

Jon Hall, Louise Rickard

People, Progress and Participation

How Initiatives Measuring Social Progress Yield Benefits
Beyond Better Metrics

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Global Choices

The world is changing at breathtaking speed. Global challenges, from climate change to cyber crime, are growing increasingly complex. Emerging economic powers in Asia and Latin America are assuming greater roles in geopolitical matters. The shift of economic power to the east is creating new dependencies. In short, the ground rules of international cooperation are being rewritten.

The “Global Choices” publication series takes a closer look at these changes and how they affect politics, business and society. By facilitating an informed understanding of these changes, this series aims to contribute constructively to debates regarding the principles of a new global order and the reforms needed to improve international cooperation. “Global Choices” is also a call to action because globalization is not a matter of immutable fate; its trajectory can be shaped. “Global Choices” therefore underscores the fact that the power to make sound choices lies within our hands.

People, Progress and Participation

How Initiatives Measuring Social Progress
Yield Benefits Beyond Better Metrics

Jon Hall and Louise Rickard

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Contents

Preface	7
Introduction	15
Metrics of Progress:	
What We Measure Shapes What We Do	19
The need for new measures of progress	19
Exploding interest in metrics of progress	20
Common steps in the process	22
Ensuring legitimacy involves repeated consultation	27
Case Studies	31
Bhutan's Gross National Happiness	31
The Canadian Index of Wellbeing	33
EU Sustainable Development Indicators	35
Jacksonville Community Indicators	36
New Zealand Quality of Life Project	38
South Africa Development Indicators	39
Tasmania Together	41
Benefits	43
Strengthening the machinery of democracy	44
Making the business of government easier	52
Building capacity and resilience	65
Conclusions	75
References	77
Authors	83
Questions Used to Guide Interviews	85

Preface

Armando García Schmidt

Indicators are powerful. They frame debates, steer planning, affect budgets and motivate action. In an increasingly complex world, the search for indicators must be a continuous one. More and more, the process of choosing our measures of progress must be a collaborative process, drawing on the creativity of the whole community ... By convening citizens to consider how to measure their overall well-being, the community as a whole is spurred to create new visions of the future, develop new working relationships across all boundaries, and define its assets, problems and opportunities in new ways.

Redefining Progress 1998

There is growing consensus in the academic, policy and even lay communities that Western nations have oriented themselves toward incomplete notions of progress for too long. The notion that gross domestic product fails to capture a society's core aspirations – a marginal, even oppositional complaint throughout much of the second half of the 20th century – is today driving a diverse range of projects seeking to quantify and measure ideas such as happiness, sustainability and satisfaction with democracy.

These projects are taking place at every level of community and governance organization. Certainly the United Nations, through the 1987 Brundtland Report and the UNDP's creation of the Human Development Index in 1990, has helped drive the quest for new ways assessing the sustainability of our globalizing societies. But national governments from Bhutan to New Zealand, as well as regional and municipal bodies around the world, are also ways to measure policy successes against standards aligned with core citizen values and aspirations, rather than conventional indicators of economic growth.

What these efforts have in common is a sense that policy tends to drift toward areas in which success or failure can be quantified. "What we measure

affects what we do,” says Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz (Stiglitz et al. 2009), one of the leading proponents of developing new indicators of progress. Measurement thus cannot and should not be regarded as a value-neutral activity. Stiglitz and others argue that measurement tools should arise from a societal discussion of aims and desires: We must collectively decide what we want to be, and then develop indicators that help society reach these goals.

It is that process or set of processes that the authors of this publication examine, but in an unusual way. Most research efforts to date have focused on analyzing the need for and the design of new measurement tools (see Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009, for a recent and thorough example), although some work has also been put into ensuring that such metrics are adopted and have a tangible impact on public debate and decision-making (see, for example, Scrivens and Iasiello (2010), the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2011) and the European Commission-funded Policy Influence of Indicators (POINT) research project).

By contrast, very little if any previous research has looked at the benefits that can flow specifically from the process of constructing such new measures – a process that typically brings together diverse stakeholders to discuss what progress means to them and how it can best be measured.

At the Bertelsmann Stiftung, we believe these positive if unintended effects are a critical part of the importance of new indicator systems. Our own portfolio of evidence-based research and indicator projects is substantial, ranging from projects assessing developing-country governance (BTI) to assessing the sustainability of governance in OECD nations (SGI) and the fast-growing BRICS countries (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012a; 2012b; and 2013). Implicit in the organization of these projects is the assumption – with Stiglitz and many others – that measurement can have an exhortatory force. Defining and measuring sustainability, for example, can itself help encourage sustainable outcomes over time.

But we are aware, too, that there are benefits to any process that extend beyond these direct outcomes – serendipitous benefits, as the authors of this publication say. Because these benefits are not always measurable in short or

even long-term impact assessments, they often remain underappreciated, both within and outside of government. Yet for those involved in the day-to-day work of such processes, these benefits are essential to advancing sustainability.

It was against this background that the Bertelsmann Stiftung commissioned in 2011 the research upon which this publication rests. In the same year, the Stiftung called together a steering group of experts and practitioners active in the field of measuring and advancing sustainable societies to oversee the research. They include: Stefan Bergheim, Director of the Centre for Societal Progress (Frankfurt/Main, Germany); Maja Göpel, Head of the Berlin Office of the Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy (Berlin, Germany); Rebecca Oliver, Project Director, Tällberg Foundation (Stockholm, Sweden); Tobias Pfaff, University of Münster (Münster, Germany), Mike Salvaris, Applied Human Rights and Community Wellbeing, RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia); Ulrich Schoof, Bertelsmann Stiftung (Gütersloh, Germany); Daniel Schraad-Tischler, Bertelsmann (Gütersloh, Germany); Oliver Zwirner, European Commission Directorate-General Environment (Brussels, Belgium). Malte Boecker initiated the project while serving as Director of International Cultural Dialogue at the Bertelsmann Stiftung. Today, he is the Director of the Beethoven Haus (Bonn, Germany).

The findings of the research conducted for this publication have been echoed in other Stiftung projects as well. In conducting the global research within the framework of the project “Winning Strategies for a Sustainable Future,” for example, interviews with project participants and site-level visits help illuminate the “auxiliary” benefits that must be counted to the credit of any such effort.

The authors of this publication examine seven such alternative indicator projects, including Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness indicators, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, the European Union’s Sustainable Development Indicators, the Jacksonville Community Indicators from the U.S. state of Florida, the New Zealand Quality of Life Project, the South Africa Development Indicators, and the Tasmania Together community consultation and goal-setting process.

The subjects of these case studies vary in scope and ambition. Bhutan's own development paradigm combines a holistic understanding of sustainability with the goal of enabling individuals to seek well-being. The EU aims to concretize its ambitions of promoting development that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable worldwide. The Canadian project explicitly seeks new, holistic ways of measuring well-being across a wide variety of life experiences, while New Zealand examines quality of life in urban environments. Projects in Jacksonville and Tasmania are aimed at giving community members a voice in guiding policy, while South Africa's indicators are designed to assess the country's progress in overcoming the legacy of apartheid.

The nature of ancillary benefits identified by the authors is similarly diverse, although projects as far apart in scale as the EU's sustainable development indicators and the Jacksonville Community Indicators derive parallel benefits from their debates and discussions.

First, the process of developing new indicators of progress can help **strengthen the machinery of democracy**, the authors say. This can happen through the facilitation of deliberative democratic practices – giving individual members of communities a forum and voice in the policy or goal-setting process – or through changing people's ideas about the social fabric itself, creating new paradigms for thinking about how one should act and forge connections within the social environment.

In both Jacksonville and Tasmania, for example, public consultation on issues vital to the communities' futures is seen as having led to improved communication and heightened participation. In Bhutan, citizens hired to perform happiness surveys have gained new skills and appreciation of their society's complexity, with many even turning to a political career.

Discussing expanded ideas of progress also gives people a rare opportunity to reflect on how healthy relationships and societies should be defined. Interviewees in Bhutan and Canada said the indicator-development and assessment processes had helped people draw valuable connections between apparently unrelated parts of life, and had strengthened connections between individuals.

As a second broad category, the authors show that the process of developing progress indicators can actually **make the business of government easier**. This happens in part as citizens on different sides of contentious issues come to find common ground. In Jacksonville, for example, a nine-month series of weekly discussions on race relations allowed views from across the entire political spectrum – from self-described bigots to victims of race-based attacks – to be aired in public, helping to develop a community consensus on the facts of the issue and ultimately reframe the public policy debate on race. On a different level, the South African project spurred a movement to examine and critique data sources that had disagreed in measuring ostensibly identical subjects. This helped the government be more transparent and credible in presenting its own data.

The process of measuring progress can also help citizens and policymakers identify and familiarize themselves with the trade-offs inherent in the reform process, as well as the potential costs in electing not to engage in reforms. New Zealand’s city comparisons, for example, helped residents understand how their environments differed, and what they could do about it. In a similar vein, Jacksonville’s reports on quality of life, race relations and demographics, developed with substantial community input, helped residents understand the rationale for policy recommendations. The authors point to the example of Tasmania as evidence that improved communication and participation does not necessarily lead to community consensus, however.

Within governments themselves, the process of developing indicators and measuring societal process can help develop informal networks and relationships that bridge fragmented administrative hierarchies and facilitate future cross-sector policymaking activity – creating “joined-up” government. In New Zealand, networking between cities was an explicit goal of the quality-of-life project, while in Jacksonville, the committees that draft the indicator reports bring together a wide variety of professional and private stakeholders. The EU indicator process forced representatives from different member states, different European Commission departments and different institutions to share their expertise and develop working relationships.

Finally, the progress-measurement process can help societies develop the ability to strengthen their own governance systems, **building capacity and**

resilience. It can provide forums in which debate and discussion can take place, and provide information on which to base those discussions. Individuals and organizations that participate are enriched by the experience, and hone their skills to engage others productively while contributing to the maintenance of social institutions.

In Jacksonville, for example, building citizens' capacities to engage in constructive deliberation is an explicit goal, while in Canada, data developed by the indicator team is used for individuals' business plans, funding proposals and other purposes. In Tasmania, the community benchmarking process helped raise awareness of and link together a number of low-profile community organizations, thus boosting their ability to reach out to local citizens.

Lastly, the case studies examined by the authors demonstrate that these processes can themselves lead to social or technological innovation, and change citizen behavior. In New Zealand, the quality of life process created a political chain reaction that ultimately led to the creation of a Ministry of Sustainable Development. In Bhutan, the country's eastern, poorest regions were inspired by the gross national happiness survey process to focus on environmental health and to reform local education curriculums. The national-level Canadian Index of Wellbeing encourages the creation of similar indicator projects on the local level, and in fact has helped trigger local and regional involvement across the country. Jacksonville created a new form of taskforce to help implement its indicator group's recommendations, while those taking part in the EU working groups say their participation has boosted their ability to effect change in their home countries.

All of these stories, in each of the three categories, carry an overarching lesson: Communities that confront a changing world head-on, actively comparing their aspirations and present circumstances in an explicit, evidence-driven way, are better equipped to deal with change over time. A wide spectrum of projects around the world is showing that abstract concepts such as happiness or sustainability, if carefully defined and based upon community-developed indicators, can play a role in guiding policy as important as that of GDP and other conventional economic measures. But as the authors show here, the process of developing and implementing these indicators can itself

lead to long-lasting, less easily quantifiable benefits for a society and its participating individuals.

It is in the spirit of cultivating a culture of exchange over what constitutes sustainable well-being in society that we present this publication. The benefits of debate over what divides and unites us are, in many respects, immeasurable but vital to our shared future. We would like to thank the steering committee for sharing their knowledge and experience in overseeing the study underlying this publication. We also express our sincere gratitude to all the interviewees, who have contributed so generously their time and insight. And finally, we extend a heartfelt thanks to our intrepid authors, Jon Hall and Louise Rickard.

Introduction

Part of the objective of rethinking our measurement systems is to generate a national and global dialogue:

- On what we care about*
- Whether what we are striving for is achieving what we care about*
- And whether this is reflected in our metrics*

Joseph Stiglitz, 2010

In this publication, we explore not only the processes and conversations behind initiatives that aim to measure the progress of societies (referred to often as “indicator initiatives”), but also how these processes can – and do – benefit both government and broader society. Based on case studies and interviews with individuals around the world, the findings discussed here draw also on our experiences and those of an expert steering committee. The case studies selected for in-depth review include initiatives in Australia (Tasmania), Bhutan, Canada, New Zealand and the United States (Jacksonville).

We began with the belief that some of the most significant benefits of indicator initiatives are those that reach beyond the measures themselves. These benefits include those that arise from the exchanges that take place within a group that comes together to discuss the meaning of progress and how it should be measured. These exchanges can generate new relationships that yield unforeseeable gains for all.

