

Editorial

The Evolution of 20 Years of Social Quality Thinking

This and the next issues of the *International Journal of Social Quality* are the outcome of the support by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) to develop this journal globally, delivering an opportunity to present a more extensive editorial in order to summarize the state of social quality work and to indicate essential challenges at this stage and in the near future. To reflect our new collaboration with CASS and our other growing international links, we welcome five new members from all over the world to the editorial board. We also welcome our new vice-chair to the international advisory committee. The preparations for the collaboration with CASS were made in 2017. In the beginning of 2018, Berghahn Books in New York, the International Association on Social Quality (IASQ) in Amsterdam, and CASS in Beijing signed a contract for the coming five years. At this stage, CASS is made up of 31 research institutes and 45 research centers oriented on a range of disciplines including economics, law, philosophy, political science, sociology, world religions, environmental science, and world politics. It applies cross-disciplinary approaches to regions such as Asia, Africa, Russia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe.

As a result of international conferences—and thanks to the stimulating role of Zhejiang University—on the social quality approach (SQA) in Japan, mainland China (twice), Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Thailand (twice), CASS members have become engaged with social quality projects in recent years. The translation of the second (Beck et al. 2001) and third (Van der Maesen and Walker 2012) main books on social quality into Chinese under the lead of Shanghai University in 2017 has also contributed to this engagement. Both books are published by the Chinese Social Sciences Academic Press. Thanks to this, SQA became of interest to CASS, which has agreed to support its elaboration and the *International Journal of Social Quality*. CASS's global scientific network in connection with IASQ's global network can be made productive for this journal and for social quality thinking in all continents.

The evolution of emphases in SQA during the past decade was relevant in the discussion with CASS representatives. As explained in the third main book on social quality, SQA now extends beyond analyses of processes in a range of policy areas seen as aspects of societal complexities (first field) and of herewith related processes in urban contexts (second field). It has added analyses oriented on the development or destruction of sustainable daily circumstances (third field), so a more global point of view has been introduced in theorizing social quality and SQA. The meaning of the adjective “sustainable” is derived from the meaning of the noun “sustainability,” and



differs from concepts like durability or consistency, as seen implicitly in concepts like “sustainable economics” or “sustainable housing.” This extension opens the possibility to analyze the reciprocity of processes in these three fields in order to better understand what happens in each field and why. This is urgent because the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change will argue in its forthcoming study that even keeping global warming down to “a 1.5°C rise might not be enough to protect many coral reefs ... and ice stored in Greenland and West Antarctica whose melt is raising sea levels” (Doyle 2018). Added should be that the “Antarctic is [already] losing ice at a rate three times faster than it was just six years ago” (Shepherd et al. 2018: 219; see also Konrad et al. 2018).

Human activity—realized in the first and second fields studied in social quality analyses—cause unavoidable consequences in the third field. Stronger and stronger becomes the international plea to start new forms of collaboration between scholars in economics, political sciences, sociocultural sciences, and sociology, among other fields, to analyze the causes of these consequences in an orchestrated way. This will be a condition for an adequate dialogue with physical scientists. But according to UNESCO and the International Social Science Council’s *World Social Science Report 2013*, necessary conditions for the cross-disciplinary collaboration and coordination are not yet well fulfilled. According to then UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (2013: 3), social sciences—and thus including economic, political, and juridical sciences—are divided, and this is a real problem: “Just as divided knowledge undermines the solidarity of humanity, so current environmental challenges—if inadequately understood and inappropriately managed—can impede achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.” In the *World Social Science Report 2016*, too, no theoretically grounded answer is formulated to cope with this problem (UNESCO et al. 2016). But is not an adequate answer from the side of the academic world very urgent?

A Renewed Figure about the Reciprocity of Three Fields as Challenge for the Journal

To introduce the required global point of view with the help of attention to the third field requires an acceptable ontological and epistemological frame of reference to connect this with the attention to both other fields. All dominant processes in each field should thus be connected coherently (Van der Maesen 2013, 2017). This frame of reference may be clarified and deepened with the help of two methodological principles: first, by recognizing and delineating the main dimensions that play a dominant role in each of the three fields. Until now, these dimensions are (tentatively!) formulated as the socioeconomic/financial, the sociopolitical/legal, the sociocultural/welfare, and the socioenvironmental dimensions. Recently, the distinction of these four dimensions has been applied and elaborated further based on SQA in the study

about Ukraine's current problematique published in this journal (Novakova 2017). The second principle is to analyze the ongoing transformations in each of these four dimensions in such a way that the outcomes of these analyses can be made comparable as a point of departure for understanding the consequences of the interconnections between the three fields.

