

# Seminar: The key to unlocking the low carbon transition...'sustainable wellbeing'?

DEMAND seminar with Dr. Tadhg O' Mahony, visiting Marie Skłodowska Curie fellow from the Finland Futures Research Centre at the University of Turku

Wednesday 20th January 2016, 1600-1800, FASS MR11

DEMAND Centre  
University of Lancaster



Marie Skłodowska-Curie  
Actions



FINLAND FUTURES  
RESEARCH CENTRE



Turun yliopisto  
University of Turku

# What will we do today?

- ▶ Some background FFRC, MSCA, MAXWELL
- ▶ Defining wellbeing and links to material consumption
- ▶ Sustainable wellbeing
- ▶ Broad problematique, not going to be definitive...yet!
- ▶ Discussion
- ▶ Policy consultation on implementation by social practices

# Finland Futures Research Centre

- ▶ University of Turku
- ▶ Turku School of Economics
- ▶ Multidisciplinary research centre
- ▶ Uses futures techniques to explore, vision and analyse the future
- ▶ Futures techniques such as scenarios are usually transdisciplinary
- ▶ Aim is to enhance understanding (scientific inquiry to reduce uncertainty) or vision desirable change (strategic inquiry for policy, strategy, participation and empowerment)
- ▶ Used in academic research, environmental, policy, corporate, conflict resolution...
- ▶ FFRC particular focus on energy, sustainable development and low-carbon transition



# Marie Skłodowska Curie Action MSCA postdoctoral fellowships

- ▶ Fully EU-funded from *Horizon 2020*
- ▶ Different aims...
- ▶ Mobility of experienced researcher
- ▶ Research career development and training
- ▶ Researcher wellbeing!!
- ▶ Societal impact in science/ policy
- ▶ Host institution benefits
- ▶ Publication
- ▶ Communication and public dissemination
- ▶ Project management



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# Maximising wellbeing and minimising emissions: backcasting social visions for a low carbon Europe (MAXWELL)

- ▶ Work Package 1

Different conceptions of wellbeing, different fields, alternatives rather than one 'true' conception

- ▶ Work Package 2

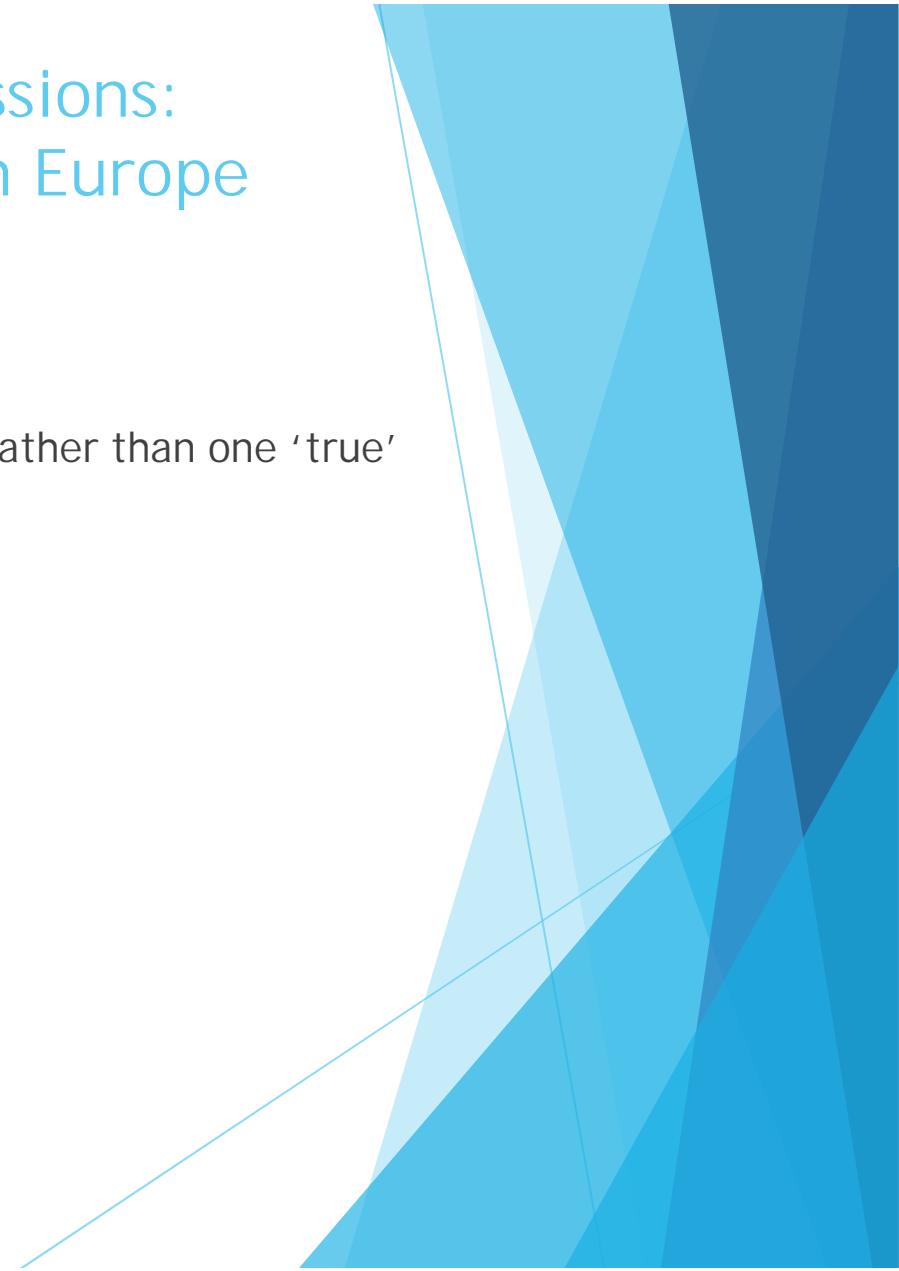
Social visions of wellbeing as scenarios

- ▶ Work Package 3

Quantified by an energy model

- ▶ Work Package 4

EU and national policy implementation



# We've hit peak home furnishings, says Ikea boss

Company's head of sustainability says consumption of many familiar goods is at its limit

**Sean Farrell**

Monday 18 January 2016 08.55 GMT

The appetite of western consumers for home furnishings has reached its peak – according to Ikea, the world's largest furniture retailer.

The Swedish company's head of sustainability told a Guardian conference that consumption of many familiar goods was at its limit.

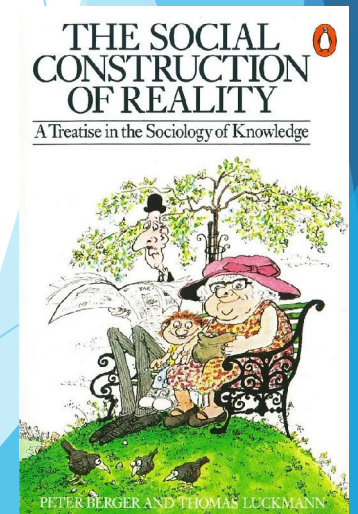
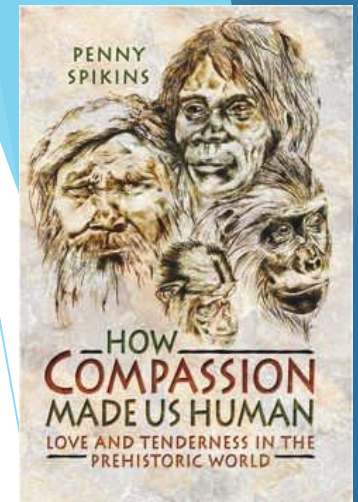
“If we look on a global basis, in the west we have probably hit peak stuff. We talk about peak oil. I'd say we've hit peak red meat, peak sugar, peak stuff ... peak home furnishings,” Steve Howard said at a Guardian Sustainable Business debate. He said the new state of affairs could be called “peak curtains”.