Employing an iterative research approach, we started by selecting several case studies for in-depth analysis. Through this analysis, we identified an initial catalogue of benefits. To assess these benefits, we then revisited those we had already interviewed and sought the opinion of other experts from around the world.

Several common benefits were identified for each of these projects. Though the degree to which these benefits manifest themselves varies from project to

project, seven key benefits were identified that can be grouped into three clusters: strengthening the machinery of democracy; making the business of government easier; and building a society's capacity to advance well-being.

Projects measuring progress can **strengthen the machinery of democracy** by facilitating **deliberative democracy** and the development of **new paradigms of thinking**. They do so by providing citizens and policymakers alike new opportunity to discuss relevant concerns within a community, as well as the goals, values and future direction of society more generally.

Making the business of government easier can also result from these processes as they require stakeholders to **find common ground** on sensitive and divisive issues. By rendering transparent the societal tradeoffs inherent to the **political economy of reform**, these processes help raise awareness regarding the often difficult choices that need to be made. These processes also involve informal networks and cross-cutting relationships that ultimately encourage **joined-up thinking in government**.

In addition, projects measuring progress **build a society's capacity** to effectively **develop capabilities** (i.e., the opportunity to do and be what is deemed valuable in a community) and **advance accountability** among individuals and institutions alike. They do so in part by providing the framework and resources by which members of a community develop skills in debate, mediation and consensus-building. Regular reviews and benchmarking help ensure that the community as well as government agencies remain accountable for their decisions and actions. Because the processes driving these indicator initiatives frequently involve friction and exchange among different or competing interests, they often **spark innovations** in social organization or technology and result in **changed behavior**.

This is one of the first studies attempting to tease out the wider benefits associated with the process of measuring societal progress. Most research to date has focused on the technical design of the indicators themselves, although some research has gone on to look at the impacts of those indicators. But there is a growing recognition that the process of indicator selection and construction – in particular the conversations that inform that process – can generate important societal and institutional benefits in themselves. Indeed,

most of the initiatives examined here generated more than one broad social benefit beyond the stated goal of creating new indicators of progress.

Finally, many people were interviewed as a part of this research or made comments on the publication. We would like to thank them all for their generosity and candidness in sharing their thoughts and experiences with us. Of course, any mistakes that remain are our own.

In particular, we would like to thank the following individuals, who gave generously of their time and knowledge as interviewees:

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Gavin Armstrong	Senior Advisor, Wellington City Council, Wellington, New Zealand
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Rena Coughlin	CEO, Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, Jacksonville, Florida, United States
Ronette Engela	Deputy Director General PME Data Systems, President's Office, Pretoria, South Africa
Leigh Gatt	Managing Director, Gatt Consulting Ltd., Wellington, New Zealand
Stephen Hall	Statistician, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London, United Kingdom
Jim Harland	Southern Regional Director, New Zealand Transport Authority, Dunedin, New Zealand
Phillip Hoysted	Director, Tasmania Together Progress Board, Hobart, Australia
Kath Jamieson	Research Team Project Coordinator, Christchurch City Council, Christchurch, New Zealand
Hayden Jones	Tasmania Together Progress Board, Hobart, Australia
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Jerry Mallot	Executive Vice President, Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce, Jacksonville, Florida, United States

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Katherine Scott	Community Vitality Lead, Vanier Institute of the Family, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Karma Tshiteem	Secretary, Gross National Happiness Commission, Thimphu, Bhutan
Dasho Karma Ura	President, Centre for Bhutan Studies, Thimphu, Bhutan
Ben Warner	President and CEO, Jacksonville Community Council Inc., Jacksonville, Florida, United States

Metrics of Progress: What We Measure Shapes What We Do

The need for new measures of progress

Too much and too long, we seem to have surrendered community excellence and community values in the mere accumulation of material things. Our gross national product ... if we should judge America by that - counts air pollution and cigarette advertising, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and the jails for those who break them. It counts the destruction of our redwoods and the loss of our natural wonder in chaotic sprawl. It counts napalm and the cost of a nuclear warhead, and armored cars for police who fight riots in our streets. It counts Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the television programs which glorify violence in order to sell toys to our children.

Yet the gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. And it tells us everything about America except why we are proud that we are Americans.

Senator Robert Kennedy, 1968

The question as to whether life is getting better has engaged thinkers since the time of the ancient Greeks. For the latter half of the 20th century there was “an implicit assumption that economic growth was synonymous with progress: an assumption that a growing gross domestic product meant life must be getting better. But now the world recognizes that it isn't quite as simple as that” (OECD 2007a).

This is not the place to critique the shortcomings of GDP as a measure of progress (for a detailed discussion see, for example, Stiglitz et al. 2009).

However, it is important to state at the outset that GDP was never designed to be used in this way. Indeed, Simon Kuznets, one of the fathers of the system of national accounts, showed remarkable prescience in identifying the potential for GDP to be misused as a yardstick for national progress, particularly by those who did not fully understand it. In 1934, he wrote that “the welfare of a nation can scarcely be inferred from a measurement of national income.”

Given Kuznets’ warnings, it would be a fascinating piece of economic history to trace the ascendancy of GDP as a yardstick to a point of such dominance that it prompted Bobby Kennedy to make his eloquent speech criticizing its application to national development (quoted above) in 1968. But whatever the reason, it seems that the very existence of metrics such as GDP can result in their taking on an importance greater than originally intended.

“What we measure affects what we do,” writes Joseph Stiglitz. “If we have the wrong metrics, we will strive for the wrong things. In the quest to increase GDP, we may end up with a society in which most citizens have become worse off” (Stiglitz et al. 2009).

If one accepts Stiglitz’s argument, as the authors of this publication do, then it is surely important to offer alternative measures to GDP. We must offer an alternative measure (or set of measures) of progress precisely in order to ensure we strive for the right things. Globally, this belief has driven much of the recent work on measuring progress.

Exploding interest in metrics of progress

We have to move towards measuring welfare, not just output.

Angel Gurría, OECD Secretary General, 2007.

Over the past 25 years, there has been an explosion of interest in producing new measures of societal progress, with the trend continuing to gain force today. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development

(the Brundtland Commission) called for the development of new ways to measure and assess progress toward sustainable development. In 1990, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published the first Human Development Index, created by Mahbub ul-Haq and Amartya Sen as a way to measure national development “not simply by national income, as had long been the practice, but also by life expectancy and literacy” (UNDP 2011). Over the past decade or so, national governments, often through their national statistical offices, have increasingly released comprehensive indicator-based reports as a means of informing the public and broadening debate. Among these have been the United Kingdom’s Quality of Life Counts (Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions 1999), Australia’s Measuring Australia’s Progress (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002), and Ireland’s Measures of Ireland’s Progress (Central Statistical Office 2004).

International organizations have also been increasingly active in this area. In 2004, the OECD began the work that led to the establishment of its Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies, a project that in turn paved the way to the 2007 Istanbul Declaration. In signing this latter document, the OECD, the European Commission, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations, the UNDP and the World Bank all committed to “measuring and fostering the progress of societies in all dimensions, with the ultimate goal of improving policymaking, democracy and citizens’ well-being” (OECD 2007b). Later that same year, the European Union held a conference called Beyond GDP that focused on “developing indicators that are as clear and appealing as GDP, but more inclusive of environmental and social aspects of progress” (EU 2007).

Among the most significant recent events were the 2009 publication of the Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress report, commissioned by France’s President Nicolas Sarkozy (Stiglitz et al. 2009), and British Prime Minister David Cameron’s 2010 announcement that his government would start measuring subjective well-being directly. “It’s time we admitted that there’s more to life than money and it’s time we focused not just on GDP but on GWB – general well-being,” Cameron said at the time.

Although a multiplicity of approaches and measures are being used today, some fundamental steps have been common to each project. We deal with these commonalities next, as the primary focus of this publication is the process that emerges as the sum of these individual steps.

Common steps in the process

The ancients, who wished to illustrate illustrious virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things.

Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated. Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their states were rightly governed. Their states being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy.

Confucius, The Great Learning, 500 B.C.

There are a number of choices that anyone seeking to measure progress is bound to consider. Before one can measure progress, well-being or sustainable development (all of which are essentially variations on the “beyond GDP” theme), the object of study must be well defined. That requires some conceptual thinking and discussion.

Whatever conceptual framework is selected is likely to comprise several dimensions of progress (including economic, social and environmental concerns, for example). Appropriate measurement instruments for each need to be designed.

The measures need to be disseminated (and sometimes combined into a single composite index) in such a way as to help move debate and discussion beyond the traditional focus on GDP.

Globally, various bodies have put a considerable amount of work into giving each of these steps a solid grounding in accessible data and national statistics. However, more relevant to the present study is the recognition that these choices – particularly in the first and second steps (though also the third if a composite indicator is chosen, given the need to create a weighting structure enabling individual components to be aggregated) – are not wholly data-driven. Selecting the most important aspects of progress in a society poses several challenges. The diversity of perspectives and value judgments informing this selection are bound to generate conflicting opinions on what constitutes progress. Yet, as the GAO notes in its 2011 report: “those involved with indicator systems have nonetheless found sufficient common ground to agree that sustained efforts to collect, organize and disseminate information in more comprehensive, balanced and understandable ways provide critical information that all can use in discussing options and making choices to address societal challenges.”

Writing about the selection of indicators, Jon Hall (2005) notes: “There is an irreducible element of subjectivity in such an approach. The choice of indicators cannot be made using statistical criteria alone; it requires some judgment both in choosing the dimensions of progress to include and in choosing the statistical measures for those dimensions of progress.” The OECD went further in 2008, claiming there is a need for “measures which are based on the values of a society, not those of a single political party or an elite few.”

Thus, “whichever approach is taken, it is likely that anyone undertaking a project in this field will want to consult widely about aspects of the project, particularly the areas of progress that should be measured” (Trewin and Hall 2004).

Democratic issues and possibilities in designing new progress metrics

Mike Salvaris

The selection of key indicators is a political process that needs to be carried out in a democratic way, that is, with the involvement of all components of the society (e.g., government, opposition, trade unions, business associations, civil society) to provide a broad-based legitimacy to the indicator set. This is a necessary condition if the set is to be trusted by citizens and recognized as shared knowledge (OECD 2009).

In the past two decades, the separate endeavors of many different communities, statistical agencies, researchers and organizations to develop new measures and models of progress that go “beyond GDP,” have gradually converged into a global movement. In that process, the focus of their attention has gradually shifted.

What began in many cases as an essentially technical challenge – to critique GDP and construct new statistical measures of progress – has been transformed into a series of broader questions, examining not just what measures we should use, but what it is we should be measuring in the first place. Such questions include: What is progress? What does it mean in practice? Progress for whom? And who should decide this?

Historically, “no single idea has been more important than the idea of progress in Western civilization for three thousand years” (Nisbet 1994). The idea has been at the center of philosophical and ethical debate throughout this long period; but it is also an intensely practical political question and, more recently, a democratic one, for many reasons.

Perhaps the most compelling reason for this relevance is that once a community or ruling group selects a definition of progress to be applied to the whole society, the model becomes immensely influential on the broad direction of national policymaking and on the perceptions, as well as the actual life outcomes, of ordinary citizens. This influence has been greatly amplified in today’s complex modern societies, as decision-makers and citizens alike are dependent on statistics to summarize their societies’ key economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions. Statistical indicators can become “the structural DNA codes of nations. They reflect a society’s values and goals and become the key drivers of economic and technological choices” (Henderson 1996).

For these reasons and more, issues of democracy have gradually become more central to the global and international movement to redefine progress, though they have often previously been a key driver of community-level projects in this area.

A good example of this transformation can be seen in the leading global project, the OECD's *Measuring the Progress of Societies*. When launched (in prototype form) at the Palermo conference in 2004, its emphasis was primarily on the use of data and statistics in policymaking. Three years later at Istanbul, the secretary-general's opening speech was entitled "Measuring Progress: Does it Make a Difference for Policy-Making and Democracy?" That speech, and the influential Istanbul Declaration that was approved by 1,200 delegates, included strong and explicit references to the democratic benefits and imperatives arising from the development of new measures of progress:

"This conference is part of a long-term OECD project on measuring the progress of societies. It will bring together other similar initiatives already underway around the world. The project challenges the common belief that progress and economic growth are one and the same. The ultimate goal is to foster the improved functioning of democracies in the information age by creating a higher level of 'customer satisfaction' with democracy" (Gurriá 2007).

"The availability of statistical indicators of economic, social and environmental outcomes and their dissemination to citizens can contribute to promoting good governance and the improvement of democratic processes. It can strengthen citizens' capacity to influence the goals of the societies they live in through debate and consensus building, and increase the accountability of public policies" (OECD 2007b).

