well, just to mention the most important ones.

In order to measure progress as a process, it is essential to determine some minimum norms, which allow us to discriminate those sectors within the population which have managed to progress from the ones who have not been able to do so.

Below we find some thoughts which might help us determine such minimum norms.

\* Haydea Izazola has studied the relationship between population, sustainability and quality of life in Mexico City. In her study, besides the analysis of measuring devices for the demographic dynamics and environmental quality, she incorporates subjective elements of women from different generations concerning quality of life and their relation with the environment. Currently she is investigating the relationship between migration and the floods which damaged the state of Tabasco in 2007.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.



In material terms we may include the following aspects:

### Income

Without doubt, in a society ruled by the market, an imperative requirement for survival and reproduction of a society is the access to an income which secures the acquisition of basic needs.

The average indicator which has been used often as a way to measure progress is the per capita income. It is not necessary to refer to the justified critiques which have been done on this indicator. Its advantage lies in the fact that it facilitates international and temporal comparisons; and to avoid some of its distortions some suggestions have been made regarding the purchasing power of the income in different countries; with this a better measure of the real situation may be obtained.

In order to overcome the exchange distortions caused by the use of a monetary indicator such as this one, I suggest an indicator which allows us to see the progress level of societies over time: Working hours in different countries and regions within these countries, in order to have access to the basic needs. For example, how much time does an average worker need in different countries and regions to buy a liter of milk, one kilogram of eggs, one gas kilogram or a megawatt, a bicycle, a television, a radio, a car, a home, or even a subscription to a newspaper. Some electronic appliances, which have been incorporated to the basic needs in some countries, could well give us a better view of progress in societies: A computer, a mobile phone, broadband internet service.

But not only in terms of material goods, we should also make an effort to show how much a person needs to work in order to have access to health care and education for his/her family.

Along with this indicator we should include the percentage of the population which have access to these goods, in order to get an estimate of the inequality of resources distribution in countries and regions.

### Employment

Due to the fact that the access to income is mainly achieved by means of selling the working force of individuals in the labor market, it would be indispensable to document the evolution of the job structure over time, as well as the working conditions included in the rights deserved by workers.

For each branch, occupation and position in such occupation there should be available information about worked hours, average income (by the hour if possible), access to rights such as: Social security, medical insurance, vacations, etc.

Child labor is a characteristic of societies who have fallen behind in progress. As long as minors have to work from the time when they are infants in order to contribute to the reproduction of their domestic units, then we can not speak about progress.

### Housing

Access to a safe home, with the minimum sanitary services, the minimum livable area per person and protection from natural disasters such as floods.

For example, currently the indicators for access to drinkable water are not enough, since it is considered as enough the fact that homes are found near a source of drinking water. However, a minimum norm would be to have access to drinking water within housing on a regular basis: Every day and every hour of the day. In the year 2000 census, a new question was added concerning the frequency of the drinking water service



in households with installed piping, and in Mexico City (the best equipped in the country) we find that the service is neither universal or regular.

In terms of basic drainage, the access to sanitary services within the household must be considered as a minimum norm. In the case of drainage, it is indispensable to consider the connection to disposal services to a drainage network.

The livable area per inhabitant is also a more reliable indicator than the number of rooms, which was traditionally used as an estimation of housing overcrowding. The diversity in the size of rooms may be conclusive.

Fuels burnt in households is another indicator of progress. It has been documented that pollution inside households due to the burning of coal and firewood is one of the main health risks in developing countries. The substitution of these kinds of fuels for gas or solar energy should also be considered as indicative of progress.

## Education

Access to quality education, should be without doubt an essential factor in the progress of societies. It is indispensable to overcome the literate/illiterate vision (although in our country there still is a considerable percentage in the population without the ability to read and write), as well as the indicator of average schooling years, since they do not allow us a correct educational measure.

It is crucial to promote a NONRELIGIOUS AND FREE EDUCATION ON ALL LEVELS which grants a better significance to critical thinking, reading, writing and understanding of texts, mathematics and philosophy, with the objective to educate citizens instead of just subordinates. The international evaluations show the state of disaster our education is in.

The indicators should have independent evaluations of the educational achievements in all levels, besides revealing the differential access population has to the different education levels.

Special care should be taken the amount of school fees in private schools of all levels, and with comparing them with the average income within different sectors of society.

## Health

Access to health care should be a condition of progress for every society. However, while the emaciation of the State and responsibilities are promoted, in the past decades the majority of the population has lost access to health.

The dramatic example of deaths we saw in May 2009, in Mexico, due to influenza showed the unsteadiness of the health care system. It is indispensable to document transformations in access to quality health care services over time and compare it with other circumstances.

It is needed to develop indicators which show the lack of fulfillment of the government's duties (national or regional) in the coverage of health care at different levels. It is necessary to overcome the indicator of life expectancy at birth, since it conceals the inequities in the access to those services within the population.

## Social security

Access to social security is a conquest of progressive societies. However, in past decades the guarantor organizations for social security are being dismantled. Especially, pensions and retirement funds are being slowly privatized and individualized, which shows a regression in societies. This should be a non-progress indicator.

In the same manner, access to maternity and sickness leaves, etc. have been eliminated from the workers' benefits, in the face of the flexibility which promotes competition within globalization, with the support of recent governments. We can not speak in terms of progress when social benefits are being dismantled.

Rather than stating what percentage of the population has access to social security, we should come up with a measuring device which shows the regression of this parameter.

### Violence

The right to a life without violence is one of the main commitments a government has to its citizens. However, our society is very violent, so much in private/home as in public affairs.

While there have been improvements in the domestic areas, it is crucial to make greater efforts to overcome the culture of violence which affects women and children.

In the public matter, we have seen a regression in the past decade. Governmental violence, mainly in the cases such as Atenco, Oaxaca, Lazaro Cardenas, just to mention a few, make us think about the conception of new measuring devices concerning social violence. For example: Amount of repressed social mobilizations; number of incarcerated social leaders; quantity of murdered social combatants, etc., etc. These indicators would show progress or regression within our society.

### Safety

Citizens have the right to a safe life; in our country safety is utopist, although the government's main responsibility is to guarantee safety for its citizens.

Police forces have been incapable of guaranteeing safety for the population within national, state and municipal levels; more likely, and quite often they are the ones who promote insecurity, as we have seen during the past years. It is crucial to design measures/ indicators which reveal this situation.

### Justice

Mexican society is characterized by the lack of a rule of law. It is an URGENT matter to note the lack of law enforcement amongst the most vulnerable social groups; the performance obtained by the Supreme Court would be a progress indicator; additionally we need to consider the excessive amounts they earn for not applying the law.

### Democracy

This is another pending subject in Mexican society. The lack of certainty in the elections, buying/selling votes and the recurrent electoral frauds have helped the fact that society has no more trust in the election processes and its institutions (TRIFE; IFE, etc.) which give rise to representative democracy. It is necessary to promote participative democracy, which depicts improvement in societies in a better way. The indicators of this dimension should notice the evolution in real participation achieved by civil society within political processes, as well as the average cost per vote; the percentage of sanctioned election felonies, etc. etc.

### Free time

Progress within a society, also has to do with the available free time people can enjoy. In Mexico, vacations are a true attainment of only a few in society. Although they are included in the Federal Labor Law, they are truly not enough in comparison to other

countries which are more developed. Additionally, working hours are more stretched and with fewer time for leisure activities; if we add that in large cities commuting time between home and working area/school are very often half of the day's working hours, then the leisure of labor forces is merely an illusion.

Indicators in this dimension could be:

- Average working day hours
- Commuting time between home and office/school
- Cost caused by the main distractions and leisure activities (in terms of working hours needed to obtain them).

- Paid vacations per year
- Cost for rides to the main tourist areas in our country (in terms of working hours/days/weeks needed to pay for them).

Everything mentioned above are some ideas I suggest for their consideration while making some progress measuring devices; but I am aware that some of them will face the lack of basic information or the resistance of public servants who should provide such data. I believe these ideas tackle the complexity found in this subject and we must insist on the development of new measuring devices which reveal societies' progress or regression in a better way.



# Francisco Lizcano Fernández\*

## Concept and Measurement of Progress\*\*

The goal of this work is to propose a concept of *progress* whose improvements, blockages and regressions are capable of being measured through a *human development global index* which considers, in a differential way, all behaviors from the elements included in such concept. The most complex of these elements is called *dimension* (to be specific, we can distinguish three progress dimensions: individual performance, sustainable development and democracy), the intermediate element we call a *variable* and the most tangible, an *indicator*.

### Progress, Improvement and Path

I understand as *progress* the improvement of individuals and social groups comprised by these, from

family to the entire human species, and including all kinds of organization and societies. In this conception, the term: *improvement* has two connotations. On one side, it not only implies a process, but a change as well, the transition from one situation to another. On the other side, it implies a positive appreciation of such change, to go from a worse situation to a better one, therefore, a negative transformation is definitively not progress.

According to the conception of progress discussed in these pages, in human history, there has been progress, but blockage and regression as well (and with certainty something similar will happen in the future). This complexity within tendencies in the path of humanity can be revealed in several ways, through any dimension, variable and indicator, from the ones I propose further on, in order to measure progress, since very often they not only emphasize said improvements, but blockages and regressions as well. Some examples which refer to the history of humanity during the past century are more than enough to show the existence of serious regressions within the

\* Francisco Lizcano Fernández, PhD coordinates the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Center of the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico. He is a specialist in Latin-American Studies; in this area he has broadly published books and articles.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.

most diverse aspects. Concerning the dimension here nominated as *sustainable development*, the income deterioration was made quite evident, amongst other periods, during the 1929 depression, during both World Wars, in the 80's in Latin America and in Russia during the last decade of the 20th Century, while the ecologic deterioration is made more common for the past decades in many places on the planet. Concerning the dimension here called *democracy*, regressions have been even so more evident and catastrophic; as proven in such an extreme way during the dramatic repression done by the right wing and left tyrants in several countries around the world. Still, in spite of the fact that regressions may happen in any aspect of human life, there are some which are more prone to regress than others; for example, technology moves forward faster than peace.

I use the term *path* to refer the way humanity moves through time, independent from the fact that there may be an improvement, blockage or regression. The reason for choosing such word is that it is less contaminated from other similar ones, such as *evolution*, especially by the linked connotations of the traditional progress concept.

From what I mentioned above I come to the following conclusion in this paper: To appropriately think and measure progress demands that we register it in a human *path* which not only reveals improvements, but blockages and regressions as well, thus putting in evidence the convenience of establishing levels or degrees of progress which contain the possibility to perceive these regressions or *negative progresses*. But the possibility to measure progress not only should refer to this complex diachronic perception (the terms of progress, blockage and regression obviously refer to such perception). The possibility to establish the levels or degrees of progress must allow us to make synchronic comparisons which show if progress is greater or equal in a social group from another one.

## The Individual as Center of Human History

The individual, acting on its own, or as a team member, is the main cause for the positive and negative things which. This declaration excludes the possibility that in determined circumstances, other causes may be detected, such as climatic or geological ones, but displays the individual's inexcusable responsibility, with the corresponding ethic load, within progress and regression of the different social groups they belong to. The individual paternity (or from small groups of people) of technical inventions is quite evident, but the one concerning progress or regression within the quality of human coexistence may be named as well. This does not mean that, in the direction taken by the human history, only great personalities interfere; on the contrary, we could also state that we are all responsible, although in different degrees (the president does not have the same responsibility as a common citizen concerning the different levels of corruption which assault our country), for those environments in which we unwind, whether they progress more or less.

This responsibility given to the individual concerning his/her development (which implies responsibility with the paths from social groups and the species he/she belongs to) must not be seen as something secondary in human beings. On the contrary, I consider that it is a part of their main characteristic: Self projection. The conception of human beings as a self projection may be traced throughout the entire history of human thinking, although its defenders do not always place it in an unmistakable and integral manner within the core of their anthropological formulations.

This self projection done by the individual must not be conceived as a purely individual business, since it not only involves the individual itself, but it almost necessarily has repercussions, in some of the social groups he/she belongs to. Therefore, we see the intimate relationship between personal development and the

concept of *improvement* (simultaneously, individually or as a group) which these pages make reference to. As alleged by certain liberals (Abbagnano, 2008: 589) this is not about postulating the complete coincidence between the individual interests and the ones from the groups he/she belongs to. Edgar Morin adequately proposes the relations between individual, society and species: "We can not totalize the individual and make him the end in sight within this loop [amongst individual, society and species], nor society or the species. In an anthropological level, society lives for the individual, whom lives for society; society and the individual live for the species, which lives for the individual and society" (Morin, 2001: 52).

But human beings (conceived as the concrete incarnation of the species and as a member of one of the social groups which comprise it) not only are the main ones responsible for the progress and regressions of their path and species, they should also be considered as the main beneficiary or victim of the progress and regressions of such path. The progress in mankind is not considered as such if it does not benefit particular individuals. Variables and indicators proposed in this work in order to measure progress were selected, according to this perception, because they evidence these kinds of benefits. A similar vision has been put to work, amongst other organizations, by the United Nations Development Programme, according to their first edition in 1990, of their current notorious yearbook about human development. "Human development is a process in which opportunities for individuals are broadened; the most important ones are a healthy and long life, access to education and enjoying a decent life quality. Other opportunities include political freedom, guarantee of human rights and self respect" (PNUD, 1990 : 33). As we can see, this quote postulates the individual's centrality concerning the dimensions, which in this text include the main conditions for the individual's performance: sustainable development and democracy.

From what it is said in this section, two other conclusions are derived, which justify why the individual is placed in the core of the conception of progress supported within these pages. On one side, within his/her possibilities, the individual has the ethic obligation to defend the obtained progress and to contribute to their self improvement. On the other side, the individual must consider his/herself as the axis around which revolve the different dimensions, variables and indicators which are established to think about and measure human progress. As we can see, both conclusions have a cognitive component and a moral one: they justify scientific research programs, while they exhort cooperation in humanity's improvement.

### Unit and Diversity of Progress

According to what is mentioned in the prior section, individuals' performance must be erected in the center of the conception and measurement of human progress, but this does not imply that we should only consider the aspects which directly refer to it: we should also take into consideration the conditions which might boost it or slow it down. From this the last general conclusion of this work is derived: If you do not want to resign unity and complexity from the concept of *progress*, you must make a classification of its components. In this section, we defend the relevance of combining them in three dimensions: Individual performance, sustainable development and democracy.

I understand as personal performance the development of one's own positive capabilities, independent from the fact that such capabilities may be physical or mental, innate or acquired, by means of education or practice. Like progress, individual performance implies an undefined change towards something better, because human beings always generate goals beyond their accomplishments. As progress, human performance may refer to the reached level, as well as the set goal to improve its achievements. In the

same manner, measuring human performance could give way to synchronic comparisons (seen in more or less higher levels) as well as diachronic comparisons which allow us to establish progresses and regressions in human performance.

This is not the moment to pretend to establish a complete list of human capacities, but I have no doubt that within such list we must find the seven intelligences detected by Howard Gardner. Verbal-linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal and interpersonal. This author defines intelligence as "the capacity to solve problems, or to create products, which are valuable in one or more cultural environments" (Gardner, 2001: 10).

In the study and measurement of individual performance we must take into consideration the subjective dimension (the way the individual perceives his own development) as the objective dimension, necessarily established through fieldworks which evaluate the level of development concerning individual capabilities. One reason to consider both dimensions independently is the fact that they do not show a relevant correlation. One of the possible approximations to subjective perception of individual performance may be obtained through the notion of *subjective wellbeing*, while this involves very heterogenic life purposes (Rojas, 2005).

Concerning conditions which promote or hinder human performance, besides being constituted as fundamental aspects in any discussion concerning progress, they are indispensable elements for their measurement. I propose to combine these conditions under two concepts: *Sustainable development and democracy*. It is important to differentiate these two dimensions, because, in spite of the fact that they have tight interrelations, they refer to differentiated human aspects whose dynamics do not show relevant correlations.

## Sustainable Development

The *development* concept embraces what is relative to enjoying goods or services. Acquisition of goods depends on income. Enjoying services (education, health care, electricity, drinking water, sewage, etc.) may also be bought, but only from what is established by the providing government, who began offering them to the public in general. There is a large consensus concerning the importance of incorporating development as a relevant dimension of progress. In fact, up to date, the indicators most commonly used to measure progress – such as the gross domestic product per capita, child mortality rate or the human performance level – are circumscribed to this dimension.

Today it is necessary to qualify *sustainable* development, since the activities which encourage it, have been the ones directly responsible for situations which put at risk today's generation's health as well as the survival of future generations. Therefore, the challenge humanity has concerning this dimension not only consists in providing enough goods and services for everyone within the current generation, as was the case until a few decades ago, but now it is important that the new generations are able to enjoy those goods and services as well.

The dimension of sustainable development is divided in this paper in four variables: Income, education, health care and the environment. The first three allude to development and the fourth to the possibility that this dimension may be prolonged in time in a more or less defined manner.

The variable relative to income depicts the way people benefit from technical and economical progress, as well as the increase in productivity. It is important to unite national averages, such as the Gross Domestic Product per capita, which is calculated according to



the Dollar's Purchasing Power Parity (PPP), with the percentage of the population which can not access basic goods or services, through indicators employed to measure the impact of poverty and extreme poverty. If considered appropriate, we could add to the prior ones indicators which relate to the way people enjoy concrete goods and services. The measure of the way people enjoy education and health care must be done with indicators related to the coverage, but also relative to others which refer to the quality of such services and the outcome of their enjoyment. Health services can also be measured through the wideness of their coverage and by the benefits derived from such services. In this case, unlike what happened with the variable mentioned before, we find the measures to be more generalized to the measures of the results, like life expectancy and child mortality rates.

Given that, as indicated, the rise in income and a greater access to services may be obtained (and so it has been the case quite often) through harmful procedures towards the equilibrium of the environment, we must consider a variable which alludes to this matter. A well known yearbook contains relevant indicators on the matter (WRI, 2008).

## Democracy

The dimension mentioned as *democracy* includes three variables: Political regime, political behavior and coexistence. On all of them, the democratic factor is valued in a positive manner, but the authoritarian is valued in a negative manner.

I understand as *political regime* the way in which the government relates with civil society, as well as the state's organizations relate amongst them. Like many other authors, I maintain that there are two basic types of political regime: The democratic and the dictatorial. According to the above definition of political regime, within the democratic political regime prevails the

independence of the state's powers (which allows the control over the Executive, the set of institutions which by definition concentrate more power, on behalf of the other state's powers); a certain control from the civil society over the State and the respect towards the consensus on behalf of the State, sustained in the guarantee granted to civil rights. On the contrary, in the dictatorial political regime the legislative and judicial powers are subordinate to the executive (which implies high degrees of concentration of power, when the corresponding controls are absent); the civil society has no control over the State whatsoever (non existence of political rights) and this suppresses the manifestations of consensus while not paying attention to civil rights.

In the concept *political behavior* I encompass the concept of *political culture*: The set of elements (values, conceptions, beliefs, images, perceptions, attitudes, feelings, etcetera) which comprise the subjective persuasion which the population has concerning politics (Peschard Mariscal, 2003: 9-12). Of course, the political behavior may also be divided in democratic or authoritarian, corresponding to the democratic political regime or to dictatorship.

I understand as *coexistence* the interaction between individuals and social groups, in so far as it implies personal, inter-subjective relation and it is susceptible to involve power (in fact, it is common that it is so in the majority of individual and social relationships). The term *coexistence* includes mental components such as values, conceptions, images, etcetera, but it also includes conduct components and places on first terms the subjective level. Manifestations of coexistence, such as those found in a political regime can be divided in two. On one side, there is pacific or democratic coexistence, where respect, dialogue, negotiation and agreement are primordial. On the other side, we have the authoritarian or violent coexistence, where intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, repression and violence prevail.

Relations between the three kinds of democracy in this text are deep and direct, while they remit to their common link with individual performance. Respect, dialogue, negotiation and the agreement which characterize democratic coexistence, tend to boost the development of individual capabilities. On the contrary, intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, repression and violence (which characterize the authoritarian coexistence) tend to inhibit it. The democratic political regime, contrary to what happened with dictatorship, encourages the democratic political behavior and coexistence of the same nature. Pacific coexistence, contrary to what happened with violent coexistence, tends to increase the levels of democratic political behavior and sets a solid base which helps consolidate and aim towards superior democracy levels. The democratic political behavior, in opposition to what was provided by the authoritarian political behavior, strengthens the democratic political regime, while it opens new expression channels for the values contained in democratic coexistence.

### Measuring: Dimensions, Variables and Indicators

Before further explaining dimensions, variables and indicators, I propose five commentaries in order to measure progress in this new century which just began. In first place, the proposal should be materialized in a global index for human progress, which incorporates the indexes for the three considered dimensions: Individual performance, sustainable development and democracy. However, it is convenient that all measurements taken from these three dimensions (and of course, the ones from the variables and indicators as well) should be expressed individually in order to facilitate fitting comparisons. In second place, this measurement is made to be applied in countries which can be understood as sovereign communities or National States. In third place, I consider that the approach should have a universal character. In fourth place, in account of two reasons, there has been an attempt to give a privilege to those indicators which

are being generated by international organizations: The making of the index will be easier and the comparability of the obtained results for each country will be assured. On fifth place, in some occasions concrete indicators are pointed out; in others, variables are indicated (wider and less defined than the indicators) or sets of possible indicators.

#### Individual Performance

- Objective: development of the different intelligences
- Subjective Perception

#### Sustainable Development

- Income
  - » GNP per capita (PPP in dollars)
  - » Percentage of the population which lives with less than one dollar per day
  - » Indicators of family goods possession, such as refrigerators, televisions and computers
  - » Indicators about the way people enjoy services related to their household: Electricity, drinking water and sewage
- Education
  - » Percentage of illiteracy
  - » Coverage of the three education levels
  - » Capability of students concerning their basic skills: writing, comprehension and cognitive.
  - » Education level for the adult population
- Health
  - » Life expectancy
  - » Child mortality
- Environment
  - » Evolution of the forest areas
  - » Evolution of soil degradation
  - » Carbon dioxide emissions
  - » Amount of garbage generated per capita
  - » Energy sources
  - » Ratification of environmental treaties

## Democracy

- Political regime
  - » Civil freedoms
  - » Political rights
  - » Rule of law
  - » Corruption
- Political behavior
  - » Support for democracy
  - » Support for authoritarianism and indifference towards a political regime
  - » Commitment towards fiscal obligations
  - » Political participation
- Coexistence
  - » Social participation
  - » Trust in your neighbor
  - » Discrimination
  - » Domestic violence
  - » Amount of homicides for every 100,000 people
  - » Degree of violent crimes

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# Julio Boltvinik\*

## The Essential Human Strengths (Needs and Skills): Fundamental Element of Social Progress\*\*

### About Social Progress

I think that the concept of progress is universal and valid for every country in the World. Maybe parting from the universal concept of progress one may be able to consider hues according with the phase and special circumstances of each country. In my doctoral thesis work and related articles I have approached the concept of human blossoming<sup>1</sup>. I have taken ideas from Marx which have been worked over and systematized by György Márkus<sup>2</sup> to combine them with this human blossoming concept and to link it with the poverty theme. The novelty of this is that we are dealing with a forgotten focus, since the work done by György Márkus is almost unknown today. Márkus rescues Marx's idea; I think he is the only one who rescued these ideas from Marx, which just like many others are spread around, in drafts and are not systematized. Márkus systematized them, and I rescue them and link them

\* Since 1980, poverty has been the central theme of the research done by Julio Boltvinik, PhD; this interest has been blended with research on themes concerning social politics, economic politics and human blossoming. Julio Boltvinik, PhD has also been involved in the study of themes concerning social progress, which is understood as a wider concept of societies' development.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

<sup>1</sup> Julio Boltvinik, *Ampliar la mirada. Un nuevo enfoque de la pobreza y el florecimiento humano* (A Wider Look. A New Focus in Poverty and Human Blossoming) 2 volumes, thesis for a PhD in Social Sciences, CIESAS-Occident, Guadalajara, April, 2005, henceforth quoted as 'A Wider Look. With some additional modifications, the book version of the same work will be published by Siglo XXI editors in cooperation with CIESAS and the Colegio de Mexico. See also the N° 23 of *Desacatos. Revista de Antropología Social*, (Disrespect, a Social Anthropology Magazine) titled "From Poverty to Human Blossoming: Critical Theory or Utopia?" CIESAS, January-April 2007, in which a group of distinguished academics from Mexico (Luis Arizemndi, Araceli Damián and Paulette Dieterlen), Great Britain (Ruth Levitas), Holland (Des Gasper) and Hungary-Australia (György Márkus), discussed the topics in my thesis with the addition of the critical theory and the utopist thinking, which I did not tackle. In said number, see also my article "Elements for the Criticism of Poverty's Economic Politic" in which there is a progress in what I call the negative foundation of the new focus: The criticism of other answers concerning the fundamental element of good.

<sup>2</sup> The work from Márkus in which I mainly base myself is "Ampliar la mirada", en *Marxismo y 'antropología'*, Grijalbo (Barcelona, 1973; México, 1985). Márkus and Agnes Heller are the two most distinguished members from the Budapest school, which was formed around Gyorgy Lukács and although Heller is much more known than Márkus, because her work is much more prolific, in my opinion, Márkus is deeper and precise.

with the concepts of poverty and human blossoming; and then I make the next formulation, which is the center of my doctoral thesis: **We must conceive the social progress as the creation of needs and budgets for the unrepressed and fast development of the essential human strengths; we must understand as essential human strengths the human needs and skills.** When I speak of skills I am talking about human skills and not about the concept of *capability*. I speak off skills in the sense they are used by for example, the pedagogues or psychologists; Piaget spoke about human skills, about skills of what humans know how to do.

These two concepts: needs and skills must be conceived as a unit, they are like the two faces of a coin. The needs are the most positive aspect and the skills are the most active ones. In order to satisfy their needs, human beings must develop their skills. So, the dialectic interaction becomes rich and complex because beginning with a certain moment of human development, the *application* of the already developed skills becomes one of the basic human needs. The contrast between both of them turns more and more dichotomist, since the skills get closer to the needs and vice versa. As Maslow said, the painter needs to paint. The capacity of loving implies the need to love. There is a very important interaction between both elements of the unit. The classic case of the two concepts which form a unit and mutually give each other a feedback; like the value of use and the value of change, or abstract and concrete work, to think of other conceptual and biphasic units of Marx.

At an individual level, we can evaluate the human blossoming of individuals, based on *the degree of development on their needs and skills*, and also on *the degree of satisfaction of the effectively developed needs* as well as the *degree of implementation of the effectively developed needs*. That is, in order for the blossoming or auto realization cycles to be complete,

it is not enough to develop the need and to develop the skills, because if one of those aspects remains unsatisfied and the other one stays unapplied, then the process will remain frustrated, non-culminated and therefore it receives no feedback since the satisfaction of needs and the implementation of skills is the factor which keeps developing them and enriching them. Like Marx says, the refined ear needs good music.

The notion of *developing the needs* is scarcely used. We usually speak of needs as something fixed, static and we are used to talk only about their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. We also tend to assume that every human being experiences needs in exactly the same manner. Many authors conceive needs in a static way; however, Marx conceived them as something dynamic which reflects human development. For Marx, the rich man is the one who has highly developed its needs: *The one who needs a lot, not the one who has a lot*. It is very deep concept, a very beautiful one. For example, the one who needs good music, beauty, science and the intense and complex interaction with other humans, that is indeed the rich human being. In contrast, a very poor human is the one who does not need beauty, nor science, nor the deep human interaction; this person can be an alienated individual, dominated by the passion (or a unique need, like Agnes Heller<sup>3</sup> says) of having, having and having.

<sup>3</sup> Two fundamental Works by Agnes Heller which are related to Marx and the needs, are *Teoría de las necesidades en Marx (Theory of Needs in Marx)*, Ediciones Península, Barcelona, 1978 (the original German version is from 1974); as well as *Hipótesis para una teoría marxista de los valores, (Hypothesis for a Marxist theory of values)*, Grijalbo, Barcelona, 1974 (original edition, 1970) In this last one, the author sustains that from the primary ontological category *richness* (which can not be empirically derived from other things) the following are derived, but based in two axiological axioms (which have in their center such categories) all values and all value judgments which are accepted by Marx. Defines richness in the same atmosphere as Márkus like the "multilateral deployment of essential strengths from the species" (p. 27).

The concept of human richness is a central concept, and its other face is human poverty. Something highly emphasized by Agnes Heller (see footnote on page 3) is that from the point of view of the theory of Marxist values, the supreme value, from which the other values emerge, is the one of human richness. In the same manner, Márkus says that the development of human essential strengths is what should become a criterion of development of societies. If it is the highest value, well it is what we must place in the core of a social progress concept.

The discussion would be whether this is the highest value or not. The arguments to consider it as the highest value are very strong ones, because it is nothing less than the display of human potentials, the development of human beings, the blossoming of humans, that which constitutes richness. It is hard to find something which one may postulate as the most valuable, something with the highest hierarchic value. What is said by György Márkus as well as by Agnes Heller, is that the central value we talk about will allow us to judge any situation, any element in terms of whether it benefits or not that human richness, that development of humans' essential strengths, then it would allow us to say that (whatever is happening) it is good or valuable, because it supports or not the development of that higher value.

With that, we reach a very coherent conceptualization in which human richness and poverty are the poles. Nor Agnes Heller nor György Márkus talk about the human poverty pole, it remains implied in their formulation, I make it explicit and then I mint the concept of human poverty as the opposite side of human richness and which consists of the non-development of the needs and the non-development of the skills. Then I make a distinction between human poverty of the being (in the sense of characteristic) – linked to the development of the skills and needs and referred to the 'structural' condition of the person – and poverty of the human

being (in the sense of condition), which refers to the circumstantial or ad hoc situation in which a person, although he/she has widely developed his/her needs and skills, could be in human poverty because they can not satisfy these wide needs which they have developed and/or can not apply these great skills they have developed.

### Measuring the concept <sup>4</sup>

Until here I have been able to do my research; the additional steps needed to make the evaluation of the social progress operational are still needed, which we must do on two levels: Society and individual, and in each one, distinguish the dimension of being in both senses as we mentioned before. With this evaluation of four dimensions, one might evaluate in an individual level, if people *are* rich or poor in the human sense and if they *are* in human richness or in human poverty. And we could build scales of the degrees in which both situations occur, and we could also add things and affirm, for example, "in this society X% of individuals are humanly rich but just Y% of them is also in human richness. Z% is humanly poor and W% of them is also in poverty". This would be the individual vision.

<sup>4</sup> At another less ambitious conceptual level, during the 80's and 90's, I developed an alternative approach to the measurement of social progress, centered in human well-being, as the constitutive element and which can be synthesized reproducing excerpts from a previous work. This approach is fully operational and has been applied in that previous work (Julio Boltvinik, "Welfare, Inequality and Poverty", in Kevin Middlebrook and Eduardo Zepeda (eds.), *Confronting Development: Assessing Mexico's Economic and Social Policy Challenges*, Stanford University Press and Center for US-Mexican Studies, Stanford, California, 2003, pp. 385-446): "Evaluating development requires a vision other than the predominant view, which reduces 'development' to expanding gross domestic product (GDP). To address this problem, Desai, Sen, and Boltvinik (Desai, Meghnad, Amartya K. Sen, and Julio Boltvinik. 1992. *Social Progress Index: A Proposal*. Regional Project

The society-like vision was also taken by György Márkus. We can talk about social progress once we clearly create or are in the clear process of creating the conditions or budgets in order for the development of the essential human strengths to avoid obstacles; that there is no repression of this development but stimuli and favorable conditions, in such a way that said development may be achieved quickly.

Social progress would be the macro social conditions of such condition, and the human blossoming would express the individuals who have been able to take advantage of those conditions and they are blossoming (or in terms of Maslow they are "self realizing"). Therefore, we have two levels which we need to get

to Overcome Poverty, United Nations Development Programme. Bogota, United Nations Development Programme, 1992) developed an alternative approach – called the social progress index – that, while not denying the importance of economic growth, defines human welfare as the sole objective of development. The index embraces two complementary perspectives: the *opportunity* set and the *achievement* set for social welfare. The opportunity set focuses on the availability of goods, services, free time, and knowledge – as well as the fairness of their distribution – in relation to needs, providing a macro-social view of the *potential* for welfare. The achievement set is a micro-social evaluation of the welfare actually achieved at the household level. This section presents calculations of the opportunity set in Mexico during the period from 1981 through 2000. The analysis of different dimensions of poverty in subsequent sections of this chapter (especially those performed via the integrated poverty measurement method) may be taken as an approximation of the achievement set.

In order to quantify the opportunity set for social welfare, one must consider several factors: (1) the available volume of goods and services in relation to the population's needs, along with equality in the distribution of access to them; (2) available free time (or its complement, working time, both domestic and extra-domestic) and its social distribution; and (3) the level and distribution of knowledge in the population. The author explored two possible options for weighting these different dimensions. The first is to give them equal weight; the

operational. This task requires a great job, because these are very different concepts to the ones we use every day. For example, to say that someone is humanly poor sounds *politically incorrect*, but we must assume that indeed there are humans of all kinds of social classes which are humanly very poor, and sometimes we express that in every day life and we say "oh! poor guy, it's such a pity!". We believe he is obsessed with money or he remained trapped in very elemental needs such as the needs for affection or self-esteem, and that everything he does is so the others love him and pamper him; then he represses his real possibilities of development, because what motivates him the most is to get along with everyone.

second is to accord half the weight to the first dimension because of its broader nature, with the other two dimensions comprising the other half. The second option (the one chosen here) is more faithful to the actual circumstances affecting social welfare.

The calculation of the opportunity set presented here incorporates the following variables: (1) total consumption, rather than the more usual GDP, as a measure of the availability of goods and services (the "size of the pie"); (2) the standardized size of the population, expressed as the number of adult equivalents, as an indicator of the magnitude of needs (the "hunger" of those at the table); (3) the Gini coefficient of income distribution among households as a proxy of inequality in the distribution of total consumption (how the pie is distributed); (4) a measurement of free time based upon observed extra-domestic excess work and on domestic work requirements; (5) an indicator of equality in access to free time; (6) a measure of educational achievement; and (7) an indicator of equality in the distribution of educational achievement.

