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To GDP or not to GDP? Identifying the factors promoting and inhibiting the use and impact of well-being metrics in Scotland and Italy

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I wandered out in the world for years
While you just stayed in your room
I saw the crescent
You saw the whole of the moon

The Waterboys – The Whole of the Moon

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I had the initial idea for this thesis after completing my master's degree. But an idea remains an idea unless it can be realised, hence I am grateful first of all to my supervisors, Elke Heins and Neil Thin, for believing in me and in this project, as well as for the feedback they have provided me with over the years. If I look back at my original proposal, I am impressed by how much progress I have made and how much I have grown as a scholar. I would also like to express my gratitude to Jan Eichhorn for helping me navigate the first years of tutoring; to Jay Wiggan for providing feedback on my theoretical framework; and, as this journey comes to an end, to my examiners for accepting to take the time to read and assess the present work which I fully devoted my last five years to.

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A mamma e papà.
Edinburgh, 22/02/2022

Abstract

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is frequently used as a proxy for well-being. Such use of GDP is problematic for many reasons, for GDP excludes activities that contribute to well-being and includes others that have a negative impact instead. A vast array of metrics has therefore been developed that aim to complement or replace it and put well-being at the heart of policymaking. Nonetheless, previous research has shown that their use and impact has been limited to date.

This thesis examines the use and impact of well-being metrics and the factors affecting them in the crucial cases of Scotland and Italy. Despite being at the forefront of the well-being debate, both countries have never been studied before in the context in question. This thesis fills this gap, collating views from 120 stakeholders on different facets of the well-being debate gathered through interviews that were conducted between 2018 and 2020. Of uttermost importance was the study of informants' awareness of problems and solutions and the extent to which these were regarded as such, problem and solution awareness and recognition being the founding pillars of a theory of policy change that I developed drawing on Kingdon's Multiple Stream Approach. Furthermore, this thesis provides an extended analysis of the use of well-being metrics in parliamentary debates and media reporting in both countries before and during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the first of its kind to be undertaken. The research was conducted using the archives made available by TheyWorkForYou and the Italian Parliament as far as the study of parliamentary debates is concerned, and Factiva and TVEyes as far as newspaper and radio and TV coverage are concerned, employing advanced search strings and a robust methodology aimed to reduce the number of duplicates and potentially irrelevant hits returned.

Findings reveal low awareness of well-being metrics and of GDP's limitations, especially among policymakers and journalists; a prevailing view of economic growth as a prerequisite for well-being which translates into the preference for GDP to be integrated with other metrics rather than replaced altogether and which results in economic crises generating punctuations that strengthen the status quo and hinder attempts to bring about change; and an almost unanimous scepticism of subjective indicators. Most importantly, findings reveal very limited use and impact of well-being metrics, particularly of official national frameworks, in line with what the theory of policy change that I developed would predict.

Ten recommendations are made to increase the use and impact of well-being metrics in both countries, among which is the need to put more effort into promoting the well-being agenda when the economy is expanding as opposed to periods in which economic growth is lacking and to divert resources to awareness campaigns that enhance the use and impact of already existing metrics rather than to the development of new metrics altogether.

Lay Summary

This thesis puts centre stage the concept of well-being. But what do we mean by well-being? There is no objective formula to determine what constitutes it, let alone to determine how this should be measured. For some, lists of things that matter in life should be compiled by experts and well-being measured accordingly irrespective of people's perceptions. For others, the measurement of well-being requires the participation of those whose well-being is being measured for. The former approach tends to favour the use of objective indicators, whereas the second one that of subjective ones, although the need to use both is often acknowledged.

While different indicators therefore exist that could be used to measure well-being, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the measure of a country's output, is frequently said to have become the predominant one. Such use of GDP as a measure of well-being is problematic for many reasons. First, GDP excludes activities that contribute to well-being such as voluntary work, volunteering and any type of unpaid work such as unpaid care work or housekeeping. Second, it includes activities that conversely have a negative impact on well-being. Indeed, GDP measures both "goods" and "bads": it counts the production of life-saving medicines as well as that of bullets, the services provided by obstetricians as well as those provided by funeral directors. Third, sometimes goods or services are included that are prohibited in the countries in which they are sold or provided and whose contribution to well-being is debatable (e.g. the production and trafficking of drugs). Fourth, GDP does not take into account the depletion of natural resources and it tells us nothing about income inequality.

The use of GDP as a measure of well-being therefore mistakenly assumes that what is good for the economy will also be good for society and vice versa. This has sparked a debate worldwide about the importance of measuring well-being adequately in a more holistic way, which has led to the development of a vast array of well-being metrics over the last decades. Their development has been driven by the intention to provide better measurements of well-being but, most importantly, by a desire to put well-being at the heart of policymaking. However, previous research has shown that the use and impact of these metrics has been limited to date.

At the forefront of the well-being debate are Scotland and Italy, both often regarded as model examples or best practices. Despite that, however, neither Scotland nor Italy has ever been studied before, specifically with regard to the use and impact of well-being metrics and the factors affecting them. This thesis fills this gap, collating views from 120 stakeholders on different aspects of the well-being debate gathered through interviews that were conducted between 2018 and 2020. A key aim of interviews was to study the perceived use and impact of well-being metrics according to their developers and intended users but, most importantly, informants' awareness of GDP's limitations and of well-being metrics and the extent to which the former were perceived as problematic and the latter as viable, problem and solution

awareness and recognition being the founding pillars of a theory of policy change that I developed drawing on Kingdon's Multiple Stream Approach.

Furthermore, this thesis provides an extended analysis of the use of well-being metrics in parliamentary debates and media reporting in both countries before and during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the first of its kind to be undertaken and to be so in countries that were hit by an economic crisis at the same time whilst the research was being conducted. The study of parliamentary debates is crucial as it can reveal whether parliamentarians use well-being metrics in supporting or criticising a certain legislation or resolution and show indirectly the content or motivations of these and more generally what is or what is not on the political agenda. The study of media coverage is just as important, since journalists often report what policymakers say, meaning the level of coverage received by well-being metrics can tell us whether and how frequently not only journalists but policymakers, too, have been referring to well-being metrics publicly, which in turn reveals what is or what is not on the political agenda and what metrics are debated when decisions are being taken.

Findings reveal low awareness of well-being metrics and of GDP's limitations, especially among policymakers and journalists; a prevailing view of economic growth as a prerequisite for well-being which translates into the preference for GDP to be integrated with other metrics rather than replaced altogether and which results in economic crises strengthening the status quo and hindering attempts to bring about change; and an almost unanimous scepticism of subjective indicators. Most importantly, findings reveal very limited use and impact of well-being metrics, particularly of official national frameworks, in line with what the theory of policy change that I developed would predict. As far as the parliamentary referencing and media reporting of well-being metrics is concerned, findings show that these did not increase (and, in fact, decreased) during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, whereas the media coverage of GDP and related queries increased (which reflects also an increase in their use made by policymakers when talking to journalists) showing that the main concern, especially during the first year of the pandemic, was the impact that this was going to have in terms of output rather than in terms of well-being.

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List of Abbreviations

ABR	Avvenire's BenVivere Ranking
AIQUAV	Italian Association for Quality-of-Life Studies
ASviS	Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development
Bank of Scotland QoLS	Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCI	Basic Capabilities Index
BES	Equitable and Sustainable Well-being
BLI	Better Life Index
BRAINPOoL	Bringing Alternative Indicators Into Policymaking
CDAS	Community Development Alliance Scotland
CEA	Community Empowerment Act
CIBES	Committee for Equitable and Sustainable Well-being Indicators
CIW	Canadian Index of Wellbeing
CONCORD	Confederation of European NGOs for Relief and Development
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPTF	Community Planning Task Force
DEF	Economic Planning Document
e-Frame	European Framework for Measuring Progress
EU	European Union
EURSPI	European Union Regional Social Progress Index
GCI	Good Country Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGCI	Good Growth for Cities Index
GIP	Glasgow Indicators Project
GLADS	Good Lives and Decent Societies
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GNP	Gross National Product
GPI	Genuine Progress Indicator
HDI	Human Development Index
HKI	Humankind Index
HPI	Happy Planet Index
ICF	Informed Consent Form
IN-STREAM	Integrating Mainstream Economic Indicators with Sustainable Development Objectives
ISEW	Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare
ISTAT	Italian National Institute of Statistics
ItaliaOggi QoLR	ItaliaOggi Quality of Life Ranking
IWI	Inclusive Wealth Index
LPI	Legatum Prosperity Index
MAKSWELL	Making Sustainable Development and Well-Being Frameworks Work For Policy Analysis
MEF	Ministry of Economic and Finance

Monocle QoLS	Monocle Quality of Life Survey
MP	Member of Parliament
MSA	Multiple Streams Approach
MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
M5S	Five Star Movement
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NPF	National Performance Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PASTILLE	Promoting Action for Sustainability Through Indicators at The Local Level in Europe
PD	Democratic Party
PIQ	Quality Domestic Product
PIS	Participant Information Sheet
POINT	Policy Influence of Indicators
QUARS	Index of Regional Quality of Development
REI	Inclusion Income
RMHI	Royal Mail Happiness Index
SCVO	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Left Ecology Freedom
SFF	Scotland's Future Forum
SGAD	State General Accounting Directorate
SNIB	Scottish National Investment Bank
SNP	Scottish National Party
Sole 24 ORE QoLR	Sole 24 ORE Quality of Life Ranking
SPI	Social Progress Index
SPHO	Scottish Public Health Observatory
SUII	Scottish Universities Insight Institute
TED	Technology Entertainment Design
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States
uSwitch QoLI	uSwitch Quality of Life Index
VEI	Vibrant Economy Index
WEAll	Wellbeing Economy Alliance
Web-COSI	Web Communities for Statistics for Social Innovation
WEGo	Wellbeing Economy Governments
WHR	World Happiness Report
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
WWF LPI	Living Planet Index

1. Introduction

Ever since I first heard Robert F. Kennedy's (1968) speech on Gross National Product (GNP) in high school, I have always wondered why similar indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are still so central in policymaking and public debate. Perhaps most importantly, why have well-being metrics found it hard to gain a similar level of traction, even though they measure things we all probably care more about?

This thesis provides an answer to that question, putting centre stage the concept of well-being. But what do we mean by well-being? There is no objective formula to determine what constitutes it – as Diener *et al.* (2009, p. 9) noted, '[a]ll definitions of well-being imply an evaluation' –, let alone to determine how this should be measured. For some, lists of things that matter in life should be made *a priori* and well-being measured accordingly irrespective of people's perceptions (e.g. Nussbaum, 2012). For others, the measurement of well-being requires the participation of those whose well-being is being measured for and an evaluation of their emotions (e.g. Kahneman, 1999), aspirations (e.g. Veenhoven, 2017) or sense of fulfilment (e.g. Vittersø, 2016). The former approach tends to favour the use of objective indicators, whereas the second one that of subjective ones, although the need to use both is often acknowledged (e.g. Veenhoven, 2002; Maggino, 2015).

While different indicators therefore exist that could be used to measure well-being, GDP is frequently said to have become the predominant one. In the 1960s already, Palmer (1966, p. 1) noted that it was being used as the 'chief criterion' of well-being and according to Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009, p. 7) it is now used to measure 'everything – performance, well-being, quality of life'. This is due mainly to the relationship that is thought to exist between economic growth (as measured by GDP) and well-being which, despite its limitations (e.g. Hamilton, 2004; Mishan, 1969, 1977) and the limitations of GDP (e.g. Colman, 2021; Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009), has not only contributed to the use of GDP a measure of well-being but has also 'pushed national policy narrowly towards economic growth' (Lind, 1993, p. 267), making of economic growth 'a priority above all else' (Spash, 2021, p. 1088).

Such use of GDP is however problematic. Many activities that contribute to well-being such as volunteering are excluded from it since they are not monetary in nature (e.g. Colman, 2021), whereas others such as police protection are included whose contribution is debatable as they index 'problems that interfere with well-being' (Diener and Seligman, 2004, p. 23). GDP also overlooks so-called externalities and the impact of economic growth on the environment (e.g. Büchs and Koch, 2017), and it tells us nothing about income inequality (e.g. Laurent, 2018; Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009). As economic growth remains the pivotal goal of governments globally, it is therefore unsurprising to see that climate change and income inequalities are two of the world's most pressing challenges.

This has sparked a debate worldwide about the importance of measuring well-being adequately in a more holistic way (e.g. Costanza *et al.*, 2009, 2013, 2014; Fioramonti, 2013, 2014; Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009), which has led to the development of a vast array of well-being metrics (see Bandura 2008; Yang, 2014). Some of these attempt to "fix" GDP by, for instance, deducting the impact of economic growth on the environment, whereas others are meant to either integrate or replace it altogether. Most importantly, these metrics aim to put well-being at the heart of

policymaking and change the way policies are planned and assessed as well as the policies themselves in the first place. Indeed, it is by being 'translated into the policy-making process' that well-being metrics can 'only really matter' (Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012, p. 1).

Yet, previous research has shown that their use and impact has been limited to date (e.g. Hák *et al.*, 2012; Hayden, 2021). A wide range of barriers have been identified, among which are the lack of awareness of well-being metrics and of GDP's limitations (e.g. Hezri, 2005; Thiry *et al*., 2013), a prevailing view of economic growth as a prerequisite for well-being (e.g. Seaford, 2013), scepticism of subjective indicators (e.g. Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b), and the lack of media support (e.g. Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012).

At the forefront of the well-being debate are the crucial cases (Eckstein, 2011) of Scotland and Italy, both often regarded as model examples or best practices (e.g. Boarini and Smith, 2014; Durand, 2018; Exton and Shinwell, 2018; Noll, 2014). Scotland, a success story according to Stiglitz (OECD, 2012), showed interest in the well-being agenda before many other countries, with its official well-being framework, the National Performance Framework (NPF), launched as early as 2007. This has since been refreshed several times, the last one in 2018 when the Scottish Government also co-established, together with the Governments of Iceland and New Zealand, the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) network, a knowledge-sharing platform which helps its members build a well-being economy.

Italy has a much longer and established history of well-being measurement, and several metrics were launched in the 1990s already. It was however in the late 2000s, with the appointment as President of the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) of former Chief Statistician of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Enrico Giovannini, that works began for the development of an official well-being framework. A public consultation was undertaken (Giovannini and Rondinella, 2012) and in 2013 ISTAT published the first Equitable and Sustainable

Well-being (BES, according to the Italian acronym) Report. In 2016, well-being indicators were embedded into national legislation, and Italy now 'has clearly a lead' in terms of integrating well-being in 'institutional policy frameworks' (Umbach in Calza, D'ambrogio and Zangla, 2020, p. 12).

Despite being at the forefront of the well-being debate, neither Scotland nor Italy has however been studied before, specifically with regard to the use and impact of well-being metrics and the factors affecting them. This thesis therefore answers one main research question:

- What factors promote or inhibit the use and impact of well-being metrics in Scotland and Italy?

Some of the factors highlighted by previous research were not studied systematically or not at all in the Scottish and Italian contexts. Therefore, this thesis also answers several related sub-questions, such as whether subjective indicators are perceived as helpful and reliable, what the sources of recent interest in well-being in both countries are and whether their official national frameworks have had any impact on policymaking to date.

Additionally, this thesis provides an extended analysis of the use of well-being metrics in parliamentary debates and media reporting in both countries before and during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the first of its kind to be undertaken. Despite lack of political support being among the barriers highlighted by previous research (e.g. Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al.*, 2013), no study has indeed ever been conducted to examine whether well-being metrics are an integral part of parliamentary debates (and by extension the policy process). Similarly, despite the key role that the media have been said to play for the success of the well-being agenda (e.g. Hák *et al.*, 2012), an analysis of media coverage of well-being metrics in both countries is currently lacking.

This thesis is structured as follows. In Chapter 2, I first introduce the reader to the differences between objective and subjective accounts of well-being. I then review scholars' claims about the primacy detained by GDP as a measure of well-being and provide an overview of its main limitations, especially in light of such use (or misuse). After tracing the key moments of the development of the well-being agenda and reviewing the main metrics and approaches that have been launched and proposed to date, I conclude with a digest of the evidence available on the use and impact of well-being metrics.

In Chapter 3, I first explain why investigating the factors that promote or inhibit the use and impact of well-being metrics means investigating the factors that promote or inhibit policy change and provide an overview of policy change theory. I then discuss Kingdon's (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) as this has been used frequently in political science (Cairney and Dones, 2015), especially among well-being scholars (e.g. Bache and Reardon, 2013, 2016). After discussing several limitations of the MSA, I explain how this helped develop my theoretical framework – a three-step theory of policy change centred on problems, solutions and contextual factors – in combination with change theories advanced in the fields of organisational behaviour, psychotherapy and decision analysis.

In Chapter 4, I summarise the key strengths and weaknesses of case study research and discuss the importance of selecting crucial cases (Eckstein, 2011). I then provide a detailed chronological summary of the key initiatives and metrics that have been launched in two such cases, Scotland and Italy.

In Chapter 5, I present my main research question and a series of related sub-questions divided by theme as per the above theoretical framework, explaining the rationale behind each of them.

In Chapter 6, I explain the methodology that I employed to answer my research questions. First, I discuss the importance of interviews and explain how participants were identified and how interviews were recorded, transcribed, translated and

analysed. Second, I show how I collected data using surveys, media monitoring tools and parliamentary archives, explaining among other things what metrics I surveyed and what search strings I used and why. Third and last, I discuss some of the challenges I faced throughout the PhD and show the thesis's timeline.

In Chapters 7-14, I present findings divided by country (starting every time with Scotland) and by theme as per the above theoretical framework.

In Chapter 15, I discuss findings and show how they align or contrast with current evidence and claims made in the literature, as well as with my theoretical framework.

Finally, in Chapter 16 I answer my research questions and present the original contributions of this thesis, also providing a list of ten recommendations. After discussing and addressing several limitations of the present study, I suggest ideas for future research and offer some concluding remarks.

2. Well-being: Metrics, Motives and Impact

2.1. A Clarification on the Terminology Employed

Among scholars who previously investigated the use and impact of well-being metrics, some looked at sustainability indicators (e.g. Morse, 2015), others at prosperity indicators (e.g. Hayden and Wilson, 2016) and still others at beyond GDP indicators (e.g. Hák *et al.*, 2012). However, not only were these indicators often the same, but sometimes they were also categorised wrongly: Morse (2011a, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018) and Sébastien and Bauler (2013), for instance, included the Human Development Index (HDI) among measures of sustainable development, despite this not including any environmental indicators (see 2.8). Furthermore, as suggested by previous research and as this thesis demonstrates, it is inappropriate to use the term "beyond GDP" for people may disagree with abandoning GDP as the idea of moving "beyond" it implicitly conveys. For the sake of simplicity, except when discussing specific types of metrics such as dashboards or studies which made explicit reference to e.g. sustainable development, throughout this thesis I have used the expression well-being metric instead, similarly to what the OECD did in a 2019 workshop titled Putting Well-Being Metrics Into Policy Action. Well-being is indeed a more generic

term that includes both elements of sustainable and human development that is being used increasingly in the literature and in policy and public discourse, whereas the word metric can include everything from indicators to composite indices and dashboards.

2.2. Objective-List Accounts of Well-being

Imagine that you were asked to judge the quality of a chocolate bar. You could look at its list of ingredients and conclude that, despite its taste, given the high levels of sugars and saturated fats – and, conversely, the lack of vitamins and minerals –, the bar in question is not very good as it is not giving people what their bodies need and in fact might be damaging their health. Similarly, some scholars interpret well-being as lists of things, mainly needs, which are deemed valuable irrespective of people's perceptions.

Many such lists have been proposed (Alkire, 2002). Examples include Doyal and Gough's (1991) list of basic and intermediate needs or Griffin's (1986) list of prudential values. Yet, what possibly is 'the best-known needs-based account of wellbeing' (Forgeard *et al*., 2011, p. 88) is Sen's so-called capability approach. This evaluates 'a person's advantage […] in terms of his or her actual […] capability to achieve valuable functionings' (Sen, 1993, p. 271). Central to Sen's approach are indeed functionings (what somebody enjoys being or doing) and capabilities, which denote 'the collection of functionings a person can achieve' (Alkire, Qizilbash and Comin, 2008, p. 3). Contrarily to other scholars, Sen (2004, p. 78) argued to be 'against […] the fixing of a cemented list of capabilities' for this would leave no space for democratic deliberation, and so did Crocker (2008). A list was nevertheless elaborated by Nussbaum (1995; see also 2012) and the HDI, whose development Sen contributed to (see 2.8), is itself another example[1].

[1] As Sen (2004, p. 79) himself argued, the HDI 'was based on a very minimal listing of capabilities'.

Objective-list accounts of well-being have been criticised for being 'potentially paternalistic' (Dolan and White, 2007, p. 79). Nussbaum (2012; see also 2001) responded saying that her list is not forcing people to use her capabilities but calling for policymakers to ensure that everybody *can* enjoy them. However, the question remains as for who should be compiling such lists, especially if freedom over life choices is to be included in them. After all, as Streeten (1984, p. 974) noted regarding the selection of basic needs, 'the freedom to define one's needs is itself a basic need'. A further issue concerns the use of objective indicators. Objective-list theorists often indeed favour the use of objective over subjective indicators. Sen, for instance, has repeatedly argued that subjective indicators such as happiness ones can be 'restrictive' (2009, p. 282) and 'deeply problematic' (2016, p. 22) because people adapt their judgments to their living conditions and might therefore not see what may otherwise appear as poverty or deprivation. Yet, scholars like Veenhoven (2002, p. 42) have argued that objective indicators are not sufficient and must be integrated with subjective ones to inform policy design and enable policy assessment for the former 'tell only half of the story'[2].

2.3. Subjective Accounts of Well-being

Other scholars look at well-being from a different angle and stress instead the importance of people's feelings and perceptions. Going back to the chocolate bar example, another way to for you to judge its quality could be to eat it and report how much *pleasure* it brings to you, say 7 on a scale from 0 to 10. Yet, you were expecting it to taste better given the brand's popularity, so your actual *satisfaction* with it is just 5. Looking at its packaging, you also realise that the bar you just ate is a Fairtrade-certified one. You might now enjoy it more regardless of its taste because you believe

[2] Which is exactly what others have argued regarding subjective indicators. Maggino (2015, p. 820), for instance, noted: 'the important role [of subjective indicators] is also a limited role since it provides […] only one perspective of the reality'.

in fairness and eating that bar makes you feel *virtuous* and *accomplished*. "Life is like a box of chocolates" Tom Hanks says in *Forrest Gump*, and just like people may use their emotions, expectations (or aspirations) and values to judge the quality of a chocolate bar, they may also be asked to refer to these to measure their affect, life satisfaction or *eudaimonia*.

To measure affect means to ask people to report their feelings, usually at a specific moment in time (OECD, 2013). Someone's well- or ill-being is then determined by the balance of their affective emotions (Kahneman, 1999). This is why when referring to affect scholars talk about hedonic well-being (e.g. Guerini and Nuvolati, 2016), since this effectively involves a maximisation of positive feelings and a minimisation of negative ones, not too differently from Bentham's (1789) principle of utility. Affect is measured especially using the Experience Sampling Method or the Day Reconstruction Method. While the former asks participants to self-report their feelings repeatedly during the day or over a certain period (OECD, 2013), the latter requires them to answer questions about the activities they were involved in the previous day and the feelings they experienced (Kahneman *et al.*, 2004; for a concise review of the limitations of both methods see Forgeard *et al*., 2011).

While for Layard (2011, 2020) one positive affect, happiness, is *the* metric of people's well-being and what policymakers should strive to promote, for others like Sen (2009, p. 276; see also 2016) happiness 'can hardly be the only thing that we have reason to value'. A crucial issue concerns the definition of "positive" and "negative" and the fact these could differ from what is "good" or "bad". As Nussbaum (2012, p. 347) noted, positive emotions may not necessarily be desirable from a societal perspective since 'bad people' such as racists 'have pleasure in their bad behavior'. Moreover, some have criticised the assumption that, to live well, positive feelings should be maximised and negative ones minimised. Thin (2012, p. 38, emphasis in original), among others, pointed out that we '*must* feel sad, angry and worried some of the time' and we may 'actually *want* to' to know what feeling happy means. Finally,

we must remember that some people may not be able to understand and express their feelings contrarily to what affect approaches assume, a condition that goes by the name of alexithymia (see Timoney and Holder, 2013).

To measure life satisfaction means instead to ask people to report how satisfied they are with their life as a whole (OECD, 2013) and it therefore 'involves a cognitive evaluation' (Deci and Ryan, 2008, p. 2). Life satisfaction is usually measured by asking single questions (Veenhoven, 2017), an example of which is Kahneman and Krueger's (2006, p. 7, emphasis in original) '[t]aking all things together, how satisfied are you with *your life as a whole* these days?'. Respondents are usually asked to rate their satisfaction on a 11-point scale that goes from 0 to 10 (10 being the maximum score), often referred to as the Cantril Ladder with reference to Cantril's (1965) Self Anchoring Striving Scale. Other scales, such as five-point ones usually referred to as Likert scales with reference to Likert's (1932) seminal work have also been used (though they have been criticised by Cummins and Gullone, 2000), and so have seven-point scales (e.g. Lyubomirsky and Lepper, 1999) among others.

The measurement of life satisfaction poses several challenges. People's answers have indeed been found to depend on e.g. whether the sun was out when the research was being conducted (Schwarz and Clore, 1983), the order of questions (Strack, Martin and Schwarz, 1988) and respondents' cultural background (Brulé and Veenhoven, 2017). Still others like Nussbaum (2012) pointed out the limitations of "life as a whole" questions as they do not allow to evaluate individual components of life, noting also that is not clear whether one is being asked to report judgements or feelings of satisfaction: someone dying might report themselves as satisfied with their life, but Nussbaum doubts that they could be experiencing pleasure.

Finally, *eudaimonia.* This ancient Greek word takes us back to Aristotle, who considered acting virtuously central for one's well-being and defined *eudaimonia* as the 'activity of soul [...] exhibiting excellence' (*op. cit.* in Proctor and Tweed, 2016, p. 279). *Eudaimonic* well-being has since been associated with words such as virtue,

flourishing, worthiness and perfection (Huta and Waterman, 2014; Vittersø, 2016). However, it has proved hard to arrive at a shared definition of the term (Vittersø, 2016). This has made some conclude that we might not need this concept after all, noting that promoting *eudaimonic* well-being may also encourage snobbery and dangerous psychological perfectionism (Thin, 2016). In fact, several scholars do not seem to give it much prominence (e.g. Miao, Koo, and Oishi, 2013). Nevertheless, according to the OECD (2013, p. 32) *eudaimonic* well-being should not be overlooked as it captures 'important aspects of people's subjective perceptions about their own well-being that are not covered by either life evaluations or affect'.

2.4. The Use of GDP as a Measure of Well-being

While different indicators therefore exist that could be used to measure well-being, GDP is frequently said to have become the predominant one. According to the European Commission (2009a, p. 2), it has 'come to be regarded as a proxy indicator for overall societal development and progress' whereas for Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009, p. 7) it is now used for the assessment of 'everything – performance, well-being, quality of life'. GDP has thus become the 'ultimate' (Dickinson, 2011, n/a) measure and the 'chief criterion' (Palmer, 1966, p. 1) of well-being. It has become 'our main measure of progress' (Ban, 2012, n/a), '*the* number we use to define success' (Pilling, 2018, p. 286, emphasis in original), and journalists are said to be using it as 'an infallible technical barometer of a nation's progress' (Hamilton, 2004, p. 2).

Nevertheless, as Rist (2011, p. 123) commented, 'the key statistic is not GDP as such but its rate of annual growth'. The reason for GDP's primacy lies indeed in the nexus that is thought to exist between economic growth (as measured by GDP) and well-being. Rooted in the pre-industrial period (Büchs and Koch, 2017), such belief evolved with the development of GNP (GDP's precursor) and particularly after the Great Depression, World War II and the Bretton Woods arrangements (Macekura,

2020; Philipsen, 2015). Policymakers worldwide were then adopting economic growth 'as their foremost goal' in the hope that 'a rising tide of prosperity would lift all boats [… and] create a world free from the class conflicts, social unrest, and political disorder that had characterised the recent past' (Macekura, 2020, p. 4). Economic growth – 'deemed inherently good' (Schmelzer, 2016, p. 348) – thus quickly became 'a sort of magic potion to cure all kinds of social problems' (Büchs and Koch, 2017, p. 18). Social progress became equated with industrial growth (Laurent, 2018), and the pursuit of 'perpetual economic growth' became 'the indispensable ideology of the state nearly everywhere' (McNeill, 2001, p. 335). As economic growth turned into 'the precondition for progress', policymakers' goal rapidly became not only that of pursuing economic growth but also that of preventing 'at all costs a shrinking economy' (Philipsen, 2015, p. 127, 89, respectively).

At the end of the 1960s, Boulding (1966, p. 339) described the 'reckless' pursuit of economic growth that characterised global policymaking at the time as the defining feature of a 'cowboy economy'. Mishan (1969, pp. 27-28) talked instead of a '[g]rowthmania', claiming that economic growth had become the 'panacea' for 'all social evils', morphing GDP into 'a guiding norm of social policy' (1977, p. 251). Such growthmania was fuelled by attempts made by the United States (US) and Russia during the Cold War to show their superiority (Arndt, 1978) as well as by the OECD which over the years has 'legitimated the view that GDP-growth is desirable, imperative, natural, and essentially limitless' (Schmelzer, 2016, p. 343).

Despite the limitations of the alleged nexus between economic growth and well-being (Hamilton, 2004; Laurent, 2018; Macekura, 2020; Mishan, 1969, 1977; Philipsen, 2015; Rist, 2011), such growthmania persists to date. Economic growth has become a 'fetish', a 'religious urge', '[t]he answer to almost every problem' (Hamilton, 2004, p. 3, 185, 2, respectively), 'a proxy for everything we are supposed to care about' (Pilling, 2018, p. 13) and 'a priority above all else' (Spash, 2021, p. 1088). Economic growth is now so 'triumphant in political discourse' (Fioramonti, 2013, p.

11) that politics itself is thought to depend on it – leaders 'know that their electoral success depends in large part on helping their citizens prosper, which means that GDP figures can only point in one direction' (Masood, 2016, p. 4). To understand why such 'unalloyed endorsement of growth at all costs' (Hamilton, 2004, p. 27) is problematic – Daly (2015, p. 10) went as far as calling it 'cancer' – an introductory discussion of GDP and its limitations has become at this point necessary.

2.5. A Brief Introduction to GDP and its Limitations

In a nutshell, GDP measures the economic output (usually of a country) at a specific time (usually a year or a quarter year). In more detail, it is the amount of goods and services (Product) that have been produced within national borders (Domestic), and over a certain period, without deducting for the depletion of natural resources or the depreciation of physical capital (Gross). In economic jargon, GDP is given by the sum of C (private consumption), G (government spending), I (investments), and NX (net exports, or exports, X, minus imports, M) or simply by C+G+I+NX[3].

Relatively easy to grasp at first, behind GDP lies a complicated statistical framework the limitations of which have long been highlighted, not only in relation to GDP but also, and especially, to its use as a measure of well-being. Some of these refer thus to GDP's intrinsic characteristics, such as the fact that GDP is a flow and not a stock measure (Colman, 2021; Dasgupta, 2021). Most refer instead to the uses to which GDP is often put and are based on what GDP counts or omits and how this may be good or bad from a well-being perspective. A concise discussion of these is presented below.

First, being a measure of economic output, many activities which contribute to well-being but which are not monetary in nature are excluded from GDP. These

[3] This is the so-called expenditure approach. For a short explanation of how this differs from other approaches see Fioramonti (2013) or OECD (2009).

include voluntary work, volunteering and any type of unpaid work such as unpaid care work or housekeeping (Colman, 2021; Diener and Seligman, 2004; Rist, 2011). This has led several scholars to criticise GDP from a gender perspective, given that most of these activities are often carried out by women (Waring, 1988, 2018). Although different studies have tried to estimate their potential value at market prices (see Douglass, Kenney and Miller, 1990), these activities remain however excluded as they do not involve or generate any monetary transaction.

Second, GDP conversely includes what Diener and Seligman (2004, p. 23) call 'regrettables', i.e. activities whose contribution to well-being is debatable as they index 'problems that interfere with well-being'. GDP measures indeed both "goods" and "bads": it counts the production of life-saving medicines as well as that of bullets, the services provided by obstetricians as well as those provided by funeral directors. GDP thus gives 'the illusion that each of its components is in a good place because its aggregated sum is growing' (Laurent, 2018, p. 22). Moreover, economic activities which usually impact positively on well-being (or which do not create harms at least) if undertaken in response to negative events also contribute to economic output and are thus counted as positives. People might buy flowers for their partner or to attend the same person's funeral, yet from an accounting perspective what matters is that flowers were sold.

Third, in some cases the goods or services included in GDP are prohibited in the countries in which they are sold or provided. For instance, since the publication by the United Nations (UN) of the latest System of National Accounts (UN *et al.*, 2009) and the introduction of the new European System of Accounts (Eurostat, 2013), prostitution, the production and trafficking of drugs and the smuggling of tobacco and alcohol are now included in a country's GDP, *even if illegal*. This results in a paradoxical situation in which those states that prohibit the above implicitly welcome their sale and provision by endorsing economic growth. Most importantly, there is the question of whether such goods and services contribute to well-being, especially

from a societal perspective as Kuznets (1934, p. 5, respectively), one of the "fathers" of GDP[4], already long noted ('[t]hat many illegal acts are of some benefit to one group or another and are being paid for, is no proof that these acts constitute a service from the social point of view').

Moreover, the way in which the value of these goods and services is calculated is worth discussing, as it demonstrates that GDP is less objective than it is usually thought. In the United Kingdom (UK), for instance, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) only counts the production of *certain* drugs: crack and powder cocaine, heroin, cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamines (Abramsky and Drew, 2014). In Italy, the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) also counts Lysergic acid diethylamide, or LSD (ISTAT, 2021a). In other words, UK crack cocaine users help the economy grow, whereas those who prefer LSD do not – unless they move to Italy. As far as prostitution is concerned, ONS statisticians did not go out in the streets and ask prostitutes how much they charge. Rather, they took prices from PunterNet (a sort of TripAdvisor where men can rate the services they were given), only counting female prostitutes going with male clients (Abramsky and Drew, 2014) even though male prostitutes are estimated to amount to 42% of all UK sex workers (Fogg, 2014) and even though female prostitutes may also go with female clients, to say nothing of transgender ones. In Italy, too, only female prostitutes seem to have been counted (ISTAT, 2021a).

Fourth, GDP does not take into account the depletion of natural resources (Büchs and Koch, 2017; Colman, 2021; Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009; Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand, 2018). More generally, GDP overlooks so-called externalities and the impact of economic growth on the environment (Barkley and Seckler, 1972; Diener and Seligman, 2004). In fact, if due to economic activity resources deplete and pollution makes air unbreathable, GDP will not only be unable to reflect that, but it will actually

[4] It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a history of GDP and national accounts. For more details about that, the reader is invited to refer to Lepenies (2016) and Philipsen (2015), or to Coyle (2015) and Pilling (2018) for more introductory texts.

increase. A telling example is that of traffic jams (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009). These may be bad from an environmental and health perspective yet they make GDP grow as one needs to fill up their car sooner. In fact, not only polluting but cleaning up, too, contributes to economic growth: a firm that because of its activities releases toxic chemicals into the sea will generate economic output, and one that is hired to clean that up will so, too – which according to Boulding (1971, p. 161) is 'ridiculous'.

Fifth, GDP tells us nothing about income inequality (Colman, 2021; Laurent, 2018; Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009; Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand, 2018). GDP might therefore increase but that does not necessarily mean that any extra generated income will have been shared fairly. GDP per capita has its limitations, too. In 2018, for instance, the small town of Lajatico, Italy ranked first in the country in terms of GDP per capita (Petrini, 2018). One might conclude people in Lajatico are very rich, but only one is: tenor Andrea Bocelli, who resides there.

Sixth, especially due to the rise of the internet and the so-called sharing economy, many goods and services, as Coyle (2015, p. 135) put it, 'are not being well measured, and neither are the new types of activity with zero market price but of great value to consumers'. A case in point is Wikipedia, which can be consulted for free contributing to personal growth but not to economic growth. But this is more than just a methodological challenge. The goods and services in question often in fact subtract from economic output. Home-exchange, for instance, made possible by platforms like HomeExchange or Facebook, enables two parties to swap their houses when going on holiday for a small fee or even for free. It thus provides benefits to home swappers but contributes little to economic output, and it actually subtracts given that none of the parties involved will need to pay for commercial accommodation.

Carpooling or carsharing are similar examples, in that they can have a positive impact on the environment (since less gasoline is needed) and a negative impact on the economy for the very same reason. This therefore highlights one final issue with

the use of GDP as a measure of well-being, which the above sections should have made clear by now: such use mistakenly assumes that what is good for the economy will also be good for society and vice versa. A more-is-better use of GDP would heavily benefit from a society in which everybody lives by themselves, no one shares anything, and everything is thrown away and frequently replaced with brand new items. This, however, raises plenty of questions from a well-being and sustainability standpoint.

Nonetheless, GDP was never intended to be a measure of welfare (Coyle, 2015). As a matter of fact, GDP was never intended to be a measure of progress, sustainability or well-being either. Criticising GDP for not measuring these is like criticising YouTube's views counter for not being a good measure of video quality: that is not what a views counter is for. The problem, therefore, is not GDP per se (although *there are* some challenges in terms of what economic activities are included and how these are measured), but rather the misuse that is made of it. As Stiglitz *et al*. (2009, p. 8, emphasis in original) similarly noted, 'GDP is not wrong *as such*, but wrongly used'. And yet, that misuse 'is precisely [… what] makes GDP so powerful' (Colman, 2021, p. 12), and it would be 'intellectually dishonest' (Philipsen, 2015, p. 175) to ignore that. Frequently misused (or misunderstood) as a measure of well-being and as 'the touchstone of policy success' (Hamilton, 2004, p. 1), GDP has become a 'false idol' (Layard, 2020, p. 37) and lost its main objective: to measure economic output. This has sparked a debate worldwide about the importance of measuring well-being adequately in a more holistic way as well as of the limitations of GDP and economic growth more generally, which has led to the development of a vast array of metrics and alternative ways to the current economic model. It is to the discussion of these issues that we now turn.

2.6. Tracing the Roots of the Well-being Debate

Michalos and Robinson (2012) showed that many philosophers had already expressed themselves about the meaning of happiness between the eight and the third century Before Common Era (one of them being Aristotle, as we have seen above). According to Moore and Schmidt (2013, p. 271, 266), however, the driving motivations and 'intellectual sources' of what the authors call the 'beyond GDP' discourse date back to the 19th century. And it is exactly then, as Giovannini (2019, 1:09:47-1:10:35) pointed out to show that measuring well-being is not a new idea, that economist Melchiorre Gioia (1826, p. 4) argued that statistics should measure the 'happiness or unhappiness' of people and their living conditions. However, these can at most be considered first attempts to highlight the importance of well-being rather than actual contributions to the "beyond GDP" debate, not least because while first estimates of national income were already available (Lepenies, 2016), GDP simply did not exist yet and in fact compiling national income statements was often seen as a useless task until the 1930s (*ivi*; Philipsen, 2015).

2.7. The 1960s. The Social Indicators Movement and Robert F. Kennedy's Speech

Bauer's (1966) edited volume, *Social Indicators*, is widely regarded as a cornerstone publication in well-being research (Land and Michalos, 2018; see also Land, Michalos and Sirgy, 2012). *Social Indicators* investigated the availability of social statistics to anticipate the potential impact of the American space programme on society at large. There were indeed growing concerns at the time that this might have had negative consequences, especially unexpected ones. Yet, there were not many tools to help establish whether these concerns were true or not and to suggest solutions to address them in case. And that did not just apply to the space programme. As Bauer (*ivi*, p. 20, emphasis in original) noted, except for quantity-oriented economic indicators, '[*f*]*or*

many of the important topics on which […] policies are made, there are no yardsticks by which to know if things are getting better or worse'.

In 1969, Duncan (*op. cit.*, Land and Michalos, 2018, p. 838) commented that the release of *Social Indicators* had given rise to the 'social indicators movement' whose emergence Bache and Reardon (2016) identified as a founding moment of what the authors called the first wave of interest in well-being. In a nutshell, the movement attempted 'to establish a system of social accounting that was broader than the money-based national income accounts' (Gershuny, 1989, p. 419). Despite generating wide interest, the movement was criticised for not having a shared set of goals (Brand, 1975) and for not being clear whether it supported the replacement or integration of GDP with other metrics (Kahn, 1991; see also Kallman, 1997). Still others expressed concerns about the quantification of reality that the production of social indicators entailed (Little, 1975).

Few years after the publication of *Social Indicators*, the flaws of GDP and the idea that a nation should not focus solely on economic growth became a matter of public debate with Robert F. Kennedy's speech at the University of Kansas. There, Kennedy (1968, 17:54-17:58) famously highlighted that GNP[5] measures 'everything in short, except that which makes life worthwhile'. Perhaps one of the few politicians to then criticise GNP so openly, Kennedy (*ivi*, 16:45-17:42) noted that this included indeed all sorts of "bads" – from 'cigarette advertising' to 'nuclear warheads' – excluding more important yet less tangible assets such as 'the health of our children' and 'the intelligence of our public debate'. Kennedy's speech is now widely quoted, especially among well-being scholars (e.g. Colman, 2021; Fioramonti, 2013; Fleurbaey and Blanchet, 2013; Philipsen, 2015).

[5] For a simple explanation of how GNP and GDP differ from each other see Colman (2021).

2.8. The 1970s-1990s. The Emergence of Sustainable and Human Development

In 1972, the Club of Rome published its ground-breaking *The Limits To Growth* report in which it highlighted that inequalities were already large and increasing and that many non-renewable resources were already depleted (Meadows *et al*., [1972] 1975). It forecasted several different scenarios and urged to take account of planetary boundaries to maintain a sustainable and civilised living. In the same year, it was suggested to replace GDP with an indicator of gross national happiness (see Tinbergen, 1972), a name that would later be popularised by the Gross National Happiness (GNH) initiative launched by the Kingdom of Bhutan (see 2.10). Also in 1972, the UN organised a Conference on the Human Environment, the world's first global environmental governance conference. A hardly human environment, however, was the one described the following year by Schumacher ([1973] 2011, p. 79) who criticised the destruction of the environment for the sake of profits, calling for a new economy that focused on quality rather than quantity – an economy that 'may take care of people and not goods only'.

Environmental concerns were not new at any rate (as the publication of *Silent Spring* by Carson in 1962 shows), but their greater manifestation came with the publication of the *Our Common Future* report by the so-called UN Brundtland Commission (Brundtland *et al.*, [1987] 1990). Set up to find ways to pursue sustainable development cooperatively at the international level, in its ground-breaking report the Commission urged policymakers worldwide to consider the impact of economic growth on the environment to guarantee future generations the ability to meet their needs (*ivi*). The idea of sustainable development was born, and this represented one of the key moments of what Bache and Reardon (2016) called the second wave of interest in well-being. Sustainable development and attention for the environment would then motivate the launch of the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) by Cobb and Daly (1989) – an index meant to replace GDP by deducting, among other

things, the monetised impact of economic growth on the environment, which Cobb, Halstead and Rowe (1995) later turned into the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) –, become one the key themes of the Earth Summit organised in Rio de Janeiro by the UN in 1992, and drive the launch by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) of the Living Planet Index (WWF LPI) in 1998 (Loh *et al*., 1998).

However, not all metrics launched in these years were concerned with the environment. In 1990, for instance, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published the first *Human Development Report* (UNDP, 1990) which, thanks particularly to the work of Sen and ul Haq (Masood, 2016), introduced the Human Development Index (HDI), '[p]robably the best-known attempt to challenge the hegemony of GDP' (Fioramonti, 2013, p. 98). The HDI ranks countries according to indicators from three domains (health, education and standard of living), excluding thus environmental indicators altogether. Additionally, it gives all indicators equal weight, which has made the HDI object of repeated criticism (e.g. Kelley, 1991; McGillivray, 1991; for a response see Klugman, Rodríguez and Choi, 2011).

2.9. The 2000s. The Emergence of the Notions of Societal Progress and "Beyond GDP"

Under the leadership of Giovannini (Layard, 2020; Seaford, 2013), in 2004 the OECD (2004, p. 1) organised a World Forum on Statistics, Knowledge and Policy which gathered in Palermo, Italy experts from around the world to 'support capacity building for all sectors of government and society in general in pursuit of better information to guide decision making'. Following its success, the OECD (n. d., p. 1) launched a Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies to discuss 'how best to define, measure and achieve societal progress' as well as further editions of the World Forum in Istanbul (2007), Busan (2009), New Delhi (2012), Guadalajara (2015) and Incheon (2018).

Meanwhile, in 2007 the European Union (EU), in partnership with the WWF and The Club of Rome, "responded" with a conference called Beyond GDP in which hundreds of experts gathered to discuss what metrics could complement or integrate GDP and how best to use and promote them (European Commission, 2009b). A *Roadmap* by the European Commission (2009a), a debate and the approval of a Motion by the European Parliament (2011) as well as a Communication on *GDP and beyond* (European Commission, 2013) followed. No further updates have been provided since and the EU does not seem to have taken a lead on the agenda lately (see however 2.10, 2.11.1).

In 2008, from an idea of the then French President Nicholas Sarkozy (though Giovannini claims to be the *Deus ex machina* – see Giovannini 2012, 2015a), several key scholars (including Nobel laureates such as Stiglitz and Sen) were commissioned to discuss the flaws of GDP and how to go "beyond" it to measure the real progress and well-being of societies. In their final report, known as the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report, the authors discussed the merits and limitations of GDP and warned against its potentially misleading use in the measurement of well-being, recommending thus, among other things, the use of both objective and subjective indicators, to consider the impact policies may have on different domains and to draw greater attention to income and wealth inequalities (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009). While many of these recommendations are not new, according to Noll (2011, p. 115) the report has brought 'a major new stimulus for the debate on the measurement of well-being in academic research, but even more so in […] the general public'.

2.10. The 2010s. New Approaches, New Metrics

In the wake of increasing interest worldwide and possibly in response to the 2007/08 financial crisis, a wide range of alternatives to the current economic model have emerged. These have taken all sorts of names but in most cases have maintained the

–growth suffix or the word growth. Terms such as green growth, sustainable growth, smart growth, inclusive growth (used particularly by the OECD since 2012) and even sustainable, smart and inclusive growth (as in the EU's Europe 2020 strategy) have been used increasingly lately. The fact that they all contain the word growth, as I show in this thesis, is a symptom of a schizophrenic dissatisfaction with GDP as a metric but not with economic growth as an objective. There are of course some exceptions, examples of which can be found in Tim Jackson's *Prosperity Without Growth* (originally published in 2009) and Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics* (2017). The most notable and radical one is however degrowth (e.g. Hickel, 2020, 2021; Latouche, 2006, 2009, 2013a) which as we will see has received heavy criticism, *exactly* for its explicit questioning of economic growth.

Concurrently, an increasing number of well-being metrics have been launched. While several metrics were developed in the mid-2000s already (see Barrington-Leigh and Escande, 2017), such as the Happy Planet Index (HPI) and the Legatum Prosperity Index (LPI), it is indeed in the 2010s that this trend consolidated. In 2011, the OECD launched the first *How's Life* report and the Better Life Index (BLI) whereas Eurostat started laying the grounds of its Quality of Life Indicators project. In 2012, the UN launched the Inclusive Wealth Index (IWI), just after adopting a resolution which called member states to develop more well-being metrics 'with a view to guiding their public policies' (UN, 2011, p. 1). In 2013, the Social Progress Imperative launched the Social Progress Index (SPI), followed by the release of *Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being* by the OECD (2013) and in 2014 by the launch of the Good Country Index (GCI) by Simon Anholt. In 2015, the UN adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a global framework to promote sustainable development that replaced the Millennium Development Goals, whereas in 2016 the EU released the Regional Social Progress Index (EURSPI), updated for the first time in December

2020[6]. As we will see (see 4.3.1, 4.3.2), the same trend can be found in Scotland and Italy, where metrics have mushroomed[7].

Of all metrics launched, those focusing on happiness seem to have gained quite a lot of traction. This is the case, for instance, of the World Happiness Report (WHR), published annually by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network since 2012. Yet, the most popular one to date is perhaps Bhutan's GNH whose first full computation was presented in 2010 (Ura, Alkire and Zangmo, 2012). Although Bhutan is often criticised for ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses[8], the GNH has 'captured the media's imagination' (Speroni, 2010, p. 118) and Bhutan 'has become symbolic of the happiness debate' (Pilling, 2018, p. 263). This is probably one of the reasons why the measurement of well-being seems at times trivialised and to be equated to the measurement of happiness[9].

2.11. The Use and Impact of Well-being Metrics

A vast number of benefits and uses of well-being metrics have been suggested, especially for policymaking (see Adler and Seligman, 2016; Bauer, 1966; Diener *et al*., 2009; Dolan, Layard and Metcalfe, 2011; Helliwell, 2010; Land and Ferriss, 2007; Moser, 1973; Noll, 2002; Sheldon and Freeman, 1970; Veenhoven, 2002). In fact, only by being 'translated into the policy-making process' will well-being metrics 'really matter' (Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012, p. 1). Which explains why the Stiglitz-Fitoussi Report (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009, p. 10) was addressed 'first of all, to political leaders' and

[6] Just a week after the launch of the Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity by the OECD, which in 2018 also published a sort of second iteration of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand, 2018).

[7] The same can be said for the UK. While metrics such as the Monocle and the Halifax Quality of Life Surveys (QoLS) were launched in the 2000s already, the trend consolidated in the 2010s: in 2012, the ONS published the first *Life in the UK* Report and PricewaterhouseCoopers issued the Good Growth for Cities Index (GGCI); in 2013, uSwitch published the Quality of Life Index (uSwitch QoLI); in 2016, Grant Thornton published the Vibrant Economy Index (VEI); and, in 2019, Royal Mail published the findings of its Happiness Index (RMHI).

[8] A Thai newspaper went as far as titling a piece on the GNH *Bhutan's secret recipe for "happiness": ethnic cleansing* (The Nation Thailand, 2015).

[9] As the OECD (2013, p. 28) pointed out (although not in relation to the GNH), '[o]ften, the measurement of subjective well-being is conflated with measuring "happiness"'.

to ‘policy-makers who wish to get a better sense of which indicators are available and useful to design, implement and assess policies aimed at improving well-being’. Nevertheless, there is a wealth of evidence showing that the use and impact of well-being metrics has been limited to date. A digest of the literature is presented in the next sections by theme: a first section focuses on policymaking, providing an overview of the main stimuli and constraints that have been identified so far; a second section looks at the media use of well-being metrics which has also been a subject of academic inquiry given the media’s influence on the policy agenda.

2.11.1. The Use and Impact of Well-being Metrics in Policymaking

PASTILLE (Promoting Action for Sustainability Through Indicators at The Local Level in Europe) was a project funded by the EU which investigated the use of sustainability indicators by the administrations of Vienna, Lyon and Winterthur and by the London Borough of Southwark. Using interviews, policy diaries, document analysis, participant observation and workshops, the project concluded that these indicators were not having ‘much impact on decision making’ (PASTILLE, 2002, p. 50). In London and Vienna, for instance, indicators and the broader theme of sustainability had ‘not been effectively incorporated into daily political practice’ (Astleithner *et al*., 2004, p. 22). Among the barriers identified were the limited duration of political mandates, organisational structure (leading to lack of cooperation between different departments) and organisational culture. Nonetheless, the authors also suggested potential stimuli of change such as the presence of policy entrepreneurs and the adoption of international agendas on sustainable development.