## Gaps in how we see the world? A challenge...

- ▶ Arts, humanities and 'soft' social sciences vs. 'hard sciences' mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and sometimes economics
- ▶ Right brain vs. left brain, creative vs. rational, intuitive vs. logical, feminine vs. masculine, soft vs-hard
- ▶ Over-simplifications and false dichotomies, distractions at best, at worst they reinforce negative power dynamics
- ▶ The trope, a Freudian projection?!!
- ▶ What are our most important achievements?
- ▶ Language and cooperation, social relationships, arts and culture, science and technology, spirituality and 'higher values'?
- ▶ The economy as we know it depends on growth and innovation, but much of innovation is creative
- ▶ The techno-economic world, 'innovation' is now actually low
- ▶ The current approach has brought us to the brink of disaster
- ▶ From climate change and environmental damages to market failures and financial collapse
- ▶ From growing social inequality, to the replacement of traditional cultures and relationships with hollow technical fixes and consumerism

# Gaps in how we see the world? A challenge...

- ▶ Political and ideological ramifications, priority on wealth ...or is it power?
- ▶ Spikin (2015) calls this a dangerous social experiment in competition (intra and inter-specie
- ▶ If reality is a social construct, is this the only possible world?
- ▶ An academic question...but maybe more importantly a social one ; is this the world we want?
- ▶ You can't solve a problem with the thinking that created it (attributed to Einstein)
- ▶ Do we need to look at things differently, and to think differently to grasp opportunities, solve problems and build a worthwhile future?
- ▶ Echoes of CP Snow's 'Two Cultures' (1959), but I'm not going to try and resolve any of these...
- ▶ However, we would do well to remember the central importance of the social sciences in meeting our challenges and opportunities
- ▶ And to open our minds in how we view the issues at hand, to broaden and not narrow





# Consumption and material consumption

- ▶ What is consumption?
- ▶ Economic growth relies on consumption
- ▶ Economic definition: personal or household purchase or use of goods and services (investment or saving)
- ▶ What is material consumption...everything that is not experiential

# 0.CN Household final consumption expenditure Summary

Current prices - not seasonally adjusted

£ million

UK NATIONAL<sup>1</sup>

UK DOMESTIC<sup>2</sup>

COICOP	Net		Total	Food & drink	Alcohol, tobacco & narcotics	Clothing & footwear	Housing	Household goods & services	Health	Transport	Communication	Recreation & culture	Education	Restaurants & hotels	Miscellaneous
	Total	tourism													
	-	-	0	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
	ABPB	ABTE	ABQI	ABZV	ADFL	ADFP	ADFS	ADFY	ADGP	ADGT	ADGX	ADGY	ADIE	ADIF	ADII
2011	990 828	11 156	979 672	87 009	41 999	54 066	245 616	46 353	16 359	136 262	19 946	100 679	15 032	91 897	124 454
2012	1 029 378	10 555	1 018 823	91 377	42 878	55 814	255 613	47 165	17 818	143 474	20 420	103 959	15 865	96 399	128 041
2013	1 073 106	9 333	1 063 773	96 199	43 526	58 905	265 162	49 300	19 121	150 124	21 975	104 353	17 882	101 277	135 949
2014	1 118 992	9 081	1 109 911	95 385	44 536	63 080	269 816	52 453	20 118	156 480	22 749	111 497	19 587	106 271	147 939

- ▶ Differences in energy and/ or greenhouse gas footprint of different consumption bundles
- ▶ Difference across industrialised and less industrialised 'developing' countries
- ▶ Material vs. experiential
- ▶ Experiential usually low material consumption (but not necessarily low energy)

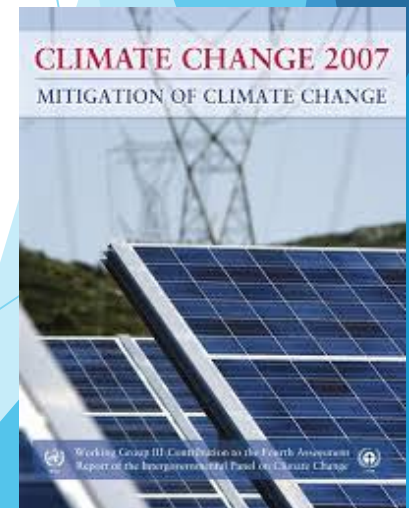
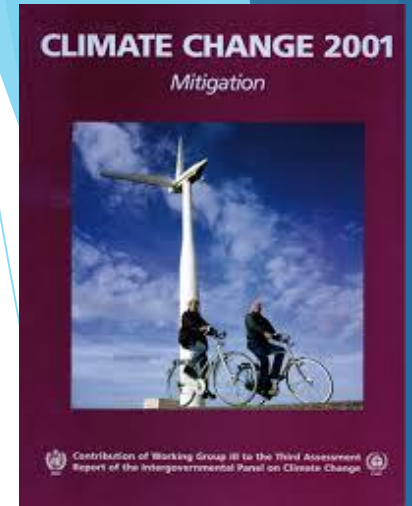
# Immaterialisation and mitigation

- ▶ FAR more one-dimensional and less integrated
- ▶ SAR 1995 started the narrative of consumption and lifestyle
- ▶ Referenced FCCC negotiations and developing countries pointing out the "unsustainable lifestyles" of developed nations (negative connotation)
- ▶ Cited "indirect policy options" that address consumption and lifestyle in an "integrated systems approach" because the issues concerned affect numerous areas
- ▶ Advocated "There seems to be ample opportunity for increasing energy conservation in the industrialized countries through the imposition of stricter standards with respect to energy and materials use and most of all, through alterations and adjustments in lifestyles."
- ▶ WGIII 2014, important contributions referenced Shove (social practices), Jackson (decoupling prosperity from growth and material consumption) and Geels (transition management)
- ▶ But how far have we come?
- ▶ Agreed that technoeconomic approach (renewables, efficiency, taxes) is insufficient
- ▶ Strong argument that social, cultural and governance drivers are the most important 'ultimate drivers'



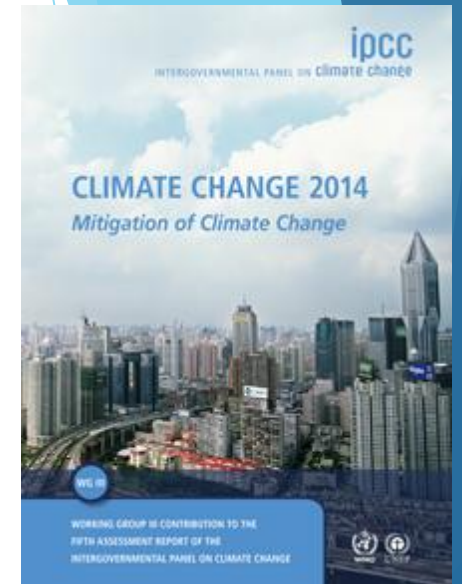
# Place of consumption in analysis and policy

- ▶ It has philosophical and moral overtones, and a very long tradition
- ▶ 'Consumer sovereignty' and the ethics of free will
- ▶ As a result it is often avoided
- ▶ But it is important to note that we are already influencing lives, choices and consumers
- ▶ Useful to look at the IPCC reports to see the status quo
- ▶ Prominent questions about lifestyle and consumer culture...*IPCC TAR (2001)*
- ▶ Lifestyles "not economically but cultural rational"
- ▶ *IPCC AR4 (2007)*
- ▶ In the context of buildings " Culture, behaviour, lifestyle and the rebound effect"
- ▶ SPM: "Lifestyle changes can reduce GHG emissions. Changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns that emphasize resource conservation can contribute to developing a low-carbon economy that is both equitable and sustainable".