The indicators, combined in the following equation, yield the opportunity set for social welfare (OSSW):

$$OSSW = [(TCAE) (E_Y)] [\{(FT) (E_{FT}) + (EA) (E_{EA})\} / 2] \quad (1)$$

where  $E_Y$ , the measure of income equality, is equal to  $(1-G_Y)$ ;  $E_{FT}$ , the indicator of free-time equality, equals  $(FT_p / FT_{NP})$ ; and  $E_{EA}$ , the measure of educational equality, equals  $(EA_p / EA_{NP})$ .



## Human richness

To identify the elements which determine human richness it is possible to lean on the theory of needs by Maslow<sup>5</sup> and place people in that scheme. Maslow himself used to say that the majority of people stay in the first levels of needs, which are the survival or physiological, safety needs, and the needs of affection and self esteem. Those he calls the deficit needs: Deprivations are identified because people find themselves in a deficit situation: They do not have affection, self esteem, food. These deficient needs contrast acutely with the needs of growth, which Maslow reduces to just one need: The one of self-realization. Self-realization is a concept we can handle

Therefore, (1) may be rewritten as follows:

$$OSSW = [(TCAE) (1-G_Y)] \{ [(FT) (FT_P / FT_{NP}) + (EA) (EA_P / EA_{NP})] / 2 \} \quad (1')$$

$$= (ETCAE) [(EFT + EEA) / 2] \quad (2)$$

given that  $(ETCAE) = (TCAE) (1-G_Y)$ ;  $(EFT) = (FT) (FT_P / FT_{NP})$ ; and  $(EEA) = (EA) (EA_P / EA_{NP})$ .

TCAE is national total consumption per adult equivalent;  $G_Y$  is the Gini coefficient of households' current income (monetary and non-monetary); ETCAE is the product of TCAE and  $(1 - G_Y)$  (that is, the egalitarian national total consumption per adult equivalent); FT is the average free time in Mexico's households, and  $FT_P$  and  $FT_{NP}$  are the average values of this same variable in poor and non-poor households (as defined above); and EA is the average educational achievement of the population older than seven years of age, while  $EA_P$  and  $EA_{NP}$  are the respective indicators for the poor and the non-poor (as defined).

ETCAE is multiplied by the simple average of EFT and EEA. Given that these last two indicators are both indices expressed in pure numbers that take a value between 0 and 2, with the norm at 1, this operation leaves intact the unit of measurement in which ETCAE is expressed (constant 1993 pesos). Thus, in a society in which everyone is at the maximum welfare that free time can provide, FT would be equal to 2 and EFT equal to 1, so that EFT would also equal 2. If, in that same society, everyone were at the educational maximum, EA would be 2

as a synonym of blossoming and human richness. Then the advantage of Maslow's scheme is that he described in a very detailed manner the way self-realizing humans are. It is quite fascinating what he says about self-realizing: For example, that they do not need to be constantly reinforcing their self esteem with the applause of every one else. Those are the ones, who make the great scientific and conceptual, revolutions, even the political ones; because they have an objective and they are going towards it, and they do not care what the other people say because they do not have that need of receiving applause. The one who is in for the applause will do what it takes for them, and not what needs to be done in the situations for achieving the objectives.

and  $E_{EA}$  would be 1. Therefore, the arithmetic mean for the egalitarian indicators of free time and educational achievement would be 2. If one were to multiply egalitarian total consumption (ETCAE) by 2, its value would double as a consequence of the high results reached in terms of free time and education.

With values at the level of the norm in FT and EA and with total equality in both, the value of EFT is 1 and egalitarian consumption remains the same when multiplied by 1. What is most common is for the empirical values of EFT and EEA to fall between 0 and 1. In this case, the closer their average is to 0, the greater the reduction entailed in making the shift from ETCAE to OSSW".

5. In Chapter 3 of *A Wider Look (Ampliar la Mirada)* I discuss in detail, Maslow's notion of needs, and the criticism he has received, The main works in which Maslow exposed his thoughts about it, are: *Motivation and Personality*, Third Edition, 1987, Addison-Wesley Longman, New York (First edition, 1954, second edition, 1970), Spanish Edition published by Díaz Santos, Madrid, 1991 with the title *Motivación y personalidad*; and *Toward a Psychology of Being*, Third edition, with a prologue of Richard Lowry, 1999 (Original edition, 1968). In Spanish, the book has been edited by Kairos, Barcelona, 1972, eleventh Edition, 1995, with the following title: *El hombre autorrealizado. Hacia una psicología del ser*.

I think that using Maslow's scheme or a modified one – that without any doubt could be and should be modified – would show us a way to measure. We would need to use very complex surveys, semi-structured questionnaires, very open interviews and start from a very clear conception of what we need to grasp.

It is also necessary to mention Fromm, who formulated a scheme of needs and a concept very related to human richness. Following Freud in some sort of way, Fromm defines a typology of individual characters, but he goes beyond that and formulates a typology social characters. We find the individual with the receptive character, which is a variable of Freud's original scheme, who named it oral character the individuals with this character, think that every good thing is out of them and that they must receive it from other people or institutions. Then we find the character which Freud called anal and which Fromm converted into the accumulative. The external is dangerous and we need to protect ourselves. The good is what one has, and we dedicate ourselves to accumulate goods and affections. He is the typical avaricious person who accumulates all kinds of things. Then we have the mercantile character, which is very complicated in Fromm's scheme (it is a concept close to the one of alienation from Marx but focused in the dynamic psychology) and that it does not exist in the one by Freud. And then Freud who saw the personality evolution/maturation process as stages marked by the placement of sexual energy, it arrived as the culmination of the genital character which reflected maturity. It was a mechanic-biologic conception. The genital character is substituted by Fromm with the *productive character*, the human being who is no longer motivated by neurotic reasons, and who is able to love, create, sustain positive relationships<sup>6</sup> with every one else and with the natural world. This concept of productivity, the fact he/she can love and create, is very similar to the one of self-realization.

In this focus from Maccoby and Fromm there is a possible way for making a measurement of individual's situation possible<sup>7</sup>. The operation ability at a social level is probably more complex, although in the quoted work these authors also try to explain the social factors which explain the people's degree of productivity. We would need to identify very clearly the negative and positive factors; in the face of the lack of negative factors we might say that there are no barriers in human blossoming, but we would also need to identify the presence of certain positive stimuli. Some are very clear, which are also identified by Fromm and Maccoby, and are located within the cultural dimension. The junk media do not wake up, on the contrary, they make humans sleepy and destroy them, as well as their capabilities for feeling, dreaming and living intensely. One of the elements they emphasize on is that people with a receptive character need many cultural stimuli at a deep level.

<sup>6</sup> The conceptions about human needs by Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby, are discussed in chapter 4 of *A Wider Look* (Ampliar La Mirada.). The main Works in which Maslow exposed his thoughts about it, are: *Man for Himself. An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*, Owl Books, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1990. Original English edition, 1947, published in Spanish under the title, *Ética y Psicoanálisis*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1953, Colección Breviarios, N° 74. *The Sane Society*, Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1955/ 1990, published in Spanish under the title, *Psicoanálisis de la Sociedad Contemporánea. Hacia una sociedad sana (Towards a healthy society)*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1956. In cooperation with Maccoby, Fromm published *Social Character in a Mexican Village*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1970, published in Spanish under the title, *Sociopsicoanálisis del campesino mexicano: Estudio de la economía y la psicología de una comunidad rural*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, México, 1973.

<sup>7</sup> Erich Fromm and Michael Maccoby did some field work in Chiconcuac, in the State of Morelos, for the quoted book in footnote 5. In this book they measure the degree of productivity/non productivity of the individuals.

For example, the children and youth music symphonic orchestras from Venezuela, which now are being replicated in Medellín, Colombia, make those humans blossom whose real options. Lacking these, a very deep cultural stimuli is to become gang members and later criminals. In return, these orchestras give them a concrete and real opportunity to develop their skills and introduce them to the world of creativity. It connects them with something as valuable as good music; it raises them away from the meanness of daily life.

Of course the human needs which come from the biologic root need to be satisfied in order to make possible the human blossoming we talk about. Because I agree with Maslow's logic (his famous needs hierarchy), when I say that people who are not sure if they will be able to eat the next day, are always thinking about food; they are concerned about this and all their vital energy is focused on it. Therefore, they can not blossom; they can not develop other skills. Thus, economic poverty needs to be overcome as a condition for human blossoming; but it is not enough, there must be something else. Some very important factors in the path for human blossoming are civic and political life; the human being who no longer thinks about him/herself, but the one who thinks in the wellbeing of his/her *polis*, his/her city. In great measure, the human blossoming consists in detaching from one self and occupying one self in external objectives which may be civic, political or scientific in nature.

### **Does a very undeveloped society need to focus on the material things and later, in a sequential manner, on another phase, or can it tackle everything at once?**

I would say that the example of the child and youth symphonic orchestras from Venezuela shows that we do not need to wait, that we may take the huge step quickly. Simultaneously you are reducing their condition

of poverty with a granted scholarship, these children and teenagers are submerged in a creative activity which shoots them directly into human blossoming; and later, once they arrive to a professional musician's degree of development they can earn a proper living performing a creative task. I suspect that this situation also begins to change the taste within the immediate social circle of these young musicians: For the father and the mother who are watching their child, this experience radically changes their life; one does not need to be a creative person in order to enjoy art.

William Morris and Ernst Bloch give art a central role in the liberation process of human blossoming. Ernst Bloch sees this from the point of view of the receiving part of the work of art. They see in art a way out of the alienation<sup>8</sup>.

When Maslow says that a human is trapped in its self-esteem or affection-deficit needs, this is another way of saying that this human is alienated from ends which should be of a medium nature, or to situations which should already be overcome. I am convinced that we should radically transform society while at the same time allowing people to be able to overcome poverty. Therefore the conventional politics against poverty, centered in focused monetary transactions towards the poor (and almost always only the extreme poor), without deep changes are deeply sterile seen from the human transformation point of view.

<sup>8</sup> In this respect, see Ruth Levitas, "The Education of Desire: Rediscovering William Morris (*La educación del deseo: el redescubrimiento de William Morris*)", in *Disrespects (Desacatos)*, N° 23, op. cit. pp. 203-222



# Araceli Damián\*

## Progress and Wellbeing\*\*

### About the concept of progress

Nowadays it is hard to speak about progress because every day it is more evident that, even in societies with high levels of economic development, there are huge numbers of people who live in a state of discontent. Therefore, it is convenient to review the idea of progress that rules our economic performance, as well as the way in which we measure the wellbeing of our society.

\* Araceli Damián has studied poverty from different points of view, such as the impact of economic policies on the wellbeing of the population; the criticism of poverty measurement methods from a perspective of human rights, the evolution of poverty in Mexico and Latin America; and its relationship with gender, labour market and time poverty.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

The concept of progress that is currently used was developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and just as the philosopher Bertrand Russell would say, "Measurable progress is necessarily in unimportant things, such as the number of motor-cars made, or the number of peanuts consumed. The really important things are not measurable and therefore not suitable for the methods of the booster" (Russell, 1935/2007).

We could talk about progress if the majority of humanity managed to have an acceptable level of wellbeing. In general, wellbeing is associated with the concept of utility or with the possession of goods, but the concept of utility does not have a precise definition, it rather relates with conditions or states of mind, with feelings of happiness, pleasure or in relation with desires. In face of the impossibility of measuring utility in a direct

way, the traditional economists base their models on income, which they believe is the best variable that represents utility. The concept of wellbeing has been also associated with the possession of goods. Under this perspective it is assumed that an increase on the amount of goods will increase general wellbeing. As a consequence of that, governments and individuals seek to increase income as well as production, and by all means they try to do so in an endless spiral. However, this does not necessarily increase the level of wellbeing since "there is overwhelming evidence that (above a certain minimum level of income) greater wealth does not bring greater happiness... While productivity per head in the developed world has swollen over the past fifty years, happiness seems actually to have declined." (Gottlieb, Anthony, 2004)

Neither can we talk about progress if we consider that in 2005 there were 2.5 billion extreme poor in the so-called underdeveloped countries; whose income was two dollars and fifty cents per person per day (Chen y Ravallion, 2008).<sup>1</sup> This figure does not include all the poor who live in developed countries, and although they may have a higher level income, this is not sufficient to lead a dignified life according to the norms of the societies in which they live.

If our society could manage to have a better distribution of the existing resources, so the extreme poor could access to the generalised satisfiers of needs, then we could talk about progress. Nevertheless, governments and International Fund Organizations (such as the World Bank) do so little to modify the variables which determine the functional distribution of income. Pogge (2005) points out that the population living in the

poorest households around the World represents 43% of the total population and their income represents only 1.1% of global income, while those living in the richest countries constitute 16% of the total amount of population and concentrate 80.5% of the global income.

Therefore, instead of increasing the product (or the income level) to achieve the required social progress we need a better **distribution of income and resources (including the availability of time)**, with the purpose of substantially decreasing social polarization, in order to allow that a greater number of people could develop their potentialities and capabilities in order to achieve human flourishing.

The current technological development would allow us to free humans from strenuous and alienating work. In spite of this achievement of humanity, millions of people continue having grinding, wearing, routine jobs and endure long working hours. If we manage to **liberate human beings from the tyranny of necessity, liberating them from work as a condition for survival**, then we would have the possibility of effectively experimenting in a true human progress in which women, men and children may have a worthy life, without fear and thus fully develop their creativity.

### Areas which cause good living

We currently have a panorama in which the labour force gets tired and bored during its working hours. Besides, workers suffer from a physical and emotional wear down, caused by overcrowded transportation means and long journeys to and from work. In this manner, they literally waste most of their lives, their most valuable years, in activities with just a small amount of gratification. In general, they spend their free time in passive and alienating activities, such as watching television (see Damian, 2007).

<sup>1</sup> This poverty line is the highest income poverty threshold recognised by the World Bank. The Bank generally published data referred to extreme poor, that is to say, the population living with an income below one dollar and twenty five cents per person per day. In 2005, 1.4 billion were extremely poor.

In contrast, the social groups with high incomes spend most of their time in sumptuous and unnecessary consumption, while the middle classes try to emulate them. Both social groups receive strong pressure from the media to consume more and more. Staffan B. Linder (1970) says that from the post-war years until the sixties (what we know as the Golden Years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century), the big capital and advertising companies joined to impose a consuming rhythm way above the one an average individual needs for a modest and worthy life. The "rational" consumers continued the never ending search for a higher income to acquire more and more goods.

According to this author, the traditional economists always assumed that utility is obtained at the very moment in which the supply meets the demand of goods, that is, consumption is regarded as an instantaneous act, and therefore they assume that no time for consumption is needed. However, in order to obtain the utility of certain commodities (defined as material and spiritual wellbeing) consumers need time to consume the acquired good. When purchases increase, time for consumption increases as well, but the limited availability of time means that the resulting opulence is partial but not total and it only takes the shape of goods access. The total opulence for Linder is a fallacy of logic. In this manner, Linder becomes one of the few traditional economists with an interest in questioning the idea that progress means abundance. On the other hand, in spite of his acceptance of the concept of utility, he tries to put into perspective the human consequences (including the ecological deterioration) of trying to increase production all the way to *infinitum*, despite the marginal decreasing profits of income.

Moreover, the author laments that in spite of the assumption that the elimination of material cares would clear the way for a broad cultural advancement, in practice, not even those who have reached the

greatest economic opulence have showed any propensity of dedicating themselves to leisure (in the classic Greek sense: that is, the cultivation of mind, spirit, music and philosophy as the basis of a cultural development). Linder suggests that when time is included in the economical models, we arrive to the conclusion that the increase in income has a decreasing marginal utility, not because the desire for consumption runs out (or the desire to obtain a greater utility, just as the traditional economists suppose), but because of time scarcity for consuming increases. This assumption would take us to the conclusion that there is a maximum consuming level and thus, the idea of continuing at any cost with a constant material growth could be rethought, something that the traditional economists will not do.

Therefore, we can be assured that it is not the level of income or the amount of goods which determine progress and wellbeing, but the possibility that individuals could develop a valuable activity, which last goal is the consumption *per se*, but the possibility of developing its full human potential. A proof of this is that today "there are those of talent and insight who are driven to prefer poverty, to choose it, rather than submit to the desolation of empty abundance." (Linder, 1970) There are also situations in which some governmental actions allow individuals to develop all their human capabilities, even when they live in poverty. For example, in Venezuela, where since 1975 the **National System for the Child and Juvenile Orchestras** created local orchestras in the poor neighbourhoods. Its establishment has allowed the creation of orchestras with international quality. The level of human flourishing that individuals may reach, when the material conditions for developing skills are provided through public resources, is engraved with the success achieved by the young Gustavo Dudamel, current director of the Russian Symphonic, who received a part of his education in such a program.

The quality and quantity of musicians who emerged from that experiment makes us assume that we do not know the real capabilities humans could develop if we had a society in which everyone would have the means for survival, with acceptable conditions of wellbeing in relation to indicators such as health, education, housing, etc., and with enough means to develop their creativity. We could have a society which creates art, a good living, mutual help and cooperation.

Within the elements which we can consider to offer a good living, we find leisure time, which as I mentioned before, may be enjoyed by everyone in the entire society if we could **reduce the time dedicated to obligatory work through the rational use of technique**. By obligatory work I mean the work needed for the assurance of social and material reproduction. Once we are liberated from the time devoted to obligatory work, humans would have the possibility of developing their human capabilities and potentialities.

It is also needed for mankind to be liberated from mankind, in the sense of the way in which our society is currently organized: there is always someone who rules and someone who obeys. The one, who finds him/herself tied up by hunger or need, must obey the one who provides him/her with job or safety. Therefore, to eliminate this state of affairs, besides reducing the working hours, we need to grant **a universal basic income** to all individuals in our society. This income will allow people not to depend on a job for their survival, thus strengthening the humans' capabilities, allowing individuals to choose freely among jobs he/she may find more satisfying. So the employers would have to make an effort to construct attractive spaces for the employees, while setting a base to create a real leisure society.

If we start from Russell's idea in the sense that for a leisure society to be happy, it must be comprised of an educated population, then besides a better distribution of resources (including time for leisure), we require

a radical change in **education**; which we must not perceive only as a means of developing the minimum skills to perform a job, but rather guided by the mental joy and the possibility of having **critical thinking**.

## Measurement

Having a universal basic income and a generalised existence of part time jobs could be considered as indicators of social progress. The establishment of a universal basic income gets us closer, but at the same time exceeds the most developed welfare state model, the Social Democratic, prevailing in the Scandinavian countries.<sup>2</sup>

The right for an income and not for a job assumes two realities. The first one is that in the current production system, each day that goes by, there is a relatively smaller amount of job postings; it is hard to guarantee a job for everyone. The second one is that it is recognized that we are all citizens of the World and as such, we are entitled to receive a rent for using the Earth's resources.

But while the universal basic income is not a reality, the availability of free time may serve as a measure of how much society has moved forward in terms of progress. The available evidence points to the fact that time for leisure has not increased in a substantial manner for the last decades and that in fact there have been some regressions. According to Gershuny there was a slight increase in free time of men and women in 20 developed countries during the period from 1960 to 1990, but when the analysis period is extended to the nineties, as Fisher did in his study, it is found that free time decreased to the levels of the seventies (quoted

<sup>2</sup> Among the main features of the Social Democratic welfare state we find that socioeconomic rights are universal, the State is devoted to secure full employment and therefore we the provision of a secure income for all citizens (See Esping-Andersen, 1990.)



by Burchardt, 2008: 13). On the other hand, in the underdeveloped countries the minimum legal working conditions accepted in the developed countries have not been assured yet, and therefore the exploitation of the labour force is still very extreme.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, since there is a generalized poverty, we can not abandon the measurement of poverty, but it has to be done on the basis of a multidimensional measurement perspective, which corresponds to the internationally recognized socioeconomic rights. In this manner, it should include the measurement of income as well as the level of education; the access to health services and social security; to have proper housing; the availability of free time, amongst other socioeconomic dimensions, with a view of human beings as a whole. In this respect it is convenient to look at the contributions made by Boltvinik (2005 and his collaboration within this book).

In order to widen the discussion about the aspects which might be measured to evaluate progress, we may take up the ideas developed by Desai (2000) who also criticized the wellbeing studies based on indicators relates with the goods (such as the Gross National Product, GNP) or with the average income per head. The author emphasizes that the traditional studies regarding wellbeing suppose that it grows with the greater possession of goods or income, without taking into consideration the cost implied for the individuals to realize their productive activity. In the measures of

<sup>3</sup> In a study of women's labour conditions in large scale retail chains in Chile it was found that 75% of women working in the agricultural activities have short time contracts to work only during the harvest periods, and they were required to work long hours, up to 60 hours per week. Moreover, one out of three women earned less than the minimum wage. Additionally, in the Chinese industrial region of Guangdong, women have to work an extra time of 35 hours, apart from the legal labour period of work of 48 hours per week; 50% of them do not have written contracts and 90% do not have social security. Oxfam (2004).

GNP or those based on income, it overlooks situations such as the fact that as cities grow, the number of hours used for going to and from work rise and thus individuals can not enjoy activities which satisfy other basic needs, like social interaction. The increase in the distances to and from work, without the corresponding reduction in the working hours have caused the "individualization" of activities which historically have been satisfied in a collective manner, just like eating. Desai claims that in the traditional economic thought it does not matter if one eats alone, with the family or with some friends. However, eating with someone, enjoying the company of others, is more important to humans than the action of eating in itself (given a minimum satisfaction for the need). Therefore, for Desai wellbeing could be measured as a function of **the time individuals may devote to social interaction**.<sup>4</sup>

Desai's proposal of measuring the time spend on social interaction as an indicator of human wellbeing can be placed within Maslow's hierarchy of human needs (1954/1987) within the belongingness and love needs, which is above survival needs, but under the highest hierarchy called **self-realization** or what Boltvinik calls **human flourishing**, in which individuals feel satisfied with their work in an anthropological sense that means that work may refer to activities of a different sort (play music, invention, painting, writing, etc.) or philosophical ones. Maslow and Boltvinik do not discard the possibility of reaching these states of satisfaction in activities such as raising children, cooking or doing community work, but it is also necessary to satisfy the rest of the human needs, at least to a certain level.

Equally important to measure wellbeing or social progress, may be the time required for **the socialization**

<sup>4</sup> It is important to notice that in societies where poverty is generalized, people may have a lot of time for social interaction, however, this could be the result of a lack of employment.

**of the intergenerational knowledge.** That is, in order for children to be able to develop their human skills they must count on the adults' care, teachings and affection. The lack of time for childcare and child raising negatively affects the transmission of this knowledge, besides having negative psychological effects on children, since, on one hand, minors may not acquire the most elemental skills for social life (such as drinking from a glass), others may suffer being left alone at home (or under the care of unreliable people), since adults have the need to go out to work, causing anguish and a sense of abandonment in children. This is without taking into consideration that this situation increases the risk of minors to have accidents or suffer physical abuse from such adults (see Damian 2007).

### Universal or regional

In order to be able to talk about real progress all humans should enjoy the minimum acceptable living conditions. Lead a long and worthy life, have a guaranteed income, enjoy time for leisure, being able to carry out a valuable activity and have access to technology; these are principles that should have a universal character.

Universal socioeconomic rights would be more effective by means of the introduction of a universal basic income. This would allow humans not to link survival with the possession of a job. At the moment when we set income as a human right, its granting would be governed by the principles of human rights, which are universals, and therefore all persons are entitled to it, without any type of discrimination. This principle is associated with those of integrality and interdependency, which implies that all rights are interrelated amongst them; that is, we can not grant the exercise or enjoyment of a right, without having at the same time the granting of the rest of the rights (Concha, 2007).

According to Gerardo Pisarello (quoted in Concha 2007) the possibility of setting the universal basic income as a socioeconomic right implies progressive tributary reforms, but granting it would be more legitimate and effective than focalised cash transfer benefits (such as *Opportunities*). In this manner collective and individual autonomy would be widened. The universal right to a proper income is conceived as a mechanism which grants the social right to autonomous existence, it would be "a complement, but not dependent, of the eventual link to paid labour or of other social rights which we may have."

With that, ideally, we could be more creative individuals and be devoted to solving the great social problems, instead of being people who just spend our lives in boring and badly paid jobs, and worried for our daily survival, without the possibility of developing alternate proposals.

In the same manner, we could satisfy other needs which have been denied or socially underrated, such as the right for playing or having activities without a specific purpose more than the one of just entertaining one self, needs which we sometimes (and in a narrow way) only acknowledge for children, disowning them for the ones who stopped being a child (Russell, 1935/2007: 22).

### Progress in Mexico

We can not say that Mexico has experimented progress during the last decades in the sense of liberating the individual from the grasp of need and hunger. In fact, in the rural areas we have had a regression because nowadays more people depend on salaries and the job opportunities are very precarious. Rural areas have not been technologically developed and the majority of people live in extreme poverty. There are some communities that do not even have drinking water available, their environment is degraded and the government's and society's initiatives are very few.

We can talk of isolated examples, such as the alternative "Nobel" Prize of ecology, 2008, which was granted to Jesus Leon Santos, countryman from Oaxaca, who at the age of 18 decided he could change his community. He and other 400 people began planting trees, and where once was a barren ground, now there is a forest.

But the economic model which the Mexican government bets on, based on exportation, has made our economy very dependent on the United States' economy; besides, the jobs which are generated by this kind of activity feed people but they do not get them out of poverty. With the economic crisis that started in 2008, the exports have decreased notoriously and there is no way of substituting the lost jobs in such activity.

On the other hand, we have reinforced the behaviours which are based on the jungle law, which then is combined with a culture of cheating, abuse and lack of justice. At a political level there is complete decomposition. Delinquency and organized crime have increased and the government's response has been mistaken by placing the army forces as police forces which has propitiated human rights violation.

While there is evidence that education levels have risen in the last decades, the education's quality has deteriorated due to the fact that the education system is caught by a corrupt syndicalism. Moreover, although the individuals may have more years of education, it only serves them to get simple jobs, while in the human and social dimension there is much to do.

Another of the deteriorated aspects is cooperation and social solidarity. In the cities, the sense of belonging to the neighbourhood is vanishing and the trust towards the neighbour is being lost. The individuality has been strengthened in a very violent and aggressive way, leaving aside moral and ethical principles. Our society is getting closer to a state of *anomia* which is more worrisome each time.

In order to achieve a sustained progress for several decades, we require that the government has a bearing on the functional distribution of income with redistributive politics, building the political consensus in Congress so changes of this type are taken into effect. We also require modifying the law of the Central Bank of Mexico so one of its objectives turns out to be the guarantee of employment and the Law of Fiscal Responsibility so the government may fall into a budget deficit when an economic crisis occurs.

It is necessary to establish mechanisms so that in a gradual manner the generalisation of the universal basic income gets implemented, perhaps starting with the money need to satisfy the need for nourishment and raising it until the point of achieving the complete de-commodification of the labour force.

In order to implement these reforms we need to eradicate corruption. In the same manner it is necessary to commit the country's elite so they accept to reduce their privileges by means of taxation which corresponds to them, and to respect workers' rights, guaranteeing the syndicalism autonomy. Democracy, in the same way, is a pending subject in our country. It is not enough to be able to vote, but we must have the certainty that no frauds will be committed, or votes bought.

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# Pedro Hernández\*

## Measuring Progress in a Globalized World. . .\*\*

I will present the premises of the reflection that I am attempting to develop throughout my interview with the project's director. In my opinion, progress is synonymous with integrated human development. It should not be understood merely as "economic development" or even "socio-economic development". Let us speak of it as integrated human development! A subject of this development, an actor of his own history, human beings are both personally and communally the central axis, their reason of being.

\* Pedro Hernández, PhD has dedicated many years of his life to studying the relationship between philosophy and sociological theory; and more specifically, the relationship between moral doctrine and social theory. He began his formation in philosophy and went into the field of sociology from there. His research deals with moral aspects in social sciences; he considers it a huge mistake to fail to study human acts in their totality, seen as social acts. This is why his research questions the fact that social sciences analyze moral aspects as aspects of the individual.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

If the above is valid, I believe that it will not be hard to reach significant consensus regarding the idea of the measurement of progress as a sign of advancement, a rhythm of forward steps towards the effective participation of the majority of society or humanity itself in attaining a reachable ideal. This is quality of life in accordance with human dignity: the life that provides the means to satisfy the real needs and legitimate aspirations of human beings according to their capacity and their diverse traditions and values, and within an environment of justice.

Human life is the very expression of all our energy: it is civilization. Its dynamics have essential components and these are the various large tasks of each culture; because there are populations with higher and lower levels of civilization, but there is no recording of communities of towns without a culture.

To measure civilization's dynamics is, in one way or another, to measure the energies or properties of those cultural components that make it up.

However, what to measure and how to do it are questions that lead us to science, epistemology and philosophy, where consensus will be harder to reach!

Why? I dare say it is simply because the problem of measurement carries another, deeper, problem that is an essential part of the crisis of civilization and the crisis of our planetary season.

Over the centuries and in most civilizations throughout history three major cultural tasks – political, family and affective relations, and religious or “numinous” – have been the central axis and the higher energy of the dynamics of civilization. They are primordial due to their importance over other tasks; through them we search for answers to our most profound dilemmas. . . concerning life, our destiny, the world we live in. Other tasks, although they are also essential, have been ancillary or complementary to these. Therefore education, economy, hygiene and recreation are the most important tasks among the diverse cultures of humanity.

Nevertheless, today we face the pretension of efficient, high-level economics, which is displacing the other tasks of culture as the central axis of civilization. This is what is at the heart of the present crisis: economy is no longer at the service of human beings, instead humans are slaves to a version of economics that controls the world’s industrial-financial capitalism directed towards a handful of corporate groups.

In my opinion, if we are going to measure real progress, we have to look at the standards of human rights; the efficiency of justice; overcoming poverty; transparency of government acts; empowerment of civil society; effective access to education and equitable distribution of income and wealth. We must unveil the farce of a democracy that is not life, and is instead a distraction spectacle created so that the people will believe in its sovereignty, while a few –money and politicians– maintain the government with the pretext of protecting sovereignty.

Relations and operations (either economic or cultural) that ignore or are opposed to personal human dignity may not be considered as true factors of progress; they exist and the attempt to decrease them or lessen their impact should be considered when measuring progress. For example, the concentration of wealth results in fewer opportunities for the wellbeing of many; or the absence of fiscal taxes on speculative operations, which causes the State to have a lower capacity to alleviate poverty.

Progress may finally consist of a path of efforts, a social adventure of unity of minds and wills joining to build the structures of human interrelations that may serve a greater number of people and their communities to live in a dignified manner in accordance with their culture and customs, and with absolute respect of human rights.

### **“Human progress: a step towards freedom in justice “**

I have worked on the ethics of development understood in a context that is not only personal and not only economic, but rather socio-economic-cultural. From this perspective, a central guideline of my thoughts is that there are seven great cultural tasks of human beings – human activities that are recorded in history and even before history; three of these tasks are elemental, and four are assistant (Peter Farbe) and co-adjutant. It is understood that all of these are necessary: there is no record of any culture that does not develop them or has not developed them at some point.

The first three are:

First, that which corresponds to religion. The area of the sublime and illuminated, the encounter with transcendence. Anyone who has loved in their life –profound love or even the love of art– knows that a window towards infinity is opened before them, and

that this is the area of the numinous, of religiousness. There is something inexplicable there, humans find themselves faced with mystery... outside of themselves, and within themselves.

Second, the family sphere or the order of activity closest to affection and day-to-day life. After man finds himself, in this sphere of love he finds the other; attraction and the search for sexual intimacy take place; then love is diffused or dispersed to all in general, and this generates the question of doing good. Any good. This is the essence of social events, whether it is explicit or not; either positively or negatively!

Third, the sphere of politics, related to the order in which the community should live. These are the smallest and most basic tasks of every culture. It serves as a sort of dynamic triple axis around which other tasks exist.

The spheres of co-adjuvant tasks (also indispensable for any cultural task) are:

- Economic, which covers everything related to subsistence and satisfaction of needs starting with scarce resources;
- Education, related to the generation and transmission of values and knowledge.
- Hygiene, related to the sustenance of the human body and to health.
- Recreation, relating to hobbies, leisure and the use of free time.

These spheres are present in every culture around the world. Up to industrialization, the three large spheres have always been related and inseparable (although they may never have been harmonized). Politics, religion and family have been the three main guidelines of the history of man: the answer to our greatest preoccupations. . . Questions such as how to love oneself, how to love others, where we are going, where we are from, and how we want to live our lives.

But as of the 19th century, or perhaps earlier, a phenomenon began to take place that is rather disturbing in my view: economy began to take a central role; instead of fulfilling its complementary role, economy was converted into the axis and value of progress. And so, economic issues began to have greater weight and value than anything else, at least in practice. I believe that this has been tragic for humanity. The world's problems lie in the fact that economy has been taking a central role in all human tasks; gradually the value of everything is based on its economic value. The result of this process has been catastrophic, because science itself and even religion are directed towards – or rather, controlled by – the economic. This fact has been documented in a lot of literature, as early as 100 years ago! An example of this is in the second edition of "The Division of Labor in Society" (Émile Durkheim, 1895).

Regarding capital, human greed can find no foothold. In relation to the concern that has arisen from the central role of economy, I see two fog lights as it were. One fog light is the pessimist side, related with voracity, and even lack of ethics, with advancing as far as one can in the economic sphere. I was convinced of this by whom I least expected: Adam Smith, in a paragraph of "The Theory of Moral Sentiment" in which he speaks in favor of a free trade system (one which he would perfect later on in "The Wealth of Nations"). Curiously, Adam Smith declares that the system would be very difficult to execute as it requires a very high probity: the moral strength that – it is assumed – the community must participate in! (Daly,-Cobb,1989,140) and this it not seen in men. Adam Smith mentions this in a paragraph in which, for obvious reasons, many of his followers never quote (or even know!). Adam Smith was an advocate of the invisible hand; however, as we know, he was also a moralist. Perhaps there is something worth considering here.