POINT (Policy Influence of Indicators), also an EU-funded project, investigated through interviews, document analysis and participatory workshops the use and influence of sustainable development indicators in Belgium, Denmark, Malta, Slovakia, Sweden, the UK and within EU institutions. Overall, it found only some use

and often no influence of indicators whereby use denoted mainly their referencing in reports or speeches and influence their actual impact on policy (POINT, n. d.; on the difference between use and influence see Gudmundsson *et al.*, 2009). In the UK, for instance, 'little evidence was found of use' of indicators 'as true decision-support tools beyond an occasional reference to them as a source of background information in policy documents' (Lehtonen, 2013, p. 28; see also Sébastien, Bauler and Lehtonen, 2014). Similar conclusions were reached about Finland (Rinne, Lyytimäki and Kautto, 2013), Malta (Cassar *et al*., 2013), Slovakia (Lyytimäki *et al.*, 2011), Sweden and EU institutions (Gudmundsson and Sørensen, 2013). In the last case, a few civil servants claimed some use in preparation for briefings and similar material (Rinne, Lyytimäki and Kautto, 2013), but EU policymakers were found to be poorly aware of indicators (Sébastien and Bauler, 2013; Sébastien, Bauler and Lehtonen, 2014) and a document analysis showed that EU institutions had rarely mentioned them, if at all, in official policy documents (Sébastien and Bauler, 2013).

Among the barriers identified were: the lack of resources to produce and update the indicators, as well as their lack of legitimacy and acceptance (POINT, n. d.); the timing of indicators release and their timeliness, 'or rather the lack of it' (*ivi,* p. 16; see also Rinne, Lyytimäki and Kautto, 2013); the lack of targets (POINT, n. d.), of consensus around a common set of indicators (Sébastien and Bauler, 2013) and of relevance of EU indicators to national policy (POINT, n. d.); and the subjectivity of many indicators which were perceived as partisan and of inferior quality (Sébastien and Bauler, 2013; Lehtonen, 2013).

POINT, however, had several limitations. First, researchers did not stick with their distinction between use and influence. There are plenty of examples, one of which can be found in the Project Final Report in which, after introducing a section on 'non-influence', the authors list some 'explanations for limited use' (POINT, n. d., p. 11), not to mention that in some cases words like 'application' were also used (as in Cassar *et al.*, 2013, p. 57) without specifying if they were meant to denote use or

influence. It is also worth mentioning that the selection of participants in workshops was incoherent and not fully reflective of the project's aims. For instance, members of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were excluded in Malta (Cassar *et al*., 2013), yet two of them participated in the Malta workshops (Bell and Morse, 2011). Moreover, among all participants there were nine students and eighteen members of local government (despite the project focusing on the national level) and only one politician (*ivi*) about whom no details are provided, i.e. we do not know whether they belonged to national, regional or local government.

BRAINPOoL (Bringing Alternative Indicators Into Policy), another EU-funded project, aimed to examine the supply- and demand-side of well-being metrics and their use in supranational, national and local policymaking in several countries (see below). Supply-wise, interviews were conducted to investigate the impact that 15 metrics had had on policymaking according to their own developers (Hák *et al.*, 2012)[10]. Overall, most metrics were claimed to have been used in one way or another, especially outside Europe. Yet, examples would often be about small-scale interventions and no metric was found to have had a tangible impact on economic policymaking and to be used according to the project definition (Seaford, 2013).

Metric producers and BRAINPOoL researchers identified several stimuli and hindrances to change (Hák *et al*., 2012). Among the stimuli were: the relevance of metrics for policy purposes; their simplicity and understandability; the neutrality of data sources (with data collected by national statistical offices seen more favourably than those collected by NGOs which one interviewee described as 'useless' – *ivi*, p. 45); and having good contacts with people within the organisations that one is trying to influence. Among the barriers were: the "beyond GDP" label for not all producers thought they were proposing alternatives to GDP; certain 'taboo words' the use of which was strongly discouraged, such as happiness in the UK which 'was considered

[10] For a full list, see Hák *et al.*, 2012, p. 36. Of these, two were from the UK and one from Italy, whereas the remaining ones were mainly relevant globally (e.g. HDI).

problematic' and 'perceived as woolly, frivolous, non-scientific' (*ivi*, p. 60); an ideological barrier since the use of metrics was thought to require greater state intervention; the economic crisis of 2007/08 which, while some thought was a catalyst, many claimed it had been a hindrance; and the cost of data collection.

Demand-wise, BRAINPOoL investigated the level of knowledge and perception of well-being metrics and the broader well-being agenda among policy actors inside and outside the 'Beyond GDP sphere' (Thiry *et al.*, 2013, p. 43). Insiders were interviewed in person, whereas outsiders participated in workshops. Among the latter, BRAINPOoL found a low level of awareness of the limitations of GDP and of well-being metrics. Interestingly, BRAINPOoL found slightly better yet still low level of awareness of well-being metrics also among insiders which, according to the authors, was probably 'due to the huge number' of metrics available (*ivi*, p. 72).

Awareness aside, researchers identified a vast number of stimuli or barriers to change, although many more barriers were highlighted in line with the main finding of the project (low use and impact) and with participants' own perceptions who acknowledged indeed 'the difficulties to go beyond GDP in the current system' (*ivi*, p. 73). Among the stimuli were: the release of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report; the presence of related (inter)national agendas and of laws that mandate the use of metrics; some political demand from the local level; and the financial crisis of 2007/08. Among the constraints were: again the financial crisis; lack of political support; the short-termism of political elections as opposed to the long-term scale of the issues to be tackled; the lack of novelty of metrics; a widespread disapproval of the idea of abandoning economic growth which was considered by both insiders and outsiders a prerequisite for well-being[11] and which led participants to criticise zero-growth or degrowth scenarios and favour the integration of GDP with other metrics rather than its replacement; confusion around key concepts (well-being, quality of

[11] Among outsiders particularly 'almost all the participants [… thought that] it is impossible to think of quality of life improvements […] without assuming the pursuit of economic growth' (Thiry *et al.*, 2013, p. 66).

life, etc.); scepticism of subjective indicators; overexposure of GDP and converse lack of media coverage of well-being metrics; and issues concerning the quality of data (e.g. their timeliness, timing and robustness).

However, it is worth noting that interviews with insiders were limited to the cases of France and the 4th OECD World Forum. In the latter case, interviewees were from different countries and organisations, thus this was not a case study of the OECD (only three interviewees represented it) or in fact of any country. As for workshops, these were organised in four countries (UK, France, Germany and Czech Republic) and some had only a few participants (16, 9, 5 and 7, respectively – Thiry, Sébastien and Bauler, 2016).

Finally, using interviews and workshops BRAINPOoL studied the barriers to the use and impact of well-being metrics in the OECD, the Welsh Government, the British Business Bank, Germany, the Midi-Pyrénées region and the cities of Rotterdam and Chrudium (Seaford, 2013; see also Bleys and Whitby, 2015). A multitude of constraints were identified, including: the prioritisation of economic growth[12], especially after the economic crisis of 2007/08 (though in a few cases this was also seen as motive for increasing interest in well-being), which meant metrics had to be presented as supplements and not as alternatives to GDP and that initiatives were seen as successful if they supported economic growth; lack of awareness of well-being metrics; lack of political support; the vast number of metrics available; problems concerning the quality of indicators; lack of resources; lack of communication strategies; the unreliability of subjective indicators; the use of taboo words such as welfare; the lack of neutrality of metrics that were not developed by national statistical offices or that had been associated with political parties; silo thinking; organisational structure; and the existence of conflicting priorities.

[12] So much so that in the case of Wales 'there was […] a strong sense that economic growth was the ultimate aim of the Welsh Government' (Seaford, 2013, p. 114).

MAKSWELL (Making Sustainable Development and Well-Being Frameworks Work For Policy Analysis) was a further EU-funded project that terminated in 2020. It aimed at producing harmonised well-being frameworks, improving indicators' timeliness, quality and availability (these being some of the barriers that the project identified), as well as at increasing their impact on policymaking (Calza, D'Ambrogio and Zangla, 2020; Tinto *et al.*, 2018). Regarding the last point, a few interviews and a document analysis were conducted in Italy and Hungary to investigate the use of well-being metrics in policymaking, particularly at the local level (Sorvillo *et al*., 2020). As for Hungary, the authors concluded that 'well-being initiatives still have not reached the policy level' (*ivi*, p. 46). In the case of Italy, several regional frameworks were examined, yet aside from reporting their aims, the trends of the indicators or the technicalities of how and by whom monitoring is performed, the authors mentioned no example of their use and impact on policymaking. Moreover, an analysis of the then latest Regional Economic and Financial Planning Documents for all Italian regions showed that only some contained references to Italy's official well-being framework, and beyond such occasional mentions no examples of budget allocations linked to it were identified. The authors (*ivi*, p. 5, 51, 53, respectively) in fact repeatedly pointed out the limited use and impact of well-being metrics throughout their report: 'their use [... is] scant'; '[m]aking […] well-being frameworks work for policy analysis does represent a relevant challenge'; '[t]he challenge is to make these projects becoming [sic] the key instrument'.

The findings of the above EU-funded projects are very similar to those of other studies. Hezri (2005), for instance, conducted interviews with Malaysian civil servants, academics and members of civil society organisations to investigate the use of sustainability indicators in the country. Interviewees found it hard to give examples, not to mention that 'available indicator programs were known only to a selected few' (*ivi*, p. 589). This made Hezri (*ivi*, p. 591) describe the then emerging indicator-based assessments as 'loose experiments with little potential for influence'.

Another relevant case is that of China. Between 2004 and 2006, attempts were made to develop a "Green GDP", a measure of national output which deducted the costs of environmental degradation (Li and Lang, 2010; Rauch and Chi, 2010). A pilot study revealed that, if the impact of economic growth on the environment was to be considered, GDP would decrease by 3.05% (China's State and Environmental Protection Agency and National Bureau of Statistics, 2006). China's Green GDP did not however even have the time to leave any marks on policymaking since the second report 'was withheld from the public' (Li and Lang, 2010, p. 51). On paper, because of the methodological weaknesses of the index. In practice, because local authorities – 'traditionally […] assessed according to the economic success of the area they administer' (Rauch and Chi, 2010, p. 108) – lobbied 'the central government against it in their eagerness to maintain economic growth' (Qiu, 2007, p. 518). The release of the report was postponed indefinitely (Li and Lang, 2010) and eventually the project was cancelled (Rauch and Chi, 2010). Recent attempts to develop a "Green GDP 2.0" have not been successful yet (Yu-Wai, 2018).

Wallace and Schmuecker (2012) conducted several interviews to investigate the policy use of well-being metrics in France, Canada, the cities of Guelph, Somerville and Toronto, and in the state of Virginia, US. Overall, they (*ivi*, p. 21) reported three examples of use, concluding however that these were 'relatively small-scale interventions'. In fact, most of the above case studies were 'in the relatively early stages of collecting data, let alone converting it into policy' (*ivi*, p. 27). Among the stimuli that they identified were: strong political leadership; the independent collection of statistics; the presence of legislation which mandated or promoted the use of metrics; and the use of composite indices to gain media traction. Among the barriers were: lack of political interest; the predominance of GDP and economic growth in public and policy debate following the 2007/08 economic crisis; lack of interest from civil society; lack of media coverage and effective communication strategies; the short duration of political mandates; lack of community participation;

the expensiveness of certain evaluation practices; and the perceived unreliability of non-official statistics, especially in Canada where doubts almost disappeared when the management of the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) shifted from a private foundation to the University of Waterloo.

Through interviews and a document analysis, Chancel, Thiry and Demailly (2014) reviewed the policy impact of well-being metrics in Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, the UK, Wales and Wallonia. The authors concluded that these had been used mainly in a symbolic way without however having much impact on policymaking. In terms of stimuli, the authors highlighted: the framing of metrics *not* as alternatives to GDP; support from high levels of government; the use of dashboards; and community participation in the development of metrics. In terms of barriers, they identified: lack of awareness and saliency of metrics; the high number of indicators within dashboards; the prioritisation of economic growth; lack of media coverage; and the economic crisis of 2007/08.

Similarly, Borgnäs (2016) conducted interviews and a document analysis to investigate the use and influence of sustainable development indicators on German policymaking, relying on the difference between use and influence employed by POINT that we have seen above (see Gudmundsson *et al.*, 2009). However, Borgnäs (2016, p. 484) used them 'as one concept'. This makes the use of POINT's terminology meaningless and hard to understand whether she found examples of use or influence, which is made even more complicated by the fact that, despite treating them as one, Borgnäs (2016) nevertheless used both terms throughout her study. Yet, since she focused mainly on use rather than influence, also defining the former but never the latter, one can conclude that, while she claimed that a high level of influence was found, she might have just found examples of use as she herself contradictorily

claimed[13]. At any rate, Borgnäs (2016) identified several promoters of change, including: the institutionalisation of frameworks; the financial crisis of 2007/08; and the level of consensus around policy goals and indicators. In terms of obstacles, she highlighted: the decentralisation of political systems; the lower frequency indicators are reported with compared to GDP; the higher perceived robustness of GDP; the prioritisation of economic indicators and indeed the problematic clashing of some goals and indicators with the pursuit of economic growth which emerged from some stakeholders' answers as the predominant policy objective, so much so that Borgnäs (*ivi*, p. 495) concluded that 'compatibility with growth prerequisites […] seems to be a fundamental feature of an influential indicator'.

In 2017, the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD) held a seminar with 32 stakeholders with interest and expertise in well-being to identify the barriers to the adoption of a well-being agenda in the EU as a whole and within EU members states (CONCORD, 2017). Participants agreed that well-being metrics have had little impact to date and identified several obstacles, including: the vast number of metrics available; the use of taboo words such as happiness; lack of political support; lack of compelling narratives; lack of trust in statistics; and widespread support of economic growth, so much so that the authors concluded that the current system is affected by a 'Stockholm syndrome' that makes all solutions look 'captive', which is why it was suggested to initially complement rather than replace GDP (which would 'scare people') and to avoid talking about degrowth which 'is even scarier' (*ivi*, pp. 7, 10, 8, respectively).

Hayden and Wilson conducted interviews to investigate the use and impact of well-being metrics in Canada (2016, 2017a, 2018a), the state of Maryland (2018b) and the UK Government (2017a, 2017b), finding them to be low or non-existent. As far as

[13] E.g. 'whereas earlier studies have struggled to find evidence of instrumental *influence*, this study argues that the persistent efforts […] have led to a relatively high degree of imposed instrumental *use*' (Borgnäs, 2016, p. 496, emphasis added).

Canada is concerned, they concluded that, although some metrics like the CIW did gain occasional media traction, 'no government in Canada, federal or provincial, had by mid-2017 begun to calculate or use the CIW, or any other beyond-GDP alternative' (2018a, p. 152; see also 2016, p. 7; 2017a, p. 176). In the case of the UK, they similarly concluded that '[a]t no point did government adopt improving people's well-being as an overarching goal and high-level interest has appeared to wane in recent years' (2017a, p. 178; see also 2017b). The obstacles they identified include: the prioritisation of GDP and economic growth; the timeliness of indicators and issues of data availability; the cost of data collection and indeed the lack of resources; lack of consensus on what is to replace or integrate GDP; lack of awareness of well-being metrics; scepticism of subjective indicators; lack of political support; lack of pressure from civil society; the instability brought by political elections; and lack of interest from right-wing politicians.

Hayden (2021, p. 124, 132, 126, respectively), discussing the above findings as well as those of his research on Bhutan and the state of Vermont, concluded that while well-being metrics 'have made a considerable conceptual contribution in challenging GDP as the dominant measure of national success', they have nevertheless 'not yet been the transformative force that many proponents have hoped for' as policy change has been 'elusive'. Similarly, reflecting about his experience of promoting the well-being agenda in Canada, Bhutan and New Zealand, Colman (*op. cit.* in Hayden, 2021, p. 121; see also Colman, 2021), founder of the think-tank GPI Atlantic which developed the Genuine Progress Index (the precursor of the CIW), concluded: '[t]wenty-five years later […] our new progress measures have failed to make a significant dent in the policy arena or to shift policy in any fundamentally transformative or meaningful way. […] On the contrary, the economic growth imperative […] is more dominant and powerful than ever'.

With reference to New Zealand, in 2019 this published its first Wellbeing Budget (New Zealand Treasury, 2019). This 'made headlines across the world'

(Anderson and Mossialos, 2019, p. 320) and has been described as a 'a significant reformist step' (Hayden, 2021, p. 130) that shows 'that it is possible for countries to design and implement economic policies to address wellbeing issues of our age' (Dalziel and Saunders, 2020, p. 42). However, it has also been noted that despite the adoption of a Wellbeing Budget New Zealand 'is not abandoning pursuit of GDP growth' which is still seen 'as an important means to achieve the overriding goal of well-being' (Hayden, 2021, p. 129, 132, respectively). In fact, some commentators (Schumacher, 2019) went as far as arguing that the Wellbeing Budget does not differ substantially from previous budgets, and Anderson and Mossialos (2019, p. 320) claimed that 'only a minor degree of funding has been raised through reprioritisation from pre-existing areas'. Whether the Wellbeing Budget has impacted on New Zealand policymaking and what factors will have facilitated or inhibited that remains however an open question given its novelty and the lack of evidence.

2.11.2. The Use of Well-being Metrics by the Media

The role of the media emerged as crucial in many studies. For POINT workshop participants, for instance, success for well-being metrics meant primarily to be 'quoted, mentioned and reported on an ongoing basis' (Bell and Morse, 2013, p. 21). Journalists' support was also the very first thing CONCORD (2017) seminar participants highlighted, and the role of the media was defined as 'critical' by Wallace and Schmuecker (2012, p. 42). Similarly, according to BRAINPOoL researchers '[f]or Beyond GDP indicators there is an imperative to be attractive to the media: No media coverage equals no pressure on politicians and influence in politics' (Hák *et al.*, 2012, p. 14). Nevertheless, there is wide dissatisfaction with the coverage that well-being metrics have received so far. The European Commission (2013, p. 17) lamented that they 'are rarely commented on in the media' whereas Fioramonti (2013, p. 115) argued that 'the media hunger is all focused on GDP'.

While such claims remain largely unsubstantiated, there is some evidence suggesting that the coverage of well-being metrics has indeed been limited. As part of POINT, Morse (2011a, 2011b, 2013; see also POINT, 2010) investigated the coverage received between 1990 and 2009 by three indices (the HDI, the Ecological Footprint and the Corruption Perception Index) in several UK newspapers (33, 22 and 31 for each study, respectively) using the NewsUK database. Morse found several articles mentioning the above indices, especially on quality sources (2011a), with 59% appearing in left newspapers, 20% in centre and 21% in right ones based on his own categorisation of outlets (2013), and with peaks of reporting in the months in which metrics were issued (2011b, 2013). However, Morse (2013, p. 247) concluded that the overall number of articles could 'hardly be called an extensive coverage' both in absolute and relative terms since this was less than 2.5% compared to the number of articles that mentioned GDP at least once over the same period.

However, the methodology employed by Morse was flawed in many respects. First, in two of his studies (2011b, 2013) he included among British newspapers the *Irish Times* because 'widely available through the UK' (2011a, p. 23). Yet, that contradicted Morse's own aim to investigate the reporting of metrics in the UK press, not to mention that references to metrics found in articles belonging to the Irish press will have most likely referred to the ranking of Ireland. Since the *Irish Times* accounted for 15% of all articles (more than Scottish and Northern Irish newspapers combined), its inclusion clearly distorted his findings. Second, Morse (2011a, p. 1682) justified the selection of the three indices on the grounds that they had 'been around for some years' and had a 'powerful backer'. This begs the question of why he excluded indices with the same characteristics such as the WWF LPI. Third, Morse did not specify why he changed the number of newspapers he searched every time and, most importantly, he only searched for indices by their full names, ignoring their acronyms, the name of the publications the indices were published in (e.g. *Human Development Report*) or in fact any other alternative names (e.g. Index of Human Development).

Therefore, his figures largely underestimate the number of articles published that cited the indices in question.

Morse (2015, 2016, 2018) re-conducted similar studies after POINT. This time, he focused on the global press and on a higher number of metrics (18, 24 and 25[14] for each study, respectively), using however a different database, NexisLexis. The findings of the three studies look very similar, although we are never told the overall number of articles yielded, or that for each metric, or in what countries articles were published. In fact, the methodology Morse employed was again rich in flaws. First, in his 2015 study he selected metrics that had been updated at least 10 times, whereas in his 2016 one he decreased that to 6, without explaining why[15]. Second, Morse only focused on composite indices, again with little explanation. Third, despite focusing on the global press, Morse only searched for keywords in English (which, by the way, he never provided) based on debatable assumptions[16], meaning his findings hugely underestimate the actual number of relevant articles published worldwide. Fourth and most importantly, Morse did not consider that the coverage start date of sources included in NexisLexis vary from source to source[17]. *The Guardian*, for instance, is covered from July 14, 1984, whereas the Italian *Corriere della Sera* from January 27, 2009, although both were founded much earlier. This means that during the period he analysed (which is unclear[18]) the former will have yielded more articles than the latter, though the latter might have published more. This also means that surges of articles in certain years were not due to a sudden increase in interest but simply to sources being added to the database (or, contrarily, that decreases in articles were simply due to sources being removed from it).

[14] 24 plus the debt-to-GDP ratio for comparison.

[15] In his 2018 study, Morse (2018, p. 436) did not even specify that, limiting to say that he chose metrics that 'had been updated over a number of years'.

[16] Morse (2015, p. 87; 2016, p. 366) claimed that in non-English sources an indicator 'is often reported using its English name'. One wonders how he could conclude that given that he ran his searches only in English.

[17] I did not highlight this in reference to NewsUK since this was discontinued, thus I could not check what sources it included and from when. However, given the way these databases work it is highly plausible that sources included in NewsUK also started to be covered from different periods.

[18] The timeframe in Morse (2015) was 1987-2012, but in Morse (2016, 2018) no start date is provided.

As part of IN-STREAM (Integrating Mainstream Economic Indicators with Sustainable Development Objectives), a similar study was undertaken to investigate the media coverage of 19 metrics in several English and French newspapers from 1990 to 2010. Although the overall number of mentions and that for each metric were not shown, the study found the Ecological Footprint to be the most mentioned one, followed by the HDI (Bassi, *et al.*, 2011). However, the methodology employed was scarcely explained and flawed. First, researchers were interested in newspapers, yet 4 out of 14 sources in the sample were news agencies. Second, it was not explained how metrics were searched for and in what language, and how potentially irrelevant articles were excluded. Third, the coverage start date issue mentioned above was again overlooked.

BRAINPOoL conducted a similar study, finding 589,660 documents on ProQuest mentioning GDP and 25,628 mentioning the 15 metrics that the project focused on (Hák *et al*., 2012; see 2.11.1). However, in this case, too, the methodology employed was scarcely explained and flawed. First, the GPI was misspelled as Genuine Progress Index (see 2.11.1) instead of Genuine Progress Indicator (see 2.8). Given that ProQuest includes Canadian newspapers, this made researchers count irrelevant articles and reach the wrong conclusions, especially as they considered that of the GPI 'successful in terms of [...] media coverage' (*ivi*, p. 38). Second, ProQuest includes theses and academic journals among other things, excluding outlets such as radio and television (TV). Yet, the authors presented their results in terms of 'media coverage' (*ivi*, p. 39). Third, articles were grouped based on whether they were found in 'Experts media' or 'Public media' (*ibidem*), without explaining the sources these included. Fourth, queries were only searched for in English and it is not clear whether acronyms were used. Fifth and last, the coverage start date issue mentioned above was also in this case overlooked.

3. Theoretical Framework

As we have seen, a vast array of well-being metrics has been developed over the last decades. Their development has been driven by the intention to provide better measurements of well-being but, most importantly, by a desire to put well-being at the heart of policymaking. At its deepest level, moving "beyond GDP" does not indeed just involve measuring well-being through different metrics but guiding 'policy beyond GDP' and make well-being become the 'ultimate' goal of policymaking (Laurent, 2018, p. 31, 160, respectively). In other words, it requires not only a change of the metrics that are taken as reference, but also of the policies that are adopted and the way these are planned and assessed. Ultimately, thus, to investigate the factors that promote or inhibit the use and impact of well-being metrics means to investigate the factors that promote or inhibit policy change, which is indeed why previous research examined whether there were examples of changes in policy attributable to their use (see 2.11.1). To be sure, policy change is only one aspect of change. Changes in outcomes, for instance, are no less and in fact even more important. However, it is *the* aspect of change that matters most in this context: for a policy to improve outcomes, it needs to be adopted first and the evidence just reviewed shows that well-being metrics are yet to be translated into the policymaking process, let alone to produce any effects. After all, this is why the OECD, which

launched World Forums on Statistics, Knowledge and *Policy*, organised a workshop in 2019 on Putting Well-being Metrics Into *Policy Action*.

Different approaches to the study of policy change (and policy continuity) have been advanced. It would not be possible to go through each of them (for some concise reviews see Béland and Powell, 2016; Cairney, 2020; Cerna, 2013), so in this chapter I only provide a brief overview of the most relevant ones. I then explore and discuss one of them more thoroughly, Kingdon's (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) MSA, as this has been used frequently in political science (Cairney and Dones, 2015; Jones *et al.*, 2016; Morris and Rawat, 2016), especially among well-being scholars (e.g. Bache, 2013, 2019; Bache and Reardon, 2013, 2016; Hoff, Rasmussen and Sørensen, 2021). Finally, I explain how, despite it not explaining policy change, Kingdon's MSA helped develop my theoretical framework in combination with change theories advanced in other fields.

3.1. Policy Change and Policy Continuity

At the upper end of the spectrum, describing thus the 'most radical form of policy change' (Béland and Howlett, 2016, p. 135), is so-called paradigm change linked to the work of Hall (1993). According to Hall, who drew on Kuhn's (1970) work on scientific revolutions, policy change has three orders: a first-order change occurs when policy settings are redesigned; a second-order change occurs when policy instruments also mutate; finally, a third-order change – a 'paradigm shift' (Hall, 1993, p. 279) – occurs when, in addition to instruments and settings, goals change, too. The notion of a three-order change has been used among others by Bache and Reardon (2016) to analyse changes towards the adoption of a well-being agenda in the UK (see below). However, it has been argued that the very notions of paradigm change and policy paradigm have not been properly theorised and operationalised (Daigneault, 2013), generating thus different interpretations of their meaning (Cairney and

Weible, 2015), and that it is unclear whether a paradigm change entails a change in ideas or policy (Daigneault, 2014).

Somewhere in the middle of the policy-stasis continuum lie the concepts of incremental change and punctuated equilibrium. The former is linked to the work of Lindblom, who argued that 'political procedures are […] incremental' (1958, p. 300) resulting in policies changing 'almost entirely through incremental adjustments' (1959, p. 84), be these small or large (1979). Although different interpretations of the term exist (Hayes, 2017), incrementalism has been commended as a 'superior form of policymaking, rooted in realistic assumptions about mankind's inherent nature and capacities' (Hayes, 2001, p. 5). However, its critics argued that it is 'at best, an incomplete explanation of government policymaking and, at worst, a misleading one' (Baumgartner, Jones and True, 2007, p. 164) and according to Béland and Howlett (2016) it has lost centrality in the policy change literature.

The notion of punctuated equilibrium is linked instead to the work of Baumgartner and Jones (1993, 2012; see also Baumgartner, Jones and True, 2007) and suggests that political processes are characterised by long periods of stasis whose equilibrium is punctuated by periods of instability caused by exogenous shocks which create an opportunity to re-organise and change. Attempts have been made to test and prove the theory by looking at the distribution of changes and the emergence of leptokurtic distributions (Baumgartner, Jones and True, 2007; Baumgartner *et al.*, 2009). Nonetheless, Green-Pedersen and Princen (2016) noted that it remains unclear whether punctuated equilibrium describes a universal pattern whereas Prindle (2012) highlighted the problems connected with the application of a concept imported from evolutionary biology to political science.

Finally, at the end of the spectrum lies the notion of path dependence. A key concept in Historical Institutionalism (Greener, 2005; Hall and Taylor, 1996), this is linked particularly to the work of Pierson (2004, 2007) and it denotes the idea that 'history matters', i.e. that the time in which decisions are taken influences their

outcome, outcome which in turn is shaped by past decisions, meaning '*history is not a chain of independent events*' (Steinmo, 2008, pp. 127, 128, respectively, emphasis in original). Path dependence therefore highlights continuity rather than change (Béland and Powell, 2016), although according to Béland (2010) historical institutionalists have started paying increasing attention to policy change, especially through the introduction of concepts such as conversion and layering (Thelen, 2007) and drift and revision (Hacker, 2004; see also Hacker, Pierson and Thelen, 2015).

Nevertheless, Béland (2010, pp. 621-622, emphasis in original; see also Béland and Howlett, 2016) pointed out that such concepts '*describe* concrete episodes of incremental change without really explaining them'. In fact, one wonders whether a theoretical explanation of policy change exists at all. The idea that policy change has three orders can help us differentiate between different degrees of change but is less helpful when it comes to explaining why or why not such change occurred in the first place. Similarly, concepts such as incremental change and punctuated equilibrium tell us about the size and pattern or distribution of changes (hence the recurrent use of terms like small and large and the focus on leptokurtic distributions), leaving however a key question unanswered: what conditions need to be met for policy change to be brought about? Exogenous shocks can surely be part of the answer, but they cannot be the answer as not all policies change due to exogenous shocks and not all exogenous shocks lead to policy change (e.g. Nohrstedt, 2008). Most importantly, what brings change about is not the shock itself – it is the awareness that comes with it of the existence of a problem which stimulates the search for and application of solutions. And it is exactly the idea of change as a problem-solution interaction the defining feature of Kingdon's MSA, to which we now turn.

3.2. Kingdon's MSA

Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003), building on Cohen, March and Olsen's (1972) Garbage Can Model, developed a theoretical approach based on the identification of three streams to explain how items gain or drop agenda prominence and how that in turn may lead to or hinder policy change. First, there is the Problem Stream. This explores the factors that make problems gain or lose agenda prominence, such as exogenous events or changes in indicator trends. For Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003), a key stage at this point is the transformation of conditions into problems. All problems are indeed conditions yet not all conditions turn into problems – conditions become problems only when 'we come to believe that we should do something about them' (2003, p. 109). Second, there is the Policy Stream. This explores the factors that make policies – what Kingdon (*ivi*, p. 5, 20, respectively) also calls 'proposals' or 'solutions' – gain or drop agenda prominence, such as budget constraints and value acceptability. Third and last, there is the Political Stream. This explores the political factors – 'political events' or 'political forces' (*ivi*, p. 18, 20, respectively) – that make again both problems and solutions gain or lose agenda prominence, such as elections, changes in administration or swings of public opinion.

In addition, Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) introduced two concepts: policy windows and policy entrepreneurs. The former refers to opportunities for policy change that arise under certain conditions (see 3.4) and that, together with the merging (or coupling, in Kingdon's words) of all streams, increase the likelihood of an agenda item being turned into a decision. As Epp (2018, p. 18) summarised, policy windows constitute 'short-lived opportunities in which it is possible to upend the status quo'. It is called a Multiple Streams Approach, after all, because it is the merging of the three streams, leading to *agenda* change, that for Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) makes the soil fertile for *policy* change. By policy entrepreneurs Kingdon (*ivi*) meant instead people who have good contacts with and

enjoy a good reputation among policymakers and can therefore push for change, especially when a policy window opens. Policy entrepreneurs also help problems and solutions be identified, or to see old problems in a new way.

3.3. Kingdon's MSA in Well-being Research

A vast literature has emerged which has applied Kingdon's MSA (Cairney and Dones, 2015; Jones *et al.*, 2015; Morris and Rawat, 2016), also in the field of well-being research. Bache and Reardon (2013, 2016; see also Bache, 2019), for instance, used Kingdon's MSA to examine the rise of the well-being agenda and its impact on UK Government policymaking. According to their analysis, some interest already existed during the Labour governments that succeeded between 1997 and 2010, but it was Cameron's leadership, the work of the New Economics Foundation and Giovannini's 'strong personal commitment' (Bache and Reardon, 2013, p. 907; 2016, p. 78) which significantly contributed to making well-being gain agenda prominence. Despite that, however, the authors argued that 'political support was limited' and by 2015 well-being 'remained at best marginal in most policy areas' (2016, pp. 79, 114, respectively). The growth paradigm therefore 'remained dominant' (*ivi*, p. 121), with 'the lack of growth [... being] seen as the problem, not the pursuit of it' (2013, p. 909; see also 2016, p. 80). Bache (2013, p. 31) reached the same conclusions regarding EU institutions: while policy entrepreneurs such as Giovannini have contributed to making well-being gain agenda prominence, 'there is some way to go before the statistical programme being developed might be used by EU policy-makers to guide policy-making'.

Similarly, Hoff, Rasmussen and Sørensen (2021) attempted to find the barriers to the use of green national accounting in Danish policymaking, combining Kingdon's MSA with Streeck and Thelen's (2005) and Mahoney and Thelen's (2009) theories of endogenous change. They concluded that the formation of a new government in 2019

opened an 'opportunity for change', claiming however that 'it remains to be seen exactly how the GNA [green national accounting] and the new "green" model of the Danish economy will be used in the relevant ministries' (Hoff, Rasmussen and Sørensen, 2021, p. 7).

3.4. Three Streams, Three Flaws

In addition to the limitations that have already been highlighted by other scholars (for a review see Zahariadis, 2007; Morris and Rawat, 2016), the MSA suffers from three critical flaws: it identifies three streams whereas only two can be justified; it is based on an unclear, confusing and incoherent definition of policy windows and coupling; and, above all, it is wrongly presented as a theory of both agenda and policy change.

To begin with, in the Problems and the Policy Primeval Soup chapters, Kingdon (2003; see also 1993, 1994, 2001, 2002) analysed the factors that make problems and policies gain or drop agenda prominence, respectively. In The Political Stream chapter, Kingdon (*ivi*) analysed *again* the factors that make problems and policies gain or drop agenda prominence, only from a more political perspective. To put it differently, Kingdon made a list of factors that help problems and solutions gain or lose prominence and divided them into two streams, extracting what he called political factors and including them in a separate stream. Since these factors relate to way problems and solutions gain or drop higher agenda status, there is no reason for having a separate Political Stream as this is an extension, if not even a duplication, of the Problem and the Policy Streams.

Kingdon (2003, pp. 198-199) himself wrote that '[d]evelopments in this political sphere are powerful agenda setters. A new administration, for instance, changes agendas all over town as it highlights its conceptions of problems and its proposals', therefore showing that such developments are nothing but different ways through which *problems* and *solutions* gain or lose agenda prominence that fall within the

stimuli and constraints of the Problem and Policy Streams. Their powerful role as agenda setters does not derive from e.g. the mere change of administration, otherwise every such change would be an agenda driver which would mean that every administration is interested in the same issues. Rather, it derives from the fact that *that* administration places a certain problem or solution higher on its priorities. What factors, however, determine such decisions? We are back to square one – and that is exactly why the Political Stream is an extension, possibly a duplication of the Problem and Policy Streams. In fact, some of the drivers of and barriers to agenda change that Kingdon identified in the Policy Stream, such as 'public acceptability, and politicians' receptivity' (2003, p. 200) and 'ideology' (*ivi*, p. 133), are the exact same ones he identified in the Political Stream, such as the congruency of policies with 'the current national mood' (*ivi*, p. 20), 'politicians' receptivity' (*ivi*, p. 18) and 'the orientations of elected officials' and 'ideological or partisan distributions' (*ivi*, pp. 162-163).

Second, the core concepts of policy windows and coupling – which Kingdon used to explain and predict policy change – are extremely confusing and incoherent at best[19]. As for the former, Kingdon (2003, p. 166) interpreted these as 'opportunities of action' in which the three streams 'come together and are coupled' like when 'target planets are in proper alignment'. From this description, however, it is unclear whether policy windows open before or after coupling – and whether thus they are two different events – or whether both describe in fact the same phenomenon. This confusion is exacerbated by the term coupling. In theory, this derives from the word couple and describes the process of combining two things or ideas, and indeed Kingdon used it on some occasions in this sense (see below). Yet, as the quote above demonstrates, Kingdon also used it to describe the merging of *three* streams.

Five different interpretations thus emerge as possible: 1) coupling and policy windows both mean the merging of two streams; 2) coupling and policy windows both

[19] Kingdon never provided a definition of either but offered nevertheless several interpretations of their meaning on which the next paragraphs are based.

mean the merging of three streams; 3) policy windows open after coupling (merging of two streams); 4) policy windows open after coupling (merging of three streams); 5) policy windows (merging of two streams) open before coupling (merging of three streams).

At first glance, the last option seems the most valid. After all, Kingdon (*ivi*, p. 194) explicitly stated that 'coupling is most likely when a policy window […] is open', thus not only recognising that they *are* different and that coupling means the merging of three streams[20], but also that the opening of policy windows *precedes* coupling. Moreover, in the Policy Window chapter (and throughout his book more generally), Kingdon (*ivi*) treated coupling and policy windows as two different events, dedicating each of them separate sub-chapters. However, this interpretation goes against other uses of the term coupling that Kingdon has made (see below). Most importantly, it makes no sense from Kingdon's own perspective since a policy window is called so because it creates an opportunity for policy change. Yet, the merging of two streams does not create such opportunity. Indeed, what really drives change in his view is the convergence of all streams. As Kingdon (*ivi*, p. 195) argued, 'the probability of an item rising on a decision agenda is dramatically increased if all three elements – problem, proposal, and political receptivity – are coupled in a single package'[21]. Or, as he confirmed in the preface to the second edition of his book, 'big policy changes occur when the streams join' (*ivi*, xix; see also Kingdon, 2001, p. 332). After all, his is a three-stream model, not a two-stream one.

A closer look at the Coupling sub-chapter supports option 1 instead. In here, Kingdon (2003) interpreted coupling as the merging of the Policy Stream with *either* the Problem or the Political Stream. '[P]roposals […] suddenly […] become elevated

[20] Since if the emergence of a stream was enough for the opening of a window, then there would be windows all the time contrarily to Kingdon's (2003, p. 166) claim that they 'open infrequently', so windows must require the merging of at least two streams, and if they open before coupling, then this must denote the merging of three streams.

[21] Which again shows that for Kingdon coupling means the merging of three streams, evidence of which can also be found in Kingdon (2003, p. 19): 'the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policy proposals, and politics'.

on the governmental agenda', he wrote, 'because they can be seen as solutions to a pressing problem *or* because politicians find their sponsorship expedient. National health insurance, for example, has been discussed constantly […]. But the proposal rises on the agenda when the political stream […] *opens a window* that makes its timing propitious' (*ivi*, p. 173, emphasis added). From this example, it is crystal clear that a problem does not need to be on the agenda for the policy window to open. Coupling and the opening of policy windows represent thus the same phenomenon. If this was the case, however, both terms could be used as synonyms. Additionally, this would again make no sense from Kingdon's own perspective, since the likelihood of change is "dramatically increased" when all streams merge. Moreover, this would contradict Kingdon's previous interpretations of coupling and would leave us with no clue about what happens after all streams have merged and about the factors that might or not then lead to policy change.

What about options 3 and 4, i.e. the possibility that policy windows may open *after* coupling? Unfortunately, both are unrealistic. Indeed, the events that Kingdon (*ivi*) identified as determining for the opening of policy windows (either in the Problem or in the Political Streams – for Kingdon policy windows cannot open in the Policy Stream) are exactly the ones he identified as determining for the emergence of the same two streams: exogenous events, changes in administration, swings in public opinion, etc. So, it would not be possible for the same factors to lead to the development of a stream *and* the opening of a window at two different times (not to mention that by the time the window opens a problem might not be a problem or on the agenda anymore). To be sure, different factors from the same stream could open a window after all streams are merged. A change in administration, for instance, could take place when all streams are merged already. However, in this case, too, by the time such change takes place, the Problem or the Political Stream might have deflated and disappeared already.

Finally, option 2. If coupling and policy windows meant the merging of three streams, this would contradict Kingdon's (already incoherent) interpretation of both terms and make one of them superfluous. Apart from that, it would leave us again with no clue about the factors that from agenda change may lead to policy change.

Given Kingdon's MSA is often used to study policy change (and not just agenda change) – as reflected also by the fact that the concept of policy windows was found to be 'the most popular of all the MSA concepts' (Jones *et al.*, 2016, p. 24) –, it surprises the little attention that this issue has received and the confusion it has consequently generated. To give just a flavour, Saint-Germain and Calamia (1996, p. 65) understood policy windows as 'the convergence of the three streams'. Quite in the opposite way, Lober (1997, p. 13) believed their convergence 'resulted in a […] window opening', and so did Exworthy and Powell (2004). Béland and Howlett (2016, p. 222) also argued that the interaction of the three streams 'produce "windows of opportunity"', only to conclude that only after 'a policy window opens […] do the streams cross'. Bache and Reardon (2016, p. 34; see also Bache, 2019), instead, argued that '[w]hen policy windows are open, policy entrepreneurs can play a key role in coupling the streams', interpreting thus policy windows as preceding coupling, and so did Copeland and James (2014), Dudley (2013) and Zhenhua (2011).

Third and last, Kingdon framed his theory as one of agenda-setting *and* policy change (seeing the confluence of streams, the defining feature of his agenda-setting model, as a necessary precondition for policy change[22] – contradicting himself[23] –, so much so that he often treated agenda change and policy change to mean the same thing[24]). Once again, he did that by employing the concepts of coupling and policy windows. As we saw above, however, these were so poorly expressed that their

[22] '[T]o make it beyond that ['the governmental agenda'] to an agenda of active decisions, all three streams *must* be joined' (Kingdon, 1993, p. 44, emphasis added).

[23] 'In describing these processes, hard-and-fast rules and the specification of conditions that *must* be met seem less fruitful than a quotation of odds' (Kingdon, 2003, p. 208, emphasis in original).

[24] E.g. Kingdon (2001, p. 332, emphasis added) '[t]he biggest *policy changes* take place when all three of the streams join' and Kingdon (2002, p. 99, emphasis added) 'the greatest *agenda change* occurs at critical times of opportunity (open policy windows) when the three streams come together'.

meaning is totally unclear. Moreover, agenda change may *as well as may not* lead to policy change according to Kingdon (2003, p. 166) himself: '[b]eing on this decision agenda, of course does not insure enactment or favourable bureaucratic decision'. As he (1994, p. 219; 2001, p. 332; 2003, p. 208) indeed confirmed multiple times, the MSA is 'probabilistic'. This explains why well-being scholars who applied Kingdon's MSA found a discrepancy between the level of agenda and policy change achieved: the MSA explains the former, not the latter. This is not to say that understanding what factors drive agenda change is purposeless. Nonetheless, we want to know what promotes or inhibits policy change and not just agenda change because this may or may not lead to the former. An analogy with menu planning may be helpful here, since having a certain dish on a menu is no guarantee that people will order it.

3.5. A Bridge of Change Model

Kingdon may have provided unclear and incoherent definitions and taken a step too far when turning his agenda-setting approach into a theory of policy change, but his great contribution is having explained agenda change in terms of problems and solutions. And it is exactly problems and solutions that constitute the two pillars of the theory of policy change that I propose here drawing on Kingdon's MSA and change theories advanced in the fields of organisational behaviour, psychotherapy and decision analysis.

It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the above in detail. What is important to highlight is that several scholars in these fields have produced lists of steps (focused on problems and solutions) that need to be taken to bring about change in organisational or day-to-day contexts. Particularly relevant here is the work of Lippitt, Watson and Westley (1958) who identified seven such steps which include problem awareness, the examination of solutions and the selection of change objects, and that of Galpin (1996) who identified nine steps which include problem recognition

and the generation of solutions. Similarly, Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974, p. 111) developed a four-step procedure for change in human behavior, the very first one being the definition of a problem since 'it is obvious that in order to be solved, a problem first of all has to be a problem', problem recognition being thus a 'precondition in the search for its resolution'. Hammond, Keeney and Raiffa (1999, p. 15, 47, respectively, emphasis in original) proposed a similar list that puts centre stage the definition of problems, which 'determines the alternatives you consider and the way you evaluate them', and alternatives (solutions), highlighting the importance of awareness and recognition at this stage since '*you can never choose an alternative you haven't considered*'. Finally, it is also worth mentioning Prochaska and DiClemente's Stages-of-Change Model (1983). This includes five stages that lead to change, later extended to six (Prochaska and Norcross, 2001) and reduced again to five (Norcross, Krebs and Prochaska, 2011), starting with pre-contemplation (in which individuals may be aware of an existing condition but not willing to change it, or unaware at all) and contemplation (in which they recognise it as a problem). Although the model was limited to describing the stages through which change occurs, it implicitly postulated problem awareness and recognition as the very first requirements of any change attempts.

Building on Kingdon's MSA (which understands agenda change as a problem-solution interaction and emphasises the difference between problems and conditions) as well as on the above theories (which postulate problem and solution awareness and recognition as crucial elements for change), I argue that for policy change to occur the following conditions must be met:

1. A certain situation/characteristic must be known *and* identified as a problem;
2. One or more solutions must be available, known *and* regarded as viable;
3. There is the possibility, and the circumstances allow, to fix or overcome any problems of the solutions or of their adoption and use.

In the context of this thesis, these conditions translate as follows:

1. The flaws of GDP must be known *and* identified as a problem;
2. One or more of the well-being metrics available must be known *and* regarded as viable;
3. There is the possibility, and the circumstances allow, to fix or overcome any problems of the solutions or of their adoption and use.

As Kingdon (2003, pp. 18-19, 15, respectively) noted, '[p]olicy is not the sole province of analysts […] nor is politics the sole province of politicians' which is why he applied his approach to a wide range of 'participants' who together with policymakers influence agenda setting, such as interest groups and the media. For the most part, these are also the main actors involved in the context under examination in this thesis and indeed the ones that previous studies focused on, such as policymakers but also statisticians, interest groups and the media (see 2.11.1, 2.11.2) who indirectly can contribute to policy change or continuity. This, however, does not mean that for change to occur all stakeholders involved will need to meet the above conditions, since what suffices is that they are met from an overall perspective or by those who hold relevant positions of authority.

Nonetheless, despite sharing some similarities the above theory differs from Kingdon's MSA for several reasons. To begin with, this is a theory in the strictest sense of the term which lists the conditions that need to be met to obtain a certain result just like in the so-called hard sciences. This does not mean that there is no other way for change to occur, as unintentional change could always take place. For intentional policy change to take place, however, I argue that there must be awareness of, and agreement with, the reason why such change is needed and the solutions available, and the context must be favourable.

Second, I decided to not employ Kingdon's stream terminology. Kingdon spoke of three independent streams as if each had the same relevance, which is why he used the same word, stream, for all of them. In this case, while contextual circumstances surely play a determining role, problem and solution awareness and recognition play a much greater role as they affect those circumstances and can shape the means at one's disposal to bring about change: two islands may be disconnected, but if that is not seen as a problem a wooden girder will be used to make fire, not a bridge. I therefore speak of a Bridge of Change Model instead: the Problem Pillar is connected to the Solution Pillar by the Context Girder. If one or both pillars are missing or not fully developed, or if the context is not favourable for the two to be connected, the possibility of achieving policy change is undermined. The theory I am presenting can thus explain both policy change and stasis.

Third, although the number of conditions happens to be the same as the number of streams originally envisioned by Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003), and the first two evoke his Problem and Policy Streams, there is no such thing as a Political Stream. Instead, the third condition is intentionally open-ended to include all possible intervening factors, which may or may not have to do with politics *stricto sensu*. It could be argued that such condition is meaningless since it tells nothing about the circumstances that contribute to policy change. But that is exactly the point. By not restricting explanations to one factor or limiting the attention to certain fields, all options remain on the table and it is up to the researcher to find which ones are most or least relevant to the context under investigation. This also enables factors to reveal themselves without preconceptions, enabling the researcher to reveal forces at play that they may have knowingly or unknowingly ignored. This does not mean that the researcher cannot explore the importance of specific factors. In fact, as we shall see in Chapter 5 one of the research sub-questions investigated the role of the media whose importance has repeatedly been highlighted by previous studies (see 2.11.2). However, all the factors that may influence human behaviour cannot be

anticipated and reduced to a single formula and focusing only on those that previous research has suggested significantly undermines the possibility of fully understanding the complex multitude of factors at play. Furthermore, this does not mean that politics plays no role at all. In fact, politics is subsumed into all conditions as it can significantly affect problem and solution recognition as we will find confirmation multiple times throughout this thesis.

Fourth and last, in Kingdon's MSA differences in the levels of knowledge of problems and solutions between or within groups are not considered as the only thing that counts for the setting of the agenda is the emergence of the streams through e.g. a change in indicator trends in the Problem Stream. Additionally, while Kingdon (2003) did differentiate between problems and conditions defining 'problem recognition' (*ivi*, p. 18) as 'critical' (*ivi*, p. 198), he devoted only a few pages to the issue overall and included no questions to investigate the extent to which problems were being recognised as such in the interview schedule that he used (see *ivi*, p. 235). Therefore, in Kingdon's MSA if a problem emerges the Problem Stream develops *even if the relevant stakeholders are not aware or disagree on the underlying problem being a problem*, which significantly hinders the possibility of altering the status quo. Here, instead, problem awareness and recognition, as well as solution awareness and recognition, are elevated to the founding pillars of policy change.

4. Case Selection

4.1. What is a Case Study?

A case study might simply be described as the study of a case which can – yet is not necessarily meant to – help us gain a better picture of a wider reality. Yin (2003) takes a step further, defining a case study as a mixed-methods research strategy that focuses on contemporary phenomena at different units of analysis and which should be guided by some theoretical accounts. Morgan (2015, p. 291) provides an even more articulated definition, arguing that case studies focus on a 'bounded', 'real-life' whole, characterised by 'open-endedness' and the possible application of different research methods, which eventually lead to 'a complex, often narrated account'.

Different types of case studies have been identified (see Gerring, 2001; Lijphart, 1971; Seawright, 2016). It is not possible here to discuss all of them and their respective strengths and weaknesses. However, suffice it to say that case studies have been praised for: the full immersion that they provide in a case which enables more descriptive analyses and higher construct validity; their ability, by zooming in on a case, to reveal the level of complexity at work; and the possibility of identifying new hypotheses and develop new theories (Bennett, 2004, 2005; Bryman, 2004; Gerring, 2001; Morgan, 2015). However, they have also been criticised for their limited ability

to extend results to other cases; their lack of plenitude; and for the selection bias they are said to incur (Bennett, 2004; 2005; Blaikie, 2015; Gerring, 2001; for a response to all these points, see Flyvbjerg, 2006).

4.2. Generalisation and Crucial Case Studies

On the issue of limited generalisability, Bryman (2004) pointed out that many case study researchers have responded by simply counterarguing that their aim is not to generalise. Nonetheless, case studies *can* increase their external validity. As Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 226) noted, 'the strategic choice of case may greatly add to the generalizability of a case study' (see also Bennett, 2004, 2005). One way of choosing cases strategically is to focus on crucial cases (Eckstein, 2011). Eckstein (*ivi*, p. 147) originally defined crucial cases as cases that are 'somehow […] crucial for a theory'. There are two types of such cases: one that almost perfectly fits a certain theory and one that does not. Yet, since such cases are rare, Eckstein also spoke of least- and most-likely cases (cases in which a theory is least or most likely to be valid, but we find the opposite to be true). While the former are confirmatory, the latter are disconfirmatory (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2001, 2007).