# Place of consumption in analysis and policy?

- ▶ *IPCC AR5 (2014)*
- ▶ The issue gets more comprehensive treatment in chapter 4 (*Sustainable development and Equity*)
- ▶ Looks at the relationship between income and 'wellbeing'
- ▶ States that consumption patterns need to be changed
- ▶ This means 'over-consumption' in western industrialised countries where consumer culture has taken hold
- ▶ Major problem that growing elites and middle classes in developing countries are adopting this pattern
- ▶ ...High material consumption becomes the global aspiration
- ▶ Emissions and consumption rise (the Kyoto targets don't show imports which requires consumption-based accounting)



# Moving to a NEW APPROACH?

- ▶ Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)
- ▶ Priority since Local Agenda 21 (1992)
- ▶ Tends to focus on behaviour and efficiency
- ▶ Sustainable consumption policy: information and taxes
- ▶ SCP is necessary but do we also need a bigger idea?
- ▶ We must choose a development path
- ▶ To 'mainstream sustainable development'
- ▶ In the context of material consumption this involves more than lifestyle and behaviour
- ▶ We need to look at underlying choices, needs and motivations...practices?!



**Figure 4.1** | Three frameworks for thinking about mitigation.

IPCC AR5 (Fleurbaye et al., 2014)



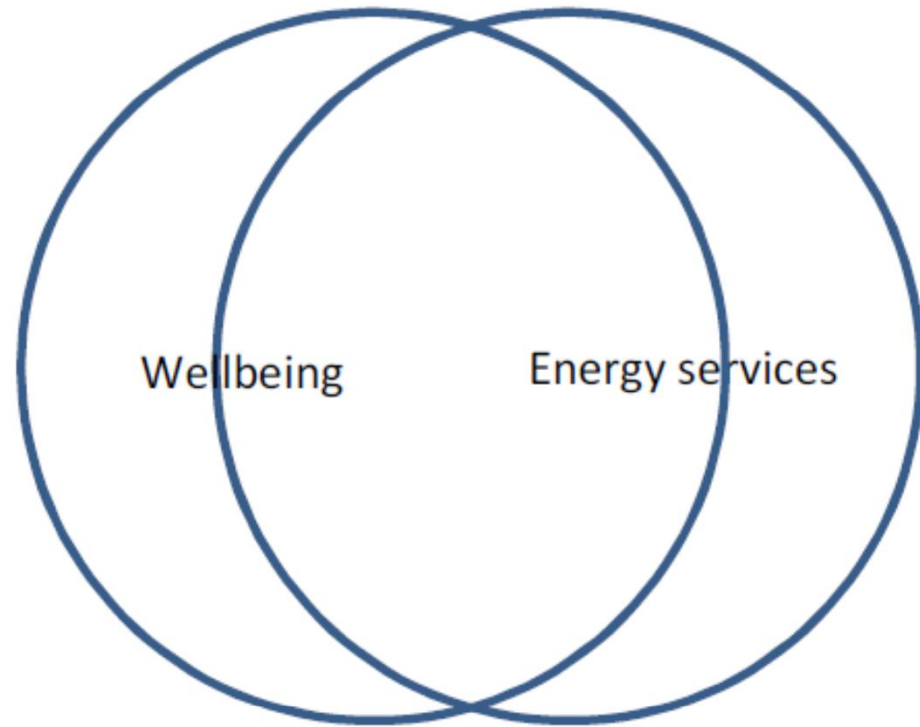
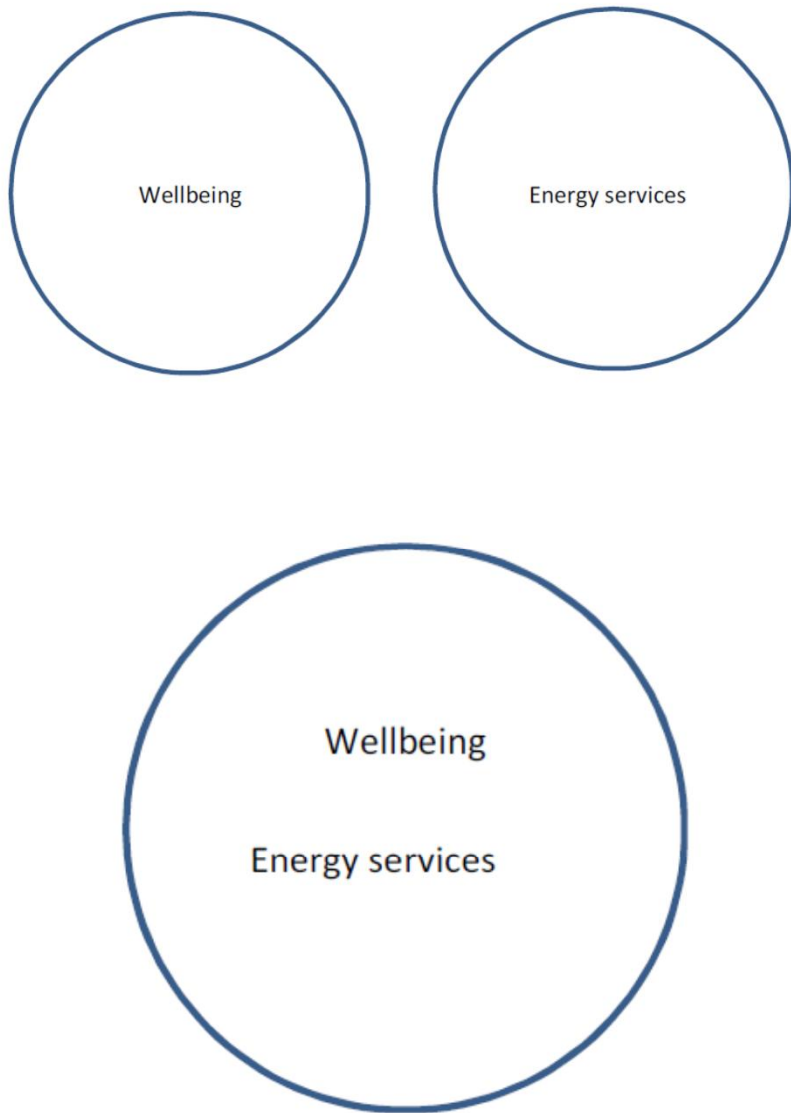


*The Sustainable Energy for All initiative is a multi-stakeholder partnership between governments, the private sector, and civil society. Launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2011, it has three interlinked objectives to be achieved by 2030:*

1. Ensure universal access to modern energy services.
2. Double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency.
3. Double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