In my opinion, Bruntlad's Report (UN, "Our Common Future") on caring for the planet makes scientists

aware that one enters into the moral terrain of human action in admitting such responsibility, our economic responsibility; towards future generations. To me this is the second fog light, one of hope, optimistic light that pushes us to study economy from the point of view of ecology, in its broadest cultural sense. Ethics is also included here. I will therefore land on a term that may be promising: ecological economy. Within this line of the moral responsibility of man towards his actions, one of the first things that we should attempt is to return economy to its rightful place, placing it truly at the service of human fraternity, and – in political terms – of the Common Good. We must begin by making sure that this economy not only acknowledges its physical limitations, but also that it takes care – above all – of the sustainability of our ecosystems.

### Looking towards the future

I would like it if within the following 50 years we manage to place the economy at the service of human fraternity. To me, the meaning of progress is that the majority may live in better conditions and have real opportunities. Progress or development is simply human dignity in its entirety. This goal must be crystallized in concrete and attainable objectives. First, it needs to be an economy capable of sustaining the planet in the best possible way and for the longest we can; in true union with nature and not by controlling it and exploiting it. More concretely, a wise economy that is efficient in the use of mainly renewable energy; and in the case of non-renewable resources, these must be studied to discover the proportion in which they must be used. We need indicators of union with nature, and technologies that specialize in renewable energies and impose effective quotas on non-renewable ones. A second type of indicator is the compliance of human rights.

On the other hand, I am convinced that as in our case, many populations of the world have a healthy moral basis. People have moral foundations that are not so twisted, and this is an immensely valuable cultural heritage.

So regarding progress indicators, a first area that should be embarked upon is the measurement of the use of natural resources and understanding of the consequences of the technologies required by the use of renewable and non-renewable resources in relation to future generations. A second area in this respect would be the levels of effective attention to human rights and provision of opportunities to truly exercise and respect these rights. A third area of work would be to rescue indigenous cultures and the respect of autonomy of their respective peoples, as well as their participation in decisions that affect their territory and their natural resources.

### Progress: universal or specific?

I believe this subject deserves a lot of reflection. Personally, I think that there are a few universal values. I have not found any culture in the world where murder or back stabbing is seen positively; much less, justifying damage to a friend. I consider the values of friendship and loyalty as universally acknowledged values. But I know that there are negative universal values: racial hatred, discrimination – these are unworthy of humanity, they lower our nature. Progress must be specific in terms of safeguarding the values of each culture; but this diversity of particularities, when lived in a democracy, confers progress its universality or, the equivalent, the inclusion element of true human progress.



# Francisco Valdés\*

## Progress in Mexico and in Latin American Society\*\*

There are many factors associated to progress. Without avoiding the bias of my own thematic or research orientation, there are two fundamental aspects: One is **the reduction of social inequality and the other one is the reduction of political inequality**, but why? Because, independently from the fact that there are people living in an unfavorable manner, inequality may be able to tolerate it; seeing it altogether, inequality produces a perverse social synergy. The presence of great social inequalities in the distribution of income, in the geographic distribution of people, in the access to public goods, especially in education, creates situations which in the end translate to differences in *capacity*. **The more freedom a society has the more it progresses**, and even more when its members

have more capabilities. More free from what? Freer from one's own bindings<sup>1</sup> and freer from external constraints, that is, more capable of doing what one wants. But a society more capable of doing what it wants is not but the aggregation of the realization capacity of its people.

<sup>1</sup> There are many types of obstacles, but the ones which have more influence on the perpetuation of the inequality are those which come from those previous traditions which are constructed, cultural or social, surrounding the naturalization of inequality. When we listen to the popular saying: "we are poor but honest", that sounds like an inequality. The ones who are not honest are the rich ones, and being poor and honest is an honorable thing, even though we remain poor. There are many cultural ways which lead us to this idea that it is better or even acceptable to a certain point to have a level of poverty. This has been recently broken with a phenomenon which we are barely starting to know in countries like Mexico, this phenomenon is the surge is a new middle class. There are many groups which come from the lower levels of society, which with the economic growth, the democratization, the society's modernization, the urbanization and even the informality have allowed that huge amounts of people get incorporated to the middle class which they previously did not belong to. This new sector of society no longer accepts these paradigms which belonged to their parents or grandparents. They are people who struggle more and more, they face conflict with less fear, they are not willing to easily accept the excess of authorities, or the abuse from third parties but they can not always translate that resistance or struggle into a modern vision of how to act through the institutions to avoid abuse or to conquer solutions.

\* Francisco Valdés, PhD is a political scientist, his area of specialization has been the reform of the State and the process of democratic change in Mexico and Latin America; besides the study in electoral sociology and electoral systems as well, Dr. Valdes has specialized in the study of the process of change in the constitutions and the political regimes contained in the constitutions. His research analyzes the ways to encourage during democratic stages, or in democratization processes, those political regimes which secure the rights of individuals, people, citizens and vulnerable groups; and analyzes in what way the institutional forms of the political regimen allow or limit the exercise of a modern citizenship and the development of a strong democracy which is up to the standards of our times.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

The more inequality, the less access to fundamental public goods which allow us to cover basic life standards (income, job, housing, education, cultural transformation in terms of relationships between people, in a family level and a community level as well). If inequality is not reduced, there can not be a production of **phenomena which are germane to the progress of modern societies**, just like the greater **horizontal interlocution capacities amongst the different social agents**. Therefore, the inequality is also translated into political inequality which *in fact*, allows the generation of an endemic evil in countries like ours: real political inequalities which contradict the main paradigm of the modern legal order which is the legal equality.

If legal equality is a chimera or if legal equality is simply an abstract principle, in the wrong sense, meaning that it does not answer correctly to the reality of those people who do not reach the access, which theoretically the institutions should grant them in order to correspond with the appropriate level of legal equality were every individual has equal rights (although some have right to certain differences because of their age, gender, social condition etc.) Legal equality does not mean that everyone should have the same rights, but that they do have the same basic rights, the same human rights, the same citizen rights, and the same rights to access the public goods which society as a whole, through the State, are obliged to provide.

There are problems which affect practically every society. Included in these are the advanced democracies, but within ours they are much more acute in presence of the special interests. These are the special interests which manage to impose themselves, in fact, above the legal norms, above the equality between people and citizens, precisely because there are great advantages in opportunities for certain groups with more capacities<sup>2</sup> in every sense in front of others, so they

can take advantage of the institutions and approve the institutions and public decision processes to mainly satisfy their interests, excluding or diminishing the interests of other groups.

In conclusion, the much generalized or excessively strong social inequality, and the political inequality *in fact*, which correspond to one another, are two of those factors which stop progress and stop modernization of societies in Latin America. This does not mean that there are societies which have managed to solve in an absolute manner this problem; there is frequent talk about the example set by the United States, especially

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<sup>2</sup> In order to understand this concept I turn to Amartya Sen since when he speaks about freedom, he speaks about freedom of realization. Freedom, not only as negative freedom which is typical of the classical liberalism, which consists of the fact that the State maintains the individual's spheres guaranteed in such way that they do not interfere with each other nor involuntary intersections are produced, or demands from some individuals to others or from the State to the individuals. This supposes the right of property, even the right of owning one self, the right of no one attacking my guaranteed basic rights to be in this society and that the society itself recognizes that I must have those rights guaranteed. There are other rights as well: How much can I do in life, and that depends of how much I have received, how many goods I have managed to add to my person, my family, my social group, in order to *be able* to do more and better achievements. If I only have one kind of training which allows me to work as a mason, but the circumstances do not allow me to become an engineer, then we are speaking of a restrained freedom by the type of information, education or links. A different social environment, where the individuals' rights are conceived as a positive freedom, not in the sense of attacking or transgressing the rights of others, but in the sense of being able to have better levels of achieving ones own skills, then we are speaking about a society in which the production of public goods for training, for creating capabilities becomes the key. In another way, we go back to the aporia of the nineteenth century in which the State has to do everything, or on the contrary, it must not *do* anything.

in America. However, within the developed countries, the United States is the one with most inequalities, whether in social, regional and economical aspects; this when we compare them with truly remarkable examples of securing life standards which are much more equalitarian between citizens, just like the case of some Nordic countries.

I consider that there rest two of the main themes, and from there, many things emerge. However, I think that the mother of all problems is within those conditions and sacks of inequality. It is enough to say that Mexico and Brazil, two of the societies with most inequalities in Latin America and the world, represent a little over 60% of the total population in Latin America, this to make us realize the dimensions of the problem at hand.

### Key factors which can evaluate progress.

I think that the *Gini Index* is important, since it is a way to measure the social inequality as well as its increase or decrease; however, there are other indicators which are equally important or complementary. The Gini index allows us to see how acute inequality is, but not always allows us to see the reasons why differences in equality may be so big between some countries. For example, the Gini index in Belgium and the one in Mexico are considerably different. With recent data, the Gini index from Belgium is approximately 0.27 and the Mexican one was about 0.52. That is, the Belgian society tends to equality, while Mexico is found in high levels of inequality. If studied with even more detail and we take away the fiscal load in Belgium, then the Gini index in that country becomes just the same as the one in Mexico (0.52). And if we take away the fiscal load in Mexico, then the Gini varies only a minimum. Why? Because the fiscal load in Belgium is in average<sup>3</sup>, a little higher than the one in the European Union, 35% on average and the Mexican load is 11%.

Between Belgium and Mexico there is a difference of more than 100% concerning what the State gathers to produce public goods, this implies, in part the high inequality in the case of Mexico and the improvement, in terms of equality, in the case of Belgium. We can not have modern societies that do not have modern states, and we can not have modern societies which do not have modern fiscal systems.

The fiscal collection in Latin America represents approximately 17% of the region's GNP, while the average collection in those countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (taking into consideration the downward effect caused by Mexico) is around 30% to 32%. The one in the European Union is higher, and if we look at some model countries such as Belgium, Norway or Sweden it goes up to 40% or 50% from the GNP collection. Needles to talk about the quality of the public organization for the generation of public goods.

Another important aspect, is the possibility of introducing the *Human Development Index* as a way of measuring progress, which in the end was born as an important variable for the study of development, not only economical but as an integral part of the countries. The introduction of this index is an improvement in respect the GNP, which is the predominant indicator. Finally, there is a concept whose application is being developed and which I think it is very interesting to explore, which in terms of public politics might be institutionalized in a better way between the measuring of GNP and the measuring of social development and taxation. This index was proposed several years ago by Amartya Sen, it is called the *Social Development Index*, which basically consists in questioning the following: and society is

<sup>3</sup> Estimations based on De Ferranti, David (2003), *Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean* (chapter 9 page 2), Washington, World Bank.

best, the one with the GNP with the greatest growth or the society in which its social development grew more, although (for distribution reasons) its GNP has a smaller growth rate? The social development index, is associated with more housing, better education, better clothing, better health, and others; that is, to raise the indexes concerning life level and quality of life or people, especially from those with less opportunities. In order for the social development index to grow, we require a spill from the GNP towards those sectors through taxation, since they are after all, public goods. This is done with social decisions which are organized and coordinated in a macro and micro manner. But then the question is: could we change the statistics, or modulate the statistics in such a way that we not only measure the GNP but the social development index as well and this may be an indicator of greater progress than the first one? This is the type of measurements which I think allow us to see progress not only as economic growth but as an improvement in society as a whole.

### **The universality of the concept of progress.**

Considering that our societies have level characteristics which are highly stratified, what happens here, is that the more authoritarian the system is, more spaces get opened for the arbitrariness of the dominant groups and thus for the formation of kleptocracies; that is, for the predatory accumulation of the excluding and select elites. From the general point of view, the improvement in people's condition and their capacities, and the democratic development of the political systems, are two crucial components of universal character. Now, the answer to how those capabilities and democratic manners will develop in every place and how will the concrete politics be applied, which in turn might lead us to those ends in each specific situation, must necessarily start from the particularities of each region. Because, obviously we are not going to do things in Costa Rica that were already done before,

but most likely we should do them in Chiapas or Nicaragua and Venezuela. It is a combination of both things: Universalities and particularities; but in the end, everywhere around the world all humans are the same and different at the same time. The linguistic, ethnic, geographic, culinary particularities and those pertaining to habits, which every society has and do not destroy the universal principle that we are all humans. We can not sustain the fact that in those differences we find really genomic distinctions, this from the human race point of view.

Hence, whatever the particular characteristics of each society, progress is a general aspiration which should not deny the first ones, if this is given under circumstances of social coordination and decisions of democratic politics.

### **Progress in Mexico and Latin America in the last decades.**

I believe there has been some progress: Our societies have opened up, they have modernized themselves, they have many regressions, many bottlenecks, but they have taken important steps to place themselves in a better situation around the world; before, they were societies much more self-centered, focused on their insides, less opened up and with a small vocation of looking outside. The governments of Latin America have produced ways of contact and interaction which are not negligible, although sometimes we say that all these ways, for example, the regional or hemispheric summit meetings, the MERCOSUR and the NAFTA or the ALBA, are completely useless or simply evil conspiracies, I personally do not think so. I think these are integration and interaction processes, which in my opinion, turns out to be an improvement. I also think that, in the measure in which we progress towards democratic systems there has been a development of citizenship, even if this progress is precarious. That is a

very important element in the democratic component I was referring to. A more illustrated, better informed, citizenship more convinced of the role it has, at least has the obligation of electing its governments.

I consider that a good part of the restlessness we see now has been a component of that condition: People are less willing to be treated badly. Bolivia seems to be an exemplary case, independently of the way we judge their outcome. There, people took Evo Morales to the government and said "Enough, we will not be the marginalized Indians from the plateau in front of the rich people of the lower lands". Those are elements of citizenship, elements of towns taking care of their own political development and exercising it; elements of enlarging their own realization liberties.

Where I believe there is less progress, and even some negligence, is in two main flaws concerning the development of Latin American societies. One is the low taxation which does not allow the production of public needs which are necessary to create a higher common ground, and the other one is the fact that there is a conceptualization of economic development opportunities which could be pushed forward; and I

think that these two things are related. There is a lot of talk about the knowledge society and that Latin America must join this knowledge society, but the investment in basic, middle and higher educations as well as the scientific research is still very lean. Currently we have some sort of a base of scientists, but miraculously, because they usually come from the previously formed middle classes, the difficulty is much greater for someone who comes from the low resources sectors of society, even though that person might have the appropriate intelligence.

And this takes us to another flaw related to the institutional structures: The political systems of Latin America do not guarantee a "free entrance" system; that is, they are not modern States. The liberty of entrance creates within society the capability of freeing oneself from ties, because everyone receives the opportunities from the same high ground. Arriving there will create a qualitative change, because people could start thinking of new options which go beyond the elemental ones. And this leads us again to the following principle: Real rights for everyone which are not abstract or nominal, such as generally occur in our countries.



# José Woldenberg\*

## Progress in Mexico\*\*

I believe that in the last few years Mexico was capable of building a democratic system that demolished the system of authority in force until then. Nowadays academics are starting to discuss the challenges and obstacles we face in the consolidation of this system. From this point of view, I believe that the issues raised by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), or the way in which the ECLAC approaches the subject, may be of much help in the construction of a new definition of progress.

In Mexico, for example, we have made great progress regarding freedoms and pluralist coexistence; however, the UNDP mentions that poverty and inequality

are some of the serious risks regarding democratic consolidation. These are not only a problem in themselves – inequality is a problem in itself – but they also deteriorate the appreciation that persons may have of the democratic regime.

Therefore, for any view on progress we would have to make a systematic evaluation of how we are capable of **fighting poverty** and of how we may **build a less divided, polarized and unequal society**.

The UNDP itself maintains that we are a society in which the application of the law is highly discretionary; and furthermore, the authorities hesitate whether to apply the law and citizens are not willing to comply with the law. The UNDP has referred to this as a rule of law deficit. I consider this as another aspect of the definition of progress. Given that the **rule of law** may not be decreed, as it is not formed from night to day but rather built little by little, we would have to observe how much we move forward in this respect as well as in the regulations which govern social coexistence

\* Dr Woldenberg's research is in the area of Political Sciences. In recent years he has worked on subjects related to democracy; with a particular emphasis on issues regarding elections, political parties and electoral legislation.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

and conflicts – or in terms of discretionality. For this reason, I would also contemplate the rule of law as part of the concept of progress.

The third subject we come to, also taken from the UNDP report, is **citizenship**. It is assumed that in a democracy, citizens are the fundamental elements of public duty. Therefore, it is necessary to find out to what extent these citizens are capable of taking on and exercising their rights. O'Donnell mentions that most people in Latin America exercise their political rights; yet paradoxically many civil and social rights may not be exercised. This is why I would include citizenship as a third component. As with the rule of law, citizenship is built and not decreed. There are many elements that make a person an “infra-citizen” and it is necessary to pay attention to those who can exercise all – or the great majority – of their rights.

I would include these three aspects in a new definition of progress which would also lead to a notion taken from the ECLAC elaborations: the term **social cohesion, the sense of belonging or lack of belonging that persons feel towards a community**. Why? Because I believe that poverty and inequality have had a negative effect on social cohesion in Latin America; we don't really have societies, we have a sort of archipelago of islands in which different groups carry out their lives but with few bridges of communication or contact with the other islands. We have highly fragmented societies which confront each other and their back to each other.

**These concepts, along with democracy – that is, the possibility that political pluralism may be recreated and compete institutionally and pacifically – may together form the idea of progress.** This clearly implies economic growth, policies directed towards building equality, and maybe even a new **fiscal pact** as stated by ECLAC; aspects which have been missing in Mexico over the years.

### How do we know if we are headed in the right direction?

I consider that it is relatively easy to measure the first concept of inequality and poverty; these measurements are already being taken. These measurements are of course made by formulas which may be refined, and technicians may perfect them. The CONEVAL, for example, has several poverty indicators related with family incomes and the needs that these can satisfy. I believe that beyond methodological discussions on the part of specialists, these indicators do capture the real trends of poverty and that we should continue collecting them. Likewise, we have Mexico's income in deciles for the measurement of inequality; and not only that, but the deciles of these deciles. What do we know about inequality in Mexico? We have a society with an appalling income concentration. I believe we have measurement instruments for this, and there are other more complex ones.

Regarding the rule of law and its compliance, I consider that we need to find formulas for measurement and that it is convenient to make a distinction between different regions. Similarly, we need to see how much progress has been made in the creation of citizenship; for example, by way of surveys we can find out from the people how many of the established rights are really exercised. The advisory board of UNICEF, for example, generated a very interesting instrument to measure whether children were exercising their rights – namely rights to education, health and nourishment. I believe the indicator was divided into ages and the Mexican states, based on indicators generated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and other official institutions. I recall that it was carried out for two years; however this effort was halted. We would need to find out what the various higher education institutions are doing on this subject, try to combine their efforts and find a way to benefit from them.



## Universality or regional peculiarities

On this subject, the extremes can be devastating. A blind universal vision will not be able to handle national peculiarities. On the other hand, an extreme notion of the particular elements of each society can only be measured against itself and its own past. I find that this denies the qualities of mankind.

Without falling into blind universalism, I believe there are formulas we can use to evaluate steps taken forward and backward regarding freedoms and equality. One such example would be regarding the extent to which freedoms are exercised in one country in comparison with another. These are not expendable tasks; they can give us an idea of whether there has been progress or not in freedom of speech, freedom of transit, freedom of association and freedom to demonstrate. It is on these premises that reasonably inhabitable societies are built, and these elements may be measured and compared. The suppression of these freedoms is generally associated with oppressive societies in which freedom may not be exercised in the best possible way. Likewise, if we consider equality and equity, access to education, health and housing, indicators allow us to compare societies without being Eurocentric.

## Progress in Mexico over the last decades

Progress is in view in the area of politics. If we look at political representation in Mexico 30 years ago and compare it with the present situation, we can observe immense progress. What do I mean by this? We are looking at 1979, when the country's president, all the governors and all the senators belonged to the same party, and I believe that over 80% of the members of parliament also belonged to the same party. All local congresses had a qualified majority of the PRI. Out of more than two thousand town halls, not more than 20 were governed by the opposition, and all the rest were governed by the PRI. If we make a comparison

with the present, today the president belongs to the PAN; the PRD governs the Federal District; the State of Mexico is governed by the PRI; the president and his party do not have the majority in the Chamber of Deputies; in many cases governors do not have the absolute majority of their congress; and governors need to coexist with municipal presidents belonging to up to six different parties. The fact that political pluralism is better represented in the Mexican state institutions is a sign of progress. This is due to the construction of a party system and of an electoral system and has had an impact on relations between powers; that is, the old omnipotent president who could do everything has more appropriate limitations today. The judicial branch, which was then practically non-existent regarding politics, now plays a very important role through constitutional controversies and judgments of unconstitutionality. The legislative branch is no longer subordinated to the president; it follows its own dynamics.

I believe that freedoms such as freedom of the press and freedom of speech are better exercised than in the past. I consider there has been progress here.

However, in other spheres such as those mentioned earlier regarding poverty and inequality, I do not believe there has been progress. I refer to the figures and find that there is still a gross inequality and proportionately I do not think there has been sufficient change. Perhaps there has been some progress in terms of poverty, but we must wait to see the impact of the present economic crisis. In other areas there has been progress but it has been slower. An example of this is in the construction of the rule of law. In fact, if we consider the public imagination today, there is a much clearer notion that citizens have rights; this has led to the creation of human rights commissions at a national and local level. I have the impression – although I would not be able to prove it – that in the circle of implementation of justice, although there are still many aberrations these

are less frequent than 30 to 35 years ago. In some fields there has been progress, in others there have been intermediate advances, and in yet others, there has not been any progress.

In the case of citizenship there has been great progress regarding political rights; but I can not say how much progress there has been in social and civil rights. The basic rights of every individual must be treated equally by policemen and public prosecutors, and we have not achieved this in Mexico. Everybody knows that people's socio-economic level has a strong influence on the way they are treated by the public prosecutor's office.

### **What would Mexico look like following continuous progress over a couple of decades?**

It would be a democratic country with less poverty, less inequality, a more carefully built rule of law, and greater exercise of citizens' rights. All this would contribute to a more cohesive country; that is, rather than the archipelago I have mentioned, it would be a country, a community that people felt part of and would cease to see as something external to them. It is not a coincidence that people stick only to their neighborhood, their family and their private activities. They see other groups as adversaries rather than members of their own community with which they may create intricate networks of collaboration. The idea of competition has been imposed in every area of life. I believe that in Mexico people only identify with the national football team, beyond this there is no

real sense of identity. There is no notion of citizenship in which we all understand that we live in the same country and have similar rights and obligations.

The conditions for the possibility of building bridges between these archipelagos are closely related to economic growth and fiscal pacts. These fiscal pacts have always been difficult in Mexico because those with the most wealth are accustomed to not paying taxes. The ECLAC itself promotes the creation of a **social cohesion contract**. That is, an agreement between the different parties involved in preparing a medium term plan. In order to achieve this plan, it is necessary for all the different groups to make efforts and achieve cooperation.

For this to be possible those who have more must give more; and a fiscal pact is needed so that this is not an issue of charity. There must be progressive type taxes and these taxes must be imposed and must serve to appease inequalities. This is easy to say and yet difficult to carry out.

I believe it is very important to raise these issues for discussion within the academic and political communities. I have the impression that all our energies are dissipated day-to-day in the moment, in passing from one scandal to another, and in statement after statement. Public life is contaminated by the preoccupation with the immediate, and this sheds darkness on the dimension and concept of the future and – above all – the desirable future.

# Carlos Tello\*

## Social Rights and Progress\*\*

In Mexico we must abandon the liberal thesis that presupposes equality between people as a starting point, and we must substitute it with the more socially advanced thesis that proposes equality as a goal we must reach. This must be carried out through the directed and decisive action of the State.

The rights of Mexicans as included in the Constitution are grouped into three types: individual, citizen and social rights. Individual and citizen rights are similar

to those in other democratic political organizations and they are not innovative. They establish the guarantees of persons' spiritual and physical integrity, as well as their exercise of freedom, and organize the method used to grant and exert political power. The social rights, in contrast, are innovative and original. When social rights were included in the Constitution, conditions were established to permit the full exercise of the individual and citizen rights. This means that the conditions for the possibility of exercising individual and citizen rights fully and freely are determined by the complete validity of social rights. While individual and citizen guarantees are rights for the State to NOT DO, social guarantees are rights that citizens have for the State TO DO. Just by being Mexican, we have the right for the State to provide the minimum necessary conditions for us to exercise our individual and citizen rights.

\* Carlos Tello is professor at the Faculty of Economics in the UNAM. At present he is carrying out research on the history of income and wealth distribution inequality in Mexico. He recently finished and published the book *Estado y Desarrollo Económico: México 1920-2006* (*State and Economic Development: Mexico 1920-2006*).

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

In my opinion, a better definition of progress is closely, and almost entirely, related to the idea of rights. It concerns the full validity of social, civil, individual and human rights.

All these rights are intimately related; for example, the condition for the possibility of a civil right – to vote for or be voted for – is largely determined by the validity of social rights and individual rights. The condition for the possibility of exercising individual rights is determined by the validity of social rights. For example, the right to freedom of speech, as an individual right, is limited if social rights are not in force (i.e. education, health).

To me, progress must be defined as advancing and maintaining the full validity of social rights. Especially the basic social rights: right to health, right to education, right to social security, right to a clean and healthy environment, right to wages, right to housing and right to work and occupation. In my view, the full force and validity of these social rights ought to be the measure of progress.

The validity of rights and the quality of the service they provide must go hand in hand. The right to housing means nothing if said housing does not include the services associated with it: electricity, water, drainage, sidewalks or the equivalent, access and appropriate space.

It has been argued that the social rights stipulated in the Constitution are of programmatic character. This means that the State will do everything possible to comply with these rights in real time. On the contrary, it is maintained – correctly in my opinion – that **social rights are A REQUISITE**. We have the right for the State to provide them. We cannot deny that the issue here is one of lack of resources. If there are no resources, these must be obtained. Tax pressure (load) is VERY LOW in Mexico, and there is a large margin of maneuver, especially regarding income tax and

taxes on assets. Progress is not the accumulation and growth of goods and services divided by the population (GDP per capita). On the contrary, progress is to have, provide and enjoy all social rights; and the sooner the better. And the organization followed to provide them must be of a **UNIVERSAL** character, not segmented or differentiated (as has occurred in Mexico), and in the appropriate quantity and quality.

In Mexico we have various social rights (the Constitution in force – that of 1917 – expresses them clearly in constitutional rights 3, 4, 27 and 123 among others). These social rights are of great importance in my view and they must be in full force. This is to say that not only are they social rights that one must aspire to, but the force and validity of these rights is in itself the fundamental indicator of progress.

### How do we measure it?

I do believe that we must abandon the sum of goods and services – either produced by the country or available to the country – as the principal indicator of progress. By this I do not mean that we should forget it entirely. I am merely emphasizing, as an introduction to the subject, that the Gross Domestic Product is definitely not the only or the most appropriate indicator for the measurement of progress. I consider that progress should be measured almost entirely upon the validity of rights; specifically social rights, but also civil and individual rights. Human rights must also be respected.

I believe that the validity of these civil rights is an important indicator of progress. We progress in the measure that we approach the full force and validity of these rights. Advances in these different rights should be made simultaneously.

However, I feel that Mexico is furthest behind in social rights; this includes not only the amount and coverage of these rights, but also their quality.

If the period required for basic education is nine years, then we must have the nine years. The average school level is a little over seven years, and if we look at Chiapas or Oaxaca, the average is around three or four years. Besides their own poverty, their education system (and the same goes for health, housing, etc.) is the poorest, most deficient and insufficient. We must aspire to the full force of the right to equal education for all Mexicans. This must be a requirement, and it must have the necessary quality. It must have nationwide coverage and quality must improve with time. This improvement must be even.

The book "Invertirensalud para el desarrollo económico" (*To invest in health for economic development*) was published in 2006 by the Fondo de Cultura Económica. This book presents the results obtained by a commission for studies on development in the health system. The country's situation is relatively good if we use as an indicator the performance of the health and social security system, and life expectancy at birth. But if we study the justice of the health system, we would find that we are extremely far behind. To begin with, the "pocket expense" is over 50% of the total expense in health services. The Mexican health system is highly differentiated and segmented. To a great extent it is associated with *Subordinated Work*; this entails large discrepancies between the different health and social security systems: the IMSS, the ISSSTE, the armed forces, bank employees, oil industry workers, etc. They are different in terms of service quality, and in terms of the resources they provide. Furthermore, the very health system varies throughout the national territory (from the Federal District and Nuevo León to Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas). President Fox invented the Popular Insurance, which is a form of insurance for those who do not have any; it is a deficient service with bad quality, and its coverage is terrible. It is a poor form of insurance for the poor. If there is no universal health and social security service, this constitutional right which includes all Mexicans loses its meaning.

Furthermore, approximately half of all Mexicans are not covered by a formal health and social security system. We are one of the countries that spend the least on its health system; we spend much less than Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Costa Rica, Panama and I believe many other countries in America. It goes without saying that we spend much less on it than the US.

Progress can be measured, with solid and objective indicators, in order to determine whether a country has progressed or not. I don't think it is difficult to measure progress based on the validity of rights; this is something that can be done, there are even some concrete indicators for environmental pollution. The right to an adequate environment is a right that is stipulated in our Constitution, but we live oblivious to this fact. I can also mention the issue of overcrowding and the quality of the construction of housing. There are, of course, indicators that arise during the compliance of individual, civil and social rights.

### How does one measure the validity of these rights?

Let us assume that there are only two social rights: the right to health and right to housing. The first thing we have to do to determine validity is to select the indicators. Let us consider housing as such when it has all the associated services. Access to water is of no use to me if I have no drainage: how do I get rid of the water? Electricity is of no use to me if I don't have the other services; these must be simultaneous. Then there is the issue of space and the division of space. It is not difficult to think of an indicator in construction used to measure the degree of validity of the right to housing. The same can be done for health. Child mortality in Mexico is six times greater than in Japan; three times greater than in Cuba and twice as high as in Costa Rica and Chile. We are a country with high levels of obesity and malnutrition.

A common indication is that there is a huge difference between the North of Mexico and the South. We could paraphrase the poem by Benedetti to mark these differences: "El sur también existe" ("The south also exists"). The validity of a right must be equal in the entire country, and it must have the same quality throughout. In Mexico it seems as if we do the contrary. If we observe the budget assignment for health (or education) we find that most of the resources go to the more favored zones, when it should be the other way around in order to help the less fortunate (of whom there are many) to climb. In terms of housing, some are offered complete homes, and others (the poor) are only provided with a firm cement floor to replace the earth floor that lots of people live on.

In my opinion, an index of progress would be the one that *defines the social rights and measures their degree of validity; regarding space (covering the entire territory) and quality*. If this is not achieved there will be no progress; progress is achieved in the degree that we approach the force and validity of these rights.

I believe the possibility of accessing higher levels of income and having a higher domestic product are very important. However, their true importance is determined by the validity of these rights. This means that we should not measure progress solely on the gross domestic product but also based on the validity of the rights I have mentioned.

## Mexico

In the case of Mexico, we are far from having the full force and validity of these rights. Therefore, we are far from speaking of a progressive country. In contrast with individual and civil rights, social rights in Mexico have been seen as programmatic rights. The

State is obliged to do whatever is in its power to make all these social rights valid and in force. They are not seen as demandable rights, as they are in France, the United Kingdom and Spain. Here we have seen them as programmatic and not demandable rights. The citizen must demand that the State provides a health service, in the same way that he demands the respect of freedom of speech or freedom to move in the country or the right to vote or be voted for. In the same way, the citizen must demand the provision of education, social security service, housing service, and the list of rights of all Mexicans, just because they can.

## Demandable Rights

Social rights are stipulated in the law; however, the State has attended to these rights in a segmented and differentiated manner.

There must be a universal health service that attends to everyone and not in relation to their income or the degree of union association or worker class. We must require a universal health system from the State that attends to everyone. This right is not demanded by citizens, in part, because they are not informed of it, but above all, because they assume that the State cannot provide it due to a lack of funds. Therefore, what we should suggest to the State is that it finds the money to attend to this service adequately. For example, in this concrete case, we must demand the Mexican state to at least collect the average collected by countries of the OECD – without including Mexico in the average. But how do we collect this amount? We must take it from the rich, the only ones who have the possibility of paying taxes, as the poor are barely surviving. And the same should be demanded regarding the other rights.

# Rolando Cordera, Leonardo Lomelí and Camilo Flores\*

## About Progress\*\*

### Camilo Flores

Progress has several interesting implications because it is relative. It is hard to measure progress if we do not have any definition of what we want, it would even be hard to know what progress is under this circumstances. Besides, progress can be measured in two senses: Progress as the means to achieve the ideal we have in mind or progress defined through our past

\* The following essay was written with the aide of Rolando Cordera, Leonardo Lomelí and Camilo Flores. Their investigations complement each other in two main areas. The first area is social development; particularly were it concerns those matters related to social politics, the current situation lived by society in its different levels of existence, the new challenges and their implications in matter of budget and definition of economic politics. The second area concerns the permanent meditation on Mexican economic development.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview

starting point. First we must define the profile of such progress: Progress compared to what; second, we must decide if we will measure it as the lack of, or as the achievements we managed to obtain from a basis or a specific date. Concerning national politics, it seems to me that we do not have a well-defined Mexican profile, which is the country's profile we could use in order to measure the progress we seek. Something very important as well for the measurement of progress is to consider the speed in which we approach those goals we could very well define.

### Leonardo Lomelí

It is very interesting to see the way in which the concept of progress has evolved in Mexico. If we contemplate what was understood as progress towards the end of the Renovation War (Guerra de Reforma), when the National High School (Escuela Nacional Preparatorio)

was created, and the way in which this institution took the positivistic motto as its own: "Order and Progress", progress was understood as a material improvement and as the use of science in studies, not only in the natural world but in social conflicts as well. The concept of progress was seen as the emulation of those countries which were considered more advanced; progress was the attempt to keep up with those countries considered more modern. The elites of the era were oriented towards the United States of America, but there was a very strong intellectual influence from France and from other Continental Europe countries, such as Germany; within the economic matter, England was admired.