Scotland and Italy could be seen, in the context of this thesis, as crucial cases based on a most-likely design. However, they are not crucial because they help disconfirm the theory I have presented earlier. They are crucial because given their high level of involvement (see next sections) we would consider both countries most likely to translate their interest in well-being into policy practice. They are crucial because they are on top of the list of countries that have shown interest in the well-being agenda: Scotland, one of the three 'success stories' Stiglitz focused on during his keynote address speech at the 4th OECD World Forum in addition to Bhutan and Canada (OECD, 2012, p. 24), and Italy, which 'has clearly a lead' in terms of integrating well-being in 'institutional policy frameworks' (Umbach in Calza, D'ambrogio and

Zangla, 2020, p. 12). They are crucial in the sense that *if change is not to occur here, then where?* Finally, they are crucial because, while the main aim of this thesis is not to generalise, their strategic selection can nevertheless help identify some of the factors that promote and inhibit change in similar contexts, and to corroborate or deny the relevance of factors identified by previous research.

4.3. The Crucial Cases of Scotland and Italy

Scotland and Italy are pioneers internationally in the measurement of well-being and the promotion of the well-being agenda. What follows below is a chronological summary of the most important initiatives and metrics that have been launched in both countries.

4.3.1. Scotland

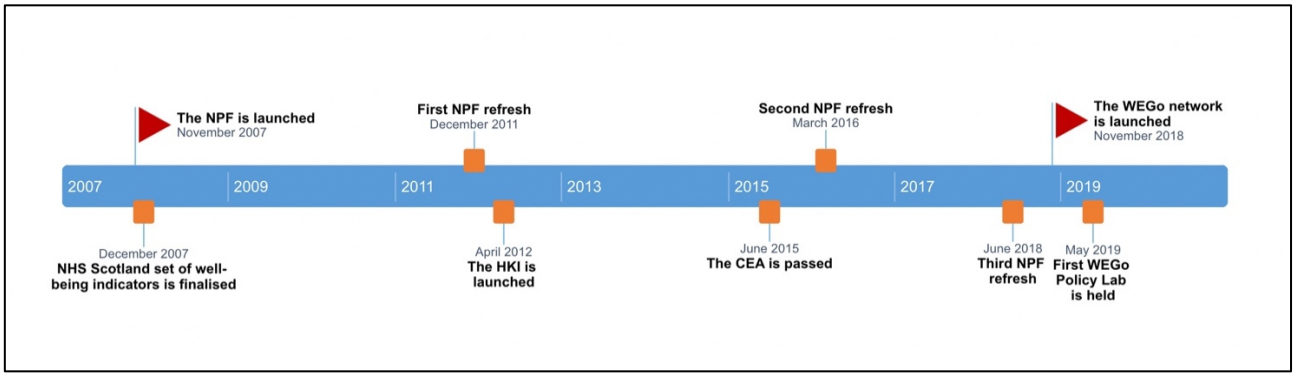


Figure 1. A timeline of the main initiatives and metrics launched in Scotland (author's own elaboration). For a larger version, click here.

In the early 2000s (thus right after Scottish devolution), the recognition that Scotland should develop its own well-being framework, and consequently the number of attempts to create one, grew increasingly. The word well-being would in some cases be absent, in others it would be used more explicitly instead. In 2001, for instance, the Scottish Government set up a Community Planning Task Force (CPTF). In 2003, this published a list of eleven recommendations. The very last one called for the development of a 'performance management framework' since 'Community Planning

will ultimately be judged on its capacity to make a difference to services and the overall quality of people's lives' (CPTF, 2003, p. 9).

Also in 2001, the Scottish Government launched the National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being, commissioning National Health Service (NHS) Scotland to develop 'a core set of national, sustainable mental health and well-being indicators' (Parkinson, 2006, p. 1). In December 2007, a list of 55 indicators was finalised, which was described as a 'significant milestone' for the development of 'a "flourishing" Scotland' (Parkinson, 2007, p. 3). The list included the renowned Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Health Scale, which was developed as part of the project. NHS Scotland agreed to update the indicators and produce an annual report to be published at a later date on the Scottish Public Health Observatory (SPHO) website[25].

Just a few weeks before that, in November 2007 the government led by the Scottish National Party (SNP) established the NPF, a dashboard of indicators whose number has been revised several times (they increased from 45 in 2007 to 50 in 2011, 55 in 2016 and 81 in 2018). Originally, it used to be underpinned by a Government's Purpose, eleven Purpose Targets and five Strategic Objectives, but it now only has one Purpose, a list of Values and eleven National Outcomes, meaning that all time-limited targets have been dropped. The NPF was launched as part of the 2007 Budget Spending Review delivered by John Swinney, then Cabinet Secretary for Finance. The SNP had just formed its first minority government, wanting to take a new approach and replace 'a proliferation of competing priorities, set by the previous administration, providing a unified vision and quantifiable benchmarks against which future progress can be assessed' (Scottish Government, 2007, p. 43). The NPF has thus a twofold aim. First, to 'provide the basis for agreeing with the different parts of the public sector' how they will contribute to the achievement of the government's agenda (*ivi*, p. 5). Second, to 'allow the people of Scotland to monitor the

[25] The first such report was published in 2009 (Taulbut *et al.*, 2009). The second and last one was published in 2012 (NHS Health Scotland, 2012).

government's performance and the performance of all our public sector' (*ibidem*). 'This means', the government concluded, 'that we will be judged – as we should be – on the results that we achieve; results which reflect real and meaningful improvements in public services and quality of life' (*ivi*, p. 45).

In August 2008, SPHO published Health and Wellbeing Profiles based on the analysis of 61 indicators for all Community Health Partnerships of Scotland (except Glasgow), as well as a *Scotland Overview Report* (SPHO, 2008)[26]. The Profiles were 'ground-breaking' (Bynner and Whyte, 2016, p. 4) but not a new idea, as they replaced previous Community (e.g. NHS Health Scotland, 2004a; see Lardner, 2005; SPHO, 2008) and Constituency Profiles (NHS Health Scotland, 2004b, 2004c), both first published in 2004 (the latter also updated previous Constituency Profiles developed by the then Public Health Institute of Scotland in 2001). An evaluation of the impact of the Profiles showed several examples of cases in which these were used to support local decision-making (SPHO, 2010; see also Lardner, 2005).

In March 2009, Community Development Alliance Scotland (CDAS) organised a conference in Dundee to discuss new measures of progress and how to make well-being achieve a higher impact on Scottish policymaking (CDAS, 2009). Several final recommendations were made, among which was the need to create more reliable and legitimate metrics.

In 2010, Carnegie UK Trust hosted a Round Table on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress in Scotland (Smith and Herren, 2011). This produced twelve recommendations specifically addressed to the Scottish Government. Whilst participants praised indeed the NPF for being 'ahead of the curve of political thinking', the authors criticised the government for failing 'to put these Purpose Targets centre stage in either reporting on progress or in decision making' (*ivi*, p. 20, 25, respectively). They also warned that 'in Parliament [...] and civil society [...] the NPF

[26] The last such report was published in 2015 (Karanwal *et al*., 2015).

seems little known and even less understood' (*ivi*, p. 20). Few months after the Round Table, Carnegie UK Trust joined thirty civil society organisations, led by Friends of the Earth Scotland, Oxfam Scotland and WWF Scotland (2011), for the release of a briefing which included additional recommendations.

Between 2010 and 2011, the Glasgow Centre for Population Health started working on the Glasgow Indicators Project (GIP, Whyte and Lyon, 2013). The project aims at influencing local policymaking and developing a democratic approach to measuring well-being. It consists of an online dashboard of indicators (called Understanding Glasgow) selected from twelve domains that enables users to monitor progress.

In 2011, Swanepoel and Wilson (2011) investigated the views of civil society organisations in Scotland on the inadequacies of GDP and potential alternatives to it. While they found consensus on the former, they found no agreement as for what metrics should be promoted with organisations emphasising 'the importance of taking into account criteria closest to their explicit areas of interest' (*ivi*, p. 23).

In 2012, Oxfam Scotland (2012, p. 6) launched the Humankind Index (HKI) to develop 'a more holistic and representative measure of progress'. The HKI aggregated a set of indicators whose choice was influenced by Scots themselves through a series of public consultations. The HKI was described as a 'commendable example' by Stiglitz (Barlow *et al.*, 2014, p. 14) but was reiterated only once in 2013 (Oxfam Scotland, 2013). Evaluating the impact of the HKI, Oxfam concluded this succeeded in changing the perception of Oxfam Scotland and influencing the well-being debate. However, it also stated that 'Oxfam Scotland has lost momentum' and lamented that 'Scottish Government Ministers […] are reluctant to divert policy and resources from improving employment and GDP as these headlines will ultimately be what they are judged upon by political opponents and national media' (Barlow *et al.*, 2014, p. 5, 29, respectively).

Also in 2012, Carnegie UK Trust looked at six case studies to produce a series of recommendations addressed to the UK and Scottish Governments to help them turn

well-being from a measurement exercise into actual policy practice (Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012; see 2.11.1). In a similar report focused on Scotland and published right after, the Trust strongly praised the Scottish Government for the NPF (Wallace, 2013). It also warned it, however, not to be complacent since the NPF was said to lack legitimacy, to not be built into programme evaluations and to lack a wide supporting coalition (*ivi*).

In the same period, Scotland's Future Forum (SFF), a think-tank within the Scottish Parliament, organised a seminar series on Rethinking Wellbeing to foster debate about well-being (SFF, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b). Among the many issues discussed, some participants pointed out 'the primacy' still 'accorded to GDP' (2012a, p. 4) and how, despite the economic crisis and the increasing interest in well-being, 'it does seem to be business as usual' (2013a, p. 7).

In 2014, the Scottish Universities Insight Institute (SUII) organised a series of programmes on Understanding, Measuring and Promoting Wellbeing which included projects such as Good Lives and Decent Societies (GLADS – Woods, 2015; Woods and Jarvie, 2015). GLADS's aim was to 'facilitate knowledge sharing' and discuss 'strategies for integrating wellbeing into policy-making and action' (Viatte, Suojanen and Heins, 2014, p. 2). One of the metrics discussed during GLADS workshops was the NPF. Anne-Marie Conlong – then Head of the Performance Unit at the Scottish Government – stated that this was being under-used within both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament (LINK, 2014)[27]. Project participants called instead for a 'more user-friendly' presentation of the NPF and for the government to put 'less emphasis on economic growth' (Viatte, Suojanen and Heins, 2014, p. 18).

In 2015, the Scottish Parliament passed the Community Empowerment Act (CEA). The Act requires all Scottish Ministries to determine National Outcomes for Scotland and to do so any time within a five-year period from their latest refresh after

[27] Similar concerns were raised by Scottish Environment LINK (2016, p. 1 and 2017, p. 1, emphasis added): '[f]or the NPF to have any impact, *it needs to be used*'.

having consulted those they deem appropriate and the Scottish Parliament. Scottish public authorities 'must have regard' to such Outcomes (CEA, 2015, 1-1-8), however the Scottish Parliament does not need to. The Act also mandates that Scottish Ministers 'prepare and publish reports about the extent to which the national outcomes have been achieved' (*ivi*, 3-1), specifying however that such reports can be published whenever 'the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate' (*ivi*, 3-3). Moreover, the CEA does not specify the progress of which indicators Scottish Ministries should report and reporting on progress of the whole NPF is not required and indeed lacking. The Local Government Committee (2018, p. 1) – which led the first National Outcomes consultation – commented that the approach to government inspired by the NPF was 'given a statutory basis' in the CEA. Yet, all the CEA did was to introduce the obligation to revise National Outcomes regularly – it introduced no actual obligation to use the NPF or to meet specific targets (in fact, all time-limited targets which characterised the early version of the NPF were again dropped in 2018).

In line with the provisions of the CEA, Carnegie UK Trust and Oxfam Scotland were asked to conduct a public consultation, as part of which stalls and discussion groups were organised between 2016 and 2017 to listen to people's opinions on what Outcomes Scotland should have adopted (Coutts and Stuart, 2018; Ishani, 2018). Eventually, a full revision of the NPF was undertaken, and a dedicated NPF website launched in June 2018[28]. Before then, information was available on the Scottish Government's website under the section Scotland Performs.

In addition to the refresh of the NPF, the year of 2018 also saw the launch of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll), a global network of 200 stakeholders aiming to promote a well-being economy. WEAll was co-founded by Katherine Trebeck (former Senior Researcher at Oxfam Scotland who helped develop the HKI), who also co-founded WEAll Scotland in the same year.

[28] www.nationalperformance.gov.scot

Also in 2018, and after input from WEAll (Abrar, 2021), the Scottish Government (2019a) co-established together with the Governments of Iceland and New Zealand the WEGo network. WEGo is a knowledge-sharing platform in which members share their expertise, especially through Policy Labs, and help each other build a well-being economy. Membership of WEGo has grown and it currently comprises also the Governments of Finland and Wales.

In May 2019, the first WEGo Policy Labs were held in Edinburgh. In the same month, the Scottish Government (2019b) published the first *Scotland's Wellbeing* report, an "all Scotland" report that showed the then most recent trends of most of the NPF indicators. To date, this has not been turned into an annual publication and remains a one-off exercise, not to mention that it does not comment on policy and may therefore not be helpful to parliamentary committees (Liddell, 2019). In July the same year, the First Minister (Sturgeon, 2019) gave a speech on well-being at the Technology Entertainment Design (TED) Edinburgh Summit which at the time of writing (February 2022) has been watched more than two million times on TED's website.

Most recently, the Scottish Government (2020a) published a report on the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) on Scotland's well-being and a guide to *Outcomes-focused Policy Making in Scotland* (2021a). In October 2021, the University of Glasgow hired Dr Gerry McCartney as Professor of Wellbeing Economy who will help establish a research centre in the area and a Master of Science in Wellbeing Economy.

4.3.2. Italy

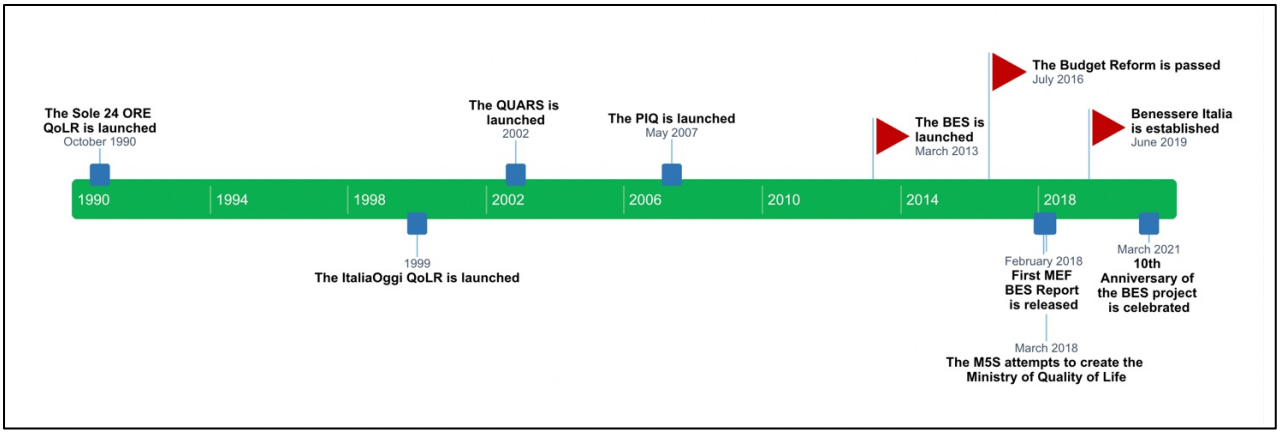


Figure 2. A timeline of the main initiatives and metrics launched in Italy (author's own elaboration). For a larger version, click here.

Compared to Scotland, Italy has a much longer and established history of well-being measurement resulting from a long-standing interest in happiness and so-called Civic Humanism (see Porta, 2016). In the 1940s, for instance, Giorgio Fuà (1941; see also 1940) already explored the issues of measuring collective well-being. It was however in the late-1960s and early 1970s that well-being research started to grow (after all, it was in 1968 that Aurelio Peccei co-founded the Club of Rome). In 1971, Formez, a public research centre, published what 'would remain for several years the only attempt in Italy to draft a blueprint for a social budget' (Zajczyk, 1994, p. 297; see also Di Franco, 1989). Four years later, ISTAT (1975) published the first *Social Statistics* volume. In 1976, the city of Milan developed a 12-domain framework to identify which of the 20 areas the city was divided into were performing best or worst 'to know how to determine the investments [required]' (Di Franco, 1989, p. 72; see also Vitale, 2007). In the same year, the Lombardy Region started to work on a regional social budget to develop 'a file containing all the social data necessary to make relevant policy decisions' (Martinotti, 1978, p. 159).

By 1990, different attempts had thus been made to measure well-being, although fragmentedly and resulting only in one-off exercises. It was in this year, however, that things changed with the publication of the Sole 24 ORE Quality of Life Ranking (Sole 24 ORE QoLR), calculated for all Italian provinces and updated yearly

since, which to date remains the most popular metric in the country. The ranking is published by *Sole 24 ORE* (a business newspaper owned by Confindustria, the General Confederation of Italian Industry), usually in December. Despite its popularity, its 'nature' has however been described as 'typically journalistic' (Maggino and Nuvolati, 2012, p. 1). Indeed, each indicator is given the same weight and the final ranking is measured by calculating their simple arithmetic mean.

In 1999, a very similar metric was published by *ItaliaOggi*, another business newspaper, in collaboration with the Sapienza University of Rome. The ItaliaOggi Quality of Life Ranking (ItaliaOggi QoLR) is also published annually at the end of the year.

In 2003, the Florence City Council and the Department of Statistics at the University of Florence worked together to define a set of well-being indicators to inform local policymakers (Maggino, 2006). Although it was expected to lead to the development of a system of indicators to be constantly updated, the project turned out to be a one-off.

In 2004, Sbilanciamoci! – an alliance of several civil society organisations – published the Index of Regional Quality of Development (QUARS) which ranked all 20 Italian regions based on their level of progress (Mazzonis, 2004), a pilot version of which was already issued in 2002 (Sbilanciamoci!, 2002; see also Femminis, 2003). Updated yearly since, the QUARS was last iterated in 2012 (Gnesi *et al.*, 2012).

In 2007, the Symbola Foundation launched the Prodotto Interno Qualità (PIQ, which sounds like *prodotto interno lordo* or PIL, GDP in Italian) with the intent of breaking up GDP not to measure well-being explicitly but the share 'of the Italian economy [that] is linked to quality' (Symbola, 2007, p. 3). PIQ was reiterated in 2010, 2011 and 2012[29].

[29] Symbola also released two local PIQ reports, one for the Lazio Region (2008) and one for the Tuscany Region (2009), both one-off studies.

In 2010, Confartigianato (2010), the largest Italian organisation representing handcraft firms, developed a Beyond GDP Index which turned out to be a one-off exercise. However, the year of 2010 also saw the establishment of the Italian Association for Quality-of-Life Studies (AIQUAV) and, most importantly, under the new presidency of Giovannini ISTAT started working with the National Council for Economics and Labour on the construction of the country's official well-being framework, the BES. A public consultation was undertaken which included the surveying of a representative sample of 45,000 people (Giovannini and Rondinella, 2012). A Steering Committee was created to select the domains of the framework (12), for which a Scientific Commission identified ca. 130 indicators (until 2020, when they increased to 152).

The first BES Report was released in 2013 with the intention of becoming Italy's 'statistical Constitution' (ISTAT, 2013a, p. 8) and has been iterated annually since. Contrarily from other metrics, no overall composite BES index has been created although composite indices for individual domains have. Also in 2013, ISTAT (2013b) launched a variation of the BES called UrBES (from the Latin word *urbs*, tr. city) for the measurement of well-being at the city level. UrBES was only reiterated once (ISTAT, 2015).

In 2016, two important developments took place. First, the Alleanza Italiana per lo Sviluppo Sostenibile (ASviS, tr. Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development), a group of almost 300 different stakeholders whose main aim is to promote the 2030 Agenda, was launched. Since its inception, ASviS's spokesman used to be Giovannini, who however resigned from the role in February 2021.

Most importantly, in 2016 the Italian Parliament reformed the country's *Legge di bilancio* (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2016), or Finance Bill, this being the piece of legislation through which the parliament approves the state's budget. As part of the reform, a Committee for Equitable and Sustainable Well-being Indicators (CIBES) – among which sat Giovannini – was created and tasked to select a set of well-being indicators,

and the Ministry of the Economy and Finance (MEF) was mandated to issue two documents annually. First, an Appendix to the Economic Planning Document (DEF) – the country's budgetary plan – which monitor the trend of the selected indicators over the previous three years and make forecasts about the next three ones to assess and predict the impact of public policies on such indicators, to be presented by April 10 (this being the last day the DEF can be presented to parliament). Second, a Report on their trends to be presented to parliament by February 15. The MEF (2017) claimed that in so doing Italy became the first country in the EU and in the G7 to introduce such requirements, but it was actually preceded by France and its so-called "Sas Law" (Laurent, forthcoming).

In April 2017, the government provisionally included four indicators in the DEF as an experiment (MEF, 2017). Eventually, the CIBES (2017) selected 12 of them. Since 2018, these 12 indicators (among which there is no subjective indicator, except for Healthy Life Expectancy which is a hybrid) are included in the above Appendix and Report.

In March 2018, the Five Star Movement (M5S, according to the Italian acronym) attempted to nominate Lorenzo Fioramonti as Minister of Economic Development and Filomena Maggino (AIQUAV Founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Social Indicators Research*) as Minister of Quality of Life and Sustainability, a Ministry that the M5S proposed to create. Fioramonti was eventually nominated Minister of Education (a role which he resigned from in December 2019), and the Ministry of Quality of Life was not created.

In May 2018, the Rome City Council presented the findings of its first BES Report (Roma Capitale, 2018), making of Rome the first city in Italy to have developed its own BES framework.

In March 2019, the catholic newspaper *Avvenire* launched the Avvenire BenVivere Ranking (ABR) and, most importantly, in June of the same year the first government led by Giuseppe Conte established Benessere Italia (tr. Well-being Italy),

a steering committee part of the Prime Minister's Office tasked to coordinate and monitor policies of all ministries to promote well-being. Maggino was appointed President.

In February 2021, a new government was formed led by former President of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi. As part of it, Giovannini was appointed Minister of Infrastructure and Transport. Despite that, Benessere Italia was dismissed. Just a few days after, ISTAT celebrated the 10th anniversary of the BES project during a high-level event in which the 2020 BES Report was released. In September, Sbilanciamoci! published the Benessere Interno Lordo, a composite index of well-being developed using BES indicators (Germani *et al*., 2021). In October, the Pontifical Academy of Mary appointed Maggino Coordinator of its newly-created Department of Integral Well-being.

4.4. Scotland and Italy: Similarities

Some of the key contributors to the global well-being debate come from or have long been based in Italy or Scotland. Examples include, to name but a few, Maggino, Fioramonti, Peccei and Trebeck. Perhaps the most important one is Giovannini. Indeed, not only has he strongly promoted the well-being agenda in Italy, but also in the UK and in the EU (Bache, 2013; Bache and Reardon, 2013, 2016; see 3.3) and at the OECD (Layard, 2020; Seaford, 2013; see 2.9).

Unsurprisingly, many Italian and Scottish stakeholders have long known and been collaborating with each other. Giovannini, for instance, was invited in 2015 by the SUII to give a presentation on well-being at the Scottish Parliament (2015b) and the University of Aberdeen (2015c). Two years later, Fioramonti was invited by Carnegie UK Trust (2017) to present his book *The World After GDP* at the Scottish Parliament and asked to chair one of the panels of Scotland's Inclusive Growth Conference (Scottish Government, 2017a). In fact, it was Fioramonti who initially

introduced the idea of what eventually became WEGo, idea which he shared with Trebeck (Abrar, 2021). In the same year, Trebeck and Fioramonti were among the speakers of an Economic Development and Social Well-Being symposium organised by the M5S (see Trebeck, 2017). We must also remember that the Club of Rome was co-founded by none other than Peccei, an Italian entrepreneur, and Alexander King, a Scottish chemist.

Furthermore, both countries have long been cooperating with each other and leading on well-being research at the EU level. Although Scotland did not participate individually, the UK is the only country to have taken part in all the EU-funded projects discussed above (see 2.11.1) plus e-Frame (European Framework for Measuring Progress) and Web-COSI (Web Communities for Statistics for Social Innovation), two projects focused on the production of well-being statistics (Table 1). Italy was not directly involved in PASTILLE, POINT and BRAINPOoL. However, several Italian stakeholders were invited to participate in BRAINPOoL (see van Bree and Slob, 2014) and the only national and regional metrics within Europe researched in the project's First Work Package were UK and Italian ones (see Hák *et al.*, 2012). The fact that 9 out of 19 members in the e-Frame Consortium were either from Italy or the UK and the launch of MAKSWELL in 2017 (led by Italy and with the participation of the UK), further demonstrate the leading role and the continuous interest of both countries in well-being research. The NPF (Boarini and Smith, 2014) and the BES (Noll, 2014) were also among the best practices or model examples discussed in e-Frame, and Scotland and Italy were two of the seven case studies analysed by the OECD (Exton and Shinwell, 2018; see also Durand, 2018).

	PASTILLE	POINT	In-Stream	BRAINPOoL	Web-COSI	e-frame	MAKSWELL
Austria	✓		✓				
Belgium		✓		✓			
Czech Republic			✓	✓			
Denmark		✓ Coordinator					
Finland		✓					
France	✓			✓		✓	
Germany			✓ Coordinator	✓			✓
Hungary							✓
Italy			✓ Scientific Coordinator	(not member but QUARS only European regional metric studied)	✓ Coordinator	✓ First and Main Coordinator	✓ Coordinator
Malta		✓					
The Netherlands				✓ Main Coordinator		✓ Second Coordinator	✓
Slovakia		✓					
Switzerland	✓						
UK	✓ Coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1. Participating countries in selected research projects (author's own elaboration).

Finally, in 2017, exactly when I started this PhD, an independent movie started to be filmed narrating the efforts made by two key activists in their respective countries to promote the well-being agenda[30]. The two countries in question are Scotland and Italy, and the two activists are none other than Trebeck and Fioramonti. This is just another demonstration of the relevance of both countries in the well-being debate, and of the right timing of their selection.

4.5. Scotland and Italy: Differences

There are, however, also differences to take note of. First, ISTAT ran a large public consultation prior to the development of the BES with a representative sample of the Italian population of 45,000 people. The Scottish Government, instead, ran a consultation on the National Outcomes but only after 11 years through stalls and discussion groups organised by Oxfam and Carnegie UK Trust using convenience

[30] https://wellbeingeconomies.film

samples for a total of about 600 participants (see Coutts and Stuart, 2018; Ishani, 2018).

A second related difference is the independence of the two countries' official frameworks. Whereas in Italy the BES is overseen by ISTAT, an almost fully independent statistical body, in Scotland the NPF is handled by the Scottish Government, meaning the selection of the indicators is mostly, if not even entirely, a political process.

Moreover, whereas in Italy ISTAT releases updates of the BES on a yearly basis (and so does the MEF), in Scotland there is no annual "NPF Report" as the first such publication was released in 2019 and has so far remained a one-off. This means there is no report that can be consulted to easily monitor progress and no focusing event throughout the year for promoting the NPF to the media.

A further difference is the level of involvement of civil society. In Scotland, dozens of organisations have shown interest (as documented above and by Heins and Pautz, 2021), although many are not leading on well-being anymore. In Italy, instead, there are not as many organisations engaging publicly and as actively. Nevertheless, in both countries we have seen the development of key alliances – WEAll in Scotland and ASviS in Italy – which have now become authoritative players in the field.

Finally, as highlighted above, Italy has a longer, more established history of well-being measurement. This explains the greater richness of data of the BES compared to the NPF (for which at the time of writing, February 2022, six indicators still need to be developed); why the methodology of the BES has been praised and exported worldwide, with the Adjusted Mazziotta-Pareto Index – used to combine non-substitutable indicators and developed by two ISTAT researchers – adopted also by Spain, Colombia and Mexico (Mazziotta, 2021); and why two volumes have been published by Springer on the measurement of well-being in Italy (Bianco, Conigliaro and Gnaldi, 2019; Maggino and Nuvolati, 2012), whereas no similar Scottish-specific publication exists to date.

5. Research Questions

Despite being at the forefront of the well-being debate, neither Scotland nor Italy has ever been studied before in the context under investigation[31]. As outlined earlier, this thesis therefore answers one main research question:

- What factors promote or inhibit the use and impact of well-being metrics in Scotland and Italy?

Previous research already highlighted the importance of several factors (see 2.11.1), such as the prioritisation of economic growth, the perceived inferiority of subjective indicators, and the media's alleged lack of interest. However, such factors were not studied systematically or not at all in the Scottish and Italian contexts. Additionally, as we have seen many different metrics and approaches have been proposed, some aiming to replace GDP (and reconsider or abandon the pursuit of economic growth), others to complement it (either with composite indices or

[31] Except for Italy in MAKSWELL (see 2.11.1). However, MAKSWELL was focused mainly on the regional level (whereas the focus of this thesis is on the national and, to a lesser degree, the city level), it had different aims, little primary research was conducted, and results were published when I was already writing up.

dashboards, or both) and still others to amend the way GDP is measured. Yet, which solutions are deemed viable and which not and what the preferences of the main stakeholders involved are remains largely unknown, especially those of policymakers and journalists who, despite the crucial role the media have been said to play, have almost never been consulted. Moreover, in Chapter 4 we saw that, despite increasing interest in well-being, several metrics in Scotland and Italy were recently terminated. However, we do not know what factors determined such decisions which could explain this apparent contradiction, nor what the sources of recent interest in well-being in both countries are in the first place. As previously claimed, to investigate the factors that promote or inhibit the use and impact of well-being metrics means to investigate the factors that promote or inhibit policy change. For policy change to be brought about, I have argued, three conditions need to be met. This thesis therefore also aimed to answer a series of sub-questions divided into three themes as per the above theoretical framework:

Problems

- Are stakeholders aware of the flaws and limitations of GDP, and do they see them as a problem?

Solutions

- Are stakeholders familiar with well-being metrics and do they see them as viable solutions? What, in particular, are their views on the helpfulness and reliability of subjective indicators of well-being and their preferences regarding the range of solutions available? What are the sources of recent interest in the well-being agenda?

Context

- What role are the media thought to play, if any, and how do journalists perceive the newsworthiness of well-being metrics, particularly Scotland's and Italy's official frameworks? What other factors have facilitated or inhibited the use and impact of well-being metrics? Why, despite increasing interest in the well-being agenda, have some stopped publishing their metrics?

Despite the key role that the media have been claimed to play (see 2.11.2), previous studies that attempted to investigate the media coverage of well-being metrics employed unrobust methodologies, were limited to newspapers (or contrarily extended to all sorts of documents), restricted samples of metrics and overlooked Scotland and Italy[32]. An analysis of media coverage of well-being metrics in both countries is therefore lacking. What is also lacking is an understanding of whether well-being metrics are an integral part of parliamentary debates (and by extension the policy process), as well as an understanding of the use that in both countries has been made of official well-being frameworks and the impact that these have had so far. Therefore, this thesis also aimed to answer the following final sub-questions:

Use and Impact

- What has the media coverage and the use of well-being metrics in parliamentary debates been to date (compared to GDP and related concepts such as economic growth)? What impact, if any, have official well-being frameworks had on policymaking according to their own developers and potential users, and have they ever used them?

[32] Morse (2015, 2016, 2018) did include the UK and Italy. However, no Scotland-specific study has ever been undertaken and the metrics that Morse analysed were relevant globally (i.e. no metrics specific to Scotland or Italy were included), not to mention again that he only searched for metrics in English.

6. Methodology

To answer the above questions, I used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. First, I used semi-structured interviews to get an understanding, among other things, of informants' knowledge of GDP's strengths and weaknesses and of the impact that selected metrics have had so far, consulting occasionally the sources mentioned by interviewees to critically evaluate their claims. At the end of each interview, I also asked informants to complete a survey and report their level of awareness of 18 well-being metrics. I then integrated and cross-checked the information I obtained with data that I collected from parliamentary archives and media monitoring tools.

6.1. Interviews

Conducting interviews enables the researcher to uncover people's perceptions and viewpoints (Blaikie, 2015; Bryman, 2004; Kvale, 2007; Punch, 2006; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Additionally, interviews can be helpful to understand someone's knowledge of a certain topic and, if flexibility is allowed for, to bring to light issues which the researcher did not initially consider. The choice of interviews as the primary method of this thesis is therefore well suited to answer the above research questions

and is indeed well aligned with previous studies that have investigated the drivers of and constraints to the use of well-being metrics in policymaking (see 2.11.1), all of which employed mainly or only the interview method.

6.1.1. The Choice of Semi-Structured Interviews

Three types of interviews are usually distinguished: structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were preferred over structured ones because they allow for more flexibility and interaction (Bryman, 2004; Kvale, 2007; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Given the theoretical framework adopted, it was indeed important to allow interviewees to express unsolicited opinions but also to enable me to ask follow-up questions or seek clarifications (on this last point see Robson and McCartan, 2016). Time was another determining factor, in that I expected several informants to have tight schedules which could be subject to unexpected changes (indeed, a few told me before or during the interview to have less time than we initially agreed). By pre-emptively having a back-up interview guide which combined questions on a similar topic into one or excluded them altogether if not wholly relevant – which would have not been possible had I conducted structured interviews – I managed to respond to such challenges effectively and to minimise any potential loss of content.

Semi-structured interviews were also preferred over unstructured ones, mainly because informants might have strayed onto irrelevant topics. Given the people I spoke to often lacked time, that would have prevented me from acquiring enough information. Moreover, it could have required me to frequently intervene to bring the conversation back on track and doing so might have demonstrated impoliteness, thus breaking the relationship of trust and respect tacitly agreed with the informant. In short, I required some degree of flexibility to be ready to handle unexpected issues

arising before or during the interview, and some degree of structure to ensure that this could be conducted within the interviewee's (and thus my) limited time.

6.1.2. The Identification of Interviewees

Between November 2018 and June 2020, I conducted 102 interviews with policymakers, statisticians, journalists and members of interest groups in Scotland (29 in total) and Italy (73)[33]. These were the main stakeholders studied by or whose role emerged as crucial in previous studies (see 2.11.1, 2.11.2) and from the analysis of the Scottish and Italian context (see 4.3.1, 4.3.2), as well as the intended audiences of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (Stiglitz *et al*., 2009). In addition, I also conducted 18 interviews with members of international organisations[34], of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission, and with the developers of global metrics (see footnote no. 43), plus one pilot interview with a member of a British NGO to test my interview guide.

To identify informants, I used different strategies. First, I took note of the name of the authors of all the documents I read about Scotland and Italy, and those of key people mentioned therein, too.

Second, I used the results of the analyses of media coverage and parliamentary debates (see 6.3, 6.4) to compile an up-to-date list of people in both countries who had mentioned well-being metrics and who were therefore likely to be interested in my research.

Third, when searching parliamentary archives, newspaper articles or transcripts of radio and TV shows (see 6.3, 6.4), I also used queries such as *GDP* and *economic*

[33] I could not speak to any statisticians in Scotland, which partly explains the lower number of interviews there. Also note that a minority of informants (two in both countries) held multiple roles at the time of the interview, had held multiple roles prior to that or took up a new role after it. Whenever this issue occurred, I included informants in the category that my questions primarily aimed to investigate.

[34] Both countries could not be studied in isolation because of the interplay between their political agendas and those of international organisations – some of which have significantly contributed to the increasing prominence of well-being and have also developed their own metrics – hence I also conducted interviews with members of the OECD and the EU. Due to space constraints findings will not be presented, but a few mentions will be made when relevant.

growth (whose results I show) or *degrowth* and *happy degrowth* for Italy[35] (not shown) to make a list of people who had mentioned these the most. I then contacted them to hear the opinions of those who might have disagreed or not been interested in my research and make the sample more balanced[36]. It is not my intention to contrast GDP with well-being as if the two were mutually exclusive. However, I found this exercise helpful as it provided me with a list of people that clearly saw GDP as a crucial metric and economic growth as an important objective. Eventually, although the majority of those I contacted never replied (which possibly confirms their uninterest in the well-being agenda), I still managed to schedule a few interviews this way, particularly in Italy.

Fourth, I took advantage of my work experiences to identify and invite informants in person. Having coordinated the release of a report on well-being for WWF Italy and AIQUAV and having worked as Research Intern for the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) turned out very helpful experiences in this sense.

Fifth, what also helped me was the so-called snowball technique, or simply asking interviewees if there was anyone that they thought I should have spoken to.

Sixth, I identified a large number of informants among the speakers or attendees at conferences on well-being that I myself presented at or attended. These included, among others, 16 key events: the 6th OECD World Forum (held in 2018 in Incheon, South Korea); the OECD Putting Well-being Metrics Into Action workshop (held in 2019 in Paris); the 3rd, 4th and 5th AIQUAV Annual Meetings (held in 2017, 2018 and 2019 in Florence); the 16th and 17th Annual Meetings of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (held in 2018 and 2019 in Hong Kong and Granada, respectively); the first Civic Economy Festival (held in 2019 in Florence); the 50th

[35] By the time I ran the search (2018/2019), no one had ever mentioned degrowth (typed also as *de growth*, *d growth* or *de-growth*) in the Scottish Parliament, whereas in the Italian counterpart hundreds of mentions were made. See 8.5 on the popularity of degrowth in Italy.

[36] Italian parliamentarians who talked about degrowth did so almost exclusively in a critical fashion, meaning the list I obtained included only parliamentarians who had criticised it.

Anniversary Conference of the Club of Rome (held in 2018 in Rome); the opening and closing ceremonies of ASviS's Festival of Sustainable Development (held in 2017, 2018 and 2019 in Rome); and the first WEGo Policy Lab (held in 2019 in Edinburgh).

6.1.3. Obtaining Contact Details and Drafting the Interview Invitation

In many cases I got informants' contact details at the above events[37]. In others, I had to search for their contact details online. Whenever I could not find these, I searched on Google for all their potential e-mail addresses in inverted commas to locate exact results[38]. Using this strategy, I obtained all e-mail addresses I needed. Yet, my mission was not accomplished yet as I still had to convince them to accept my invitation. For this reason, I put many efforts into writing the "perfect" message, which involved the following steps (a sample invitation can be found in Appendix A).

First, when sending e-mails, the subject would read 'Interview Invitation' and not 'Interview Request' (invitations seemed to me less likely to be rejected since they usually come from those who see a commonality of interests with the invitee, so they make them feel part of an invisible network of like-minded people, whereas *anybody* can make a request to *anybody*). Second, I kept my invitation short (150-180 words), avoiding too many details to not give the impression that specific knowledge was required. Third, I always tailored each invitation, citing whenever possible the findings of my analyses. Fourth, whenever someone recommended me to get in touch with the person I was writing to, I would always mention their name (after having obtained their consent). This made me look less of a stranger in the recipient's eyes and might have helped me gain greater authority and trust. Fifth and last, to seem proactive and

[37] In some instances, I had to conduct the interview on the spot, and occasionally I had no choice but to ask only one question. This was particularly the case when I introduced myself to high-profile stakeholders whom I knew would have been impossible to arrange interviews with otherwise. This, for instance, is how I managed to briefly talk to the then Prime Minister and Minister of the Economy of Italy in March 2019.

[38] "name.surname@employer.domain", "namesurname@employer.domain", "nsurname@employer.domain", "n.surname@employer.domain" and again all four changing the "@employer.domain" part with the name of the most famous e-mail providers.

organised and indeed to organise interviews quicker, I always mentioned the expected length of the interview and sometimes where and/or when this might have taken place, too. Overall, I sent out 168 invitations and 109 (65%) accepted, an acceptance rate almost three times higher than that of similar studies[39]. I cannot claim all the above is why I managed to arrange many interviews, but I do think it helped.

In one case my invitation was rejected but I managed to conduct the interview anyway by drawing on my tenacity and resourcefulness. The case in question is that of the Deputy Scottish First Minister, one of the "fathers" of the NPF. Initially, his assistants rejected my invitation, but his participation in my research was for me too crucial to relinquish. I thus travelled to Coupar Angus to one of his surgeries to see whether I could talk to him. I had no appointment and in fact could not participate as I was not a constituent. However, there were only five people queuing on the day and eventually the Deputy First Minister agreed to meet me, albeit for a short time, which was by far the most adventurous interview I conducted for this thesis.

6.1.4. The Interview Guide

My interview guide shown below contains a mixture of single, clear, open, non-leading, probing questions (see Yeo *et al.*, 2014) which aimed to investigate the extent to which each of the three conditions listed in Chapter 3 has been met, though to give a sense of coherence their order followed the topic being discussed. The same questions can be found in Italian in Appendix B.

Problem	1) What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of the GDP indicator?[40]

[39] In Thiry *et al.* (2013), for instance, 142 people were contacted but only 36 (25%) accepted.
[40] Asking about both helped me keep the question neutral.

Solution	2) In light of what you just said, do you think the measurement of GDP should be improved, for instance by including the impact of economic growth on the environment, would it be better to complement it with other metrics in the form of dashboards or composite indices, or should it instead be replaced altogether?
Problem	3) Do you think that a decrease in output or a non-growing GDP are a problem?[41]
Solution	4) Social and well-being indicators have been around for decades. What do you think brought them back onto the agenda?[42]
Solution	5) Among such indicators are subjective indicators of well-being. What are your views on their reliability and usefulness?
Context	6) *[If the interviewee was responsible for the development or promotion of a metric that ceased to be updated]* Why did you stop publishing the (metric's name)?
Use and Impact	7) Can you give me any examples of cases in which the (NPF or BES) had an impact on policymaking, leading to policy change?[43]

[41] There are two reasons why I did not ask the opposite question, i.e. if economic growth can be problematic. First, previous studies found a widespread support of economic growth (see 2.11.1). People's perceptions of decreases in outputs or zero-growth scenarios have instead rarely been investigated. Second, in the above studies the economic crisis of 2007/08 emerged both as a driver of change and as a barrier. This question thus helped me understand whether economic crises work as stimuli or whether they in fact stimulate interest in economic growth.

[42] There has been a significant increase in the number of metrics launched recently (see 2.10), not to mention that almost all studies that investigated the use and impact of well-being metrics were conducted after 2010 (2.11.1) and that of the seven EU-funded projects mentioned above (Table 1) six begun after 2008. This increase in interest followed a shift away from favouring well-being metrics that took place after the launch of the social indicators movement when a precarious economic situation shifted the attention away back to economic growth (Andrews, 1989; Fleurbaey and Blanchet, 2013), hence the "back onto the agenda". Note that since solutions are by definition linked to problems, this question enabled to reveal the factors that have made not only the well-being agenda but also the limitations of GDP gain prominence recently. It also helped explore the role, if any, that policy entrepreneurs have played and get an additional sense of informants' views on the impact that well-being metrics have had so far since they could of course disagree about well-being being a prominent theme on the political agenda.

[43] I also asked this question in relation to the metrics informants had been involved with (if so), such as the ABR, the GIP, the HKI, the HPI, the PIQ, the QUARS, the Sole 24 ORE QoLR, the WHR and the WWF LPI. Due to space constraints, findings will not be presented. In the case of Italy, since the BES was officially adopted in Rome (see 4.3.2), a local perspective will however be provided. This will help understand whether there is greater interest in well-being locally as suggested in Thiry *et al*. (2013).

Use and Impact	8) Can you give me an example of an occasion in which you used the (NPF or BES)?
Context	9) *[To all interviewees but journalists]* What role do you think the media play in promoting or hindering the use and impact of well-being metrics, if any at all?
Context	10) *[If the interviewee was responsible for the development or promotion of a specific metric]* Have you ever promoted the (metric's name) to the media? 10.1) *[If so]* How? What did you find particularly effective and what ineffective instead, and what results did you achieve? 10.2) *[If not]* Why not? What prevented you from doing so?
Context	11) *[When talking to journalists, I would tell them how many articles/segments I had found produced by them and, if none or a few, ask them]* Why did you never/rarely mention the (metrics' names) in your pieces/segments?
Context	12) *[When talking to journalists in Italy, I would hand them the then latest BES press review – see ISTAT, 2018 – and ask (the NPF is not press-released, hence I could not ask this question in Scotland)]* This is the latest BES press review. Can you have a look at it and tell me what its strengths and weaknesses are?

The guide above does not cover all issues discussed during interviews given that they were semi-structured. I shall also point out that I could not ask introductory questions about, for instance, the interviewee's role (as recommended by e.g. Yeo *et al*., 2014). To do that, as well as to introduce my research, maximise the time at my disposal and for 'the typical social greetings and small talk' (*ivi*, p. 187), I used instead the time between the moment I would meet the informant and the moment we would reach the interview venue.

Note that the guide includes two questions which asked informants to report examples of use and impact of the NPF or of the BES. Since in most cases this would be the first time for me to mention either, these questions helped me to uncover interviewees' awareness of these metrics because if interviewees were unaware of them this is when I would find out. Most importantly, they helped me to investigate the extent to which policy change has occurred in both countries and therefore test the robustness of my theoretical framework. To be sure, to assess the extent to which well-being metrics have impacted on policymaking would have required a different research project. However, the majority of informants, similarly to previous studies which investigated policy change in the well-being context (see 2.11.1), were among those who had been interested the most in the well-being agenda. Just like Scotland and Italy represent two crucial cases, the informants of this thesis are also crucial: if they are not aware of any examples of policy change, *who else will?* Likewise, if they have never used these metrics, *who else will have?*

Use and impact are interpreted here in a much simpler way than in Gudmundsson *et al.* (2009). Use may denote e.g. the referencing of well-being metrics in parliamentary speeches or newspaper articles. Impact denotes at its very core policy change and consists primarily in the adoption, change or dismissal of a policy based on its expected benefits for well-being and motivated by the decision to improve certain conditions whose state was informed by well-being metrics[44]. Note that use may or may not lead to, or be intended to lead to, impact. This, for instance, is the case of metrics that are used as ornaments by journalists (see Morse, 2013) to merely provide background information. Use may in fact even denote lack of impact, e.g. when journalists lament how a specific metric has not had any impact on policymaking. Conversely, impact necessarily requires use, though use may not

[44] The term policy change may initially suggest that change can only occur when a policy changes from x to y. However, this can also denote a situation in which a new policy is adopted or one in which a policy does not change from x to y as would have otherwise happened had well-being metrics not been considered.

necessarily be visible as in the case of someone who uses well-being metrics to inform themselves and adopt a certain policy without however using them in any discernible way. This is one of the reasons why, in addition to analysing the media coverage and parliamentary referencing of well-being metrics, I asked informants to recall examples of use and impact of such metrics, as the above analyses only tell us half of the story. Nonetheless, impact will often translate into use as e.g. the motivations behind the adoption or dismissal of a policy may be explained during a parliamentary speech that is also broadcast on TV. Hence, use may be a limited yet good proxy for policy impact (see 6.3, 6.4).

6.1.5. How Interviews Were Recorded, Stored, Transcribed, Translated and Analysed

In 95% of the cases, informants agreed for the interview to be recorded. To do that, I followed the advice of Arksey and Knight (1999) and used two devices so that if there was any technical issue another recording would be available. Files were saved by the two devices on external memory cards and from there copied to my laptop and tablet and stored momentarily for the purpose of transcription in a password-protected folder. Once the transcription was done, they were deleted from both devices but not from the memory cards they were initially saved in. Indeed, unless otherwise agreed, original tapes and their transcripts will be kept indefinitely (the only exceptions being my first six interviews – see 6.1.6). In the remaining 5% of the cases, informants did not consent to the interview being recorded. In such cases, I took notes while they were speaking. Notes, too, will be kept indefinitely unless otherwise agreed.

Once interviews were recorded, I had to transcribe them. Before I began my PhD, I looked for ways to reduce transcription times but could not find any. Morris (2015), for instance, presented no alternatives to manual transcription (and so did *Doing Interviews* by Brinkmann and Kvale by 2018 still). In late 2017, however, a friend

showed me her new phone and how she could send messages by just letting it transcribe everything she said instead of typing. I then searched for online voice recognition programmes and found out that Google Documents had a Voice Typing function available. By connecting the headphone and microphone ports of my laptop with a male-to-male aux cable, I made the internal microphone of my laptop capture the audio coming from its internal speakers. By then turning on the Voice Typing function and playing the recordings, I was able to get full transcripts, both in English and in Italian, without much effort[45]. By installing a virtual audio device on my tablet and configuring it as the system's audio input and output, I was even able to transcribe multiple interviews simultaneously. Transcripts were not always perfect. Indeed, Google does not add any punctuation and if the original tape had background noises a lot of fine-tuning would be needed. Nonetheless, this saved me an incredible amount of time. It is estimated that one hour of conversation takes up to 8 (Morris, 2015) or 10 hours (Robson and McCartan 2016) to transcribe. Given that the average interview lasted 1 hour and that I spent on average 1.5 hours transcribing per hour of material, this meant, assuming it takes 9 hours to transcribe every hour of conversation, that I went from an estimated required amount of work of 1,080 hours to just 180. In other words, I cut transcription times by 83%.

Google Documents can also translate documents. This meant I did not have to manually translate each of the Italian interviews. However, automated translations were less accurate than automated transcriptions, not least because interviewees would often speak with accents or use words or expressions which have no specific English counterparts. Translating thus required more input from me than transcribing. Nevertheless, this was not too time-consuming given that I only translated those parts of the interviews that I quoted directly.

[45] The name of the interviewee was not included, and I protected my Google account (from which transcripts were eventually deleted) using a strong, long password with both upper- and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols.

Regarding analysis, I did not deem it necessary to upload transcripts on programmes such as NVivo. Instead, while listening to each recording to check the accuracy of Google's automated transcriptions I highlighted in bold words or sentences which I found most relevant. This was much more helpful than generating codes (which, by the way, would have required extra time to create) as it showed me right away what part of the transcript to look at and what the informant had said. Also, since my questions were transcribed, too, and since their order was pretty much the same for most interviews, the questions themselves were sort of codes as they indicated what answers were about, facilitating the identification of data. After all transcripts were finalised, I re-read all of them to ensure I was consistent and did not miss any important information.

6.1.6. Data Protection and Written Consent

The project went successfully through an Ethical Review process and in 2018 I undertook an online training provided by the University of Edinburgh to ensure it complied with the then new General Data Protection Regulation. Before interviews started, I provided interviewees with a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and an Informed Consent Form (ICF). Interviewees kept the former and signed the latter, which I retained. While they were reading both, I always made myself available for questions. To minimise risk and ensure the names of those who wanted to be anonymised could not be deducted from the signatures on the ICFs, these were and are still stored in a locked filing cabinet separately from other research materials.

A draft PIS was sent for feedback to the then School's Data Protection Champion who, in turn, sought and received feedback from the University's Data Protection Officer. A first version of the PIS and ICF, built on the feedback I received, was used for a first round of six interviews. Further comments that I received by the above people helped me draft the final versions of both documents which I then used

for the rest of my research, a copy of which in English and Italian can be found in Appendix C and D. The main difference between the first and the final versions is the length of data retention: two years in the former, indefinite in the latter.

6.1.7. Oral Consent

In rare and exceptional cases, oral consent was sought in lieu of written one. This was particularly the case when I was speaking to high-level stakeholders at events in which it was impossible for me to hand in the above documents and for them to read them due to time constraints. In such cases, I would first briefly introduce myself and explain what I was doing, and then ask whether I could record and quote the person or not (recording their consent if so). Unfortunately, in two cases I could not seek oral consent, though I still managed to introduce myself.