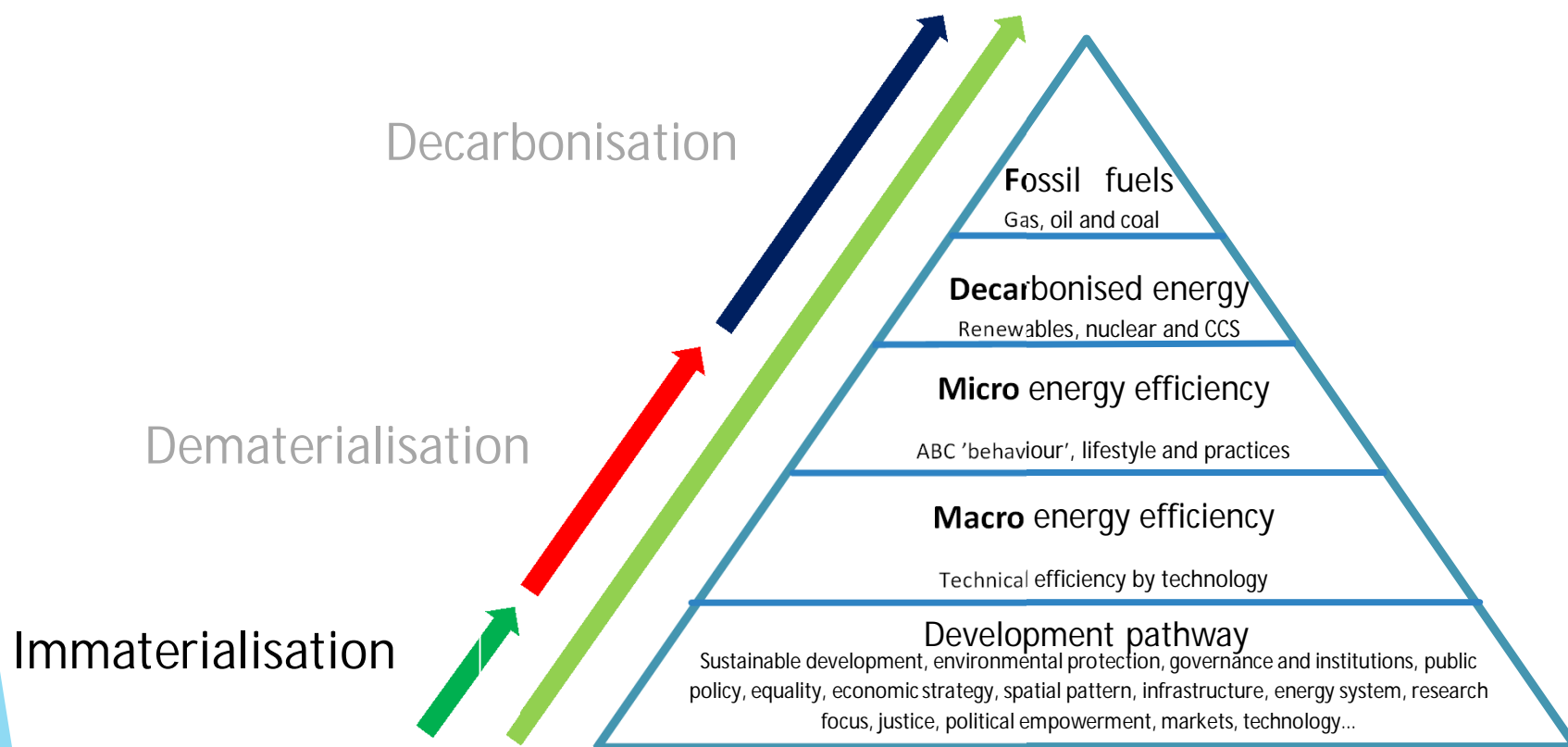
- ▶ se4all
- ▶ Universal access to 'modern energy services' by 2030
- ▶ Who defines what modern energy services are?
- ▶ What do they actually need?
- ▶ Are we giving them 'needs' or 'services' that are against their collective and individual wellbeing?
- ▶ Recognising that we have already failed to develop sustainably?

## Conceptions of wellbeing and energy services





# Conceptual decision-making framework for mitigation: a renovated energy hierarchy for low-carbon transition



Copyright O' Mahony (2016)

Decarbonisation and dematerialisation insights usually by techno-economic modelling.

Immaterialisation fundamental and always first

Cannot be resolved by models alone, requires social sciences and qualitative scenarios.

# The problematique as per IPCC WGIII AR5 (2014)

- ▶ Global consumption of goods continues to increase dramatically
- ▶ Environmental pressures and emissions increase
- ▶ Population is a factor
- ▶ Economic growth is much more important
- ▶ Population is a factor...but not the right-wing trope of increasing population in Africa
- ▶ However, economic growth does have to lead to a linear increase in emissions
- ▶ This depends on consumption patterns

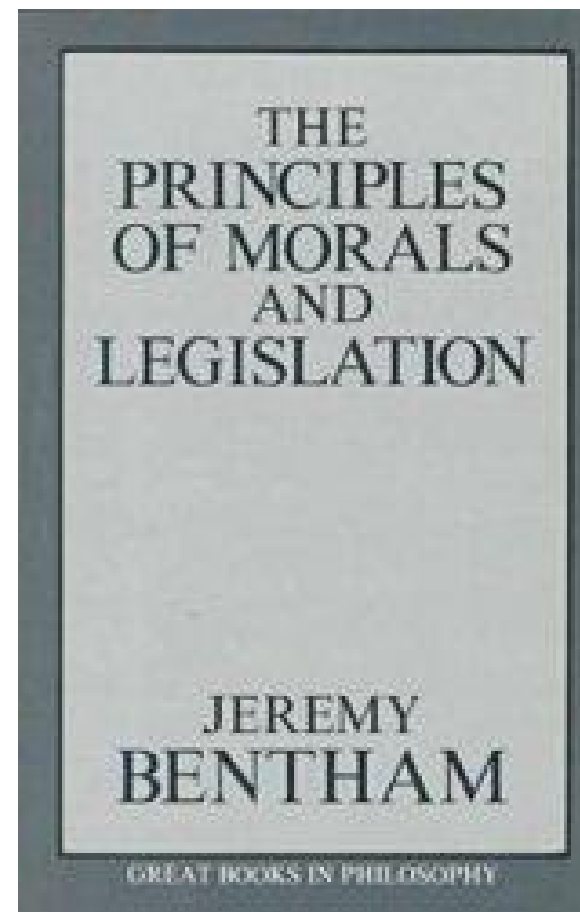
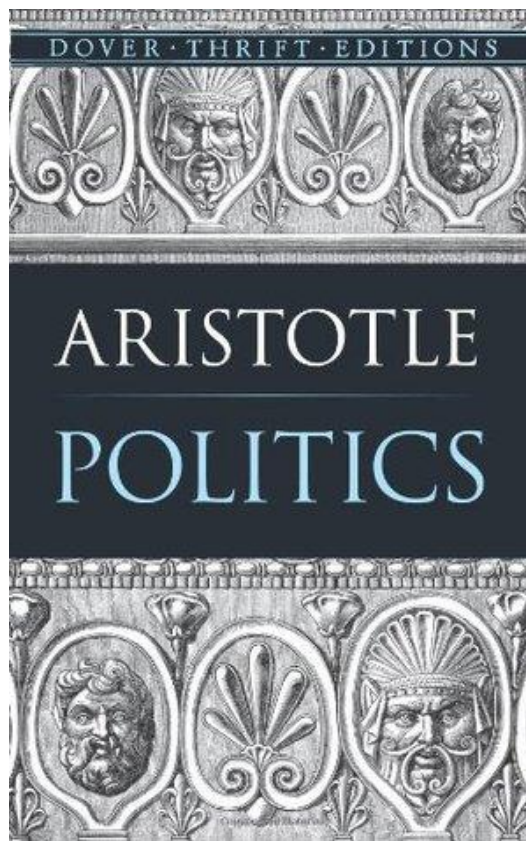
# The problematique as per IPCC WGIII AR5 (2014)