People had the idea that the country should grow economically in order to reach those developed countries, and the rest would fall into place by its own weight. Population would acquire more knowledge, the gap between the rich and the poor would diminish. There was the notion that the social and cultural variety would be solved by means of the mixing of races and by the assimilation of all cultures which still abide in the country despite the new liberal and irreligious national culture, which by all means signified progress, and that everyone would become part of that Mexican society, as homogenous as it could be. In the present day, many of those notions are being questioned. On one side the cultural difference has been revaluated; there has been lots of progress in the world while appraising the advantages of multiculturalism, but I also think that during the 20<sup>th</sup> century came the belief that economic growth by itself cannot produce progress in other areas of social life.

### **Rolando Cordera**

We are approaching some kind of recovery concerning the founding principles (Smith, Condorcet) which had to do with a disturbed world in which a certain change is given, and where seemingly untouchable institutions are coming to an end. The past, that static past from feudalism was on the verge of being left

behind by the discovery of freedom as a possibility and the search for systems which gave security in the practice of freedom. At the same time an interesting idea was postulated, this idea was the concept that by means of trade, humanity could build an endless world of commerce in goods and satisfactions; since commerce and trade were seen as a cultural exercise, which went beyond the basic exercise of trade to become a conversation and a persuasion exercise. Smith even describes economic life as a permanent argument. Today's globalization incites us to rethink these concepts and to recover them at the same time.

The freedom topic, the safety to enjoy such freedom and the interchange (now at a global scale) form a triangle in which we currently move with the global crisis. For example it is quite possible that the ideas developed during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century concerning multiculturalism and the appreciation of everything that is different; to question the material progress as the unique pattern used to speak about progress and to question the economical growth as the one and only criteria used to assess the societies performance, are currently in a clotting state in which on one side they confirm the idea that human development goes beyond economy and this also implies universal warranties for the entitled rights concerning the basic needs such as health, education, nourishment and a home. This has economical implications and material assumptions with possibilities; but it goes past this, maybe a conjunction which gives us a way to measure progress and submits individualism and economy to evaluation criteria and requirement which was supposedly abandoned thanks to the neo-liberal globalization.

The other big issue on its way and which doesn't care about any economical crisis is the environmental matter, and the closeness, historically speaking; what we now call climate change. Then, on one side we have the idea of progress, which not necessarily is the one derived in an illusion from the economic progress,



but rather a progress seen as a **human right which we must materialize carefully but without pauses, with no rushes but without pauses**, as Napoleon said and **without returns**, except for catastrophic issues. A conception of progress as a **materialization of human rights within the social, cultural and economical**, was the topic of climate change, and will impose evaluation criteria. We are not very used to such criteria even though we have progressed in our regulation.

In *"The Conditions of Economic Progress"*, Colin Clark sees economic progress as a material progress, but he eagerly insisted in the economic cultural conjunction which he considers of high importance today, that is to reclaim it and even to establish another type of dialogue with science and technology. There must be a cultural and values variable, but without them dialogue is very complicated, and even harder is to aspire a shared notion of progress. Maybe through the road of culture and values we may start building a notion which unites our efforts, the evaluations and the tasks that must be done by the international organizations in order to distinguish countries from one another and define the kind of international aide to obtain a more balanced development than the one we currently have.

### Universalities or peculiarities

#### Camilo Flores

I think it is hard to establish general guidelines, but I think it is easy to establish that we can alienate ourselves to achieve progress. Maybe we can reach a common ground when it comes to defining progress and the guidelines we need to measure it because it would turn out to be very diverse, I would even consider a not-so-progressive notion to attempt a consensus in the matter. But I do believe that we can reach a consensus where progress could be **any constant and consistent behavior which takes us away from the imposition of negative external inputs towards society, non**

**sustainable activities, the destruction of renewable resources and the destruction of structures which are not replicable within society.**

#### Rolando Cordera

I consider it necessary to insist that the world is indeed global. Then, we are all on board the same ship, and there are some levels of global existence which imply global commitments; there are global responsibilities that cannot be rejected or dodged with the argument of particularities whether national or regional. Of course the big migration we are still experiencing, and which we may keep on experiencing even with the economic crisis, presents a topic concerning global rights. This migration is placing against the wall the notion of citizenship as something derived from national constitutions, that is, based on facts, citizen global rights are questioned and demanded. I think that, without undermining the idiosyncratic characteristic of progress and development, globalization does pose global themes in different aspects; for example, the rights for people who migrate, the topic about global inequality and the one concerning climate change.

At the same time, I think we can get closer to a vision of human development as progress, of course, in a more ambitious way. The human development as a fulfillment and expansion of rights; and that should be what within the fulfillment constitutes the evaluation criteria of human development. There has been work done in that direction already, for example, in the United Nations and within the academies, the public budgets are under scrutiny. How much do the expenditures budgets get us closer or further away from a rights regimen, such as the one concerning universal access to health care? On one side, I believe that's the field we must take into consideration; especially in the four areas nutrition, health, home and education. On the other side, concerning the environment and culture, are themes which are harder to deal with. Involve culture as a rights topic and as a theme to recover

once more what Adam Smith stated, also as a theme without which the economic trade, commerce and world market lose weight and deteriorate, ruin us, since it is strictly commercial and of immediate profit.

### Leonardo Lomeli

I think there is a place where we can get universal reference points of what progress is. For example in health issues, coverage of several basic services and concerning the capability to organize certain basic social services. There we can have common reference points with all countries, but at the same time I think there should also exist an area to deal with national issues. For example, there are countries without problems of cultural bonding, but there are other countries which do have those issues, I do not understand it as a homogenization, I rather get it as the possibility of eliminating discrimination for some sectors or specific groups. I think that progress is to **achieve basic rules for coexistence and for respect amongst people in a society**. I believe that as we move on to a better progress concept we have to acknowledge the existence of several referrals that may be universal and also areas to define local particularities, or to acknowledge the universality within the acceptance of the national particularities.

### Progress in Mexico. The past decades

#### Leonardo Lomeli

Against the beliefs in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, progress is not lineal. I consider progress is like the Hegelian spiral; ascending; therefore the general tendency is indeed towards progress, but we are not safe from setbacks. We have advanced in some things, we have receded in others; thus, sometimes the result is not very clear. Today we can be certain that we have advanced in the area of political freedom, we have receded in the individual safety area, we have stepped back – I think – in the social area, and of course, we have receded in the state's capability for guaranteeing our social rights,

which it never guaranteed it to the entire population, but in some types of services we had a better coverage in 1982 than the one we have today. For example, we may also argue how much and where began the deterioration of quality in public education.

#### Rolando Cordera

We have a quality problem, we advance a long distance in matter of coverage but we have a huge quality problem, and although we have great quantitative improvements which may be seen; for example in matters of access to health care thanks to the popular insurance, I think coverage is stuck and we have a large amount of Mexicans without a guaranteed access to health care. Concerning health care we are stuck, and in the area of education there are two terrible elements which make us doubt if we have progressed despite other indicators which speak about improvements. There is a terrible quality problem within basic education, and the percentage of young people old enough for a higher education in our country is way below the one found in other countries with a similar development status, or even below countries with a slightly lower development, not to compare ourselves with the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) club we belong to.

There are some dark and undefined areas which prevent us from saying "if we have progressed". For example, it is said that more than ninety something percent of children old enough, are in elementary school, and there was an improvement in middle school as well, but it is there where desertion begins, and there is no proof that this desertion is due to lack of talent, that is, detachable from their social environment and income level.

#### Camilo Flores

With the poverty paradox and analyzing the demography, if we measure progress today or if there has been progress in Mexico during the past 20 to 25 years

we can say yes, but we can also say that in 30 to 40 years we will have a contingent problem with progress, since linked to this poverty paradox and to job's non formality and instability, within 30 to 40 years we will speak about the ones whom today could have been benefited by progress, in 40 years they won't have social security nor a pension nor health care. Today the problem is for the young, the young from today will be the old in 40 years. But the progress achieved compared to those of 25 years ago, in 40 years we will be underneath the progress quotas. We will progress if we count our blessings today, but if we see it as a constant transaction perhaps it will be non-sustainable progress. My answer is not only if we progress up to today but if we have progressed until today what will happen with our progress in the next 40 years.

## Onward

### Rolando Cordera

In 2050 the measuring stick I would use to measure if there has been any progress would be: 1) if there is an effective universal access to health care, the health understood in the wide sense of the word; 2) if all the young old enough to do so are studying. That no one is left without a higher education for economical or environmental issues; 3) quality concepts apart from inclusion; 4) environmental restoration.

### Camilo Flores

A criterion to analyze if there is a sustained progress is to observe if the objectives we have in political, economical, social and cultural matter are congruent with the budget and the income we have. If we search for a universal access to health and culture we need to pay for it; currently we pay 11 GNP points in direct taxing, but we want objectives that cost 40 to 45 points. Then I think that **a way to visualize progress within 50 years is that we have a GNP income** which will allow us to achieve the objectives we have set as progress.

### Leonardo Lomeli

I think that in fact, progress is not only the existence of economic growth, but I think it is an important condition that there should be enough growth to generate the jobs needed by the economy and to generate the resources which allow the state to invest in guaranteeing rights and to boost the improvement of the most undeveloped regions in the country. In my opinion this condition is necessary to obtain a country in which, in fact, the pressure on natural resources is reduced, that we have a better distribution of population, and that we have better life conditions.



# Martín Puchet Anyul \*

## Ideas about the Concept of Progress and its Measurement \*\*

The following pages contain ideas about progress. They do not make an eager revision about the matter at hand, nor its measurement. Although there are many sources of inspiration about what I have written here, I decided not to include references because probably each paragraph has several of them and that would turn this work into a tedious reading and lecture.

\* Martín Puchet Anyul holds a PhD in economics. He does research on themes about national and social accounting, analysis of input-output and the economic dynamics, as well as economic methodology. He has always been interested in analytic aspects concerning the relations between economy and political science, lately dedicating himself on matters of efficiency and justice, as well as the institutional aspects of political science and technology.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.

The present essay is organized in the following manner. In the first part I declare what are the *intentions*. In the second part, I give the necessary *definitions* to originate the concept of progress with the purpose of establishing, in the third section, the *possibilities* which they have. In the fourth section I establish the concept's *dimensions*. In the fifth part I formulate some reflections about the proposed concept, in the sixth section I reveal the involved *institutions* and in the last part I introduce *measurements* of some of its aspects and a way of measuring it in a combined manner.

### 1. Intentions

*Declaration of origin.* I have never lived in the countryside. I have always lived in cities of several sizes: Durazno, the small town where I was born; Uruguay, and

Montevideo city during my childhood and teenage years; Buenos Aires and Mexico City the incommensurable cities of my now far-away youth. Whenever I have been away working or on holidays I have always been in cities. Therefore I do not have yet an experience which turns the distance and difference between the urban and rural world into something insightful. These are the discrepancies which have sustained the ideas of progress for many centuries, at least since the origins of political economy. They distinguished the rural aspect, which had the meaning of regression from that of urban which had the meaning of progress.

*Motivation.* My current impression is that in fact there is some sort of timeline in which we can place the different economies; such timeline has several landmarks such as: Pre-industrial, semi-industrial, industrial and post-industrial economies. And in this line we do not go from the rural to the urban, nor do we progress economically in the order I have called each stage. This intuition motivates my thoughts about progress.

*Objective.* I will attempt to postulate that progress plans to make up a plot amongst those aspects which come from the rural and the urban as well. At the same time I will declare that it establishes itself around the industrial revolution, but assuming that, in a paradoxical way, it is always subject to regressions linked to the degradation of the natural environment; social discrimination of some human beings by others; and the submission of individual freedom to the ups and downs of material transformation. Definitions which make possible the conception of progress together with the statement of possibilities of materializing it and the dimensions which comprise it are established with the purpose of discussing the other conceptualizations and their implications with the social scientists and philosophers which judge their budgets, as with politicians and statisticians who need an idea to forge actions and measurements.

*Material progress and purposes.* I do not deny that societies register material progress and that these have beneficial effects on human beings. Today a significant portion of humanity has an easier access to drinking water; to satisfy their needs for nourishment, dressing, and housing, as well as facing a wide spectrum of diseases, transportation and communication. All these compared to the way it was one hundred years ago. It is also possible to appreciate the fact that today we require less material resources, working hours or useful knowledge per habitant to satisfy thirst, avoid hunger, dress and have a home available, be healthy, go from one place to another and be able to communicate with other people, than it was necessary a century ago. At the same time, and although not in a very evident manner, the differences in possibilities which humans have to realize those actions and to achieve them with less resources, time and physical or mental energy have decreased. However the acknowledgment of material progress and of the minor differences in the possibilities humans have to achieve them, the purpose for defining progress is to be able to comprehend it in a more operative and concrete manner, while going beyond those essential changes for human history.

## 2. Definitions

**Material transformation cycle.** I will say that humans have the following: a) basic needs – water, food, clothing, housing; b) ability to remain healthy in general, which depends on the satisfaction of such basic needs and on the availability of knowledge, practices and devices to cure diseases; and c) capabilities for transporting and communicating. The basic needs, ability to remain healthy in general and the capabilities of transportation and communication require the use and production of the resources required to satisfy needs, create skills and generate capabilities.

There is a cycle in which the resources extracted from the natural surroundings and those produced by

human beings, are transformed into the satisfaction of needs, creation of skills and generation of capabilities. And such results which are called goods, acquired skills and generated capabilities make it possible to re-use those resources over and over, while at the same time extract and produce new ones. I will say that, such is the nature's material transformation cycle done by societies.

**Sustainability and efficiency.** The way in which the natural resources are extracted and the way in which those resources are used to obtain the mentioned results characterize the cycle of the material transformation. The cycle becomes sustainable if within a reasonable time frame of one human generation the environment's resources which were extracted from the natural surroundings in such a way does not degrade or become extinct.

At the same time, a cycle is efficient if it uses the available produced resources without degrading the quality of such resources, or causing unemployment, under-employment or over-employment in the different individual's categories which intervene as the different kinds of accumulated resources – human, physical, intangible or financial – which are used in the material transformation processes and which their respective owners contribute.

Sustainability is a result of the activities which use and exploit the natural non-human and environmental resources; efficiency is a result of the activities which use and exploit all the resources. Having sustainable and efficient material transformation cycles not only supposes minimizing the degradation and extinction costs along with those of exploitation, but to value the outcome of the productive human activities in terms of the individual and social exploitation of the potential capitals (or patrimony) in different aspects: natural, cultural, social, organizational, intellectual, labor and physical.

**Equity.** The human beings and the accumulated resources which participate in such cycle obtain different results and have different possibilities for intervening again. The needs – water, food, clothing, housing, acquired skills for health and the generated capabilities of transportation and communication – are distributed at the end of each cycle amongst groups of human beings in the corresponding and different proportions, particularly in amounts not always proportional to the resources contributed by each group. If the amounts of the obtained results for each one at the end of the cycle are distributed in the same proportions as the resources provided at the beginning and, at the same time, it is possible for us to reproduce those resources, then the process is equitable.

*Remuneration.* The way of valuing the initial contribution of each participant and comparing it with the obtained results, goes through the process of evaluation of the commitment as well as the remuneration obtained by everyone during the process. Each resource has a value for the one who provides it as well as for the overall participants. The owners of each type of resource obtain remunerations by means of their participation during such cycle. It is possible to say that the remuneration is the power for obtaining goods, skills and capabilities by means of their interchange or self-generation. Typically we consider the purchasing power of remuneration to be rather a salary, rent or profit as the way of comparing it with what it can obtain. As proposed below, this is a very an imperfect way of estimating how much is replaced by the remuneration obtained from the initial contribution.

*Individual remuneration.* Each human being comes to the material transformation cycle with some initial possibilities of satisfying their needs, with some basic skills for health and with certain primordial capabilities for transportation and communication. In the first place, equity refers to the fact that in the material transformation cycle, the obtained remuneration

makes it possible to maintain the goods, skills and capabilities that each individual had at the beginning; the initial input made to the process.

Two examples are quite demonstrative. The farmer who has assured nourishment with a certain nutritional value in his crop may lose the possibilities of obtaining the same satisfaction when he moves to the city and receives a salary or acquires an informal income which will not allow him to obtain food with the same value. The student who enters the labor market may lose resting hours in order to keep up with his/her school performance and so decrease his/her health. In both cases, the material transformation cycle concerning these individuals is not equal because it is not enough to maintain those goods and skills.

*Remuneration of resources and capitals.* At the same time, the resources which intervene in each cycle wear down by their own use and need to be replaced for the following cycles. For that, the equity refers in a second term, to the fact that remunerations replace the wear and assure the reproduction of the resources. And this comprises humans, teams and devices, relationships between humans as well as the relations between those humans and the physical resources, and the financial resources which guarantee different kinds of risks which are inseparable from the material transformation cycle.

Some examples which relate to the different types of resources follow.

*Human resources.* The wear of those humans who participate in any phase of the material transformation supposes that it is necessary to include in their remuneration the expenses which give the possibility of tending to professional diseases and those which are typical of every phase in life; the costs of retirement and those of the participants' reproduction by means

of the possibility of having offspring and raising them as well. These resources accumulate labor, technical and professional training of the individuals in way of the human capital which is included in the material transformation processes. For that, we require that the corresponding remuneration includes the expenses of training and education or the supply of funds for the realization of those processes with the necessary degrees of upgrading. When the permanent incorporation of knowledge rules over the material transformation it is necessary to assure the funding to create human resources which are ever-more qualified and adequate for the innovation.

*Physical resources.* The replacement of equipment and devices must be assured by remunerations which make it possible for their owners to not only cover the acquisition of identical resources but of those which allow them to obtain the same or even better results. It is obvious that the replacement in the exact same conditions makes no sense when technological change is the regular way for material transformation.

*Intangible resources.* Together with human beings and the required physical resources, we also need to reproduce the ways of relating the environments, the interactions which create innovations and the relations which assure trust amongst the participants. The organizations which accumulate social, organizational and intellectual capital, and which are the beneficiaries of the respective remunerations require that these should be generated in such a way that the mentioned capital may replace its corresponding depreciations.

*Financial resources.* The material transformation processes are subject to uncertainty. Those risks are of a different kind, from those of natural disasters; to the ones which are born from innovation, production and the interchange of goods, and must be covered by the organizations which make such processes. The guarantee



of such risks by means of hiring different insurances, specific coverage, quota credit lines and financial options, requires some sort of remuneration. For that, a part of the outcome in a process covers the costs, but another part, equally relevant, must cover the risks.

Thus, generally speaking, the concept of equity refers to the fact that during a process, each participant obtains a remuneration which is equal to the originally invested amount. But this calculation ceases to be simple when: i) we consider that the cycle repeats itself, but the future conditions are not the same as the present ones, ii) we perceive the fact that for humans to be able to act tomorrow, they need to maintain the current health, natural environment, social environment and reproduction conditions, while they upgrade their skills, iii) we can observe that the depreciation of any type of capital such as the physical, human, organizational, intellectual and social does not mean it is a gradual decrease of their capacity to operate, but rather a non continuous change in such capacity which depends on the interaction between the capital and the environment, as well as its way of being produced, and iv) we are inclined to think that the future will introduce risks and incidentals which alter the calculation of any cost by means of at least an additional calculation of the risks.

Equity supposes that during a process, each participant obtains the corresponding proportion of his/her initial investment. That which was available for the realization of the process will be maintained in such conditions that it may be part of the next cycle in the same manner as it did in the prior one. It is not subject to debate if it may be part of another role or if it may obtain a remuneration which allows it to improve its conditions for the future.

The principle of equity starts with the way in which each one of them managed to make its initial investment

into a process, without questioning the situation and assuming that once the process has started each participant will obtain the necessary circumstances to reproduce the cycle in the exact same conditions. Equity is the equivalence between the invested resources and the obtained results which are needed to start over with the exact same conditions. The initial resource distribution is the factor which determines that the results are obtained according to such distribution and therefore, if there is equity, the distribution will not be affected.

The typically economic examples of equity are the following: 1) the wage earning worker receives an equitable remuneration when the equity makes it possible to satisfy his/her needs, as well as maintaining health and achieving its transportation and communication capabilities in the exact same conditions before and after a productive cycle, and 2) the owner of the equipment and devices which comprise the physical capital receive an equivalent profit such that the equity is capable of maintaining and replacing such equipment in the same conditions as before and after a productive cycle.

**Equality.** Any human being which participates in the material transformation processes certainly has basic needs, health and capabilities for transportation and communication given by the circumstances of their lives. These circumstances are not the result of choices and decisions taken by an individual but rather, they were generated by biologic inheritance, social history and the natural environment beyond him/her. For those reasons, if the process in which he/she participates is equal it will allow him/her to: a) obtain an individual remuneration in such a way so he/she is able to participate again to satisfy his/her needs, maintain the skill and realize the capabilities, while at the same time, b) if he/she contributes with capital resources, then when the process is equal, it generates remunerations

for him/her to participate in the same manner the next cycle. But the procurement of the equal results concerning what each individual contributes does not modify his/her initial circumstances: His/her talents; the possession of the resources and capital which he/she has available; his/her relationships with others and with the environment; they will still be imposed by circumstances.

Two meaningful and paradigmatic examples have been the following. The individual who has a limited and specific talent will continue using it after many cycles. The poor people who do not have assets will also remain in this situation after being part of productive processes which is ruled by an equity principle.

The conditions imposed by the circumstances to each individual who participates in a material transformation process are quite diverse, and frequently, highly heterogeneous. Those conditions are the ones which determine that the initial contributions of each participant are very different. And on those conditions, together with the following contributions, depend the number of options and how many possibilities of achieving their aspirations, desires and objectives each person has, and how possible it is for a life plan to be put into practice. For that reason, beyond the possibility of obtaining the required things to achieve the basic needs, the propensity for health and the capabilities of transportation and communication are required, whilst at the same time we know which are the minimum conditions that all humans who belong to a society must have to realize their own life plans.

Effective equality in a society is when everyone has the same minimum conditions to realize their life plans. The way for determining these minimum conditions depends on which are the necessary resources to provide the basic needs, the propensity for health and the capabilities of transportation and communication.

### 3. Possibilities

Next, we backtrack towards some prior definitions to explore their limitations and scopes.

**Expansion and extension of the basic needs, skills and capabilities.** Human history is the continuous expansion and extension of basic needs. In such expansion we have the convergence of the developing knowledge of which are the most appropriate needs for humans and the coding of the subjective experience of everyone concerning what they find necessary. At the same time, new products which satisfy thirst and hunger are developed. Today, water and food are required in different proportions, qualities and compositions because the scientific knowledge on nutrition has progressed. But at the same time they have different characteristics as the result of the diversity in human experience which deems necessary certain ways of preparing, presenting and integrating water and food to daily life. Clothing also has been deeply modified by the knowledge of properties and forms of materials and their relations with the body and environment, as well as the resulting production of new garments. Also, human experience and the enjoyment of clothing garments have created an array of basic needs which did not exist thirty or forty years ago. The same has happened with housing in which both strengths (knowledge which transforms its construction and forms, and the experiences which modify the way humans manage to own their spaces) have expanded the needs.

The expansion of the basic needs, and their appreciation in terms which allow them to incorporate in the appropriate manner to the relations amongst humans, and between them and the natural surrounding, is under attack by some messages and actions of a very different matter, which prevent us differentiating the superfluous and formulating strategies to reach the satisfaction of those needs.

Healthcare skills have increased as a historic result of the relation between human beings and their skills, functions and corporeity, and at the same time as a privileged result of the repercussions of the scientific research concerning health conditions and the possibilities of curing diseases. Thus, today healthcare skills depend on the incorporation of scientific knowledge in routines and habits of daily life, and also on the experience which humans have acquired for handling their biological rhythms and their physical and mental energies.

In this field, we can also see that the extension of the essential skill for life and the way we handle it is constantly interfered with messages and actions which prevent us from capturing the scope of such extension and its requirements.

Probably the greatest extension in sight is the one which is linked to the capabilities of transportation and communication. We only need to think that eighty years ago there was no air transportation and that thirty years ago there were neither mobile telephones nor communication via computers to estimate the magnitude of the change experienced in a human generation.

Also, the extension and appraisalment of those capabilities are disputed by means of messages and actions of diverse types.

It is convenient to ponder here on some specific points which are relative to the messages which interfere with the configuration of needs such as the reduction of resources by human actions.

**Exaggerations and obsessions.** To confirm the expansion of basic needs, health care skills and capabilities for transportation and communication does not mean to disclaim that such a process is accompanied in every case by the generation of exaggerations and even obsessions which may make us question the appearance

of some of them. Some examples are useful to contrast the dissatisfaction of the needs, the non-realization of minimum health care skills or the impossibility of using the capabilities of transportation and communication at least in a minimum manner. Imagine yourself in the exaggeration of drinking purified water, eating organic food or wearing aerodynamic shoes and in obsessions such as making exercise to develop different muscular zones or for communicating with a mobile phone for any reason or for everything.

The quality of many of the needs which have been rising is rooted in the rural world. The virtues of fresh water from a spring, organic food, clothes made of natural fibers, the food supplements contained in vegetables or fresh fruit and walking to the main activity centers, are those only available in the countryside. The material transformation process linked to industry created a distancing of great portions of humanity from the rural zones and at the same time these used goods which lost their natural qualities and created unwanted harms: water pollution, food without the proper nutrients, a sedentary way of life, and transportation without body movement.

**Over-exploitation of the environment's resources.** Together with the expansion of everything required by human beings, some industrial processes were incubated, which have degraded environmental resources and in some cases they have become extinct. That is the environmental over-exploitation which many zones in the natural environment suffer and which shows that they are not sustainable processes.

**Over-exploitation and under-exploitation of other resources.** Also, the expansive dynamic has coupled the excessive and deficient uses of resources. There is some inefficiency linked to the exhausting of physical and intangible resources as well as to the non-utilization of important bands of human resources. Both types of inefficiency generate inadequate uses of resources.

The exploitation of natural resources or of physical or human resources is typical of the material transformation processes. It is the way in which societies act upon themselves and upon nature when they do so in a sustainable and efficient manner. Extracting the flows of environmental resources or those of other resources, particularly those of humans, supposes wear actions of the latter which are in the end irreparable for those who suffer them. That is why it is so important for such activities which have in them an exploitation character to be carried out in a balanced – sustainable and efficient – manner, as well as in an equitable and egalitarian way.

There is **inequity** when the material transformation process generates remunerations which do not cover the initial contribution. There is **inequality** when the material transformation process generates the minimum conditions which are different for some groups than others.

The commonly-defended concept of progress is an extremely narrow one, which postulates that a society progresses if it has material improvements as the result of an increase in efficiency without such improvements being sustainable, equitable or egalitarian. Another concept is the one which postulates that a society progresses when the material improvements are a product of efficient and equitable processes, although they are neither really sustainable or egalitarian. One would rather say that society not only progresses but also develops itself if, aside from putting into practice material transformation processes which are efficient and equitable they are at the same time sustainable and egalitarian.

#### 4. Dimensions

In the previous pages, the discussed dimensions consider appraisals of the processes which do not suppose subjective criteria. In some way, sustainability

and efficiency refer to the dynamic balance between the availability of resources and their use; while equity and equality refer, in one case, to the adequate proportion of remunerations concerning the reproduction of capital resources and, in the other, they refer to the comparison of the minimum objective conditions of those who contribute resources and capital.

**Subjective evaluations.** The correspondence between natural evolution and economic growth which supposes the concept of sustainability does not imply, in principle, an appraisal in itself about the harmony between nature and economy. When a transformation process is considered sustainable because the mentioned correspondence supposes that the capability of enjoying the natural environment is possible, then a favorable subjective appraisal for the taste for nature is introduced. It exceeds the concern for the protection and conservation of the environment because it is a way of preserving the human species and it affirms in an independent manner ethical and aesthetic values.

In turn, the adequacy between economic production and the desires of individuals in a society which supposes the concept of equality, as long as the minimum conditions are met, are those required so that each person has the possibility to realize his/her life plan, (that is, to fulfill his/her desires) may have an appraisal implication of the subjective kind. When a material transformation process is considered egalitarian because the indicated adequacy supposes that the realization of people according to their life plans is socially useful, then we are incorporating a favorable subjective evaluation of the equality of human beings. This goes beyond the role placed by equality in social stability to affirm ethical and political values. So, beyond sustainability and equality, it is possible to sustain the usefulness both criteria have, if we are thinking that beyond the harmony with nature and social stability, they form a part of ethical, aesthetic and political ideals.

**Happiness.** The material improvements of societies have been judged from a spiritual perspective based on the beliefs of human beings. These beliefs have a different epistemic character and pass over the wide spectrum which comprises religions, political ideologies, the normative formulations of a judicial or philosophical matter or common sense. And so, beyond the emerging definitions of the descriptions and the explanations of all material transformation processes, the judgments made from beliefs have allowed us to criticize everything through history.

For that, when we judge from beliefs, it is possible that everything may be considered and placed more or less far away from a normative ideal. This judgment makes it possible for people to feel better or worse depending on how they consider the state of the society they live in, regarding what their beliefs tell them. That is, in general, the source of (un)happiness of people. When the beliefs in a society are unified, it is relatively easy to establish how far or how close its members consider it compared to the other one which they believe it is ideal to live in. But in societies we can see a very large of the beliefs, by simply looking at the proliferation of religious credos. Then, it is important to have not only criteria, as the ones before, but to determine as well how happy are the members of a society in relation to the situation they are currently experiencing. This takes account not only of the improvements in the material order, but also in the spiritual one.

**Concept of progress.** The progress of a society happens when the material transformation processes turn progressively more sustainable, efficient, equitable and egalitarian and when people judge the society they live in, in such a way that they consider themselves happier.

This concept is relative and therefore supposes measuring its different objective and subjective dimensions to deem it useful from the analytical and operative point of view.

## 5. Reflections

It is convenient to return to the fundamentals of the concept of progress proposed, to indicate connections between definitions, possibilities and dimensions.

Progress does not admit anymore an interpretation which assumes that development is to pass from rural to urban. There will only be progress if finally there is harmony between the material transformations created and imposed by human beings and in the natural world.

Sustainability must reflect the value they have in order for humanity to be fed with organic products, preserve nature where we live in and assure the activity and contemplation cycles which are established between society and the natural environment. When development becomes sustainable, the values from the rural world are integrated with those which come from the urban world and show that the necessary capability of societies to interact harmoniously with nature must prevail.

Human activities use resources over or below their potentiality; the exploitation of what is available for any organized or rational process is not always adequate for the existing magnitudes and to its reproduction capabilities. The creation of new resources and capital for the material transformation is not always assured. Natural disasters lead human beings to face unpredictable situations all the time.

For that, progress supposes the efficient use of what is available and the appraisal of the risk in each activity beyond the possibilities of routine repetition. To use and assign what is potentially available supposes that economies develop measuring the risks in their possibilities. The material transformation takes place in an economical world in which the potentially reachable, and the risks of realizing the next cycle, require planning and strategies.

When the development is efficient and equitable, this incorporates the values which recognize the need to foresee future scenarios and control risks linked to innovation, flaws in the provision of resources and disasters produced by the natural environment.

The acknowledgment that the social dynamic creates inequality forces the fact that progress consists of improving the initial circumstances of the people who are less favored as if those circumstances were the result of uncertainty. The contemporary social complexity which has resulted from the interaction between the natural and cultural environments, social configurations, and economic structures force us to consider that the circumstances of each individual in the social world are random.

Therefore, equality must express the value that societies have for the fact that complex processes leave some human beings in permanent disadvantage compared to others at the margin of the responsibilities of those involved. If, at the beginning of life, no one knew the situation in which they would end up by means of the environmental, cultural, social and economical changes, they would not want that the distribution of resources and capital which they obtained were unfavorable.

When there is an egalitarian development, we include values of competition with others, which come from cooperation; human individualization becomes compatible with social solidarity with people in unfavorable situations.

But progress, in the proposed sense, should not only consider: i) the sustainable development which leads to harmony with nature, ii) efficient development which avoids waste and the under-utilization or the over-exploitation of resources, iii) equitable development which supposes that, in the future, the same conditions for a new material transformation will exist, that is,

that the environmental, human, physical, intangible and financial resources must be assured to create the same performance as the one seen before, and iv) egalitarian development which compensates the less favored ones for the lack of possibilities. Progress will be such if these objective components correspond to the subjective satisfaction of people.

The possible harmonious interaction between natural, economical and social worlds must be judged as such by the spiritual world of societies. The critique horizon about the existing things which starts from the beliefs of human beings and combines utopia, models for action, normative criteria or circumstantial opinions, is decisive to determine the progress of a society. The subjective valuation of what happens is the key to indicate in what way the objectivity of relations between nature, economy and society are internalized by people. And only they rate the process in the end.

## 6. Institutions

The evaluation of material transformation processes which is done when deciding if they suppose development which is sustainable, efficient, egalitarian and happy, implies the consideration that they take place in an institutional framework. This frame is formed by the sets of rules which every society has, that is, those which make it possible to finalize or block sustainability, efficiency, equity, equality or happiness. For that, each one of progress' dimensions is also conceivable as one in which we can judge the quality of the institutions in that direction. In this way, sustainability informs us about the quality in the institutional frame in which the relations between the natural environment and society are formed; the efficiency takes into account of the manner in which the rules regulate the participation of people and the use of resources so they are not under- or over-exploited; equity makes it possible to establish if any of the regulations over the remunerations which should be received by

the owners of resources and capitals are enough to assure a permanent, and at the same time adequate, reproduction which does not impede development; equality shows if the distribution structures of resources are been regulated and complemented to generate the minimum conditions which assure that people realize their life plans; happiness shows how adequate are the rules for people to believe what they want and judge the world from their utopia, models, norms and common sense.