6.2. Survey on Self-Reported Knowledge

As argued previously, knowledge of well-being metrics is a necessary (albeit insufficient) condition for conscious policy change to take place. Therefore, finding which metrics interviewees were aware of and which not was a key aim of this study. After all, the simplest inhibiting factor to the use of a certain metric could be that no one knows it. As argued in BRAINPOoL (Seaford, 2013, p. 22), '[e]ven if people are fundamentally sympathetic to the Beyond GDP agenda, they are not going to use the indicators if they don't know about them'.

6.2.1. How the Survey Was Run

The platform I used was Typeform[46]. To facilitate the analysis of data, I created a survey for each of the categories of people I spoke to in both countries, keeping

[46] www.typeform.com. When I was almost done with fieldwork, some of its features became accessible to Premium users only. This meant I had to switch to SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.co.uk) to survey one final participant.

however the metrics and their order the same[47]. Interviewees completed the survey on my tablet or on their own device in the case of remote interviews. Unfortunately, in some cases I could not ask interviewees to complete this task. For instance, when I conducted short interviews with high-profile policymakers or when informants had to terminate the interview in advance (in two such cases, however, they completed it afterwards from their own devices). Therefore, the number of respondents (75) was lower than the number of interviewees (120). Finally, the survey was completely anonymous.

6.2.2. The Sample of Metrics Surveyed

Although the nature of the task and the simplicity of the platform enabled participants to complete the survey quickly, I had to limit the number of metrics surveyed. This was to ensure participants would maintain some patience and concentration while completing the task, as seeing the number of questions left decreasing slowly might have made some respond thoughtlessly or refuse to do so altogether. The number of metrics that I surveyed in the end was 18, divided in three categories: those that I expected interviewees to know, those that I expected them to have at most heard of, and those that I expected them to have never heard of at all[48] [49].

The metrics in question were (Table 2):

Category	Scotland	Italy
Expected to know	Bank of Scotland QoLS, BLI, HDI, HKI, NPF, WHR	BES, BLI, HDI, ItaliaOggi QoLR, Sole 24 ORE QoLR, WHR

[47] In the case of Italy, the datasets containing statisticians' and members of interest groups' replies were combined in the analysis phase because of the small size of the latter which would have made no sense to show separately.
[48] My expectations were based on the evidence available on awareness and media coverage, however controversial (see 2.11.2), and on preliminary findings of newspaper coverage that I obtained in August 2018.
[49] Surveying metrics that interviewees may not know is important because if they are indeed unaware of them then they will have never used them.

Expected to have heard of	HPI, LPI, Monocle QoLS, SPI, uSwitch QoLI, WWF LPI	HPI, LPI, PIQ, QUARS, SPI, WWF LPI
Expected to have never heard of	BCI, EURSPI, GCI, GPI, ISEW, IWI	BCI, EURSPI, GCI, GPI, ISEW, IWI

Table 2. List of metrics surveyed.

All the above metrics are or used to be calculated for the country whose sample they belong to. In the case of Scotland, only the HKI, the NPF and the Bank of Scotland QoLS are Scotland-specific. This does not mean that the remaining metrics such as the WHR are irrelevant as they do look at Scotland but in the wider context of the UK.

The order in which metrics were presented was randomised (but again kept the same in all surveys). For each metric, respondents were asked to select between: A) I know it (and could explain it right now); B) I have heard of it (but could not explain it right now); C) I have never heard of it. What exactly knowledge meant was purposedly left open for interpretation. My aim was not to examine respondents' knowledge of the above metrics through some fixed "objective" criteria, but to let respondents report *their self-perceived knowledge*, just like life satisfaction surveys ask people to report how satisfised they feel with their life whose results might differ from "objective" evaluations. To be sure, answers could be affected by social desirability. However, this does not mean that findings will be unreliable but that, if anything, answers reporting unawareness will be an underestimation since one would feel pressured to show that they know a certain metric, not that they do not. Moreover, while answers related to the NPF and the BES will have been affected by the fact that these were the main, sometimes the only metrics mentioned during interviews (which may have made informants feel pressured to report that they knew them), interviews themselves provided an opportunity to triangulate sources (Denzin, 1978) and examine awareness of both in more depth.

6.3. Analysis of Media Coverage

The media are believed to play a crucial role for the success of the well-being agenda (see 2.11.1, 2.11.2). The level of media coverage received by well-being metrics is therefore one among several metrics that can be employed to gauge the success of the well-being agenda. In fact, since journalists often report what policymakers say, this also tells us whether and how frequently *policymakers* have been referring to well-being metrics publicly, which in turn reveals what is or what is not on the political agenda and what metrics are debated when decisions are being taken. Media coverage can thus reveal the salience of metrics, and, albeit limitedly and imperfectly, can be an indirect proxy for policy use and impact (see Hák *et al*., 2012). Yet, media coverage of well-being metrics has been insufficiently researched and, even when studies have been conducted, these were limited to newspapers, restricted samples of metrics and full of flaws (see 2.11.2). Furthermore, no such study has ever been conducted for Scotland and Italy. By using Factiva for the analysis of newspaper coverage and TVEyes for that of radio and TV, I was able to fill this research gap.

6.3.1. Factiva

Factiva enables us to search over 45,000 sources (including, but not limited to, newspapers). It is important to note that Factiva shows the density of reporting, not its volume. What I will show is therefore the overall number of articles in which the metrics I searched for was mentioned at least once, which is very likely an underestimation of the overall number of mentions.

6.3.1.1. Preventing Misinterpretations Due to Coverage Issues

Simple and intuitive at first glance, Factiva is much more complicated to use than one may think. There are indeed six issues one needs to address to avoid misinterpreting data:

1. the coverage start date of sources does not match their launch date but varies depending on when agreements between Factiva and publishers were signed. This means that, for any given query, the number of articles returned will always at some point increase not because of an increase in interest but because of an increase in the sources covered;
2. conversely, a decrease in articles might reflect a discontinuation, i.e. be due to said agreements expiring;
3. increases or decreases in articles may also be due to more sources starting/ceasing naturally to be published;
4. some sources are covered fully, others partially and for others still only abstracts are available (see Dow Jones, 2012). This means that increases/decreases in articles might be due not to increases/decreases in interest but to some sources being fully/partially covered;
5. for many sources Factiva reports delivery problems, so decreases in articles might be due to suspended deliveries. Sometimes these gaps are small. For instance, *La Stampa* has a 13-day gap in coverage. However, they can also be enormous. *Halifax Courier*, for instance, has an 8-year gap;
6. finally, sometimes Factiva includes sources in the wrong category. For instance, among Italian newspapers it includes both *ForeignAffairs.co.nz* (whose country of origin is New Zealand) and *News Bites* (Australia), meaning that increases in articles may originate from irrelevant sources.

To solve these issues, first I manually collected information about all Italian, Scottish and UK-wide[50] sources (590 in total), inputting all data into an Excel file (for details on how I did that, check Appendix E). After that, I compared the information I obtained with that of the Title List provided by ProQuest to make sure I had included all relevant sources available[51]. I then used my Excel list to exclude any sources which were not newspapers[52] and to determine which ones to include in my sample and the start year of my searches (for a list see Appendix E).

As for Scotland, I included only sources with full coverage agreements that were not discontinued by the end of 2021. Since all metrics but one had been launched by 2017, I chose 2017 as the start year of my search and, therefore, December 31, 2016, as the latest date sources could have been added to the database for these to be considered[53]. The final sample included 56 sources (27 Scottish and 29 UK-wide – some UK-wide sources also include Scotland editions, see Appendix E) with essentially no gaps in coverage. Note, however, that some of these sources are the online versions of the newspapers' print editions[54] or their Sunday editions, meaning the actual number of newspapers included in the sample (as opposed to the number of sources) is 37.

As for Italy, I followed the exact same approach. Since by 2017 all but two metrics had been launched, I selected again 2017 as the start year of my search. The final sample included 58 sources with almost no gaps in coverage. Note again that

[50] Since Scotland is not an independent state where UK-wide titles are widely consumed. Conversely, I did not include in the sample of Italian newspapers those from the Vatican City, being this an independent state. This contrasts with the approach taken by Morse (see 2.11.2).

[51] I did not use this from the beginning because I found out that it does not actually include all sources covered by Factiva as stated by ProQuest. For instance, it includes only 195 titles in Italian whose country of origin is Italy whereas the Search Builder shows 462. Nevertheless, I used it because it does include some that are not in the Search Builder.

[52] With the exceptions of *L'Espresso* for Italy and *Holyrood* for Scotland, as they are both magazines focused on Italian and Scottish politics, respectively, thus key publications for the purposes of this study.

[53] The only exception was *Holyrood* which started to be covered in mid-February 2017, so only a few days after which is why I kept it.

[54] If they met the criteria above, I did not exclude them because online editions often contain different/additional material (some sources may therefore appear to have published more articles than others, but this may simply depend on the inclusion of online content). To be sure, they also may contain the exact same articles, but Factiva is likely to have labelled these as duplicates (see 6.3.1.4).

some sources are the online versions of the newspapers' print editions, meaning the actual number of newspapers included in the sample is 33.

6.3.1.2. The Metrics Searched For

The list of metrics that I searched for is the same as the one above (see 6.2.2), with the addition for both countries of the GNH (due to its popularity among journalists as we have seen in Chapter 2 and as also suggested by the findings of Bassi *et al.*, 2011), and of GDP and related concepts (for comparison similarly to Morse, 2018 – see next section); the GGCI, the GIP, the RHMI, and the VEI for Scotland (for a total of 23 metrics); and the ABR and Rome's BES for Italy (for a total of 21 metrics). Note that almost all metrics are composite indices, which makes the study even more interesting given that their creation is usually justified on the grounds that their simplicity will gain media traction (see Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012).

6.3.1.3. The Search String Used

Due to the high volume of articles yielded, I could not read each of them and exclude irrelevant ones manually. Thus, I had to find a search string that would enable Factiva to limit the number of potentially irrelevant articles returned. Since I could search for multiple queries and use multiple operators simultaneously, after years of revisions I elaborated the following search string template (for a list of all strings I used see Appendix G and H):

> *metric's name or official alternative metric's name if available or unofficial alternative metric's name if commonly used or [(main word(s) in metric's name or metric's acronym if commonly used) near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league*

tables)] near15 (developer's name or alternative developer's name if available or developer's acronym if commonly used)

First, we have the full metric's name, followed by any official and unofficial alternative names. Given the vast number of potential unofficial alternative names, these were added as individual queries only if commonly used and if there was a realistic possibility that these may have not been referenced close to the name of their developer[55].

The remainder of the string was meant to return all articles in which metrics were mentioned without explicit reference to their name (as in e.g. "a recent *report* by the *United Nations* found *happiness* to..."). The *main word(s) in metric's name* is e.g. happiness in the case of the WHR. This had to be within 15 words of at least one among a list of keywords, in either order. I took some of these keywords from the names of the metrics themselves (index, report, survey). To these, I added a few synonyms (ranking, list, league table); occasionally, the word indicator (see Appendix G and H); and the plural version of all the above words[56]. It is possible that some will have only mentioned the main word in the metric's name and the developer's name without mentioning any of these keywords. However, not adding them would have returned too many irrelevant articles. Finally, to limit the number of irrelevant results returned all these queries had to be found within again 15 words of the developer's name, any alternative name or their acronym, if commonly used (e.g. UN[57]).

As for metrics' acronyms, I only searched for those of the HDI and of the BES as it is unlikely that journalists will have cited e.g. the IWI without explaining what this stands for, in addition to that of the PIQ as this is meant to be cited this way (see

[55] The remainder of the string as I explain in the rest of the section was designed to return articles in which alternative names were used, but only if the name of their developer was mentioned, too.

[56] The only exception is the word index. This is because whereas various reports have been published over time about e.g. the HDI, only one such index exists, so it is unlikely that journalists will have talked about the Human Development Indices (see however Appendix H).

[57] UN is a good example as it is used as much as, if not even more than, United Nations. Instead, it is very unlikely that journalists will have mentioned the SPI without explaining what this stands for (Social Progress Imperative).

Appendix H). The reason why I did not search for metrics' acronyms by themselves is because each of them can stand for many different things. By ensuring they had to be mentioned within 15 words of the above keywords and the developer's name, and by also including, when needed, an additional query to exclude articles in which irrelevant spelled-out forms were used[58], I limited considerably the number of potentially irrelevant articles returned.

Having said that, I used the above string in all but three cases. This is because two metrics lack a single official developer (GPI, ISEW) and, in the case of the GNH, there is no other way to refer to it without mentioning its full name. In these cases, I just searched for them by their full names. Moreover, for every query I also searched for any alternative spelled-out versions (e.g. *Indice dello/di sviluppo umano*) or any alternative spellings (e.g. Organization/Organisation) of the queries and words I used and, in the case of Italy, I ran searches both in English (when the metric's original name was in English) and in Italian, contrarily to Morse (2015).

Finally, as mentioned above I also added GDP to the list of metrics that I searched for, for comparison. To be sure, GDP can be mentioned for many reasons which may not always be related to well-being. Therefore, in addition to *GDP* and *Gross Domestic Product* I also searched for the queries *economic growth* (which identifies a specific trend of GDP which, as we saw in Chapter 2, is widely deemed necessary for well-being) and *recession*[59]. However, while I searched for the above well-being metrics in all possible ways, in this case I could not do that because one can talk about e.g. economic growth in too many ways without using either word by saying things like "we haven't grown enough". While I could have used a string such as *(economic growth OR economy near15 grow*)*, this would have returned too many irrelevant results. That is why the queries I searched for were the simplest ones and

[58] Typed as follows: *not (alternative meaning).*

[59] While the word growth may be used to refer to all types of growth, recession is usually associated with economic recession. The fact that, as we will see, the number of articles talking about/mentions of recession increased in both countries during the economic crisis that followed the COVID-19 pandemic confirms just that.

means that while the number of articles returned that mentioned any of the well-being metrics in the two countries' samples is as accurate as possible, that in which the above queries were so is by far an underestimation.

6.3.1.4. Eliminating Duplicates

Given the large number of articles returned, I could not read every article and delete duplicates manually. I therefore had to rely on Factiva's duplicate identifier instead which allows to automatically exclude articles that are virtually identical. In the case of the Sole 24 ORE QoLR, the number of duplicates shown does not match the number of duplicates on the page if one were to count all duplicates manually. I informed Factiva's Support Team which told me that they identified the cause of the problem but that the solution will require significant changes. At the time of writing (February 2022), the problem has not been fixed yet. As such, I counted all duplicates and the number of articles published by each source manually. Additionally, due to the way Factiva works it was impossible for me to exclude duplicates in the case of articles mentioning GDP and related queries. When comparing the number of articles in which these were mentioned with that in which well-being metrics were so, I therefore included duplicates in the latter as well.

6.3.2. TVEyes

TVEyes is a media monitoring tool available on a subscription-basis that uses speech recognition technology to provide real-time transcripts of whatever is broadcast on radio and TV. It is used mainly by businesses to track the media coverage of their brands. It has not been used in this field before and a search on the University of Edinburgh's Library's search tool for the word *TVEyes* returned only two articles in peer-reviewed journals in which this was used (Martin and McCrain, 2019; Park *et al.*, 2020) and not even as extensively as in this thesis (the first one used it to cover a

seven-month period, the second one to cover only one month). It is worth noting that contrarily to Factiva TVEyes shows the total number of mentions. However, if the query one is searching for was mentioned more than once within 30 seconds, TVEyes will only return one result. This means that not all actual mentions were counted, though from what I could see it was hardly the case for a metric to be mentioned twice or more in a 30-second timeframe.

6.3.2.1. Fighting Against Time

Through TVEyes's Power Search function, one can search transcripts of anything that was aired in the previous six months on the sources covered by the tool, plus the month one is running the search in. This means that as soon as the month in which TVEyes is being used ends, all transcripts older than six months get deleted. On the one hand, this meant that for the 38 months that I covered in my thesis I had to "only" purchase six one-month passes (as each of these allowed me to search backwards in time, meaning that since I first subscribed in May 2019, I could search transcripts of anything that was aired from November 2018 onwards). On the other hand, anyone attempting to replicate my study will, whilst able to replicate my searches, not be able to replicate my findings. Indeed, by July 2022 even the last month covered by this thesis (December 2021) will have become inaccessible. However, I saved all raw data, and these can be consulted upon request.

6.3.2.2. Preventing Misinterpretations Due to Coverage Issues

Almost all sources covered by TVEyes remained the same during the research period and no gaps in coverage were recorded. Nonetheless, several sources were added between 2020 and 2021. These sources were excluded but this made no difference since almost no references were made on them anyway. Additionally, *Wave 102* was re-branded as *Pure Radio* in July 2020. However, it did not stop being covered and as

such it did not represent a problem. In the end, 31 radio stations (16 UK-wide + 15 Scottish) and 13 TV channels (9 UK-wide + 4 Scottish) were analysed for Scotland, and 16 radio stations and 21 TV channels for Italy (for a full list, see Appendix F).

6.3.2.3. The Metrics and Queries Searched For

The metrics that I searched for were the same ones I searched for on Factiva (see 6.3.1.2)[60]. Contrarily to Factiva, however, TVEyes seems incapable of handling too complicated and too many queries simultaneously. Additionally, TVEyes does not allow the use of the *near* operator[61]. For these reasons, I could not use a single search string. Instead, I had to search for queries separately. This means that after searching for e.g. a metric by its full name, I often had to add *NOT "metric's full name"* at the end of other queries to avoid including duplicates because searching for e.g. "*happiness" AND ("UN" OR "United Nations")* returns also mentions of the WHR which will have already been returned for *World Happiness Report*[62].

A list of all queries that I searched for can be found in Appendix G and H. In short, I searched for metrics again by their full name and any official or unofficial alternative names, as well as any acronyms if commonly used, both in English and Italian, using alternative spellings of the words I used and alternative spelled-out versions of the metrics' names. I also searched for the main word(s) in any metric's name alongside the name of their developer (or their acronym if commonly used), though without a list of keywords this time (except in three cases, see Appendix H). However, in a few cases the use of this string was either not possible or not needed (see Appendix G and H).

[60] Unfortunately, I only thought about adding the query *recession* in November 2019 when my second subscription had already ended. Given the lack of funding, I had to wait until my next subscription in June 2020 to add it. Although previous data are lost, at least I could collect references made from December 2019 thus from the pre-pandemic period.
[61] The use of a similar operator was introduced only on July 31, 2021.
[62] "Often" and not "always" because when the results yielded would be low cross-checking dates and times of mentions would suffice for me to determine whether they were duplicates or not (see 6.3.2.4).

6.3.2.4. Eliminating Irrelevant Mentions and Duplicates

The impossibility of using complicated strings, the limited searchable timeframe, the fact that I did not collect data all at once, the low level of coverage and the high number of duplicates (see below) meant that contrarily to Factiva I had and was able to go through the transcripts of all mentions returned and delete any irrelevant ones manually.

However, TVEyes does not automatically identify duplicates which is a problem given the number of sister/regional stations and channels in Scotland and the UK. This means that if a reference to the WHR is made, for instance, on *Rai Radio 1* which is broadcast all over Italy, TVEyes will return one mention, whereas if the same reference is made on stations belonging to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) such as *BBC Radio Shetland, BBC Radio Orkney, BBC Radio Scotland* and *BBC Radio Highlands & Islands*, it will return four instead.

To avoid including duplicates, I thus had to remove them manually. For a reference to be labelled as duplicate, three criteria had to be met. The first one was time. Indeed, it was very common to find the same show broadcast with a few seconds' or minutes' difference on multiple sources, though hardly with more than 5 minutes' difference, which is why for a reference to be labelled as duplicate this needed, first, to have been made on the same day and at a very similar time as another one (±5 minutes from each other).

Second, for a reference to be considered the duplicate of another, their transcripts had to be either the same or very similar. Very similar and not just the same because sometimes the same show would be transcribed differently due to it being broadcast with a few variations on different stations belonging to the same network, especially when different news presenters reported the same news bulletin with different accents or changing the local news part or the weather forecasts.

Third and last, references which met the conditions above had to appear either on sources belonging to the same network (e.g. *BBC Radio 1* and *BBC Radio 2*) or on sources belonging to the same company (e.g. *Kerrang!* and *Absolute Radio*, both owned by Bauer Radio). Indeed, many among the latter do not have a news desk and, even if they do, they often broadcast news bulletins from major news providers such as *Sky News*, which is why their transcripts would often look the same, especially in the case of radio (as for TV, almost all the channels available belonged to different companies, so this issue did not occur as frequently).

Note that references which resulted because of the re-airings of shows were not labelled as duplicates. This contrasts with the way Factiva labelled duplicates. However, not only did I have no other choice (once again, I had to rely on Factiva's duplicate identifier as I could not delete duplicates manually), but newspapers also work differently from radios and TVs, which justifies the adoption of a different approach. Indeed, the latter usually never stop broadcasting. This means that late at night, when there is often no live show taking place, they may re-air some content. Moreover, they also broadcast documentaries and movies, and they may do so repeatedly which is why I would occasionally find the exact same references made in different months. Re-airings are thus almost like novel material, as different people are likely to have heard or watched them. Newspapers, instead, hardly re-post the same article twice or more. In fact, the main reason Factiva shows duplicates is not that the same articles were published multiple times throughout the year, but that these were *delivered* multiple times to the platform, perhaps before and after appearing on print, or because they were published both on print and online.

6.4. Analysis of Parliamentary Debates

Through the analysis of parliamentary debates, I was able to determine how many times parliamentarians had mentioned well-being metrics in their speeches, a subject

on which no data are available[63]. This, of course, is no proof that such metrics will have impacted on the policymaking process, in which parliaments are also only one of the bodies involved. Yet, parliamentary referencing is still a fairly good proxy for policy impact, especially when triangulated (Denzin, 1978) with the findings of all the above methods, since by revealing whether parliamentarians use well-being metrics in supporting or criticising a certain legislation or resolution, it indirectly shows the content or motivations of these and more generally what is or what is not on the political agenda (as similarly argued by Wallace, 2019). Additionally, results helped me identify informants (see 6.1.2) and I used excerpts of the speeches I found to integrate the information I collected through interviews or used them as alternative sources in case I could not talk to their authors.

6.4.1. The Platforms Used

For Scotland, I used the archive made available by TheyWorkForYou[64]. This includes all materials imported from the Scottish Parliament official report produced since its first meeting in May 1999. I did not use the Scottish Parliament's online archive because it is neither user-friendly nor accurate (it does not support Boolean operators and as such it always returns either too few or too many results, most of which are irrelevant). For Italy, I used the official databases of the Chamber of Deputies[65] and of the Senate[66], the two houses of the Italian Parliament, which include full transcripts

[63] Except for Wallace (2019) as regards the NPF in Scotland. However, Wallace did not explain her methodology except for saying that she used the Scottish Parliament official report which, as I argue in 6.4.1, is unreliable. This explains why Wallace's figures are different from mine which are far more accurate. To give but one example, Wallace (*ivi*, pp. 58-59) found that during 'the 2007-2011 parliamentary session, there were no debates that referred to the framework more than twice during the main Plenary session of the Parliament', whereas there were instead dozens of. Additionally, Wallace's coverage ends in March 2018, so we do not know what the recent use of the NPF in parliamentary debates has been, or that of other metrics for that matter.

[64] http://www.theyworkforyou.com

[65] XVIII Legislature: http://banchedati.camera.it/tiap_18/ctrStartPage.asp
XVII Legislature: http://banchedati.camera.it/tiap_17/ctrStartPage.asp
XVI Legislature: http://banchedati.camera.it/tiap_16/ctrStartPage.asp
XV Legislature: http://banchedati.camera.it/tiap_15_v1/ctrStartPage.asp

[66] http://www.senato.it/ric/lavori/nuovaricerca.do?

of every plenary session. Since coverage in the former starts from May 2004, whereas in the latter from May 2001, I set January 2005 as the start date of my searches.

6.4.2. The Metrics and Queries Searched For

The list of metrics that I searched for is the same as the one above (see 6.3.1.2 and 6.3.2.3). Queries-wise, these were almost always the same I searched for on TVEyes (see Appendix G and H) given that none of the databases above allows the use of the *near* operator and that too complicated strings would not work (meaning that in this case, too, I had to search for queries separately and delete any duplicates manually). The only difference is how I used the "*main word(s) in metric's name" AND "developer's name"* string and searched for acronyms. This is because whereas TVEyes searches two- to five-minute-long transcripts (and Factiva articles), parliamentary archives search a business day's full transcript. Given the impossibility of using the *near* operator, this means that searching for e.g. "*quality of life*" *AND "Halifax"* returns mentions made at completely different times of the day, perhaps by different people, which will have nothing to do with the Halifax QoLS. The same goes for acronyms, which made the addition of keywords counterproductive (differently from 6.3.1.3). Therefore, every time I searched for either I had to double check if the mentions returned were actually about the metrics I was interested in. On a final note, as far as GDP and related terms are concerned, given the huge number of mentions that parliamentarians regularly make to these I had to limit my searches to three years, so I chose 2019, 2020 and 2021 to see what the most recent trend has been and whether the COVID-19 pandemic has had any impact (see below).

6.5. Challenges: Financial and Time Constraints

The greatest challenge I faced was the continuous lack of financial resources. From 2017 to 2021, I submitted ca. 30 scholarship applications, obtaining none. Working

because of being self-funded has clearly taken a lot of time from my PhD. However, I used again a way of transcribing and translating that saved me a lot of time, efforts, and money. Organising as many interviews as possible in the weeks I travelled abroad, especially during conferences, also helped me save a lot of time and so did all the analyses above which helped me identify informants quickly and efficiently.

6.6. Opportunities: The COVID-19 Pandemic

The research was only moderately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. By February 2020, I had indeed only one pending interview which I eventually conducted remotely. While I do not want to consider the COVID-19 pandemic an "opportunity" as if this was something to hope for, I must acknowledge that the economic crisis that followed in both countries at the same time provided me with a once-in-a-lifetime occasion to test my theoretical framework and the robustness of my findings. In fact, although I had almost completed fieldwork by the time the pandemic started, I kept collecting data from Factiva, TVEyes and parliamentary archives until December 31, 2021. This makes this thesis unique, as I could triangulate the opinions that informants expressed *back when no one would have imagined we were on the brink of an economic crisis* with hard data on the referencing and reporting of well-being metrics by, among others, some of those same people I had spoken to. And, as we shall see, 2020 and 2021 data show very interesting results.

6.7. Timeline

Below (Figure 3) is the research's timeline. For a larger version click here.

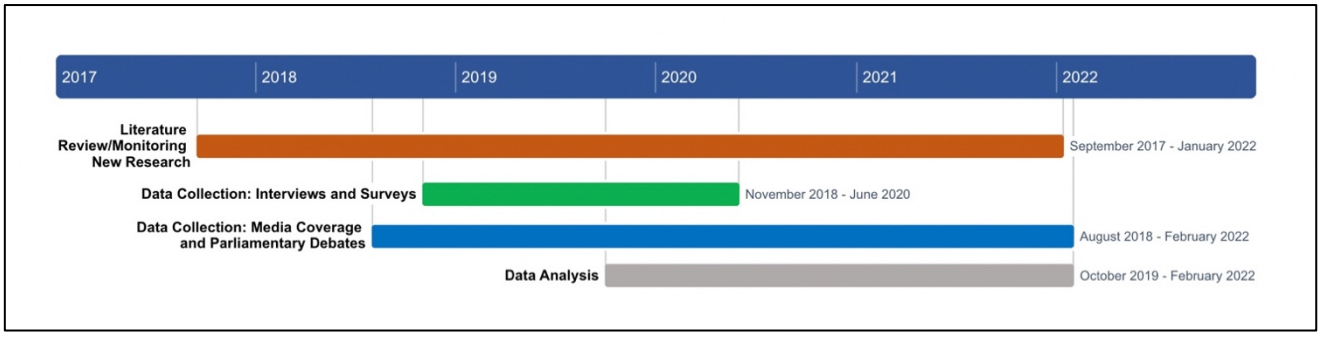


Figure 3. The research's timeline.

7. The Problem Pillar – Scotland

7.1. Awareness of GDP's Strengths

According to members of interest groups, GDP's main strengths are its simplicity and comparability (between countries and across time), as well as the fact that it is a single number whose figures are updated regularly and widely accepted. Other related strengths include the fact that people are familiar with it (although 'it doesn't necessarily mean they understand it', the Senior Strategic Advisor at WEAll noted), and that it is frequently reported by the media. There was, thus, a tendency to highlight the communicative advantages of the indicator and the popularity that consequently derives from that. However, some interviewees could not identify any strengths at all. For instance, after somebody from SCVO listed some weaknesses, I asked them if there was also any strength they could identify. 'There probably is', they replied, 'I'm just very critical of it. I think that… yeah, no, I'm going to stick with my criticism'. This suggests that among interest groups some people are radicalising their viewpoints: they have been criticising GDP so much that they now struggle to find any strengths in it.

Among policymakers, there was a tendency to highlight as GDP's major strength the fact that it is easy to understand and that consequently it is 'well understood' by people. A Conservative MSP added that GDP is relatable, as it is

measured in ‘monetary terms and also things that people can identify with, understand easily’. Being an internationally accepted measure and comparability were also identified as strengths. As someone from the Scottish Government pointed out, ‘we can compare ourselves against pretty much anywhere in the world’.

Before answering, however, a few policymakers felt it necessary to clarify that they were not economists as a sort of way to excuse themselves for what they were going to say after, which possibly explains why answers were generally short and not particularly elaborated among this group and may indicate limited knowledge of the indicator. The Engagement Lead for the NPF, to give but one example, after clarifying that they were not an economist admitted that they had ‘actually been doing quite a lot of reading around it [GDP] recently, primarily because […] it wasn’t something that I had really that much knowledge of’. Aside from showing that GDP may not be that “well understood”, this also shows that, even among those who support the well-being agenda, knowledge of GDP may not be as high as one would expect. One interviewee even added that they did not know how long GDP has been measured for which, given the very common reference to Kuznets’s work in books, papers and conferences about well-being, could indicate limited awareness of the broader well-being agenda as well.

Regarding journalists, it was harder for me to identify clusters as this was the group fewer people were interviewed from. Having said that, the strengths highlighted generally focused on the currency of the indicator. The great strength of GDP is thus ‘the consensus around it’ and the fact that ‘it’s recognised by the media and it’s a measure that’s used by politicians’. For the Chief Economics Commentator of the *Financial Times*, strengths also include GDP’s history (which ‘means it’s widely understood’ and that ‘there are long and reasonably consistent series’), comparability, and the fact that it measures things ‘which people find pretty easy to understand’. Surprisingly, journalists did not emphasise the communicative strengths of the indicator, but this could be due again to the restricted size of the sample. In

this case, too, a few journalists clarified before answering that they were not experts in the field ('I wouldn't term myself as an expert... [...] I've been familiar with it [GDP], it's just not on the tip of my tongue' one journalist, for instance, told me). This was quite surprising, especially since some of them had expertise in economics and regularly cite GDP statistics in their pieces or segments. This is another demonstration that, after all, GDP may not be that "well understood".

7.2. Awareness of GDP's Weaknesses

Members of interest groups found it easier to identify weaknesses than strengths. These would include the fact that GDP does not measure the impact of production on the environment, inequalities and that it does not differentiate between good and bad output. 'So, it's a poor measure of the overall wellbeing', one interviewee concluded. Sometimes responses would be particularly critical – a case in point was a former member of LINK who defined GDP as a 'totem' that we are 'worshipping' and economic growth as 'a disaster' from 'an organic perspective'. Interestingly, there was a tendency to highlight first or even only those weaknesses that were closer to the person's expertise or the interests of the organisation they belonged to. So, for instance, someone from LINK would point out the 'harmful environmental outputs' measured by GDP, whereas someone who used to work for Oxfam Scotland that GDP is 'distribution blind' and someone who follows the SDGs agenda for SCVO that 'growth and sustainability just do not fit well together'.

A few additional weaknesses would be highlighted, but only occasionally. The Head of Oxfam Scotland, for instance, noted that GDP neglects unpaid care work 'which is enormous and a key driver of, of poverty' (again evidence of the aforementioned tendency) and another informant that GDP contains 'a lot of perverse incentives' (although they did not specify which ones). In some cases, however, understanding of both GDP and of its limitations was rusty or limited,

especially among those who used to or only recently started to work on the well-being agenda who would give very short and/or very generic answers.

As for policymakers, the majority provided short and generic responses. The main weakness to be mentioned was the fact that GDP does not differentiate between good and bad output. Other weaknesses that would occasionally be identified include the fact that GDP does not take into account the depletion of natural resources or that it measures a flow and not a stock. However, a few policymakers did not really mention any weaknesses, with others limiting to say that GDP is 'very narrow' as one person with expertise on the NPF said. Thus, whereas some showed a basic yet generally good understanding of the flaws of the indicator, others (including those with interest and expertise in the well-being agenda) did not appear very knowledgeable, if at all.

Among journalists, answers were generally short. In some cases, they were rather generic whereas in others more detailed. So, for instance, one journalist would limit to say that GDP fails to measure 'elements of progress', whereas another one would highlight that 'there are important aspects of the things people value which are excluded or not taken into account. It's pretty obvious what they are: household production, the consumption of resources both as inputs and outputs, and the production of bads. And, therefore, obviously by definition sustainability questions'. As noted previously, some journalists clarified that they were not experts in GDP, and some indeed struggled to identify weaknesses in it. 'I'm not an economist', one journalist, for instance, told me, 'so I don't really pretend to understand how it works and what other options there would be. But I am aware of this, of the idea that when you measure growth it's not necessarily a very, always a very positive thing' (note that the person in question admitted little awareness not only of GDP but also of "other options"). Thus, whereas some showed a good understanding of the flaws of the indicator, others seemed not very knowledgeable, if much at all, not only of the weaknesses of the indicator but of GDP in the first place.

7.3. The Importance of Economic Growth

According to most members of interest groups, the absence of growth or decreases in output would not necessarily be problematic. First, because if people can be happy without the economy growing, then a growing economy is not necessary. Second, because the world has witnessed enough growth, what is really needed now is redistribution. Third and last, because of the current unsustainability of the growth paradigm, particularly from an environmental perspective. Overall, thus, answers were largely coherent with the weaknesses of GDP that the same group previously identified (GDP not necessarily equating with well-being, not measuring inequalities and neglecting externalities).

However, some were more cautious. The Head of Oxfam Scotland, for instance, pointed out that 'as an anti-poverty organisation […] it's hard to say to the countries where we are operating on […] "stay where you are and let's not grow" because […] in those contexts [growth] will help lift people out of poverty'. Somebody from Friends of the Earth Scotland, instead, claimed that a system tending to zero economic growth would tend 'to economic crises and therefore recessions [... which are] not good for the environment [... and] other indicators and so […] sure, I think that non-growth in GDP is not a problem in itself – I think it creates systemic crises which are then a problem' (note the association of the absence of growth with recession, a topic which I return to in Chapter 8). Others still did not know what to answer. One person from Carnegie UK Trust, for instance, argued that 'obviously growth is important' only to conclude with a frank 'I don't know'. Despite good coherence overall, some interviewees in this group thus did not appear once again very knowledgeable, and it seemed like they had never reflected on one of the key questions of the well-being debate before.

As regards policymakers, all informants but two regarded both scenarios as problematic, showing thus a distinct approach to GDP as an indicator and growth as an objective (i.e. despite the identification of several flaws in the indicator, growth

was nevertheless implicitly or explicitly regarded as necessary). The Director for Performance and Strategic Outcomes, for instance, pointed out that 'it would take a massive cultural societal shift for people not to aspire to their children to be as well off as them […] and to not see that as a sort of negative if people have less'. For this and other reasons, an expectation was said to exist within society that the economy should always expand, which policymakers felt pressured by. As a Conservative MSP put it, there is 'an expectation that all economies need to grow', since 'people expect […] rising employment [… and higher] living standards and therefore that depends upon GDP growth to deliver all these benefits'. The First Minister herself, when I asked her some questions during the first WEGo Policy Lab, admitted that 'there will be more focus on what the GDP figures are saying and more pressure on government if they are not as good as people think they should be, than there will be on these wider measurements of well-being'.

However, some policymakers were again not confident or claimed to be not expert enough to respond and indeed excused themselves for not being able to give 'a sensible answer'. Still others seemed rather confused. An SNP MSP, for instance, swung from one side to the other, saying initially that 'probably it [a non-growing GDP] isn't a problem'; then arguing that they 'would like the economy to be continuing to be growing' and that they would not go as far as saying that they 'don't want GDP growth'; only to conclude that they would 'be prepared to sacrifice a bit of GDP growth'. In this case, too, some interviewees seemed like they had never reflected on the desirability of economic growth before.

According to journalists, too, a non-growth scenario or a decrease in output would be problematic. '[T]here's clearly a consensus that the more growth the better', the *BBC Scotland* Business and Economy Editor, for instance, commented. '[I]f we get down to zero growth and negative growth contractions', he carried on, 'experience tells us that it's painful. It's painful for people in job losses and dislocations and firms which are restructuring and banks which are pulling back on

lending, you know, all the elements of a recession are associated with pain. And that I think is why zero-negative is a shorthand for a painful period' (note the use of the word recession as a synonym for zero-negative, a topic which I discuss in Chapter 8). However, some interviewees were not able to answer as they were again not knowledgeable of GDP in the first place. '[F]rom a completely amateur point of view', one journalist told me, 'I imagine that a negative thing would be a problem. But I don't have any, any good reasons for explaining why I would think that. It just doesn't sound very positive'.

8. The Problem Pillar – Italy

8.1. Awareness of GDP's Strengths

Statisticians' responses would be the longest and most detailed ones. According to this group, GDP's main strength lies in its standardisation, or in it having become 'a common standard globally'. This means there are 'very clear guidelines on what to measure and how'. Or, as the then Head of the National Accounts Directorate of ISTAT said, GDP has a strong 'internal coherence', that took years to establish, which makes of it a 'very clear, defined' and 'transparent' indicator. Standardisation was so important that virtually every statistician I spoke to mentioned it, often as the very first strength. Considering one of statisticians' role is to make sure official statistics are reliable and internationally accepted, this is again evidence of the tendency for interviewees to highlight what fit most with their role.

Another strength that statisticians mentioned was the ability to convey a vast amount of information about the economy in a clear and simple manner through a single number. That, one statistician argued, is further facilitated by the fact that GDP is measured in monetary terms (or that it uses an 'univocal' unit of measurement), which also means that GDP 'can be aggregated, disaggregated as you want', as another statistician put it. Another strength which would occasionally be highlighted was the connection of GDP – by which interviewees meant economic growth – with

well-being and the fact that GDP can often be used as a proxy for it. As one statistician argued,

> GDP growth [… is] typically linked to growth in many things such as schooling, life expectancy […] and so on. So […] if there is willingness to redistribute […] it clearly can become a proxy [for well-being]. There are of course exceptions to this so it's not a rule. However, this is a strength in the sense that it's not straightforward to say that if GDP goes up, we're worse off. It's hard to say.

Although only a few others explicitly identified the link between economic growth and well-being as a strength, as we will see below almost all interviewees (including the one above) agreed with the idea that there can be no improvements in well-being in the absence of economic growth.

Among members of interest groups, responses were overall shorter and more generic. The main strengths to be mentioned were GDP's 'universality' and its comparability, as well as its 'ability to synthesise information'. As an example, one interviewee mentioned the European Commission's tweets in which growth forecasts for member countries are communicated with just 'flags and one number'. However, some had a hard time identifying strengths. One interviewee, for instance, said that they could not 'see almost any' and indeed did not mention any. Like in Scotland, some members of interest groups seem to have radicalised their viewpoints about GDP.

Policymakers highlighted mainly the same strengths, namely standardisation, comparability, and above all the fact that GDP is a single number which 'is undoubtedly a strength in the oversimplified public debate of our time', as the former Deputy Minister of the Economy contended (this explains why, as we will see in Chapter 10, policymakers preferred the creation of composite indices over

dashboards). A few other strengths would also be mentioned occasionally. Among these were GDP's objectivity and its connection with well-being, as well as the importance of expressing value in monetary terms 'because we are a monetary economy', as a former Minister of the Economy put it.

However, some policymakers admitted not knowing too much about GDP ('I am not an economist and therefore someone else who knows more about it should talk about GDP'); began to waffle ('[t]he strengths are clearly that [… it measures] the economic condition of a country in general through the measurement of all economic variables' which, by the way, is not correct); or seemed to be not fully familiar with the actual composition of GDP. A former minister, for instance, defined GDP throughout the interview as the sum of 'consumption and investments' omitting thus net exports and, most importantly, government expenditure, which is quite surprising given they were a former member of government. These examples show that GDP may well be "very clear" and "transparent" among statisticians, but – just like in Scotland – not always so among policymakers.

Journalists' answers, too, tended to be based on their roles and interests, but were much shorter and less detailed than those of any other group. The main strength to be mentioned was that GDP is a single number which makes it possible to convey a lot of information about the economy in a simple manner, which clearly is an advantage for journalists as they often try to keep their pieces simple. Journalists would thus praise the fact that GDP is 'rich in information' and its 'immediate perceptibility', meaning that 'with a simple figure, a single number or a simple percentage it tells a story'. Further strengths include comparability and that of being a well-established indicator (meaning we now have 'solid' GDP figures 'that have been verified with time'). For all these reasons, GDP was described as 'a news item in and of itself'. However, considering how frequently GDP gets reported by the media (see Chapter 14) and that some of the journalists I talked to were the ones who had reported GDP the most until then, I expected more informed and elaborated answers.

Like in Scotland, this suggests that, even among those who frequently refer to GDP, understanding of it is weaker than one would imagine.

8.2. Awareness of GDP's Weaknesses

Statisticians' responses were again rich in details. Many explicitly mentioned the Stigtlitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report or Kuznet's works which only a few from other groups did, showing a great level of familiarity with the subject. As for the weaknesses highlighted, these would be several. Some would relate to GDP's computation. The former President of ISTAT, for instance, pointed out the difficulty of measuring quality improvements over time and the fact that 'services are measured with cost prices and therefore don't consider [that these might reflect] wrong, inefficient choices'. Most would relate to either what GDP omits or to what it includes in relation to its use as a measure of well-being. As for the former, GDP was said to neglect voluntary work, housework, 'health, education […] landscape and cultural heritage' and 'aspects of fairness [… and] sustainability' which, as one statistician put it, are 'key elements for the appraisal of society and people's well-being'. As for the latter, statisticians would highlight that GDP includes things 'that should not be counted' such as non-essential goods like women's make-up or illegal/controversial goods or services such as drugs and prostitution. The former President of ISTAT recalled their recent introduction (see 2.5), noting how at the time ethical considerations regarding their inclusion 'clashed' with 'the cold logic of the accountant who only aims at the comparability and exhaustivity of national accounts'.

Such "cold logic" made a few statisticians point out that GDP should only be taken for what it is – a measure of economic output. One statistician made it very clear that the problem is not GDP. Rather,

> [t]he problem is the improper use of GDP […], it's when GDP becomes the measure of well-being. […] Your enemy is then all the infrastructure that is around it which goes beyond its use for national accounting, but national accounting has its purposes which are sacrosanct.

Or, as another statistician said, GDP's strengths and weaknesses vary depending on what one wants to use GDP for and, if GDP is to be used to measure economic performance, there are 'more strengths than weaknesses'. This is one of the reasons why, as we will see in Chapter 10, no statistician was in favour of replacing GDP, preferring to complement it with other metrics instead.

Among members of interest groups, responses would be generally less detailed and homogenous, as everyone would highlight different weaknesses. These include the fact that GDP is not a stock measure, that it neglects inequalities and that it overlooks activities such as streaming services which generate increasing value despite declining sales. Like in Scotland, answers highlighted those weaknesses that were most relevant to interviewees' expertise or to the area of interest of the organisation they belonged to. Someone from WWF Italy would thus describe GDP as a 'totem' and criticise the 'environmental devastation' brought by the current economic system, whereas the founder of the Happy Degrowth Movement would criticise the accounting of 'energy waste' or 'food waste' and the exclusion of non-monetary activities, two key issues for the Movement and the theory of happy degrowth[67].

Among policymakers, responses were also less detailed compared to statisticians' and focused more on what GDP omits. However, there was a stark difference between the answers of those who had previous experience in well-being research and those who had not or who had only occasionally been involved in well-

[67] Which is based on the reduction of waste and the promotion of non-monetary practices such as gift-giving as well as of household production of goods and services (see e.g. Pallante, 2012).

being discussions which represented more than half of the sample. Whereas the former were able to identify several weaknesses and to expand on their arguments, the latter struggled and gave shorter, more generic replies. Interviewees pertaining to the first group would highlight, for instance, that GDP 'is focused exclusively on monetary variables' and as such 'overlooks the pillars which the human economy is based on'. They would thus point out that GDP does not measure inequalities, the 'intertemporal' impact of economic growth on the environment, 'the literacy rate, the quality of the air' and, more generally, crucial components of well-being. Instead, those belonging to the second group would struggle to answer and only very briefly suggest that, for instance, despite GDP being correlated with well-being, there exists no 'perfect correlation' between the two. In fact, some did not mention any weakness and others even shifted the conversation away and ended up talking about irrelevant things. A current minister, for instance, only told me that 'the weakness is linked to the fact that this is a country that doesn't grow' before changing the topic of the conversation altogether (highlighting thus also very clearly their view on the desirability of growth).

Occasionally, other weaknesses would also be mentioned (especially by those who had previous knowledge of the well-being agenda). Two of these, in particular, concerned digitisation and the measurement of quality. As for the former, one interviewee argued that due to 'digital capitalism' GDP fails to measure all transactions carried out in the economy. As for the latter, one informant mentioned GDP's inability to measure the quality of *production* as opposed to just quality of *life*. The first interviewee happens to be the Founder of DigithON, an organisation concerned with digitisation, whereas the second one the President of Symbola, the organisation that used to publish the PIQ (which aimed to measure the quality of Italy's economic output, see 4.3.2). This further demonstrates that interviewees tended to highlight those characteristics that fit most with their expertise or interests.

Finally, journalists' responses were far less technical and more generic than those of anyone else. The main weakness highlighted by this group was that GDP overlooks 'the well-being and wealth of a nation', ignoring things such as care work and 'processes linked to digitisation'. GDP would thus be described as a 'partial' indicator of 'a country's "health" status'. Interestingly, despite many references in books, papers and conferences about well-being to the neglect of externalities, only one journalist mentioned the word environment and, broadly speaking, the fact that GDP does not take into account the impact of growth on it (the person in question was an Environment Correspondent, again in line with the tendency described above). In fact, many struggled to identify weaknesses, and some did not mention any. All in all, there seemed to be a fairly poor awareness of GDP's limitations among Italian journalists.

8.3. The Importance of Economic Growth

Starting again from statisticians, several interviewees considered a non-growth scenario or a decrease in GDP to be seriously problematic, mainly for the negative impact that they would have on inequalities and for the effects that they would 'immediately' have on the labour market. As one statistician said, if GDP 'goes down by 0.1%, you have the labour market that is at a standstill for six months', meaning 'people can't find a job'. Others, like the then Head of the Economic Statistics Directorate, pointed out that such scenarios are not a problem per se but more so because of Italy's high public debt, the burden of which would increase leading to higher taxes. This makes the Italian case slightly different from the Scottish one, where the debt-to-GDP ratio is less of a problem (in fact, no interviewee in Scotland raised this issue). Overall, thus, despite their acquaintance with the weaknesses of the indicator, statisticians generally regarded the lack of economic growth as problematic.

Members of interest groups held a similar view. One interviewee, for instance, pointed out that 'a stagnant economy which does not create jobs [...] can have a negative impact' on well-being (making them conclude that they were 'not a degrowth supporter at all', using thus the word degrowth as a synonym for stagnation). Similarly, another interviewee commented the then newly released GDP forecasts for Italy saying that they would 'not expect household well-being to improve', even from just 'stationary' levels of GDP. Only one person disagreed. This was Pallante, the father of happy degrowth, according to whom 'in some cases, improvements in well-being can be reached through a decrease in the Gross Domestic Product'. As an example, he mentioned the case of food waste: if people in Italy were to throw away less food, he argued, GDP would decrease by 1% according to ISTAT estimates and yet that would be a clear sign of progress.

Policymakers were also united in describing both scenarios as problematic. In this case there was not much difference between those that had previously participated in the well-being debate and those that had not. Perhaps the only difference was the tone of their replies, with the latter using more daunting expressions and adjectives to describe the lack of growth such as 'tragedy' and 'catastrophic'. As for the reasons why, the vast majority of policymakers believed that both scenarios would lead to rising unemployment and, therefore, impact negatively on well-being[68]. Therefore, as a former centre-left minister put it, one may well argue that growth is not always beneficial, but 'when the [trend of the] indicator is negative there's much less to discuss'. Like in Scotland, GDP and growth were thus seen as distinct from each other, in the sense that the limitations of the former did not affect the desirability of the latter. This is rather contradictory: despite policymakers in Italy highlighting that two of the weaknesses of GDP are that it does not differentiate

[68] Which resonates with what the MEF (2017, pp. VII-VIII) argued in the 2017 DEF: 'GDP and employment remain crucial indicators to estimate and promote people's wellbeing'.

between good and bad output and that it does not always correlate with well-being, both scenarios were unconditionally described as a "tragedy".

Above all, however, policymakers from across the political spectrum were concerned about the impact that either scenario would have on the state budget (another evidence of the tendency to highlight what fit most with one's role). Specifically, growth was described as fundamental since the more GDP increases the more the state earns in tax revenues and the more it can spend. 'If it [GDP] doesn't go up', a centre-right MP said, 'it means that there is less wealth. It means that there are less tax revenues, meaning that the state earns less money, meaning that there's less money [to be allocated] for services'. Growth was also regarded as necessary for the state to be able to redistribute. As another centre-right MP put it, '[f]irst we have to create wealth. Then and only then wealth could be redistributed, if at all'. This contrasts with one of GDP's weaknesses that policymakers themselves highlighted, namely that GDP tells us nothing about inequalities, and may also indicate limited understanding of GDP in that this is not a stock (wealth) but only a flow measure.

Yet perhaps most importantly, the pursuit of economic growth emerged as desirable since growth can not only increase tax revenues which can then be spent or redistributed, but also do so *without increasing the tax base*. As a centre-left MP and former Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister put it,

> [i]t's a problem [if GDP does not grow]. It's also a problem [in terms] of the sustainability of our welfare systems. If I think of how much Italy has lost in terms of growth over the last 20 years, had we only grown [our] GDP, on average, like the rest of Europe […] we'd [now] have […] some 240 billion-worth of additional resources at an unchanged fiscal pressure so a lot of things I can [use] to increase income distribution, services and well-being. So […] there's a negative effect of a non-growing economy […]. I'd rather have

> my economy growing […]. Instead of a happy degrowth I am interested in a controlled growth that everyone can benefit from.

Therefore, from the policymaker's perspective the benefits of growth can be questioned but a non-growing or shrinking economy is always harmful, especially as far as state finances are concerned.

Only three policymakers (two of which had previous background in well-being research) believed that the absence of growth would not necessarily be problematic. One of the examples that I was given is again that of food waste, the reduction of which was argued to make a country's well-being improve, not worsen. So, if a government's aim is to improve well-being and that is achieved by a reduction in output, 'how can a decrease in GDP be a problem?' one of the interviewees rhetorically asked. 'Which is why', another interviewee commented, 'we should actually start talking about happy degrowth'. Interestingly, the three informants in question were all directly or indirectly affiliated with the M5S, a topic that I explore in the next sections.