The collaboration of IASQ with CASS is particularly attractive because this academy is able, thanks to its infrastructure, to stimulate cross-disciplinary research relevant for the elaboration of the first methodological principle. Scholars connected with IASQ (2018) constructed the architecture of social quality, and this presents a distinction of three interrelated sets of factors with which to analyze processes in the four dimensions of each field. These factors are based on a particular ontological and epistemological point of view and include the constitutional (the subjective world), conditional (the objective world), and normative (the ethical world) factors. Usually, aspects of these three sets (e.g., responsiveness, happiness, needs, capability, economic security, inclusion, empowerment, social justice) are discussed as belonging to one family of concepts without a distinctive heuristic meaning. The distinctions made in this architecture provides an analytical point of departure for the elaboration of the second methodological principle, avoiding tautologies such as "social capital" as well.

Cross-disciplinary-oriented research with the help of the conceptual and methodological characteristics that are expressed in the architecture of SQA may deliver new insights in the reciprocity of the three fields in order to really understand the consequences of their reciprocal transformations (see Figure 1). The first version of Figure 1 was published five years ago (Van der Maesen 2013). Further hypothesized is that with the help of this analytical procedural and instrumental approach, issues of sustainability can be connected with processes in the first and second fields, taking on board the subjective, objective, and normative factors that are relevant in daily circumstances. The recent rejection of, for example, the 2015 Paris climate change agreement by the richest nation on Earth—the one with perhaps the biggest ecological footprint per capita—is an outcome of a specific configuration of subjective, objective, and normative factors. It is aimed at defending and increasing its wealth to maintain and extend its current lifestyles: "America first." Equally worrisome is the conclusion by the International Air Transport Association (IATA 2017) that, because of suppositions about future lifestyles globally, "the world needs to prepare for a doubling of passengers in the next 20 years. ... The [Asia-Pacific] region will be the source of more than half the new passengers over the next two decades." It should be noted that air traffic and sea traffic were not a part of the Paris climate change agreement.

The relationships between fields, dimensions, and factors are illustrated in Figure 1. In this figure, three conclusions are illustrated. First, with this approach, comparison can be made with other approaches such as "quality of life," "social capital," "human security," or the "capability approach." For a dialogue about politics and policies that should be pertinent for the upcoming challenges, this will be relevant. Second, the ICT impact will influence the nature of the four dimensions and thus the outcomes

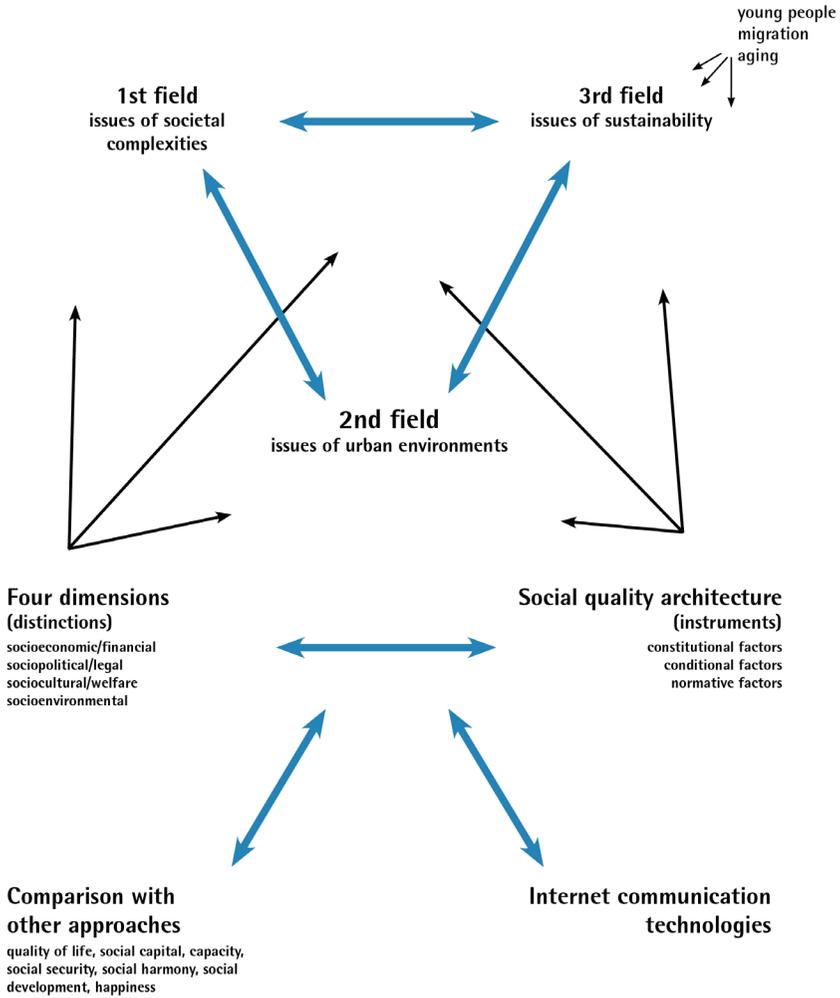
of processes in the three fields. According to Ruchir Sharma (2018), technology (based on ICT) will decide which country emerges as the world's dominant economic power in the long run: "While about 20 percent of per capita gross domestic product growth is driven by labor and capital, the remaining 80 percent is determined by how rapidly an economy is developing and applying new technology to increase production." This will very soon cause a "tech battle" between the United States, China, Japan, the European Union, and so on. According to a McKinsey Global Institute group of researchers who collaborated with the Centre of Liveable Cities (CLC) Singapore, these technologies are "about creating environments where different players can bring innovation to bear on public issues. Many digital solutions that are changing the urban fabric, from e-healing to telemedicine, come from the private sector. These have enormous potential across Southeast Asia, where urbanization is happening at a breakneck pace" (Chye et al. 2018). According to the McKinsey group, this will contribute to "quality of life," but the research does not explain what this means or how this may be related with the challenge of overall sustainability. A challenge for SQA is to understand this technological- and commercial-oriented way of reasoning from its own theoretical and policy perspective. Third, questions of the societal position of young people (especially on the labor market), migration waves, and an aging population (in many places on the world) rise on the global political agenda. They concern all four dimensions and thus all three fields.