In 2008, the influential Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission established by French President Nicolas Sarkozy firmly underscored the issues of democracy, expressing the hope that : "[T]hrough a better understanding of the statistical data and indicators that are available ... [citizens] can make a better assessment of the problems facing their societies. ... Information is a public good; the more we are informed about what is happening in our society, the better will our democracies be able to function." The commission concluded with a call for "a global debate around the issues and recommendations raised in this report ... and a discussion of societal values, for what we, as a society, care about, and whether we are really striving for what is important" (Stiglitz 2009: 10,18).

In the 21st century, it is possible to identify at least five important ways in which democratic issues and the redefinition of societal progress measurement are linked (cf. Salvaris and Woolcock 2009):

- 1) Because it is so influential on outcomes and life chances, the task of defining national or societal goals and priorities for progress (that is, specifying what should be measured when assessing achievement) ought in a democracy to be the responsibility of democratic citizens. Under ordinary democratic principles, participation in setting societal priorities is as integral to the role of citizenship as, say, voting to approve a national constitution.
- 2) In most conceivable models of societal progress, democratic health (including civic participation, human rights and governance quality) is itself a vital sign of true societal progress. This implies that we need measures of democratic health alongside those of physical health.
- 3) A well-documented correlation has been shown between communities that have a strong and healthy democratic process and actual outcomes for citizens and communities in terms of progress and well-being in other spheres.
- 4) Effective and transparent measures of social progress make for better government, as they enable better reporting and policy evaluation, and result in governments that are more honest and accountable. Trusted social progress indicators can provide the basis for informed democratic decision-making by citizens, because “without a shared understanding of reality, fruitful democratic debate is almost impossible” (OECD 2007c).
- 5) Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, measuring progress may be one important way to renew democracies in decline. In communities around the world, engaging citizens in helping to define and measure progress – a meaningful task which necessarily involves developing a shared vision, identifying concrete outcomes and discussing differences – has proved an important means of rebuilding democratic capacity at a time when many countries show evidence of a general decline in democratic confidence and vitality, as well as alienation and disaffection among their citizens.

In 1997 Canadian writer John Ralston Saul anticipated this connection with remarkable foresight:

“New measures of progress should be part of a larger process of civic renewal. As corporatism has grown, citizens have gradually metamorphosed into customers.

Somewhere along this path, and despite the increase in our material well-being, modern civilization has lost its reflective capacity, the ability to ask the Socratic question: ‘What is the way we ought to live?’ It is by asking this question, and by making specific claims for the standards of a decent society against the dominant corporate goals, that we can reassert the lost legitimacy of a democracy of citizens” (Saul 1997).

A decade later, in his opening speech at the third OECD World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy held in Busan, South Korea, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría echoed this call for new measures of progress as a vehicle for civic renewal:

“We are facing both an opportunity and a duty to rethink what progress really means and to build stronger and more inclusive visions for the future of our societies. Citizens are looking for new ways to improve their lives. We need committed citizens, scientists and well-informed leaders ready to engage the whole of society in an assessment of the challenges ahead. We have to move towards measuring welfare, not just output. It will constitute a major contribution to stability and democracy” (Gurría 2007).

Ensuring legitimacy involves repeated consultation

Whichever approach one uses, to understand progress one must examine many aspects of people’s lives – their health, the quality of their environment, their incomes, their work and leisure, their security from crime, and so on. So progress is multidimensional. ... In order to measure progress one needs first to select the dimensions of progress that should be measured. Only then can one choose a statistical measure for each.... The statistician’s job is to recognize and minimize the inherent subjectivity in choosing dimensions. Two approaches are key. First, it is important to realize there are many ways of looking at the world and that the statistician’s view is not the only one. Second, it is important to be open about how the dimensions of progress were chosen. It is perhaps inevitable that there will always be those who disagree with the choices you have made: what is important is they have some understanding of why those choices were made.

Jon Hall, 2005

Ultimately, while different initiatives may take different approaches, there is widespread agreement on two points. First is a recognition that the process by which measures of progress are constructed itself constitutes a key ingredient in the measuring tools' ultimate success; that is, the new indicators' legitimacy relies on ensuring that a wide swathe of the public is engaged and thus feels ownership in the results, feels that the right things are being measured, and believes that the indicators used to measure them are meaningful. Second, the process must incorporate views other than those of the individuals (usually statisticians or economists) taking the lead in building the measures.

Experience shows that many individuals will take an interest in this work, including policymakers, academics, the media and community groups. For example, the UK government found it difficult to reduce the number of sustainable development indicators it had produced, because "when the debate was opened up for stakeholder comment, a commonly held fear among many people was that if their area of interest was not covered by the set of indicators, it would cease to be visible to policymakers" (Scrivens and Iasiello, 2010). Writing in 2004, David Yencken, a prominent member of civil society in Australia, explained the interest of the Australian Collaboration (an organization representing a group of NGOs) in monitoring and reporting: "Without good reporting, key trends aren't known to citizens and their governments and there is an inadequate basis for decision-making. Where reporting regimes are well established, trends and issues are given media attention, and they are kept in the forefront of the consciousness of citizens. In this way they gain standing in public opinion and in political debates. These are the essential preludes to action. Where reporting is poor or nonexistent, issues are buried, neglected by the media and given scant attention by politicians" (Hall, Carswell, Jones and Yencken 2004).

It is therefore clear that getting the process right is a necessary if not sufficient condition for the success of a new set of indicators. It is also widely recognized that the process ought to reflect the views of a broad cross-section of the society whose progress is being measured.

The finer points of consultation

Appropriate consultation in the development of a new framework for measuring progress is vital, primarily because the selection of indicators is not solely a problem of statistics. Radermacher (2004) explains that “indicator construction has to cope with the conflicting goals of statistical measurability, scientific consistency and political relevance, [and] three major actors will emerge: statistics, science and politics.” Andrew Jackson (2004) further notes that “the selection and privileging of social indicators are inevitably a political process informed by interests and values.”

Hall (2005) claims that “whichever approach is taken, it is likely that anyone undertaking a project in this field will want to consult widely” by referring to:

- international standards or practice;
- current policy issues and debates; and
- the views of stakeholders and the general public.

Consultation can help ensure that the indicators are seen as legitimate – that is, that they genuinely reflect the views of a society. It can also build a stronger sense of ownership of the indicators themselves throughout the society, ensuring that they are more likely to be used. “Listening to the views of stakeholders was particularly important in MAP’s [Measures of Australia’s Progress] development. Giving stakeholders some ownership in the publication was almost as valuable a determinant of the publication’s success as the advice they gave” (Hall 2005). Hall et al. (2004) note that “working alongside civil society organizations can foster a wider level of ownership and support for a project, which can help to ensure it achieves its outcomes.”

There is therefore agreement that the development process is important as a means to the desired end. However, most analysis of new indicators’ benefits has focused on the ways in which the metrics are ultimately used. For instance, in a large study the GAO listed the benefits associated with what it described as key indicator systems, noting that these frameworks can:

- increase transparency and awareness;
- foster civic engagement and collaboration; and

- be used to monitor progress, establish accountability for results, and aid in decision-making.

Stefan Bergheim, writing in Trewin and Hall (2010), looks at the close links between the process of constructing indicator sets and the practice of future studies – sometimes called “foresight” – which “can be defined as the use of a wide spectrum of methods to think about possible and probable futures in a structured way in order to be better prepared for the future and to try to shape it. It is not primarily about making better forecasts about an inherently unpredictable future. The methods and conclusions of futures studies can be of great use for research on progress. And, vice versa, indicators of progress are important for the work of all those who try to identify preferable futures.”

Gahin, Veleva and Hart (2003) looked at the ways in which the indicators themselves catalyzed the creation of sustainable communities. “Indicators build connections between people, foster discussion in the community, and provide a powerful educational tool to raise awareness. As a source of data about the community, indicators empower community members, leading to positive change in planning, advocacy, and decision-making. Clearly, indicators are not a substitute for action, but help to create the social knowledge, connections and inspiration for meaningful action. In this way, indicators can lead to progress, albeit slowly and incrementally, toward community sustainability and well-being.”

What is less well-documented is the set of benefits that can arise during the construction of progress metrics themselves – benefits that might be described as ancillary, unintended or serendipitous. The remainder of this publication will focus on these benefits.

Case Studies

Several case studies were selected, after consultation with the project steering committee, to explore in greater detail the benefits that arose out of each initiative's process. These case studies were selected from a long list of possibilities through discussion with the steering committee, as well as by considering the accessibility of suitable interviewees. An attempt was also made to balance distribution in terms of the scale and geographical location of the initiatives considered. Case studies are thus drawn from developed and developing countries, focus on the subnational, national and international levels, and include processes initiated by both government and civil society organizations.

In most cases, interviewees were proposed by the leaders of the case study. The final selection of interviewees was based on a combination of interviewee availability, willingness and desire to participate.

The interviews took the form of free-flowing conversations, with a rough interview guide (see "Questions Used to Guide Interviews") used as an aide mémoire. The interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The main objective of this study has been to gain a better understanding of the processes employed by the different case studies, of how those processes were applied, and of the impacts they had on individuals, institutions and society. We have thus placed particular focus on the identification of lasting benefits.

Bhutan's Gross National Happiness

The concept of gross national happiness (GNH) was developed with the aim of measuring quality of life or social progress in more holistic and subjective terms than was possible using gross domestic product (GDP) alone. The term "gross national happiness," coined in 1972 by Bhutan's former King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, signaled the monarch's commitment to building an economy able to complement and preserve a unique Bhutanese culture based

on Buddhist spiritual values. What began as an offhand remark by the king – “Gross national happiness is more important than GNP” – quickly gained traction as a policy goal, and the Centre for Bhutan Studies developed a survey to measure the population’s overall well-being (Ura et al. 2012: 6).

The concept of GNH is somewhat easier to describe than to define with precision. The four pillars of GNH include: the promotion of sustainable development, the preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and the establishment of good governance. These are further comprised of nine general contributors to happiness, including psychological well-being, health, education, cultural diversity and resilience, time use, community vitality, living standard, and ecological diversity and resilience (Ura et al. 2012: 13).

The Bhutanese have sought to use GNH to assess the country’s levels of well-being more deeply than is possible with conventional indicators. In line with a Buddhist philosophy, they view the distinction between subjective and objective often invoked in western thought as an abstraction from reality. Subjective well-being, in other words, is not only fundamentally linked to the aforementioned pillars of happiness, it also “internalizes responsibility and other-regarding motivations explicitly” (Ura et. al. 2012: 11). Seen in this way, happiness and well-being ultimately constitute a way of being that is embedded in the quality of relations we live in. As Jigmi Y. Thinley (Bhutan’s first democratically elected prime minister) explained, “the most common goal that every Bhutanese seeks in life is happiness ... and it should be the role of the government, the role of the state, to create conditions that will enable people to pursue happiness successfully” (Thinley interview 2007).

Although the Bhutanese are at the forefront of promoting such ideas, it is worth noting that Thomas Jefferson thought the U.S. government had a similar role when he wrote near the end of his presidency that “the care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government” (Jefferson 1809: 165).

In a manner unique in the world, Bhutan has taken steps to integrate the concept of GNH into the country’s policymaking process. In 2008, Bhutan established the GNH Commission as the country’s top strategic body for

national development planning. GNH committees were also set up at the ministerial, dzongkhag (district) and gewog (block) levels. These changes aimed to create stronger and clearer links between the concepts of GNH and their application to policy and programs, while ensuring that GNH had a stronger impact on the country's political economy and its legal, health and education systems. In addition, proposed policies in Bhutan are now subjected to an impact review in terms of GNH. The current ruling party, the Peace and Prosperity Party (Druk Phuensum Tshogpa), has repeatedly expressed its commitment to pursuing GNH since coming to power in 2008).

The main GNH measurement process includes a detailed and lengthy survey. A key element of the measurement process is the presentation of the aggregated results and findings within individual villages, with the aim of instigating dialogue and discussion about policy change at the local level.

For further information on the concept of GNH, as well as the institutional and procedural architecture that has embedded the concept into the country's political system, see www.grossnationalhappiness.com

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) Network is a national initiative supported by an independent, nonpartisan group of national and international leaders, researchers, organizations and grassroots citizens who are developing a new way of measuring well-being in Canada. Based at the University of Waterloo within the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, it operates under the leadership of an advisory board of accomplished Canadians and international experts. As stated in its mission statement, the CIW aims “to enable all Canadians to share in the highest well-being status by identifying, developing and publicizing statistical measures that offer clear, valid and regular reporting on progress toward well-being goals and outcomes Canadians seek as a nation” (CIW 2012).