Journalists, too, described both scenarios as great problems, their main alleged consequences being rising unemployment ('only with growth you can create jobs'), lower tax revenues, greater difficulty in redistributing resources and a worsening of the debt- and deficit-to-GDP ratios[69]. Which is why economic growth was regarded as 'essential' and its absence a 'serious problem'. Differently from all other interviewees, however, journalists were particularly keen to stress that both scenarios could have no positive consequences on well-being whatsoever. This is very well exemplified by a comment made by a journalist of *La Stampa* who argued that '[i]t is true that money doesn't buy happiness. However, the loss of money takes it away'.

[69] Which may give the impression that journalists were not that ignorant after all. This, however, is just a summary meaning not every journalist will have mentioned each of these consequences, not to mention that journalists may well have some understanding of GDP but the problem, as highlighted previously, *is that they are not generally aware of its limitations*.

It is worth noting that some journalists criticised the idea of infinite growth and yet contradicted themselves by saying that a decrease in output is *always* a problem. A journalist of *Il Corriere della Sera*, for instance, criticised the idea of pursuing infinite growth in a finite system, claiming nevertheless that '[i]t's always a problem if GDP doesn't grow […] because it means that, overall, the economy […] is not working properly. […] [I]t's a contradiction, yet that's how things stand'. Once again, comments like this reveal confusion and inconsistency, most likely due to limited awareness of both GDP's limitations and the broader well-being agenda as findings discussed in previous sections have shown.

8.4. The Issue of Degrowth

As we have seen above, unlike in Scotland some interviewees touched upon degrowth in their answers[70]. In fact, degrowth would be mentioned frequently during interviews[71], with almost the entirety of interviewees criticising it heavily. Criticism would come from all groups, and it would highlight how degrowth cannot be "happy" since it is always "unhappy". Statisticians would thus argue that degrowth 'is unhappy from the outset' or, as the former President of ISTAT put it, that 'it's a contradiction in terms'. Similarly, journalists would say that '[t]here is either happiness or unhappiness, […] happy degrowth doesn't exist by definition', or point out that 'Italy is degrowing, but I can assure you that it's not a happy country'.

Yet, it was policymakers from across the political spectrum who were the most critical. Degrowth was said to imply a decrease in living standards, a return to ancient lifestyles and a rejection of modernity and innovation (with people expected to go

[70] In some cases, interviewees referred to degrowth, in others to happy degrowth as theorised by Pallante (2012), and in others still they seemed to use the two terms interchangeably. Given their similarity and that it was not clear which of them they were referring to, in the next sections I employed the term degrowth only unless otherwise needed.

[71] Sometime interviewees would talk about degrowth on their own initiative, in other cases I would prompt them myself and ask them what their view on degrowth was (as, for instance, when I interviewed MPs which I had originally contacted because they had criticised degrowth – see 6.1.2).

'back to work in the fields, to live with a light bulb'). Another important concern was again the lack of resources: there is not 'much happiness in degrowing', a former centre-left minister commented, since '[t]o degrow means to produce less wealth' and '[w]hen you produce less wealth there is also an issue of redistribution', showing again concerns with the impact that output reductions would have on the state's ability to reduce inequalities. Criticism of degrowth was sometimes so strong that policymakers would refer to it as 'cazzata', bullshit. A former centre-left MP would thus say that degrowth is 'huge bullshit' and another former centre-left MP that 'it is bullshit' because 'degrowth is never happy. Italy lost 10% of GDP per capita over the last 10 years. We're therefore 10% poorer than 10 years ago and I think we're not happier at all'. Overall, thus, economic growth emerged again as essential for well-being and its essentiality was seen as out of the question from parliamentarians from across the political spectrum. Particularly emblematic in this regard was a comment made by a civil servant working at the MEF: 'to talk about degrowth here is totally out of place, because one can't expect the Ministry of the Economy and Finance not to care about the growth of GDP'.

As shown above, only a handful of people disagreed. Such people would all directly or indirectly be affiliated with the M5S and, in fact, several informants explicitly associated degrowth with the M5S during interviews. This is not the place for a disquisition on degrowth or the M5S. However, before concluding it is worth looking at the link between the two, as that helps not only to corroborate the evidence gathered so far but also to understand why degrowth was mentioned during interviews in Italy so frequently compared to Scotland (where it was almost never cited instead), why policymakers were so critical of it, and ultimately to reveal important barriers to policy change.

8.5. Degrowth and its Association with the M5S and Recession

To provide some background, the M5S has been very supportive of the well-being agenda and of the BES. As we will see, the M5S is indeed the party whose parliamentarians made the highest number of references to the BES in the Italian Parliament. Moreover, we must remember that in 2018 the M5S proposed the creation of the Ministry of Quality of Life and the nomination of Fioramonti as Minister of Economic Development (see 4.3.2). It was also during the first Conte Government (supported by the M5S) that Benessere Italia was set up (see 4.3.2). Finally, the M5S has organised several events on well-being, such as the symposium mentioned above (see 4.4) and a high-level event on the Economy of Well-being in 2019[72].

The M5S has also long supported the degrowth agenda, an agenda that has gained traction in the country since 2004 (Demaria *et al.*, 2013) making of Italy 'the second cradle of the movement in Europe' after France (Gheorghica, 2012, p. 68). Pallante (2013, 2:57-3:03) himself admitted to 'have seen among many of its members interest' in degrowth. Indeed, local groups of M5S activists have organised countless events on degrowth (often with Pallante as the main guest), such as those in Calitri (2012[73]), Parma (2012[74]), Andria (2012[75]), Rome (2014[76] [77]), Teramo (2014[78]) and Fermignano (2015[79]) – to list but a few. M5S national and local elected politicians have also repeatedly featured as the speakers of events about degrowth (as in 2013[80]) not to mention that some are or were members of the Happy Degrowth Movement. The co-founder of the M5S, Grillo (2007, 2008a, 2013, 2018, 2020) himself, not only

[72] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eaqKERro8Qs [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[73] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rz40CNpoo-4 [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[74] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDdULcrvQ60 [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[75] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABANx9WXCkg [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[76] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zBxLFqY4cuI [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[77] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waFH-xwIVjk [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[78] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TT_Kwra2hKo [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[79] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvjQJKpUeZo [Accessed: 30/09/2021].
[80] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkynGXAW3Qc [Accessed: 30/09/2021].

repeatedly criticised GDP and showed interest in degrowth but went as far as arguing that 'Pallante must become the next Prime Minister' (2008a, 3:45-3:48; 2008b, 5:46-5:49). He (2007, 2008b) also admitted that Pallante helped him create the agenda and policy proposals of the M5S, and Pallante founded the Movement for Happy Degrowth in 2007, exactly as Grillo was preparing the launch of the M5S. The degrowth agenda and the M5S's manifesto have thus a lot in common, which is why Latouche (2013b, n/a) commented that 'there are surely some similarities between degrowth and what the Five Star Movement supports'.

The M5S, therefore, has shown interest in both the well-being and the degrowth agenda. Because of the popularisation of the latter by the M5S, the two have often been confused with each other. The Mayor of Pesaro – described by many interviewees as one of the most active promoters of the well-being agenda in Italy – claimed that 'there is no awareness [of the well-being agenda] yet' among Italian politicians because 'many have confused it with the idea of degrowth'. This explains why the former Minister of the Economy (Gualtieri, 2019, 3:19:00-3:19:10) had to publicly specify at a conference on well-being that 'when we talk about sustainable development and Equitable and Sustainable Well-being [the spelled-out name of the BES …] we are not talking about happy degrowth'. And the reason why such confusion is thought to be damaging is once again because of the shared belief that degrowth (and, therefore, output reductions) cannot be beneficial for well-being.

But there is also another reason: the association of degrowth with recession. Several interviewees (as we have seen above) used degrowth as synonym for zero-growth and output reductions in general. In some cases, however, degrowth would also be associated with recession, just like "zero-negative growth" would be associated with recession in Scotland (see 7.3). Pallante himself lamented that policymakers and journalists always confuse between the two[81]. The way degrowth

[81] Similar claims have been made by other degrowth supporters (e.g. Hickel, 2021).

has been used in public debate in recent years confirms that. A case in point is what happened right after the release by ISTAT on January 31, 2019, of negative GDP figures (-0.2%) that confirmed Italy entered a technical recession. Politicians from across the political spectrum criticised the M5S – one of the then ruling parties – for leading 'Italy into a recession, into an unhappy degrowth', as argued by the former Parliamentary Leader of the Democratic Party (PD, according to the Italian acronym), Marcucci (Askanews, 2019a, n/a); Gentiloni and Patriarca (Askanews, 2019b, 2019c), both of the same party; Ciriani (Agenzia Giornalistica Italia, 2019) of Fratelli d'Italia; and Brunetta, Giacomoni (Askanews, 2019d, 2019e), Caon and Gasparri (Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata, 2019a, 2019b) of Forza Italia.

Unsurprisingly, the M5S distanced itself from degrowth over the years[82], so much so that right before the 2014 European elections Grillo (2014, 40:32-40:34) even denied supporting degrowth, claiming that he had 'never talked about degrowth before'. One reason for that is that Pallante ceased to collaborate with the M5S as he was apparently asked to take a step back by Grillo[83]. Yet, the main reason is probably the negative impact generated by the M5S's support of degrowth, which once again led to both being constantly attacked and ridiculed[84]. As one of the journalists I spoke to commented cynically, 'now that they are part of government, they avoid pursuing it because […] they understand that a decrease in GDP leads to a decrease in political support'.

This leaves us with a contorted image of Italy's well-being debate in which the well-being agenda is often confused with the degrowth agenda (primarily due to its popularisation by the M5S), which in turn is often confused with recession. It would

[82] An analysis of parliamentary debates that I conducted (not shown here), revealed that M5S parliamentarians have hardly talked about degrowth in Parliament lately, let alone shown support for it.

[83] 'Beppe Grillo told me to stand aside [… after which degrowth was] no longer in the political manifesto of the Five Star Movement. […] [I]f the boss says "you should stay away because otherwise I am marginalised, too"… Got it? This is what happened', Pallante told me.

[84] The above analysis revealed that almost all references to degrowth were critical and making fun of the M5S's support of degrowth. Degrowth and Beppe Grillo were also the theme of a satirical piece by the most famous political comedian in the country (Crozza, 2013).

be a stretch to draw a syllogism and conclude that the well-being agenda is confused with recession, too. In fact, interviews have shown just the opposite: while degrowth was almost unanimously criticised, with the same unanimity no one criticised the well-being agenda or the BES for that matter. And the reason for that is exactly once again that interviewees distinguished between GDP as an indicator and economic growth as an objective, considering GDP a flawed measure yet economic growth a fundamental prerequisite for well-being: contrarily to the BES, which presents itself as a *complementary metric* to the GDP *indicator* without explicitly questioning the underlying economic model, degrowth explicitly questions *economic growth* promoting its downscaling, generating in so doing heavy criticism.

9. The Solution Pillar – Scotland

9.1. Survey Results

Starting from members of interest groups, the NPF is the only metric all respondents reported knowledge of, followed by the HKI and the HDI, which everyone reported having at least heard of (Figure 4)[85]. At the end of the scale are metrics like the Bank of Scotland QoLS or the GCI, which almost everyone reported having never heard of.

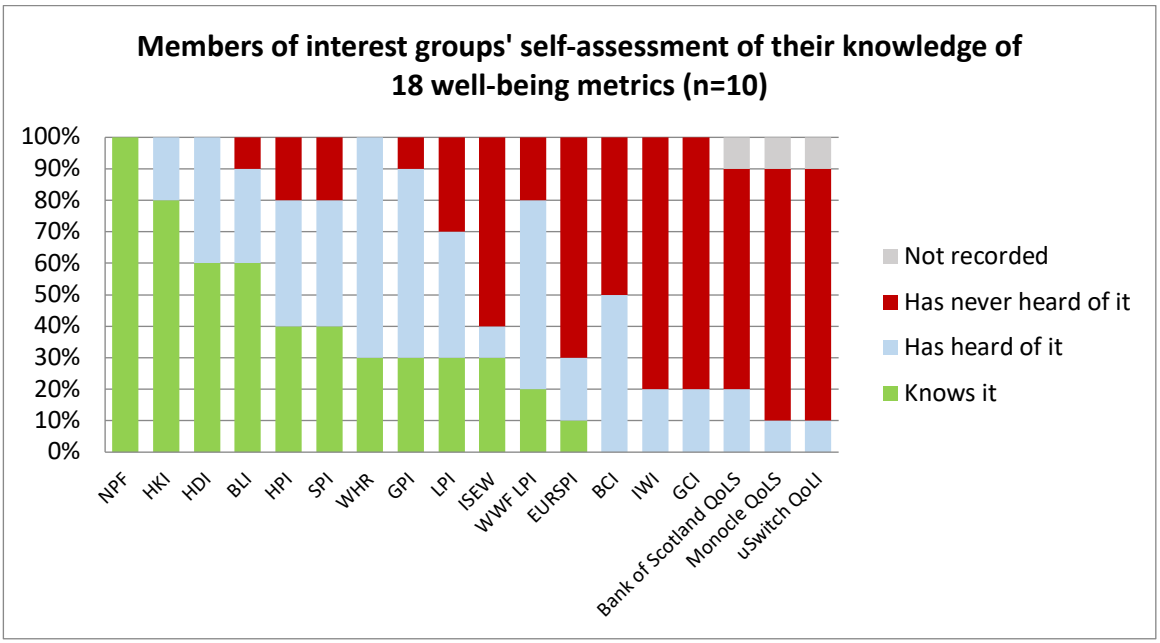


Figure 4.

[85] In a few instances respondents forgot to select an answer or clicked twice by mistake on the forward button therefore missing one or two metrics. Generally, I did not supervise informants while they were filling the survey as I did not want to put pressure on them or make them feel monitored. For this reason, I did not realise that a few answers were missing until I got to see their responses. Fortunately, this only affected a tiny number of answers in both countries.

Among policymakers, too, the NPF is the only metric all respondents reported knowledge of, followed by the HKI and the HDI and, at the end of the scale, by the IWI and Monocle QoLS which no one reported having ever heard of (Figure 5).

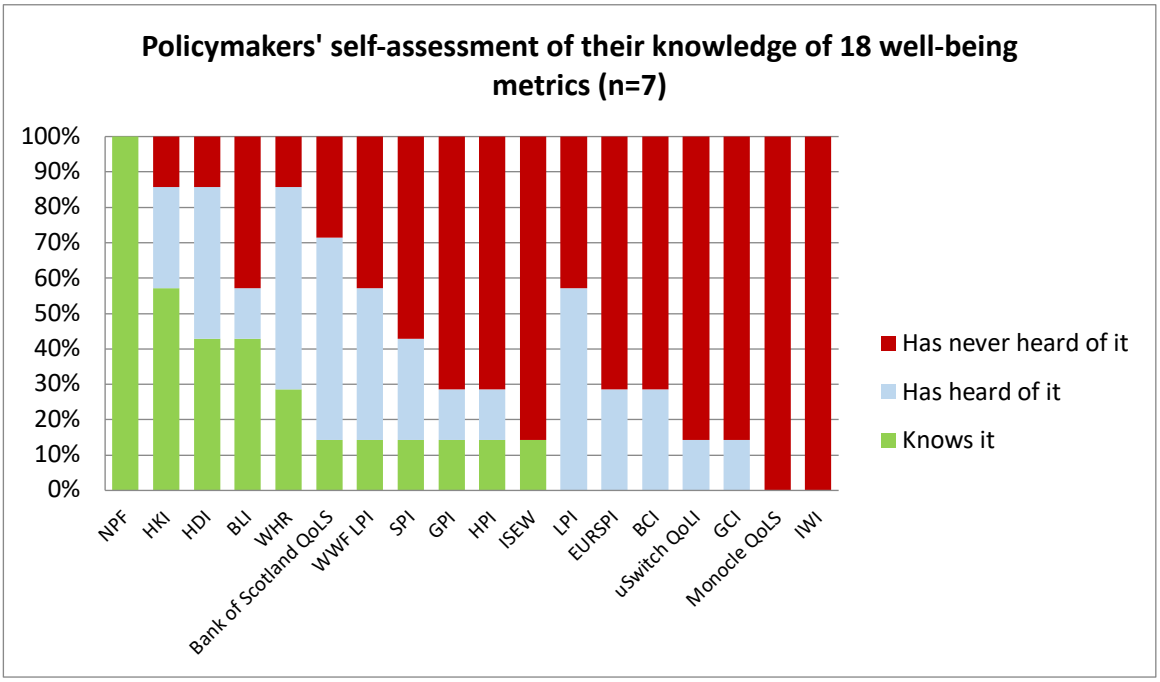


Figure 5.

Among journalists, the metric that most respondents reported knowing was the HKI (Figure 6). Note that there is no metric that all respondents reported knowledge of. At the end of the scale are 9 metrics which all respondents reported having never heard of (as one of them commented while completing the survey, 'I didn't know there were so many!'). The fact that the HKI ranked on top is probably due to the fact that some journalists were approached because they had published a piece about it and reminding them might have influenced their responses. In fact, at least one of such responses was not entirely reflective of the interviewee's knowledge of the metric in question, since during the interview they claimed that 'once a year Oxfam publishes something about the Humankind Index' which is not correct as the HKI was terminated in 2013.

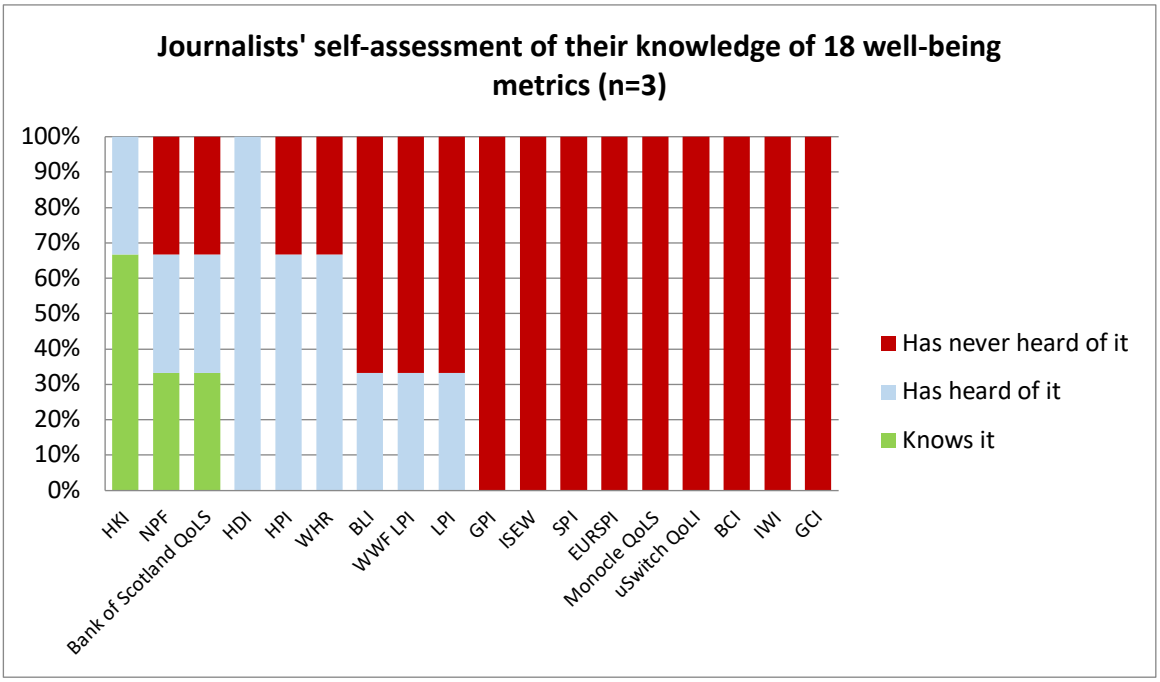


Figure 6.

When all answers are combined, we can see that there are only 2 metrics which at least 50% of respondents reported knowledge of, the NPF and the HKI (Figure 7). Contrarily, there are 8 metrics which at least 50% of respondents reported having never heard of. The highest number of metrics that the majority of respondents reported knowing or having heard of was found among members of interest groups (at least 50% reported knowing or having heard of 11 metrics out of 18), followed by policymakers (8) and journalists (6). To put it differently, the highest number of metrics that the majority of respondents reported having never heard of was found among journalists (at least 50% reported having never heard of 12 metrics out of 18), policymakers (10) and members of interest groups (8)[86].

[86] In the case of interest groups, the total is 19 (11+8) and not 18 as the number of metrics in the sample because in the case of the BCI the number of those who had never heard of it and of those who either knew or had heard of it was in both cases 50%.

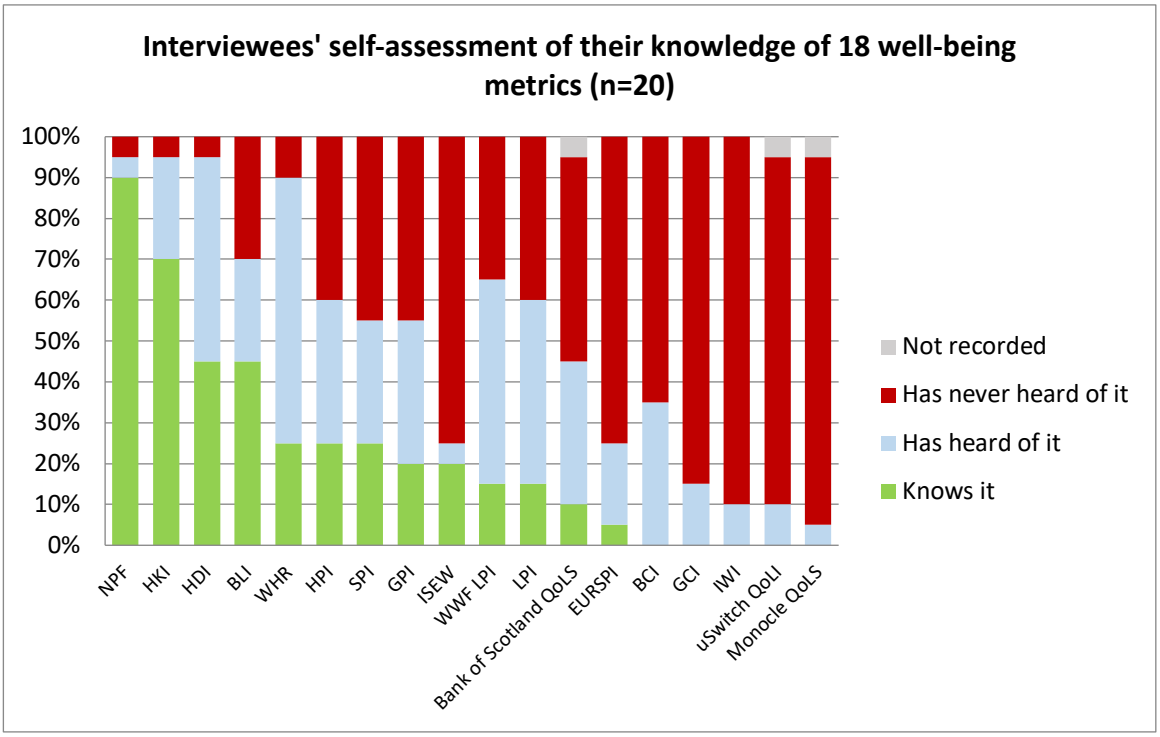


Figure 7.

As we saw in the case of journalists, and as we will see more clearly in the case of Italy where the sample was larger, self-reported knowledge does not necessarily reflect actual knowledge. The results above are thus only indicative since self-reported knowledge levels (as already argued in 6.2.2) are likely an overestimation. Still, the above findings seem in line with those of the Problem chapters, with members of interest groups in Scotland emerging as the most acquainted group overall, followed by policymakers and journalists.

9.2. Lack of Awareness of the NPF

Speaking of surveys, a source told me about an internal poll that the Scottish Government conducted about the level of awareness of the 2018 NPF refresh across the entire organisation. The source could not remember the findings precisely but claimed that '[o]nly 30 to 40%, I think, of staff knew that the NPF had been refreshed'. Interested in finding out more, I asked them who I should have got in touch with. The

person I eventually spoke to from government confirmed that a survey was run. Most importantly, they revealed much different results:

> the question of the poll basically asked: "were you aware that the National Performance Framework was refreshed in June?". And people were given the option to say "yes", "no" or "what's the National Performance Framework?". And, so, it was actually worse than what you were suggesting. We had 40% that they hadn't heard of the National Performance Framework. […] 1,600 people responded to the poll [...]. Because of that we launched really extensive kind of internal awareness campaign and […] the poll [… was repeated] in December 2019 and it got down to I think 23% not knowing about the National Performance Framework.

Unfortunately, we do not know exactly how many, in addition to those who did not know about the NPF, did not know about its refresh (the original source said between 30 and 40% which, if confirmed, would mean that by December 2018 only around 20-30% of respondents knew that the NPF had been refreshed). In any case, what we know for sure is that at least 40% were not aware of the NPF *at all* eleven years after its launch[87], which means that they will have never used it before then.

Lack of awareness of the NPF remains an issue to date. In December 2020, the Engagement Lead for the NPF was the guest speaker of a webinar hosted by Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway. She started by asking if participants could say how much they knew about the NPF from a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being a lot). After collecting answers especially from members of NHS Dumfries and Galloway and civil society

[87] This is not in contrast with the findings of my survey given that responses relating to the NPF were influenced by the fact that interviews were focused on the NPF and that those that were interviewed from government were contacted because of their interest in the agenda so obviously their responses will be different from those of other civil servants.

organisations, the moderator said that 'most are 1s and 2s – or 3s, we've got a 3 now – and just one 5. So, I'm guessing most of our attendees… we've got Nory saying "about zero, no knowledge"' (Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway, 2020, 05:19-5:30). To which the Engagement Lead for the NPF (*ivi*, 06:01-06:24) responded: 'I do these sessions primarily for Scottish Government staff, and I will tend to find that when I talk to them about the National Performance Framework, they would rate themselves kind of fairly similarly. So, you know, it's not necessarily something that my colleagues, the colleagues that I work with, know more about the National Performance Framework than actually you guys do'. Not only thus many remain little or not aware of the NPF among the third sector, but within Scottish Government too.

Interviewees themselves raised this issue repeatedly, claiming that 'people are just not aware of its existence', as a Conservative MSP put it. But it was not only the lack of awareness of the NPF within policy circles to be identified as a hindrance: the lack of awareness of the NPF among the public and the media, in line with what will be discussed in Chapter 11, was also regarded as problematic. The former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, for instance, was very clear in explaining that the NPF is

> not common currency, you have to explain it to most people. If you, if you were to go to most people and say NPF or National Performance Framework or even if you just say index of well-being, people would just look at you blankly […] and the people who make judgments about you, the voters, the journalists, would either not accept it or worse they'd mock you for it so you'd be derided. So, it's a very dangerous area to go into.

In fact, similar claims were made very frequently in parliament as well. Malcolm Chisholm (2013, n/a), Labour: 'it is a fact that it [the NPF] is not widely known'. Kenneth Gibson (2013, n/a) and John Mason (2013, n/a), both SNP: 'it is clear that

the NPF is not widely known', 'we should accept that it [NPF] is not well known among the public'. And while one could argue that these claims are now dated, the same argument was made in recent years, too. Willie Rennie (2018, n/a), Liberal Democrats: '[i]f I went down to […] my constituency, and started to talk to people about the National Performance Framework, they would not have the faintest idea of what I was talking about'. These comments show how important it is for MSPs that the public know about the NPF, and how in their view this is not currently the case, a topic which I will return to in Chapter 11 when discussing the role of the media.

9.3. Informants' Views on the Helpfulness and Reliability of Subjective Indicators

Members of interest groups were split into two groups. Some were generally enthusiastic about subjective indicators. In terms of usefulness, one thing that was highlighted was their ability to show and give confidence to policymakers 'that society is interested and does respond to a range of things that don't necessarily relate to GDP spending', as a former Head of Policy at WWF Scotland put it. What also was appreciated is their role in stimulating research on the factors that make people perceive their condition differently from what objective data show. In terms of reliability, this was not seen as an issue, in the sense that, as one interviewee commented, 'if that's what people are feeling, that's what people are feeling'.

Others, instead, were more sceptical about both their helpfulness and reliability and welcomed as a 'good thing' the fact that the NPF particularly is 'not obsessed' by subjective well-being[88]. Still others did not seem to be familiar with these indicators, if at all. One informant, for instance, said they did not know much about them and told me to ask one of their colleagues who had worked more closely on the agenda. Asked whether they found subjective indicators helpful and reliable, that person in turn limited however to say: 'yes, I think so… yeah, they must be – mustn't

[88] While the NPF includes an indicator of child wellbeing and happiness and an indicator of mental well-being (the Edinburgh-Warwick scale), it does seem like subjective well-being has not been given much prominence overall.

it?'. To be sure, one does not need to favour the use of subjective indicators to be a supporter of the well-being agenda. However, one of the most crucial and heated discussions within the well-being debate has long been that of using subjective as opposed to – or in conjunction with – objective indicators (see 2.2, 2.3). Limited familiarity with these indicators suggests thus again that familiarity with the well-being agenda was in some cases low even among its promoters.

Policymakers were sceptical about subjective indicators, both in terms of their helpfulness and reliability. A first problem to be raised was the difficulty in identifying the factors that make people report certain scores instead of others and, therefore, what policies could be implemented to improve them. A second problem concerned the lack of comparability of subjective data, whose interpretation was said to differ from person to person. Subjective indicators might thus be 'interesting', a Conservative MSP argued, but hardly reliable. This is why another MSP concluded: 'I totally accept we need to do more than just GDP, but the more subjective it becomes, […] the uneasier I get'. Some politicians thought the use of subjective indicators, particularly happiness ones, would therefore be 'dangerous'. The former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, for instance, claimed one could be derided for using them 'because you're trying to measure happiness and people say, "well that's not the job of politicians"', citing the case of David Cameron who 'tried this' and 'abandoned it because he realised he was in a dangerous political territory'.

Among journalists, too, scepticism prevailed. Whereas GDP would be referred to as 'objective', 'concrete', 'solid' and 'measurable', happiness[89] data would be described as 'more remote', 'nebulous' and 'abstract'. In this case, too, interviewees tended to mention those factors that fit most with their role, often justifying their arguments based on what was good or bad for their audience or for them as

[89] Note that, although my question was centred on subjective indicators, interviewees focused their answers on happiness indicators showing that they equated subjective well-being with happiness which in turn could show again limited awareness of the well-being agenda.

journalists. The helpfulness and reliability of happiness indicators were thus criticised for people were said to be unable to understand them and to find the idea that happiness can be measured 'ridiculous' in the first place, or because, being the result of polls, it would be impossible to interpret what determined their scores. One journalist added as a problem the lack of comparability, arguing that 'unless you get a consensus' coming from the 'OECD or whatever' they would 'have problems' with using happiness data 'regularly'. Considering that the OECD (2013) does have *Guidelines on Measuring Subjective Well-being* in place and that the BLI and the WHR already allow such comparisons as far as life satisfaction is concerned, this shows little awareness not only of these metrics (confirmed by the results of the above survey) but also of the broader well-being agenda.

9.4. Informants' Preferences Between the Creation of Dashboards, Composite Indices, the Revision of GDP and its Replacement

Roughly half of members of interest groups were in favour of dashboards while the other half of composite indices. Those in favour of dashboards justified their arguments on two main grounds. First, as a matter of coherence: if one of the problems of GDP is that it encapsulates all different sorts of economic activities, then having another single measure is contradictory. Second, composite indices were criticised for their inability to measure the complexity of well-being, which only a dashboard could reflect. As one informant commented, 'we need to embrace complexity to do it justice'.

Those in favour of composite indices, instead, highlighted mainly the communicative advantages of such metrics. The Head of Policy at Carnegie UK, for instance, recognised that while a dashboard could be helpful (especially for policymakers to better understand the trend of each indicator), communication-wise only a composite index can take GDP 'off the pedestal'. One interviewee linked that

with the NPF specifically, arguing that this includes many 'good' indicators, yet the lack of a single figure means 'no one actually pays much attention to them' (highlighting dissatisfaction with its impact, a topic which I explore in Chapter 13). In fact, some of those who advocated for dashboards also shared the communicative advantages of having composite indices or at least a restricted number of headline indicators, which is why somebody from LINK concluded that 'maybe you need both'.

Policymakers were more on the dashboard-side of the spectrum. Only the Engagement Lead for the NPF was enthusiastic about composite indices, noting with reference to the NPF that to 'sell' the framework 'simplicity is better'. Nonetheless, in this group, too, some recognised that a dashboard might not be 'sufficient [...] as we try and drive it through the system', as the Director for Performance and Strategic Outcomes put it in relation again to the NPF, showing that there is some recognition amongst supporters of dashboards that composite indices might be needed to gain more traction.

A few policymakers favoured a complete replacement of GDP instead. Sometimes this would be for no reason but contempt for GDP (with one interviewee going as far as saying that they could not see 'the point of GDP'), whereas in other cases because GDP 'measures the wrong things', as the former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament put it, and 'in politics if you don't measure something you don't address it'. However, the interviewee pointed out that it would be 'very difficult' to replace GDP 'unless you replace it with something equally hard-headed' because GDP is still 'attractive to many people' whereas other metrics 'have been add-ons' that 'people ignore'. Once again, we see the alleged lack of awareness of well-being metrics among the population emerging as a hurdle. Conversely, some policymakers used this question to re-affirm the importance of GDP and describe its replacement as out of the question. A Conservative MSP, for instance, made it very clear that 'GDP is still a very useful measure' and that they 'wouldn't support [...] to move away' from it.

Among journalists, there was a clear preference for composite indices over dashboards. In this case, too, journalists generally focused on the advantages and disadvantages that either would have for them as journalists or for their audience, highlighting particularly the communicative strengths of composite indices. These were preferred as they are 'easier to handle' and more easily communicable, and consequently more likely to be reported. A case in point was a comment made by the *BBC Scotland* Business and Economy Editor:

> all the research we do takes us back to fundamental ignorance of basic economic concepts within our audience. And, so, we have to explain every time. We have to say GDP, it's a measure of the whole economy, is output… which itself is a simplification of reality. You then, if you have 2/2 and a half minutes for a report on television as a general rule you should not introduce more than 3 statistics in that space […] or else people become confused […] and therefore one indicator of the strengths and weaknesses of the economy from my point of view would be much more useful than to give me 6, you know, or 10 or whatever.

Yet not every journalist fully agreed and even those who supported composite indices recognised that dashboards might also be helpful, especially when one is preparing 'a more extended piece' that allows to 'go into some detail'. In general, choosing between composites or dashboards seemed to depend on the expected length and level of detail required.

9.5. The Sources of Recent Interest in the Well-being Agenda

Among members of interest groups, answers were quite heterogenous. Nonetheless, two events did appear in several responses: the 2007/08 financial crisis and the climate emergency. Regarding the former particularly, it is worth noting that whereas

for some low growth rates following the crash showed that something was broken with the dominant economic model, for others they stimulated interest in other metrics exactly to hide those low growth rates, meaning not all interest generated by the crisis was thought to be genuine. A few other factors would be mentioned occasionally. According to Trebeck the political endorsement of Sarkozy and Cameron made it more 'permissible' to talk about well-being, and so did the publication of books such as *The Spirit Level* by Wilkinson and Pickett, Tim Jackson's *Prosperity Without Growth* and Kate Raworth's *Doughnut Economics*. For another interviewee it was Trebeck herself who played a determining role in Scotland (she 'has charisma and attracts people'), and occasionally the names of Giovannini and Fioramonti would also be mentioned.

However, roughly one-third of interviewees in this group struggled to reply and admitted not being fully familiar with or remembering the history and development of the well-being agenda. This is in line with findings of the Problem chapters, in which while the group emerged overall as fairly knowledgeable about the agenda, several informants within it did not appear particularly acquainted instead. Furthermore, roughly another one-third actually used their answers to express doubts about the popularity and implementation of the agenda. A former Parliamentary Officer of LINK, for instance, claimed that the well-being debate 'has not been going on in political circles', whereas somebody from SCVO recalled their experience as a member of the Commission on Housing and Well-being a few years before the interview took place when they

> were trying to put well-being on the agenda, and I remember meeting with Scottish Government [… and] saying, "look, […] this is what we're going to be saying about why housing supports people's wellbeing […]". And the response that we got from the person in the room from government was "yes but what's the economic value?" […] and not about what it means for

> our well-being. I think we're still there. I don't think things have changed much over the last five years.

As we will see in Chapter 13, members of interest groups were indeed highly dissatisfied with the impact that the well-being agenda, and the NPF above all, have had on Scottish policymaking so far.

Among policymakers, answers were more homogeneous instead with climate change and increasing life dissatisfaction described as the main factors responsible for the increasing prominence of the well-being agenda. Regarding the latter particularly, interviewees would claim that, despite the rates of economic growth achieved, an increasing number of people are not feeling happier and that this has led to a 'growing realisation' that economic growth does not necessarily lead to improvements in well-being. This contrasts with previous claims made by the same group that there is an expectation among society that the economy should grow (see 7.3), as well as with policymakers' own views about the necessity of growth (see 7.3), and shows that there is some confusion among policymakers as for what people are thought to believe regarding economic growth and well-being.

However, in this group, too, some struggled to reply, either due to limited familiarity with the agenda or simply to uncertainty regarding the "comeback" of well-being ('[i]s there [resurgence] or is it just a bit of a circular thing that goes around? I don't know', one civil servant, for instance, commented). Others used again their answers to raise doubts, in this case about the popularity of well-being metrics. According thus to an SNP MSP, 'there's still not a widespread understanding or acceptance' and it is hard to find people who are aware of well-being metrics among the public ('if to people out there you said GDP, they'll get a kind of rough idea of what we're talking about. If you said, what was it, Humankind Index or something like that, I think most people wouldn't know'). Comments like these were frequent during

interviews as we have also seen above and, as we will see in Chapter 13, people's alleged unawareness, particularly of the NPF, emerged indeed as a great barrier.

Among journalists, there was no specific moment or event that the majority of interviewees highlighted, probably due to the smaller size of the sample. Among the stimuli identified were climate change, the 'growing dissolution with global capitalism' and the greater importance people have started to pay to living well as opposed to 'just surviving'. However, journalists, too, struggled to answer this question. One journalist excused for not being able to give 'any real answers' and for 'rambling'. Another one repeated several times not to know what to answer and admitted not knowing about the Kennedy speech that I had mentioned earlier to him which, given its over-quotation not only in the literature but also in mainstream debate, suggests limited familiarity with the well-being agenda. Overall, therefore, journalists did not appear particularly knowledgeable. In fact, some refused to be interviewed claiming this was not something they had covered or come across often.

10. The Solution Pillar – Italy

10.1. Survey Results

Among national statisticians and members of interest groups, the BES is the only metric that all respondents reported knowledge of, followed by the Sole 24 ORE QoLR and the HDI, which everyone in this group reported having at least heard of (Figure 8). The metrics that most respondents reported being unaware of are the GCI, the LPI, the IWI and the BCI.

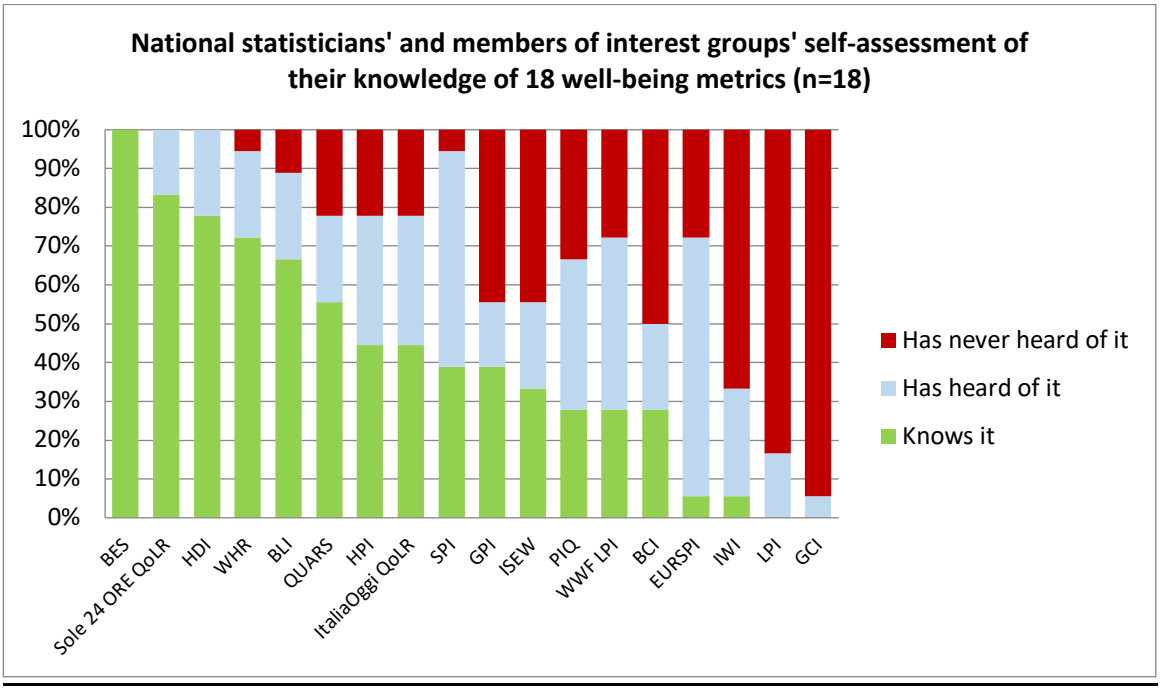


Figure 8.

As for policymakers, the number of metrics that respondents reported having never heard of is higher than in the case of national statisticians and members of interest groups (Figure 9). Having said that, it is quite surprising that almost all policymakers reported good knowledge of the BES since many of them did not seem to know much about it during interviews (see Chapter 14). Responses were thus probably influenced by the fact that the main, sometimes the only metric to be mentioned during interviews was the BES (which may have made informants feel pressured to report that they knew it). Similarly, it is quite surprising that more policymakers reported knowing niche metrics such as the GCI or the EURSPI than national statisticians. One possible explanation could be that the respondents in question are those who had previous experience in well-being research. However, after associating the date and time of completion of the surveys with the names of the people I was interviewing, I can conclude that this is not the case. The answer lies instead in the way some policymakers completed the task. One of the two policymakers that reported good knowledge of the GCI, the IWI, the ISEW and of many other metrics, for instance, asked me halfway through: '[a]re these acronyms or are these concepts? I didn't get it. […] Are they all real or are they fake?' and asked their assistants to confirm that they were aware of e.g. *social progress* or *human development* (not the Social Progress *Index* or the Human Development *Index*), filling out the survey accordingly. Another respondent also thought the list of metrics was a list of concepts and another one who reported knowing all metrics (including the BES) but one, told me during the interview that they could not remember the BES in detail[90]. These are all demonstrations of poor awareness which confirm that the number of Cs (and probably that of Bs, too) is an underestimation.

[90] Moreover, when asked to describe it, they defined it as 'an alternative measure to GDP to measure happiness' which is not the case since subjective well-being is only one of the 12 BES domains, not to mention that the BES includes no happiness indicator and that it is not branded as an alternative to GDP.

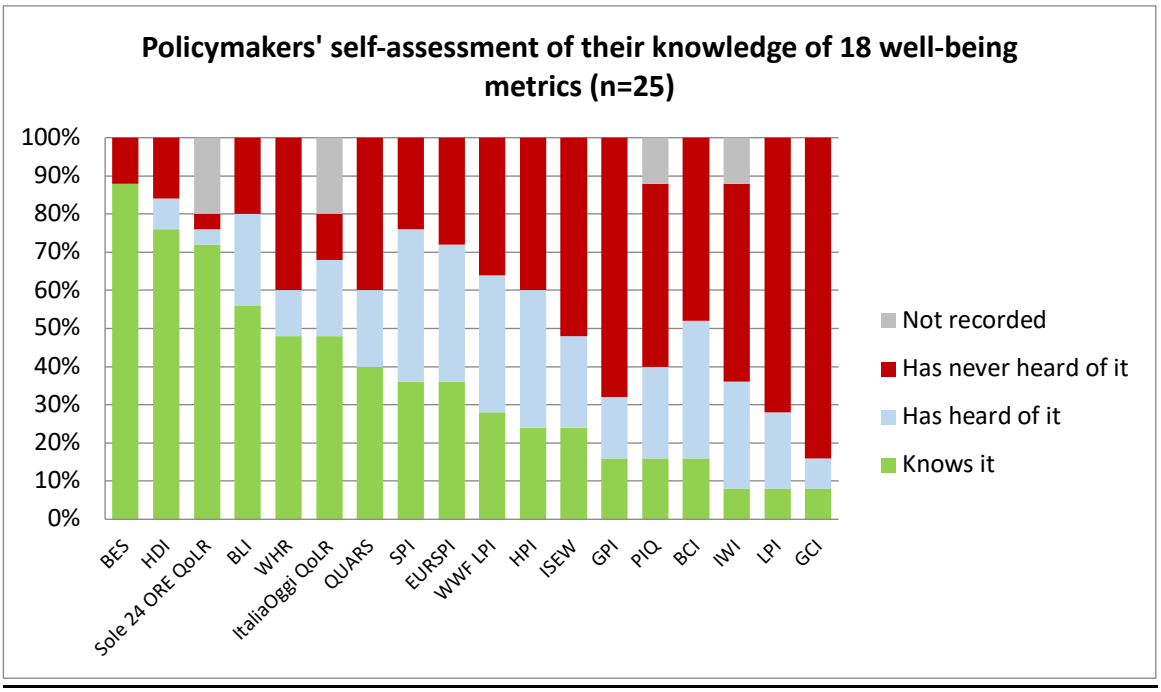


Figure 9.

Among journalists, the BES is the metric most respondents reported knowledge of, followed by the Sole 24 ORE QoLR which is not surprising considering that some of them belonged to *Sole 24 ORE* (Figure 10). However, in this case, too, some did not complete the survey genuinely, meaning the number of Cs is once again an underestimation. For instance, a journalist who admitted knowing little about the BES during the interview reported knowledge of it and having heard of the HDI and the WHR although, while completing the survey, made comments that leave little space for interpretation: 'this Human Development Index… who issues it?', 'What the fuck is this World Happiness Report about?!'.

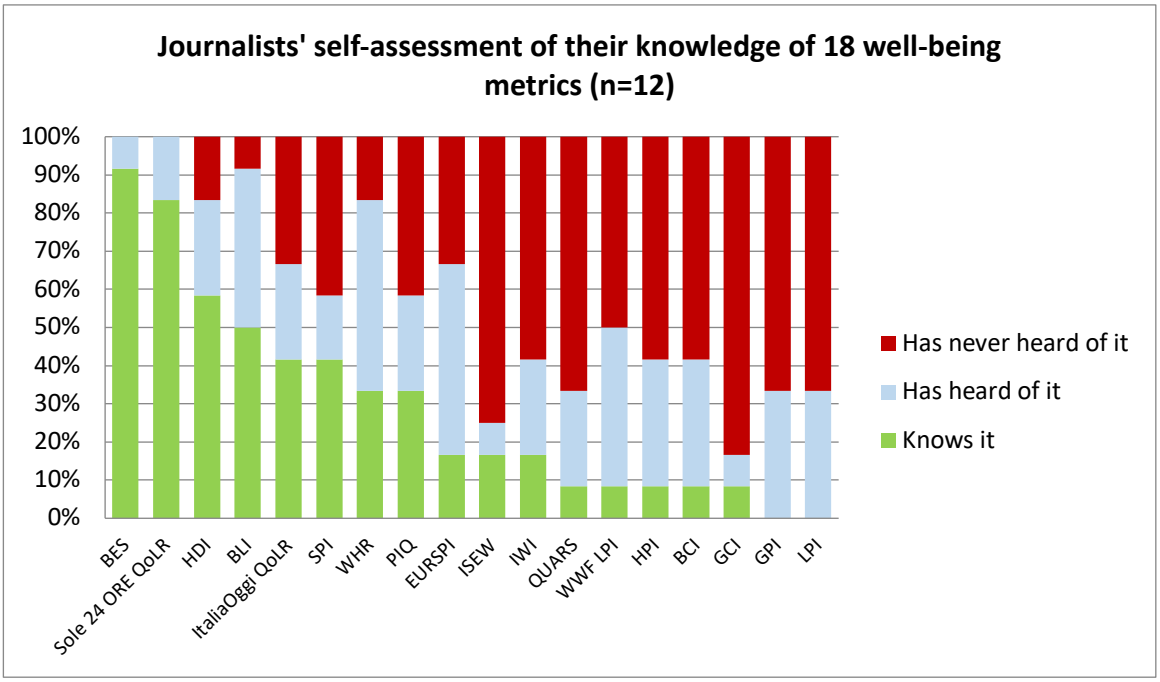


Figure 10.

When all answers are combined, we can see that there are only 5 metrics which at least 50% of respondents reported knowledge of (Figure 11). Contrarily, there are 6 metrics which at least 50% of respondents reported having never heard of, meaning the majority of respondents in Italy reported knowing more metrics and also not knowing fewer metrics than in Scotland. The highest number of metrics that the majority of respondents reported knowing or having heard of was found among national statisticians and members of interest groups (at least 50% reported knowing or having heard of 15 metrics out of 18), followed by policymakers (12) and journalists (10). To put it differently, the highest number of metrics that the majority of respondents reported having never heard of was found among journalists (at least 50% reported being unaware of 9 metrics out of 18), policymakers (6) and statisticians and members of interest groups (4)[91]. Note that although with different scores, in both cases groups ranked in the exact same order as in Scotland.

[91] Once again, the reason why in two cases the total amount of metrics is 19 and not 18 is because the percentages in those cases were exactly 50%.

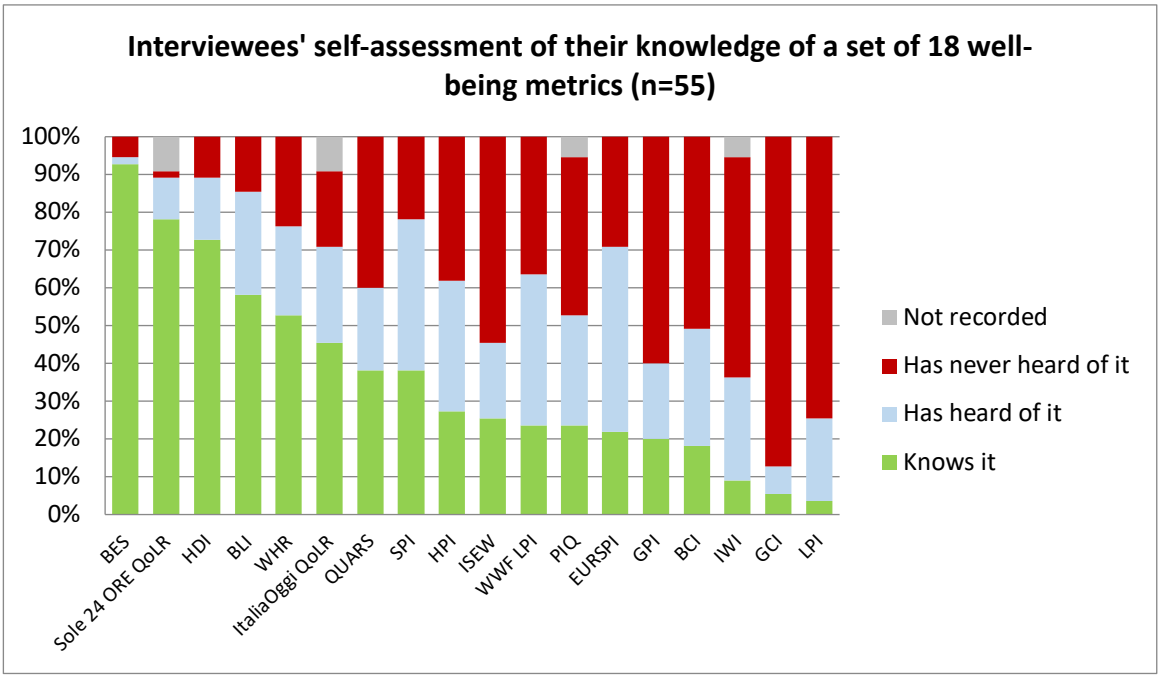


Figure 11.