- ▶ The affluent in the developed countries historically and currently
- ▶ Even while national emissions come down (territorial emissions under UNFCCC), consumption-based emissions go up (trade, with production in developing countries)
- ▶ We are deceiving ourselves by an accounting trick
- ▶ Affluent have an emissions intensive 'lifestyle'
- ▶ Cultural identity is consumerist
- ▶ Growing elites and middle classes in developing countries also



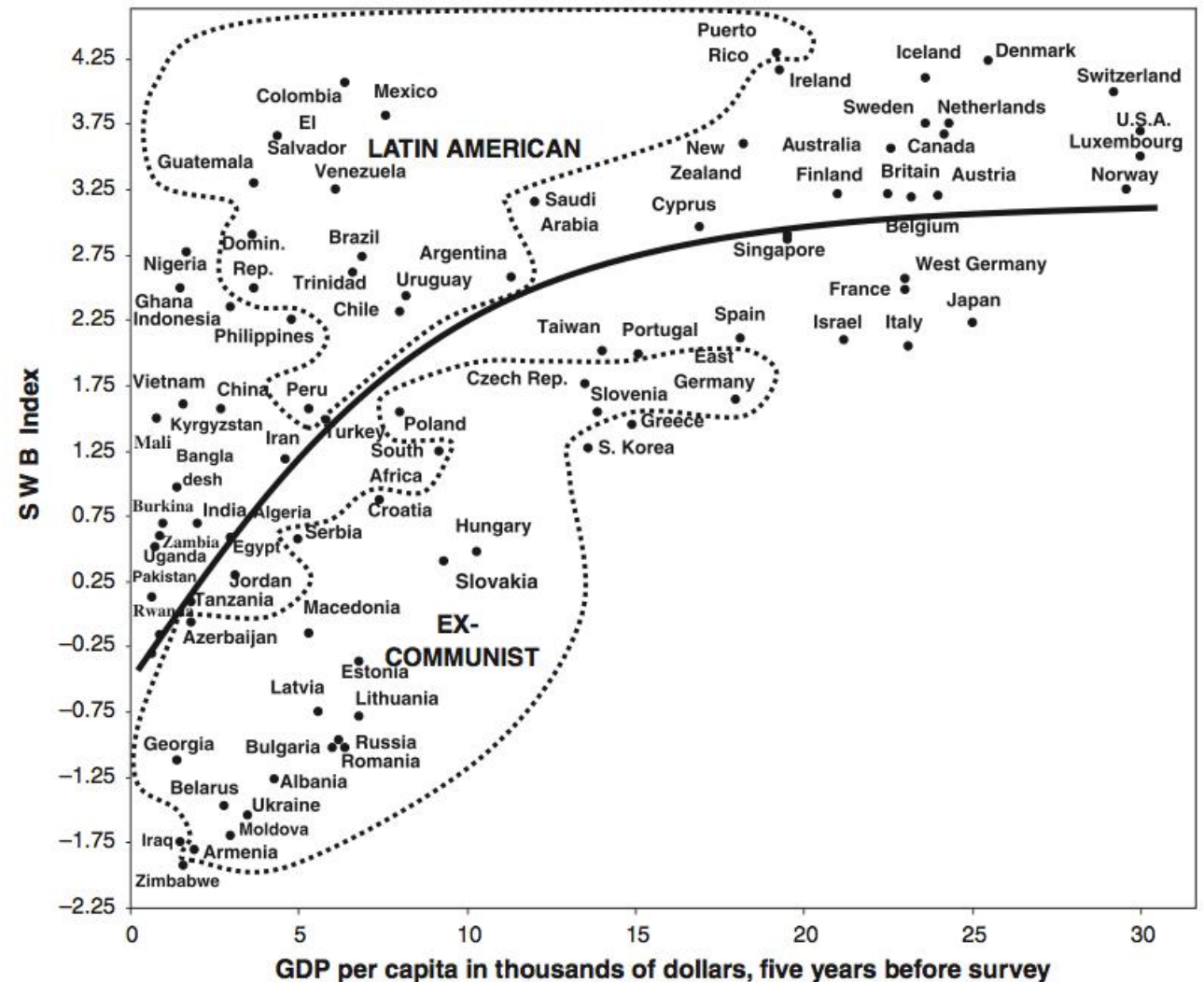
# Mitigation as understood by 'decoupling'

- ▶ There are two ways to reduce or 'decouple' consumption emissions
- ▶ 1. Dematerialisation...the decoupling of material resource consumption (including fossil fuels) from production and economic growth as ecological modernisation and efficiency
- ▶ 2. Immaterialisation...the decoupling of human wellbeing from economic growth
- ▶ Most analysis and policy focusses on 'sustainable production and consumption'
- ▶ Little analysis and essentially no policy on immaterialisation
- ▶ To see if it is theoretically and empirically possible to maintain or increase wellbeing while reducing emissions and what would it entail?
- ▶ Seen as "controversial" (Fleurbaye et al., 2014)



# Subjective wellbeing and income

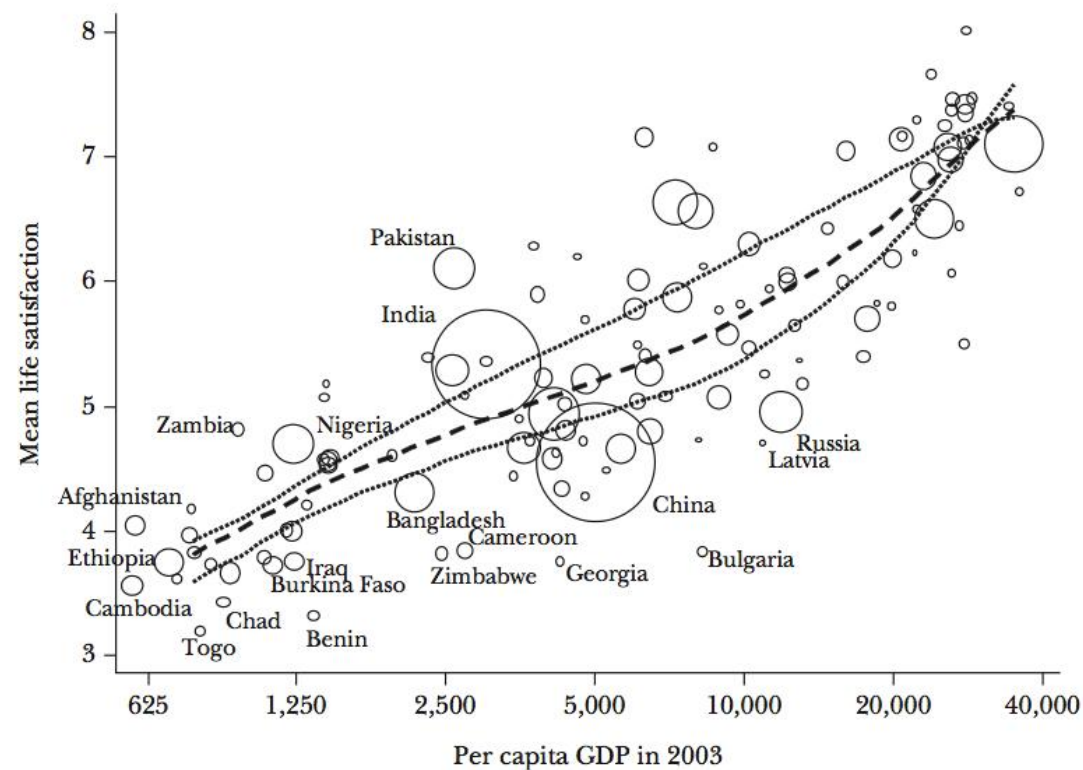
- ▶ Some controversies from Fleurbaey et al. (2014)
- ▶ Ethical about the measure of wellbeing and use of subjective wellbeing data (SWB)
- ▶ SWB cognitive in evaluative judgements about our lives and affective about emotional quality of everyday experience as emotional wellbeing
- ▶ Empirical about the relationship between SWB and income
- ▶ SWB shows clear satiation points, increased income