The Role of Globalization and the Position of Megacities

Figure 1 concerns issues on the community, national, regional, and global levels. The concept of globalization as introduced in the Western Hemisphere at the end of the twentieth century refers to the global level. Its meaning has changed, given current economic and political relationships. First, according to James Galbraith (2018), the supposition was spread in the 1990s that a unified and open Western liberal world—under the lead of globally operating financial institutions—would bring democracy and prosperity to other continents. This neoliberal ideology was and is, according to Galbraith, an illusion. Its hollow foundations caused a great financial crisis—having debased democracy before finance and having shown disregard for postwar structures of international law. Second, the rise of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and other emerging economies (EURISPES 2018) means that "a bit of humility, of recognition [by the USA and the EU] that the delusion of 'globalization' as it was conceived twenty years ago by very foolish people, cannot be sustained, and a program of national and regional reconstruction focused on the most urgent resource, social and climate challenges—that might be the right way to start" (Galbraith 2018).

But who is or can be responsible for such a start? Often, no distinction is made between neoliberalism as an ideology and as a political economic reality. According to William Mitchell and Thomas Fazi (2017a; see also 2017b), this reality "has produced

Figure 1: The reciprocity between the three fields of the social quality approach, the analytical distinctions, and instruments.



increasingly powerful, interventionist and ever-reaching—even authoritarian—state apparatuses ... including: the liberalization of goods and capital markets, the privatization of resources ... the reduction of workers’ rights (first and foremost, the right to collective bargaining) and more in general the repression of labor activism; the lowering of taxes on wealth and capital.” Both argue, however, that globalization and internationalization of finance did not undermine the viability of the nation-state, including because of cultural and linguistic differences. They conclude that, contrary to common sense understanding, globalization and internationalization remain notably limited. This may be important for different reasons. National economic

politics or politics of integrated nationalities may be a condition for inevitable productive and consumptive restrictions for realizing sustainable living circumstances on our planet.

During its first decade or so, SQA work was mainly focused on the nature of policy areas as aspects of societal complexities—namely, the first field. It included attention to welfare provisions, aging, public health systems, income and employment, and the role of citizens as actors in their communities. Many outcomes were published in the previous *European Journal of Social Quality* (see, e.g., Van der Maesen and Walker 2014). Thanks to the collaboration with universities and research groups in East and Southeast Asia and Australia, this journal evolved into the *International Journal of Social Quality* in 2011. Out of that collaboration, the original restriction to these “first field” policy areas has been surpassed. Much of the newer SQA work addresses the nature of the urban contexts in which 66 percent of humankind will live 2050 (UN DESA 2014: 7). The ambition is to understand processes of the transformation of (mega)cities also in a global context. This is important because, as the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat 2009) has explained, “the world is undergoing an irreversible process of rapid urbanization. Failure to accommodate this mega trend has resulted in unsustainable forms of production and consumption, poverty and social exclusion, and pollution.”