10.2. Informants' Views on the Helpfulness and Reliability of Subjective Indicators

National statisticians described subjective indicators as 'fundamental', 'important' and 'essential' (often citing the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report or the work by scholars such as Michalos and Diener in their replies, showing again to be well acquainted with the well-being agenda). First, because they provide important contextual information about people's well-being. Second, because they help 'anticipate tipping points'. Third and last, because they can reveal discrepancies between reality and the perception of it. Nevertheless, statisticians warned to be cautious about their reliability. Primarily because people's answers can be influenced by many different factors, which makes these indicators 'not that reliable' as the then Head of the Economic Statistics Directorate put it. Additionally, because of the treadmill effect or the fact that underneath similar evaluations there might very different objective living conditions which is why subjective indicators were described as 'dangerous'. For all these reasons, although statisticians recognised the strong 'descriptive' and 'contextual' power of subjective indicators, they were generally sceptical of their usefulness for policymaking.

Among members of interest groups, no main view emerged on the issue of reliability, but subjective indicators were nevertheless described as helpful. Above all, because they help reveal discrepancies between people's perception and objective data and stimulate research on the determinants of well-being. Giovannini also noted their capacity of increasing policy impact, pointing out that 'the same policy can have different effects depending on whether that policy is applied to a sad community or to a lively one'.

Among policymakers, responses were mixed. Some, like the former President of Benessere Italia and Editor-in-Chief of *Social Indicators Research*, described subjective indicators as crucial, claiming that only when these are looked at in conjunction with objective ones can one get a full picture of well-being ('we either take all of them or we'll fail again'). One aspect that emerged as particularly important is the capacity of subjective indicators to reveal discrepancies between people's perception and objective data. In that regard, a former Minister of the Economy recalled that during his electoral campaign he would often tell people how the economy had grown during his time in office and yet get many responses from the audience telling him that they did not realise to better off at all, describing people's perception in this instance as very important since that is what ultimately 'influences individual behaviour'. This is a very interesting anecdote as it shows once again that growth is assumed to make people better off, as well as the tendency to highlight what fit most with one's role.

Nonetheless, policymakers were sceptical about their reliability. Mainly, because people's answers were said to be influenced by a constantly negative mood. A common argument from across the political spectrum would indeed be that people respond harshly to surveys because 'in Italy there's a tendency to complain', or because Italians are 'pessimistic, cry-babies, moaners' and even 'crypto-depressed'. A former centre-left MP went as far as arguing that not only those of Italians, but answers of people from other countries are also unreliable. As an example, they

mentioned a ‘propensity to do business index’ that they had once seen ‘in which Italy ranked below Mozambique’. ‘Come on, Mozambique’, they lamented, ‘probably they found four managers who were rejected by a girl in Italy that told them that Italy’s not a good place’. Another recurring theme was that of people’s answers being influenced negatively by the media. One person cited as an example the case of immigration and how people always inflate the percentage of immigrants over the total population due to this being an item widely covered in the news.

A few other points would be mentioned, occasionally. For a former Undersecretary of the Economy, for instance, subjective indicators should be handled carefully because they raise the issue of the so-called “ethical state”. For a civil servant with experience in well-being research, instead, they should be so because they may be misleading (perceived unsafety might increase as more people report being abused, they said, even though abuses may have not increased). Someone from the Bank of Italy added the problem of adaptation, noting how some people might live in ‘objectively mediocre or poor living conditions and yet not necessarily perceive themselves like that’. Finally, Fioramonti pointed out that some might not be able to make informed judgments when asked about their or society’s well-being as they may lack the ability ‘to understand the complexity’ of them.

For all these reasons, the general viewpoint among policymakers was that, even if subjective indicators might be interesting to look at, they should not be used for policymaking. Therefore, the former Deputy Minister for the Economy, despite acknowledging that ‘the more complete the informative kit is, the better’, concluded that ‘objective parameters are more interesting from the policymaker’s point of view’ since subjective data ‘should be taken with a pinch of salt’. Or, as Fioramonti put it, subjective indicators can be good ‘to inform’ but ‘economic planning […] can’t be based on opinion polls’. It is worth mentioning, however, that a few policymakers could not answer as they admitted to not be very familiar with these indicators or

with subjective well-being more generally, whereas others made confusion between objective and subjective indicators.

As for journalists, the quality of answers was inferior compared to those of other groups which is why there was not much material for me to analyse. Overall, journalists were sceptical of subjective indicators, describing them as 'ethereal' or as lacking 'scientific grounds'. Their lack of comparability would in a few cases be mentioned, too ('what makes Italians happy doesn't make Eskimos, too'). In one case subjective indicators were associated with happy degrowth (perhaps because of the word "happy" in it), showing confusion about both.

It is worth highlighting that several journalists used this question to affirm the unreliability of well-being metrics *in general* and not just of subjective indicators. These metrics, it was argued, are unreliable since they are not standardised and can therefore be subject to manipulation. A Senior Economics Correspondent of *La Stampa* thus noted, '[a]s a journalist, let me be very rough: it's easier to falsify the BES than it is to falsify GDP by a government [the informant was referring to MEF BES Reports and Appendices] that performs badly, because GDP has indeed a methodology full of flaws which however is internationally homogenous. These new indices, for now at least, don't have an established procedure and are therefore easier to be manipulated'. Such scepticism probably derives from the predisposition of many journalists to question and criticise political sources and, as we will see, is an important inhibiting factor when it comes to the use of well-being data.

10.3. Informants' Preferences Between the Creation of Dashboards, Composite Indices, the Revision of GDP and its Replacement

Among national statisticians, the majority of interviewees preferred dashboards over composite indices. No statistician was in favour of replacing or "fixing" GDP. Replacing GDP was rejected on the grounds that, as we saw above (see 8.2), GDP is a

“sacrosanct” indicator which can be used as a proxy for well-being. The “fixing” of GDP, instead, was mainly rejected because one would need to put a price on things. Thus, as one statistician concluded, ‘it’s better not to monetise complexity’.

The creation of a composite index was a highly contested issue, so much so that dashboards would often be supported because of the limitations of the former rather than because of the advantages of the latter. The creation of composite indices was criticised for different reasons. To begin with, criticising GDP for encapsulating all sorts of activities into a single number and then creating a composite index of well-being was seen by some as incoherent. Others pointed out the arbitrariness such index would have, whereas others still the fact that because of its multidimensionality well-being cannot be summarised into a single number. Composite indices were also criticised for they often look either too flat or too compensative, meaning they may be misleading. Industrial production, for instance, might increase and environmental indicators worsen, yet a composite index could show no variation at all. Some also raised the issue of manipulation and the fact that one can make composite indices ‘tell you whatever you want’ (confirming in a way journalists’ concerns that we have just seen).

Perhaps most importantly, some statisticians believed that a national statistical office should not decide what weights indicators should be given to not compromise its impartiality. This would be raised as a problem especially in relation to the BES given that that this lacks an overall composite index and that all statisticians I interviewed worked or used to work on it. ‘This’, one of the interviewees argued referring to ISTAT, ‘is a place of super technicians that, however, have somehow been dragged into this debate which is mainly political’. It is thus ‘not the Institute’s business’, they concluded, to choose weights. For this reason, some were actually fine with having a composite index as long as it is not ISTAT the one developing it. This was the view, for instance, of the former President of ISTAT who rejected the possibility of creating one officially but agreed that ‘others can do it’. Which does not mean that

ISTAT itself has never tried to create such overarching index. In fact, it seems to have been developing several for a while, only to conclude that it should not release them for they are too arbitrary and misleading: 'we keep doing that but just to […] have further motivations for not doing so', the then Head of the Statistics Directorate commented.

Nonetheless, roughly half of statisticians saw the lack of simplicity as a problem, especially in relation to the BES. In particular, the lack of simplicity was thought to hinder the possibility of gaining media traction (which shows the important role that the media are believed to play, a topic that will be discussed in the next chapters). The BES was thus said to be 'too much analytical' and to lack 'something as easily communicable as GDP' since 'no one is willing to sit there and study 12 domains, a 150-page-long report'. The then Head of Communication of ISTAT, however, disagreed. The creation of a composite index 'didn't turn out to be a very crucial issue' during conversations with journalists, she claimed. For others, the same was also true of policymakers. If the lack of a composite index was so crucial, one statistician commented, 'they could have asked [us] to make one', suggesting that no demand has been made by policymakers in that regard.

The current President of ISTAT, Antonio Blangiardo, has welcomed the possibility of developing a composite index of the BES. 'No problem', he told me during the 2019 AIQUAV Conference after I asked him whether ISTAT would be ready to officially release one. For Blangiardo, 'there is nothing wrong' in deciding what weights indicators should be given and in compiling a ranking. However, he stressed that it should be clear how weights were given and why, just like 'package inserts' inform patients thoroughly about the drug they are about to take. My question – and Blangiardo's response – set the floor on fire and a very passionate discussion started among ISTAT statisticians and scholars attending. In particular, one person criticised the "package insert" comparison arguing that these inserts are seldom read, suggesting that providing more information does not solve the underlying issues. In

the end, no agreement was reached, and this demonstrates that the creation of composite indices was and still is a controversial topic that has not been settled yet (no overall BES index exists to date).

Among members of interest groups, dashboards were the preferred option, again primarily because of the limitations of composite indices which were thought to undermine the complexity of well-being. Moreover, they can give 'the impression that nothing is happening when all sorts of things are going on', and 'from a communication point of view, an index that shows no variation is not a good news story', Giovannini pointed out (which shows again the important role the media are believed to play). Yet, that does not mean that the construction of composite indices should be completely ruled out, 'because you get nowhere with 130 indicators' Giovannini also noted. This explains why the BES (whose development Giovannini contributed to) is a hybrid and why ASviS itself developed composite indices as part of its work on sustainable development but only for individual domains. As for the remaining options instead, no one seemed to support the idea of "fixing" GDP. Doing so would necessitate putting arbitrary prices on things which is why it was said to be better to keep GDP and well-being 'separate'. One person, instead, supported a complete replacement of GDP. This was Pallante, the only person among all interviewees in Italy to hold this view.

Policymakers were more on the composite-side of the spectrum, highlighting the ability of composite indices to convey information more easily and to stimulate interest among the public, which in turn was believed to make them more impactful. As a former centre-left MP put it, '[w]hen one talks about GDP one is very impressed: +1, -1. When you talk about [...] 130 indicators people get confused, they get lost [… and this has] no consequences on the decision-maker'. Only a tiny minority argued in favour of dashboards, and only among those who had previous experience in well-being research who claimed that well-being is a complex, multidimensional concept that cannot be measured by a single number.

No policymaker seemed to like the idea of "fixing" GDP. What there was wide agreement on, instead, is that GDP should not be replaced altogether. For some the replacement of GDP was in fact a threat to be avoided at all costs. A current centre-right minister, for instance, agreed that GDP 'is not exhaustive' yet firmly stated to be 'really against its dismissal to pursue the BES' since 'GDP remains a fundamental indicator and if we underestimate the warning signs that Italy has ['we're stuck with a 0.2% growth'] we would be making a big mistake', interpreting therefore the pursuit of well-being through the use of the BES as something that would halt growth[92]. Yet, the BES is not branded as an alternative to GDP and it *does* include economic indicators, meaning "to pursue the BES" does not necessarily mean to halt growth or overlook GDP altogether, which suggests that the interviewee was probably not fully aware of the framework[93]. At any rate, we see once again how important the pursuit of economic growth is, a finding in line with results of the Problem chapters.

Journalists, too, were more on the composite-side of the spectrum. As a Senior Economics Correspondent put it, composite indices make data more 'interesting', 'immediately available' and 'noticeable' as they show more easily whether well-being has improved or not which would otherwise be 'hard to say'. The importance of making data more "immediately available" is inextricably linked with the need for journalists to find stories for their pieces. As a journalist said commenting the lack of a composite index of the BES particularly: 'there's no piece coming out [of it …]: we didn't need the BES to know that there's traffic […] or that CO_2 emissions have increased. […] One should aggregate […], create a message'. A composite index would thus make it easier to find a story and, for newspaper journalists particularly, to find a title as well (the lack of which would make it harder to 'stimulate interest'). It is unsurprising then that most of the journalists I spoke to supported rankings. As one

[92] As confirmed by one of their colleagues, who lamented that they 'did not get the point […] as they think it's [the BES] an alternative to growth'.

[93] And probably not fully familiar with the broader well-being agenda either: at one of the conferences on well-being that I attended, for instance, they talked about 'Agenzia 2030' as if the 2030 Agenda were an institution.

journalist admitted, '[g]ive a ranking to newspapers, to journalists, and they'll be happy'. Only two of them expressed concerns about the risk of simplifying and 'trivialising' information, noting that aggregation would nevertheless be 'sexy'.

Additionally, there was a general agreement among journalists that GDP should not be replaced altogether. The main reason for that being that GDP is an 'essential' and 'extremely relevant' indicator that is 'crucial for the creation of well-being' as well as regularly employed 'in political discussion' and which 'opens the doors to a language that after all is well-understood'. This confirms and is in line with what already emerged above, particularly regarding journalists' views on the communicative strengths of GDP (see 8.1) and on the importance of economic growth (8.3), which in turn contradicts claims made within the same group that GDP overlooks "the well-being and wealth of a nation" (8.2), although such contradiction may be again explained in light of the distinction interviewees made between GDP as an indicator and economic growth as an objective.

10.4. The Sources of Recent Interest in the Well-being Agenda

According to the majority of national statisticians, the publication of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report is what increased interest in the agenda recently. A few also highlighted Sen's preceding individual work and the launch of the HDI as further, related determining factors. Yet, a plethora of other factors were mentioned, too. According to the former President of ISTAT, for instance, a key moment was the launch of the 2030 Agenda and of the SDGs. For another interviewee it was the launch of the Euro instead, which revealed ISTAT's inability to properly calculate inflation (with GDP 'continuing to say that inflation did not exist') and fostered debate about the reliability of GDP. For another statistician a key factor was the widening of inequalities and for another one the 2007/08 crisis. The latter stimulated the search for 'other metrics', which the interviewee thought was in some cases an attempt to

shift the attention away from the absence of growth, an interpretation that yet another statistician rejected however as 'malicious'.

Nonetheless, statisticians largely agreed that the most important role was played by the charisma of a single individual: Giovannini. By the time he became President of ISTAT, Giovannini had already acquired great experience and authority in the field[94]. His presidency was so crucial that, as one interviewee put it, '[t]he BES was born because of Giovannini' – he 'had all networks, all the tools, and invested greatly in it'. Furthermore, the 'rich availability of data' ISTAT could then rely on, combined with the publication of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report and the launch of the OECD Better Life Initiative, meant there was fertile soil for Giovannini to make the agenda grow and this 'facilitated the fact that ISTAT was quite ahead on this from the very beginning', one statistician commented.

Among members of interest groups, answers were heterogenous and reflected once again interviewees' expertise and interests or the priorities of the organisation they belonged to. So, for instance, somebody from WWF would argue that well-being benefitted from increasing awareness of the 'dramatic' environmental crisis, whereas the founder of the Happy Degrowth Movement that public works such as those commissioned for the Olympic games, despite contributing to growth, have now been abandoned developing greater awareness of the shortcomings of the growth paradigm and of the need to reduce waste. Similarly, somebody from ASviS (whose spokesperson until early 2021 used to be Giovannini) highlighted the huge role played by none other than Giovannini.

Policymakers identified yet different factors, particularly the climate emergency and growing inequalities. Interestingly, the combination of both issues was used by the former Deputy Minister of the Economy to explain the defeat of the PD (which the informant belonged to) in Italy's 2018 elections:

[94] Giovannini became the President of ISTAT right before the publication of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (for which he was one of the advisors), leaving his position as Chief Statistician of the OECD.

> [t]he centre-left ran for the elections saying – rightly so – that macroeconomic parameters improved under the centre-left['s government] and that Italy started growing again […]. These data, though, were giving a partial representation of reality and did not tell us anything about inequality (which increased even during the years of the centre-left government) and about the overall unsustainability of our growth paradigm. We overlooked these phenomena. We did not pay enough attention to them, and this affected without any doubt the election results.

While the person in question was the only one from his party to make such reflections, this is nevertheless an important contribution as it suggests that not only victories, but election defeats, too, can make problems and solutions gain prominence.

A few other factors would also be mentioned, occasionally. A few policymakers (all with previous experience in well-being research), for instance, highlighted the work of the OECD on well-being, whereas others the publication of specific reports or books. A former Minister of the Economy and the former Deputy Minister of the Economy, for instance, both identified the launch of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report as a turning point. Finally, although no one mentioned Giovannini when answering this question specifically, the vast majority of policymakers mentioned him at some point, talking about the 'huge role' he has played and the 'extraordinary' work being carried out by ASviS.

For journalists, most of whom were economics correspondents, the 2007/08 economic crisis was the most important factor, often the only one to be cited (again in line with the tendency to highlight what fit most with one's role). However, some were sceptical and thought the crisis generated interest in the well-being agenda, especially among policymakers, just to hide the fact 'that there is no growth'. A few other factors would occasionally be mentioned, such as rising inequalities, the climate

emergency and the launch of the SDGs. Furthermore, although no one again mentioned Giovannini when answering this specific question, almost all journalists talked about him at some point during the interview and about the great role he has played. One journalist even explicitly admitted that they came to know about the BES thanks to him.

11. The Context Girder – Scotland

11.1. The Role of the Media

Among members of interest groups, the media were said to have 'a massive role to play', as the findings of previous chapters also showed. All interviewees but one, however, expressed their deep dissatisfaction with the way the media have been covering the well-being agenda ('[t]hey are not interested. To journalists this is administrative bullshit for policy wonks and civil servants'), suggesting that the media in Scotland have so far been a 'hindrance'.

A vast number of reasons were advanced to explain such low level of interest. These included the lack of newsworthiness of metrics such as the NPF; the limited availability of data and the lack of timeliness of indicators; the lack of 'serious' journalists; the media's negative bias; the fact that economic growth is still equated to progress; and, finally, lack of understanding of both well-being and GDP among journalists. One interviewee, for instance, wondered how much journalists actually know about the well-being agenda and recalled an article that they had read in which the SDGs were called 'Scotland's Development Goals', whereas a former Head of Policy at WWF Scotland argued that GDP is often 'thrown out there' with 'very little questioning'. On that note, the Head of Oxfam Scotland, a former reporter, admitted

that journalists often neglect what the meaning of GDP actually is and recalled that he himself 'wrote countless stories […] around whether GDP was going up or down by .1 or .2% or the like, somewhat ignoring that [… that] means very little to many in our communities'[95]. However, the Senior Strategic Advisor at WEAll suggested that policymakers should be blamed just as much as journalists, noting that the questions that are asked to finance ministers the day budgets are brought forward are very much growth-centred, yet 'the interviewee, the finance minister or whoever, could say "why are you asking me the wrong questions? What you should be asking me is this…" but they don't do that'.

Nonetheless, had members of interest groups themselves ever tried to promote the agenda or specific metrics to the media? Several informants said that they had but not always successfully. Others admitted instead that they had not done much in terms of press. Someone from Carnegie UK, for instance, said that as an organisation they 'don't have a specific focus on the media' as they 'are not a campaigning organisation'. Sometimes this would also be due to the difficulty in producing new material given the difficulty in finding a story all the times. Apparently, this was even one of the reasons why the HKI was terminated, since with its second iteration it became apparent that 'there wasn't an obvious media story there that was like, "here's a better measure of well-being" – it's sort of the same as it was last year', somebody who worked on the HKI recalled.

Among policymakers, too, there was a general agreement that the media play an important role. After all, as a Conservative MSP put it, a lot of what is discussed in parliament is 'driven by what the media and what people are talking about'. However, in this case, too, interviewees expressed their dissatisfaction with the media's current level of interest, claiming that the media talk about GDP 'every day' whereas interest

[95] Which echoes Pilling (2018, p. 14): '[f]rom my very first days [of] reporting […] I taught myself how to compare every number to GDP and to mention it in almost every article – to lend a bit of gravitas. I didn't spend too much time worrying about what exactly GDP was or what was supposed to mean'.

in the well-being agenda has been 'sporadic' because 'it's the nice story when there's nothing else happening'. The lack of interest among journalists was seen as the ultimate reason for people's lack of interest and the consequent lack of pressure put by civil society on policymakers. As an MSP put it, 'I don't think the media are particularly interested and therefore the public are not interested because they just don't hear about it […]. I never get letters, you know, from the public, I never get people coming to surgeries asking me about NPF indicators […] it's not something that's recognised to any degree'.

Have policymakers themselves though tried to promote the agenda, the NPF or other metrics to the media? Despite (or perhaps due to) their criticism, informants did not seem to have engaged or to be too excited about engaging with journalists. Some said they prefer to remain 'behind the scenes' whereas others pointed out that in the public sector there are specific offices that deal with the media thus communications are 'very carefully controlled' which means that it is not easy for one to talk openly to journalists and on their own initiative. Interestingly, elected politicians said to find it hard to imagine themselves talking about metrics such as the NPF in public. Their main concern was again the lack of interest in and support of these metrics among journalists and the population at large. An SNP MSP was very clear about the fact that 'unless I was asked about it [the NPF], it's probably not something I would just raise […] and it's a bit of a chicken-and-egg, because the media is not talking about it so I'm not thinking about it'. Similarly, a Conservative MSP pointed out that 'for somebody who is in politics who wants to use the media to communicate a message to the public there's no point in talking about something that they probably have never heard of. They probably have heard of GDP growth […], but NPF? Don't know what that means'. A case in point was however a comment made by the former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament. Despite his demonstrated interest in the agenda, he made it clear that using or talking about metrics which no one is using or talking about is too risky because politicians are

> not willing to risk their credibility for an index which has not got common currency. [… If] you're trying to portray yourself as a serious politician – particularly those who deal with the economy, finances – you have to maintain, you have to be sober-suited, you have to be straight character, you have to use hard facts and figures […]. If you start sounding like you wear sandals, and you breed your hair and you smoke marijuana the weekends, you know, people don't take you seriously anymore and that's, that's the contrast between GDP and the NPF. One is taken seriously, the other one is seen as slightly flaky, slightly lightweight, not got common currency, not common acceptance. And people are unwilling to stake their reputation.

Comments like this show very clearly how important increasing the media profile, acceptance and ultimately the awareness of metrics such as the NPF is for their success, and the crucial role that the media can therefore play in that regard.

11.2. The Lack of a Dissemination Strategy: The Cases of the 2019 WEGo Policy Lab, the 2018 WEGo launch and the 2019 *Wellbeing Report*

To date, there is no publication that reports regularly on the NPF (see 4.3.1, 4.5). Three Scotland Performs Updates were published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (Campbell, 2012a, 2012b, 2013), and two by the Scottish Government (2016, 2017b) in the form of Performance Scorecards tailored for each parliamentary committee, in both cases mainly (if not only) for a parliamentary audience. A first *Wellbeing Report* was published but only in May 2019 (see 4.3.1). A further report was published in December 2020 focused however on the impact of COVID-19, meaning it is not clear whether *Wellbeing Reports* are going to be published regularly in the future (at the time of writing, February 2022, no other

report has been published since). As we will see in Chapters 13 and 14, media coverage is significantly increased when key publications are released. The lack of such publication as far as the NPF is concerned is thus highly problematic as it provides journalists with no focusing event and no material to report.

Yet, the NPF does not seem to be promoted by the government to the media even when favourable opportunities arise which would not require the release of reports. One informant made me notice that the day the first WEGo Policy Lab was being held (May 1st, 2019) also happened to be the day that the then new GDP figures were being released. That day, the person recalled, 'there was a Scottish Government press release on the GDP stats but there wasn't one on the Well-being Economy Governments'. '[Y]ou had the Prime Minister of Iceland in Scotland, you had the First Minister making a speech all about "Beyond GDP", and yet what the Scottish Government was responding to was the GDP stats. And from memory […] there was zero reference in that to the fact even that the Wellbeing Economy Government Policy Lab was being held. So […] [that is] a classic example of responding to the dominant narrative as opposed to trying to shift the narrative and being proactive'.

That comment sparked my curiosity, so I decided to double check the informant's claims. To do so, I searched the Scottish Government's website's *News* section to see what news items were published on that day, as well as on the days preceding and following the event. It is worth noting that the Scottish Government does not seem to publish actual press releases but only news items, like blog posts. This does not mean that separate documents are not sent to the press, but if these exist it is unknown as they are not available online (though if they do one should see an increase in the number of pieces published or aired on that topic in that period). What follows is what I found.

On April 30th, 2019, a first news item reported the topics of a meeting the First Minister and the Icelandic Prime Minister had on that day, mentioning the WEGo Policy Lab that was meant to take place on the following day (Scottish Government,

2019c). On the day of the event, no news item was published about the Policy Lab. The speech the First Minister gave at the event was published, but under the *Publications* section (Scottish Government, 2019d). On the exact same day, new GDP figures were released at 9:47 a.m., some 40 minutes after the First Minister's speech had started. A news item in this case was published which contained however no references to the NPF, WEAll, WEGo or the Policy Lab (Scottish Government, 2019e). This contained a link to the full statistical publication, in which a brief reference to the NPF is made on page 4 where it is stated what the Economy Outcome includes, that one of the indicators is the GDP growth rate compared to the average rate of the previous three years and that more information can be found on the NPF's website (Scottish Government, 2019f). This very short reference, however, looks completely disconnected from the rest of the publication, not to mention that nowhere in the document are GDP statistics linked holistically to the NPF making it thus just seem the result of a box-ticking exercise. The whole document, after all, is entirely about GDP and economic growth and the authors invite the reader to find more about the NPF elsewhere.

After double-checking that the informant's claims were correct, I asked some of those working on the NPF for clarifications and why no regular NPF publication exists to date. The main reason, it emerged, is that the promotion of the NPF to the media has not been a priority on the government's agenda. The Engagement Lead for the NPF herself admitted that 'certainly we haven't done much in the way of kind of active engagement with the media'. In fact, I was told that internal conversations about the promotion of the NPF and public engagement have only begun recently, and due to the COVID-19 pandemic they have 'been put on hold'. The internal structure of government also seems to have made it quite complicated to promote the NPF. As again the Engagement Lead for the NPF explained, 'this sort of stuff tends to go through our communication colleagues […] who very much control our interaction with the media which is why I actually think Twitter is so useful, because

there's no gatekeeping there. I mean, I can basically have a conversation with whoever I want, whenever I want'. The *Scottish Government Outcomes & SDGs* Twitter account is indeed updated regularly and, as the Director of Performance and Strategic Outcomes recognised, 'that's probably the main tool [my team uses]'. This has advantages but also disadvantages (see 11.3) and suggests that "communication colleagues" within government have been recalcitrant to promote the NPF which however is the symptom, not the cause, of what ultimately seems the lack of a strong leadership from government[96].

The intrinsic characteristics of the NPF have not been helpful either. According again to the Engagement Lead for the NPF, it can be 'really difficult to sell the NPF' even to communication colleagues because 'they don't see where the story is' (given the lack of an annual NPF report, one wonders whether they "don't see where the story is" simply because there is nowhere to find one). The large number of indicators, time lags with the data, and the lack of a composite index which translates into the lack of a 'simple messaging' were also described as problematic. The same person also mentioned as a problem the fact that the relationship with the BBC and other media outlets in Scotland 'is not great' because of 'that big elephant-shaped independence-thing in the room'. So, being the NPF *Scotland*'s well-being framework, UK-wide outlets may not be interested in reporting it.

As for why the press release on GDP did not mention the launch of WEGo and only very briefly referenced to the NPF, the Director of Performance and Strategic Outcomes commented that this 'will not have been looked at in a very thoughtful way'. '[I]t's […] on a separate siloed track to anyone making those connections. So, the Chief Statistician, if he signed this off, would have signed it off I suspect in a very sort of technical, with a technical head on […] rather than […] thinking "is this an opportunity […] to present this […] in a broader context?"'. Without perhaps realising,

[96] Which is probably why Scotland was not among the examples of 'strong leadership' mentioned by the OECD (see Exton and Shinwell, 2018, p. 22).

the informant effectively suggested the failure of the NPF in discouraging silo thinking, and indeed silo thinking was one of the barriers that other informants identified (see 11.4).

But that of the WEGo Policy Lab was not an isolated case. The launch of the WEGo network that took place during the 6th OECD World Forum in November 2018 was not press-released either despite the attendance of Stiglitz and representatives of Scotland, New Zealand and Iceland[97]. Nor was the 2019 *Wellbeing Report*: no news item was posted on the Scottish Government's website, I could find no references to the report or to the NPF on *any* among all the media outlets I looked at in the weeks following its publication, and an advanced search on Google News returned no results either. To be sure, a press release may have still been sent and journalists may have simply not been interested in it. However, the Director of Performance and Strategic Outcomes was unsure about there being one ('when we published the *Wellbeing Report* in May, was there no press release? There was… was there a press release?'), which suggests that its promotion to the media was not a major concern then, and at any rate it is unlikely that a press release about an official publication like this will have received no interest *at all*. In conclusion, even taking a key event and one of the latest available publications as further examples, we see that the NPF remains absent from the dissemination priorities of the Scottish Government.

11.3. Journalists' View: The Importance of Press Releases

Journalists agreed largely on the importance of sending press releases. 'In theory', one of them said, 'if we know about something we can go and look it up. But unless we do know about it then we can't do that. So, if they [the Scottish Government] want us to, you know, report and go look at it [the NPF], then they need to tell us about it

[97] The government would later create a dedicate page about WEGo and mention the OECD World Forum there, but the launch of the initiative remained uncovered whilst it was taking place.

first'. Note that the interviewee implicitly admitted not being aware of the NPF. Also note that I used the word sending and not publishing. Another journalist was indeed irritated by the fact that nowadays organisations just post their announcements on their social media accounts pretending that journalists report them (which seems to be exactly the approach currently taken by the NPF team with its Twitter account, possibly another sign that the dissemination of the NPF has not been thoroughly planned).

And yet, sending press releases is not enough. Journalists receive an incredible number of press releases, so it is also important to send them to the right person. As a journalist from *The Herald* said, 'the thing to do is to look – as you've done – for journalists who have written about those kinds of topics in the past because they're likely to be more receptive […], whereas if you are just sending a press release off to a desk you don't know if someone is even reading it'. A journalist from *Edinburgh Evening News*, however, disagreed, arguing that press releases should be sent to the News Editor or to the news desk, 'because they are the ones that coordinate […] all the different departments'. This suggests that different outlets have different preferences which means that, to increase the media profile of well-being metrics, their developers should carefully consider what the best way to promote their press releases would be from outlet to outlet and perhaps even from journalist to journalist.

Another crucial issue concerns the day press releases should be sent in (and, consequently, the day metrics should be released or events organised). According to the *BBC Scotland* Business and Economy Editor, Saturday is probably the best choice since during the weekend the BBC has a two-hour morning news program which is 'more serious and in-depth, intellectual' (which suggests that well-being is perceived as a niche topic that is not suitable for a lay audience). Yet, he also pointed out that during weekends there is live sports which 'newspapers don't have', meaning that only certain times during weekends would be suitable. In fact, TV and radio seem to have different requirements from newspapers considering that the latter need to be

also sent to print in advance. A journalist from *Edinburgh Evening News* thus thought press releases that arrive on Friday and are embargoed for Monday's papers are more likely to be picked up. 'In our paper, for instance', they said, 'Fridays are the busiest days because we try to write most of Monday's paper […] because we […] have only one person in on a Sunday […] and because you are thinking ahead of Monday there's always going to be less stories […], so if one presents itself, they will say "oh, this is good!"'. The same person also added however that 'if there is like a General Election it's probably not the best time to do it' (the interview was conducted right before the 2019 General Election). This suggests that metrics like the NPF are seen as a distraction and irrelevant in times of elections while that is probably when one would want to use them most as accountability tools.

This leads us to the characteristics and content of the press release itself. This should be short (200-300 words) and contain a story that is new, relatable and, above all, relevant to the outlet one is sending it to. A journalist from *Edinburgh Evening News*, for instance, made it very clear that for them press releases should have 'some local relevance'. After all, being it an Edinburgh-based newspaper, if 'there is no particular Edinburgh interest in it then that's not particularly good for us'. Nevertheless, if the metric in question has little or no currency it is hard for it to be reported because, yet another journalist commented, it would be hard to get a 'news desk interested in a story about it' as people will not know 'very much about it in the first place so it goes down to "they might not be as interested"'. This is similar to what the Chief Economic Commentator of the *Financial Times* told me when I asked them why they had not mentioned in their pieces any of the metrics that I looked at: 'say I wrote a few columns […] I still wouldn't have prepared the ground to write about this regularly 'cause the readers won't know what it's about, every time I'd have to start again!'. Once again, we see the idea that society at large is unaware or uninterested in the well-being agenda emerging as a great barrier.

What seems could help is a Scottish Government "label". '[T]he Scottish Government's wellbeing index', – one journalist said probably referring to the NPF, which could point to their unawareness of the NPF, or simply of what an index is – 'doesn't have a very high degree of competence but because it's connected to the Scottish Government if that went down significantly that would probably be an easier story to sell because people would be like "this is the Scottish Government's own well-being index [and] is showing they're not doing very well"'. Since composite indices are generally thought to increase media coverage and given that journalists tend to focus more on where things have gone wrong (as the above comment suggests as well), this could actually make their creation less likely since governments will prefer to avoid bad press and could well be one of the reasons why the Scottish Government has not developed such index yet.

11.4. Silo Thinking

According to the Engagement Lead for the NPF, 'it's really difficult sometimes to get ministers and cabinet secretaries to make decisions that will support the bigger picture. They are thinking about their portfolio, and they are thinking about what would get them a good headline in the press and there will be particular pet projects that they want to spend money on'. Silo thinking, as another civil servant argued, is indeed still dominant across the civil service and government whose departments are 'still working in a very traditional way'. To make their case, they used the National Outcomes consultation as an example. One committee, the informant recalled without however specifying which one,

> decided that they were going to write about their issues not just to one cabinet secretary but to all the cabinet secretaries. And […] some of the staff got very upset about this […] because every committee has a clear boundary

> of its remit […]. So, […] the clerks […] were uncomfortable with this because when the convener of the committee gets angry it's generally the clerk who will have to deal with that issue, you know, when they get upset, they think "oh, why did, why did that committee write to my minister?!".

These comments, which come from people within the policy arena who have been working on the NPF and following the well-being agenda closely, in addition to the above example of the May 2019 GDP press release, demonstrate that silo thinking still permeates the policymaking process and suggest that the NPF may have not been successful yet in changing the way decisions are taken (which is in line with what we will see in Chapter 13).

11.5. The Political Ownership of the NPF

Another factor that emerged clearly during interviews as a hurdle, especially in relation to the NPF, was its political, non-independent ownership. When asked why they had not mentioned the NPF more frequently in their speeches, a Conservative MSP replied: 'to me or other politicians it's really the Scottish Government, the SNP-Scottish Government… it's their policy, so their National Performance Framework, so you would expect them to talk about it more'. This is in line with the greater use that has been made of the NPF by SNP MSPs in parliamentary speeches (see Chapter 13) and in fact could be one of the reasons why several members of the opposition rejected my interview invitations.

The lack of independence of the NPF was not however a problem for member of opposition parties only. A former member of Oxfam Scotland, too, expressed concerns about the NPF's lack of impartiality and especially about the opportunistic selection of indicators. The informant recalled their experience in trying to bring some

fair work-related indicators into the framework before its 2018 refresh. Eventually, they managed to have three indicators in,

> none of which I think were in the first draft and none of which I think they wanted to put in it. […] [T]he first was an indicator of what we call Employee Voice […] they really didn't want to include that […] so we wrote […] to the minister and then the minister says "yes, include this". […] [T]he civil servants […] were probably concerned that that was really hard to shift. That's why we wanted it down there, because it's hard to shift.

According to the person in question, this is common practice in Scotland which is why they said to be 'sceptical' of many of the NPF indicators. Indeed, although the interviewee was enthusiastic about the inclusion of the above indicators, that was exactly what concerned them as it highlighted a relative ease for stakeholders of including whatever indicators fit most with their interests. They therefore criticised how the NPF is being used opportunistically by the government as a 'stakeholder management tool': the government does not have 'a fundamental interest in changing things […]. [T]hey would go to a room full of trade unionists and say "we support workers' rights" and they would go to a room full of businesses and say they want the most supportive environment for businesses'.

Similarly, one journalist claimed that the fact that the Scottish Government 'sets its own targets' makes these 'slightly less trusted' (note that the government dropped all time-limited targets in 2018, almost two years before the interview took place, which reveals again limited familiarity with the framework). If it is the government 'setting itself its own exam and doing the marking', they concluded, 'I'm not really interested'. This contradicts what other journalists have argued above about the fact that a Scottish Government "label" may facilitate the reporting of the NPF. However, as we will see, despite the NPF being a Scottish Government output

this remains almost absent from the media landscape. The fact that the government oversees the NPF is thus both the reason why some who might be aware of it are sceptical, and the reason why the NPF is not being reported despite being potentially attractive to journalists since it is not being promoted and journalists therefore remain unaware of it.

11.6. The Publication of Unfavourable Information

It was brought to my attention by a source within government that this has 'a report that the OECD did on our kind of outcomes approach about 18 months ago'. 'It's never actually been published', the source added, noting that 'we've had a couple of issues with, with some things in it' since 'the OECD has been very supportive of us over the years but they […] have been critical as well […] so, you know, there's a good section in the report about stuff that we still need to work on'. The government seems to have thus decided to not publish a report because some of the information contained in it highlighted weaknesses in either the framework and the approach more broadly or in their use and impact, or perhaps both. This is inextricably linked to the issue of the NPF being overseen by the Scottish Government and unfortunately supports the scepticism that some interviewees expressed above. Having a tertiary body in charge of the framework could thus solve these problems and indeed, as we will see, the release of data showing adverse trends was similarly reason for concern in Italy so much so that their publication was in some cases at risk, but always when policymakers oversaw their release and not within ISTAT.

11.7. The Termination of the HKI

Three factors seem to have determined the termination of the HKI. First, as we have seen above the fact that the numbers did not vary much between the two iterations meant that there was no big story for the media, and this made its promotion harder.

As one interviewee recalled, ‘the second time around […] we didn’t get a lot of traction for saying the Humankind has ticked up or down by a small amount’. This confirms again the important role the media are thought to play and the importance of producing stories for the press. Second, another problem was the lack of resources. Developing the HKI was ‘quite a capacity-intensive process’ one interviewee recalled. So, after the second iteration, yet another person commented, ‘we had no money to do it’. However, before I would ask why the HKI was terminated I was told that Oxfam ‘spent a tiny budget’ on it, so the lack of resources was probably only a secondary reason. Third and last, what in fact seems to have really determined the end of the HKI was Oxfam’s ‘restructuring’. As one interviewee recalled, ‘it was an Oxfam internal politics and bureaucracy. […A]t the UK level they […] wanted to narrow the focus onto more specific things […] and the well-being stuff didn't really fit within that. So, we still tried to keep it going a little bit, but we had basically been told not to do that’ (another interviewee used their hands to imitate a sword axing the project). Internal dynamics and changes in leadership were thus probably the key reasons which determined the termination of the HKI and which, as we will see in a moment, affected the iteration of well-being metrics in Italy as well.

12. The Context Girder – Italy

12.1. The Role of the Media

According to national statisticians, the media play a crucial role for the success of the well-being agenda (as we also saw in Chapter 8 and 10), so much so that some would talk about the media and their importance even before I had asked them. Their role is so crucial that one interviewee went as far as arguing that the media 'let you exist. If you are outside of the media circle you can do whatever you want but you don't exist, period'. Therefore, ISTAT always issues a press release to accompany the publication of BES Reports whose annual release usually takes place during a high-level event which journalists are also invited to attend. Just like in Scotland, however, there was widespread criticism of the media's current level of coverage as well as with the quality of their work when they do get interested (with journalists accused of promoting 'studies that have no scientific soundness', as one statistician said referring to rankings such as the *Sole 24 ORE*'s and *ItaliaOggi*'s).

Several reasons were suggested to explain such alleged low interest. First, the short lifespan of the news cycle. Second, journalists' 'poor' numeracy skills, as the then Head of Communication of ISTAT, a former journalist herself, suggested. Third and perhaps most importantly, journalists' difficulty in understanding complex topics such as well-being. As one statistician pointed out, journalists have found it hard to

extrapolate stories from BES Reports that are 'not simply "the employment rate has decreased" which is not a very BES-related message because there are other publications about that'. As a result, I was told that ISTAT has expanded the introductory chapters of its annual BES Report to present a wider assessment of well-being. Yet, journalists have 'not much' been interested in this as they apparently just 'copy and paste' from ISTAT's press release.

Interestingly, according to the then Head of the National Accounts Directorate the same problems apply to the dissemination of GDP statistics. The interviewee lamented indeed that journalists use these in a 'very random' and 'often non-technically correct way'. This seems to be in line with the fact that, as we saw in the Problem chapters, even those who have been reporting GDP the most were not particularly knowledgeable about it. Furthermore, the interviewee noted that although they talk to journalists 'a lot', it is 'extremely rarely' that journalists will ask them questions about well-being. This is in line with the perceived low level of media coverage of the well-being agenda as well as with journalists' level of awareness emerged in previous chapters and with claims discussed in the previous paragraph regarding the inability of journalist to cover complex, multidisciplinary topics.

Among members of interest groups, too, despite a general agreement that the media play a 'huge' and 'fundamental' role, almost all interviewees were critical of the media's current level of interest. While thus many said to frequently try and promote well-being metrics and the broader agenda to the media, several barriers were said to exist that prevent these from being reported. Some mentioned as a problem the short-termism of journalism compared with the longer-term horizon that the promotion of well-being necessitates. For others, a key barrier was the limited time available when being interviewed by journalists, especially when discussing complex topics such as well-being or related themes. For instance, while we were conversating the former Scientific Director of WWF Italy received an invitation from *Canale 5* to comment live the following day on Greta Thunberg and the Friday for

Future strikes. I asked him whether he would have taken the opportunity to mention the BES and he responded: '[n]o way. The journalist already called me saying "[…] we can't say these things tomorrow because" – I had told him what climate change means and he said – "[…] we don't have much time... we should say things very briefly"'. Just like in Scotland, the same person pointed out that policymakers are however to be blamed for their uninterest just as much as journalists. '[T]he media are, unfortunately, terribly tied to the daily political debate, and the daily political debate does not take into consideration these aspects at all'.

Perhaps most importantly, what emerged as a great barrier was the compartmentalisation of newsrooms. The then Head of Communication of ASviS and now Giovannini's Press Office Manager, a former journalist herself, explained this problem with richness of detail[98]. The interviewee said that press releases about multidimensional themes that have no reference news desk struggle to get to the right journalists and, ultimately, to get published. As they explained,

> when there are many elements combined there is no reference newsroom because I've understood that if the key is sustainable development, the press release bounces between newsrooms. "It's not, it's not my stuff" argues the Economics Newsroom, "because it says sustainable development"'.

The interview took place the day before a high-level event in which ASviS presented its analysis of the Finance Bill in light of the 2030 Agenda. The informant thus gave me as an example the work she had just been undertaking to get the event's press releases published. Which turned out to be a rather complicated task:

[98] Although the interviewee referred to sustainable development – AsviS's main area of interest – the same problems she encountered apply to well-being as well, given both are multidimensional in nature.

> the Economics Newsroom [which the press release was sent to] starts to get annoyed and says “what’s this 2030 Agenda? 2030 Agenda! That’s stuff that is about the environment” […]. What happens to this press release? It starts to dance within [between] newsrooms. I’ve witnessed this because I called the Economics [Newsroom] whom I had sent it to, and I said: “[…] did you see the press release?” “Yes, I did. I sent it to Environment” “What, you sent it to Environment? That’s about the Finance Bill, take it back!” “No” – they said – “No, actually it’s... it’s [something] for experts”. “OK” – I called the experts – “No, actually we sent it to Internal or Social Affairs...”.

This bouncing back and forth between newsrooms was confirmed by one of the journalists I interviewed, who admitted that a press release of multidisciplinary nature like the one above usually bounces between newsrooms and eventually ‘ends up in the bin’.

Policymakers, too, believed that the media play a ‘fundamental’, ‘very important’ and ‘huge’ role. Yet in this case, too, interviewees were critical of the media’s current level of interest. ‘The media always only talk about growth’, ‘[n]o one ever talks about the BES’ and similar comments would indeed be very frequent. Several reasons were advanced as for why that could be the case, including the short lifespan of the news cycle, journalists’ incapacity to cover complex topics, and their preference for political gossip. A few policymakers also highlighted as a problem journalists’ lack of time and knowledge. A former Council Assessor of the City of Rome, for instance, argued that despite journalists attending the launch event of the city’s 2019 BES Report, only two interviewed her with the rest being ‘happy to be just sent a press release’ as they were not experts in the field and therefore lacked the time and knowledge to examine the theme in depth.

Most importantly, like in Scotland, several policymakers, especially elected politicians, admitted that they would find it hard to talk about the BES or the well-

being agenda to journalists. The former Minister of Regional Affairs, for instance, said that if he went on TV and talked about the BES he would be labelled as 'crazy' and 'get thrown out the door'. Similarly, a Senator said that 'they wouldn't invite me to go on television anymore', whereas a former Minister of Transport claimed that both him and his party do not already receive much exposure thus if they started talking about the BES 'they'd cut us off [completely]'. A former Minister of Education went even farther:

> [t]here's a need to criticise this government whatever, irrespectively of what it does [...]. So, GDP keeps making the headlines because – especially when it's going down – because [they] say "see the government, see the government, see the government!". No one... If I said [let's move] "beyond GDP", let's try to understand what this Finance Bill can do for people's well-being, I'd get suddenly attacked: "[…] you want to shift the attention away towards another measure because you are destroying the economy, so you want to mislead us […]". What do you do then? You don't even say that because you know that that'll be [their] view [...]. What I am saying to you right now, if you were a journalist you'd write "Fioramonti proposes degrowth for Italy" [...] because you must sell, it has to be a title that can sell [...] but also a negative title: negative news sell more than positive ones.

This shows how double-edged the media can be. On the one hand, they can stimulate interest and action. On the other hand, they can limit policymakers' willingness to talk about well-being to the public, especially if journalists are unaware or sceptical of the agenda and policymakers distrust them, or worse still if economic output is not growing (which is in line with and confirms findings of the Problem and Solution chapters). Since such views came especially from former ministers, this is concerning as it effectively shows that at high levels of government talking about well-being

publicly is regarded as problematic, which is exactly the opposite of what one instead would hope for. On a final note, the last comment about degrowth is also very important as it shows that degrowth (and decreases in output for that matter) are thought to be detrimental for well-being and supports my previous claim that the well-being and the degrowth agenda are often confused with each other.

12.2. Journalists' View: ISTAT's BES Press Release

The vast majority of journalists believed that ISTAT's 2018 BES press release was very poorly made. Above all, because it lacked a story. 'The first thing that needs to be there is a story in my opinion because I'm neither a researcher, a professor nor a politician. I need to tell a story', a TV journalist said after looking at the press release and before concluding that they could find 'no big story' in it. The lack of a story is therefore enough to prevent journalists from reporting it: '[h]ow can I propose it to my supervisor or to the Editor-in-Chief? They'll say: "this BES thingy is very nice, but where's the story?"', another journalist commented.

Several journalists also pointed out the lack of a proper title (which was just *Synthesis for the press*). 'I mean let's imagine what a title on the BES could be […]: "12 indicators of development"? No one would read that', a Senior Economic Correspondent commented. Note that a press release might lack a story but not necessarily a title (or vice versa). In this case, journalists believed that both were lacking. From her part, the then Head of Communication of ISTAT rejected these criticisms arguing that for every domain they 'provide a synthesis and [...] a journalistic title'. This is a half-truth, however, since the titles provided correspond exactly to the names of the domains of the framework and are thus not that journalistic.

Although the lack of a story was a great deterrent, some thought the lack of a negative story to be the real issue. As a journalist put it, 'positive news stories are not

good stories'. Some were even suspicious of the fact that the findings presented in the press release were too positive. '[I]t seems that everything's going well', another journalist said after skim-reading it, 'so something must be wrong with it' (which demonstrates again the prevalence of a sense of scepticism of well-being metrics among journalists).

Another problem concerned the length of the press release. Many interviewees complained that a nine-page-long document was way too long for it to be even taken into consideration[99]. Still another problem was the academic, not very journalist-friendly style of the press release. Comments like '[t]his is a study, not a press release', 'it's a scientific synthesis rather than a journalistic one', would be very common. On that note, a *Corriere della Sera* journalist described the very first part of the document as irrelevant as it focused on the methodology of the BES, criticising also the overall use of complicated terms and graphs. '[T]his table here is by quintiles' – they said commenting the table on page 8 – 'I mean, you [ISTAT] want to make my life hard. What the fuck, how am I going to explain to people what quintiles are?'.

A different, yet also very related problem was the short notice the press release gets sent with. This gets sent 'a few hours in advance (if not even one hour before)', one journalist explained, meaning that there is no time to read it 'because you need to publish right away'. The then Head of Communication of ISTAT however again disagreed, saying that they 'send a press release to everybody two days in advance' and do also follow-ups.

The day in which the BES (and therefore its accompanying press release) is issued was highlighted as a problem, too. Except for its first edition, the BES has always been released on Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Fridays. A TV journalist explained that, *being the BES a low-salient issue*, to increase the chances of it being reported

[99] Which is why the curators of the Sole 24 ORE QoLR said that they keep their press release no longer than one or even half of a page.

this should be published when 'there are no big news'. On a Monday, for instance, because 'there's not much stuff [going on]'. The main reason being:

> Mondays – you get there from Saturdays and Sundays. Sources don't work and institutions start working late because all parliamentarians get to parliament, they take the 9 A.M. train and arrive at 12 P.M. Then [...] there is hardly ever a plenary session in the Chamber or in the Senate on a Monday morning, these are organised from Tuesday onwards. Indeed, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are the days in which all events take place. Why? Because parliamentarians are in Rome, ministers are in Rome, whereas on Saturdays and Sundays they go back to their respective constituencies.

In other words, BES or well-being-related news are currently not perceived as salient and are only seen as items worth reporting when there are gaps to be filled – they are *not* "big news". The fact that the BES is not worth reporting while parliamentary activity is taking place also shows two things: first, that the BES and well-being are not something that parliamentarians refer to in their activities or in conversating with journalists; second, that journalists do not see metrics such as the BES as integral to the policy process and as therefore helpful for them to e.g. hold policymakers to account as they would be happy to report them but only when no political activity is underway, similarly to what we saw in Scotland with the NPF described as a distraction in times of a General Election (see 11.3).

Finally, several interviewees lamented the lack of involvement from ISTAT's side in the promotion of the BES. 'You don't see them, you don't hear from them', one journalist said referring to ISTAT's Communication Department. The then Head of Communication of ISTAT disagreed again with these criticisms, arguing that, among other things, ISTAT keeps its press office 'open from 9 to 19 everyday' for journalists

who might need clarifications. For some, engagement levels decreased following Giovannini's resignation as President of ISTAT in 2013. Whether or not this impacted on the promotion of the BES will be discussed more in depth below. However, suffice it to say that Giovannini admitted that when he was President, he 'increased hugely [...] the number of press releases' whereas his successor 'significantly decreased [them] [...] in the belief that there was an overexposure of ISTAT'.