Subjective well-being (SWB), per capita gross domestic product (GDP) and different types of societies - Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, and Welzel (2008)

# Life satisfaction and income

- ▶ About relationship between 'life satisfaction' and income (life satisfaction or 'ladder-of-life' is cognitive wellbeing by evaluative judgement)
- ▶ Some studies show clear relationship between satisfaction and per capita income
- ▶ Long-term relationship is not conclusive and varies across countries (...social and cultural construction of what satisfies? or income does not make people 'happy'?)
- ▶ So current thinking is unresolved, but the gaps may be telling
- ▶ A possibly important omission in this argument...the actual relationship between material consumption (not income as proxy) and wellbeing?
- ▶ Is ignorance 'bliss' what if our frame of reference is limited by our past and our current experiences? What if there are higher levels of multidimensional wellbeing that are available to people but they have not had the opportunity to experience them?
- ▶ Can our current measurement fully capture multidimensional wellbeing?



Global data on the correlation between income and life satisfaction from Gallup World Poll - Deaton (2008)<sup>4</sup>



## **A Review of the Relationship between Subjective Well-Being and Consumption**

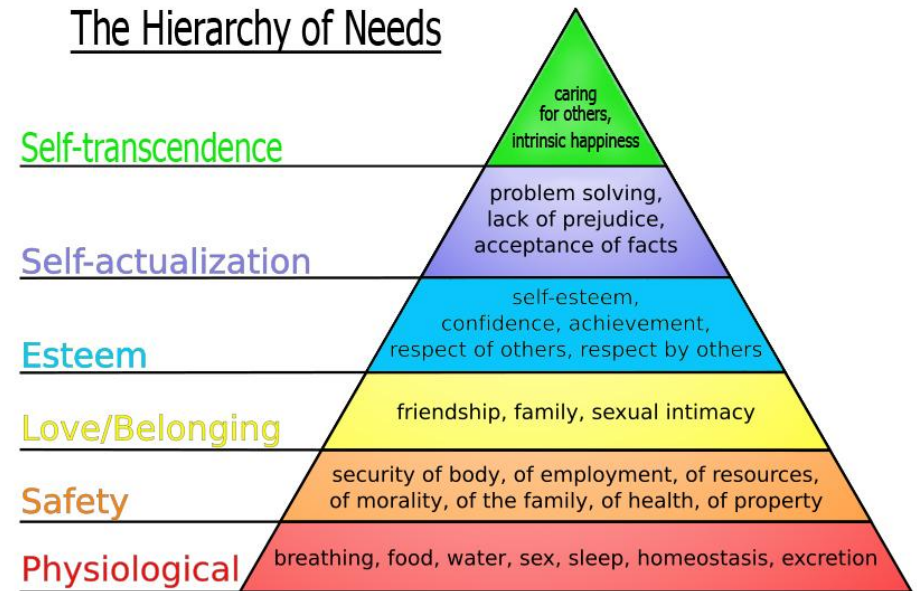
Nattaya Prapaipanich<sup>1</sup>

*One of the determinants that most happiness economists concentrate on is income. There are not many of prior research studies on the linkages between consumption and subjective well-being (SWB). The objective of this paper is to review and to bridge a gap in the literature on the relationship between consumption and an individual's SWB. It is commonly accepted that consumption increases an individual's well-being. However, does consumption really increase an individual's subjective well-being (SWB)? It focuses on papers that have been published in international journals since 1990 both in the area of economics and psychology. This paper also discusses the reasons why consumption is selected as a proxy, instead of income. Consumption in this paper specifically emphasizes on material goods and experiential goods. There are some interesting findings. Material goods deliver comfort which is temporary and fades with time. It only increases SWB in the short term. An individual adapts to the gain from material goods through time. On the other hand, experiential goods deliver pleasure. Experiential goods provide more SWB than material goods because of three reasons. The first reason is that experiences are less likely to disadvantageous comparisons, or social comparison. The second reason is that experiential goods are less possible to adapt through time. The final reason is that experiential goods are more likely to continually fascinate and provide satisfaction. As a result, it is suggested that an individual should spend money on experiential goods rather than material goods.*



# Defining wellbeing: Maslow's hierarchy and needs

- ▶ *Maslow, (1943)*
- ▶ In later years, Maslow explored further dimension of needs, while criticising self-actualisation. Self only finds actualisation in giving itself to some higher goal outside oneself, in altruism and spirituality
- ▶ Maslow (1969)
- ▶ Needs discourse is useful in critique of material consumption

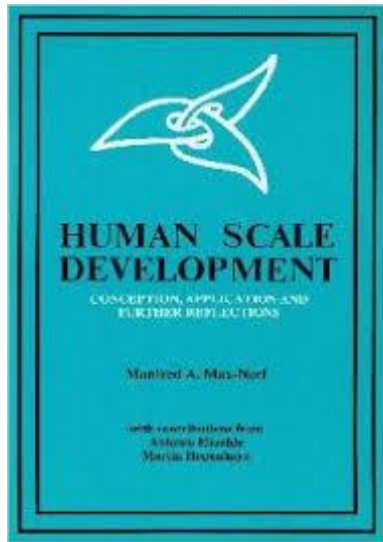


Copyright Shane Mccarty (2008)  
<https://shanemccarty.wordpress.com/a-life-coach/>

# Defining wellbeing: Max Neef's scale development

- ▶ But what's the problem with a hierarchy?
- ▶ Max Neef et al., (1989) "Development and Human Needs", p. 18.
- ▶ 'Needs' are non-hierarchical, finite, few and universal
- ▶ Supported by Tay and Diener (2011) on SWB globally





Manfred A. Max-Neef  
with Antonio  
Elizalde, Martin  
Hopenhayn. (1989).  
Human scale  
development:  
conception,  
application and  
further reflections.  
New York: Apex.

	Being (qualities)	Having (things)	Doing (actions)	Interacting (settings)
Need				
Subsistence	physical and mental health	food, shelter, work	feed, clothe, rest, work	living environment, social setting
Protection	care, adaptability, autonomy	social security, health systems, work	co-operate, plan, take care of, help	social environment, dwelling
Affection	respect, sense of humour, generosity, sensuality	friendships, family, relationships with nature	share, take care of, make love, express emotions	privacy, intimate spaces of togetherness
Understanding	critical capacity, curiosity, intuition	literature, teachers, policies, educational	analyse, study, meditate, investigate,	schools, families, universities, communities, associations,
Participation	receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour	responsibilities, duties, work, rights	cooperate, dissent, express opinions	parties, churches, neighbourhoods
Leisure	imagination, tranquility, spontaneity	games, parties, peace of mind	day-dream, remember, relax, have fun	landscapes, intimate spaces, places to be alone
Creation	imagination, boldness, inventiveness, curiosity	abilities, skills, work, techniques	invent, build, design, work, compose, interpret	spaces for expression, workshops, audiences
Identity	sense of belonging, self-esteem, consistency	language, religions, work, customs, values, norms	get to know oneself, grow, commit oneself	places one belongs to, everyday settings
Freedom	autonomy, passion, self-esteem, open-mindedness	equal rights	dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness	anywhere

# Defining wellbeing

- ▶ Maslow's hierarchy of needs is useful to begin to think about this
- ▶ Although there are flaws
- ▶ Sen (1999) offers a way out

# Defining wellbeing: Sen's capability approach

Within moral and political philosophy, capability approach recently emerged as new theoretical framework about well-being, development and justice.