The CIW Network seeks to develop a holistic and integrated approach to measuring well-being and to offer clear, effective and regular information on the quality of life of Canadians. In so doing, it fosters dialogue on how to

achieve improvement through progressive policies that are responsive to the needs and values of Canadians. The CIW is the flagship index of this vision. A composite indicator, it is constructed from data covering eight primary domains, and is meant to offer a new way of measuring well-being that reaches beyond narrow economic measures like GDP. It is designed to yield unique insights into Canadians' quality of life – “overall, and in specific areas that matter: our standard of living, our health, the quality of our environment, our education and skill levels, the way we use our time, the vitality of our communities, our participation in the democratic process, and the state of our leisure and culture” (CIW 2011a).

The data underlying the composite indicator is drawn from eight separate reports, each covering a different domain of well-being: democratic engagement, living standards, healthy populations, time use, leisure and culture, community vitality, education and environment. The consultation involved in developing each domain report was quite extensive. In each case, the CIW Network typically commissioned a literature review and the production of a domain report by one or more experts in the field. These reviews recommended a set of indicators for the domain where data was available, and identified additional desirable indicators for which no reliable data yet existed. All domain authors used a set of criteria for selecting the proposed indicators, and each draft domain report was circulated for internal and external peer review. To date, more than 60 reviews by “broad-based groups of people with diverse backgrounds have ensured the work is validated against the common sense and sentiments of all Canadians” (CIW 2011b: 16).

The CIW goes beyond conventional conceptual silos, shining a spotlight on interconnections between important areas such as how changes in income and education are linked to changes in health. It is hoped that policy change will stem indirectly from this initiative; this is expected to take place in the form of public debate over the results, and though application of the index methodology at the local community level.

The flagship version of the overall index was published in October 2011, and an annual update – which pointed to a decline in Canadian well-being – was published in October 2012. Reports for each of the domains have been

published as well. While Statistics Canada played an advisory role, no other federal government body was involved.

For further information, see:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/canadian-index-wellbeing/>

EU Sustainable Development Indicators

In 1999, the European Council asked the European Commission to present “a proposal for a long-term strategy dovetailing policies for economically, socially and ecologically sustainable development” (European Council 1999). This was the first step in a process that led to the adoption of the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development (SDS). However, the European Council failed to specify so-called headline objectives and define measures for each. Instead, it singled out several “objectives and measures as general guidance for future policy development in four priority areas: climate change, transport, public health and natural resources” (Adelle and Pallemarts 2009: 6).

The strategy was revised in 2006, and is now manifest in a single, coherent document that differs in scope and structure from the 2001 SDS. Now structured by a set of overall objectives that are specified further by operational targets and actions to be taken, the strategy has achieved broader applicability. In addition, two priority areas have been added: social cohesion and the EU’s role in promoting sustainable development at the global level.

When the SDS project began, the European Council agreed to review the progress of the strategy in a synthesis report, making reference to a number of key indicators. Reporting was a task first given to the Commission in 2000 as part of the monitoring and review process of the Lisbon Strategy. “In effect, the European Council decided to apply the same process to the SDS, and the synthesis report was to be based not only on economic and social, but also environmental indicators” (ibid). However, the report in the end remained focused on the socioeconomic objectives of the Lisbon Strategy, with relatively few environmental indicators. This did not work as well as hoped, and a new monitoring system was subsequently introduced in 2005 by Eurostat, which had been charged with developing a set of sustainable

development indicators (SDIs). The organization enlisted the help of a group of national experts known as the Task Force on SDIs, which included representatives from each member state, from the Commission, and from other European and international organizations. Eurostat's role was thus both that of a technical statistical office and a diplomatic networking organization.

The first set of indicators focused on quantitative trends, and analysis was restricted to the sustainable development indicators adopted by the European Commission in February 2005, with the aim of providing a “useful complement to the Commission’s communication on the review of the sustainable development strategy. Trends are assessed against policy objectives to inform the readers about the achievements, trade-offs, and failures in achieving the commonly agreed objectives” (European Commission and Eurostat 2006: VII).

The indicators are now published every two years and grouped into 10 themes, reflecting the seven key challenges of the strategy along with the key objective of economic prosperity and guiding principles related to good governance.

The process has included the SDI task force at all stages of the work, but does not involve the general public per se. Instead, it engages with the official representatives of elected governments and government institutions in the member countries.

For further information, see:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/sd/pdf/sdi_review.pdf

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/product_details/publication?p_product_code=KS-68-05-551

Jacksonville Community Indicators

The Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) defines itself in its mission statement as a “nonpartisan civic organization that engages diverse citizens in open dialogue, research, consensus building, advocacy and leadership development to improve the quality of life and build a better community in

Northeast Florida and beyond.” Funded by the United Way of Northeast Florida (a coalition of charities), the City of Jacksonville, grants, corporations and individual members, the JCCI is a “citizen think-tank” where “community-minded people get together to explore issues of community importance, identify problems, discover solutions, and advocate for positive change” (JCCI 2012). Participation from all members of the community is encouraged.

The JCCI aims to bring people together to improve their community by encouraging them to participate in a variety of programs and studies. Its community engagement work has included 35 years of studies, active advocacy for the implementation of recommendations contained in its studies, and the provision of opportunities for public dialogue on critical issues of local interest. The group offers people a chance to:

- learn about and discuss important community issues;
- reach consensus on actions addressing community problems;
- engage in advocacy efforts designed to create lasting change; and
- meet others who care about the future of the community.

The JCCI Forward program separately offers a vehicle for emerging leaders to engage with the community and build leadership capacity.

The JCCI has a strong focus on community indicators, which they describe as “a set of data or information that provides insight into the trends in a community over time. Together, the collection of community indicators tells the story about where a community is in relation to its vision and the direction in which the community is heading” (ibid).

The group has produced three major indicator products:

The Community Snapshot, an interactive map that allows users to access indicator data associated with their communities.

The Quality of Life Progress Report, a document that provides a roadmap for the community, in terms of where they’ve been, where they are, and the critical areas demanding attention.

The Race Relations Progress Report, a publication that “measures progress toward eliminating race-based disparities in education, employment and income, neighborhoods and housing, health, justice, and politics and civic engagement” (ibid).

In 2010, the JCCI released its 26th annual set of community quality-of-life indicators, making it America’s longest-running community indicators report. As Jacksonville Mayor John Peyton notes in his foreword to the publication, “Real, lasting community change is built around knowing where you are, where you want to be, and whether your efforts are making a difference. JCCI’s Quality of Life Progress Report continues to guide us collectively as a community, but more importantly, serves as a call to action for individual citizens by asking: What role can I play to make Jacksonville an even better place to live, work and raise a family?” (JCCI 2010).

For further information, see:
www.jcci.org/jcciwebsite/pages/jccihome.html

New Zealand Quality of Life Project

The Quality of Life Project was established in 1999 to provide social, economic and environmental indicators enabling quality of life in New Zealand’s six largest cities (since expanded to include eight cities) to be assessed. It was initiated in response to growing pressures on urban communities, concern about the impacts of urbanization, and uncertainty as to these issues’ effects on residents’ well-being. The project’s key purpose is to equip decision-makers with the information they need to advance measures that improve the quality of life in New Zealand’s major urban areas.

It has a range of other objectives, however, including:

- consistency of indicator use and monitoring methods among participating cities;
- provision of data to support advocacy on urban issues;
- raising the profile of urban issues within the central government;

- cooperation between the country's big cities in monitoring and addressing quality-of-life issues; and
- cross-city monitoring, thus enabling participating city councils to develop a consistent set of indicators, identify urban issues and trends, and provide a platform to develop comprehensive responses.

The reporting framework includes a biennial quality-of-life survey and a separate quality-of-life report published once every five years, which draws on the survey data and other sources including the national census. The survey measures residents' perceptions of overall quality of life in the following areas:

- Health and well-being
- Crime and safety
- Community, culture and social networks
- Council decision-making processes
- Environment
- Public transport
- Lifestyle

Survey data are available for 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010. Published in 2001, 2003 and 2007, the report includes 68 key quality-of-life indicators (encompassing 186 individual measures) across 11 domain areas: people; knowledge and skills; economic standard of living; economic development; housing; health; built environment; natural environment; safety; social connectedness; and civil and political rights.

For further information, see: www.bigcities.govt.nz/

South Africa Development Indicators

South Africa's democratic transition required the government to overcome the legacy of racial segregation in public service delivery under apartheid by improving access to services for disadvantaged communities. Addressing this

in the context of South Africa's three spheres of government – national, provincial and municipal – poses obvious coordination challenges both across and within all policy sectors (Engela and Ajam 2010).

In 2005, seeking a way to improve the flow of information on service delivery, the cabinet approved the presidency's recommendations to develop a monitoring and evaluation system. This system was to include functions such as monitoring, evaluation, early warning, data verification, data collection, analysis and reporting. As a part of these changes, monitoring and evaluation were to be institutionalized as a part of the policy cycle, following the planning and implementation phases, and a set of national indicators was to be established to give the system a conceptual anchor. Work was to be carried out by an interdepartmental task team led by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), divided along the following lines of responsibility:

- principles and practices, led by the president's office;
- reporting and databases, led by the DPSA; and
- capacity building, led by the public administration's Leadership and Management Academy.

After the government demonstrated its initial interest, the initiative lost momentum for about a year. It then became clear that the president's office needed to step in to revive interest and the administration's policy unit took over the leadership of the interdepartmental task team.

As subsequently introduced, the government monitoring and evaluation efforts were grounded in three primary sources of intelligence:

Program performance information, as derived from internal departmental records and administrative datasets, among other sources. This is also strongly linked to departmental budgets.

Social, economic and demographic statistics, derived mainly from the South African statistical agency's censuses and surveys, along with individual departmental surveys.

Direct evaluations commissioned on an ad hoc basis, and primarily performed by external researchers.

A set of key development indicators was published for the first time in 2007, and has been updated annually since that time. The indicators, which are viewed as one component in an integrated approach toward transparent and evaluative policymaking, cover 10 broad themes: economic growth and transformation, employment, poverty and inequality, household and community assets, health, education, social cohesion, safety and security, international relations and good governance.

Copies of the publication are distributed widely to ministers and parliamentarians, their provincial equivalents, and all senior civil servants, as well as to universities, think tanks and civil society organizations.

For further information, see:

www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=2876

Tasmania Together

Launched in 2001, Tasmania Together is a community-derived, long-term vision for Tasmania's future. Its 12 goals and 155 benchmarks were produced through a process of extensive community, industry and government consultations in 2000, 2005 and 2011.

In 1999, the Tasmanian premier challenged residents to create a collective plan for the Australian state as it grappled with the new century. The premier worked with leaders from rival political parties to form a community leaders' group to help steer the process, with members in part nominated by the public. This group subsequently held a "search conference" aimed at collecting the views of a broad cross section of Tasmanian society. The findings from this conference were published in a document entitled *Our Vision, Our Future*, which was distributed to more than 14,000 organizations and individuals in late 1999.

The process of consultation continued for more than a year. In 2001, the community leaders group published the Tasmania Together plan, which set

out a social, environmental and economic plan for the state. This included goals, half of which are benchmarked using indicators paired with baseline data, as well as interim targets and a final target for 2020. Community participation was thus a central element in the plan's formation, being used to "establish broad goals and specific and concrete benchmarks for the plan, and develop detailed indicators and an ongoing process for open, transparent and ongoing measurement of the achievement of the goals" (Salvaris et al. 2000).

Designed to respond to changing attitudes and circumstances in the island state, Tasmania Together is subject to review every five years. As a result of its most recent review, undertaken in 2010 and based on extensive community input, it was expanded to include quality of life and community satisfaction issues, including teenage pregnancies and renewable electricity generation, among others (Tasmania Together 2011: 3).

The initiative has also been viewed as an attempt to draw on existing social capital and community capacity to enrich the policymaking process (Hall et al., 2004). As a process, Tasmania Together reflects – and indeed depends on – the collaborative and collective actions of civil society, business and government. Until October 2012, responsibility for monitoring the plan's progress was given to an independent statutory authority, the Progress Board, that reported directly to parliament, and through it to the people of Tasmania. Now integrated into the Tasmanian Government's Department of Premier and Cabinet, Tasmania Together is slated to work more closely with other government agencies and organizations in collecting and collating data and reports for future governments. Governments have a particular interest in the content of the reports because budgets and policies are linked to the plan. Civil society is also keenly interested, as the plan reflects both the aspirations of and contributions from the Tasmanian people.

For further information, see: www.tasmaniatogether.tas.gov.au/about

Benefits

The outcomes [of the process] should be not just the benchmarks and indicators themselves, but increased community activity..... improved standards in government processes... increased awareness and understanding (of government, and community priorities); and over time, an enlarged capacity for participation and, thus, more empowered communities.