Probably, the main result of the evaluation of societies' progress is a concomitant judgment about the need to improve the institutional net, or which of its parts must be modified decisively.

## 7. Measurements

Several indicators measure some characteristics of progress such as the ones mentioned above. Sustainability usually uses some kind of measure of the green GNP. Efficiency resorts to comparisons of the potential GNP and equity uses indexes which measure wellbeing together with sustainability <index of sustainable economic wellbeing (ISEW)><sup>1</sup>, or human development <human development index (HDI)>. Equality uses some measure of inequality in the income or richness distribution, such as the Gini coefficient. Finally, subjective wellbeing uses some happiness index such as the satisfaction of life index for its own measurement.

There are some integrated indexes which have the purpose of measuring a multi-dimensional magnitude such as the concept of progress which we define here, but without resorting to the GNP per capita. These are, for example, the genuine progress index (GPI) or the happy planet index (HPI).

<sup>1</sup> In parenthesis we find the proper initials for the corresponding indicators.

**Measurement of progress.** The measurement of progress considers the following five normalized indicators which make up a pentagon. The area of the pentagon made by the indicators for a country is the measure of progress concerning the area of a regular pentagon which has in its vertices the corresponding unit of the dimension of each indicator.

- Ratio between the green gross domestic product ( $Y_v$ ) and the gross domestic product ( $Y$ ).
- Ratio between  $Y$  and the potential domestic income ( $Y^*$ ).
- Ratio between the real wages ( $w$ ) and the real compensating wages which covers the basic needs, skills for health, capabilities for transportation and communication and the education to maintain those needs, skills and capabilities ( $w^*$ ).
- Normalized Gini index of the income or richness distribution ( $G$ ).
- Normalized happiness index obtained by means of some indicator of satisfaction of life or of perception of quality of life ( $F$ ).

A comparison of these indicators with the definitions and considerations realized makes it possible to establish everything which is needed in order to measure progress in a comprehensive and rigorous manner.





# Alicia Puyana\*

## Thoughts about Progress. Within Fifty Years\*\*

To ponder on progress, in the lines I was asked by the Forum, is meditation exercise based on social conscience aiming to present the moral norms, the set duties and values that guide and direct all social life, apply to all human beings, and from which all duties and obligations derive. Therefore, by definition, progress can not, and ought not, to abstract from the knowledge received in university, work and vital experiences. I consider it most convenient to concentrate in some recent ideas about progress.

It is not enough to suggest "we do not measure what really matters". It is important to carefully think that something is wrong in the economic discipline and in economic policies. They both have distanced themselves

from the search for collective wellbeing and turned exclusively into tools for capital reproduction, treating as antagonists, equality and efficiency or the "rational use of the productive factors". That artificial dichotomy helped to enthrone a false dilemma between positive and normative economics. Additionally, when we do not prioritize the elements which constitute progress, according to the set of moral principles, "everything is important and nothing is relevant". I ask myself what implications come from stating that economic growth does not matter, since "...for ordinary people, measures like these (GDP and commerce growth, AP) were too detached from their everyday life to have real meaning, and worse, sometimes contradicted their own experience".<sup>1</sup> I guess that for Briscoe the "ordinary people" are the poor ones, precisely the majority which in Mexico, and elsewhere, needs to work for a living. In order for such "ordinary people" to be able to work, economic growth is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. The type of growth and the kind of jobs

\* Alicia Puyana holds a PhD in Economics. She is author of numerous articles and author/editor of several books concerning regional economic integration, economic growth in Latin America, the economic effects of oil discoveries in Colombia and Mexico and about the production for global value chains (maquila) in Mexico and other Latin American countries.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.

<sup>1</sup> Simon Briscoe, 2009, "A more humane way to measure progress", *Financial Times*, January 31 2009, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/b2926d7e-eb63-11dd-bb6e-0000779fd2ac.html>, February 2, 2009

created do matter. To finance what Briscoe includes in progress: Security; education; health; children and the elderly; the preservation of the environment; making reality of the right to be heard and respected; and to know the properties and names of every single plant (as in the survey of Bhutan's Kingdom), amongst others, demands colossal investments, implies high surplus and the political will to apply part of it to provide all the above mentioned goods to the entire population, in equal amounts for everyone and without any type of discrimination. In other words, it commands a *social pact*. These two elements, economic surplus and social pact constitute the base and the measure of progress. And I am sure, here in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, an important surplus does exist, but not the political will to agree on a social pact. The political will for social justice and to reduce inequality has been fading out since the end of the seventies, but especially since the eighties with the Reagan-Thatcher<sup>2</sup> conservative revolution; the crumbling of socialism; the dismantling of the welfare state, and the weakening of the social cohesion. All these gave birth to a new moral, to the triumph of the individual rights over the social duties. These new individualist moral demands from each person the maximum efficiency not only in work but even in pleasure, obliges him to care for his health and to look always young and fit, all the time to be on command<sup>3</sup>. Only then, can the individual claim and maintain its right to a hedonistic maximum. In this new word, every aspect of the reproduction both

of the economy and of social life, were put to play in the stock-exchange casino. *This development is not really progress; it casts insecurity all along life.*

## 1

When I studied economics<sup>4</sup>, the information and available tools to analyze the economic trajectory of our countries were weak, compared with the long series of current data and the computers and programmes we have today at our disposal. *It is a material progress, which has transformed the study and practice of economy.*

At that time, some hypothesis was proposed which went beyond the existing modeling capabilities. The development theoreticians insisted in increasing returns to scale, the imperfection of information and the role of institutions as historic creations. The orthodox economy evolved within the frames of perfect competition, decreasing returns. By doing so, it got rid of the richness of the real world and transformed the abstraction into reality<sup>5</sup>. *It is a regression in economic thinking.*

If theoretically useful, those models abandon important elements, because of insufficient or imperfect information or because of ideological preferences. The classic and neoclassic economy pretend to explain the world with absolute laws under the premise that society is ruled by similar rules as the ones found in physics, with the capability of predicting<sup>6</sup>. With econometrics, economics won in the precision of what

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Thatcher has presented in very short sentences the essence of the conservative revolution: "New Labour was my finest creation", quoted in Palma, 2009 "The revenge of the market on the rentiers. Why neo-liberal reports of the end of history turned out to be premature" in *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 2009 33(4):829-869; doi:10.1093/cje/bep037; and: "There is no such thing as society: there are individual men and women, and there are families" consulted in <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/margarethth165648.html>.

<sup>3</sup> A very good Picture of this culture was depicted in the film "American Psycho".

<sup>4</sup> All my studies are in economics, therefore I do not have the insights of a sociologist or an antropologists, despite my efforts to study some of these disciplines.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Krugman, 1999, " The Fall And Rise of Development Economics", <http://web.mit.edu/krugman/www/dishpan.html>

<sup>6</sup> Kwame Sundaram Jomo (Editor), 2005, *The Pioneers of Development Economics. Great Economists on Development*. New York-London, Zed Books.

it may apprehend. But, because of what it abstracts, it lost all relevance. In this process, macro economy was assimilated to micro economy and, because of all the forgotten knowledge, arrived to the "macro economy middle ages"<sup>7</sup>. Economics become "...a branch of applied mathematics."<sup>8</sup> What is more troubling is the course the teaching of economics has taken. A commission set up by the *American Economic Association*, concluded that: '...graduate programs may be turning out a generation with too many *idiot savants* skilled in technique but innocent of real economic issues'.<sup>9</sup> Economists are experts on mathematical modeling but lack knowledge. In a letter to the Queen who asked, in November 2008 in the London School of Economics why nobody saw the crisis coming, a group of distinguish economist expressed their concern about this problem: What has been scarce is a professional wisdom informed by a rich knowledge of psychology, institutional structures and historical precedents. This insufficiency has been apparent among those economists giving advice to governments, banks, businesses and policy institutes<sup>10</sup>. *That is another grave regression.*

There are plenty of statistics covering all kind of topics, at the disposal of academics, politicians and public administrators, producers associations, multilateral organizations. And we well know that what is measurable is controllable.

Using "physics metaphors" allows classic and neoclassic economics to present itself as a discipline with inherently scientific rationality, which goes

beyond the interests of social classes and displaces the distribution of income to the quicksand of *social policy*. Equality, employment and poverty became exogenous variables<sup>11</sup> ...*Progress is released from the real content.*

That is why we should seriously ponder on the character of economics as a social science and on what is the economist's role, when, as professionals in a social discipline they participate, from a position in the State, in the design of economic policies<sup>12</sup>. We have to think as well about the possible change in character of the economy and the role played by the economists, in the wake of changes such as: The fall of socialism; the scientific and technologic revolution; the unification of the world market of goods and capitals. These transformations are brandished in order to reinforce the idea of the scientific objectivity of economics and to legitimate as rational only one economic model and only a determined type of economist. In that way, the gap between economics and politics is further broadened. "...the economist, bearer of a legitimate knowledge, will be transformed into a public actor when it enters in the political institution network. At this moment, he links his knowledge to political power<sup>13</sup> .... and while participating in the definition of policies or laws, all of them, decisions of compulsory character, they have the power of imposing their will upon each one of all social relations. That is true even if the economists argue they do not belong to any party, since to affect or to promote specific interests within society is a political act. The non-militancy

<sup>7</sup> P. Krugman, *A Dark Age of Macroeconomics* (wonkish), in <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/> (consulted march 15, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> "Report of the Comission on Graduate Education in Economics", *Journal of Economic Literature*, Sept. 1991, 1035-1053. The commission was set up by the American Economics Association.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Letter to the Queen*, consulted August 15, 2009, in <http://www.docstoc.com/docs/9919280/queen2009b>

<sup>11</sup> K.S Jomo, y E.S. Reiner, 2005, *Development Economics*, London-NY, p. ix

<sup>12</sup> A. Puyana, 2007, "La Ciencia Económica, el Poder, la Nueva Economía y la Nueva Izquierda", *Seminario de Estudios Avanzados "Izquierda y sociedad. ¿Hay un futuro democrático para América Latina?"*. UNAM-Fundación F. Ebert. Nov. 2007

<sup>13</sup> Palacios, M.A. 2005, "Knowledge is Power: The Case of Colombian Econmists", In: V. Fitzgerald y R. Thorp, Eds. 2005, *Economic Doctrines in Latin America: Origins, Embedding and Evolution*, Palgrave, Oxford, UK.

does not guarantee ideological neutrality, which is supposedly endorsed by the "scientific objectivity of economics".<sup>14</sup>

According to Palacios, the economist has considered himself as an instrument of modernization which is feasible if technocrats able to manage public matters with political neutrality are moved to key government positions. The intention of modernization has been to depoliticize, to bureaucratize, the administration which has turned into a hotly disputed argument between technocracy (modernity) and politics (backwardness) and into a decrease in decision power, in economic matters, of the elected authorities. Palacios adds that modernization fails when the other structures remain untouched, like in Latin America. In face of the concentration of wealth, the market is far from perfect and competitive and there is no capable regulating capacity. Who will take Slim or Televisa in hand? The economists took leadership in the redefinition of the economic borders of the state, as if these were a matter of accounting efficiency and if the state-society relationships were a synthesizable category in the internal rate of return.

### What are findings of my research in the past 15 years?

Several elements I can not explain with the prevailing orthodoxy:

1. Weakness of the relation between economic growth and the generation of jobs in the formal and tradable sectors.

<sup>14</sup> Woods, N. (2005). "The Bretton Woods Institutions and the Transmission of Neo-Liberal ideas in Mexico", in Fitzgerald, V. and Thorp, R., *Economic Doctrines in Latin America. Origins, Embedding and Evolution*, Palgrave, St. Anthony's Series, Oxford, 2005; Arjo Klamer, "The Making of an Economist", *Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 1, Number 2, Fall 1987, pp. 95-11

2. Premature fall in the participation of the manufacturing and agricultural sectors within total GNP and employment, resulting in intensification of poverty and migration-international and rural-urban.
3. Stagnation of low growth of labour productivity;
4. No direct, strong relation between exports growth and the growth of GDP productivity and employment, even in the exporting activities such as the maquila.
5. Weakening of the relation between economic growth and reduction of poverty and income concentration.

The export-lead model and the liberation of the capital market could not allow the developing countries to progress in industrialization because it eliminated the measures employed by the already-developed countries. It was in fact, "*removing the ladder*" which allowed England and the USA and others to ascend in industrialization the progress in the activities with real potential to increase productivity<sup>15</sup>. Manufacturing has the greatest potential in technology and in productivity growth<sup>16</sup>. And the increase in productivity is the basis for an improvement in income and salaries.

It may sound contradictory to insist in the growth of production and productivity. But it is necessary since our societies have not yet guaranteed full satisfaction of basic needs for everyone; until these have been reached, growth is necessary. Nevertheless, "Once our basic needs are met,

<sup>15</sup> F. List, 1885. "The National System of Political Economy", London: Longmans, Green, citado en Ha-Joon Chang, 2002, *Kicking Away the Ladder – Development Strategy in Historical Perspective*, Anthem Press, London, on 10 June 2002.

<sup>16</sup> N. Kaldor, (1967) *Strategic Factors in Economic Development*, New York, Ithaca. "The Real Exchange Rate and Economic Growth", *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, Spring 2009.

aiming for additional wealth does not represent an efficient way to significantly increase well-being"<sup>17</sup>. Mexico is far from guaranteeing the basic needs for the entire population, not even the minimum ones promised by the focused poverty programs. Growth may allow everyone to develop their social potential and the satisfaction of their needs, but we have to have always in mind that growth is not an end by itself. Let alone, exports growth or the control of inflation or the reduction of fiscal deficit. These are means, tools to the final objective: general welfare.

## 2

Progress implies "comprehension of nature, for our use without destroying it". The discovery of vaccines, penicillin, anesthesia, the pill, steam engines, the jet, nuclear energy, information technologies, those all confirm that there has been progress. But, has it been balanced? Where can it take us? It is most likely there will be technical progress in the future even with regard to nature. But, will the discoveries linked to the genome create a deep division in society of the kind "suitable" or "non suitable"?

Progress is also the knowledge and comprehension of human beings, without defining it according to reductionism theories which strip them from their fears, anguish, values, feelings, passions; from their humanity.

The notion of progress must include the importance and dignity of work. This notion implies an improvement in the quality of life, a reorientation and revalidation of leisure, pleasure, and of "happiness". We have to understand that "...unemployment has an effect that goes well beyond the loss of income to which it gives rise"<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> NEF, 2008, "bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet".

<sup>18</sup> Stiglitz on the report of the International Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, consulted in the Financial Times, September 13, 2009 in: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/95b492a8-a095-11de-b9ef-00144feabdc0.html>

According to Keynes, and also with Smith and Ricardo, progress is the spiritual, political and social improvement of the entire society. In "Economic Possibilities of our Grandchildren"<sup>19</sup>, he suggests that, once society has solved "the economic problem, the struggle for subsistence...", we can aim for the satisfaction of other more important needs, like spending more time cultivating the fine arts. Scientific progress will free humanity from the need to work until exhaustion. According to Keynes, humanity has two kinds of needs: The absolute ones (food, home, health, etc.) and the relative ones, which make someone feel superior to others and differ from the absolutes because they are never satisfied. The satisfaction of the absolute needs will allow us to dedicate our time for the cultivation of the spirit, as long as there is a cultural transformation, which rewards the creative leisure, and scale down the satisfaction of relative needs. For Keynes, technological progress and productivity growth would require us to work for no more than 15 hours per week, to satisfy basic needs, as long as there were the necessary change in morality which determines the distribution of wealth, sanctions and rewards.

For the majority of the population, the Mexican economy is not generating satisfactory and profitable work, and the real, minimum and median wages have intensively deteriorated. For the majority of the population, the road towards solving the "economic problem" is still a long way ahead; as the fight for survival up till now is. Or in Sen's words, we have not achieved the necessary freedom to obtain wellbeing, which is: "...Freedom from hunger, or being free from malaria."<sup>20</sup> Such freedom, which is essential for the quality of life, depends, amongst others, on the satisfaction of the

<sup>19</sup> Keynes, J.M. 1930, *Economic Possibilities of our Grandchildren*, read at: <http://www.econ.yale.edu/smith/econ116a/keynes1.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Sen, A. 1993, "Capabilities and Well-being", in Nussbaum, M. and Sen, A. 1993, *The Quality of Life*, OUP, p. 44.

basic needs. "...unless certain basic welfare conditions are met and resources and opportunities provided, we cannot seriously claim that society is preserving and protecting everyone's freedom."<sup>21</sup>

First, we must assure the right conditions for people to have sufficient means to appropriately satisfy absolute needs. This satisfaction must not be dependent either on transferences nor on private philanthropy. There will always be transferences, there are in Sweden, or Switzerland and Germany, but there, transferences are not the ones that barely save people from hunger.

There has been material progress. But, is there any social progress accordingly to the principles mentioned above?

For the first three-tenths of the Mexican population, whose participation in income is lower than the capital accumulated by Mr. Carlos Slim, the freedom of choice is invalid or extremely restricted; its voice is not heard; but even for broad segments of the middle classes their future or their children's future is not secure.

At the moment of redefining the state's frontiers, the rate of return for capital investments was erected as the ruling axis for the economy and efficiency; profits and competitiveness as the ruling criteria of the public policies, which took pre-eminence over equity. **The principle that efficiency and equity form a unit and as such they must be** a political economy core topic and a matter of discussion of democratic regimes, and not, as today, that the debate is focused on whether with democracy the market may assure or not, Pareto efficiency<sup>22</sup>. Equity is relegated to residual measures,

out of economic policies, just to compensate for the devastation which is imposed on equity by the exclusive preference to efficiency and capital's rate of return. *There is regression in the way public policy is managed.*

Coupled to the application of the economic model and to the rhetoric of poverty relief policies, essential changes in ethics, which I can not qualify as progress, have gained ground. There is a greater tolerance towards levels of poverty and inequality which, for unfairness, were previously rejected as absolutely and morally unacceptable. This tolerance guided the acceptance, as normal, of "precarious jobs"<sup>23</sup>. It is accepted as economically rational, consequently, that no interventions in the labour market should be instrumented, and the power of the workers to negotiate had to be eroded. These new rules were supposed to generate more employment, greater investments and better salaries. Salaries have been reduced, the gap between qualified work and non-qualified have widened; the substitution-elasticity of non-qualified labour has increased, the income elasticity of labour demand has been reduced and salary insecurity has increased as well.

It was accepted that fiscal policy has be neutral, not altering the primary distribution of income. But if it turns out to be necessary to modify it, it should only be done marginally, without altering the rate of return of capital, measured in international terms. As the main source of fiscal income, direct taxation was replaced by the indirect taxes, like the VAT, a regressive and pro-cyclical tax. Thus, we arrived at a minimalist welfare state.

What concept of progress must we have in the remaining of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

<sup>21</sup> Korsgaard, C.M. 1993, "Commentary to Cohen and Sen", in Nussbaum, M. and Sen, A. 1993, *The Quality of Life*, OUP, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> E. Stiglitz, 1991: "The Invisible Hand and Modern Welfare Economics". NBER Working paper No 3641, March 1991.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Atkinson "Is rising Income inequality Inevitable? A Critique of the Transatlantic Consensus", WIDER 1999

Well, I think there are several points which allow us to walk towards the social progress needed in Mexico:

1. To achieve a more egalitarian society, in economic, social and political terms. For it, it is indispensable not to centre the reduction of poverty and inequality on economic growth and the trickle-down effect. To reduce poverty in this way, we would need environmentally unsustainable growth rates<sup>24</sup>.
2. To adopt strongly distributive policies, which have to be radically different to the current ones which, because they are marginal, do not affect poverty and do not enhance the capacity of at least reaching 25 per cent of the population to "solve the economic problem".
3. To eliminate the false dichotomy between equity and efficiency and to re-establish the most rational use of the productive factors, primarily the work at the core of public policies: macroeconomic, monetary, exchange and fiscal policies.
4. To improve the implementation of public services: education and health, housing, and nutrition, by broadening the access and raising the amount and quality of public services, so they stop being means of discrimination and act as channels for social mobility and progress. The endowment of public education (and health) must be of such quality and volume as to coerce the private sector to lower its prices. Then, the public and private services may be an option for every citizen of any economic or social status.
5. To guarantee full citizenship, the equality of everyone in the face of the law while designing

<sup>24</sup> D. Woodward, and A. Simms, 2006, "Growth isn't working. The unbalanced distribution of benefits and costs from economic growth", NEF London.

mechanisms of positive discrimination, this will help to reach the previous points. In the face of dramatic social inequality and the tremendous wealth and income concentration, positive discrimination is indispensable.

6. To accept that there are no markets, because of the existence of *de facto* powers which control them (it is enough to think of the power of the television networks, and their capacity to define public politics and promote voting). It is necessary to abandon the myth of perfect competition, complete information and a levelled playing field for everyone. The government must create markets and organize freedom for everyone, as prescribed by Amartya Sen. Then there will be progress.

### 3

Goals must be oriented to compensate work with criteria of equity and not of microeconomic performance exclusively. In the next 50 years, we must produce a revolution in the way we consider salary and employment; what are efficiency, justice and freedom and what are the ways to guarantee them all to all citizens. The raising of our children is a "job" in itself, and all the household work is a job which contributes to the growth of GDP. Do household work and the women's double shift help to reduce the cost of the labour force and to maintain wages relatively low? The macro economy, with a gender perspective, gives clues for this evaluation and for needed modifications of the current principles of the macro economy.

In a society in progress it is inadmissible to think that there is a natural rate of "unemployment", but still more serious is the acceptance, as economically rational, of the unemployment camouflaged in the very low productivity informal sector, the Colombian *rebusque*, which in Mexico accounts for 64 per cent of employment.



All the economically active population must enter the circuit of the modern economy in order to achieve a generalized increase in productivity and to fulfil the utopia Keynes presented. A good part of the older generation fall victim to poverty or misery, because they never contributed to social security or because pensions are not enough. It is convenient to create working opportunities for the "retired", only then, will they have a dignified and independent life, with affection and respect.

#### 4

Progress is Universal. The technological progress of the past centuries has made the Earth smaller. The national frontiers must open to labour movements, as the borders for the movements of goods and capitals were totally eliminated.

There are universal parameters. For example, the satisfaction of basic needs which ought to allow every citizen development and freedom as presented above. Conditioning progress to the perception of individuals about their happiness and relegating their material conditions, the satisfaction of basic needs, to second place, may drive us to greater errors than those we want to solve. It "...may only depict how well people adapt, conform to the current state of things, with the current conditions". Is conformism the measure of the new concept of progress we are heading towards?

Any particularity in the notion of progress for Mexico must start from the acknowledgment of basic deprivation experienced by a large part of society. It has to address, in first place, the quantitative and qualitative deficit in the access to basic needs. The deficit in material wellbeing is overpowering.

This novel worry about the definitions of progress is framed within the concept of modernization, which assumes that society can be integrated by the supply of welfare and political spaces created by the market.

But, I wonder, is it not a strategy which comes from developed countries which already have solved "the economic problem" and can concentrate their attention on other problems, always centering their solution in GDP growth and market signals?

#### 5

From the economy's point of view there is a lot to do. To release the macro from the dark ages; to place as the focus point of the policy-making the problems derived from the concentration of income, and inequality. The reduction of inequality, property and income must be the immediate and principal concern of the economists and the main political objective. But it has to be more than just saving the poor from their misery with a minimum wellbeing.

Concerning my research, I think that I have managed to prove the reasons why the liberalization of the economy and the structural reforms, by just eliminating the market interferences of the state while and leaving untouched the concentration of property, production and distribution, will only reduce the growth potential and exclude progress from a large part of the population. Due to the quality of the jobs created and the reduction of the GDP elasticity of employment, even during the spells of greater growth a considerable reduction of inequality and poverty did not take place. There is no direct and strong relation between trade liberalization and economic growth. There is evidence of an indirect, but not meaningful relation between liberalization of the economy and GDP growth. It is necessary to study the way economic policies ought to be changed. That need is even more pressing in the wake of the 2008 crisis.

#### 6

Progress has been unequal. It gives preference to capital over work; to workers organized in unions or linked to activities intensive in technology and foreign capital; to cities over rural areas.



# Gonzalo Castañeda\*

## About Progress\*\*

In general the word progress is associated with economical factors, but without any doubts, progress is understood as a positive change in a society, and it must be seen from different angles. To my understanding, a society progresses to the degree that it becomes more egalitarian, more tolerant and harmonic, and within this society we may find sustainable development.

\* Gonzalo Castañeda, PhD is an economist; traditionally, he has been dedicated to themes that have to do with organizational architecture and corporate governance, he has also worked in the past on institutions and development and on methodological aspects of the economic and social sciences which deal with complex adaptable systems. Currently, he is a professor at El Colegio de Mexico.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

A society has equality when all the individual basic needs are totally fulfilled (health care, education, home, nourishment, social insertion). That would be an equality level, the one pertaining to basic needs. A second level would be equality in the eyes of the law, that everyone would have the same rights and responsibilities in face of the law. A third factor would be the opportunities, which everyone gets; these must be useful for personal and social development.

A society is a tolerant society when it accepts that several points of view exist within different aspects of life, when it is aware that capacities may be differentiated, and when there are some mechanisms which are able to harmonize the existing differences. It is not only to recognize that differences do exist, but the way in which we deal with them as well. This

tolerance must have the awareness whether such differences are political, economical, social, ethnic, religious, or of age or gender. A society lives in harmony when the solution to collective problems is consistent with the majority's point of view, but acknowledging that the minorities must not be affected within their rights. This harmony also implies dealing with all basic services which are necessary so individuals who are challenged may develop themselves as people and as members of a community.

In a society we may find sustainable development when the economic activity is done in harmony with the environment. In this society the economic incentives and the need for growth, derived from the universality of basic needs, must not go against ecology. The technological progress and innovations can not be exclusively guided by economic profitability, but also by the collective wellbeing and the sustainable development. In the past, as a society, we never worried if the innovations created negative effects in terms of soil degradation, air and ocean pollution.

### Measurement

Concerning indicators, I think that there is no problem because, technically, it can be done. Today the most developed aspect that we can measure is equity with income indicators and the ones of the United Nations concerning human development which are associated with health care, housing and education. But that is only one of the three aspects I mentioned, the aspect related with equality in the basic needs which must be present in a society.

The other aspects of tolerance and sustainable development are not as common in international comparisons nor in national accounts. There we can develop other kind of indicators, technically I do not see any problems in an indicator which might be able to measure the access to information, one which may

be able to measure the capacity a common citizen has for expressing his/her opinion to the authorities; another indicator which may be able to measure the grade of corruption in a society.

Technically it is possible; maybe they are not developed, there are no resources or perhaps there is no will to develop them. I think that, as of today, the subjective wellbeing and happiness indicators are not yet viable; which after all may be the ultimate goals for the progress of a society, but in the art stage they have a measuring deficiency since they tend to not depend on the context. Many variables are in discussion, in my opinion it is good to move forward in that direction, but I would stay in this inferior level; with the indicators that are directly linked to equality, tolerance, harmony and sustainable development.

In the end we human beings are after happiness or subjective wellbeing, however these concepts are much harder to tie down, to quantify. Therefore I am more in favor of the objective indicators without neglecting that we must do research in the area of subjective wellbeing. These objective indicators may be hard data or may be perceptions. Generally, the perception indicators have problems, but it may be a first step. This is an indicator which starts with perceptions and then another indicator which quantifies very precise things in each country, avoiding by any means possible the cultural bias.

### Progress in Mexico

Nowadays, Mexico is a more tolerant, less unequal society with a greater ecologic consciousness. The technological development has allowed us to improve the communications networks and the access to information, thus establishing the basis to achieve a sustained progress. On the other hand, society is more participative and conscious of the virtues from the collective effort.

In this Mexico, its inhabitants are more concerned for not affecting the rights of third parties; that their institutions work with counterweights, and that information flows in a more transparent way in order to take better, and more correct, decisions.

Today, people are more conscious of the ecologic environment; such a thing was not common some time ago. I think that there have been improvements in poverty alleviation, although it is still a heart-rending problem in Mexican society, but in my opinion I can see some progress.

Towards the future, I visualize a Mexico that in around 50 years will be going towards the direction I have mentioned, a country which is less preoccupied by the economy and safety, and more concerned for having solid institutions which are flexible, do not depend on a group of people, and do work with counterweights. Institutions where information flows easily, so Mexicans have more capabilities for making the correct decisions.

I see a Mexico more occupied with those "post material" tasks. Without any doubt, I see a Mexico where the poverty problem might be completely eliminated, or at least great steps would be taken in that direction. And the reason I can see that is on the side of a society which is more actively participant than before, a more conscious society of its environment. On the other side, there are important exogenous factors which have to do with technology, communication, access to information and that were not necessarily created in Mexico, but they are there, and they have made globalization possible. The positive part in all of this is that people compare, contrast and have the capability of integrating, and makes the civil society more alive. Without any doubt it is a change which comes from the outside and Mexico is quite interested. I am positive in the following 10 or 20 years, but even more in a longer term at the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, since I think that things will go towards a better road.

## Universalities

Just as us human beings are equal, as long as ethnics and societies share the same needs and capacities, progress will not be associated to a particular region, nor will it acquire special hues from one place to another. The only difference lies in institutional mechanisms which take us to progress. In this sense, the habits and customs of a society are valid in the sense that they drive towards equality, tolerance-harmony and towards sustainability.

On the other side, I do believe that some determined cultural differences determined by a society's historic past do exist but because of this, the institutions which guide us towards progress may be conceived in a different manner.

Maybe in a tribal society they have certain habits and customs. To the extent that those habits and customs do not go against tolerance and equity they are valid, hence they may produce institutions that are quite different to those which rule in an occidental society. But what we seek with these institutions, I believe, is not specific to a society; it is more of a universal character, because the need for a home, education and social interaction does not depend on a culture of societies, it belongs to humans themselves. The capacities we have for self-development or social development are not proprietary to a culture. But the way in we reach this tolerance may vary.

## Contributions of the economy to progress in Mexico

Since the times of Adam Smith, the economists have been busy studying progress. Unfortunately, their analysis of progress was limited for many years, to whatever causes growth and efficiency while assigning the resources. In the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, this conception is being fractured, the economic arena is

now seen as a part of other systems which work in an open manner; therefore, what happens inside one arena affects what happens in another one. The fact that societies may be seen as a complex adaptive system, and that such societies are inserted inside an ecological environment gives us the possibility of theoretically understanding the virtues of the decentralized processes and the catastrophic consequences produced when the economic factor is conceived independently from the social and biological one.

Accepting the fact that the economy is inserted in a socio-cultural web, is the first step for developing relevant theories for a region or society. From this, we get the notion that a better knowledge of history and Mexican culture is important for establishing public policies and institutions which make progress possible.

For a long time, the economy lost its way of knowing where to conceptualize its problems, but recent technological and knowledge developments have allowed us to have a more eclectic vision, in this sense, economics has more to offer than it used to.

# Luis Reygadas\*

## Shared Progress\*\*

From equality's point of view, the key for evaluating progress is to determine how shared and inclusive it really is. Progress is more than the sum of progress achieved by individuals. If progress in societies was the sum of the everyone's happiness, when an individual increases his/her wellbeing, we can say that society's wellbeing increased as well. However it does not turn out to be that way, because if only one individual, a small group of people, or some groups, increase their wellbeing and the rest of society does not, then society as a collective may have a regression and not progress. Particularly, this happens if those who improve their indicators are the ones who previously found themselves in a better situation.

\* Within the field of Anthropology, Luis Reygadas, PhD has specialized in the area of social inequalities.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

For example, let us think of a family with several daughters and a son, where each one has some amount of money. If the son's income increases, the total of the family's money increases as well. But, if generally speaking, the son was particularly favored by his parents for a sexist reason or because of the weight of living within a patriarchal culture, then the increase in income worsens the already existing tension because of the favors made towards the son and the discrimination towards the daughters. Thus, the sum of all the family's individual well beings increased, but as a human collective, the family may be deteriorated.

The same occurs at a social level, if we limit ourselves to measure progress as the sum of all individual progresses, then we are making a mistake. In first place, because societies are more than the sum of all individuals, and, second, because if the benefits released by progress

are concentrated in just a minority, then society as a whole may have a regression in the matter of equality and governability. In such society, envy is created towards those who historically have had greater benefits and now are progressing at a faster rate than the rest. It increases the social distance which already existed, as well as the negative consequences caused by the broadening of the social gaps, which in turn can produce violence, anomie, social discomfort, criminality etc. This point reveals the importance of shared progress, because progress which is not inclusive implies a worsening of the inequalities. It may even set the stage for an economical deterioration which in the medium term will cause the decrease of the total sum of individual wellbeings within such society.

Another reason for which progress should be shared is that, in this era of great technological changes in areas such as genetic engineering, biotechnology and computers, there are new inequalities which are related to these changes. On one side, we could say that societies are progressing, because now we have access to new technologies and it increases productivity; but this has added an additional sign of distinction and inequality to the already existing ones. A good example is that of the new information technologies: There is much evidence that previous configurations of the social inequalities are those which guide the differences in access to information technology. Put in other words, the famous digital divide, in general, goes through the chasms, ravines and divisions which existed before its own invention. The geography of digital inequality is very similar to the one belonging to the previous social one: The greatest amount of equipment and high quality access are concentrated in developed countries and in the privileged minorities of the rest of the world, as it was expected, since they demand resources; electrical, telephonic or satellite infrastructure. For some people is more difficult to access information technology: those who live in remote regions, those who do not read or write in

English (even more so, those who do not read or write at all), women who work double or triple working days and those who do not have enough money to pay for the equipment or connections.

The latest argument in favor of an inclusive progress, is that globalization implies a shared destiny. In ecological terms, it is already clear for a long time that the damages done to the ozone layer affect the entire world; in the same manner, an epidemic sprout in a country or region becomes, in just a few weeks, a world wide risk. Then, it does matter how shared progress really is.

### How can we measure if progress is inclusive?

In order to measure the shared character of progress, the individual wellbeing indicators are not enough, we must use instruments of a relational character, which tell us how the resources are distributed; which also measure if social gaps are shortened or broadened. Thereby, a first goal is to keep an eye on the evolution of measures of inequality, for example the Gini index, the Theil coefficient or other indicators which measure the degree of equality or inequality in the distribution of a variable within a society.