1. The importance of real freedoms in the assessment of a person's advantage
2. Individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities
3. The multi-variate nature of activities giving rise to happiness
4. A balance of materialistic and nonmaterialistic factors in evaluating human welfare
5. Concern for the distribution of opportunities within society



# Defining wellbeing: Sen's capability approach

- ▶ Functionings..."beings and doings"
- ▶ Living as a set of interrelated functionings
- ▶ Functionings are the states and activities constitutive of a person's being
- ▶ Elementary: such as being healthy, having a good job, and being safe
- ▶ More complex states, being happy, having self-respect, and being calm
- ▶ Person's chosen combination of functionings, what they are and do, part of their overall capability set — functionings they were able to do

# Defining wellbeing: Sen's capability approach

- ▶ Capabilities essential to define functionings
- ▶ The alternative functionings that a person is capable of achieving...feasible
- ▶ Based on functionings and opportunity freedom
- ▶ Freedom is the defining characteristic as otherwise value would only be defined by functionings
- ▶ Extended by Ballet et al., (2013) *Freedom, Responsibility and Economics of the Person*
- ▶ Critical methodological reflection, phenomenology *versus* Kantian thought, to re-humanise the person
- ▶ Through actions, values and norms that lead to rights and obligations that must be ordered.
- ▶ Freedom in relation to responsibility, by capacity of people to apply moral constraints to themselves.
- ▶ Contrast, Sen's capability approach considers freedom as a purely functional rationality of choice...more in line with conventional economics?

# Defining wellbeing: Nussbaum's central capabilities

- ▶ Nussbaum (2000) frames basic principles in terms of 10 capabilities, real opportunities based on personal and social circumstance
- ▶ To reach a threshold level of these 10 capabilities
- ▶ *Life*. Longevity and healthy years
- ▶ *Bodily Health*. Physical health, nourishment and adequate shelter
- ▶ *Bodily Integrity*. Freedom of movement, secure against all forms of assault, opportunities for sexual satisfaction and choice in matters of reproduction
- ▶ *Senses, Imagination, and Thought*. Able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—to do these things in a "truly human" way, informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Imagination and thought, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, able to have pleasurable experiences and avoid non-beneficial pain
- ▶ *Emotions*. Able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not blighted by fear and anxiety
- ▶ *Practical Reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about one's life



# Defining wellbeing: Nussbaum's central capabilities

- ▶ *Affiliation.*
  - ▶ Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other humans, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another.
  - ▶ Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. (equality and discrimination)
- ▶ *Other Species.* Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
- ▶ *Play.* Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
- ▶ *Control over one's Environment.*
  - ▶ *Political.* Being able to participate in political choices that govern one's life;
  - ▶ *Material.* Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis

# Defining wellbeing: Nussbaum's central capabilities

- ▶ Nussbaum (2000) useful to operationalise what is more conceptual in Sen, recognising, need for social and personal freedom in identifying and defining such capabilities
- ▶ Sen argued against this, somewhat counter to holistic account of wellbeing by establishing minimally decent life or thresholds
- ▶ The 'messy space' at the nexus of theory and practice?
- ▶ But Nussbaum may be useful in seeking to implement as Sen's goal of definition in the public sphere is attempted
- ▶ Now a widely accepted paradigm of development
- ▶ Anand and colleagues draw on Nussbaum as relatively comprehensive account in which human well-being or life quality is experienced
- ▶ But too distinct to be monitored by single question, dashboard of some 40-50 indicators recommended for empirical work

# Defining wellbeing: NEF (2005)

## BOX 1: What is well-being?

Some academics argue that well-being is best understood in terms of our overall happiness or satisfaction with life. But evidence shows that there is much more to life than satisfaction: people also want to be leading rich and fulfilling lives – developing their capabilities and fulfilling their potential.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, **nef**'s model of well-being has two personal dimensions:

- People's **satisfaction with their lives**, which is generally measured by an indicator called **life satisfaction**: this captures satisfaction, pleasure and enjoyment.
- People's **personal development** for which there is not yet one standard psychological indicator – the concept includes being engaged in life, curiosity, 'flow' (a state of absorption where hours pass like minutes), personal development and growth, autonomy, fulfilling potential, having a purpose in life, and the feeling that life has meaning.<sup>4</sup>

For people to lead truly **flourishing** lives they need to feel they are personally satisfied and developing.

# Wellbeing grows...

- ▶ Wellbeing proliferates in pop psychology
- ▶ Happiness studies
- ▶ Health
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Economics
- ▶ Social sciences
- ▶ Legal standing in constitutions
- ▶ BuenVivir in Ecuador (2008) and Vivir bien in Bolivia (2009)
- ▶ Measurements: objective wellbeing by UK ONS
- ▶ Policy and national goals

## Measuring National Well-being: Life in the UK, 2015

Author Name(s): Joanne Evans, Ian Macrory and Chris Randall, Office for National Statistics

### Abstract

Provides a snapshot of life in the UK today across the 10 domains of national well-being. It is the third annual summary to be delivered by the Measuring National Well-being programme.

### Key points

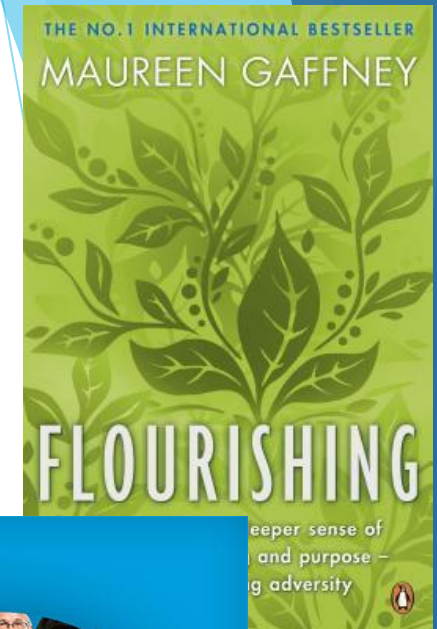
- Assessment of change in measures of national well-being are presented for the first time. Compared with a year earlier, 33% of indicators had improved, 42% showed no overall change, 21% were not assessed and 5% deteriorated
- The proportion of people in the UK giving the highest ratings for each aspect of personal well-being increased significantly in the financial year ending 2014
- Healthy life expectancy in the UK improved between 2006 to 2008 and 2009 to 2011, while the proportion of people satisfied with their health in the financial year ending 2013 (59.3%) showed no overall change
- Adult participation in 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport at least once a week in the UK improved over 3 years between 2010 to 2011 (35.2%) and 2013 to 2014 (35.8%) but deteriorated compared with 2012 to 2013 (36.2%)
- In the financial year ending 2013, 21% of people in the UK lived in households with less than 60% of median income
- In the financial year ending 2013, 10.1% of people found it difficult to get by financially in the UK, an improvement since the financial years ending 2012 (10.9%) and 2010 (12.3%)

### Introduction

The Measuring National Well-being (MNW) programme began in November 2010 with the aim to "develop and publish an accepted and trusted set of National Statistics which help people understand and monitor well-being". We describe well-being as "how we are doing" as individuals, as communities and as a nation, and how sustainable this is for the future.