12.3. Other Factors Inhibiting Media Coverage[100]

In addition to the media-unfriendliness of ISTAT's BES press release, a few other factors were claimed by journalists to be inhibiting the reporting of the BES and well-being metrics more generally. To begin with, people were said to be not interested in serious content. '[T]he quality of the most-read news is the poorest', a *Corriere della Sera* journalist commented. This makes it hard for high quality journalism to emerge and to even be commissioned, which consequently reduces the chances that journalists will cover well-being in their pieces as they will be incentivised to publish low-quality content that however attracts more views.

What also emerged as a great barrier was people's alleged unawareness of the BES. '[I]f I cite the BES', one journalist commented, 'I know that those who'll read the piece won't know what I'm referring to'. This means that only a few will be interested in reading it and, above all, *search for it* in the first place. This is a problem for online journalism since the number of clicks articles get is a key metric of success for journalists today. Instead, 'if you mention GDP', the same person commented, being this a highly researched keyword '[the article] is indexed by search engines and [it appears] in more searches', getting more clicks and generating more revenues.

[100] No stimuli emerged, which is in itself a finding as it shows that even receptive journalists are struggling to talk about well-being.

Clicks are for newspaper journalists what viewing figures are for TV journalists. Every morning '[t]he Heads look at viewing figures', a TV journalist said, and if while a segment on e.g. the BES was aired figures decreased, 'the [next] day before including in the treatment a segment on ISTAT they'll think about it twice'. The reason being that the higher the viewing figures, the higher the price advertisements that are shown before, during and after the newscast are sold at, meaning that less salient issues can be easily scraped off the treatment if in the past they reported low figures during their airing.

Finally, some journalists told me that they would have liked to cover the BES more but that their bosses would not let them. Therefore, having sympathetic editors on board is probably as important as finding sympathetic journalists, if not even more. As one journalist commented, there is a 'hierarchy of news' but also a 'hierarchy of people'. The question then becomes, though, why editors are not interested. To be sure, they could be refraining from requesting or approving pieces or segments about e.g. the BES for all the above reasons. Yet, there is one more factor that might influence their decisions: their outlet's political alignment. As a Senior Economics Commentator put it, some newspapers 'ignore it [the BES] because they think this could be a left-wing theme. Indeed, it was introduced in public debate by the recent reform of the state's budget which was signed by the former President of the Budget Committee, Francesco Boccia of the Democratic Party'. As we will see, it is indeed left or centre-left parliamentarians who have mentioned well-being metrics the most in their speeches. This could make the agenda be seen as partisan, although the embedding of well-being indicators into national legislation could in theory counteract this by promoting the use of these metrics among all parties.

12.4. ISTAT's Change of Administration and the Termination of UrBES

The most important factor that seems to have determined the end of UrBES (and to have also affected the development and promotion of the BES and therefore its reception and impact within policy circles), is the resignation in 2013 of Giovannini as President of ISTAT and the nomination in mid-2014 of his successor, Giorgio Alleva. According to interviewees this was a turning point. '[U]ntil Giovannini was in power, that [the BES] was his creature so it had almost absolute priority. The Alleva presidency was not of the same opinion', a statistician who worked closely with Alleva argued.

To put things into context, after Alleva's nomination the independent magazine *La Voce* published an article in which a group of scholars criticised Alleva's skills, defining his curriculum as 'extremely mediocre' (Anderlini *et al.*, 2014, n/a). Alleva, according to some informants, believed Giovannini to be behind this letter (which Giovannini did not sign). Consequently, Alleva and Giovannini started 'to not get along', and a series of 'internal problems' and 'internal jealousies' emerged. The executives Giovannini had nominated, I was told, went through a '*damnatio memoriae'* and the BES was assigned to people that according to interviewees were very competent yet had expertise in other fields, were 'never interested' and believed that the BES was 'crap' (one of whom is even apparently known internally as 'mister GDP'). One interviewee claimed that if Alleva could, he would have in fact terminated the BES 'right away'. However, the BES was gaining traction locally (with several local policymakers wanting to develop their own framework), nationally (with the first proposals to include well-being indicators into the DEF being submitted to parliament) and internationally (with invitations to present the framework at international conferences increasing exponentially). This helped the BES to not be 'completely buried'. Other projects with more limited uptake, such as UrBES, were

instead terminated. Or, as one interviewee put it, ‘everything that it was possible to cut, it was cut’.

Although I met both Alleva and Giovannini, I did not ask them to comment on this as I thought that doing so would have been inappropriate but also to guarantee a smooth conduction of the interview. Nonetheless, I did ask Alleva to comment on the criticisms advanced against his presidency and the reasons that led to the termination of UrBES. Regarding the former, Alleva recognised that he ‘revolutionised the organisation’ since he ‘was really keen to change’. This willingness to change clashed however with opposing views within ISTAT, especially in relation to the BES. Alleva recalled indeed finding ‘a rather sacerdotal situation around the BES’, like if this was an object of worship for which change was out of the question, and as such he was not surprised that he had been criticised by his colleagues.

Regarding UrBES, Alleva argued that it was because of the lack of political interest that the project was not further iterated. Local statistical offices would often invite him to present the BES framework but only as they ‘hoped that by doing so the next day their administrators would listen to them more’, which for Alleva demonstrated lack of political support. In fact, he recalled attending a press conference in which only ‘six, seven’ local policymakers participated which is a problem when ‘one needs to present something with journalists’ (which once again shows the important role the media are thought to play for the success of the agenda). So, ‘if you have to build a project’, Alleva said, ‘you need to do that when it’s ready, […] when there is consciousness, when there is demand [...]. I mean, if you work on something at the local level you have to do so on all territories [… otherwise] you highlight a lack of interest’. As soon as it was clear that these factors lacked, the project ‘struggled’. Alleva also lamented that those interested in the project were always the same (particularly the mayors of Pesaro and Bologna) and that as soon as local governments were overthrown there was no interest anymore (‘everything would fall into pieces’), making it hard to consolidate the project.

12.5. ISTAT's Internal Disputes and Users' Demand for GDP Data

ISTAT's website was re-designed in 2018. Currently, the top drill-down menus, each dedicated to one macro-field of statistics, when expanded include no references to well-being. A banner on the bottom-left corner of the website redirects users to BES and SDGs data whereas GDP per capita is the first of three indicators presented on the top-right corner (Appendix I). A few statisticians argued that they had to 'fight' a 'battle' to have that banner. Apparently, 'initially there was no [reference to well-being] at all'. The then Head of Communication of ISTAT, however, rejected these criticisms, saying that ISTAT had done 'a huge job of promotion' and that she would 'dare anyone to demonstrate that there was such a problem'. As far as the lower positioning of the BES banner is concerned, this was interestingly justified because of the higher demand for GDP data. The three statistics on the right-hand column, the Head of Communication told me, are indeed the ones that users search the most on the website[101]. The layout of the website is thus 'coherent with demand', Alleva said.

12.6. Lack of Interest from Civil Society and International Organisations

Several informants complained about the lack of interest and support from civil society. After all, except for ASviS there are not many other organisations that are pushing the agenda forward nationally, which explains why ASviS was the only one to be cited occasionally as a key player. Interestingly, international organisations did not emerge as crucial actors. In fact, their role would be hardly highlighted and, if anything, they would emerge as uninterested. A telling anecdote concerns the EU. One of the then Department Heads of ISTAT received a phone call from Eurostat while we were conversating. After hanging up, the person in question commented: '[n]o

[101] Although I could not be given official figures, one interviewee who looked at the then most recent webpage analytics told me that there was 'an abyss' between user searches for GDP and BES statistics.

one ever calls you from Eurostat [to ask questions] about the BES, they always call you [and ask] about GDP!'.

12.7. The Publication of Data Showing Adverse Trends

One of the people I spoke to told me about the case of an Italian municipality that had recently developed its own BES dashboard[102]. At the very beginning, the source recalled, '[t]here was a lot of curiosity' and 'enthusiasm' within the administration, especially because there was interest in finding why some things were being measured and others not or because 'there was simply no knowledge of the BES'. As soon as data were collected, however, there were 'more discussions'. The source told me that they received a phone call from the mayor who sounded very concerned and only managed to calm them down after a two-hour long conversation. This was because findings did not match 'with expectations'. The local administration was indeed expecting to perform well in areas in which, instead, it was found to perform badly and vice versa. This was worsened by the fact that the results were 'probably [going to] become of public domain'. Although that is the farthest the interviewee went, what they possibly meant is that there was a concern that the publication of data could have had a negative media impact. Although data were eventually published, this example is particularly interesting as it recalls the OECD report that the Scottish Government allegedly concealed (see 11.6). Despite their difference, both examples are similar in that they show that policymakers are understandably concerned about the publication of negative information or data that show adverse trends, which confirms once more the need of having independent, impartial bodies in charge of overseeing the publication of well-being metrics.

[102] To maintain the interviewee's anonymity, I will not reveal the name of the municipality in question.

12.8. Lack of Resources

One problem that emerged multiple times during interviews was the lack of resources, especially among statisticians and within the MEF where one interviewee argued that they are 'carrying on' with the evaluation of the impact of public policies on well-being but that there are 'not enough resources', especially in terms of experienced staff. As noted in BRAINPOoL (Seaford, 2013), the lack of resources is only a reflection of the lack of interest in what is to be financed through those resources. However, it is also true, as the same interviewee above admitted, that 'in the whole administration there is a problem of resources'. So, whereas the lack of resources when the budget would allow for them might in effect be due to a lack of interest, the provision of funding (however limited) in times of budget constraints actually demonstrates the opposite, although the MEF has been required by law to undertake such work, so the question is whether it would have continued and started such work in the first place had it not been required to (the next section shows not).

12.9. The Embedding of BES Indicators into National Legislation

As mentioned above (see 4.3.2) and by interviewees themselves, a landmark achievement was the embedding of 12 BES indicators into national legislation through the reform in 2016 of the state's budget. As we have seen above, this was claimed to have helped the BES "survive" a change of presidency and, as we will see, it provided an occasion for well-being to be debated in parliament (see 14.3).

Achieving this result, however, was not easy. Giulio Marcon, former left MP and spokesman of Sbilanciamoci! who first proposed measuring the impact of policies on well-being, said that the MEF was 'ferociously against' his proposal. This was seen as a 'stupid' and useless exercise, since the MEF thought that 'GDP estimates and other macroeconomic indicators' were 'already enough'. Concerns were raised particularly by the State General Accounting Directorate (SGAD), a sub-unit of the MEF which

oversees the state's budget. According to Marcon, opposition by the SGAD was 'very strong'. Boccia, the first signer of the state's budget reform, argued that the SGAD was against the proposal 'because it's a technocratic institution that might change in the moment in which you change the measurement model'. Padoan – the then Minister of the Economy – argued instead that those of the SGAD were just concerns relating to how to practically conduct the measurement and analysis[103]. It was thus 'not an ideological or political opposition' which is why, he concluded, 'this opposition was overcome – in fact, the BES it's inside the DEF'.

But how was such opposition overcome? According to Boccia, the SGAD has no legislative power, meaning 'it makes comments but then you negotiate with it'. Vested interests thus attempted to maintain the status quo but given the non-legislative status of the SGAD this opposition was not problematic. What played a much greater role though was the involvement and commitment of two people. The first one was Padoan. While some said that he was not actually very supportive ('he acted like a fish in a barrel'[104]), others, including Boccia, described him as crucial. Giovannini (2019, 01:16:12-01:16:14, 01:17:01-01:17:03, respectively), too, while he initially argued that there was 'opposition by the MEF' admitted that Padoan 'supported this idea'. From his part, Padoan rejected criticisms advanced against him as 'absolutely false', claiming that given his experience at the OECD it would have been impossible for him to be unsupportive.

The second person was Boccia. Marcon himself thought that his initial proposal 'would have never seen the light' without his help, especially because only a minority of bills that are proposed get approved and back then he was a member of the opposition, so his chances were even lower. From his part, Boccia said that he 'always believed in the measurement of quality of life', so as soon as he became President of

[103] This is what Giovannini (2019, 01:16:49-01:17:05), too, meant when he claimed that the development of forecasting tools 'was a strong reason for concern' during 'technical conversations' with the MEF.
[104] This way of saying identifies someone who ignores or opposes a certain decision like a deaf dead fish.

the Budget Committee and got the occasion to propose a reform of the budget, for him 'it looked like a unique opportunity […] that of integrating Equitable and Sustainable Well-being indicators'. Yet, other parties were not supportive initially. When he presented the idea to other groups in the Budget Committee, he recalled, 'they looked at us scornfully, [saying things] like "here come the happiness philosophers"' (which suggests that the well-being agenda is not only confused with degrowth but also with the measurement of happiness which requires the use of subjective indicators which as we have seen are not widely supported, hence the derision). Eventually, he managed to make all of them vote in favour (but the M5S voted against the whole reform once this arrived in parliament for the final vote). However, a few interviewees claimed that such unanimity was due to MPs paying 'little attention' to what they were approving. Others who voted in favour claimed instead that there was attention, but only because the embedding of well-being indicators was an easy way to be put 'under a good light': 'I don't remember anyone arguing against', a former centre-left MP said, 'in fact, these are things that let you find agreement at small expense: it doesn't cost anything'.

It is worth noting that some criticised the role eventually attributed to the MEF (see 4.3.2). One statistician, for instance, described this operation as 'bizarre' since as things stand 'the government [is] self-evaluating itself'. This is why in Marcon's original proposal the evaluation task was not assigned to the MEF and why he argued that this process should be more 'independent' as it does not currently 'ensure the impartiality and neutrality of evaluations' (Marcon, 2019, n/a; 2018, n/a, respectively). Among journalists, too, there was scepticism, with one journalist claiming that they were 'not interested' in MEF BES Reports because of their lack of impartiality (see also 10.2). This is very similar to what some journalists in Scotland claimed (see 11.5) but partially contrasts with the fact that, as we will see, MEF BES Reports have in some cases generated more coverage than ISTAT's.

Finally, it is worth noting that Marcon's original proposal also included a provision which would have bound policymakers to legislate based on the expected impact of policies on well-being through an ex-ante, in itinere and ex-post use of well-being indicators (Camera dei Deputati, 2015). Marcon recalled receiving written comments made by the MEF and the SGAD 'in which they eliminated this part here, giving negative feedback'. Eventually, the clause in question was removed. For Marcon, this risks turning well-being indicators into 'a sort of embellishing gadget', or in other words 'a beautiful study that however has no effect'. Boccia was of a similar opinion, pointing out however that he reached a good compromise, especially considering that initially 'they didn't even want to include them [well-being indicators] in an Appendix to the DEF'.

12.10. The Termination of the QUARS

Two key factors led to the termination of the QUARS in 2012. First, the launch of the BES project in 2010. This, somebody who worked on the QUARS said, meant that Sbilanciamoci! had achieved one of its goals, the institutionalisation of well-being. To keep updating the QUARS would have thus been 'a duplication' of ISTAT's work. Additionally, the QUARS was now seen as superfluous: 'we thought: well […], why should a local authority now decide to base their public policies on the QUARS instead than on the BES?', another interviewee commented. It is worth noting that many of those who worked on the QUARS participated in the consultation that ISTAT undertook for the creation of the BES or were hired by it and worked on the BES. That meant Sbilanciamoci! was able to shape the BES from the inside, so much so that as an ISTAT statistician who worked on the QUARS put it, 'if you look at them – the BES and the QUARS – they are basically the same thing'.

Second, the economic crisis of 2007/08. The crisis shrunk local authorities' budgets. Forced to make cuts, these drastically reduced the funding they provided to

organisations such as Lunaria which coordinates the Sbilanciamoci! campaign. The impact of these cuts was enormous. 'Sbilanciamoci!'s budget', one interviewee recalled, 'decreased from […] around 300,000€ a year to 5,000€ in the summer of the year when I left'. Indeed, another factor that seems to have determined the termination of the QUARS is that due to the above cuts some had to leave Lunaria, meaning that this also suddenly found itself without some of the expertise that it had relied on until then.

12.11. The Termination of the PIQ

According to the President of the Symbola Foundation, two factors determined the termination of the PIQ in 2012. First, 'less offensive' initiatives like the BES were being launched in the same period, so it was decided to not 'start a war' in order 'not to mess things up'. Therefore, just like in the case of the QUARS, the development of an official well-being framework made the curators of similar, unofficial initiatives think that their job was over (though, contrarily to the QUARS, the institutionalisation of well-being was not Symbola's main goal).

Second, and most importantly, the intrinsic controversial nature of the tool. The aim of the PIQ was to do like what 'Michelangelo [did] with Moses', that is, 'to take the superfluous out of GDP'. In other words, to show how much output every year was of good quality and how much of it was not instead. Now, the interviewee did not go on to explain why that was problematic, but one can imagine that this operation was met with criticism. After all, the PIQ was launched during an economic crisis and, contrarily to the BES (which also was launched in those years), it explicitly "attacked" GDP suggesting that some output was better than other (it was meant 'to start a conflict within GDP', hence the use of the word offensive). Given that interviewees considered economic growth to be necessary *despite the recognition that GDP measures both good and bad output*, the PIQ was thus probably launched

at the least favourable time. Also, as we saw above (10.3), almost no one in Italy supported the amendment or replacement of GDP, meaning that the PIQ might have also been launched in the least favourable form.

12.12. The Aborted Creation of the Ministry of Quality of Life

According to Fioramonti, the creation of the Ministry of Quality of Life (see 4.3.2) was aborted, above all, because of a lack of interest from the Lega party. In fact, many told me during interviews that both Lega and its leader, Matteo Salvini, were completely uninterested in the well-being agenda[105]. The then candidate Minister (who would later be appointed President of Benessere Italia) was not instead aware of what exactly happened during the negotiations between the M5S and the Lega party[106]. I tried to ask that to the then Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte, at a conference in March 2019. Though he let me ask my question, unfortunately he thought I was a journalist and preferred not to answer – a practical demonstration of policymakers' distrust of journalists.

[105] Interviews in Italy were conducted mainly between November 2018 and May 2019, thus when Lega had just formed a coalition government with the M5S which is why both were cited frequently.

[106] The interviewee also claimed that she was not actually convinced initially by the idea of creating a specific ministry since that 'could have clashed' with its objectives, being quality of life a cross-cutting issue. This possibly explains why the first Conte Cabinet established a steering committee that was part of the Prime Minister's Office rather than a separate ministry.

13. The Use and Impact of Well-being Metrics – Scotland

13.1. Analysis of Newspaper Coverage

The WHR is the metric that was found in the highest number of articles (300), followed by the HDI (187) and the WWF LPI (116) with the BCI, the EURSPI, the GIP and the ISEW at the end of the scale (all of which returned 0 results each), for a total of 1,015 articles (Figure 12). With only 20 hits, the NPF was among the metrics that were found in the lowest number of articles.

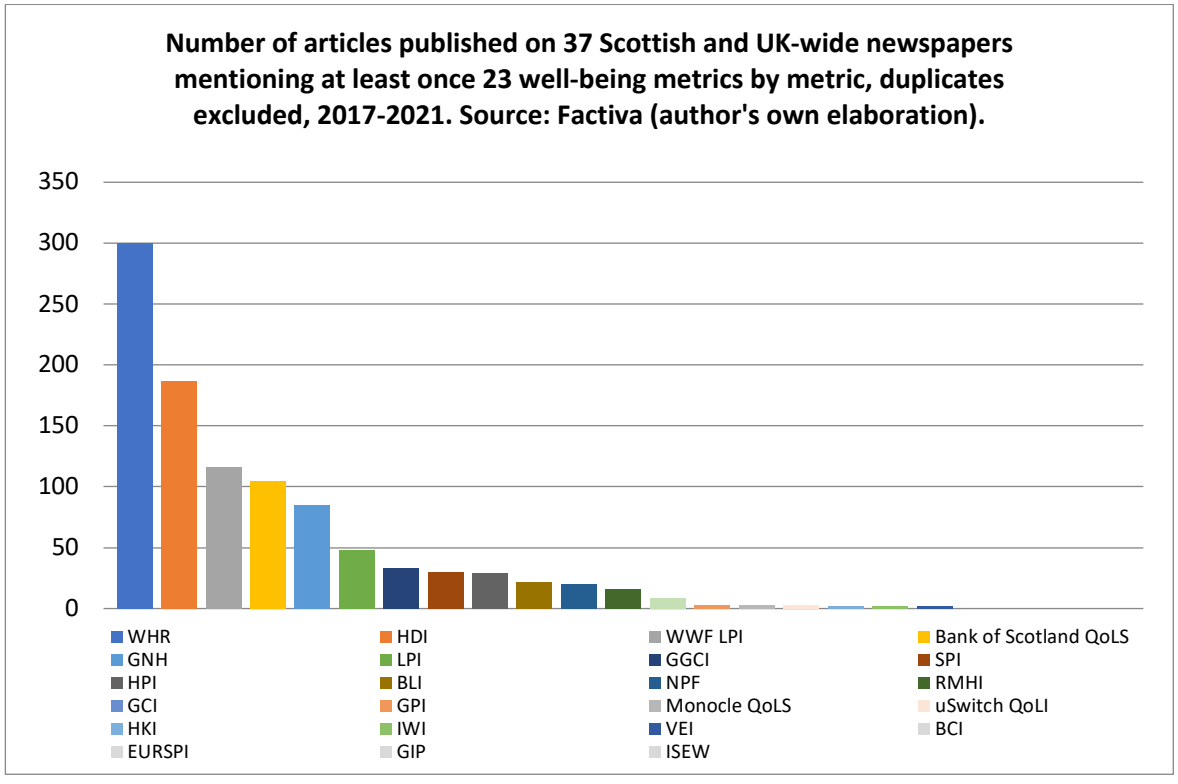


Figure 12.

The number of articles remained quite stable initially, only to start decreasing by 8% in 2020 and even further by 36% in 2021 (Figure 13). Such initial decrease in 2020 may be due to the RMHI not being iterated then and to the release of the 2020 GGCI being postponed to 2021. However, articles decreased despite the release of the WWF LPI which was not issued in 2019 being this a biannual publication and which was mentioned in more articles in 2020 (46) than the above metrics combined in 2019 (23). Similarly, the sharp decrease in 2021 may be due to the WWF LPI not being iterated then, but the overall gap in articles between 2020 and 2021 (75) is greater than the gap in articles published in the same years about the WWF LPI (30). Such overall decrease could then be due to the Bank of Scotland QoLS not being iterated in 2021, however 2021 saw the publication of the 2020 GGCI and the revival of the HPI, first updated since 2016. Therefore, such overall reduction in coverage, which can only limitedly be attributed to changes in the years metrics were released and which in fact occurred despite that, is most likely due to external factors and, as argued throughout the rest of the thesis, particularly to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed.

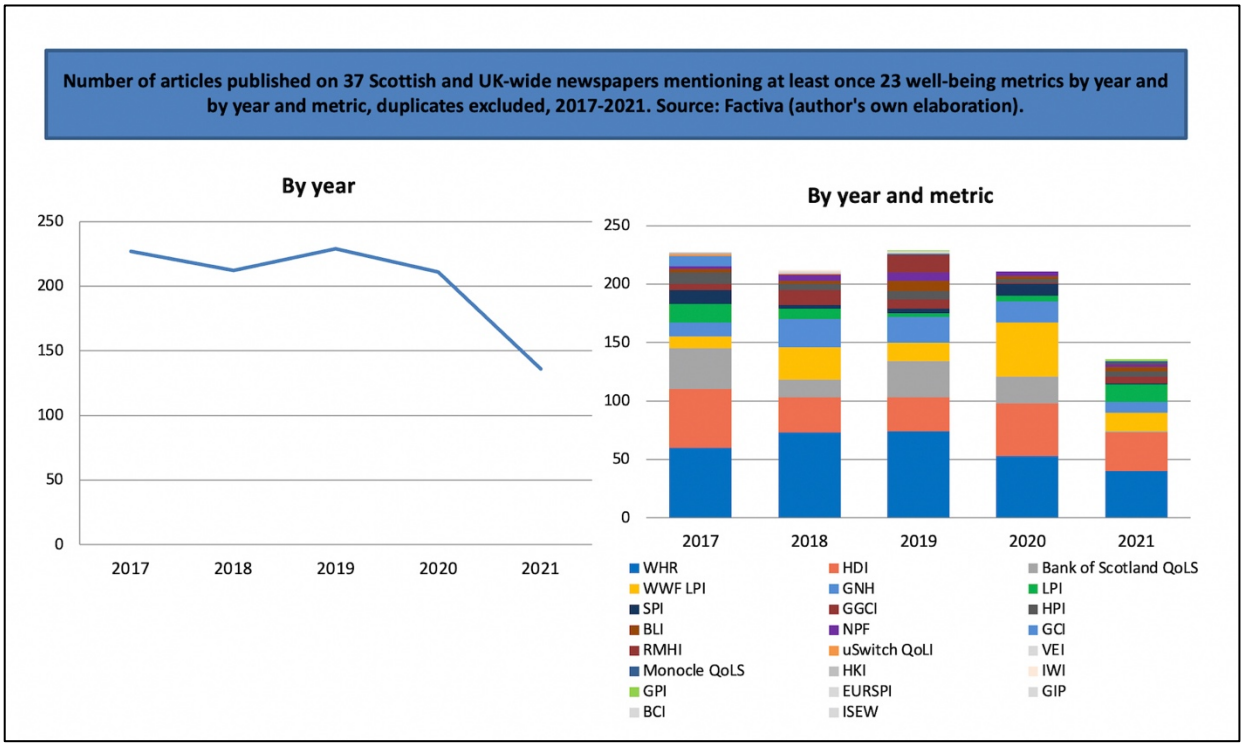


Figure 13.

The majority of articles were published within the months in which metrics were released (except for those that are not updated regularly such as the GNH). For instance, below are articles sorted by month for the WHR and the Bank of Scotland QoLS, to which 40% of all articles refer to (Figure 14). The major peaks were reached when the metrics in question were issued. In fact, articles were published almost exclusively on the day of their release.

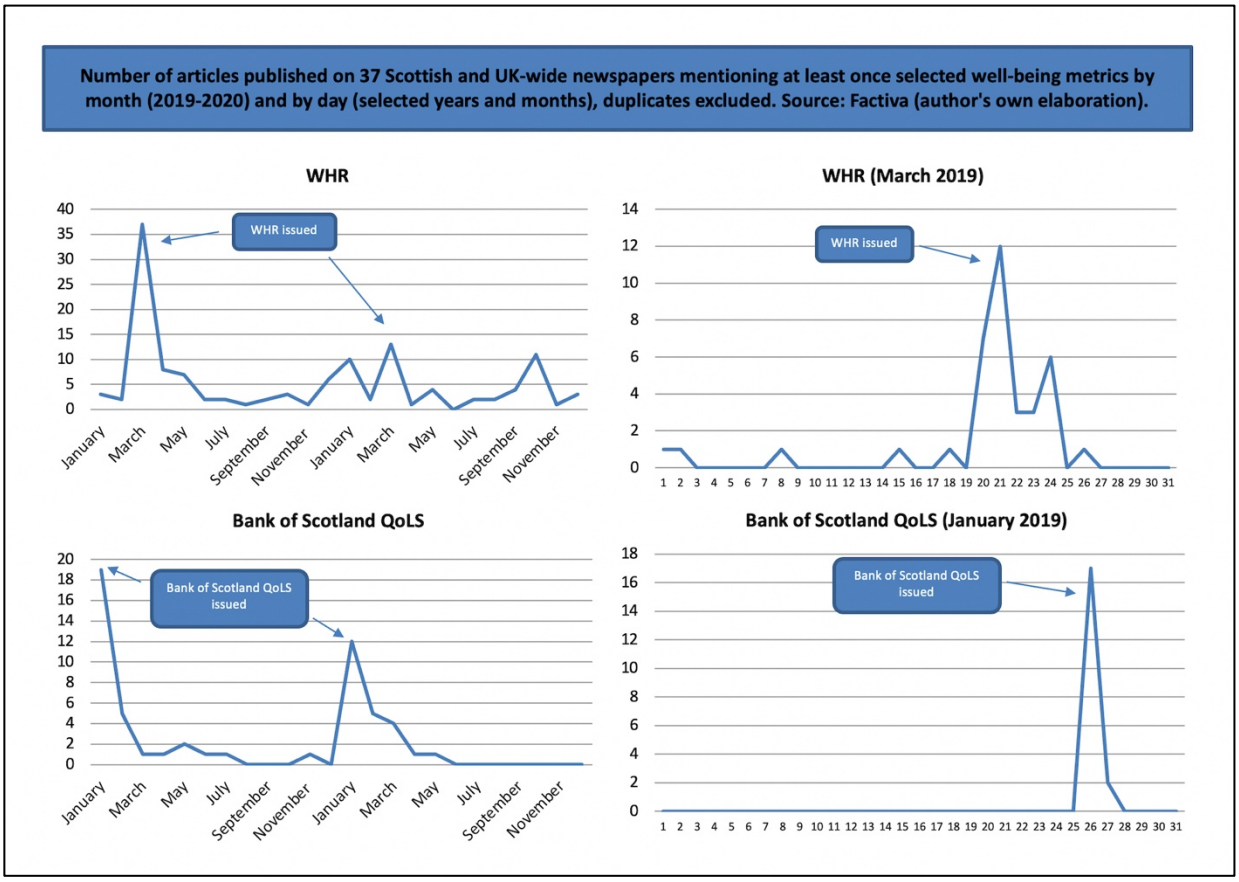


Figure 14.

More than half (59%) of all articles were published in just five newspapers (Figure 15). No article was published in 9 newspapers and the last 14 sources that did publish at least one issued less than 10 each. Almost the entirety (90%) of all articles appeared in UK-wide sources. While some of these included Scotland editions, meaning some of the articles will include Scotland-specific content, regional and local newspapers were almost completely uninterested. *Holyrood*, a Scottish magazine dedicated exclusively to Scottish politics, only published a handful of articles, which

shows very clearly that well-being metrics, including the NPF, are not part of Scottish policymakers' language.

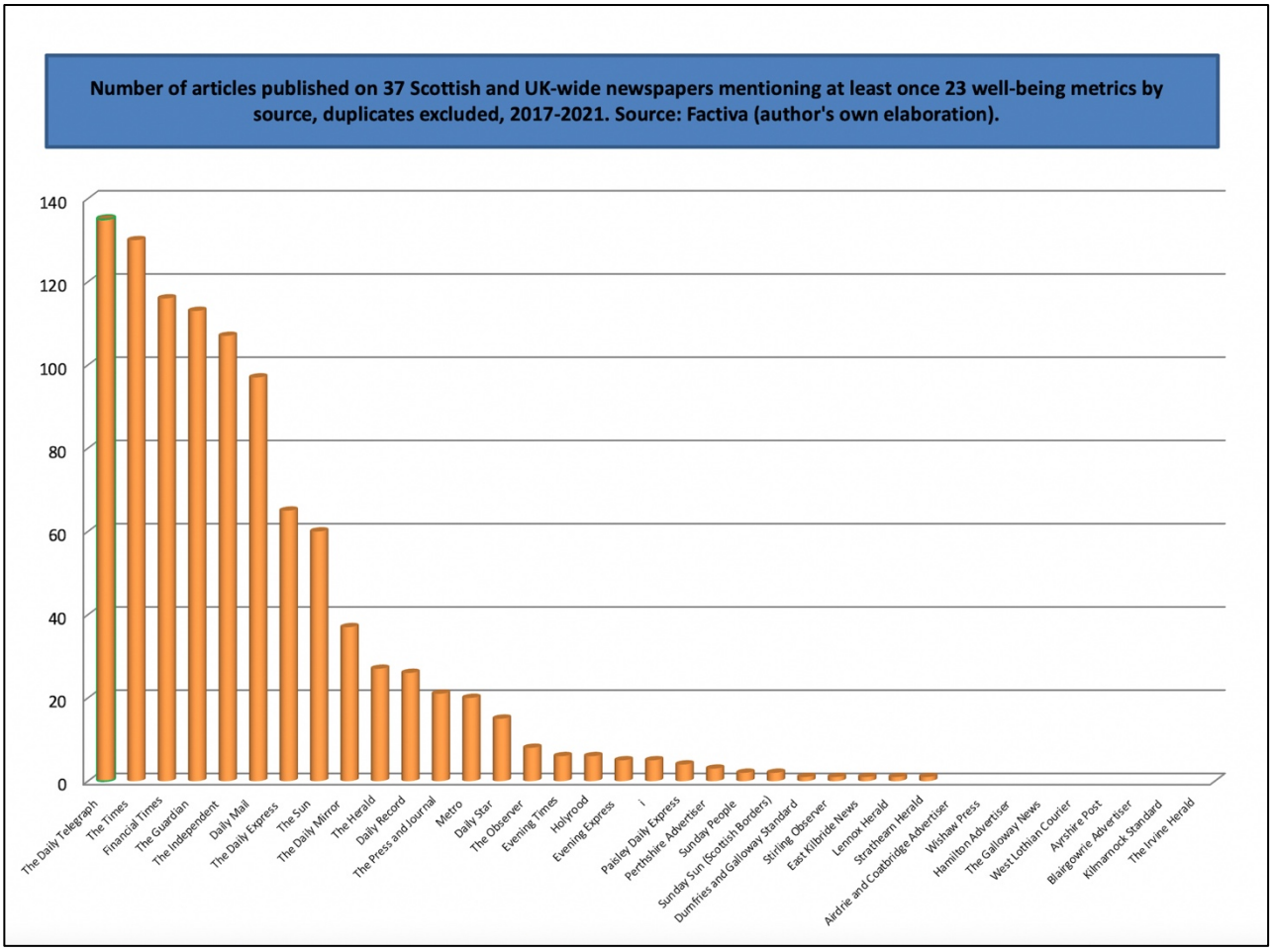


Figure 15.

The number of articles mentioning all 23 well-being metrics combined is 1.6% compared to the number of articles that mentioned at least once GDP over the same period, 2.7% compared to economic growth and 2% compared to recession (Figure 16). Compared to 2019, the number of articles mentioning at least once either GDP or recession increased in 2020 by 32% and 59%, respectively, to which corresponded a 30% decrease in the number of articles relating to economic growth. The number of articles mentioning all well-being metrics combined once again decreased since 2019 reaching its lowest point in 2021, when articles covering GDP and recession went back to their 2018 levels and those relating to economic growth increased by 5%. The coverage of GDP and related terms thus seemed to follow the performance

of the Scottish and UK economy during the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that of particular concern was the impact this was having and going to have primarily on GDP and in terms of economic output than in terms of and on well-being.

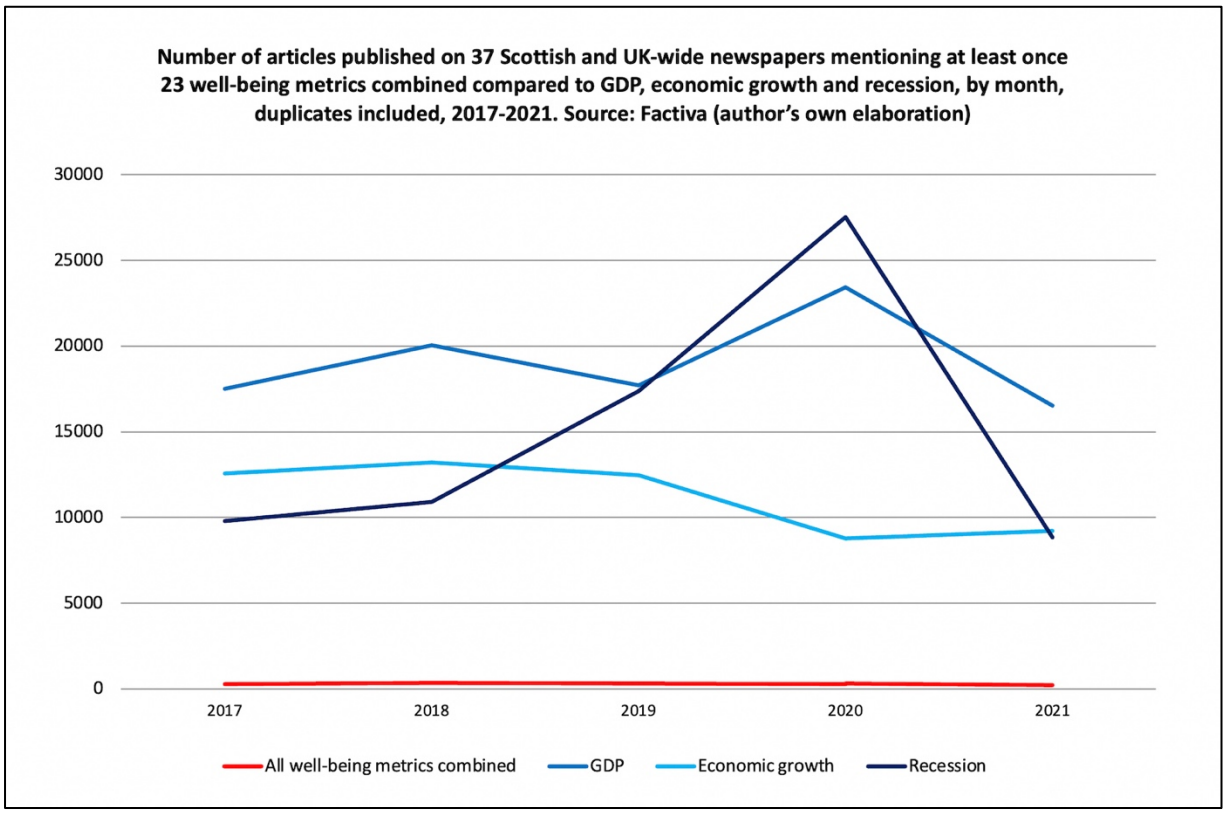


Figure 16.

13.2. Analysis of Radio and TV Coverage

The most mentioned metric over the 38-month period analysed was the WHR with 85 references, followed by the WWF LPI (48) and the Bank of Scotland QoLS (45), with 12 metrics at the end of the scale such as the BLI, the EURSPI and the ISEW (all of which returned 0 results each), for a total of 281 mentions (Figure 17). Note that the NPF only returned 15 hits.

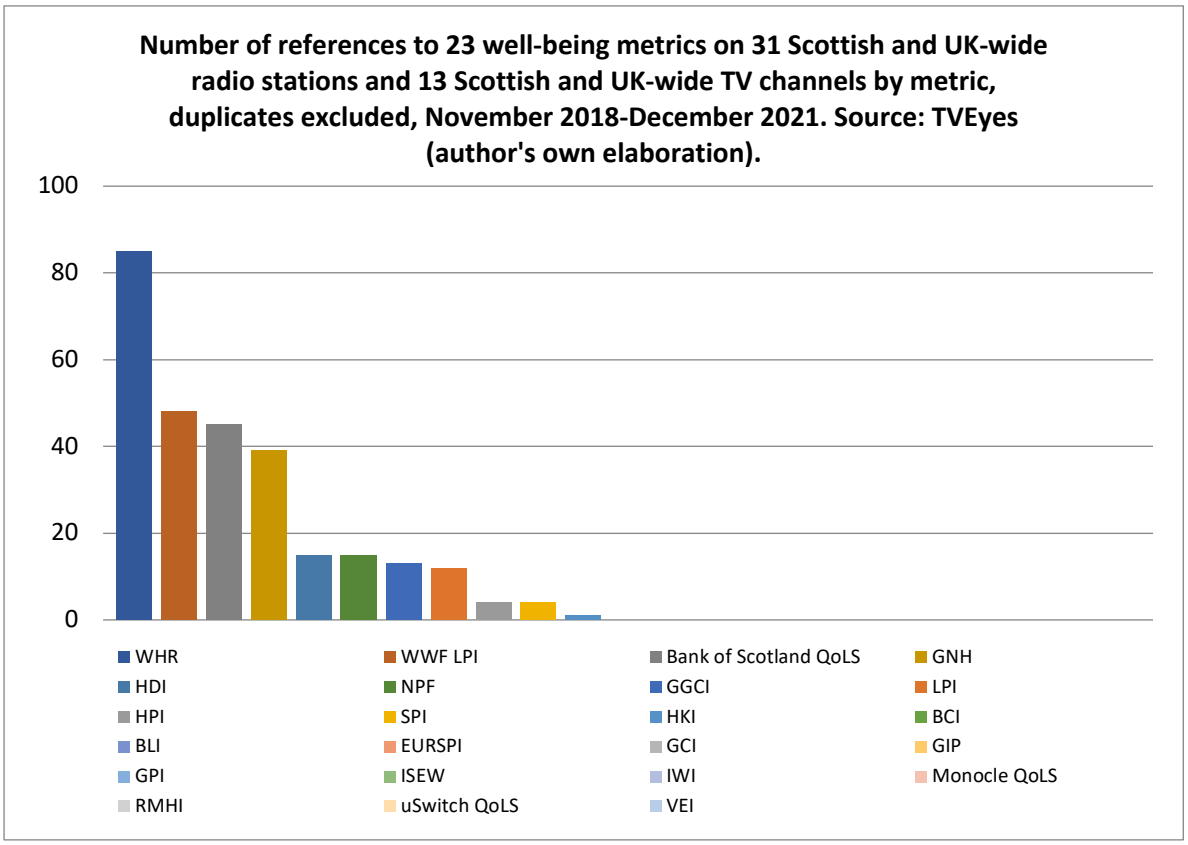


Figure 17.

Overall, the number of mentions decreased by 16% in 2020 compared to 2019 (Figure 18). All metrics that were published in both years saw their number of mentions decrease (e.g. WHR, -28%; Bank of Scotland QoLS -100%), except for the SPI (+400%) whose increase becomes irrelevant when we consider that this went from 0 references in 2019 to 4 in 2020. Total mentions decreased despite the publication of the 2020 WWF LPI. In fact, if WWF LPI figures for the month of September 2020 when this was issued are excluded, the decrease is even larger: -54%. One possible explanation for this contraction could be that the 2020 GGCI was published in January 2021 and not in 2020. However, the GGCI was only reported 3 times in 2019, so this cannot have caused such a large decrease. Another explanation could be, in relation to the 2020 Bank of Scotland QoLS at least, that Orkney ranked best place to live for the eighth year in a row (i.e. there was no big story to report anymore). However, the year before this was reported despite Orkney ranking first for the seventh year in a row (i.e. there was no big story then either). It is thus highly plausible that the main

reason behind this contraction was again the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed, whose effects kept showing throughout 2021 when overall references further decreased by 36% despite the revival of the HPI and the issuing of the GGCI (see above).

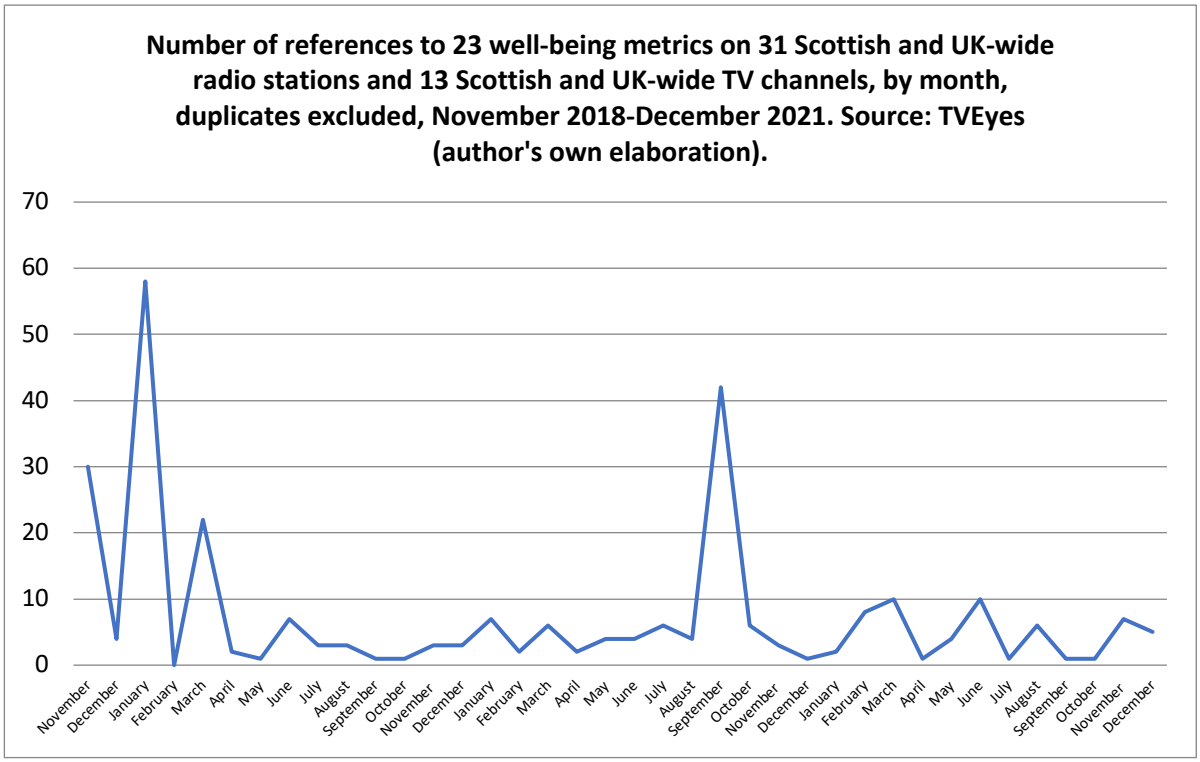


Figure 18.

The majority of mentions (54%) were made in just four months: November 2018, January and March 2019, and September 2020. These correspond to the months in which the 2018 GGCI, the 2019 Bank of Scotland QoLS, the 2019 WHR and the 2020 WWF LPI were issued, respectively. In fact, well-being metrics were mentioned again mostly, if not even only, in the months in which they got released (except, of course, for those that are not updated regularly). This trend can be seen clearly if we break down data by month for the top two metrics, to which 47% of all mentions refer to (Figure 19). All the peaks were reached when the metrics in question were issued (the only exception is the WHR, for which a peak can also be seen in June 2021). In fact, the majority of mentions were once again made on the

day in which these metrics were issued, with some occasional coverage in the following days, after which they disappeared from the media landscape.

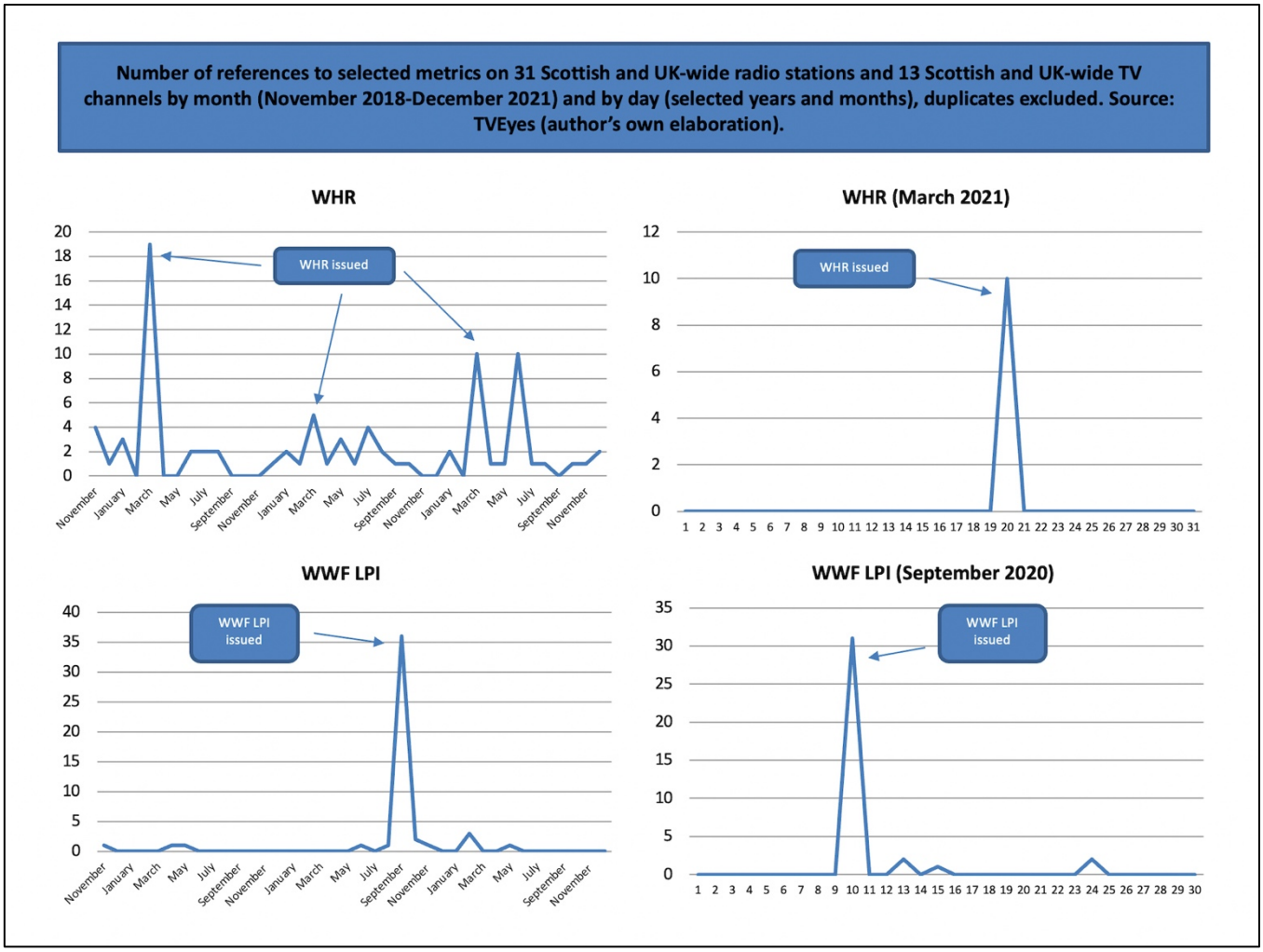


Figure 19.

References were made mainly on radio (74%), but we must remember that TV channels in the sample were almost a third of radio stations (Figure 20). Some metrics got covered more on TV (such as the NPF), whereas others more on radio (such as the Bank of Scotland QoLS), with some only mentioned on radio. Interestingly, most radio and TV mentions were made on stations or channels belonging to the BBC network, against thus the expectations of some informants (see 11.2).