One example is the city of Surat in India (with a 2018 population of more than six million), a pioneer member of the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network, located in New York. The megacity of Surat will be exposed to recurrent flooding, with the risk of malaria and dengue fever epidemics in its aftermath. It also faces higher temperatures and intense summer heat, which may force companies to relocate: “In the worst case the city council will prove unable to cope with urban sprawl and climate shocks, fueling conflict between communities, rising crime and the departure of industry” (Bouissou 2014). This Asian network seems more serious about the urban problematic than is the McKinsey-connected CLC Singapore (Chye et al. 2018). Recently, in *Sciences Advances*, the seriousness of the increase in frequency and severity of heat waves in India was underpinned. These waves killed more than 1,300 people in the city of Ahmedabad alone in 2010, and “future climate warming could have a relatively drastic human toll in India and similarly in developing tropical and subtropical countries [especially Africa]” (Mazdiyasi et al. 2017). This case presents a clear argument to relate the second field (urban context) with the third field (sustainability).

New Understandings of the Concept of Sustainability, Going beyond the “Economic, Social, and Environmental” Triangle

To contribute to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (aka Rio+ 20) in June 2012 on overall sustainability, a Dutch scientific group that was inspired by SQA presented in a working paper a preliminary definition of

sustainability as “a state of dynamic equilibrium between the entire interactive ensemble of non-living and living entities, functioning within the boundaries of a resilient system” (Van Renswoude et al. 2012: 37). These “entities” concern the always-changing outcomes of the reciprocity of processes in the three fields, and these changing outcomes will cause either sustainable or unsustainable societal relationships, respecting or transgressing the boundaries of a (physical) resilient system (Rockström et al. 2009). Therefore, SQA should be applied to all four dimensions, which play a dominant role in all three fields, so the 12 aspects of the three sets of factors of the SQA architecture were extended by adding environment-oriented aspects (Van Renswoude et al. 2012). This is further elaborated by Laurent van der Maesen (2013). The extension paves the way to understanding processes in the first and second fields from the perspective of the sustainability challenge as the third field.

In the classical discourse on sustainability, a distinction is made between the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability, for example, in the famous Brundtland Report published by the UN (1987). But until now, the “social dimension” has remained an amorphous “black box,” which is, for logical reasons, separated from the other dimensions (Van Renswoude et al. 2012). Seen from the SQA perspective, the worldwide failure to define its supposed “social dimension” is an outcome of failing to understand “the social.” The academic world may be stimulated to theorize this question because of the consequences of the de facto current dominance of utilitarian-oriented economic thinking (and interests) for the socioenvironmental dimension. Under existing circumstances (*ceteris paribus*), this will stimulate an increasing commodification and marketization of aspects of the ecosystem. This will cause also an underdevelopment in understanding the key role of sustainable urban development as a condition for overall sustainability. In the classic three-dimensional approach to sustainability, “the social” of the “social dimension” concerns everything that is not economic or environmental. The incessant use of this black box is not merely a minor blemish but rather a fundamental root problem that brings about a misunderstanding of well-being, of societal dynamics, and of what could be effective policy responses (Van Renswoude et al. 2012). Thus, during the past decade, work in the social quality theory has focused on elaborating concept of “the social,” encompassing the subject matters of all four dimensions, as well as all aspects of the SQA architecture. The executive summary to the *Living Planet Report 2016* implicitly endorses this way of reasoning: “The growth of the Ecological Footprint, the violation of Planetary Boundaries and increasing pressure on biodiversity are rooted in systemic failures inherent to the current systems of production, consumption, finance and governance. The behaviours that lead to these patterns are largely determined by the way consumerist societies are organized” (WWF 2016: 13). But what are the methodologies to analyze and understand these interdependencies that will go beyond the application of an amorphous black box?

Some Characteristics of the Role of Economics and the Socioeconomic Dimension

Ongoing global processes mean that the old patterns of integration within the framework of separated nation-states have become incomplete and therefore not sufficiently functional. Extra modern steering systems are needed between (inter) governmental configurations with nation-states on the one side and strong or vital communities within nation-states on the other (Cadman 2011, 2012). This means that by introducing the “global point of view” (discussed earlier) in SQA, new attention to the future meaning of vital communities within nation-states will be possible (in the first and second fields: societal life and the urban life world), which may be appreciated at the same time as a condition for overall sustainability (the third field). (This is also expressed in Figure 1.) This form of reasoning will open new horizons.

If these new forms of steering should be oriented to “social progress”—as in many pleas from the European Commission—we must know what progress of “the social” means. Such is also the case with the careless use of the concept of the “social model” (Phillips 2006). Uneasiness with the GDP measurement led the French president to invite Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and Jean-Paul Fitoussi (2009) to produce a report with ideas on how to measure “social progress.” But the authors restricted themselves to individual lifestyles (quality of life), and separated from reflections on current environmental questions. According to Peter Herrmann (2013), they implicitly deepened a separation of these topics, blocking a holistic perspective on societies. Furthermore, these authors, as well as Nicholas Stern or Anthony Giddens, appear committed to endlessly ongoing economic growth as potentially welfare giving and itself the essential condition for sustainability. As Des Gasper has noted: “Often, economic growth is presented as an essential part of modern identity: The source of hope, meaning and self-profiling, at the level of individuals, and especially of nations. It becomes the token of national strength, virility and vitality, ‘the symbol of life itself’” (2010: 16).