Life in the UK presents the full set of 41 headline measures of national well-being, organised by the 10 domains, or areas, such as Health, Where we live, What we do and Our relationships. The measures include both objective data (for example, number of crimes against the person per 1,000 adults) and subjective data (for example, percentage who felt safe walking alone after dark). The

Office for National Statistics | 1



# Moving towards wellbeing

- ▶ Nasty, Brutish and Short
- ▶ A firm of lawyers coming to sue you for smiling?
- ▶ A quotation about life from Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan (1651)
- ▶ Is it possible to be happy, healthy, contented, satisfied, calm, at peace?
- ▶ To have 'wellbeing'?
- ▶ Is life about simply survival or is it about thriving and flourishing?
- ▶ Why does this seem to be only available to the affluent?

Mssrs. Nasty, Brutish and Short

Solicitors at law

"Your pain is our pleasure!"

# Moving towards wellbeing

- ▶ Is it income, choice and behaviour?
- ▶ Or are there social, cultural, structural and institutional issues at play?
- ▶ Economic frontier (maximum output, most efficient), technological frontier (those technologies that are and those that could be deployed)...wellbeing frontier?
- ▶ What even is 'wellbeing'?
- ▶ Are the goals of our societies and economies well-considered?
- ▶ What about the stereotypical goals to be rich, famous, big car
- ▶ Or are they a hollow edifice that does not support us leading good lives...or the 'good life'?
- ▶ And for whom?
- ▶ Caveat, obvious differences in developing countries

# Moving towards 'The GOOD LIFE'

- ▶ But what is 'the good life,' 'wellbeing' or 'happiness'?
- ▶ Ambiguous, contested..
- ▶ Different perspectives from economics, sociology, psychology and new field of happiness studies
- ▶ Different across individuals and cultures
- ▶ Economics dominates and tends to rely on 'rational choice theory'
- ▶ That we always make decisions rationally, fully informed, to maximise our 'welfare' and minimise our pain??!
- ▶ 'Satisfaction from material consumption is unlimited'
- ▶ Heavily criticised by many
- ▶ Other phenomena at play such as, altruistic values, consumer lock-in to choices, habits, the value-action gap...there are psychological, sociological and cultural factors (Fleurbaye et al., 2014)

# Defining wellbeing

- ▶ No common definition and no neat disciplinary boundaries
- ▶ Must be socially and to some extent personally defined
- ▶ Would usually include...material wellbeing, yes, related to income, shelter,...
- ▶ But also mind, body, society and environment
- ▶ Mental and physical health...but more than that...flourishing!
- ▶ Social relations, partners, friends, family, community, identity, equality
- ▶ Psychological and physical security
- ▶ Opportunity for creativity, fulfillment, success
- ▶ Self actualisation
- ▶ Self transcendence
- ▶ Spirituality or religion for some



# Defining wellbeing

- ▶ An environment that facilitates sustained survival
- ▶ But also for some, reflects other values of environmental protection for its own intrinsic worth
- ▶ Wellbeing as thus defined can be used to question our analysis, our policy, our economy...and our society
- ▶ Who is leading who where?
- ▶ How, why and what?

# Defining wellbeing

- ▶ Questions about attribution of changes in life satisfaction and SWB to income, is it robust or could it be other factors?
- ▶ This doesn't even start us on beings and doings that do not involve spending
- ▶ Activities that don't involve purchases, that meet other, needs, wants and desires
- ▶ Some of the most important beings and doings?

# Defining wellbeing:

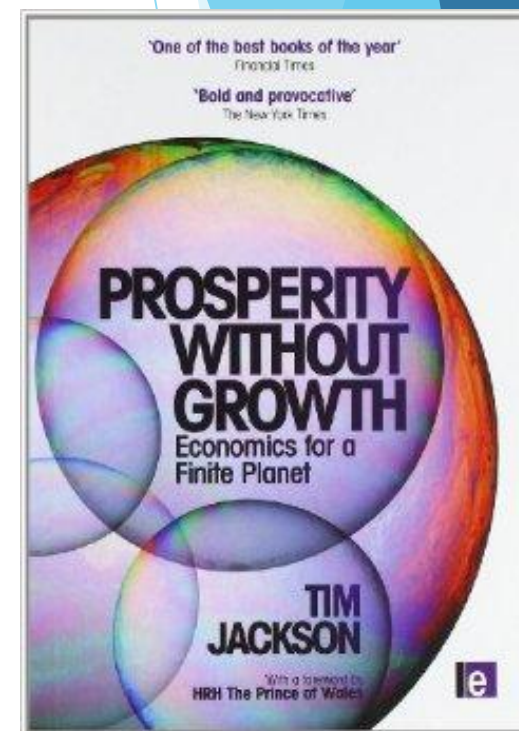
- ▶ Some indications
- ▶ Friends, family, community, spirituality, hobbies, sport, physical health, mental health, music, art, the pursuit of knowledge, altruism, the natural environment, philosophies of meditation and mindful awareness
- ▶ Time itself could be a significant resource as an opportunity to maximise wellbeing
- ▶ Sustainable human development to maximise capabilities (Sen, 1999)
- ▶ The opportunity to choose to achieve a set of functionings
- ▶ The liberty to choose is very important according to Sen
- ▶ Free not to care...
- ▶ But the opportunity to have a different life
- ▶ Overcome some of the difficult moral and philosophical issues

# Moving towards 'The GOOD LIFE'

- ▶ Perception of cost and loss in mitigation

N.B. Mitigation or reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions, is synonymous with the concept of a low-carbon transition

- ▶ This perception in that we lose standard of living...wellbeing...happiness
- ▶ These are unpopular ideas, but are they true?
- ▶ In the 'double dividend' concept (Weber de Moraes and Schluter, 2009) there is a win-win of higher wellbeing and reduced consumption
- ▶ What if we change the perspective?
- ▶ Move from growth, income and consumption...to...maximising wellbeing
- ▶ Similar to move away from GDP as the measure of progress and success of nations



# 'Sustainable wellbeing' a conceptual discussion

## Framework

- ▶ Related to capabilities
- ▶ As societal goal, but also overarching concept for mitigation, energy and energy services
- ▶ For 'mainstreaming' sustainable development
- ▶ Necessarily multidimensional
- ▶ Not only individual wellbeing but indivisible connection with societal and environmental underpinnings
- ▶ As context, as mediating conditions that constrain or support it
- ▶ Would be socially, culturally and individually defined, different value systems would choose the primacy of different functionings with the freedom to choose
- ▶ Dynamic and contested concept as per sustainability with all of the explanatory power and limitations that entails (theory and practice)
- ▶ Recognising a need for security, aesthetics and different value systems with respect to society and environment implicitly entails SD
- ▶ Any conception of purely individual wellbeing is highly artificial

# 'Sustainable wellbeing' a conceptual discussion

A potential example from cultural theory

- ▶ Individualist would place higher value on the self, an egalitarian would place more value on societal and environmental wellbeing as the mediating conditions
- ▶ Both would have the choice of functionings, but interestingly, neither could be entirely separated entirely from wider societal and environmental context

Practical application

- ▶ Identifying Nussbaum's capability set in this context, policy could be designed to support more multidimensional wellbeing
- ▶ To maximise the capability to achieve functionings including those that are not directly linked with material consumption and energy services
- ▶ That may be more beneficial for multidimensional wellbeing
- ▶ That facilitate a potential 'double dividend'
- ▶ Integrated policy informed by multiple domains

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Thank you!  
Questions and comments?

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 657865.



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