It is important to take into consideration not only the income inequality. Even though it is hard to calculate the Gini coefficient for other aspects, such as education, culture, health and other wellbeing dimensions, we must find ways of measuring inequality beyond monetary income. Concerning the different components of the Human Development index, we must look at them from the correlation and social gaps point of view.

Another way of measuring if we are indeed advancing towards a shared progress is to set decile objectives; for example, for a particular indicator, we should find out how many tenths of the population have reached

the benefit associated with the indicator and set precise goals with established times, until it reaches the entire society.

In my judgment, the discussion about indicators and wellbeing (or that of development, or progress) has not been set yet. There have been too many efforts focused on defining which are the components that comprise the wellbeing of a person, and if some efforts are taken away or new ones are added. More important than that, is to see how extended these benefits are. In poor and developing countries the advantages and disadvantages concerning most of the indicators tend to accumulate, therefore, it becomes a quite unnecessary exercise to focus research and discussion to which wellbeing components must be the appropriate ones, leaving behind the central theme of equity which surrounds them. I think it is not so hard to make the indicators list. I consider that we could have some basic indicators: For example, jobs, income, health, basic needs and high quality education. The crucial point is to measure the inclusion level regarding those basic indicators.

Based on this, we should establish inclusion goals, that is, precise objectives in order to increase the real coverage percentage until we reach a situation of effective universal access for those basic indicators. We also have to measure, on a regular basis, whether the social gaps are closing. Are the distances between rich and poor getting any smaller?; between city and the countryside?; between the central regions and the remote ones? Maybe the percentage of people with access to good health care and education increases, but the gap between the most remote and outcast zones is not closing.

We should also consider the group type measurements, that is, the ones which take into consideration the belonging of a person to determined social categories, for example man/woman, white/hybrid/Indian, child/teenager/adult/elder, rural population/urban popula-

tion, etc. Several studies have showed that the unequal distribution of many benefits is linked with gender, ethnic group, age and home address. Therefore, we should also be aware of the evolution in group indicators linked to the ethnic belonging or gender and not only to the individual indicators.

### Basic factors to take into consideration within shared progress

- Education. Guarantee that during the first fifteen years of life of a person, they have access to quality basic education, but not only as we have it today from five to fifteen years, but since their first years of age which are fundamental in people's education.
- Good quality universal basic health care system.
- Employment. A dignified job, with proper wages and basic coverage. In Mexico, the open unemployment index is low (3% to 4%), but this says very little, because between 50% and 60% of employees do not have coverage, nor stability and are not properly paid. A dignified job is crucial because it allows us not to depend on the public programs or on private charity. The topic of employment is important, since from there we can add many other benefits, it is a base, the minimum to work correctly in a community.

### Concerning the universality or particularity of the concept

There really is a universal dimension in the concept of progress; if the idea is that it is a shared progress, we need to measure if the gaps between countries are being reduced. We must have universal standards to make comparisons in order to see if we are moving forward in sharing the world progress, the world development or the world wellbeing. Besides, because it is necessary

to see certain global standards; for example, in terms of behavior within businesses concerning the environment, it would be absurd to respect certain standards in Europe but not in the rest of the world, because it is the same environment for everyone, it affects us all. Then, if there is a component which is universal, because the surroundings are global, because there is a shared destiny, and because it is about reducing lack of symmetries.

150 years ago, the majority of inequalities were explained by the internal inequalities within countries, today the majority of inequalities are related with the existing disparity between countries. Now, that does not exclude that there are regional or cultural particularities concerning progress; that there are differences in the ways to reach wellbeing by regions, due to the historical and cultural differences; it does not exclude the fact that every society may have autonomy and freedom to decide in what aspect they want to progress more, and in what other aspect not so much, this according to their history and their habits.

The global measurement of progress and the search of shared progress within all countries does not contradict freedom and the autonomy of each country, of each region or each culture to find it by their own means. That is, priorities in Islamic countries may be different to the priorities of Latin American or African countries. There may be different roads to reach shared wellbeing. I consider that we should not polarize the matter of universality and particularity. To fall into extreme particularities may be harmful, just as it is harmful to follow a blind universality to regional and cultural differences. Then, there may be several roads, we have to respect the regional particularities, but without any doubt there is a universal dimension in the shared progress.

## Progress in Mexico within the last decades

In some occasions I think progress is very evident, as in the way gender relationships change. Besides, there has been a greater education; the levels of human development; the coverage in health care systems; and life expectancy have all increased. And to think that everything has been negative would be to close one's eyes in face of very evident data.

Another point in which there has been certain progress is that we have taken consciousness of ethnic discrimination and of the indigenous people situation; conscience, although no clear improvement in their situation is evident.

On the other side, the old inequalities have persisted and new inequalities have surfaced, which are related with technological progress; inequalities in the access to digital technology, knowledge and several technological innovations. Besides, there is more violence and more deterioration of some social networks; we move forward towards a more individualist society.

Until now, a very unilateral vision of progress has prevailed, one in which progress is seen only as an economic growth. We thought that the commercial opportunities and the freedom in trade and finances were enough, but countries have to prepare through human development and infrastructure improvement. We did not pay enough attention to the inequality theme concerning the social aspects. Many types of corruption, monopoly and exclusion still prevail.

Then, I disagree with the majority of the people, because the majority of people affirm that "everything is worse than before", that "the neoliberal politics has taken us to a country which today is much worse



than before and that we should go back to the old politics"; but I also disagree with those people who think that everything is much better now, there are serious situations derived from failure in the neoliberal strategy, which did not manage to decrease inequality and has left an enormous social debt. Progress linked to globalization has not been a shared progress.

**If we thought about shared progress, in the future Mexican society would be...**

Similar to the one of the most equalitarian countries. It would be a country where social distances were not so offensive, and thus, all people could go out to the streets, freeways and roads at any time of night without feeling insecure, because the majority of people would be in similar progress conditions and there would be no

reason to fear them. There would not be a small group of rich people in risk having to be careful all the time, nor a large group of poor people which are fighting for their survival and who are in such a state of exclusion. We need a good education system, good health care and the proper rights in society. If they asked me about a key indicator which would measure if Mexico is moving on towards a shared progress or not, I would think in watching out for the Gini's coefficient evolution regarding income distribution, which currently is higher than .500. If there were such thing as shared progress in the next decades, the coefficient should be reduced in order to get closer to the one found in countries with less inequalities, that is, reach the goal of being lower than .300. We have a long and winding road to go before we reach this goal.



# Elena Azaola\*

## Some Prerequisites for Progress in Mexico\*\*

### About Progress

I have generated my own concept of development and underdevelopment based on the issues I deal with in my work. I work with children in the worst conditions of vulnerability, that have been exploited, abused, thrown out of their homes and living under bridges, in the sewer or in shelters, prisons, correctional centers, etc.

\* Elena Azaola, PhD has a research history of over thirty years in the field of social anthropology. She has dedicated most of this time to the analysis of diverse phenomena of criminality in Mexico, as well as the analysis of the institutions dedicated to confronting and penalizing criminality. Throughout her extensive career she has investigated street children, young men and women in prison and children subjected to sexual exploitation; she has also studied police institutions, prisons and the State's criminal policies. Violence, power and human rights have been the guiding themes around which her work focuses.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

By looking at society from these places, their darkest corners and from which these children see it, I would define an **underdeveloped society** as one in which there are **children living in extreme situations of unprotectedness** and there is no organized society or state government that can respond to them and provide them with appropriate attention. Therefore, I consider a society to be underdeveloped if the institutions needed to care for children who for different reasons cannot be attended by their family end up – more often than not – repeating the abuse, violating their rights, causing new damage; and if society lacks **a social fabric strong enough to denounce and alleviate the abuse in order to repair the different damages that these children have suffered**. The same happens in other sectors where these societies cannot satisfy their rights, not only because of poverty, but because of **weak, incompetent, inappropriate or abusive**

**operation of institutions** and due to the absence of an **organized society** to denounce this. This is my focus on development and underdevelopment.

Therefore in my opinion, a **way to measure progress** is to scrutinize the **performance of the institutions dedicated to the most vulnerable members of the society**, of those who have no option but to seek the protection of the State: from orphanages to prisons, including public shelters, homes and hospitals. I recently carried out a study through which I visited fifty shelters of different kinds around the country and I observed that the State is in severe non-compliance of its duty to provide a solid and competent social welfare system. This is the case whether we speak of abandoned children, the disabled, homeless, women fleeing from violence or the elderly who do not have the support of their families. Also, if it does not practice its surveillance duties or provide minimal care standards for the civil society institutions that assume these functions. Even when there is no abuse, fanaticism or mistreatment, disorder and voluntarism prevail. Some may argue that our State would have difficulty in providing a welfare apparatus of the dimensions needed; and others may argue that welfarism is a model that has been exhausted and that the Welfare State is already a part of history. Either way, I believe that **progress is not possible in a society as long as so many sectors are excluded**. In this sense, I consider that one way to progress would be to design and implement a coherent social protection system, in which the State and civil society participate, define their responsibilities, establish attention standards, practice adequate supervision and are accountable to society.

There are also other fields that would require substantial changes in order for there to be **progress**. This is the case of the **justice administration** system; even though it has recently undergone a significant reform of the legal framework, there is still a long way to go so that

the principles of due process on which the reform is based become common currency in the daily practice of the Attorney General's offices, courts and prisons. Unfortunately we still have highly deficient justice administration institutions where incompetence and corruption prevail and where informal and paralegal practices are dominant. The abusive, discretionary and illegal exercise of power is still the norm rather than the exception.

In fact, as has been acknowledged on occasion, we cannot speak of the Mexican State as a democratic rule of law while the State Institutions are often responsible for the violation of rights; while individual guarantees are not the guiding axis for the State's institutions and policies. One revealing symptom of the state of affairs is the high levels of distrust that people present in surveys towards the justice administration policies and systems. In this sense, the **gradual recovery of the citizens' trust of the police, the Attorney General's offices and the courts would be an appropriate way to measure progress in this field**.

Another way to measure progress would be by considerably improving **living conditions in prisons**. I believe this is a subject on which the State has very short sight regarding the issues. As we know, most of those who go to prison are not society's serious criminals but are instead minor offenders, the poor and those who have no self-defense. But let us assume that the State improves its investigation capacity and that the most dangerous criminals are detained; prison sentences must be used appropriately applied and punishment must be in accordance with the damages caused and internal living conditions must be improved.

As most individuals who enter a prison will eventually return to society, it is in the interest of the State to treat them according to the principles of justice and legality; making sure to abstain from committing all

kinds of abuse that it would not be prepared to admit to when these individuals are reincorporated into society. If, however, the State violates the principles that it stands for and keeps its internees in sub-human conditions, it causes the rupture of the social pact, the legal order, and promotes its own weakening and the deterioration of the social fabric. The State's lack of vision consists of pretending that the individuals whose rights are violated in prison do not form part of families, and that these families are not part of communities. When one violates the rights of persons whose freedom has been deprived, one also violates the rights of their families and of society in general.

Progress would also mean fewer people going to prison as the offenses or crimes committed by most are lesser damages than those caused by sending them to prison. Therefore alternative systems to prison would have to be created that would permit the repair of damages caused by misdemeanors; for example, by way of models such as restoration justice – and prison would be reserved only for major crimes.

Up to now I have mentioned the deficiencies of the justice and social welfare systems. Now I would like to refer to those I have observed in security policies that have – especially in this regime – given priority to fighting organized crime and, more specifically, drug trafficking. This is not, as has often been said, a “war” that can be won. As long as its illegal situation contributes to making drug trafficking lucrative, there will continue to be incentives to include new consumers. If these incentives were removed, drugs would continue to be used by those who decide to do so, as is the case today despite their prohibition. This means that those that chose to take drugs will do so under one scheme or the other; however, a lot of the damage caused by criminalization, such as the uncontrolled growth of prison populations and the saturation of the legal systems, would cease to exist.

As we know, a large amount of resources has been invested to fighting crime in recent years. However, most of the resources have been channeled to repressive policies and very few go towards prevention. There has been a lack of vision to give these policies the place and the role that correspond to a long term – less immediate – view, which places the construction of citizenship and strengthening of social ties as some of its **main concerns**. A country that has solid institutions – but more importantly solid communities – is one that can care for its children that, for whatever reason, have not been cared for by their families; and we are back where we began.

**The strengthening of social ties, the social network and social cohesion** are fundamental issues which our security policies do not consider sufficiently. Nothing is being done, for example, to study and develop programs that attend to the certain effects on children exposed to a daily bombardment of media violence.

Amazing as it may seem, we do not have policies aimed expressly at reducing the high and increasing levels of violence that we have observed over the last five years. It seems as though violence is considered as collateral or secondary damage, an unavoidable fact, in contrast with the priority placed on fighting organized crime. No one has given priority to the orphans left behind; the children of those killed because they were either policemen or drug lords; boys and girls who have lost their father. A large number of families are being torn apart by the “war on drugs”; and these families do not have justice or access to the truth and the repair of damages because in most cases these deaths are not investigated and those responsible go unpunished. To ignore these families is to exclude them from the social group and allow the social fabric to become fragmented and fragile. We must not forget that **the density and strength of the social fabric are essential traits for a society to progress.**

## Strengthening the Social Fabric

The task faced by the State is not only to strengthen the welfare sector, but also to create a space where coexistence and individual development are possible. In this sense, the issue of inclusion is of vital significance, that is, the creation of conditions under which the sectors that are excluded in today's dominant economic model may be included legally into the economy.

But this issue is not merely related to the economy. No one seems to be asking why, for example, younger and younger children want to take drugs; what is wrong? Has anyone heard them? Is anyone listening to what they search for in drugs, what it is they are not obtaining elsewhere? Or why the police join organized crime? Many would say: "it's logical; they are offered the money that police institutions cannot provide." But perhaps it is not just an issue of money. There are many things that organized crime cannot offer, but are not provided by the police institutions either. I refer mainly to a social status of respect, recognition, for them and their families. They occupy a place from which they can be sure to rise if they comply with regulations, they will have dignified work conditions, their children will receive an education and their family will be healthy, they will have a home and dignified retirement conditions; but above all, they will have respect and recognition. More money is not the only thing that people look for. There would be a way to counteract what organized crime can offer the police if we had institutions that offered everything which organized crime cannot offer; this includes not living in a permanent state of anxiety, hiding their activities and fearing for their safety and that of their families. We have a lot of work to do in order have police institutions with the level required to face the challenges before them. The main challenge is still, without a doubt, to build a police force oriented towards serving and protecting the citizens before protecting the interests and stability of the political regime, as has been the case during the regime of the State's party.

I have spent many hours listening to delinquents and police alike. If I had to summarize in a few words what they both want, I would say it is about respect of their dignity and human condition. They do not want us to think that because they are prison inmates they can eat anything or not eat at all, sleep on filth, without blankets or piled up; that they should be left to tolerate fever and pain or illness without care or medication. They do not want anyone to believe that because they are policemen, they must withstand 14 hour work days, eat anything, beg to use a bathroom, tolerate mistreatment and humiliation from their bosses and from citizens. They must be given back their dignity and we must recognize their human condition.

## Universal Consensus?

There are certain standards, even when they are minimal, that we may consider universal. For example, the right of the relatives of a person who dies of unnatural causes to demand justice, or at least to learn the circumstances under which the person died. It is true that conditions are different in every country, and that these result in different levels of satisfaction of the citizens' rights. If we consider Mexico, from the perspective of progress that I have attempted to define here, I believe that some of the minimal conditions that we must try to attain are: **to live in a community where there are strong ties of solidarity; where the authorities assume their responsibility in front of citizens and are responsible for their actions; where everyone has attained at least a minimal level of satisfaction of basic needs; and where there is a general rejection of arbitrary actions, abuse of power and corruption.**

# Mariflor Aguilar\*

## Measuring the Progress of Societies. Between Freedom and Survival\*\*

*We urgently need a synthesis, a responsible and joyful one, in which we can penetrate while grasping the dignity of words and the demands of pointing out one's own profile; a style and a civility technique.*

*José Lezama Lima*

Such relevant themes, which are also quite current and universal like the topic of progress of societies, place us in risk of the commonplace, or that of delirium. Most likely, here we will find ourselves closer to delirium,

\* Mariflor Aguilar holds a PhD in Philosophy from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). Her specialty and teachings lie in the areas of philosophy in social sciences, critical theory of subjectivity and culture philosophy. She has focused her work in the problem of 'construction of subjectivity', which she has studied from the critical theory point of view, as well as from the one pertaining to the science of interpretation, psychoanalysis and post-structuralism. Currently she has begun studying this problem from the perspective of 'territory' and she coordinates a research project about 'Democracy and Territory'.

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taking into consideration that we speak from within philosophy, which without any doubt has nothing to do with the progress of societies, since we have decided to remove it from the study programs within national high schools.

Although this decision was reverted<sup>1</sup>, I want to settle my own opinion about this discipline, but taking into consideration that these thoughts are made from a philosophical point of view. I consider that only from this perspective is it possible to make a global reflection, which is also critical and takes into consideration the fundamental aspects of humans and their condition. With this I do not mean to say that only philosophy

<sup>1</sup> P.S. From a dialogue which took place between philosophy professors and researchers located in the Philosophical Observatory and the authorities of national education, this decision was reverted in the meeting on May 22, 2009, which took place in Mexico City at the National Counsel of Education Authorities (Consejo Nacional de Autoridades Educativas (CONAEDU)). The choice of eliminating the study programs in the national high school was previously taken into account and established in the "Integral Reform of the Middle and High School" ("Reforma Integral de Educación Media Superior" (RIEMS) published on September 26, 2008 in the *Official Diary of the Federation (Diario Oficial de la Federación)*, through resolution No.442. This reference was not eliminated from the current work with the purpose of leaving a proof.

as a discipline is capable of this kind of consideration. What I do mean to say is that this philosophical dimension is present in every discipline at the moment and with the considerations they have to choose the road to follow in the production of knowledge.

In any case, and with the satisfaction that the decision has been reverted, we must decide that since one of philosophy's tasks is to mediate between knowledge and power, nothing is as relevant as its mediating action between the knowledge which conceives progress as related with technological powers, and the ones which conceive it as articulated with social powers which help the integral human formation. With this we do not want to suggest that both senses necessarily oppose each other, but often, they do oppose the social practices and the development plans which take productivity's growth as the privileged index of progress.

Those who summon this reflection are right when they affirm that within a complex world such as the one in which we live, it is no longer possible to clearly understand the social signs such as progress; the indicators might be of any kind, economic, political, cultural, demographic and even psychological and aesthetic.

Taking this into consideration, my proposal considers in a central manner a feature which characterizes the globalized world, namely, human displacements.

More than ever, the current moment in which the world's market organization is located has created social phenomena which are linked to the territory and the mobility of groups of humans, such as displacements, migrations, relocations, etc.

For that reason, the anticipation of Jacques Attali was clear when, more than fifteen years ago, he said that

"'nomad' (...) is the key word which defines the way of life, the cultural style and the consumption in the two thousands" <sup>2</sup>

The nomadic thinking, which today is multi-present in several social contexts, may be of different types; it may be descriptive and normative, that is, a record of the facts of observation which tells about what we see in the present or what is foreseen for the future, or which may be seen as a human essence or a must be. In the same manner, the 'nomadism' may be conceived as a virtue of the social organization, about the groups and individuals which relentlessly seek freedom, to go to the promised land or towards a better world, or seek a new life; it can also be seen as a situation which produces damage in different aspects of social life. It may also be that the speech which gives equality to nomadism and virtue is a smokescreen speech which does not allow us to see other realities, or another dimension of the same phenomena to the ones the speech refers to.

As far as we are concerned, we know that our country is rich in production of migrants, who experience the most varied effects produced by migration; effects which reach every aspect of social and individual life. This is seen more clearly if we take into consideration the cultural and social meaning of *territory* of which we can see three dimensions: A space for enrollment to culture; a framework or area for distribution of institutions and cultural practices; and an object of affective attachment as a symbol of socio-territorial belonging<sup>3</sup>. These territorial dimensions encourage the

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jacques Attali, *Milenio*, Mexico, Seix Barral, 1993, p. 81. (*Lignes d'horizon*, 1990, Paris)

<sup>3</sup> Gilberto Giménez, "Territory, Culture, Identities. The Sociocultural Religion" ("Territorio, cultura, identidades. La región sociocultural"), at the Institute of Social Research (Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales), UNAM, México.



fact that the migratory processes affect “the cultural models; the most common day to day aspects: Food, home, clothing, world's conception and the collective and public as well”<sup>4</sup>. Due to the essential character and its transcendence, the territory's repercussion is integral. This is the reason for which urbanism, architecture and landscape design, as well as demography, anthropology and ethnology, have gained relevance today, since jointly they can acknowledge the impossibility of separating the subjectivity-environment-culture triad, that is, self consciousness, environment in which individuals are formed as well as their ways of thinking and their life styles.

Under this scope, we may understand the relevance that migration has for individuals and cultures, in the positive sense as well as in the negative one. From the knowledge of the multidimensional construct it is possible to promote an adequate relation between the three mentioned instances in such manner that the proper self-acknowledgment is provided a condition for the recognition of others. However, the gap between the requests gives rise to several problems, many of which are related with territory issues and migration situations. There are records of these, and we will point out the most relevant ones for the sake of our argument.

The problems linked with territory frequently coincide with people's sense of *belonging*, as well as their self-image and the way they identify amongst each other. When displacements are forced, they tend to fracture

the basic types of relationships within a society in an irreparable way, and the society's relation with nature; then the social network is dismembered and the cohesion of groups is vulnerable, causing wounds to communities and the long-standing relations which become hard to fix again.

On the other side, even when Mexican migrants have given proof of a high degree of organizational strength, we know that this was partially encouraged and tolerated with electoral purposes, which became evident during the following months after Barack Obama's presidential election. In relation with this subject, what commonly occurs is the encouragement of the loss of the potential for political participation in the face of the increase in the difficulty to assume the role as active subjects within their sociopolitical context.

Another aspect which deserves to be taken seriously into consideration is the cultural enslavement which often is risked with the 'deterritorialization', which imposes notions of progress, wellbeing and development which sometimes have more to do with tastes, needs and ideals built on purpose and having as an objective the accumulation of capital, than with the aspects of belonging, identity and acknowledgment that build the dignity of cultures and of the socio cultural groups in general. The interesting thing, although terrible, is that this model works in the case of Mexicans which have massively left towards the north as in the case of the internal forced migrations, whether by 'natural' disasters or by territorial restructuring which gets imposed as destiny from the outside without considering the interest of the deployed groups: “In Guatemala and Chiapas the effects of loss of land from the hands of the indigenous communities, whether by dispossession or by natural disasters, have affected the lives of those communities by the tendency of over-exploitation of the natural

<sup>4</sup> Duarte Rolando and Teresa Coello, “The Choice of leaving: the migrant cultures from Guatemala and Chiapas” (“La decisión de marcharse: los pueblos indígenas migrantes de Guatemala y Chiapas”), Projects Council, 2007, in: <[http://www.iidh.ed.cr/BibliotecaWeb/Varios/Documentos/BD\\_1961302194/Migracionesindgusa.doc?url=%2FBibliotecaWeb%2FVarios%2FDocumentos%2FBD\\_1961302194%2FMigracionesindgusa.doc](http://www.iidh.ed.cr/BibliotecaWeb/Varios/Documentos/BD_1961302194/Migracionesindgusa.doc?url=%2FBibliotecaWeb%2FVarios%2FDocumentos%2FBD_1961302194%2FMigracionesindgusa.doc)>

resources and the deterioration of their traditional production systems. ...Amongst the threats to the indigenous territory in Chiapas we can also find the following: the military occupation, the creation of new laws which allow *the exploitation by third parties of the natural resources within their territories*, [and] the lack a real consultation"<sup>5</sup>.

Another serious problem which presents itself frequently in migratory situations is the infringement of human rights, whether they are individual or collective and whether in commuting between countries or amongst regions within a single country. In spite of the growing information that we have had in Mexico about the disadvantageous, if not deplorable, situation of migrants in and from our country, and despite reciprocating visits from the involved governments in the matter and of governments' deeds which tend to demand respect and an improvement in the migratory situation, we can not perceive eloquent results nor a clear agenda about it. Concerning Mexican migration to the United States we can see a double speech today: On one side the new north American administration speaks about a migratory reform with an aim towards documentation, and on the other side, police officers harass every Latino who crosses their path and even lock them up for several days without even accusing them of any crime.

At least such is the case in the state of New Jersey.<sup>6</sup> Situations such as this one and many others which are not mentioned because of modesty reasons, make us think about "the discretionary nature in which

migration is handled by the federal, state and county governments in the US" which "promote corruption within the authorities" <sup>7</sup>.

And at last we must mention another non-the-less important aspect of the migration problem; we are talking about the problems concerning the right to own a piece of land, which, by the way, are many and revolve around the loss of that land itself, violations of the right of property, unfair buying and selling in which we find abuse of power, taking advantage of the ignorance and vulnerability of the people involved, who are forced to migrate once they find themselves taken away from their most precious and coveted object, becoming a monetary exchange in the international economic transactions.

Admittedly, it is true that according to several studies, not every migration leaves a traumatic mark, we may deduce that if territory plays a role of crucial importance in the formation of subjectivity, and if the individuals find themselves forced to commute leaving behind points of reference which constitute within them their singularity and their generality, then we must confirm that every forced migration or a not-wanted migration, most surely will leave a traumatic mark,<sup>8</sup> and unfortunately this includes internal migrations as well.

From this perspective, and taking into consideration what we said before concerning the global importance of migration, and its effects in social and individual life, and of the existing record in relation to the damages caused by the forced and unnecessary displacements,

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*. Our emphasis.

<sup>6</sup> Just as recorded by Leticia Beresford on Friday, April 17, 2009 in *La Jornada de Zacatecas*, in: <<http://soberaniapopular.blogspot.com/2009/04/trato-migrantes-opuesto-al-discurso-de.html>>

<sup>7</sup> Duarte and Coello, *op.cit.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

*I sustain that a relevant factor to measure progress in societies, or the lack of progress itself, is the amount of individuals who leave for survival and not for exercising their freedom; that is, we can see as an index of progress in societies the precise level which is exerted over the population in order to abandon their territory for not finding there proper life conditions, or because they are forced to move in benefit of third parties without providing in exchange an equivalent situation to the one they lost.*

The pertinent data for this evaluation is not the amount of migrants in general; it is not the number of people who leave their places exercising a way of freedom which indicates a limited development – or not – of a society; more likely they are the ones who are expelled for several reasons, some which we already mentioned amongst these lines. Put in other words, an indicator of progress in societies may be the possibility that these offer to the individuals to exercise the right of staying home with dignity.



# Miguel Székely Pardo \*

## Measurement for Improvement \*\*

The measurement and characterization of a population's living conditions are fundamental elements for evaluating the progress of a society. Among other aspects, it allows us to get an idea of the magnitude of deficiencies, to determine advances and setbacks, and to establish clear objectives. In fact, just as there are ideas that move the world, there are also numbers and statistics that can awaken the conscience, move the will, lead to action, generate debate, and in a few fortunate cases they can lead to the solution of a problem.

\* Miguel Székely holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Oxford, he is a specialist in topics concerning poverty, distribution and inequality. Currently he works as the Undersecretary of Education (Ministry of Public Education). He has also served as the Undersecretary of Planning, Prospective and Evaluation for the SEDESOL (Ministry of Social Development). He has 68 specialized academic publications.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

In the last decades there have been considerable advances around the world in the measurement of the population's wellbeing. There is a wide availability of methods and definitions, as well as data used to calculate the value of several indicators.

But even with these advances, the following questions still apply: What is the most important element for the progress of societies? What indicator must be used? As these concepts are subjective, discussions on the matter have been endless and the volumes of books, articles and texts supporting one position or another are innumerable. Probably the best answer to these questions is: it depends. And more specifically, it depends on what aspect one searches to improve by way of measurement.

For example, the indicator that is most commonly used around the world to obtain information on people's quality of life is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP),

which quantifies the capacity of an economy to generate resources for its population. One advantage of this indicator is that the methodological conventions and agreements for its calculation are widely accepted. However, it has its limitations as an indicator of wellbeing as it does not allow for the inclusion of information on inequality, and therefore cannot say whether the whole population effectively has access to the same level of satisfiers, or whether there are those who despite the availability of resources, cannot get access to them. So, there can be two completely opposite answers for the same indicator: it is probably the best option if we want to know the amount of available resources; but if we wish to learn how many people in a country have the minimum resources to survive it is clearly not the best option.

The debate becomes even more intense in cases where there is no agreement on the methodology used for measurement. An important example regarding the above is the measurement of poverty, for which there are many methods, definitions and interpretations. Just over 100 years ago, in his study called *"Poverty: A Study of Town Life"*, Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree carried out the first scientific study on poverty, generating over a century of research, discussions and analyses carried out by academics and public policy-makers. And at present we can still not say that there is a general agreement regarding the measurement of poverty.

Does this imply that it is not possible to rely on indicators of social progress such as poverty? Recent experience in Mexico on this issue indicates that significant advancements can be made when the objectives are clear; and even more importantly, defining a statistic can make society more sensitive towards the problem, it can provide input for the design of better public policies, generate informed academic debates, and most of all, it can contribute by making the country as a whole more conscious of the viability of reducing poverty.

The experience began in 2000, when the country's new government came into office and it was found that there was no official data of the number of poor people.<sup>1</sup> Given the lack of information, a Technical Committee for the Measurement of Poverty (CTMP) was officially established in June 2001, formed by seven prominent independent academics, with the objective of proposing an indicator that provides information to: a) establish the magnitude of the problem of poverty; b) characterize the phenomenon in order to design policies, programs and actions in the public sector aimed at its solution; c) evaluate changes in the population's living conditions; d) evaluate the policies, programs and public actions for social development in terms of their incidence on poverty.

The clearest establishment of the objectives was a determining factor. Another equally important element was to define the following parameters for the measurement methodology using transparency from the beginning: 1) simple and easy to communicate; 2) responds to common sense; 3) capable of answering the questions for which it is designed; 4) solid, defensible and statistically robust; 5) operationally viable; 6) easy to replicate.

At the beginning of the process, Mexico did not have all the support studies required for the development of a fully satisfying measurement methodology. For example, there were no poverty line estimates with recent information, nor adult equivalent standards (the characterization of the needs of each member of a household according to age and gender), to mention a few. An important decision was to develop a preliminary methodology based on the state of knowledge and research existing at the time, and then carry out the studies needed to collect better elements for the design of a refined methodology.

<sup>1</sup> A detailed description of this case is seen in Székely, M., "Números que mueven al Mundo: la mediación de la pobreza en México", Editorial Porrúa, 2006, México.

In August of 2002 the CTMP delivered its methodology proposal to the government, after which the level of poverty was estimated for the year 2000 (the most recent information available at the time). By applying the method, a result of 53.7% of the population living in poverty was obtained. This generated extensive debate in the country, and above all, it had a direct impact on the design of social programs, on the identification of the population that requires social support; on the evaluation of the country's progress in social issues; and on directionality and reassignment of public resources.

Up until now, the official measurement of poverty in Mexico has had a significant impact on the planning and evaluation of social programs. This is in itself a valuable contribution; moreover, the development and adoption of a new methodology has been an experience from which we can derive several lessons. The first, is that during debates on methodology there is inevitably tension between statistical purity and academic and methodological rigorousness, on the one hand, and its relevance and usefulness to take better policy decisions in the real world, on the other. Policy decisions are generally made with extreme urgency, requiring a sense of what is practical, and the problem is that it is not always easy to find balance between perfection and usefulness.

The three critical elements around which this balance was found for the case of Mexico are: timing, degree of independence between research and reality, and the coincidence between the objectives of academics and policy makers.

With respect to timing, the solution permitted a balance between the perfect and the possible, according to which the CTMP would provide a preliminary methodology that would serve to make practical decisions and provide general follow up to the evaluation of poverty in the short term; making sure not

to sacrifice the objective of perfecting measurements in the future. The definition and development of a long term research agenda was the mechanism used to guarantee this possibility.

In relation to the balance between academic independence and the need for these measurements to have practical use, the critical element that generated harmony was the original agreement that the Committee's mandate was to suggest a methodology. In this way, the government was free to decide whether to use it or not, or to apply it or not. This was a key factor that helped maintain the academic rigorousness, thus guaranteeing its relevance in the evaluation and design of politics.

Regarding the definition of the objective of the exercise, there was a strong coincidence of four purposes from the beginning: to develop a tool that may help improve policy decisions; place the problem of poverty on the national agenda in order to promote forces for its solution; to inform society of the meaning, decisions and assumptions behind the measurement of poverty; and to identify better policy instruments that may be used to face the problem.

A second lesson is in the success factors that may make these efforts succeed or fail. In our view, there were eight critical elements in this regard during the process:

1. Carrying out a measurement for the first time implies risks; and assuming them is a matter of **political will**. The main risk is that having an evaluation mechanism of this kind opens up the possibility of "condemning" the performance of a government or section of government.
2. **Technical quality and rigorousness** must be unquestionable, for society and the government to accept and use an indicator.

3. There must be absolute clarity that the measurement methodology is **a means** to approach an issue **and not an end** in itself.
4. The data and statistics used for measurement must be **unquestionable in terms of quality** and solidity.
5. The development of new research, discussion time, and even the support material needed for decision-making requires **financial resources**. Their availability is a critical factor.
6. A clear social **demand** for specific information is a determining factor for a methodology to contribute to placing an issue on the national agenda.
7. A success factor for measurement to be easily understood by citizens is that the **media must** efficiently transmit the meaning and objective of this type of effort.
8. The common objective and practical relevance of the discussion becomes clear when the relevant actors perceive from the beginning that the indicators will be used, in practice, for defining budgets, programs and actions and to evaluate the performance of the country.