Mike Saharis, 2000

In examining these various government- and civil-society-led discussions on measuring progress and related concepts, three distinct clusters of frequently encountered benefits could be identified. Though by no means inevitable, where observed, these benefits augur well for communities aiming to facilitate progress. They do so in three fundamental ways:

First, discussing progress can itself help **strengthen the machinery of democracy**. Broad-based conversations on what constitutes progress in a society support participatory democracy by giving communities a voice, and by presenting politicians with an opportunity to listen to citizens in a different way. They can help societies better understand – and reflect on – their own identities and circumstances; this in turn can help render goals and values explicit, and help shape new paradigms for activity.

Second, discussions on defining and measuring progress can **make the business of government easier**. Developing and monitoring new indicators enables governments and other bodies to consider core policy areas through a new lens, and to approach familiar issues in novel ways. Discussions on measuring progress provide an opportunity for opposing factions to find common ground, and allow groups to clarify their disagreements. Indeed, they have the potential to reframe contentious debates in ways that help broker agreement. They can break down traditional silos (between sectors or between disciplines of expertise), thus promoting holistic thinking and improving work across the government sector. The creation of indicators and the discussion prompted thereby can also create a stronger sense of shared ownership for new policies (or the need for them), in large part by making societal trade-offs

more explicit and better understood. This is vital in the political economy of reform.

Finally, discussions of this nature and the development of new indicators **build a society's (or community's) capacity to foster capabilities** by providing a forum in which constructive, engaged debate takes place. The process, based on productive exchange, trains and equips individuals in the often difficult work of making justifiable decisions for societies as a whole. Deliberations of this nature engender further constructive deliberations which, in turn, render a society more capable of addressing its problems and more resilient to large-scale shocks (such as climate change). Those who have worked in this domain offer myriad examples of how their projects have affected the experts and citizens involved. The networks constructed, the conversations held, and the final products produced have often proved to be of broader use to a community than was initially envisioned, thus building capacity and resilience. Individuals involved in the discussions frequently change the way they do things even on a personal level. Indeed, there are many examples of how approaches developed in one community or sector have had an unexpected multiplier effect, being adopted elsewhere and stimulating change well beyond the original projections.

Strengthening the machinery of democracy

Facilitating deliberative democracy

The process of measuring societal progress gives communities and citizens a voice with which to discuss their concerns, and offers politicians a new opportunity to listen. Because there are so many ways to view progress, the development of any new measurement framework should take place “in a way that respects the insights and aspirations of women and men of all races, classes, and political orientations” (Alkire 2002: 194). That means that every member of society – expert or otherwise – can be deemed to hold a legitimate view about what progress means. Reflecting this diversity requires consultation with the community whose progress one seeks to measure. Evidence suggests

that when this process is well managed, it gives communities a voice that is particularly likely to be heard by politicians. This, in turn, empowers communities by involving them in the activity of public administration instead of simply subjecting them to administration. In a very real sense, individuals become active agents of democracy through the work of deliberation.

Such discussions can be handled in various ways. Many initiatives – particularly at the subnational or local level – discuss what should be measured, and how, directly with citizens. These discussions tend to be enthusiastically received and productive, yielding benefits that extend beyond securing public legitimization for the new set of indicators.

In Jacksonville, Florida, the JCCI offers a rare forum in which the general public is consulted and allowed to participate in – or even direct – public policy processes. Pointing to the relatively unique participatory character of this forum, one interviewee, Rena Coughlin (CEO, Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida), underscores its high value. It is the one regional forum where ordinary citizens can voice their concerns and opinions, and can realistically expect to be heard by political decision-makers. The opinions expressed in this forum can then find their way into the political process as they inform the context in which decisions are made. Rena Coughlin points to the relatively unique deliberative character of this forum in identifying its social value: “I can’t think of another process in this community that is as valuable, and where opinions are so effectively and broadly sought, and opportunities for engagement given to the community. Or where the questions are asked: What do you care about? What would you like us to investigate? What would you like us to participate in? Even just that question asked out loud makes the process worth it.”

Most interviewees identified improved communication as one of the benefits of the process. It can do so by providing a uniform frame of reference for evaluating local conditions in the community, as noted by another Jacksonville interviewee, Jerry Mallot (Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce): “It has definitely created better community communication and openness. It does not necessarily mean that everyone always agrees, but it is a wonderful forum for dialogue and for an understanding that we have a uniform way of evaluating different aspects of our community.”

But exposure to different frames of reference within a community through the process is another way in which communication can be improved. Participants in the discussions are often confronted with the diversity of their own communities with unaccustomed directness, learning as a result how to communicate in new ways, and engaging in productive dialogue that may previously have appeared impossible. This may take the form of white supremacists listening to race crime victims, for example, or of buskers listening to symphony orchestra musicians. Setting the stage for this kind of forum is important, as noted by Ben Warner (President and CEO, JCCI): “We let people know at the beginning of the meeting that the kinds of meetings we run are different to any meeting they have ever been to. We operate strictly on a consensus model, there’s no voting, and we don’t use a parliamentary procedure. Part of what we are doing is training people in how to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue and hear from each other. These are perhaps ways that they don’t normally communicate.”

About eight times the geographical size of northeast Florida, but with only 30 percent of the population, Tasmania also engaged in an extensive process of community consultation, asking a series of questions including: “Where do you want Tasmania to be in 20 years’ time?” “What are your priorities?” and “What matters to you now?” Animating citizens to actively invest in defining their shared future was a central feature of the process, as expressed by Phillip Hoysted (Tasmania Together): “Getting people excited was the main thing, excited about doing things in a different way and about having the space to work in – that was new – especially the community leaders’ network.” And, as David Adams (University of Tasmania) noted, “one of the objectives of these processes has been to fuel knowledge and capability – particularly at the local level – to encourage people to participate in places where people have (traditionally) been excluded from the policy process.”

Although it is difficult to draw causal linkages between community consultation processes and governmental outcomes, there are a number of examples in which issues identified by the community as central to the idea of progress were subsequently addressed by policymakers. The example of Tasmania Together serves well in this regard, as highlighted by Hayden Jones: “Domestic violence was one issue of concern raised during the original

consultations. Shortly afterwards, the government introduced the “Safe at Home” initiative, a whole-of-government approach that sought to lower tolerance for family violence and encourage the prosecution of offenders. The government also set up a coalition of interest from the community and the government to tackle housing affordability. The group’s response included a call for measures to be included in *Tasmania Together*. They went on to recommend indicators and targets for specific housing benchmarks.”

At the national and supra-national levels, the sheer scale of initiatives makes it more difficult to consult directly with citizens. Many national projects therefore work instead with focus or community groups to discuss what should be measured. These discussions are frequently seen as a vital part of the development process.

But in order for these discussions to yield effective policy impact, they should be linked to government through statutory bodies tasked with monitoring and reviewing tasks and measures of progress. If these discussions take place or resonate within advisory bodies alone, they run the risk of being ignored or poorly understood by decision-makers and their staff. According to David Yencken, a prominent member of Australia’s civil society, this is a problem with middle management in particular, given their uncertainties “about the head of the department or agency or the minister.” This, he stresses, makes the “importance of leadership and the openness of the institutional environment [in which] employees work” all the more crucial (Hall et al. 2004: 434–452).

Nonetheless, there are benefits to working with focus groups, even if these discussions are not integrated into a statutory body. For example, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), which held a series of 40 focus groups or dialogue discussions before work started on the index itself, generated opportunities for people to develop their deliberative capacity. “The participants, while not always optimistic that the process would yield tangible results, were nevertheless energized by their participation in the process. Many people learned about other views and often came away understanding others who perhaps held different views to be more thoughtful and engaging.” (Michalski 2001: vi).

The Bhutanese are even more ambitious in this regard. In monitoring progress toward their GNH goals, they run a survey based on face-to-face interviews, asking a variety of open-ended questions. While the survey includes several multiple choice questions, there is considerable weight given to the information generated by open-ended questions. This generates invaluable enthusiasm and cultivates at the same time a stronger sense of community, as Dasho Karma Ura (President, Centre for Bhutan Studies) says, “We are seeking the voice of the people themselves. When we present data, especially for the local area, then people become very excited.” The Bhutanese also recognize that the process of developing and monitoring GNH goals results in a substantial amount of capacity building.

The opportunity to participate in the process, especially as a survey enumerator, is described as transformative, with many enumerators acquiring valuable new skills as they experience their nation in a new light. Some 50 enumerators conduct a total of 8,000 interviews within six months. These individuals, who are paid employees and not volunteers, undergo two weeks of training before being sent across the country to conduct interviews. As they come to witness firsthand the contexts and experiences of people throughout Bhutan whom they otherwise might never meet, they acquire not only considerable knowledge but develop a deeper understanding of the complexities and diversity found within their society. Many of them have since become politicians in the constitutional monarchy. Underscoring the transformative effect this experience of exchange can have on individuals, Dasho Karma Ura states: “To ask and to hear such diverse views on these issues is itself liberating, I think. You can never get a chance to hear about others’ lives as you do in a survey like this, I think it’s a very, very humanizing engagement on its own. You can be transformed after hearing about the lives of other people even after you finish taking their responses.”

Lessons for success

Although initial discussions about progress are worthwhile, it is important to remember that they can only constitute a part of the decision-making process and cannot supplant it altogether. Moreover, initial goodwill fostered by the

discussions can dissipate over time. Writing about Tasmania Together, Kate Crowley (2009) explains that “in theory the process does not drive representative politics, because the final plan is presented to state parliament, to be discussed, debated and amended according to the will of the majority.” She argues that the Labour majority, by assuring the plan’s “smooth slid[e] through the parliamentary procedures in the early years, essentially substituted public will for representative politics.”

Nonetheless, the process does provide citizens ample opportunity to have their say in political agenda-setting. The next step in the process – defining policy – is left up to the politicians. As Phillip Hoysted and Hayden Jones stress, it is about “informing all players and accessing relevant information about those issues that are community priorities,” which in itself “is sure to provide common space in terms of the nature of the problems we might want to address.”

Crowley notes that if the primary purpose of deliberative democracy is to heighten citizen influence in policymaking, then the Tasmania Together initiative represents a success, given that it helped drive state policy agendas. However, if the point of deliberative democracy is to provide enhanced opportunities for reasoned discussion that facilitate an active citizenry and civil society sector able to exercise tangible influence in the long run, then Tasmania Together has yielded less impact in these terms. Indeed, criticism of Tasmania Together has centered on the fact that the government failed to endorse the community’s requests to set tough targets, for example, to end or reduce logging in old-growth forests. Concerns have also been raised about the ejection of dissenters from the community leaders’ group, the role played by community leaders and their original selection. Together, these issues have raised questions about the underlying ethos of the process. Indeed, some have argued that it may have served to further distance the general public from the political process, thus fostering mistrust and cynicism among some with respect to the political process more generally (Crowley 2009).

New paradigms of thinking

The process of measuring societal progress has the power to shape new social paradigms by providing a forum in which participants discuss the future direction, goals and values of society. Shaping new paradigms is, directly or indirectly, the end-game of most initiatives. Addressing ways to rethink our measurement systems at a seminar held by the Australian government's Productivity Commission on July 29, 2010, Joseph Stiglitz stated that this involves a national and global dialogue on "what we care about; whether what we are striving for is achieving what we care about; and whether this is reflected in our metrics."

There can be few more important conversations for a community or society to have. But they are conversations that seem all too rare. Where present, what impact have such discussions had?

In Bhutan there is evidence of the power of these conversations to incite change at the community level in particular. Linking the process of measuring happiness in Bhutan to an increased awareness of how to cultivate community relationships, Dasho Karma Ura stresses that such conversations allow "people to think about the purpose of life, what the things are that we easily take for granted and forget and do not pay attention to, things in which we don't invest but which are important for well-being." These discussions become, in a way, a public good as they build and maintain the community relationships needed to facilitate the healthy growth of a society. In other words, by cultivating "community vitality, belonging, trustworthiness of the people, [and a] lack of enmity among the community members" these discussions often result in more people engaging with each other, taking time for self-reflection and avoiding the pitfalls of passive entertainment.

The process of measuring societal progress can also help raise awareness of the interconnected nature of problems in society. One interviewee associated with the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) described the process as offering "a new lens, a more holistic way of seeing and understanding social change." This proves especially helpful in generating an appreciation for consequences among individuals and groups who have come together to tackle head-on a specific problem in a community. In many cases, the initially identified

problem is revealed over time to be merely one aspect of a larger issue. It is, explains the interviewee, “like the guy suffering from a midlife crisis who seeks a counselor because he thinks he should get divorced, only to discover the real issue is [that] he feels stuck in his job. It is no different for communities. Everything is interconnected.”

This kind of phenomenon can be observed, he says, in the response people have to the CIW Environment Report. Most local citizens gravitate toward “buying local food by advocating for local food procurement policies at the municipal and institutional levels. This, in turn, can create a ripple effect impacting all of the other domains – living standards, community vitality, democratic engagement, etc.”