According to Herrmann (2016), the dominant utilitarian-oriented economic paradigm—as the genetic code of bourgeois-capitalistic enlightenment and expressed by the current neoliberal market propositions—caused a disjointed, disembedded economic space with the main objective (or dominant value) to maximize profit and to minimize losses, as a *l’art pour l’art* principle, neglecting societal and environmental desiderata. In recent decades, the “social liberal propositions” of the Western Hemisphere function as philosophically based damage mitigations. In the case of the concept of “social liberalism,” this adjective too lacks a theoretical foundation. This hedonistic-materialistic value is a result of this paradigm’s operationalization, based on specific interests and power. As Herrmann argues, we experienced the narrowing down of thinking from a broad understanding of political economy toward an understanding of economic processes of exchange according to subjective values as

reflected in particular marginalist theories, developed in the second half of the nineteenth century. These values functioned and function as a handmaiden to strengthen the positions of financial/economic elites.

The Position of Communities and the Purpose of This Journal

These capitalistic economic politics subordinate the production of “use values” to “exchange values” by producing commodities for sale. According to Herrmann (2017), this distinction is first explained by Karl Marx (1867), who concluded that the circulation of money as capital is an end in itself. This is antithetical to politics, stimulating overall sustainability. Capitalist politics’ main instrument—namely, the application of market principles—involves a definition of what production is about (the determination of value), the status of producers, and the character of labor (Herrmann 2017). Demands from the side of communities concerning the creation of acceptable daily circumstances that support overall sustainability are not addressed by these disembodied economic policies and politics. SQA aims to contribute to the exploration of pathways to support a development toward sustainability by communities. It also aims to offer procedural and instrumental methodologies to contribute to social quality in daily circumstances, which is at the same time positive for overall sustainability. And it is from this point of view that one must determine the functional “use values” that should be the core business of economic politics and policies in the near future.

SQA is not aimed at a unilinear societal development with already-formulated suppositions of its outcomes. It tries to develop adequate analytical instruments, and it respects differences in and between communities. But because of this respect for variation, it stresses the need for a framework to organize dialogue about the outcomes. The SQA framework is constituted by four universal values and herewith related norms: social justice (equity), solidarity, equal value, and human dignity. The operationalization of these norms shall differ between regions of the continents of our planet (Bureekul 2007; Chang 2009; Lin 2011). The challenge is to reach a consensus about the essential characteristics of these values and norms (not their specific operationalizations) in order to judge the outcomes of the application of proposed procedural and instrumental methodologies, as has been explained in earlier Asian studies.

This journal aims to provide a forum that helps to construct this required understanding. With regard to this issue, the articles will be introduced with the help of the ideas proposed above. Implicitly and sometimes explicitly, the authors discuss the constitutional factors of social quality, related to people’s feelings, longings, self-evaluation, and personal capacities. Thus far, empirical studies about aspects of social quality at a certain place and time have concerned especially the conditional factors with which to understand aspects of daily circumstances that are more objective. In

other words, in this issue, a new and equally fundamental range of factors comes into the limelight. And contrary to populist movements, feelings and longings are not disconnected from objective circumstances and reduced to gut feelings. Therefore, the constitutional factors must be confronted with the conditional factors. With the help of the normative factors, we can judge the outcomes of this confrontation. This main principle of social quality thinking is in contradiction with populism.

The Articles

In the first article of this issue, “Social Quality and Brexit in Stoke-on-Trent, England,” Ian Mahoney and Anthony Kearon empirically underpin the expectation that continual failures to tackle the lack of social quality as experienced in the daily lives of disadvantaged, excluded, and marginalized populations across the West will spur populist anti-EU manifestations across Europe. It will also stimulate new populist manifestations in the United Kingdom in the period leading up to and in the aftermath of Brexit. In effect, the authors empirically elaborate Alan Walker and Steve Corbett’s (2017) manifesto about Brexit and social quality. They analyze the state of affairs of communities in the city of Stoke-on-Trent in the United Kingdom, which had one of the highest percentages of the Leave votes resulting in Brexit. These voters were oriented to Euroscepticism, populism, and nationalism, as earlier discussed in this journal (Corbett 2016). But why? Critics argue that these voters who supported Brexit are too disengaged, lazy, and feckless or cannot be trusted to evaluate the evidence put to them and come up with the reasoned, rational conclusion to remain in the EU. Indeed, Stoke—like many other economically deprived, deindustrialized areas of the English Midlands—received significant support from the European Regional Development Fund, but these critics ignore the subjective realities faced by those living in those areas.