In conclusion, the definition of the best method for measuring the progress of a society is still an open discussion. However, when there is success in reaching concrete agreements regarding a specific method, as in the case of ideas, "numbers can move the world". In the end, the true measure of success of any attempt to determine how to measure the progress of a society is whether it helps to change reality by improving the population's living condition. This should be its main objective from the outset.



# Agustín Escobar Latapí\*

## Measuring the Progress of Societies: Work, Equality of Opportunity and Social Wellbeing\*\*

### Introduction

Each author in this volume proposes progress indicators deriving from their own experience, theoretical stances and world-vision. Mine are no exception. Since 1980 I have analysed Mexican migration to the United States. In the eighties, I devoted most of my time to the study of labour markets; in the nineties my main interest

lay in social mobility; and since the late nineties I have focused on the analysis of public policies and programs. It should come as no surprise therefore that I center on employment, equality of opportunity, and social well-being. Indeed, many others and I believe that GDP-related visions and indexes, as a rule, have been overemphasized. Social progress, which should be given a central role, has been displaced. Improvement in society is the goal of development. I hope the reader finds that these indicators, outlined in a general manner, can aid in measuring social progress, the ultimate reason for all public policy.

\* Agustín Escobar, PhD is a sociologist and anthropologist. His research has been centered on the issues of migration and social structure and social mobility. He is also an academic advisor at CONEVAL.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

## 1) Dignified employment

Eighteen years ago the ILO (International Labour Organisation) triggered an internal debate that quickly expanded to include many international organizations. The debate climaxed in the formulation of the "decent work" initiative. According to its creator, this was the politically acceptable expression for something closer to "dignified work". In this essay, I do not follow the letter of the ILO definition although, I think, its spirit<sup>1</sup>.

Dignified work:

1. Is free. Workers are not bound to a given employer, nor can the employer force them to stay in that work;
2. Pays a salary or wage enabling workers to afford survival and all inherent human needs, from food to culture;
3. Is developed under conditions that are not degrading, and do not compromise workers' integrity or their future;
4. Rewards skills, capabilities and talents, and fosters them;
5. Affords minimum certainty and security on working conditions and duration of the employment nexus;
6. Allows workers to organize and to negotiate these and other conditions with their employers.

<sup>1</sup> "Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives – their aspirations for opportunity and income; rights, voice and recognition; family stability and personal development; and fairness and gender equality. Ultimately these various dimensions of decent work underpin peace in communities and society. Decent work reflects the concerns of governments, workers and employers, who together provide the ILO with its unique tripartite identity." [http://www.ilo.org/global/About\\_the\\_ILO/Mainpillars/WhatisDecentWork/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Mainpillars/WhatisDecentWork/lang--en/index.htm)

The first indicator I am proposing corresponds to this notion. Different national statistical systems naturally reflect each of these conditions differently. A common indicator can be built gradually. As an initial, minimal expression of this concept, however, an indicator can be formulated thus:

1. Proportion of jobs paying enough to allow workers to afford their needs, measured according to an income absolute poverty line. Consideration must be granted to the fact that each worker is responsible for the sustenance of other ("inactive") members of society. Therefore, the wage level must be divided by the social dependency rate.
2. Proportion of jobs complying with minimum conditions set forth in local legislation, according to international standards, particularly those of ILO.

The intersection of both (the proportion of jobs satisfying both traits) corresponds to the proportion of dignified work in any given society. An increase points at social progress.

This indicator, slightly reformulated, can describe the ability of a society to provide dignified work to its population *as this population changes*. Members of society lacking this opportunity will have to depend on welfare, perform marginal jobs, live in poverty, or migrate. Although it would be possible to measure working-age emigration as an indicator of (negative) labour absorption (losing one's population to other countries means a society is not generating sufficient opportunities), emigration and immigration are subject to conditions in other countries. Immigration countries may be open to regular and irregular migrants from a given society, or they may not. A small population loss does not mean a society is granting sufficient opportunities for all its members. In this sense, a society

advancing in this indicator runs a smaller risk of losing its working population, even if other countries are open to its migrants. Retaining its own population in dignified jobs means both it is fulfilling its obligations to its citizens, and that its human capital is in place to further enhance its own development.

A secondary indicator, therefore, could consist of a measure of change. Tabulating the number of dignified work positions over the number of persons entering the EAP would accomplish this. This would measure the extent to which a given society is coping with population growth, whether natural or social.

## 2) Equal occupational opportunity.

Societies should provide equal opportunities to their population. Regardless of their place of residence, gender, social class or ethnicity, social institutions (the family, schools, health services, social security mechanisms) should prepare children and youths for equitable access to labour opportunities. A society accomplishing this shows a high degree of social fluidity. This notion, put forward by Goldthorpe and Erikson in 1980, can be expressed in indexes ranging from extreme simplicity to extreme complexity.

An international indicator should retain some simplicity, to be readily comprehensible and comparable. At its simplest, occupations are classified into three ascending strata, depending on pay, skill level, education and prestige. This is done for parents and their children, which gives rise to a transition matrix. Each case is placed in a cell depending on the parent's and the child's position. The number of cases in which children perform higher or lower occupation than their parents, divided by the number in which they are placed in the same hierarchical stratum, represents social fluidity: the proportion of children that did NOT inherit their parents' occupational stratum. This indicator shows the effective

output of all those social institutions that should help provide equal opportunity in any given society.

This indicator, as described, is sensitive to a number of distortions, ranging from changing demographic characteristics by class, to stratum size, to structural change. Large amounts of research have centered on advancing internationally comparable indicators of social fluidity. That literature would be most helpful to arrive at a simple but satisfactory indicator of equality of opportunity.

This indicator can be used to measure equality among specific groups: Do women, indigenous persons, religious minorities from a certain class stand the same chances of upward mobility as other persons? What are their chances (odds)?

## 3) Multidimensional social well-being

The above indicator measures the aggregate output of all those social institutions producing social well-being. Societies, however, can be compared in terms of what each social institution actually does for its citizens. These institutions can be conceived of as providing goods and services that meet basic needs.

Mexico is advancing toward the creation of a multidimensional measurement of poverty, as outlined in its Social Development Law. Briefly, this measurement includes the following:

1. an income line;
2. access to food;
3. access to education;
4. access to health;
5. access to social security;
6. minimum housing standards;
7. minimal domestic and urban services; and
8. social cohesion.

I propose that a very significant indicator of social progress consists in increasing the population that satisfies each of these dimensions, according to thresholds agreed to by international standards. Social cohesion is not a component of poverty according to most theories. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly a component of well-being (whether expressed as a low inequality index, low criminality, or high levels of mutual trust). It may thus be a component of this indicator.

Mexico has assembled an international team of experts helping to design the optimal measure for Mexico. This work could be expanded to discuss social wellbeing, and other societies.

I have discussed this with other contributors. I have agreed with a number of their proposals, particularly those relating to sustainable development. I therefore refrain from formulating my proposal in this area. They have been formulated by others and I support them.

# Antonio Paoli Bolio\*

## Education and Progress\*\*

It seems to me that progress should be understood as a life process oriented towards human's social and psychological harmony.

Measuring the efficiency of such progress oriented towards social harmony supposes a large amount of

\* Antonio Paoli holds a PhD in Social Sciences. Since 1977 he has been a professor at the Metropolitan Autonomous University (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana UAM), campus Xochimilco, within the Department of Education and Communication, as well as in the Rural Development Masters and Post-degree program. He has written and published articles and books about communication, pedagogy and sociology. He is coordinator of the Play and Live with the Values (Jugar y Vivir los Valores) education program.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.

indicators which should be applied with the purpose of revealing a contrast between the "less developed" past and a "more developed" present. Here, we postulate a set of principles which according to our sociologic and pedagogic experience would have to provide an education which creates a social and pedagogic harmony around the world.

These principles may be considered as indicators, and in case they are fulfilled they would highly help to boost social progress.

An education oriented towards progress, which is focused on the generation of social and psychological harmony, would suppose several regular practices whose efficient enforcement would sponsor the following:

### The art of a positive view

1. The experience of positive value, experienced as a reason occurrence which widens horizons and promotes the development of positive attitudes.

2. A progress-oriented education will suppose constant creativity in teachers, students and parents. It would be inclined to develop skills, virtuosities and capabilities useful for acting, interpreting or making different deeds which allow us to show the students multiple capabilities.

3. This education will promote art understood as a human activity in which a personal vision is expressed; this vision represents a lived or imagined reality. This expression and representation will be given by means of a great variety in plastic, dancing, written or spoken, musical (sung or instrumental) arts. Art is not only the practical realization which tends to be perfected; it is also intellectual reasoning and interpretation oriented to understanding these practices and to provide them with an explicit and communicable sense by means of the *logos*. Frequently it will be convenient to provide their analysis as part of the lived experience, they may be interpreted by means of logical reasoning, in order to better understand the implied relations which define or start a valuable action.

4. There must be novelty and nice surprises: new songs, dance steps and moves; recently invented games which are enjoyed as something brand new never experienced before; better and more loving relations with the family, thanks to new ways (which add value) introduced into their daily lives; nice cooperation ways which surprise us by the unusual benefits they leave.

### Novelty and context

5. These novelties suppose an implicit break from tight and unmovable atmospheres and must create sense

scopes where happiness rules and it is promoted by fun and respectful ways of expression, by pedagogic dynamics which produce cooperation symbols, enthusiasm and friendship between teachers, students, administration staff and parents.

6. Paradoxically, novelties must be contextualized, the appearance of aspects which have never been seen before must be prepared; this in a way which allows for a wide coherent frame which provides a plausible surprise and renews our horizons.

7. The now of the creative process always inaugurates or re-inaugurates life processes. It is an affective and social reconfiguration which must be experienced. It is like the moment just before a race, when you say: "on your marks, set, GO!" The GO! places us facing the future, it sets us in the expectation mode, in the effort, in the novelty which will come, and which we are already waiting for.

### Horizon renewal

8. An education understood as a creator of social and psychological harmony will always widen the horizon when it relates in a new way, which serves as a means of experimentation and understanding of ways never seized before. Then, we can see and enjoy new points of view from everything. In this way, new ways for creation, invention and perfection are opened for the students and their societies. A new positive and good horizon, they discover better ways of understanding, of projecting time, of organizing space, of associating themselves with those who surround them.

9. A new horizon supposes the adoption of a different way in which they see events and the way they build news about them. The horizon which incorporates human values to the vision allows us to draw new and more efficient ways used to project and guide the way, to plan voyages; ways of imagining which easily thrill us.

## Renewal of horizons and their harmonizing and therapeutic sense

10. An education which is understood as a generator of social and psychological harmony will want to promote the development of capabilities which allow us to overcome problems caused by the lack of cooperation, trust and transparency.

11. An education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony will seek to boost the ability that the Greek called *kinesis*, the capability of orienting oneself with serenity towards the search of new potentials, new senses.

Kinesiotherapy is what we call the therapeutic method which employs active and passive movements of the entire body or one of its parts. This kind of therapy boosts and promotes the flow of energy, reestablishes movement, equilibrium and coordination capabilities as well as the harmonic integration of oneself and the articulation with other people. Dance is a type of Kinesiotherapy, dismemberment or at least a smoothing of those deformations caused by fears and defense mechanisms created subconsciously.

## Conversation and reason

12. Therapy requires horizons to know in which direction it should guide movement; it also requires regular exercise so we are able to walk in the path our intellect set for us. The teacher may offer suggestive questions and some new dance steps, he/she may also smoothly correct postures and he/she may dance at least a little bit.

13. It comes down to incorporating new ways of understanding the external and internal, a way of understanding me as an entity which plays and harmonizes with the environment and people, it also comes down

to objectiveness and subjectivity. Objectiveness and subjectivity which always are in process, in evolution in a predictable and mysterious sync.

## Future and current times

14. With questions and dialogue tendencies of the future, changes in attitude towards coming events become tacitly outlined. We ponder from the *now* referred towards tomorrow. And *now* is not only a start in the present; rather it is a way which speaks about the future.

15. An education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony will constantly provide nice and fun experiences. The ongoing moment of an experience is an undeniable fact in which a new reality is created. It can not be created in the past or in the future. Creation is current, personal and collective. With games made out of fine arts, musical rhythm dance, singing, spontaneous laughter and other always expected factors, collective movement is created, where we experience together the integration and the now that everyone will gladly remember.

"The now - according to Santayana - has within itself, emotionally, all the happiness of material change, it escapes the past as if it were impatient for not having arrived there before, and goes towards the future with agility, as if it were certain of not losing anything while moving forward. Since it is clear that the real succession can only contain nows..."<sup>1</sup>

16. The fun pedagogic dynamic offers a vision with future expectation. However, each student will update and make his/her own synthesis depending on his configuration of memory and project, depending on the

<sup>1</sup> Jorge Santayana: *Los reinos del ser*. México, Fondo de cultura Económica, 1985, p. 229

way he/she understands his/her environment, culture and the circumstances in which he/she foresees his/her actions.

17. It will not start from the memories and immediate past from children, which are frequently invaded by thousands of television hours where they see hundreds of crimes, bitterness and frustrations. The now form games played will start from a current happiness, given by leisure and relaxed present, which everyone has a right to.

18. Our students require clean and fresh water to build another reality of friendship, cooperation and respect, an experience built intra-subjectively which marks a new reality, that may be lived in the now.

19. In an education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony not only we will play with fun fantasies and fantastic ideals, but with concrete realities which may have a contrast with their bitterness. We strengthen the experience of shared happiness which gives us the possibility of a new positive configuration of dramatic experiences, that is, form the attitude of our students and that of the entire education community.

20. In an education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony there will be many games with a way of association where the other one is recognized as valuable and such value will be noted from different points of view. This entire set of ideas tends to be remembered as a symbol of happy and respectful friendship. It will be like opening possibilities, promising futures, live images and guiding thoughts, always done by children and understood by them.

21. In this education, respect will loose its sense of distance and solemnity, turning into pleasant closeness. In this situation, the education community will have to experiment and comprehend that friendship can be

respectful, pleasant and fun at the same time. This will not be understood just because it is accepted in a speech, but rather because the new synthesis in this playful and fun reality will be experienced; this will cause a group consideration.

22. In this context, the child will adopt words and linguistic constructions which were not common to see associated in the children's language. And above all, it was not plausible; it was not credible that they could pleasantly adopt them in their language.

### Preaching is not the teacher's purpose

23. Many children answer with great seriousness to questions made about their aesthetic experiences which they gladly experienced in a group. Normally, this group pays attention to the answers given by their classmates and accepts their reasoning. However, when the teacher pretends to explain these questions without even making them, it will be common for children to care less about the teacher's explanation. This will cause that the teacher, in order to maintain and increase his/her authority, will have to ask and converse with the students while respecting their answers.

24. The personal answer given by each child, to the teacher and the rest of the group will stimulate the rational thinking and the clarification of relationships in which it is appreciated or it is sensible to appreciate in one way or another. This exercise encourages the tendency to think coherently and with precision.

25. In an education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony, the teacher will have to listen respectfully to the student's answers, will repeat them and when he/she sees coherence in them he/she will openly approve them. This action is very meaningful for the students, since they need a grownup's backup which gives them security.



26. From the experience obtained in workshops, dialogues, drawing, singing and dancing a new dimension is prepared which helps a deeper conversation. The new dialogue will be created, like the other ones, thanks to the teacher's questions and the spontaneous answers from the children and there will be new pleasant experiences which will cause a tendency to encourage the adoption of new positive attitudes.

### Personal commitments

27. In an education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony there will be implied and explicit personal commitments, concerning the way people act upon what they experience, reason and share; they will also tend towards what is perceived as a personal and social asset. Because the spontaneous initiative of children, motivated by experience and questions will allow that elements taken from their environment, their culture and the reality they have lived will flow constantly.

### Active family participation

28. In an education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony, family tasks are an important factor which tends to create a common ground for cooperation from where the following will rise: experiences, judgments, goals, languages and an appropriate symbology for the systematic integration in the entire education community. In this manner, family will be offered a way in to know the materials and the imagery used at school; besides, with the family tasks done each week, home is included in such work; a new language for the family-school relations is created and children are stimulated on a regular basis.

### Generosity and moral

29. With dialogue, the idea and experience of service for everyone is incorporated, and not only limited to just a few beneficiaries. It will start from the principle that moral is a guide towards the common good. Not only for my group, but for my entire community as well. However, while acting on behalf of the wellbeing of the entire human kind, will also see that my partners and I will be benefited.

As Emil Durkheim said: "there are only truly moral goals within collective goals; there is no truly moral motive outside the group adhesion [...] Believing in a society is believing in a social ideal and there is a some amount of that ideal in each one of us [...] The adhesion to a group implies in an indirect manner and almost necessarily, the adhesion to the individuals." <sup>2</sup>

30. In an education understood as creator of social and psychological harmony, we will seek generosity as a service towards others, not only to my children and my friends, but to everyone. The edifying person, and in this sense, "moral", is generous and serving. Even when this person serves itself and his/her relatives, he/she does this with the consciousness of encouraging them to be serving and that everyone serves humanity as well, because he/she knows that you may only be happy with a generosity not limited to just a few. Happiness supposes that we feel gratefulness and that we create gratitude feelings towards others. No-one can be happy without being a systematic giver, a giver; of respect, peace of mind, comprehension, friendship; joint cooperation with people and the environment.

<sup>2</sup> Emil Durkheim, *Educación y moral*, México, Editorial Colofón, p. 95



# Mario Molina\*

## About Progress in Mexico\*\*

There is no doubt that when we think about progress, the economic matter jumps out, since we must guarantee an appropriate life quality for the entire population. At the same time it is necessary that the distribution of said resources is much fairer than the one today.

\* Dr. Molina received in 1995 the Chemistry Nobel Price for his achievements in atmospheric chemistry, especially concerning the formation and destruction of ozone. In recent years he has worked in global environmental processes linked to the atmosphere. Dr. Molina works in programs related to the use of energy and the quality of air in Mexico and in other countries. His most important projects are connected to the solving of climate change, setting Mexico as an example of a developing country in which the necessary measures may be taken to aide the solving of these global problems.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

Therefore a part of progress is related with economic resources and with the availability of material goods to insure that all inhabitants have access to education, hospitals, public health, etc. This aspect of progress is evident and commonly acknowledged and accepted.

However, an additional and very important part of progress, which is not measured only in terms of economic resources, is the access of the individual to an education of excellence which implies besides attending school that it becomes something which benefits his personal life. This benefit is not only economical, it also influences in the formation of the individual, which is necessary for it to be complete and which allows him to participate actively and productively in society.

Another important factor for the progress of a society is the cooperation amongst its citizens. I think it is very important that we all work towards a common wellbeing; if we do that, we all win. This implies the ethical values which allow us to appreciate the benefits for the community (besides the personal benefits), which are perfectly compatible with one another.

Progress also includes the warranty of human and individual rights, the contribution being within the way our society works properly, that is, in its government; obtaining government's protection concerning personal safety, being able to enjoy an elevated life quality, etc. Fortunately we have several examples from different countries such as the Scandinavians, where citizens have less economic resources than other countries, but they do have a clearly more advanced society, with access to health care, cultural aspects, and a higher education, just to mention a few things.

### Measuring devices which might help us analyze growth or regression.

It is important to point out that someone's education in Mexico during this modern era implies access to culture, including the one from our own country and the one developed in the rest of the world within its different aspects: science, arts, etc. This objective might be considered ambitious, but if we have a clear goal it is possible to achieve with the excellent education I am talking about.

Put in other words, a very straightforward indicator to measure growth or regression within a society is the education level of its citizens, although economic income and its distribution are very important, especially within Mexico's perspective. But if we think in matters of education, it is not enough to know how many children have access to elementary school and how many finished their studies; we also need to measure the efficiency with which they learnt. In this

field there is a large room for improvement, since the conventional measuring devices are quite often based in academic tests which measure only the capabilities of reading, performing basic mathematic operations, etc. It is also necessary to measure the efficiency, in which children learn to think, emit appropriate judgment related to the world they live in and to observe how nature works, etc. From science's point of view a part of the education process is to understand the scientific method in order to make judgments based on evidence. In this matter there are not yet measuring devices which go beyond the basic measures. Of course, currently, there are measures in effect, which are also very important and which teach us that in Mexico we are quite left behind, for this reason we need to make a very huge effort to improve the outcome, but we must be conscious that there is more than just knowing how to read, multiply and divide. The same thing happens with scientific education as one of the main components in culture: The important thing is not to memorize scientific facts, such as every plant's names, but rather to emphasize the understanding of the scientific method to comprehend nature, society, etc. This is an ambitious objective, but it is something that in pedagogic teaching methods is taken into consideration more often.

### The Environment

It is also very important that education teaches to appreciate nature, and how indispensable it is for our own well being. This implies we have to instill a specific value which turns out as a respect towards nature. In the same manner as respect for human life and the interest for the well being for the people we share our lives with are manifestations of progress, so the respect for biodiversity and the appreciation of its innate value also show how advanced a society is.

Allow me to show you what I am talking about with a very simple example. It is very unpleasant to live

in a dirty community filled with garbage. Therefore, education must be concerned for teaching children that they must not throw garbage away where they should not, since this damages their life quality, but they should learn to do this for their own conviction and not just because a policeman is around. The ideal would be that people do the right thing for the desire to live in a place where their life quality is the best it can be. This example may be extended to the appreciation of nature, and it can be efficiently communicated through a first class education, where children develop this taste for working with experiments which involve natural systems, observe how plants grow, the way ecosystems work, how insects grow, etc. If done properly, the appreciation of nature I'm talking about will occur on its own.

To achieve this quality in education, it is very important to use the recent findings in pedagogy and teaching, which is very different to what we have been doing for many years now and based almost exclusively in listening to speeches. I refer to active education, in which children make experiments and participate in projects working together with other children in a very active manner. The same goes for education inside universities and colleges; it is not very efficient to sit down and just listen to a professor talking or showing data which might easily be found through books or television shows.

Modern pedagogy shows us that through active participation we efficiently acquire key values for the correct operation of society.

### Universal concept or regional peculiarities

I insist that first we must recognize that there is a universal culture, but without forgetting the appreciation of our own culture, the way other societies have done before. A very important part of education is to show children and teenagers to appreciate our

own cultural manifestations, and to give them the real value they have. For example, if we speak of isolated indigenous populations which have a non-Spanish speaking culture, it is important without any doubt to maintain their regional value. What part of culture should we preserve and what part shall we include in universal culture? We must take into consideration universality, which is something generally common to human beings, but we should also consider some peculiarities such as the development of traditions, language, etc. We should learn to appreciate that part of culture and make sure it does not disappear. To sum up, we must keep our individuality, but at the same time incorporate the progress of universal culture.

### A vision towards the future

We are aware of problems which not only concern Mexico, such as corruption and certain groups of interest which take advantage of other groups of interest. Maybe these problems are more acute in Mexico, but those are problems which have been present during the entire human history within many regions. It is also true that in the main aspect we must improve communication, but in the practical aspect we need a society which guarantees civil rights. Adding it all up; the fact that society is well enough organized and that it works well enough to guarantee the safety of everyone. It is very important to have a society which works properly guaranteeing civil rights through each and every institution: Police, army, authorities, etc.

The movement towards civilization is unfortunately slow; societies evolve slowly and require many generations for changes to take effect. I think that during the beginning of this Century we have a unique opportunity to leap forward and avoid waiting for the slow process of evolution to take effect. The opportunity presents itself as long as we can have education for the masses and more efficiently than

in the past, by means of applying the new pedagogic methods I talked about and the improvements achieved in science and communication. These improvements will allow us to have a different society within one or two generations. We have the opportunity to speed up this process as long as we acknowledge that we must make very important changes in the way we teach and in the way we communicate with the rest of the world. It is a highly ambitious goal, but the fact that we can reach it makes us, as a society, work in a very creative manner to boost these types of improvements in all the population.

Fortunately in Mexico we have some examples that this can be done. Although we have very serious education problems, these new pedagogic methods have been introduced in select groups. We have many elementary school children who are using these participative teaching methods, and they are also experimenting with a genuine fascination. One of these cases, is the SEVIC (*inquisitive science teaching*), a program in which the SEP (*Secretary of the Ministry for Public Education*). The project was originally developed through the

International Association of Science Academies. Several countries such as France and the United States of America provided many resources and made some initial experiments, and currently Mexico is putting into effect their findings. The program pretends to work with teachers so they learn the system and so far it has had a lot of success, since it has been applied in many states, although unfortunately not in all of them. Currently there are hundreds of thousands of children involved in the program, thus we can prove that this can be done in Mexico. We know it works; it is no longer a theory or something utopist, but we have concrete examples in Mexico, and it is also working in other countries as well. For that, we are not the only ones nor do we have to start from square one; we are fortunate that we can recognize which experiments are successful in this movement to change education and we can get ready to achieve a better society. In conclusion, there are many possibilities of accelerated progress and of an unarguable benefit for all Mexicans, especially for teenagers, since our future depends on them as a successful society. All efforts we may be able to do are well worth trying.

# Ugo Pipitone\*

## Progress and Transition\*\*

### Progress in a transition age?

Progress is amongst an endless amount of options and dreams, an accumulation of knowledge, increase in productivity, incorporation of new rights and broadening of the evolutionary possibilities. A flow of changes, which paradoxically, comes from learning through experience as well as the capability of forcing

its limits and decrees. In the past two centuries, it was a movement which boosted the world in name of trust in the future. A course between industrialization, mass consumption, urbanization, universal suffrage, public education, electrification, national bureaucracy, automobile, etc. A course which, lately, incorporates the discovery that the endless acts of production, distribution and transportation which feed wellbeing through the energy created by hydrocarbons, which in turn have environmental issues that announce climate changes with possible irreversible alterations of entire planetary ecosystems. And suddenly, we have the possibility that disaster awaits for the conclusion of the path of progress. In the current technological context and lifestyles, wellbeing is a global threat.

As soon as we have a materialization of the idea of wellbeing as some kind of last meal in wait of possible environmental damages, perhaps irreversible, *volens nolens*, we take the first steps towards an age forced to redefine progress in order to face the global systematic disorder which has been feed by its secular display. Lifestyles (of consumption, production, transportation, etc.) and energy dependence on hydrocarbons thus become central territories in the redefinition of a word forged four centuries ago from the Baconian trust in

\* Ugo Pipitone is an economist dedicated to topics concerning development from the historic point of view. For several years he has worked on topics related to historic phenomena (whether they are successful or not) concerning regression and he has found several constants:

- Escaping regression is something done quickly (at most two, three generations) or it is never done. A castle is conquered by a frontal attack, by means of a siege it is impenetrable;
- Without a sense of urgency coming from the new ruling classes which perceive growth as their major legitimation tool, escaping regression remains as a wishful thinking;
- Without rural policies capable of increasing productivity and rural wellness, countries drag for centuries deformations linked to a previous historically unaccomplished social task;
- The escape from regression does not belong to the right or the left wing; whichever is the government's political ideology, the key still remains the same: A good public administration.

\*\* This contribution was written as an essay.

truth as a product of time. And since, then reborn in several occasions and with different meanings. More than a progressive accumulation of improvements in a reasonably stable frame of reference, we face the urgency of important changes in the matter of the path walked until now. The question is: "How much wellbeing fits in environmental limits which can not be overshoot? And the *how much* will depend on the *how*, that is from the type of wellbeing.

### Accumulation and Reorganization

For decades, independently from other circumstances, the success in the construction of "socialism" in the USSR was measured in tons of steel although, with time, the stockpiles grew unchecked without the government and society knowing what to do with them. The objective, as an ideological mantra, was independent from its own original reasons. It comes from asking whether in current societies, the constant accumulation of long lasting private goods designed for their quick renovation might be like the soviet steel, the anachronistic remain of a productive base which has become environmentally unsustainable and of decreasing profits in terms of wellbeing. If progress threatens to be dissolved in a mass hedonism without the capability of having collective objectives, the sole idea of progress loses sense or requires a serious re-work. The present embodies an absolute novelty: The breaking of a secular *continuum* of trust in which the future would have the capability to solve its own problems.

It is not comfortable to neither define nor measure *progress* when progress means a criticism of their success and an opening to new ways of production, life and international cooperation. Progress can control and decrease the risk which the crisis in some critical areas (climate change, conflicts associated with poverty, democratic governability, etc.) may activate chain reactions with undesirable consequences.

If until yesterday progress was accumulation along a line (more or less) of known progressive improvements, framed in an industrial dimension, *progress* today means the experimentation of new equilibriums amongst social groups which are dismembered and regrouped with new identities and needs in the emerging postindustrial society. The sense of progress weakens when the urgencies go from the accumulation (of goods and rights) to the construction of new architectures of competition and cooperation. Urgent architectures which may be defined as globalization of responsibility and the redefinition of energetic guidelines for consumption, production and work which will impose a new jump in the market metabolisms to incorporating the rules which correspond to systematic and unedited needs. *Progress* consists today in this transaction.

### Two tasks for two parts of the World

Which goals may be set to progress (that is the transition towards new types and fantasies of wellbeing) within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Reducing the greenhouse effect emissions through changes in the current energy guidelines, reducing the gap between rich and poor at a global scale and moving towards a knowledge society and solidarity: Around these three dimensions objectives, commitments and measuring devices of improvements and regressions may be set. But it is convenient to stop right here. Beyond certain limits, desirable improvements for the future may not be independently defined from the particular urgencies of different parts of the world.

In countries named as "developed" by the conventional lexicon, ulterior progress may only be partially measured as greater richness per capita and will have to be evaluated in terms of life quality and acceleration (more or less) of transit towards a knowledge economy and society. Which relentlessly means that there is a progressive abandonment (in favor of "developing"



countries) of manufacturing sectors in which cost of non-highly skilled labor still is a meaningful variable? Important production acceleration depends on a higher profile for education; the capability to absorb existing human capital; a greater expenditure in scientific research and a higher job concentration in high performance activities for their technological innovation potential or for their correspondence towards new needs and consumer styles. Only in a context of this kind, will it be possible to extend social security and particularly, the social protection against unemployment and face the task of rethinking work within the metabolism of a high production society.

In "developing" countries, economic growth and high job generation correspond to realities in which the many rural-industrial goods needed to reach acceptable wellbeing levels are still not enough. Despite an elevated inequality which lessens the social effects of economic growth, this last term remains as an unavoidable necessity. Such economic growth which slowly becomes a synonym of social health in many countries with high income rates still is a differently unaccomplished task in many other parts of the world. The desired improvements and progress will follow more conventional roads, particular to societies which still need to grow, to minor environmental costs that in the past were within the industrialization process. However, there is an aspect which, if rather incorporated to the contemporary worries, still has not reached the deserved attention. It is the institutional characteristic, or in other words, the quality in relation between society and institutions. It is in that link that systematic coherence (without excluding conflict) is established, and makes it possible for a society to set objectives which it is capable of pursuing with consistency. Whenever this consistency is not possible, due to poor public administration quality, or the fragile credibility in institutions, or a weak social organized pressure, economic success is simply not enough to create conditions for its own endogenization. No

economic progress is sustainable in the long term without a large progress in institutions within the areas of efficiency and social legitimacy.

### The GNP per capita is not the key

In any World country with a GNP per capita higher than 30 thousand dollars there are not statistically notable rates of illiteracy or malnutrition, while in every country under the 10 thousand dollar threshold they do exist. Evidently, size matters. But size is not everything. The challenge is to escape regression, which means establishing a three dimensional convergence route, which interaction is essential in building an endogenously dynamic socio-economic physiology: institutions which increase efficiency and social credibility; growing economy and an organized society capable of conditioning the market and public politics options with its needs. If one of the three wheels gets blocked or out of line, the wagon will go slower than before or it will go around in circles.

Marginal income is not everything. Let us compare Oaxaca, with a GNP per capita of 4 thousand dollars with Sicily, which with the current exchange rate (June 2009), has more than 20 thousand dollars. In virtue of its high GNP per capita, in international comparisons, Sicily might be considered as a region which has made the leap way beyond the rooted regression in its socio-economic growth and social homologation physiology? It would be hard to give a positive answer within a Sicilian context concerning chronic juvenile unemployment, systematic corruption of the public administration (and of politics), powerful organized crime, scarce industrial and rural growth and a deep social distrust in the institutions. Conclusion: There is a regression in high incomes, which in spite of them, maintains the exact signs of regression. Let us go to Oaxaca. Here we could even imagine within the next decades a sensible growth acceleration (although it may not be easy to see the sources of such eventuality

from the present), but if such a thing should happen in the absence of sustained social convergence processes and of institutional cleansing, the best perspective for a Oaxaca whose annual income per capita should grow in 3%, would be to wait almost six decades in order to reach productivity and wellbeing levels similar to those of Sicily today. Is this a desirable perspective? Countries like Denmark and South Korea already began to leave behind their regression way before they reached Sicily's current GNP per capita. Economic growth is a necessary condition, not a *Deus ex machina*.

### Progress in Mexico

I limit myself to three indicators - conditions for Mexico to be able to leave behind some of its obstacles which have limited its capability of change and growth for several decades. That is, obstacles which have closed the possibility of a way out from regression for a Mexican society that, between 1934 and 1980 registered high growth rates.

The first condition is the decrease in the cross sector productivity differential. Almost half a century has gone by since Mexican agriculture faced (although with a few important exceptions) a situation of a lack of strength which has reduced the possibility of local development and has accelerated urbanization rhythms which produce megalopolis that are heavy and will remain heavy on top of the country's future. Without taking into consideration the migration of young people. Reverting the tendency means to wake up again the innovation in agriculture and local economy. Aside from the permanent damages which have left a prolonged rural crisis in the country, the fact remains, that no nation has escaped regression still carrying such huge differences as the ones in Mexico (and in general Latin America) between rural and city productivity.

The second condition is the institutional dignity and the progress towards a system based on rules. If someone asks what makes up the Mexican progress in the past decades, the answer would be a complex one: If progress is a front line, it moves forward, stabilizes and recedes at the same time within its different sections. But, to that difficulty we add another one which I will formulate in a very drastic manner in order to reveal the problem: What is the difference between not having schools and having schools which fulfill their functions in an unsatisfactory way? Between not having enough public servants and having a public administration which is swollen, inefficient and corrupt? Credible institutions are the only way to know with certainty that it is better to have schools rather than not having any. Without taking into consideration that, with drug dealing in full growth, institutions of low efficiency and credibility will imply consequences which are hardly measurable over times of social and economical maturity within the country.