In Jacksonville, where societal change has always been the ultimate goal of the JCCI process, improving living conditions in the local community has been a measure of such progress. As Ben Warner emphasizes, this consensus-built vision of community change must, however, be continually monitored and subject to evaluation, because “vision means nothing without also having the indicators so you can measure your progress against that vision. Indicators tell you where you are, and then action-planning tells you what to do when indicators fall short. And the indicators serve a second function as tools for evaluating the effectiveness of our policies.” In this way, evidence-based strategies become part of ongoing discussions that inform shared visions of progress.

Lessons for success

Turning these discussions and the indicators they yield into new paradigms of thinking requires good communication strategies. Narratives can be a useful feature of a good communication strategy by helping people gain a better understanding of what is happening in and around their community. Two of the interviewees associated with the CIW highlighted the advantages of personal narratives in moving the discussion from the abstract toward specific, concrete examples capable of raising awareness and generating fruitful debate. Because they are unlikely to cultivate the CIW’s resonance across a broad

spectrum of contexts nationally, narratives are not currently provided at that level. However, such narratives are very much a part of the process at local and community levels. In addition to providing media outlets and community organizations a golden opportunity to place findings in local contexts, they also act as incubators of changed thinking. As one CIW interviewee put it, “I think the real power is in communities coming together and doing their own storytelling and trying on social indicators. The story creates the context of change.”

A further key lesson to be drawn is the need for an inclusive process of consultation in which people with a wide variety of interests are engaged. By incorporating various stakeholders, those responsible for the process ensure that the resulting indicators enjoy legitimacy. And although this kind of process is considerably more time-consuming and arguably less straightforward than one carried out by a select group of experts, it nonetheless prepares the terrain for long-lasting solutions. Any of the experts involved in most – if not all – of the initiatives might have been able to design in a fraction of the time a (possibly more) coherent index structure, but as Laszlo Pinter (Central Eastern University) notes, the more successful initiatives chose instead to sacrifice speed for inclusivity, consensus, legitimacy and durability: “I don’t think this a quick fix. I can come up in my living room with an indicator system and get some data and put out a report but what difference is that going to make? I think the real impact comes from the process and the dialogue.”

Making the business of government easier

Finding common ground

The process of measuring societal progress can reframe sensitive issues that are the source of conflict by creating a forum in which common ground can be established. By providing a safe environment in which the full spectrum of views and experiences can be voiced, considered and challenged, the process exposes people to experiences – and therefore ways of understanding – that

they might otherwise never encounter. Doing so can help clarify areas of disagreement and advance the formulation of shared goals, which in turn makes the business of government easier.

The case of race relations in Jacksonville, Florida and the Jacksonville Community Council Inc. (JCCI) illustrates this point well. In 2001, the city of Jacksonville, which continues to grapple with the legacy of slavery and segregation, recognized the need to develop a different conversation on race relations. Repeated past efforts to address problems generally resulted in little more than public leaders making declarations of goodwill and calls for improved behavior, with little long-term effect.

In an attempt to break this cycle, the JCCI brought together more than 200 people on a weekly basis for nine months to address the issues underlying racial discrimination and identify those practices that generate or perpetuate racial disparities. The JCCI proved diligent in ensuring that the full spectrum of the community's individuals – from self-identified bigots to business owners to civil rights organizers to victims of racial violence – were included. In this way, according to one interviewee, the JCCI “offered a safe place for frank conversation and shared learning. No personal attacks were allowed, but no viewpoint was silenced. The group heard from others in the committee who shared stories and data, policy and outcomes, history and plans.” This resulted, he continues, in “a shared consensus of the facts facing our community, and a set of recommendations developed through consensus on how to address the problems identified.”

One of those recommendations called on the JCCI to develop a set of indicators tracking progress on race relations. This annual “report card” is to be used in holding the community accountable for eliminating race-based disparities. Now in its fourth annual publication, the Race Relations Progress Report has “reframed the debate and reshaped public policy and private actions towards race,” says Warner. “Most significantly,” he emphasizes, “it stands as a reminder to the community that citizen engagement, done right, can address any problem.”

In their 1981 bestseller on negotiation “Getting to YES,” Roger Fisher and William Ury identified the following four elements of successful negotiations:

- understand each other's viewpoints, and the lens through which each views the world;
- focus on real interests (which may overlap) rather than positions (which often do not);
- look for mutual options for mutual gain; and
- frame each issue as a mutual search for objective criteria.

Evidence from the case studies explored in this study suggests that the discussions informing and shaping indicators of progress can support the first two elements, while the indicators themselves are designed to assist with the last. The evidence also shows that groups characterized by frequent disagreement are likely to find common ground and engage in productive discussions when talking about indicators.

The discussions comprising the selection of indicators for the Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP) project offer a case in point. Here, people of different political ideologies – who tended to disagree far more often than not – came together to discuss a particular aspect of progress. They found they shared considerable common ground when it came to defining why they saw an area as important and what progress in that area might look like. They might, of course, have held radically different ideas about the policies required to achieve progress, but at least they formed a common understanding and agreement on fundamental points.

Discussions can also make participants aware of the different lenses through which we view the world. Productive discussion is often hindered when people believe they are discussing the same thing, but are unwittingly talking about very different things. Again, the experience with MAP provides a nice example. The internal project steering committee had agreed that “work” was an aspect of progress that ought to be measured. But as it turned out, the members of the committee had rather different reasons for thinking so. The economist, who equated progress in work with increasing the total volume of employment in Australia, was concerned with boosting economic activity. The social statistician, by contrast, equated progress in this area with reducing unemployment rates which can foster greater opportunities for social inclusion, heightened self-esteem and lower poverty rates. It was only through discussing the appropriate measures that these differences were revealed.

If such differences are not immediately apparent among colleagues or friends who presumably knew each other rather well, we can expect this to be even more true for groups of people brought together for the first time. Until our different views of the world are made clear, productive discussion and long-lasting agreement can prove elusive. In fact, identifying the differences in assumptions and frames of reference serve to mark the areas of common interest, as Phillip Hoysted and Hayden Jones remark, “Some groups may be aware of each other but might not have any awareness of how close their particular objectives or programs are. If we provide an introduction, or perhaps just have a brief conversation with them about something, then that can encourage them to work more closely around a particular project or issue and even to explore things like getting funding to do things they might not have been able to do alone.” Furthermore, they emphasize, this fosters “greater awareness not only about what they are doing but also about what government programs might be operating in the space that they may be interested in.”

New measures can also help build much-needed trust, particularly in government. Building public trust in government was a key driver in former French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s decision to establish the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (also known as the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission). With this decision, the president acknowledged the failure of major statistics on the country’s economic progress to resonate with the day-to-day experience of French citizens. At the time, France’s GDP was growing, but the ordinary French citizen did not feel prosperous. In the president’s view, this low level of public trust in official statistics was contributing to declining trust in government (Stiglitz et al. 2009).

Transparency of data can go far in building trust, as illustrated by the experience of those responsible for South Africa’s Development Indicators. As in most other index contexts, the South Africa Development Indicators draw upon several data sets from different sources which, at first glance, claim to measure the same thing but often result in different numbers. In the South African case, this resulted in the establishment of a number of data forums tasked with examining the different data sets. Clear documentation methods

are essential, as one interviewee associated with the South African Development Indicators stressed, “Listing data sources has proven important to building trust. And the other thing is to put the data sources down- it’s all a credibility issue with the government. People say ah well you are trying to make it look good because you are the government. The moment you put the data sources down people have a bit more trust.”

Lessons for success

The Jacksonville project appears to have had particular success in this arena. Its success in establishing common ground among a broad spectrum of interests has been attributed to a very open process. The organizers, according to Rena Coughlin, take pains to keep the outcome open for as long as possible, “There is a lot in this process that you do without knowing whether the outcome will push you forward or not, because it is fairly open to influence from the participants. So you sacrifice some control in order to produce more legitimacy.”

As a result, the Jacksonville process is particularly responsive to the needs and opinions of its participants. Facilitators of the process undergo training, and are especially sensitive in handling the emotional aspects of people’s experiences, opinions and beliefs.

The Tasmanian Together experience suggests that it is important to manage expectations and to avoid making promises that cannot be delivered. Noting the initiative’s failure to deliver on some of its promises, David Adams felt the process might have eroded rather than generated trust, “In retrospect, all three approaches were incredibly ambitious: the idea that we can resolve institutional and fundamental value debates though focusing on key indicators and benchmarks turned out to be partly problematic, especially with regard to the capacity of state government to influence those important indicators and benchmarks, and in terms of what actually constitutes community engagement and ownership.”

The political economy of reform

In addition to facilitating the identification of common ground, the process of measuring societal progress can help make the business of government easier by making visible and transparent the trade-offs involved in targeted reforms. Indeed, the discussions and debates over reform can serve to raise awareness throughout a community of the choices to be made and, at the same time, promote greater understanding of their consequences.

In addition, the evidence provided by indicators of progress help government and other stakeholders communicate more clearly the benefits and costs of reform. Just as each reform measure involves costs and benefits, deciding not to reform entails specific costs and benefits as well. In a 2010 speech addressing Australia's mining and energy sector, Australian Treasury official Tony McDonald underlined the need for evidence-based measures of progress, "Providing evidence of the potential and actual net benefits of reform is crucial in building and maintaining public support for reform. One of the key lessons from Australia's reform experience is the need to remind people of the benefits of reform, so that the focus is not solely on costs of reform." This is important, he continues, because "the costs of reform tend to occur in the short term and can be concentrated on relatively small groups, while benefits tend to materialize in the medium to long term and be widely spread across the community." Because the costs of not taking action can be even greater, evidence thereof is also needed to "help mobilize broader support for reform."

A great deal of political debate focuses on the merits of trade-offs. Yet, too often, political points are cheaply scored by ignoring the facts. The reflection that takes place during discussions of measuring progress can generate a more sophisticated and reasoned debate by highlighting the various aspects of progress that are pitted against each other. What are, for example, the net gains in curtailing industrial development? Are these gains to be felt in the short, medium or long term? And who will lose out in the short, medium or long term? Providing silos of data is not enough in this regard. Identifying and examining trade-offs require the systematic analysis of various indicators against each other and weighing these results in considered debate. There are hard choices to be made when undertaking reform. Drawing on available

evidence when discussing the trade-offs make these choices better understood, which can go far in helping governments do their job.

Moving data off the charts and into a debate can stimulate reasoned debate among various levels of government representatives and other stakeholders, as is the case with city policy issues in the New Zealand Quality of Life project. For Leigh Gatt (Gatt Consulting), the chief architect of the project, this was an explicit goal: “I didn’t want to just interpret the data at a data level, and I didn’t want to just interpret the data with regard to an individual indicator or policy; I wanted to interpret that data with regard to all the indicators at local and national levels to see how they worked together and how they impacted on people and policy.”

The choices, and those making them, are funneled back to New Zealand’s general public through media coverage of the project’s annual survey report. The reports attract considerable attention with national TV and radio media outlets covering the results. City rankings are avoided because, as Jim Harland (previously a Dunedin and now Christchurch City Council member) notes, “there is no winner/loser in this.” Instead, he stresses, the survey results provide an opportunity for those engaged in improving the quality of life to learn from each other, “it’s about looking at what you do well – or not so well – compared to other cities and following up to see what they do to achieve their results. The data also helps determine the agenda – the issues – the metropolitan sector may need to work on.”

In Jacksonville, the JCCI’s annual reports on quality of life, race relations and community demographics cultivate awareness and understanding for the political economy of reform. Interviewees associated with the project suggest that its inclusive and thorough processes usually precipitate widespread support and ownership of the resulting policy recommendations. Having played an integral role in the long process of deliberation, the participants emerge well-informed of issues and return to their local communities as ambassadors of the policies.

Lessons for success

In Tasmania, where discussions about trade-offs and the hard choices to be made were the source of considerable disagreement, the role played by Tasmania Together in some of these debates did not always make the work of government easier. The organization, which was tasked in many ways with bringing together members of government, industry, NGOs and the general public to discuss choices and consequences of relevance to the island as a whole, did not elicit a consensus on how to manage the trade-offs between industrial development and tourism. At the heart of this issue lay difficult choices involving continued logging versus the desire to retain a pristine environment.

Underlining the high stakes involved with targeting consensus, Gerard Castles (CEO, Gerard Castles & Associates) criticized Tasmania Together for overlooking the need to settle for less, when necessary, “I think the group found it difficult to manage the tensions that were inevitably going to arise as part of the process. What they sought was consensus rather than saying ‘there are some tensions that we have to work out how to live with.’” As a result, certain tensions were not explicitly addressed and therefore resolved.

But even if the discussions conducted failed to produce the desired results, they have nonetheless aided the Tasmanian government’s understanding of how to engage meaningfully with the community. As David Adams says, “There certainly has been a lot of learning about how to engage with communities in the process itself, ranging from consultation to the co-creation of indicators and benchmarks with the community.”