According to the political philosopher Jan-Werner Müller (2018), we should tackle the specific structural problems that have aided the triumph of populist politicians. They “exploit” the feelings of people living in deprived circumstances for their own power, and practice a degenerate form of democracy based on hate speech. They dislike pluralism as a main characteristic of democracy, but how are we to understand the structural problems and the connection between these problems and feelings of people? Mahoney and Kearon confront aspects of the SQA architecture with outcomes of processes in the first field (see Figure 1) in Stoke. They address both the conditional factors, for examining the objective recognizable structural problems, and the constitutional factors with which to explore subjective aspects—namely, feelings, attitudes, and so on. They use in-depth interviews to analyze the constitutional factors in communities of Stoke: personal security, social recognition, social responsiveness, and personal capacity. Relevant are residents’ feelings about the consequences of newcomers (immigration) in their communities. Their narratives demonstrate a sense

of disenfranchisement from and disillusionment with politics, strengthening their feeling of deprivation.

According to Mahoney and Kearon, the narratives about migration given by poor and vulnerable people in Stoke differ vastly from those provided by liberal think tanks, research institutes, and much of the political establishment, who all accept migration as being important for the socioeconomic life of the United Kingdom. There appears to be a reciprocity between particular conditional factors that result in very low social quality in deprived daily circumstances and their attitudes, and feelings that result in particular constitutional factors of social quality. The authors remark that, as has been recognized elsewhere, postindustrial communities have borne the brunt of migration, asylum seeking, and refugee placement in recent years with little state support for either the incomers or the existing population, which has resulted in further competition for work and fractures arising within communities. Politics and policies should assist deprived communities in such a way that enables them to develop new perspectives and to strengthen community power for enhancing their own daily circumstances. To stimulate this form of social empowerment will be the appropriate answer to their exploitation by populist parties. The accent on social empowerment as a crucial aspect for social quality begets no wonder (Bouget 2001).

In the second article, “Citizens and Citizenship: The Rhetoric of Dutch Immigrant Integration Policy in 2011,” Dana Rem and Des Gasper discuss the rhetoric of Dutch immigrant integration policy as presented in a 2011 governmental policy paper partly influenced by right-wing populist parties. Most Dutch political parties have distanced themselves—as did this policy statement—from multiculturalism, even though, for example, more than 150 languages are spoken in the capital city of Amsterdam. This contrast is not specific to Dutch society, so the discussion of this policy paper has a wider relevance. The question of current migration flows—partly due to war, corruption, crude forms of discrimination, inhuman forms of poverty, and climate change—is becoming increasingly urgent. It influences the nature of processes in all four dimensions and thus the nature of the configurations of all three fields. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi (2018) says:

As conflicts emerge, recur, persist and deepen, 68,5 million people are uprooted around the world. Nine out of 10 are in their own countries or countries next door, and the impact is massive—on refugees themselves, and on the communities that open their doors to them ... Getting laws and policies right is vital, But it's local people and communities that are on the frontline when refugees arrive, and whose welcome makes the difference—the difference between rejection and inclusion; between despair and hope; between being left behind and building a future.

And there are today, according the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA 2017):

an estimated 258 million people living in a country other than their country of birth—an increase of 49% since 2000. ... On 19 September 2016, the General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, in which UN Member States agreed to implement well-managed migration policies. They also committed to sharing more equitably the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees, protecting the human rights of all migrants, and countering xenophobia and intolerance directed towards migrants.

All this is in stark contrast with recent happenings in the United States and the EU. In May 2018, about two thousand young children were cruelly separated from their parents who wanted to reach the US from Mexico. The drama on the southern European borders with migrants from Africa, Syria, Afghanistan, and so on is even greater.

With this in mind, this article analyzes how policy makers in EU member states—in this case, the Netherlands—respond. In the sense used by the American sociologist Robert Merton, the Netherlands presents a “strategic case,” for it is marked by an early and striking switch to “radically harsh policies and public debates vis-à-vis migrants” (Van Houdt 2014: 163). Rem and Gasper apply tools from discourse analysis to explore the nature of this switch. In particular, they analyze “rhetoric,” meaning practices of attempted persuasion of a public and the practice of civic communication. The questions investigate who the subjects of the immigration policy are, how they are described, and what structures of argumentation are constructed around these categories—leading to the further question of whether and how the concept of citizenship that is used contributes to migrants’ marginalization and exclusion. This analysis should be appreciated in light of the fierce debates in the EU in 2018 about the reception of refugees, even while the number of refugees has decreased considerably. The authors conclude that the subjective fears are given authority in other ways, too, from the start of the policy document, including by repetition and impersonal articulation. The document states that many Dutch people experience the ethnic and cultural diversity that now characterizes the Netherlands not as enrichment but as a threat.