The third condition is the economic awakening in the south part of the country (especially the poverty triangle of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas) and the reduction of productivity and wellbeing in the gaps which separate them from the north central area. The Mexican "meridian issue" is an old matter which in two centuries of independent life has not been guided to some sort of long term solution. And while this goes on like this, Mexico will carry the cost of its reforming impotence.

If those three conditions are not met in an appropriate proportion to activate an interactive critical mass, the Mexican GNP per capita will certainly increase in the next decades, but Mexico will remain as a "developing country".

# Rollin Kent\*

## About Progress\*\*

I will not make any statement about the topics left "crystal clear" by others in this forum: The need to start with a criticism of the concepts which we inherited from the economy in order to conceive and measure progress. I will assume that progress most certainly implies a material improvement and especially a growth of people's capabilities and freedoms, this in harmony with the respect (or in other words a non-destruction) of the natural resources and the environment. I also

assume that an improvement in material life, which is environmentally friendly but at the same time unequally distributed, is not exactly a progress. I think these critics have been richly explored by Amartya Sen and others; therefore it is not necessary to dwell in them. I will focus my opinions on the matter of the institutional dimension of progress, and I will do so by commenting on the feedback given by other people attending this forum.

\* Most research papers from Rollin Kent, PhD have discussed higher education politics and the process pertaining to institutional change. In the past two years Dr. Kent has done some research about social studies in science and technology, with a particular interest in the institutional configuration of the Mexican Scientific and Technological System.

\*\* This contribution was written as an interview.

Francisco Valdés points out the connections between socioeconomic equality, development of personal and social capabilities, political systems and freedom. He questions the purpose of freedom: "More freedom from what? More freedom from one's own bindings and more freedom from external constraints, that is, being more capable of doing what one wants." He also points out that capabilities are social, for example,

the capability **"of horizontal dialogue amongst the different social agents"**. This takes us to the matter of "real political inequalities which contradict the main paradigm of the modern legal order which is legal equality." Therefore, the flaws in the institutional structure comply with a central role in the reproduction of inequalities, thus reducing the freedom margins of individuals and groups. This formulation serves as a starting point.

I would like to bring into focus and discuss several points that have been developed by other participants. For example, Judit Boxer insists in the topic concerning the education institution and its relevance to develop a culture for democracy. I ask: In this sense, what can we expect from the Mexican Education Institution? Many assume (or expect) that democratic culture is built in schools, or at least basically in schools. If we look coldly at the Mexican school history we cannot find such a thing; we rather see an institution that since the post-revolutionary reforms is mainly worried about helping with the social integration and "national unity". Barely during the past years school has been noted as the institution which promotes democracy. An assumption of this new function assigned to school, is that democratic culture is taught with the curricula, school practice and with the information from text books. Without any doubt there is certain information which must be lectured, taught. But I ask: Democratic culture is in essence, something which is taught or learnt? I think they both are, that is, the curricula and the formal information in text books is as important as the practices and the prevailing values in the school institution. This second subject demands more attention.

Regarding the subject of civic culture and democracy as something you learn with practice and observation, as an *experience*, one should ask what is that children learn through their school experience in relation with their (future) citizenship. In Mexico, there are around

31 million children and teenagers which spend between 6 and 8 hours of their lives in a school institution since they reach 6 years of age until they are 18 years old. The schooling average in Mexico is 9 years of everyday immersion in an institution which separates them from their family and shapes them, creating a massive value infusion. Thus, we have to ask ourselves what is happening at school beyond the formal curricula; that is, which are the real relationships concerning power, solidarity, transparency or opacity, participation or obedience which are presented in school.

As time passes we find more studies about this subject (see references), but it seems that the connection between school as a teacher of future citizens and school as an institutional environment with values and its own practices which has locked in millions of children and teenagers is not always realized. The term "locked in" may seem harsh, but I use it to point out the importance of school as a socializing arena. For example, we have more children and teenagers locked in than the entire Dutch population (twice as much by the way). The amounts are overwhelming, and they remain there for hours on end during many years. Without any doubt that has deep and long lasting effects. We know that, unfortunately one of those effects is a poor learning of the linguistic and mathematical codes, the scientific and human studies codes as well (as shown by different evaluation such as the Program for International Student Assessment, PISA). But they learn other important things about the way Mexican institutions work, which by the way remain deeply rooted in the civil culture of teenagers. But I do not hear much talk about it, since we assume that school is inherently good, therefore we measure progress according to the number of years attending classes.

I must admit that the fact that I do not believe in school as such, may sound quite perturbing. But I allow myself to suggest that we should ask ourselves if children and

teenagers notice congruence between the practice of school institution and the school's official agenda. That is to say, is there a highly perceived congruence between the proclaimed results and what is really obtained? The degree of congruence between what is declared and what is practiced is very important for the school environment: Mainly because children and teenagers have a high sensibility to this congruence and also because it turns out to be a first approach to cynicism or to institution's legitimacy. If you see that everyday at school something is said but the contrary is done, you learn that the distance between the agenda and practice is a normal thing. Therefore, what do you think about institutions?

Other questions which come to mind are: Do students perceive transparency and responsibility as operant values at school? Do they perceive that problems may be solved by means of participation and dialogue?

If the formation of citizens goes through the acquired experience at school, then we should analyze in a judgmental manner all values, norms and common practices of the institution. But in a political-educational system such as the one we have in Mexico, where it is very obvious that the educational system is politically organized, the lack of such truly awkward questions which deal with the relation between education and citizens formation, is quite strange. If we shall make some progress in education, in the contribution that education may and should do to the formation of citizens, we must ask ourselves about the so called *hidden curriculum* of the Mexican School System. This would imply the generation of indicators which measure the congruence levels and the transparency of school practices from the point of view of the mass experience concerning the deep and everyday immersion of students. By all means, this is not only a problem related to the formation of citizens. It also has certain implications for the formal curriculum since it is well known (although

not recognized by the massive evaluation measuring systems) that there is a vital connection between the cognitive and affective aspects of teaching. It wouldn't be enough that the Human Development Index should consider the amount of years spent in a school as an input. We need a gauge for "school experience quality" as well.

I found the text by Elena Azaola very interesting. If we must measure all progress achieved, we have to focus on the most unprotected groups, which obviously do not comprise the whole of the population, but if progress implies social integration and cohesion it would be a priority to focus on these groups and their relations with the other social classes. I find this specification important for measuring progress. I do not mean to speak abstractly about social cohesion nor social integration, but it is necessary to find out what is happening with the least protected groups.

On the other hand, Azaola makes an emphasis on the rule of law and the equality in the face of the law. She also speaks about the slow recovery of trust by the citizens towards policemen, public ministries and courts. Her conclusion is flawless: "... some minimum requirements we should achieve are: live in a community where we find strong solidarity bonds; where we have authorities which assume their responsibilities towards citizens and are responsible for their actions; where everyone has achieved a minimum level of satisfaction of their basic needs and where we find a collective rejection towards arbitrariness, power abuse and corruption". The measurement of these phenomena is done by some organizations such as *International and Mexican Transparency*. What could they contribute to a measurement in progress?

Now I go to another topic which is nonetheless related to the prior one: The problems caused by crime, drug trafficking and violence. I am worried by the social and long-lasting effect caused today and in the future by

such topics, especially amongst young people within cities where these problems can be found more often. In the United States of America studies have been going on for years without reaching good conclusions; in that country they have been worrying about what they call "social disorganization", a sociological concept which turns out to be somewhat ideological. They speak a lot about the communitarian social effects, about the constant incidence of crime, violence and the use of weapons in communities, and especially in young people, who participate often in such activities. If we must judge by the experience of large cities in the United States of America these consequences have already stained entire communities and they will remain, even if we assume that we could control, reduce and guide crime and drug trafficking. Supposing that we begin to solve the problems found in police institutions and those in justice administration, anyway the effects caused by drug trafficking and violence will remain. In this sense it was very important the implementation of the *1st National Survey of Exclusion, Intolerance and Violence in Public Middle and high schools* on behalf of the SEP's Middle and High School Subsecretary of Education in 2007.

Finally I will refer to the text by Ugo Pipitone which speaks about progress as the accumulation of knowledge, increase in productivity, installation of new rights and the broadening of evolutionary possibilities in people. I agree when he confirms that progress will be understood in different manners in a developed country and in an underdeveloped country. Is within this topic where he refers to the quality concerning the relation between society and institutions, the systematic coherence without the exception of conflict and the possibility of a society which is consistent to its own objectives. He speaks about the social capabilities to organize life and to improve the institutional environments which many times tend to block or distort well intended politics.

Pipitone speaks about three indicators which measure conditions for the Mexican case. The first condition is the reduction of the productivity differential amongst the different sectors, that is: Countryside and city. No wonder he says that the countryside has been blocked in Mexico for more than 40 years; thus we have mega cities and that is also why we have suburban poverty and therefore, why we have much immigration. There is an agricultural policy, but it does not seem that this agricultural policy is taking care of this 40 year long disaster.

The second condition: institutional dignity and the progress towards a system based on rules. What is the difference between not having schools and having schools which fulfill their functions in an unsatisfactory way? That is, if we do not have schools, children will not learn certain things, and if we have schools which do not work properly, the children will learn other things that may not be good, perhaps we are damaging them with the school system as it is. Let us ask ourselves about the deep malfunctions in the institutions we already have. Pipitone also asks: what is the difference between not having enough public servants and having a swollen public administration which is also inefficient and corrupt? I think it is better not to have many public servants. Having credible institutions is the best way to know with certainty that having schools is better than not having any.

The third condition is the economic awakening of the south part of the country, which is strongly linked to the first condition. The measuring devices used in Mexico for the evaluation of the public politics have a very narrow view, is this policy effective? Is there a price benefit in this policy? There is an entire academic and technocratic tradition in making the analysis of a public policy in a specialized and technically correct manner, which nonetheless it does not allow us to see relevant matters. This has several effects, one of them is that it does not properly resolve all problems, but the other

one is that within political marketing, those programs are sold as something positive. The programs end up fulfilling a legitimating function. The governmental disinterest for the *wide socio institutional effectiveness* of the public politics programs reinforces the cynicism found in the population.

I go back to the "provision of dignifying institutions" topic. I put it in these terms; having effective institutions is the starting point, but it is not enough if they are not worthy and transparent, that is, they are socially valid. It is fundamental to have effective and

credible mediators. These institutions are important for economic effectiveness, for participation and cohesion. Therefore, the institutional and social cohesion problems are not separate things. The institutional topic is fundamental and what worries me about the indicators is that in general they are occupied with the effect in population, groups and individuals. This is correct and methodologically understandable: It is harder to measure and define the "institutional progress". But we must walk in that direction.

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# 4 Towards a Taxonomy to Measure the Progress of Societies

Mariano Rojas

## 1. The reflection made

The previous pages show the richness of the reflection made by a selected group of consolidated researchers in Mexico on the concept of progress and its measurement. They moved from concept to conceptions, and in many cases, with different degrees of detail; some even dared to outline a set of practices for measuring progress. As is to be expected in the academic world, the diversity of ideas, approaches and methodologies has shown up, indicating the fruitfulness of the reflection. The scope of the combined reflections is far higher than the sum of the personal contributions, and their richness emerges from something which I consider a desirable practice when approaching issues that deal with human beings and their life in society: the diversity of disciplines in

the group of collaborators and the manifest interest in many of them of moving beyond the boundaries of their disciplines.

As it is also expected, many collaborators have centered their reflections on their specific lines of investigation. Since these collaborators are researchers with a long and solid career in the academic world in Mexico, we can be sure that the exercise of reflection not only offers the richness of breadth as it embraces many disciplines and approaches, but also the richness of depth, with their reflections on progress substantiated by their thought which has been forged during many years of study and investigation. Also, since the reflection exercise is based

on research carried out in Mexico, we can be sure that it refers to issues which are most relevant to the inhabitants of this country and, perhaps, to the inhabitants of the majority of countries in the world. It is not necessary to claim universality with respect to thought generated in Mexico; it is sufficient to recognize its relevance for large segments of the world population

Some of the proposals made have aspired to present a general framework to approach the issue of progress while others have made specific propositions for its measurement. Some collaborators opted to give a solid theoretical basis to their contributions while others opted to base their reflection on the findings of their research. Many questioned the theoretical models of their disciplines. There are even those who are pessimistic about progress and even about the reflection exercise.

It is not necessary to have a consensus; diversity is important. The purpose of this book is not to define our concept of progress in the 21st Century nor is it to establish the set of indicators to be used to measure progress in Mexico. Its objective is to contribute to the reflection that society should have on what is to be considered as progress in this century, and, because of this, to the general discussion on where we want to go as people and as a society. It is considered to be imperative that a generalized and inclusive reflection is made in Mexico and that this is carried out with the aim of reaching agreements on the conception and measurement of progress. With the aim of contributing to the process, a taxonomy to measure the progress of society is proposed. The taxonomy is based on a reading of the reflections that this book contains. However, this taxonomy does not aspire to be the only possible reading of these reflections, nor does it aim to be a simple amendable version or eclectic solution, and is even less intended to substitute each one of the proposals that the collaborators have made. The taxonomy does aim

to make a coherent and useful proposal for the process of dialog and definition that, it is hoped, will take place in the near future and that, as one of the collaborators expresses, aims to trigger research, discussions and analyses among academics and the creators of public policies.

## **2. A taxonomy proposal to measure the progress of societies**

### **2.1. Rationality of the taxonomy**

A taxonomy seeks to create a coherent classification scheme with the aim of giving substance to a concept. The objective is not to make a specific proposal of the variables to be used but rather to propose the areas that require monitoring to measure the progress of societies. The exercise of variables definition comes after the taxonomy and it also requires the participation of statisticians and specialist institutions.

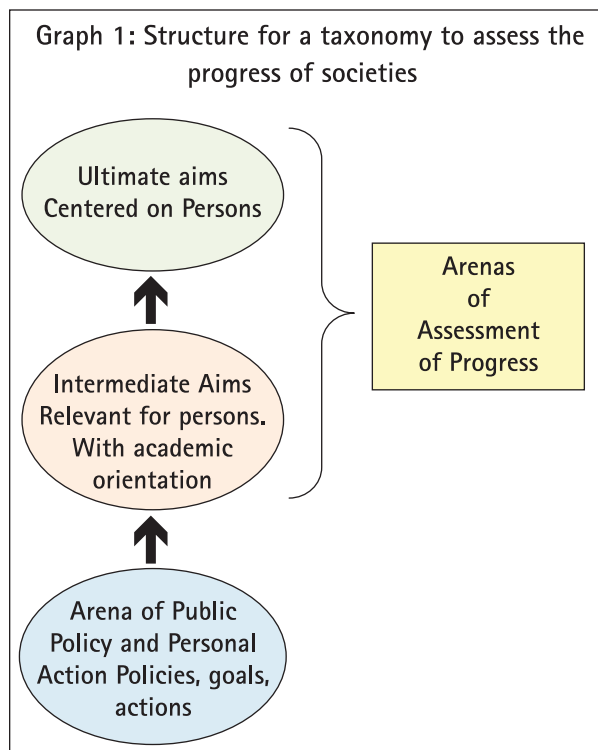
When talking of progress it is important to distinguish between the level at which progress is assessed and the level at which instruments for progress are defined. When assessing the progress of society one must look at those areas where society's aims are defined.

It is also important to distinguish between final aims and intermediate aims within the level of assessment. The final aims have an intrinsic value for human beings and do not have procedural value; in other words, human beings aspire to these ends for themselves and not as instruments to accede to other ends. With the final aims there is no space for the question as to why they are important. Human beings do not need to answer this kind of question. The intermediate aims are valuable in that they contribute to the final aims being pursued but also may have procedural value. It is worth asking what is the contribution of these intermediate aims once the final aims are defined

but it is also worth mentioning that it is important to achieve these final aims in one way and not another.

Since the progress of societies is a matter of human beings in society, the final aims are necessarily centered on the person, while the intermediate aims are relevant to people but have a broad academic slant that reflects the form of studying and understanding human phenomena. Because of this, the level of assessment of progress is fundamentally centered on persons, in their roles of beneficiaries and evaluators of progress.

The level of instruments has to do with the definition and design of policies, the evaluation of their impact, the fixing of goals and the investigation into the cause, effect and intervention processes. The theme of instruments is centered on the work of academicians and public officers.



## 2.2. A taxonomy to measure the progress of societies

Some of the final aims and many intermediate aims have been discussed throughout the book. Also, in many cases, issues at the level of instruments has been broached as, for example, in the discussion on what the tax burden of a country should be and which courses should be included in a high school study plan.

The proposed taxonomy corresponds only to the arenas of assessment of the progress in societies; the theme of identifying instruments and defining policy variables is left to the study and discussion by academicians and policy makers. As it was previously mentioned, the taxonomy is based on the reading that the author makes of the reflections presented in this book and does not intend, nor can aspire at any time, to displace or substitute the ways of thinking and visions that each one of the collaborators has of progress and its measurement.

### 2.3. Detail of proposed taxonomy

Without exhausting all the themes to be considered, it is essential to monitor the following issues within each domain under consideration:

- a. Indicators of subjective wellbeing. People's happiness, and their satisfaction with life and in their domains of life. People's affective state and the conditions of 'their internal world'. The self-assessments that people make of their life.
- b. Indicators of fulfillment. The development of multiple intelligences, the degree of satisfaction of human needs in dimensions proposed by thinkers such as Maslow and Fromm, and the full display of human potential.
- c. Indicators of physical and mental health. Physical health measured not only as absence of diseases but

also as absence of functionality problems, the situation of stress, anguish and other emotional states.

d. Indicators of the effectiveness of democracy and rights. Indicators of the political system, political behavior, and civil coexistence. Exercise of duties of social coexistence. Existence of a state of law and citizenship rights. Exercise of liberty. Respect and complete realization of social rights.

e. Indicators of income and wealth. Income can be used in a better way. It is recognized that income is important for the satisfaction of needs; however, it is essential to pay attention not only to the level and rate of growth of income but also to the way income is used. In addition, it is also important to keep track of the way in which income is generated so as to improve its impact on the other dimensions of the taxonomy.

f. Indicators of human relations. Human relations are a source of wellbeing and fulfillment. It is necessary to keep track of family and friendship relationships; as well as interpersonal relations within the community and all kind of inter-generational relationships. The basic rules of coexistence and respect between members of a society. The density and strength of the social tissue and the bonds of solidarity.

g. Indicators of spare time. Availability of spare time. The time for a reassuring dream. The satisfying use of spare time and its use for self-fulfillment.

h. Work and its conditions. Work is not only a means to generate income; it can be a means of obtaining wellbeing and fulfillment. It is necessary to keep track of the kind of human relations at work. The existence and conditions of child labor. Salary and fringe benefits as well as other working conditions such as commuting requirements. Job satisfaction. Importance and dignity of work.

i. Indicators of identity and culture. The relations of cultural and ethnic affiliation; the sense of belonging to specific communities. Presenting indicators at the community and identity-group level.

j. Habitability conditions. The environment is important. Indicators of safety, violence, living conditions, communal infrastructure, recreational facilities and many more.

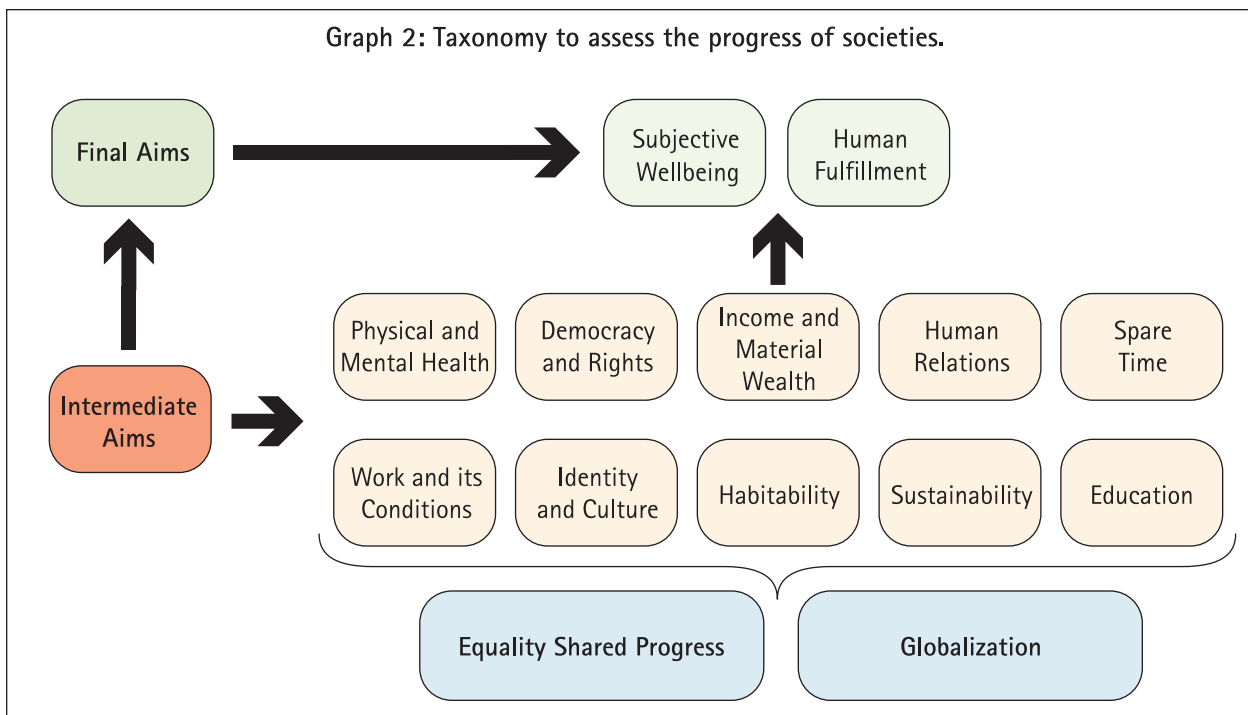
k. Sustainability. The preoccupation with future generations and the environment. Indicators of environmental destruction, pollution, depletion of non-renewable resources, ecological footprint. Respect for other species coexisting with humans on the planet.

l. Education. A reconsideration of the conception of progress also implies a reconsideration of the value of education as well as the type of education desired: education that trains human beings in skills to have a happy life and for self-fulfillment; education that offers capacities for coexistence and civic life, for mental enjoyment and for critical thinking; an education that generates social and psychological harmony; an education that teaches the appreciation of nature.

Two additional themes are recurrent in the reflections made; even though they do not constitute specific domains of the taxonomy to measure progress they are indeed basis constituents of any assessment of progress.

Shared progress. Special attention should be paid to inequalities in all the areas of progress assessment. There should be indicators of inequality (gaps and distribution indicators) for all domains where progress is assessed and not only for the income domain. There should also be indicators of exclusion for specific demographic and ethnic groups. Deprivation is, in consequence, defined in other dimensions beyond

Graph 2: Taxonomy to assess the progress of societies.



income. In this way inequality and exclusion, in dimensions such as health, happiness, and effectiveness of civil, social, political and legal rights and even in human relations, are all measured.

The assessment of progress should also have a global perspective. Globalization makes it necessary to measure progress at geographical levels beyond the normal country jurisdictions. It is necessary to create and keep track of global-level indicators that recognize that we all live in an interconnected world and that we have a shared destiny. For example, we could keep track of migratory flows, climate change, the rights of migrants, and world inequalities.

A final methodological consideration needs to be made regarding the construction of indicators. Although the need and convenience of keeping track of quantitative indicators is recognized, it is also acknowledged that they do not completely grasp all human aspects that are relevant in the assessment of the progress of societies.

There is a need for qualitative studies. The quantitative follow-up of progress should be complemented by periodic and systematic qualitative studies on themes of relevance to progress. Qualitative studies are especially useful when dealing with socially fragile groups (such as the situation of homeless people) and in studying issues where quantitative indicators are insufficient to grasp their complexity. Particular attention should be paid to the situation of children.



# 5 Index of Contributors

**Agustín Escobar.** Doctor in Sociology from the University of Manchester. He is research professor of the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology - west. He is Academic Advisor in the National Council of Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL); member of the National Researchers System (SNI), level 3, and of the Mexican Academy of Sciences. [ageslat@fastmail.fm](mailto:ageslat@fastmail.fm)

**Alba González.** Doctor in History from the Universidad Iberoamericana. She is Professor of the Department of Social Sciences and Politics in the Universidad Iberoamericana, Santa Fe. She is member of the SNI, level 3, and a member of the Mexican Academy of Sciences. [alba.gonzalez@uia.mx](mailto:alba.gonzalez@uia.mx)

**Alicia Puyana.** Doctor in Economics from Oxford University. She is Researcher Professor of the Latin-American Faculty of Social Sciences-Mexico. Member of the SNI, level 3. [apuyana@flacso.edu.mx](mailto:apuyana@flacso.edu.mx)

**Antonio Paoli.** Doctor in Social Sciences from the Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico City. He carried out his post-doctoral studies at Boston College. He is Researcher Professor at the Department of Education and Communication and in the post-graduate studies in Rural Development at the Autonomous Metropolitan University-Xochimilco. He is a member of the SNI, level 2. [jpaoli@correo.xoc.uam.mx](mailto:jpaoli@correo.xoc.uam.mx)

**Araceli Damián.** Doctor in Urban economics from the London University. She is Researcher Professor at the Center for Demographic, Urban and Environmental Studies at the Colegio de México. She is a member of the SNI, level 2. [adamian@colmex.mx](mailto:adamian@colmex.mx)

**Benjamín Domínguez Trejo.** Doctor in General Experimental Psychology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He is Professor of the Faculty of Psychology in the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Consultant at the Pain Clinic of the National Medical Center "20 de noviembre" ISSSTE (2000-2009) and member of the Board of Directors of the International Organization Psychology Beyond Borders ([www.psychologybeyondborders.org](http://www.psychologybeyondborders.org)) He is a member of the SIN, level 1. [benjamin@unam.mx](mailto:benjamin@unam.mx)

**Camilo Flores.** Graduate in Economics from the Faculty of Economics, National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he is now Professor. He is carrying out his doctoral studies at the University of Notre Dame. [cfloresa@nd.edu](mailto:cfloresa@nd.edu)

**Carlos Tello.** He is Associate Professor of the Faculty of Economics in the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Master in Economics from Columbia University; he carried out his doctoral studies in the University of Cambridge. He has been Undersecretary of the Treasury Department, Secretary of Budget and Planning, Director General of the Bank of Mexico, Director General of the National Indigenist Institute, and Ambassador to Mexico in Portugal, the USSR and Cuba. He is a member of the SNI, level 3. [tellomcar@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:tellomcar@prodigy.net.mx)

**Elena Azaola.** Doctor in Anthropology from the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology and Professor in the same institution. Member of the SNI, level 3. [eazaola@ciesas.edu.mx](mailto:eazaola@ciesas.edu.mx)

**Francisco Lizcano Fernández.** Doctor in Latin American Studies from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He coordinates the Center for Research in Social Sciences and Humanities at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He is a member of the SNI, level 2. [fralife@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:fralife@prodigy.net.mx)

**Francisco Valdés.** Doctor in Political Sciences from the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, National Autonomous University of Mexico. He is Senior Researcher of the Social Research Institute at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. President of the Governing Board of the Latin-American Faculty of Social Sciences. He is a editorial writer for "El Universal" newspaper. He is a member of the SNI, 2. [ugalde@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:ugalde@servidor.unam.mx)

**Gonzalo Castañeda.** Doctor in Economics from Cornell University. He is Research Professor in the Colegio de México. He is a member of the SNI, level 2. [gcastaneda@colmex.mx](mailto:gcastaneda@colmex.mx)



**Haydea Izazola.** Doctor in Social Sciences with a specialty in Population Studies, from the Colegio de México. She is Researcher Professor at the Autonomous Metropolitan University-Xochimilco, Division of Sciences and Arts for Design, Department of Methods and Systems. She is a member of the SNI, level 2. [hizazola@correo.xoc.uam.mx](mailto:hizazola@correo.xoc.uam.mx)

**Jorge González.** Doctor in Social Sciences from the Universidad Iberoamericana. He is Senior Researcher of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research in Sciences and Humanities (CEIICH) at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Member of the SNI, level 3. [tzolkin4@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:tzolkin4@servidor.unam.mx)

**Jose Woldenberg.** Sociologist and Master in Latin American Studies from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He was Council President of the Federal Electoral Institute from 1996 to 2003. He is a columnist of "Reforma" newspaper. He is also Research Professor in the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Member of the SNI, level 2. [josewolk@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:josewolk@prodigy.net.mx)

**Juan Pedro Laclette.** Doctor in Basic Biomedical Research from the National Autonomous University of Mexico; he carried out his post-doctorate degree in the Harvard School of Public Health, Harvard University. He is General Coordinator of the Technological and Scientific Consultative Forum. Member of the SNI, 3. [laclette@biomedicas.unam.mx](mailto:laclette@biomedicas.unam.mx)

**Juan Ramón de la Fuente.** President of the International Association of Universities, Council Member of the United Nations University and Director of the Cátedra Simón Bolívar at the Alcala de Henares University. He has been the Mexican Minister of Health and Rector of the National Autonomous University of Mexico, where he has been professor since 1980. [seminario\\_principal@hotmail.com](mailto:seminario_principal@hotmail.com)

**José Luis Tejada.** Doctor in Political Sciences from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. He is Research Professor of the Department of Politics and Culture at the Autonomous Metropolitan University-Xochimilco. Member of the SNI, level 2. [joseluis\\_tejeda@infosel.net.mx](mailto:joseluis_tejeda@infosel.net.mx)

**Julio Boltvinik.** Doctor in Social Sciences from the Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology West Building. At present he is Research Professor in the Colegio de México. He is a collaborator for "La Jornada" newspaper where he writes his weekly column "Economía moral" (Moral Economy). He is a member of the SNI, level 3. [jbolt@colmex.mx](mailto:jbolt@colmex.mx)

**Leonardo Lomelí.** Graduate in Economics and Master and Doctoral candidate in History from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). Full-time Permanent Professor at the Faculty of Economics, UNAM; member of the SNI, level C. [llomeliv@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:llomeliv@servidor.unam.mx)

**Luis Reygadas.** Doctor in Anthropological Sciences from the Autonomous Metropolitan University-Iztapalapa, with Post-doctoral research carried out in New York State University. He is Professor of the Anthropology Department at the Autonomous Metropolitan University-Iztapalapa. Member of the SNI, level 3. [lrrg@xanum.uam.mx](mailto:lrrg@xanum.uam.mx)

**Mariano Rojas.** Doctor in Economics from Ohio State University. He is Professor at the Latin-American Faculty of Social Sciences-Mexico, and the Popular Autonomous University of the State of Puebla. He is member of the SNI, level 3. [mariano.rojas.h@gmail.com](mailto:mariano.rojas.h@gmail.com)

**Mariflor Aguilar.** Doctor in Philosophy from the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature of the National Autonomous University of Mexico. She is Research Professor at this Faculty. She is member of the SNI, level 3. [mariflor@unam.mx](mailto:mariflor@unam.mx)

**Mario Molina.** Doctor in Physical Chemistry from University of California, Berkeley. He received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1995 for his work in atmospheric chemistry, specifically in relation to the formation and decomposition of ozone. At present he is Professor of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). He is Chairman of the Mario Molina Center for Strategic Studies in Energy and the Environment, Mexico City, and member of the National College. [mmolina@centromariomolina.org](mailto:mmolina@centromariomolina.org)

**Martín Puchet.** Doctor in Economics from the National Autonomous University of Mexico; where he is Associate Professor of Quantitative Methods. He is member of the SNI, level 3. [anyul@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:anyul@servidor.unam.mx)

**Miguel Székely.** Doctor in Economics from Oxford University. He is Undersecretary of Middle Higher Education, SEP. He was the Undersecretary of Planning, Analysis and Evaluation, SEDESOL. He has 68 academic publications on issues related to social politics. [emszekely@sems.gob.mx](mailto:emszekely@sems.gob.mx)

**Paola Cubas.** Graduate in Mathematics and Economics from the Universidad de las Américas-Puebla. She is Associate Researcher for the initiative "Measuring the Progress of Societies: A Mexican Perspective". [paolacubas@gmail.com](mailto:paolacubas@gmail.com)

**Pedro Hernández.** Doctor in Sociology from Iowa State University. He is Research Professor of the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Benemérita Autonomous University of Puebla. Member of the SNI, level 3. [pfhernan@prodigy.net.mx](mailto:pfhernan@prodigy.net.mx)

**Rodolfo Stavenhagen.** Doctor in Sociology from the University of Paris. He is Emeritus Professor-Researcher from the Colegio de México, where he has worked as Researcher Professor of the Center for Sociology Studies since 1965. He is National Emeritus Researcher of the SNI. [staven@colmex.mx](mailto:staven@colmex.mx)

**Rolando Cordera.** He is Emeritus Professor of the Faculty of Economics in the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). He is Graduate in Economics from the National School of Economics and has post-graduate studies from the London School of Economics. He is a weekly collaborator for "La Jornada" and a monthly collaborator for "Nexos". He is a member of the editorial board of the magazine *Economíaunam*, UNAM. He is member of the Editorial Board of the magazine *Nexos*. Member of the SNI, level 2. [cordera@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:cordera@servidor.unam.mx)

**Rollin Kent.** He studied History in Dartmouth College, USA; he has a Master's in Sociology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and a Master's and Doctorate in Education, DIE-CINVESTAV. He is Research Professor in the Benemérita Autonomous University of Puebla. He is a member of the SNI, level 3. [kent.rollin@gmail.com](mailto:kent.rollin@gmail.com)

**Ugo Pipitone.** Doctor in Economics and Trade from the University of Rome. Senior Researcher of the CIDE. He is a member of the SNI, level 3. [ugo.pipitone@cide.edu](mailto:ugo.pipitone@cide.edu)