Joined-up government

Joined-up government, which refers to coordinated thinking and action that cuts across the various levels of government, can be boosted by processes of measuring societal progress. The informal networks and relationships spawned by such processes can promote government efficiency by fostering the exchange and flow of good ideas between various stakeholders, which builds trust and erodes tensions. At the same time, the processes involved with

measuring societal progress promotes the development of synergies in the work of governments as they recognize that the major outcomes society seeks are nearly always brought about by the combined efforts of different parts of government. In short, when those responsible for policymaking break out of their departmental “silos,” a whole-of-government approach to tackling issues becomes possible.

Participants in the process shaping the Measures of Australia’s Progress (MAP) project, which focuses primarily on outcome measures, witnessed first-hand how the process fostered a whole-of-government approach to specific goals. During the initial consultations, many policymakers questioned the policy relevance of broad outcome measures which are influenced by several factors both within and outside government. Measures such as life expectancy, as one observer notes, do “not lend themselves to being impacted readily by a single agency.” However, the emphasis and variety of information provided on outcome measures “encouraged policymakers to focus on the end result, and to discuss how to influence these key outcomes with colleagues in other departments.” The meetings held gave those present the opportunity to exchange concerns and views with colleagues in other departments.

In a similar way, New Zealand’s Quality of Life initiative brought central and local government together as partners in tracking urban progress. Pointing to its collaborative benefits, Leigh Gatt, a former director of the initiative, says it “fostered ‘joined-up-thinking’ by the councils, and collaborative activity by the mayors and chief executives. Processes used in the indicator development, reporting and advocacy phases of the project have promoted a cross-sector, cross-departmental, and across layers-of-government approach to monitoring.”

Discussions about progress are necessarily broad-based. Covering a range of subjects – from economic to social to environmental issues – these discussions bring together people from different disciplines who seldom see eye-to-eye and rarely have the opportunity to collaborate. Measures of progress are also of interest to stakeholders from a variety of sectors, including government and policymakers, academia, community groups, the media, statisticians and other non-governmental groups. Indeed, everyone has a legitimate stake in discussing whether life is getting better.

It is also worth noting that measuring progress should attract the best and the brightest. President Sarkozy's commission, which included five Nobel prize winners, offers a case in point. The fact that a group of such eminent individuals could reach agreement illustrates nicely the ways in which such discussions can develop new relationships! The measurement process is, therefore, a means to bringing together people who will, as they work together, almost inevitably develop a network and have a conversation that breaks out of traditional silos.

During the consultations preceding the first MAP issue, the Australian Bureau of Statistics discussed the selection of indicators with academic experts, community groups and policymakers. In Jon Hall's own experience, these conversations proved beneficial to the statisticians in part by giving them a better understanding of policymakers' perspectives. At the same time, these discussions gave the statisticians a chance to better explain the available measures and their limitations, presenting them a unique opportunity to offer the outside world a better understanding of official statistics. Participants from outside the Bureau of Statistics also benefited from the discussions themselves and the new networks they generated. As Trewin and Hall (2010) claim, an unintended outcome of Measures of Australia's Progress was the improvement of "whole-of-government communication around the issues at stake."

Such conversations can help stakeholders at the local level of government, or those within an organization pursue new courses of action. In Canada, the Barrie Community Health Centre, a local manifestation of the CIW, offers an illustrative example of this. In response to CIW calls for improved monitoring of broader aspects of health and well-being, the Barrie Community Health Centre implemented new intake questions to cover these CIW domains. The center benefited not only from an expanded set of useful data, but addressing these aspects has enabled employees to engage in broader discussions of health with patients. As Gary Machan (Barrie Community Health Centre) explains, "We ask questions about their income levels, their education levels, the number of friends they have or that they can rely on, time stress etc. What we explain in doing that is that it is related to the CIW and we explain why we are doing that and it's a bit of a revelation to people that these sorts of things

do have an impact on their health.” Furthermore, he notes, the introduction of these issues has prompted a positive change in the strategic direction of the health center, “It also helps us from a program development standpoint. It serves the dual purpose of helping our organization get a better read on the people we serve, while at the same time as educating our clients, as a first step in engaging them, on issues which impact on their well-being.”

In New Zealand, where getting cities to work together was a recognized challenge, the networking aspect of the New Zealand Quality of Life project was targeted from the beginning. As one interviewee recalls, “It was fraught with difficulties as it was the first time the cities had worked together; it was a project on a huge scale and with a significant investment of staff resources.” There was a push to ensure that personal relationships develop between team members in the different cities, which would yield benefits in other areas as well. Organizers recognized that the work could be done by others, but that was explicitly ruled out, as the interviewee notes, “We could do this work by contracting out. But we use it as a staff training exercise and also to keep alive the relationship between staff in the different cities – they build relationships that they carry over into other work.”

In Jacksonville, the JCCI processes have encouraged the participation of a diverse set of stakeholders in face-to-face meetings. The JCCI’s explicit goal with these discussions has been to uphold the value of contributions while generating interest and stimulating learning. Reviewing and monitoring progress in the community through the indicator process has become a staple of communication in Jacksonville, as one interviewee with the JCCI explains, “The indicators work that we do now frames most of our public discussions and is a touchstone for discovering community issues and for working outside traditional local government silos.”

Networks in Jacksonville are expanded and strengthened through the preparation of the actual indicator reports. The drafting committee has in this context the opportunity to deepen their relationships, both professional and private, with a variety of stakeholders. The involvement of experts from various fields is a bonus in this regard, as emphasized by one interviewee, “I would say the benefits of serving on the committee for the quality of life

report, is being able to learn from other experts in various field. So there's knowledge that is gained through the conversation.”

Facilitating joined-up thinking and action is even more challenging for a supra-national organization such as the EU. For those involved in establishing the EU's Sustainable Development Indicators, the process created an opportunity for them to develop links and informal relationships with others beyond their usual frame of reference, which then carried into other processes. The process encouraged links between representatives from different EU member states, different departments within the European Commission, researchers from different fields, and also between institutions (e.g., environmental and health ministries) from one country that comprised a joint delegation. The spectrum of substantive and institutional backgrounds represented by these individuals can be quite broad, as one interviewee explains, “The group draws on different types of expertise – not just indicator people from the statistical offices but also people from the economic and social spheres, the environmental sphere, from ministries and policy organizations. It brings in the different types of background and expertise.” This creates a more balanced understanding of how best to monitor and approach sustainable development, he claims, “the policy people of course understand the relevance – sometimes more than the technical people – but not always. But the technical people can understand the technical difficulty of something. And you need really to address the two aspects – because it's fine to say you need an indicator; but you also need ideas on how you can address it and what you should not waste time on. So the sharing of experience and different types of expertise is important.”

In Bhutan, GNH-related discussions focusing on how the GNH index can encourage holistic government policies led to the development of a set of screening tools. These screening tools serve as a checklist of the kinds of activities and measures that constitute the GNH. This checklist can be used in the design phase of any new policy or measure. By issuing a warning signal whenever a policy or project might bear a negative impact on any of the nine domains, the screening tools help ensure that policies and projects in Bhutan foster holistic progress. In this way, the tools foster joined-up thinking in Bhutan.

In South Africa, meaningful discussions about data and the tangible impact of monitoring progress within the context of the South Africa Development Indicators have encouraged government workers to pursue synergies. One interviewee describes a changed environment in which people feel more comfortable discussing data, “It does allow talking about data and sharing data in the department, and it is a real product. You can talk in the abstract about indicators to people but if you have a concrete product to show it’s stronger. I think it establishes a culture of talking about the data.”

Lessons for success

Without exception, all interviewees expressed enthusiasm for the benefits of conversation and discussion in developing the broader networks needed for joined-up government. Attention to an open environment in which everyone has their say can be an important feature of such discussions, especially when community stakeholders are integrated into the process. However, as the examples of the Barrier Health Centre and the JCCI show, sensitivity to personal experience on sensitive topics is also required.

Perhaps the key lesson to be drawn from all the case studies is the need to give those involved enough time to develop a personal as well as a professional relationship. Productive and effective working relationships built on trust take time to develop. Informal contexts that accompany more formal procedures can play a vital role in this regard. As the case of New Zealand shows, the cultivation of informal dialogue that emphasized relationship-building rather than extensive formal meetings, were later identified as key features of a successful process by Leigh Gatt. Highlighting the importance of joint lunchtimes in facilitating relationships, especially at the early stages of the project, she says: “From my point of view it was most important to meet regularly and cultivate the relationships and contact. Those relationships have been critical to the success of the project: without them it would not have worked.... It was invaluable to meet face-to-face and be able to talk through issues to reach a common understanding and how to tackle issues and challenges in the project – that worked really well and was a very critical part of the approach.”

Building capacity and resilience

Strengthening capabilities, enhancing accountability

The process of measuring societal progress empowers communities and fosters social resilience as it strengthens a community's capacity to tackle issues effectively and with enhanced accountability – together. It does so by providing both the forum and information needed to engender constructive deliberation. Organizations and individuals from the community who participate in the process can draw upon a variety of experiences and other resources – and learn more – that enhance their capacity to contribute to society.

These processes, and the indicators they yield, build community capacity by generating expertise and new evidence to inform ongoing discussions. This can help communities tackle problems and improve accountability. In Jacksonville, where the JCCI process provides extensive community information far beyond what a small organization could afford to collect alone, community organizations can use this information for various purposes – from strategic planning to grant applications. These resources also help raise awareness of how an organization's work relates to other local issues and trends, as Rena Coughlin stresses: “That’s important for organizations such as not for profits that have very little internal research capacity. So it’s turning into a very useful tool for organizations. People would say show us your outcome from JCCI and they can point to most of the human services organizations in our communities as beneficiaries to the work they do.”

Creating citizen experts is another aspect of the JCCI surveys, which are conceived as elements of an ongoing learning process. Building individuals' capacity to engage in constructive deliberation is an explicit goal, as Ben Warner explains: “We provide only free coffee, no payment; but we try to make sure that for all events where we invite the community that everyone who attends the meeting **has the opportunity to learn something, contribute something and come away with something.**” It is a volunteer-driven process spearheaded by a volunteer chair and steering committee overseeing an issue, he continues, “We then issue a call to get people who are

interested in this issue; and they meet weekly for about six months to talk about it. So that we create out of our general citizenry a series of citizen experts.” The participating citizens hear from a variety of experts in the field, contribute their own personal narratives and ask questions. This kind of participation, as Warner emphasizes, “shapes that conversation so that we have an understanding of what the issues are” and enables the participants to “decide what the policy changes need to be.”

In Canada, the Newfoundland Community Accounts, which gathers, collates and provides community and provincial level data and information for public use has proved effective in empowering institutions as well as individuals. Referring to the use of the data by rural doctors in “understanding the communities they serve” and its use in coursework at Memorial University’s medical school, one interviewee associated with the project reports how the data is applied for community benefit. In addition, he says, “Individuals use the data to develop business plans, develop funding proposals and a variety of other activities. The Community Accounts have also given quantitative substance to population health groups in communities and within government.” The project has attracted much attention in Canada and elsewhere because, he says, “it demonstrates the possibilities for translating well-being concepts into data that can be used widely by many with differing interests.”

Just as the process of building indicators can create new networks facilitative of more effective activity in government, the process of debating these measures can create new networks among public participants. As one participant in the Canadian Index of Wellbeing’s construction observed: “Getting this huge network of researchers together must have seemed like herding cats at times. The CIW team has done a very laudable job, and it’s an extraordinary effort. The Atkinson Foundation has brought in a range of players that are not always engaged in academic work. So it has been a tremendous achievement.”

Underscoring the value of expanding networks, several CIW-associated interviewees pointed to the variety of cross-cutting opportunities for domain teams that allowed researchers with different levels of experience to become involved in the process. This included everything from graduate students

carrying out the basic indicator work to senior professors who worked on indicator design and concepts.

In Tasmania, the informal networks cultivated by Tasmanian Together through its “Partners Program” helped raise awareness of the activities of several low-profile organizations both within and outside of government. It functioned to link small, independent organizations in particular to information and contacts. Otherwise separate community organizations are brought together where they can, as Hayden Jones suggests, “share experiences, knowledge and ideas around areas of activity that contribute to one or more Tasmania Together benchmarks. Work in this space may challenge the assumption that it is only ‘government’ (or even ‘governance’) that benefits from being joined-up. Our perspective would suggest that ‘joining-up’ is a useful notion in a whole-of-community context, not just whole-of-government.”

These networks among practitioners have also brought about improved working relationships in the community and fostered synergies, as another interviewee points out: “Previously we did have conversations, but now we are working a lot closer together and looking for opportunities where there are synergies on other pieces of information.”