In that context, the spirit of the UN declaration mentioned earlier does not play a role. The article suggests the importance of research on how migrants themselves relate to the policy and its overly simple concepts in order to see how far it is productive or counterproductive. This was recently stimulated, in July 2018, by the “neoliberal” Dutch minister of foreign affairs, who explained that a multicultural society is in essence not possible. It is a repetition of the 2011 policy document. This has provoked a strong protest by writers and academics, who demand to stop the derogatory statements about people with a migrant background. This destroys society and—concerning SQA—is directly opposed the pursuit of social quality (Greer et al. 2018).

The third article, “Social Quality in China: An Analysis of the Evaluation of Different Classes,” by Cui Yan and Huang Yongliang, is an outcome of an extensive

study about the state of social quality in China and based on data derived from the 2017 Chinese Social Survey by the CASS Institute of Sociology in which more than ten thousand urban and rural residents were interviewed. Chinese society has undergone dramatic changes in recent decades, so the authors ask what, under these circumstances, the new demands of the population are, as well as acceptable expectations and ideas about good governance. In the survey, interviewees were asked, “Which social class do you think you belong to?” Based on their answers, the authors made the distinction between upper, upper-middle, middle, lower-middle, and lower classes. They call this the different “social class groups” and suppose that this distinction has an affinity with the distinction into different income cohorts: upper, upper middle, middle, lower middle, and lower. The supposition is that representatives of these “social class groups” might apply different standards for evaluating the nature of the development of their daily circumstances. This question demands further theoretical exploration and dialogue about similarities and differences between classes (as interpreted by Marx, referring to positions in the existing production systems), status groups (as interpreted by Weber), castes (also interpreted by Weber), parties (as pluralities organized purely for the acquisition of power), and cohorts (as technically determined by income or age criteria) (Martindale 1960: 392).

In order to understand the similarities and differences between representatives of different groups (income cohorts?), the authors apply the four conditional factors of social quality: socioeconomic security, social cohesion, social inclusion, and social empowerment. They thus apply one of the sets of social quality factors to analyze changes and consequences in different policy areas of societal complexities (the first field in Figure 1). To explain this choice, the article presents a brief history of social quality thinking in Europe, Southeast Asia, and Australia and refers to the manifold of social quality projects in China. This overview will stimulate a global debate about the outcomes of these Chinese projects, and translations of related studies into English.

The study is focused on cognitive differences of the impact of the changes in China and the consequences for social quality. It considers the subject matter of the constitutional factors that also play a strong role in the first and second articles of this issue. As in earlier social quality studies in Europe, Russia, East and Southeast Asia, and Australia, the attention to the constitutional factors remains relatively underdeveloped. Therefore, the consequences and meaning of changes in the conditional factors—to be explained with the help of the confrontation with the constitutional factors—remain unclear. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates how important “feelings” of people are in coping with their daily circumstances. These feelings will also change as the Chinese population’s international frame of reference is extended as well. For example, while about half a million Chinese tourists visited the United States in 2009, nearly three million did in 2016 (Ives 2018). The greatest explosion of air traffic in the coming two decades will happen in East and Southeast Asia (IATA 2017).

The article offers conclusions about the differences between the “social class groups” with regard to demands about how to improve the quality of daily circumstances. For example, representatives of the upper-middle group essentially improved their economic strength. They are thus now more concerned about a qualitative leap in regard to the cultural level and morality and strengthening their influence in the society as such. In the lower class, feelings of deprivation about the highly unequal income distribution in China—in which inequality is measured with the application of indicators of one of the conditional factors—are strong. From applying indicators of two other conditional factors, their feelings of discrimination (exclusion) and powerlessness (non-empowerment) are quite understandably manifest. The authors conclude that it is essential for the Chinese government to deepen the reform of the household registration system, reduce urban social exclusion, and eliminate discrimination, thus contributing to a stronger societal balance. This is also important because about 310 million people in China are expected to migrate from West to East and from rural conditions to urban conditions in the forthcoming decades (UNDP China 2013: 100).

In the fourth article, “Singing with Dignity: Adding Social Quality to Organization Studies on Aging,” Prabhir Vishnu Poruthiyil addresses the lack of a multifaceted framework in aging studies. A framework such as the one elaborated in the SQA is a condition for policy makers to better secure the dignity of precarious individuals. The article is based on an ethnography of older adults who took singing lessons in a cultural institution called the Koorenhuis in the city of The Hague in the Netherlands. This institute faced imminent closure because of austerity measures based on the rhetoric of stimulating citizens’ self-reliance through less support from the municipality, the argument being that the state recedes from the provision of basic services to citizens and allows, under minimum regulations, market forces to fill the resulting void, a supposed condition for participation. With regard to The Hague, Harry Nijhuis (2017) has discussed this theme and explains the contradiction to stimulate the role of communities in the renewal of public health with a political decided decrease of facilities for communities to realize this.

The article connects SQA to contributions from organization theory, which can shed light on organizing principles relevant to the well-being of older persons. The large army of unconnected groups of highly specialized schools in management and organization studies is not really oriented to question what the consequences are of more encompassing societal changes for older people. Their feelings, fears, and uncertainties are neglected. With regard to Figure 1, this article concerns use of SQA for the policy area of aging in the first field of societal complexities, intending to go beyond the fragmentation in aging research. The author is explicitly oriented to the substance of the constitutional factors of SQA architecture.

This study by an Indian scholar about a Dutch case examines the narratives of the participants and coworkers—mostly older people—of the Koorenhuis. In additions to interviews, Poruthiyil, as a participant observer over seven years, also observed

many group activities. He notes how the participants felt the uncertainty associated with the closure of the Koorenhuis, “since this would seriously impact an important source of peace, relaxation, friendship, and social inclusion.” He proposes an approach, in societal analysis and policy, that includes real concern over frailties of age, and the importance of granting acceptance and understanding. The article elaborates how the singing lessons took into account the need of precarious individuals to be assured of their usefulness to the group, and explains the possibilities for expanding their skills, providing a guarantee of appreciation and reduced risks of anxiety from failure. The author notes the narrowness of management principles that favor only the capability for dynamic enterprise by individuals, resulting in dominant management discourses that disregard the creeping frailties of age. These principles of course relate to the normative factor of human dignity, including accepting the change of physical and mental opportunities. According to Poruthiyil, the structure of SQA gives attention to elements and processes at human, systemic, and normative levels, and allows the productive cohabitation of the different focuses of organization theorists of all interests and dispositions, offering a niche to each.

In the fifth and final article, “The Role of Small-Scale Farming in Familial Care: Reducing Work Risks Stemming from the Market Economy in Northeast Thailand,” Shinsuke Tomita, Mario Ivan Lopez, and Yasuyuki Kono focus on socioeconomic transformations in the rural areas of Thailand compared with the urban areas of Bangkok in southern Thailand. They connect these with consequences in the sociocultural/welfare dimension, especially the vulnerable position of caregiving. The vulnerability reflects that, in the current stage, the state is not very supportive in meeting new demands as outcomes of these transformations. This is discussed further in light of the consequences of the large amount of out-migration in Thailand from the northeast to the south. So, the study refers to two dimensions of the first field of Figure 1. All migrants, from their late teens to their forties, are more likely to reside in Bangkok, but childbearing and child-rearing are, to a certain extent, risks to their work and employability. Many migrant women are postponing childbearing because of the difficulty in combining motherhood and paid employment. Therefore, many infants who were born in Bangkok are likely to be sent away to the northern and northeastern regions. While caregiving has traditionally been a responsibility of the household, the outcomes of this migration have weakened in the urban areas the ability to care for children (in the absence of support by the elderly, living in the north) and for the elderly (living in the north and far away from their children, living in the south). According to the authors, caregiving for aging parents also shortens work opportunities in the market, in turn decreasing potential income and a person’s value in the labor market. Caring for others may harm the accumulation of capital that would secure improved health and a higher standard of living especially in the later stages of life. Without a change in the low support from the state for caring and rearing under these circumstances, migrants especially are confronted with serious contradictions.

The issues raised by this exploration of the consequences of socioeconomic transformation are widely relevant, for example, in China. The authors examine, from the viewpoint of risk management, the state of provision of care and work in households in northeast Thailand. They argue that farming plays a vital part in the current and future welfare of children, the younger generation, and older people. Household farming provides preferable conditions for combining work and caregiving. They consider that the subsistence part of the household economy provides preferable conditions for balancing work and care in farming households, and that a subsistence-oriented economy can still play a vital role for welfare in the household, even though it is not important as a source of cash income. They argue that modern forms of household farming prevent the elderly from being confined strictly to a prescribed care receiver role and relegated to the role of a reduced family member in the later years of their lives. They allow them to work longer, which in turn provides autonomy and allows the filial families to reduce the burden of care giving to parents. Young couples on farms can share work and child-rearing in the workplace because of flexible working conditions, and having kin on farms has advantages for women in the labor force, as it reduces risks associated with child-rearing. The household that incorporates farming as one facet of a range of livelihood sources will face fewer risks when caregiving for children and the elderly. The continuing agricultural investment in—in this case—northeast Thailand might be not so much for income improvement, but as one of a series of socioeconomic strategies to provide the basis for livelihood and caregiving for both people in the labor market and on farms.

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