In Canada, where the CIW has prompted public institutions to work together in new ways, the community council of Prince George (British Columbia) led the founding of the Institute for Social Research and Evaluation. The institute, a partnership between the city and the University of Northern British Columbia, was initially treated with mistrust by council members fearful of being usurped and who had little faith in survey research. At the time, policymaking lacked evidence-based research and, according to one interviewee associated with the project, “it took about four years before a majority of city council members began to appreciate what the institute was trying to offer and how best to use it. But once the message took hold, public policymaking in the city became more balanced, more participative and largely evidence-based.” Here, the creation of synergies and partnerships in public institutions have also generated accountability within public administration.

Lessons for success

Given the complexity of institutional, organizational and social factors shaping the success of any such indicator project, the importance of political commitment from the outset cannot be understated. Indeed, if strengthening community capacity and building accountability are key aims of such a project, it must be backed up and championed by political and community leaders alike.

New Zealand's Quality of Life project, for example, has enjoyed public endorsement by senior policymakers. This assures that relevant issues are addressed in meetings and receive the requisite media attention, as Jim Harland describes: "We meet with the mayors of the cities and this project will be on the agenda during the course of the regular metro sector meetings. We would arrange to have a presentation of the results to the mayors and then a national media briefing on the same day. That worked well, and we'd do the same thing about the perception survey – in this way the political people become the champions."

Engaging the community through narratives can be a useful means of building capacity and accountability. Recognizing the power of narrative stories to contextualize and explain, the JCCI uses storytelling to make the indicators relevant to the local community. This relevance then becomes a driving force of engagement as people in the community join in efforts to improve the situation. As Ben Warner notes, the JCCI's indicator reports are "not about the data but about telling the story of where the community is in relationship to its vision, and helping evaluate effectiveness of efforts moving towards that vision." The process allows people to create, he continues, "a shared commitment to action to make those problems go away. It's a shared call to action."

Sparking innovation and changing behavior

The case studies explored here offer ample evidence of indicator processes sparking social and technological innovation. In many cases, this leads as well to changed behavior. The degree of innovation involved in a process can in part be attributed to the progressive character of projects that capture the imagination and passion of people from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. As Leigh Gatt recalls, “We engaged the brains and hearts of people right back at the early stages at all levels: technicians, CEOs, NGOs, academics, mayors. The work was considered forward-thinking, and people were engaged by the idea that you can measure on a range of levels and use those measurements to drive change – which is what we did.”

By bringing technocrats and statisticians together with community practitioners, the need for information otherwise overlooked can be brought to light. In the case of Winnipeg’s PEG Community Indicator System, the desire for finer granulation in certain indicators was expressed during a series of meetings. The city’s graduation rate, for example, as Laszlo Pinter recalls, was “available as a city-wide average but we wanted to make [it]available at the level of individual school districts.” This eventually led to action taken on the part of school districts, many of which, he says “changed their policy and formally agreed to make graduation rate data available to the public for the first time.”

The New Zealand Quality of Life project initiated a chain reaction that reached through to the prime minister, ultimately resulting in the creation of a government office, the Minister for Sustainable Development. Describing this process, Leigh Gatt says, “As a result of our discussions, the six mayors were able to approach the Prime Minister to say what the main issues were in the cities, and how this could impact on the whole country. This had real influence on policy in New Zealand. For example, after the first report, Helen Clarke put in place a minister for sustainable development. Our mayors also used the findings at local level to make other changes, such as the levels of policing and so on. As a result of the project, we collectively had a great result: we were a team of public servants who influenced the CEOs who influenced the mayors, who influenced the PM.”

In Bhutan, the process surrounding the GNH sparked changed in the country's poorest regions to the east. Describing how the GNH survey process drew those communities' attention to their capacity for self-reliance and environmental health, Dasho Karma Ura says, "they had become very conscious of self-reliance. They are on the border with India so there is a lot of trade – and they decided to turn their district into an organic district. They also decided to reform their education curriculum – they became very conscious of their environmental quality and that they need to maintain it." In fact, he argues, thanks to the survey, they began to see clearly what they had, in the past, only vaguely understood to be priorities. The survey process and its results reinforces what many intuitively understand, giving "them further confidence – in what they wanted to do already."

Many of the interviewees spoke of indicator initiatives as catalysts, inspiring further indicator work elsewhere and sparking broader change. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing, for example, illustrates this well. As a national initiative, it calls upon organizations across Canadian society to step up and develop their own indicators and index. The scope of societal engagement and leadership at many levels is expected to continue growing. One interviewee associated with the project argues that affecting national change often begins with locally implemented change. He cites smoking bans and restricted pesticide use as examples of how local communities can introduce changes that are eventually taken up in legislation by the provincial government.

Gary Machan of the Barrie Community Health Centre in Ontario, Canada describes how the CIW as a national survey with local involvement compels communities, on the one hand, to initiate change locally and, on the other, to shape policy recommendations at the regional and national levels. From the beginning, the aim of the Barrie local CIW project was linked to making suggestions for policy change as well as the ability to compare the regional situation with the national one. As he describes it, "we have an indicator study which is national in scope but when it comes to policy, odds are that the first step is at the local level." Stressing that major shifts in national policy require a degree of public support, he points to the role of CIW results in raising awareness: "When the CIW comes out at the national level, the following day we will come out with a report at the regional level that has been prepared by

our county government and will consist also of recommendations for policy.” The results have an impact on decisions made locally regarding, for example, the environmental, social and economic aspects of food in the area. In fact, they influence local activities, as organizers “work closely with the green teams at schools, having the teams identify what they see as the solutions.” He points to similar effects in other domains, such as time-use. He notes that after the report highlighted the strains placed on caregivers, the community responded by implementing some wider policies designed to support caregivers specifically, to reduce the stress on them and also to promote their health.

Some initiatives also engage with local businesses. Christa Rust, discussing the PEG initiative in Winnipeg, describes how the innovative use of open-source technology in creating the necessary database framework meant this could be shared with other local initiatives. Because the initial programming was provided in the form of a donation, she says, “we can have conversations with other folks who are interested in doing the same thing, and they do not have to worry about huge costs and having to develop new portals or getting licences.” In part thanks to its engaging web portal, the initiative has “stirred up quite a bit of a dialogue” and attracted considerable interest from other organizations. Local companies or universities can provide the programming as voluntary contributions to their community, thus enabling ideas to spread.

Making data less intimidating and easier to access was a challenge for the Newfoundland Community Accounts project that sparked innovation. Underscoring the need to acknowledge “different amounts of quantitative skills and interests “ among potential users, an interviewee associated with the project recalls considerable thought being given to accessibility, resulting in the “merging of computer systems with innovative ways to present and display data and to make the data easy to access. The result was innovation in making data ‘inclusive’...some who might not otherwise have the data or be able to use it now could.” According to the interviewee, this had the added benefit of prompting social interaction between residents and elected officials through the discussion of quantitative information.

As always with collaborative research work, limited resources can prompt innovations in cost-sharing that yield potential benefits in terms of cost effectiveness. In the case of New Zealand’s Quality of Life initiative, smaller

city councils with limited resources can benefit from the indicators and methodology applied in larger cities, and they can tap into other resources such as collectively purchased data. Kath Jamieson (Christchurch City Council) describes how cities in New Zealand come together as a collective in submitting joint data purchase requests, which improves efficiency in data collection and therefore yields additional data at lower costs. In short, she says, “All of the administrative costs of the project were shared so it became a lot more cost effective than it ever would have been if we had been trying to tackle this individually as cities.”

In Jacksonville, the JCCI has responded to the challenge of ensuring follow-through on policy recommendations by creating taskforces. Every JCCI study is assigned an implementation taskforce. As Jerry Mallot (EVP, Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce) states, these taskforces may not have the power to carry out the report’s recommendations, “but they have the power to try to get others to do it.” The success rate of this follow-through can be attributed in part to the project’s broad and deep reach throughout the community, which anchors relevance. As Ben Warner states, “We have done this now over 70 times in our history, and we have created significant policy changes in every area of our report. [...] We have a cross-section of people, for example, when we looked at affordable housing, we had government officials, landowners, those in public housing, homeless people. It is this ability to engage all of those different perspectives that adds richness and value [to policy].”

Those who have worked on the European Union’s Sustainable Development indicators have also observed how the process increases the capacity of individuals involved to affect and stimulate broader change in the member states. Shaped by their EU experience, members of the project’s working groups apply this experience to national projects at home upon their return. By the same token, international meetings provide opportunities for technical staff, and staff from within national institutions, to interact with each other internationally. The conflicts and debates grappled with in these international networks expose individuals to experiences and ideas that generate further learning opportunities.

In Bhutan, innovation is manifest at the local level in particular. Thanks to the GNH, villages in Bhutan are able to make decisions on how to address problems identified in the survey results. The Centre for Bhutan Studies itself does not address policy issues other than to make occasional suggestions to the central government. As Dasho Karma Ura states, “We do not prescribe – that is up to the government. We suggest actions, but they remain recommendations.” Discussing things that matter can therefore build capacity among those involved in the process, and can lead to changes in behavior among the individuals involved and, by extension, the community.

Lessons for success

In all of the case studies, interviewees expressed the need for ongoing maintenance and engagement. The importance of understanding that the existence of an initiative is not – on its own – sufficient to spark innovation was underlined in nearly every case. The Tasmanian experience in particular demonstrates how cooperation among stakeholders cannot be forced. Observing failing performance on certain benchmarks, Phillip Hoysted and Hayden Jones are mindful of how this may prompt government agencies and non-governmental organizations alike to address the problem with ad hoc measures, but that “you can’t actually enforce collaboration and cooperation to deal with that issue.” In fact, they believe it is crucial for Tasmania Together to achieve “cooperation around failing benchmarks” if they are to meet their “targets by the year 2020” and identify this as a “major area” where they “could have done better.”

Conclusions

What has also been lost is our sense of common purpose – our sense of higher purpose. And that's what we have to restore. We may not agree on abortion, but surely we can agree on reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies in this country.

Barack Obama, 2008

There are rapidly growing numbers of people – from all regions of the world and from all sectors of society – who believe their societies need to develop new metrics of progress. They believe communities should discuss to reach agreement on the outcomes they wish to achieve and on how to measure progress towards those goals. And they believe that agreement, as U.S. President Barack Obama suggests, can be achieved.

Although the approaches applied in targeting this agreement differ, they share in common the understanding among those driving them that the process by which these measures are selected is itself fundamental to the success of an initiative. Processes that build legitimacy and ownership will produce a better set of measures.

This study has shown that the process is important in other ways, too. It is important in its own right because it can empower people to undertake action in advancing well-being in society. A well-handled process can lead to many benefits that go beyond the creation of new measures. These benefits can strengthen the machinery of democracy, make the business of government easier, and build our capacity to foster and expand the capabilities needed for meaningful participation in society.

What is striking is that in many of the cases examined, the “process” benefits have arisen almost serendipitously, often to the surprise of those involved. If these benefits are less a product of design than of accident, this begs the question as to what might be achieved if they were built into the aims of a project at the outset.

With this research we hope to add impetus to the belief that measuring progress offers many benefits to a society. We want to broaden the list of potential benefits beyond those that accrue from having a new set of numbers. We want to spread awareness of those benefits. And we want to help ensure that all those who work in this field will harvest them.

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Questions Used to Guide the Interviews

Initiative phase

- What were the origins of the study? Were they top/down or bottom/up?
- Specifics: How did it come about? Why then?
- Was there a scoping/pilot study?
- Specifics: Who by? When? How was it used? What effect did it have?

Preparation phase

Technical preparation

- Framework selection (open question – ask to describe process and thesis)
- Data and indicator selection (open question – ask to describe process and thesis)
- Methods (open question – ask to describe process and thesis)
- Approach to internal engagement (in organization), policy engagement, technical engagement, public engagement. (NB: look for evidence of whether it was communication, consultation, participation)

Presentation

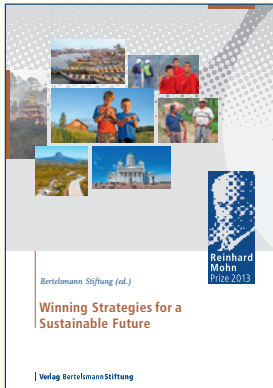
- Who (e.g., role/organization)?
- When (e.g., when were the media involved)?
- Process (e.g., how were the media involved)?
- Report (e.g., paper vs. online)
- Media (e.g., press conferences)
- Success (sense of uptake by e.g., media)?

Post-phase

- Do you have a sense of how the results have been used by academics? ...by policy end users and decision-makers?
- Has there been an effectiveness study/review/resource re-allocation?

Process reflections (open question with focus on the process)

- Could you sum up the approach in your own words?
- Could you say what worked well? ..and what perhaps did not work so well?
- What do you think would be the main lessons learned?
- Finally, do you have any tips for others attempting to create these sorts of measures? ... and any comments about any lasting process benefits?



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