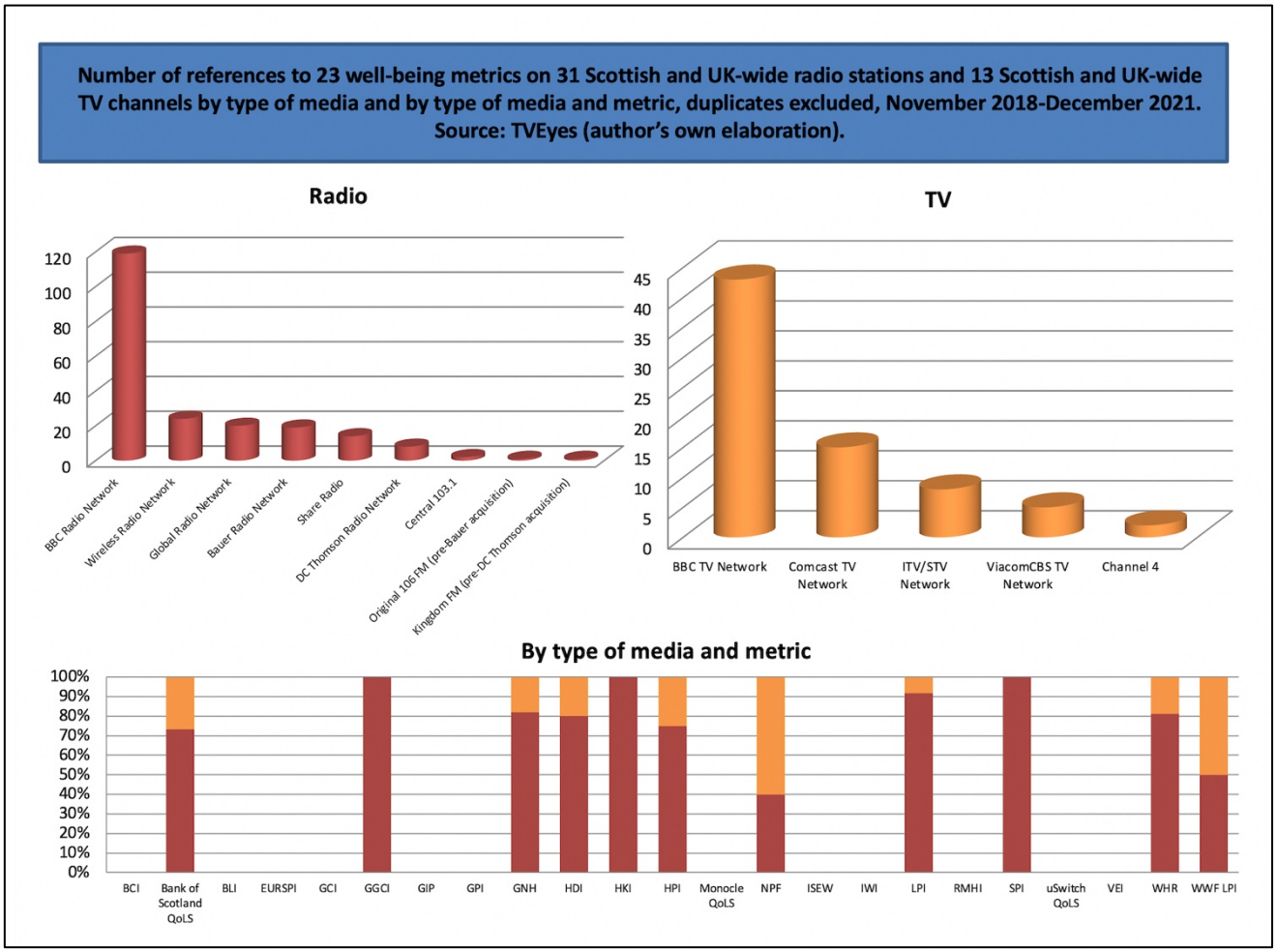


Figure 20.

As for the time of the day in which mentions were made, there were five major peaks at 4 and 7 A.M. and at 12, 5 and 10 P.M. (Figure 21). Only 15% of references were made during prime time (7-11 P.M.) as opposed to e.g. the early morning hours of 6-10 A.M. (23%). More mentions were made even between 4 and 8 A.M. than during prime time, although this is likely due to the re-airing of previous content. This shows the difficulty for well-being metrics to make it into the main evening schedules and suggests that well-being is a theme that is neither perceived to be worth reporting to a larger audience nor one that is raised frequently by policymakers participating in talk shows aired when most people are watching or listening, which in both cases is in line with findings of previous chapters (see 9.2, 11.1). Data broken down by day also show that one third of mentions were made between Saturday and

Sunday, which confirms what some journalists said about exploiting weekends (see 11.3), although Thursday seems propitious, too.

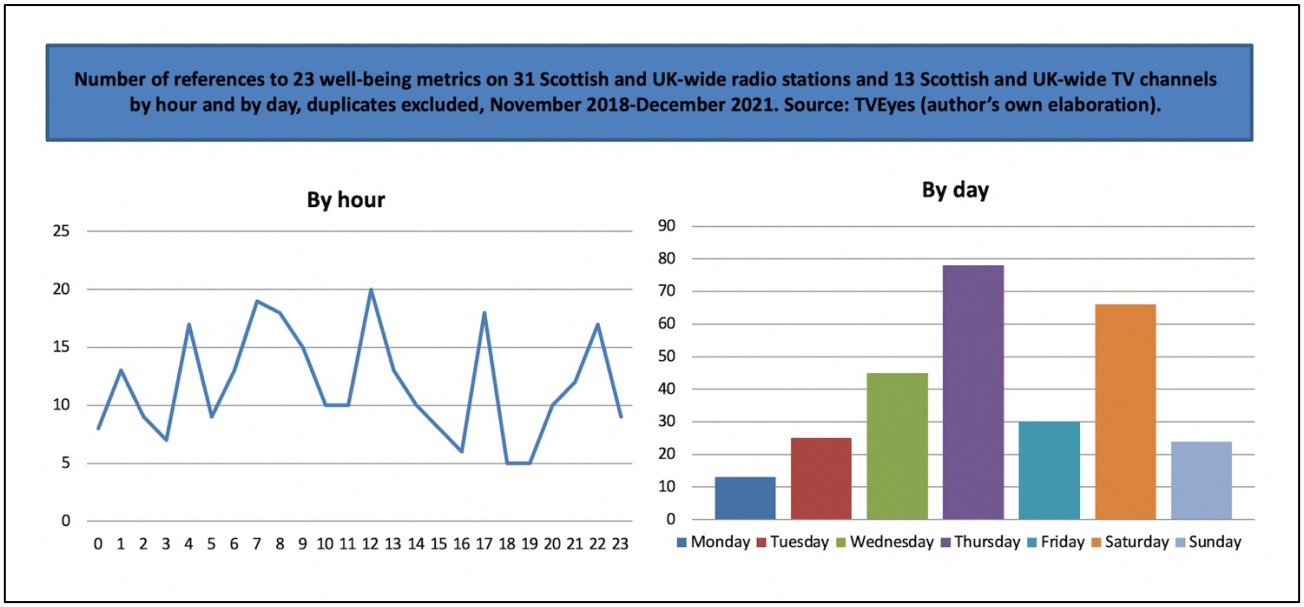


Figure 21.

Finally, references to all well-being metrics combined are significantly lower than mentions of GDP, economic growth and recession (Figure 22)[107]. What we also see clearly is the sharp increase in references to recession starting from March 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe and as the UK entered is first lockdown. While the reporting of well-being metrics was thus affected negatively, that of GDP and recession was instead affected positively. In 2021, references to all well-being metrics combined kept decreasing (halving compared to 2019), and so did mentions of GDP and recession which remained however 83 and 59 times as high, respectively, while references to economic growth stabilised. This suggests again that of particular concern especially in the first year of the pandemic was the impact this was going to have primarily in terms of and on GDP than in terms of and on well-being, concern that partially deflated in 2021, remaining however incomparably strong.

[107] Data refer to the UK as a whole (i.e. all sources covered by TVEyes for the UK were included this time) because of the impossibility to filter data by source due to the huge number of references the above queries returned (which is in itself a finding).

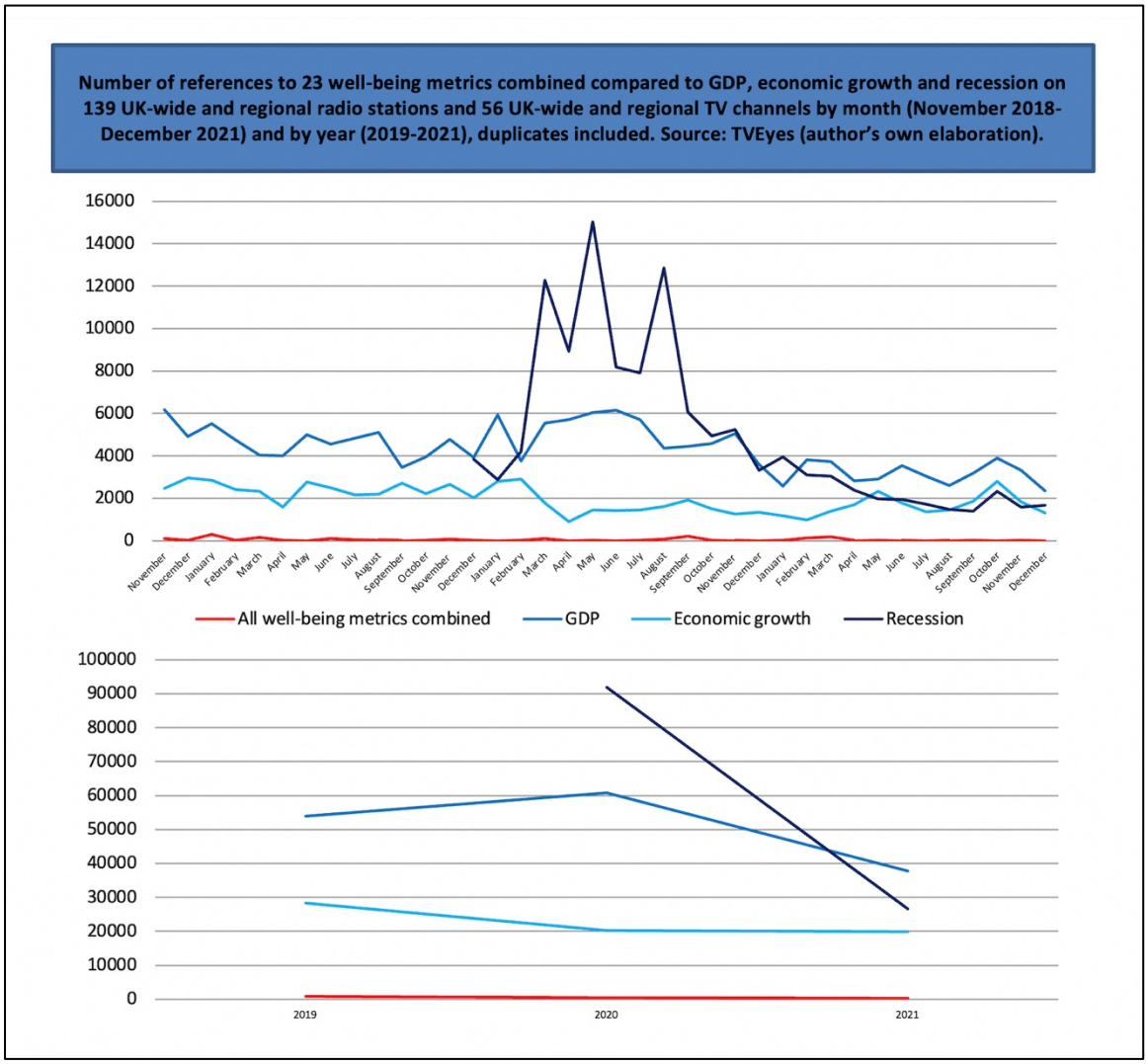


Figure 22.

13.3. Analysis of Parliamentary Debates

In the Scottish Parliament, the NPF was the most mentioned metric with 754 references overall, followed by the HKI (63) and the HDI (25), with 14 metrics at the end of the scale (all of which returned 0 results each), for a total of 853 references (Figure 23).

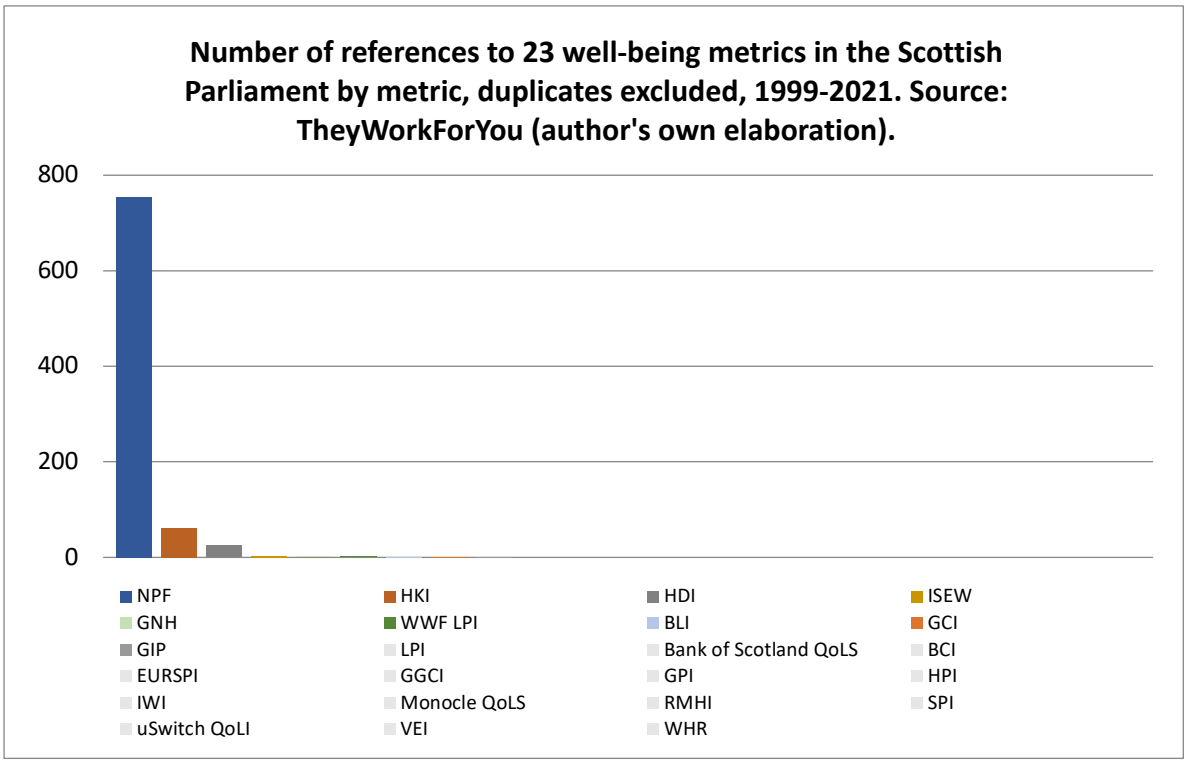


Figure 23.

The NPF was cited particularly in three periods: between 2008 and 2009, in 2013 and in 2018 (Figure 24). Note that since 2019 mentions have been decreasing, a topic which I return to at the end of the section.

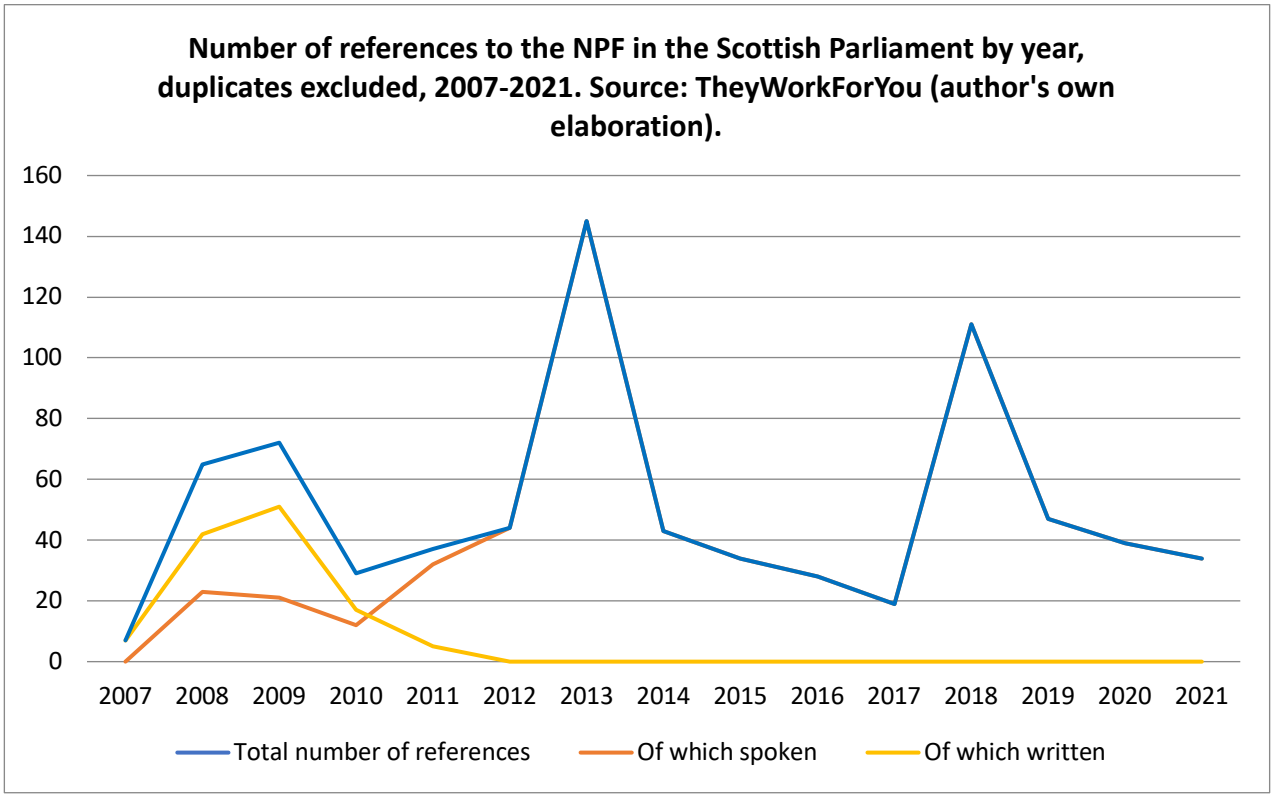


Figure 24.

If we break down data by month for the four years in which the above peaks were recorded, we find that, regarding the first increase (2008-09), references were made heterogeneously, and no precise event seems to have driven those years' mentions except the newness of the tool itself. Contrarily, in both 2013 and 2018 most references (63% and 74%, respectively) were made in one month and, if we further break down data by day, we see that they were made almost exclusively on one day (Figure 25). In 2013, this was when Kenneth Gibson reported on some work that the Finance Committee undertook relating to the NPF, whereas in 2018 this was when the National Outcomes consultation was being held. In other words, about at least one fourth of all references were made by MSPs when they were induced or when they had to, i.e. passively, which may denote limited interest in the framework. In fact, despite a milestone event such as the NPF refresh in 2018 (which took place just 19 days after the above National Outcomes debate), only 6 references were made to it after that date in June of the same year. This is what Willie Rennie (2018, n/a) meant when he argued that lack of awareness amongst the public and lack of media coverage of the NPF is linked with the fact that this is not discussed in the Scottish Parliament in the first place: 'we do not even debate the Framework in this Parliament. If we were to look back through the Official Report,' he correctly noted, 'we would see that it got only a handful of mentions in the past five years. In fact, the most mentions that the National Performance Framework has had in that period was when we last reviewed it'.

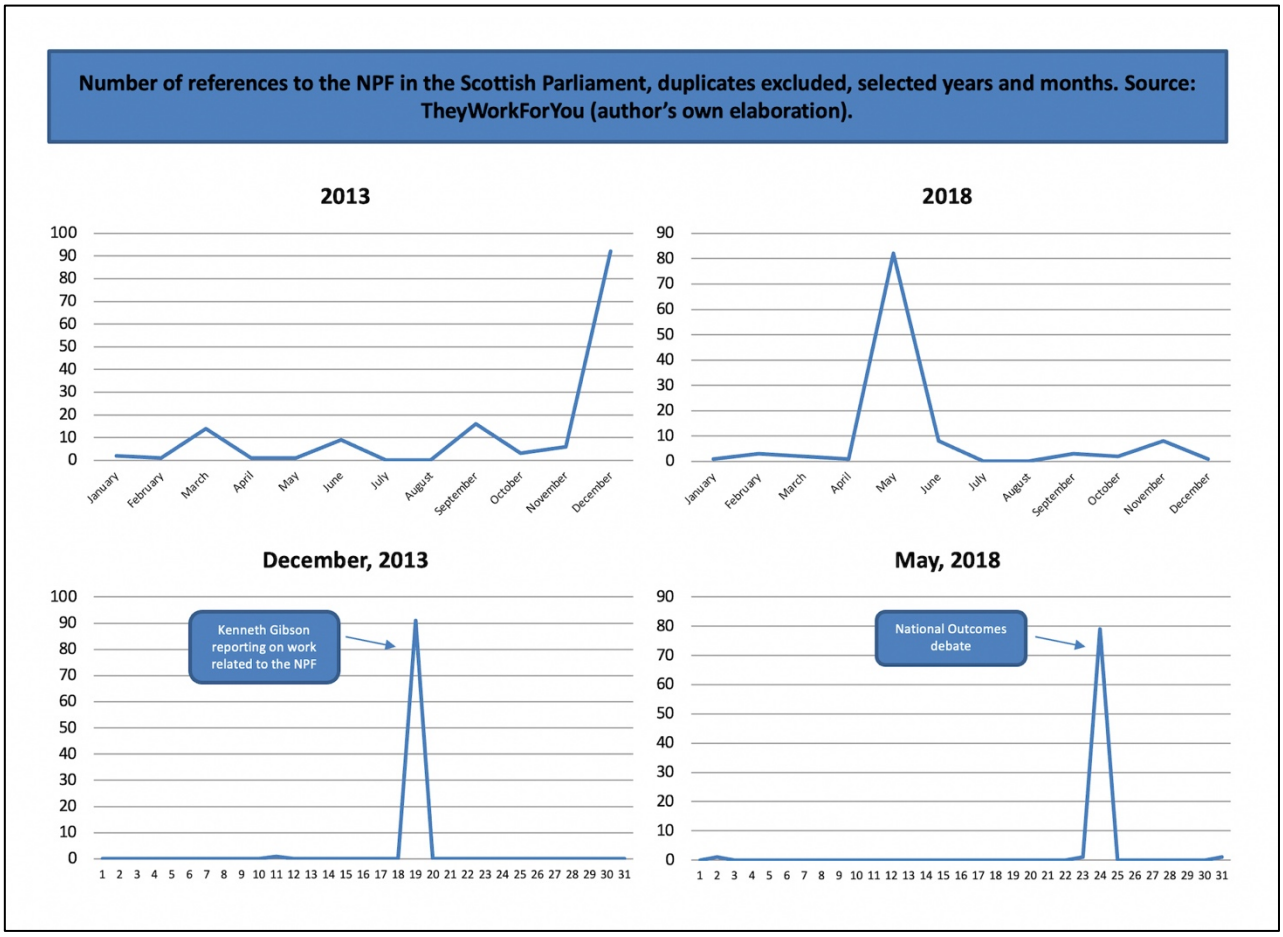


Figure 25.

More than half (64%) of references were made by MSPs belonging to the SNP (Figure 26). The number of MSPs from opposition parties is much lower than that of MSPs from the SNP, so such relative imbalance is not surprising. Nevertheless, in absolute terms opposition parties have not mentioned the NPF very frequently since its inception, suggesting they have rarely used it as a tool to hold government to account. The Scottish Green Party[108], for instance, accounts on average for only two mentions per year and even the Scottish Labour Party, whose MSPs authored the highest number of mentions after the SNP, for less than nine.

[108] The Scottish Green Party is considered an opposition party here until May 2021 when this joined government.

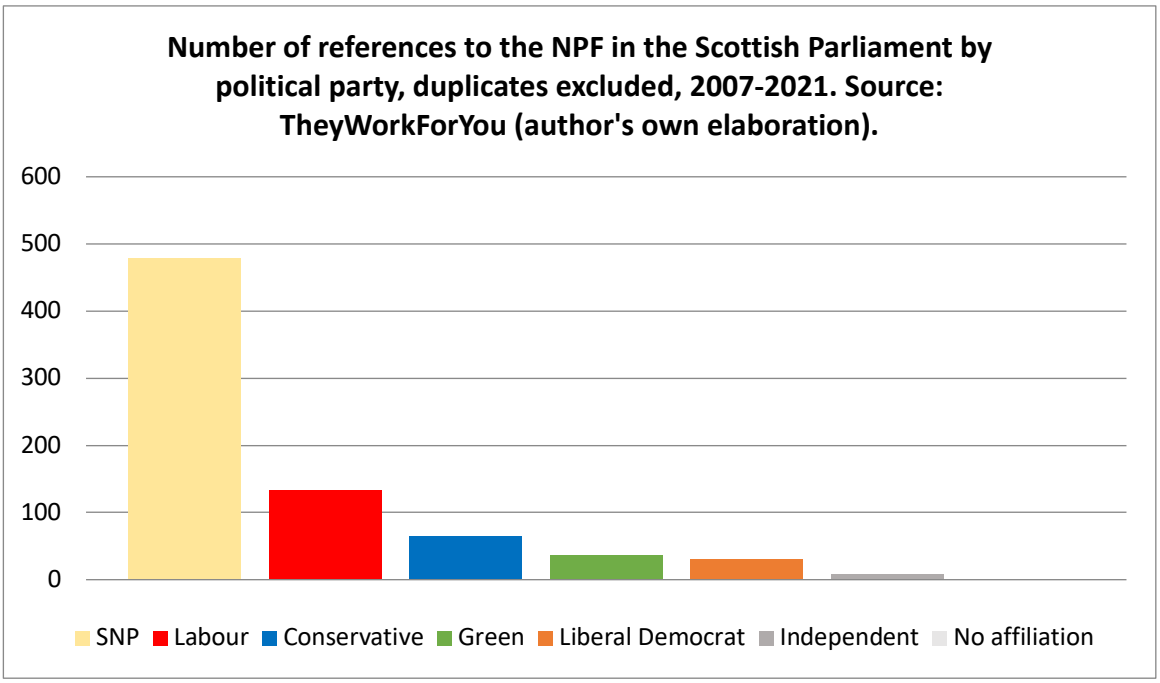


Figure 26.

Almost half of all references to the NPF were made by just 10 MSPs, of which John Swinney is the one who made the most and in the highest number of sessions (Figure 27). The density of referencing is overall low, as the NPF is usually mentioned once or twice at most in the same speech. Interestingly, the First Minister has not mentioned the NPF frequently in her Chamber speeches, including those made during First Minister's Question Times (which, of course, may also be due to her not being asked by others about it). In fact, since May 21, 2013, she only mentioned it during two sessions, the last time on December 2, 2021. This questions the extent to which the First Minister (Sturgeon, 2019, 9:11-9:24) is truly 'determined […] to put well-being at the heart of everything', especially if we also consider that she verbally mentioned the NPF only 12 times since this was launched in 2007, not even once a year on average.

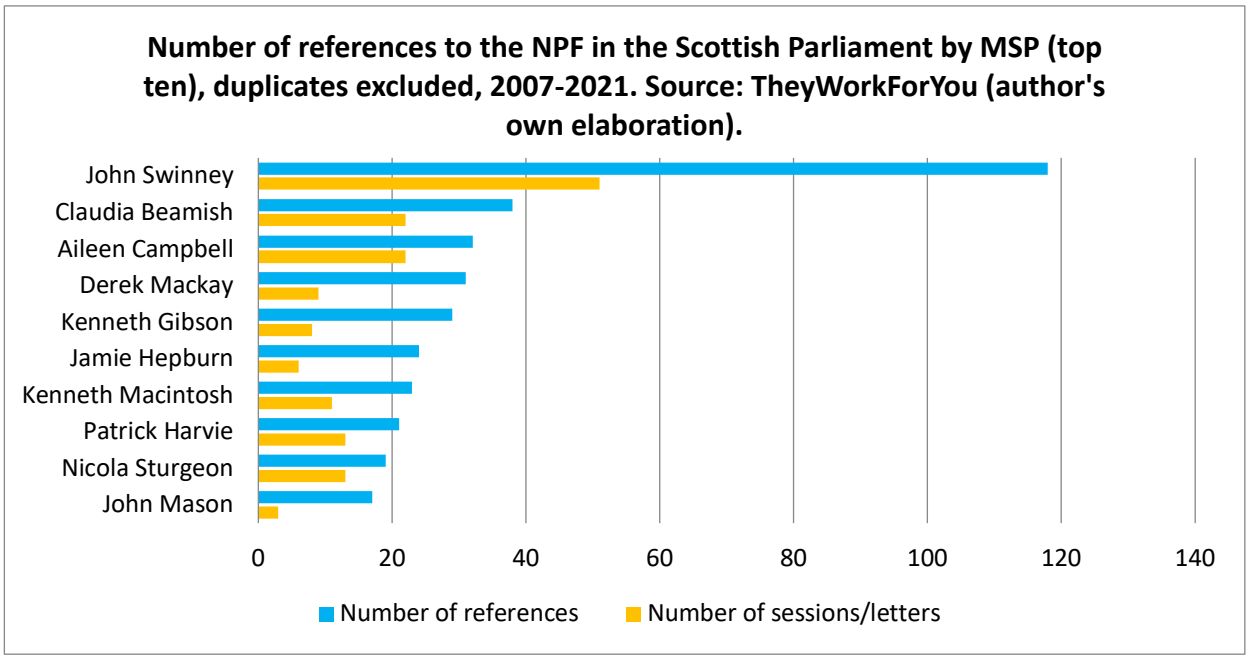


Figure 27.

As shown above, only a few other metrics were mentioned by MSPs, one of them being the HKI. This was mentioned 42 times in 2012 right after its launch, of which 36 (86%) on September 5 during the discussion of a motion in the name of Kenneth Macintosh on the HKI itself (Figure 28). After that, the number of references followed the dying out of the metric and eventually flattened out.

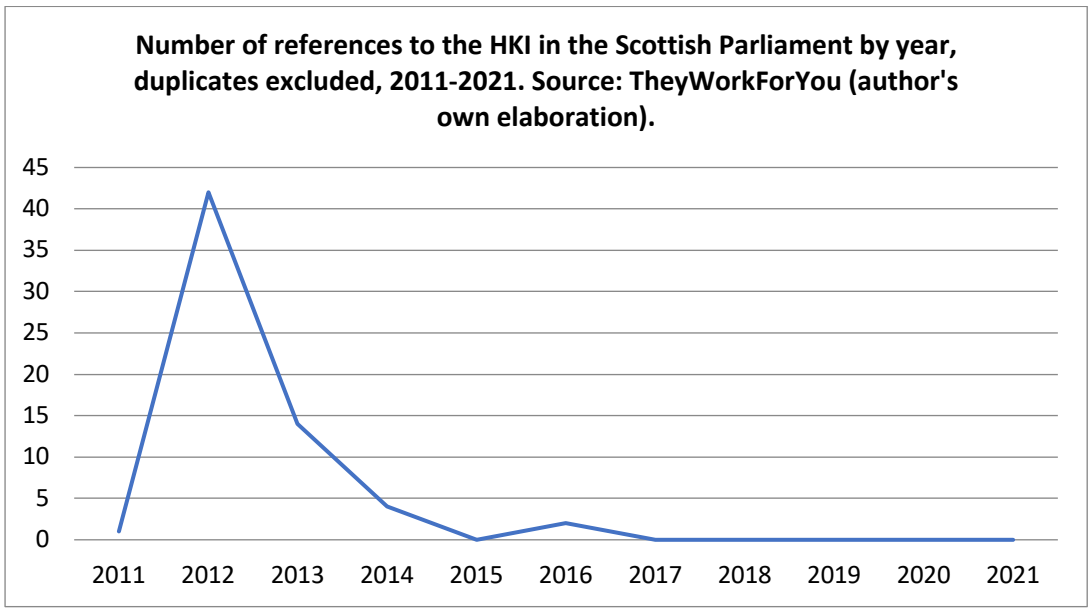


Figure 28.

The HKI has been of particular interest to the Scottish Labour Party, with only 21% of references made by MSPs belonging to the SNP (Figure 29). Opposition parties

seemed therefore relatively more interested in the HKI than in the NPF. If we break down data by MSP, we can see that some of those who mentioned the HKI the most were also those who mentioned the NPF the most, such as Kenneth Macintosh, Patrick Harvie and John Swinney (who together authored one third of all references to the HKI). Those interested in these metrics seem therefore a handful of MSPs.

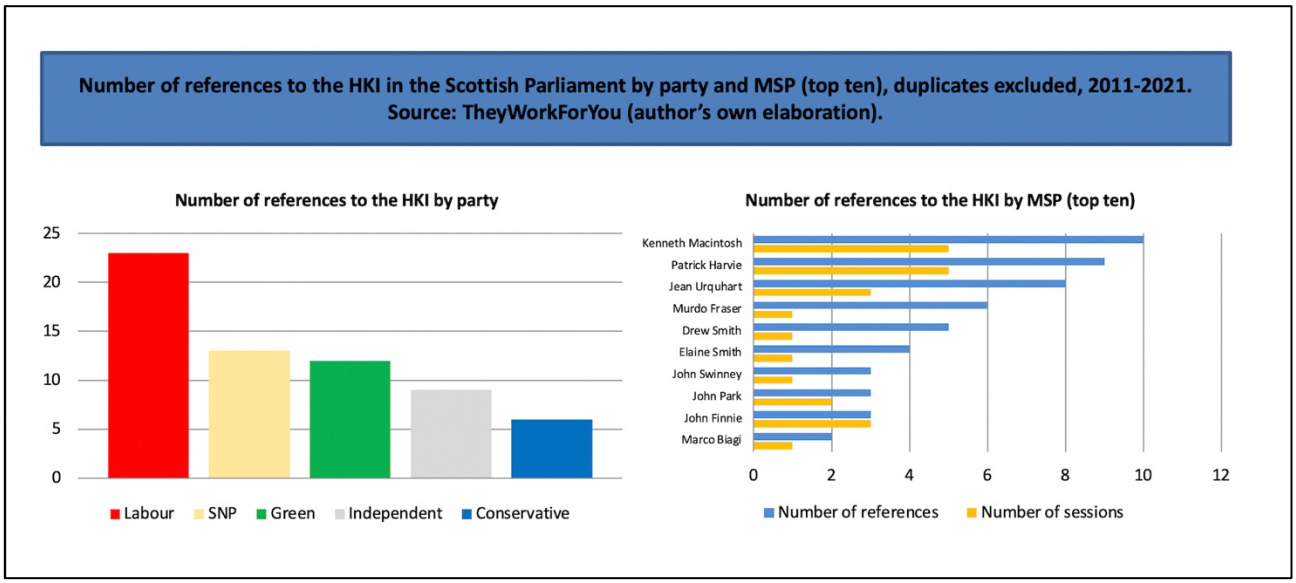


Figure 29.

In fact, some of these names can also be found among the names of those MSPs who mentioned the HDI (not shown here), essentially the only other metric to have been mentioned in the Scottish Parliament, and if we look at pictures of the Chamber taken during the discussion of Macintosh's aforementioned motion, we can see that the debate was not well attended (Screenshot 1, 2 and 3) and that those in the room were mainly the MSPs in the above lists (Macintosh, Swinney, Harvie, etc.).



Screenshot 1. Source: Scottish Parliament (2012).



Screenshot 2. Source: Scottish Parliament (2012).



Screenshot 3. Source: Scottish Parliament (2012).

In this case, too, there is the question of how much well-being metrics have been mentioned compared to queries such as GDP, economic growth and recession. Taking the NPF (almost the only metric to be mentioned by MSPs and the only one to be so since 2019) as an example, we see that the general trend emerged in previous sections is confirmed (Figure 30). In 2019, GDP was mentioned 3.5 times more than the NPF, whereas economic growth 5 and in both cases in a much higher number of meetings. Between 2019 and 2020, the number of references to the NPF decreased by 17%, with references to GDP and economic growth decreasing also by 38% and 57%, respectively, with those to recession increasing instead by 135%. While thus in this case references to GDP did not rise, references to the NPF once again did not increase *and in fact decreased*, with mentions of GDP alone remaining almost 3 times as high. Between 2020 and 2021, references to the NPF kept decreasing, and while that of GDP and recession did so, too, those to economic growth instead increased, with the number of meetings in which this was discussed also increasing by 14 percentage points. We must remember that the below figures do not include references in which alternative words (e.g. economic output) or expressions (e.g. “the economy has not grown enough”) were used, meaning the actual gap will be much

higher. To be sure, this applies to the NPF as well. However, searching for related queries shows even worse trends: references to *National Outcomes* (not shown here), for instance, decreased by 69% from 2019 to 2021 and remained relatively insignificant (16 in 2019, 9 in 2020, 5 in 2021).

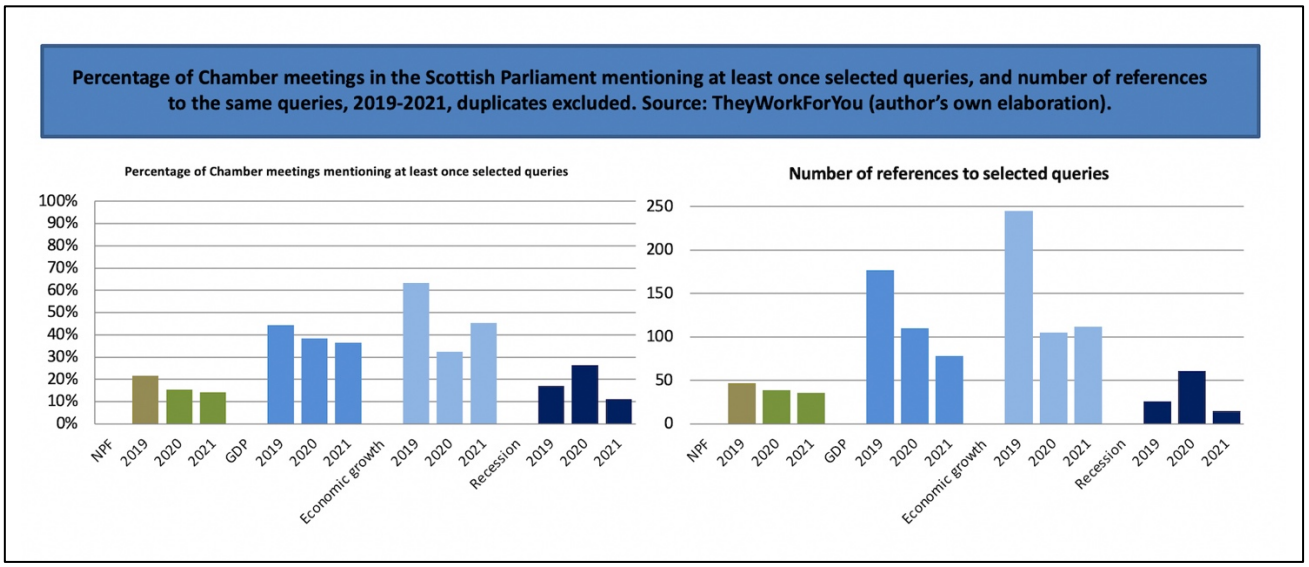


Figure 30.

Finally, it is worth noting that except for the NPF almost no references to any other well-being metric were made until 2012 when the HKI was launched and, even then, the HKI was essentially the only one to be mentioned and as we have seen only until it was being updated. Moreover, the NPF saw its number of references decrease by 60% from 2009 to 2010 and again was only mentioned with greater intensity in 2013 when however MSPs were induced to talk about it, with references to the NPF indeed continuing to decrease until 2017. This suggests that well-being metrics were not really part of the Scottish political debate that followed the 2007/08 crisis.

13.4. Interviewees' Self-Assessment of the Impact of the NPF

Almost the entirety of members of interest groups believed that the NPF has had little or no impact to date. '[I]t's not been a huge game changer', 'it doesn't actually do anything, it's just there', 'it's more a statement of intent', 'I haven't seen it used',

'[t]hey didn't stick to it [… and] got re-captured back into GDP talk and day-to-day decision-making' were just some of the comments that interviewees made[109]. The Senior Strategic Advisor at WEAll, possibly the most informed informant in this group, was of the same view. While she recognised that 'it's up laminated on their desks', in the sense that the NPF is something the Scottish Government is proud of, she concluded: 'I haven't really seen it operationalised'.

However, I shall mention that some seemed afraid of or not enthusiastic about answering this question. One informant, for instance, started their answer with an interrogative yet peremptory 'I will not be quoted on this?' and another one admitted 'I can't really speak of what I think now because […] given my current role it wouldn't be probably appropriate'[110]. This shows that some interviewees were critical of the impact achieved by the NPF since they would have not been afraid to talk openly otherwise, which in turns suggests that they as well as others might have sweetened their answers or decided to not disclose other information that they were aware of. This is once again due to the NPF being overseen by the government and not by an independent and impartial body, as opposed to the case of Italy where indeed no one, despite the larger size of the sample, made similar comments.

Nonetheless, one interviewee claimed that they had 'come across references to it […] in funding bids' and yet another one recalled attending an event the day before the interview took place in which the then Cabinet Secretary for Communities was quoting the NPF. To hear the NPF 'actually' being referenced, the informant commented, was 'great' (which, by showing that the NPF was finally being mentioned, demonstrates that this had not been so before then). Still others argued, albeit very vaguely, that the NPF has 'become part of the discourse' and has 'shift[ed] a bit [the]

[109] Recently, Anna Fowlie (in Pennycook, 2020, p. 31), Chief Executive of SCVO, similarly stated: '[w]e are measuring ourselves as a country against wellbeing indicators […]. But what has changed? Have we moved away from outputs and targets? Are we putting the safety of the planet above economic benefit? […] In short, no'.

[110] Although I was told this when the interview ended, this very likely refers to the reply the informant gave to this question specifically since this was the only one which required interviewees to expose themselves and evaluate the work of government which is indeed why, as the previous quote shows, these comments would be made after I had asked *this* question.

First Minister's language'. This last comment was actually quite common but is not supported by the fact that as we have seen the NPF has rarely been mentioned in newspapers and on radio and TV in the last few years (and, since the media report what the First Minister says, this indirectly tells us whether her language has changed or not), not to mention that since 2013 she only mentioned the NPF in parliament on two occasions.

Only two interviewees from this group were able to identify a specific example of use and impact. This was the Justice Strategy, 'the one the Scottish Government always talks about', as one of them put it. This was explained particularly well by the Head of Policy at Carnegie UK (who also mentioned the same example in her book, see Wallace, 2019) according to whom this is 'the clearest example' of the impact of the NPF on policymaking. At the Justice Department, she argued,

> they had to completely fundamentally rethink what it was that they were about. And they did it in order to meet the outcome on Safe Communities. [...] The statistical evidence for change comes from the reduction and reoffending rates which […] fell by 17%. England, which […] has been through exactly the same situation of Scotland [...] had a 1% decrease. […]. Now, it's very difficult because of the resistance to claiming credit for statistical change in a complex world […] to say that was because of, you know, the government activities. But I haven't heard an argument about what else it might have been because of.

Note, however, that the most recent 2017-2020 Justice Strategy (Scottish Government, 2017c) contains no references to the NPF and that the 2018 Delivery Plan (Scottish Government, 2018a) and the 2021 Delivery Report (Scottish Government, 2021b) contain only one each. Additionally, the fact that the Justice Strategy is allegedly cited frequently by the government (which, as we shall see, does

seem to be the case), raises the question of whether interviewees were aware of other examples apart from those highlighted by the government itself. The Head of Policy at Carnegie did not provide another one (in her book as well she discussed one case study only, noting that 'there remain many examples of policies that do not take account of the NPF' – Wallace 2019, p. 61). The other person who mentioned the Justice case was more direct: 'let's see… […] I can't think of an example of it having had an impact on a particular policy'.

Members of interest groups might have not seen the NPF operationalised, but had they used the NPF? In this case, responses differed from organisation to organisation. Some, especially from LINK and Friends of the Earth Scotland, admitted not having used the NPF much or finding others not using it much. A former LINK member, for instance, claimed to have 'frequently' asked in SCVO meetings what the government was doing on the NPF targets but 'they'd say, the voluntary organisations and the social work sectors in particular would say, "oh we've no idea"'. Similar comments were made recently by members of other organisations[111]. Others, instead, claimed to have been mentioning the NPF frequently in reports, briefings or consultations to highlight issues government or parliament should deal with (SCVO) or that something that is being put forward is going to undermine the objectives as set out in the NPF (WWF Scotland). Interestingly, no one mentioned explicitly to have used the NPF as an accountability tool.

Among policymakers, there was a stark difference between civil servants working for the government/members of government, and civil servants working for the parliament/MSPs. The former mentioned several examples of cases in which the NPF impacted on policymaking. One of them was the Early Years Collaborative. This was led by the former Chief Medical Officer, Sir Harry Burns and one interviewee

[111] Marvick (2020, n/a), Director of Evaluation Support Scotland, on the use of the NPF during the COVID-19 pandemic: '[t]o be fair, neither Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) nor the many third sector organisations we work made any mention of the NPF over the last few months'.

claimed that it 'came out of the NPF' and that it 'showed a positive impact' although 'what he [Burns] would say is after two years they reduced the mortality rate for under three-year-olds but they couldn't tell you what policy was it that'd done it because he had basically 32 local authorities'. The same person also mentioned the case of North Ayrshire ('probably the best example we've got') where a 'measurement framework' was developed to see how it performed against Scotland in terms of certain indicators. Although both convincing at first glance, note that, based on the interviewee's description, in the case of the Early Years Collaborative it is not clear if and how exactly the NPF was used (information available online does not seem to provide many details either), whereas in the case of north Ayrshire the question remains whether this local framework was used and had any impact on local policymaking.

According to the Director of Performance and Strategic Outcomes, another example is the creation of institutions like Public House Scotland or the Scottish National Investment Bank (SNIB). The NPF, the interviewee argued, helped them 'develop themselves and give them a sense of "what's the national purpose that we're contributing to?"'. That of the SNIB was mentioned also by the then Finance Secretary, Derek Mackay, at an OECD workshop on well-being (see 2.1, 6.1.2) as an example of use and impact of the NPF to show the audience that 'this is real and not just evangelical rhetoric' (author's own recording).

However, whether that of the SNIB can be cited as a relevant example is questionable. Launched in 2020, the idea of creating the Bank was first introduced in the Government's Programme for 2017-18 (Scottish Government, 2017d). There (*ivi*, p. 7, see also p. 49), the aim of the SNIB was described as to 'support economic growth' and, indeed, information about the SNIB is not only under the *Growing the Economy* section of the Scottish Government's website but also *never* mentioned on the NPF's website. The Programme contained only six references to the NPF (of which half in titles and headings and none of which in relation to the SNIB), and only one

page was dedicated to it out of 124. In the final version of the SNIB Bill that became law in February 2020, the main object of the Bank, it was decided, will be to give 'financial assistance […] for the purpose of promoting or sustaining economic development' (Scottish Parliament, 2020, 3-1). It is true that 'ancillary objects' were set, too, and that two of them are to 'promote social' and 'environmental wellbeing' (*ivi*, 3-2-b-c). Yet, these are only secondary, vaguely defined goals of what is a very growth-oriented institution, so much so that the first of such ancillary objects is to invest 'in inclusive and sustainable economic growth' (*ivi*, 3-2-a). Moreover, no explicit reference to the NPF or to the National Outcomes is made[112]. It is true that the current missions of the Bank, chosen in December 2020 by Scottish Ministers and which will indicate the strategic direction of the Bank, do not make explicit reference to the pursuit of economic growth (Hyslop, 2020). However, it is to be seen how this can be balanced with the SNIB's main object, which remains growth-oriented as per legal requirements.

At the aforementioned OECD workshop, Derek Mackay also gave as an example that of the tyre manufacturer Michelin. The company, Mackay said, 'had decided to cease commercial manufacturing of tyres in Scotland and I immediately set out to Paris to say: "please don't do that, we're losing 150 quality jobs!". And what convinced them to stay it wasn't just an enterprise case that I put, but the National Performance Framework on one page that set out the country's mission about a fairer society looking for a more sustainable future and then the company wanted to be part of that' (author's own recording). The fact that Mackay may have mentioned the NPF in his negotiations is remarkable and perhaps evidence of that shift in "language" that a few interviewees talked about. However, it is doubtful that a not better specified one-page document convinced a multinational company to agree to what

[112] A reference is made to 'any national performance indicators' that Scottish Ministries may ask every five years to judge the performance of the Bank against (Scottish Parliament, 2020, 21-4-i-C). However, the use of low-case letters suggests such indicators are not necessarily NPF ones, not to mention that Scottish Ministries may well decide not to pick any in the first place.

would have later revealed to be a 60 million joint investment effort by Michelin, Scottish Enterprise and Dundee City Council (Scottish Government, 2019g). Quite paradoxically, this was a compelling example of storytelling and of that "evangelical rhetoric" that Mackay was actually trying to avoid.

The First Minister, whom I asked at the launch of the WEGo Policy Labs to give me examples of use of the NPF made by the government, said that 'every specific, you know, review in the Social Cabinet, we will reference how that feeds into and […] contributes towards the objectives in the National Performance Framework so […] it mainstreams then into the decision-making process of the government'. She did not, however, highlight a specific decision that was driven by, planned ex-ante or assessed ex-post using the NPF as I had asked her to, which may indicate their lack thereof. The Deputy First Minister, instead, argued that 'the focus on the Child Poverty Plan, the focus on the Attainment Challenge, the focus on the Climate Challenge, the focus on fair mortgaging – these are all influenced by what contributes towards the National Performance Framework'. Whereas contrarily to the First Minister he highlighted specific policies or areas of intervention, he did not however go into detail and specify how the NPF was used, or the way a holistic approach may have been adopted. It is, however, important to point out that I managed to talk to the Deputy First Minister only for a couple of minutes, so this surely influenced the content and length of his responses. At the same time, I should note that despite such limitations, the interviewee gave longer replies to other questions and, being him one of the "fathers" of the NPF, I was expecting *this* to be his longest and most elaborated answer.

The Engagement Lead for the NPF told me instead about three 'fairly recent examples that we tend to talk about quite a lot'. The first one was the Justice Portfolio (which confirms the claim above regarding Justice being a frequently cited example), followed by Scotland's Environment Strategy (which 'looked at how their specific outcomes that they wanted to achieve […] are contributing to the National Outcomes') and, finally, the Forestry Strategy (which the interviewee only made a

quick reference to). The last two examples are worth discussing. Regarding Scotland's Environment Strategy, the role and impact that the NPF has had or will have is unclear. A Discussion Paper was published in June 2018 seeking comments to develop the Strategy (Scottish Government, 2018b). This mentions the NPF only four times, always vaguely. Most importantly, apart from including a graph which shows very generically how the Strategy's Outcomes and Vision contribute to the SDGs and the National Outcomes, no information is given about the way the NPF is going to be used (not to mention that one might contribute to the Outcomes and make no use of NPF indicators). In the final Environment Strategy document (Scottish Government, 2020b), there are only three references to the NPF of which two in notes or titles. If the way the NPF was going to be used was unclear in 2018, this was even more so in 2020. The same goes for Scotland's Forestry Strategy. The Strategy opens with a remarkable '[the Strategy] places forestry policy at the heart of government, helping to deliver the aims of the National Performance Framework' (Scottish Government, 2019h, p. 1). However, apart from including a graph that shows how the Strategy's Outcomes are aligned with the National Outcomes, it does not specify at any point how the Strategy helps deliver the aims of the NPF or how the NPF is going to be used.

Among civil servants based at the Scottish Parliament and MSPs, instead, there was unanimous agreement that the NPF has had little or no impact so far, with all interviewees unable to cite any examples. 'Can I? No, honestly I can't', 'it's words, not action', 'I don't see it being implemented' were just some of the comments interviewees made. On the one hand, such difference could be due to bias and lack of awareness. The NPF, once again, is a tool that was created and that is still overseen by the SNP-led government. Thus, non-SNP MSPs might be biased in their judgments (as we saw previously, they were indeed critical of the NPF and as we saw above opposition parties have not referenced to it much). Moreover, MSPs may not be aware of how the NPF is being used by the government as much as those working in and for it. On the other hand, the NPF is not a government-only framework, and

government is not the only actor in the decision-making process. Moreover, it was not only opposition MSPs who could not cite examples of use and impact of the NPF, but *SNP MSPs too* ('I'd be struggling to think of one' one of them, for instance, told me). We must also remember that one of the interviewees was the then Presiding Officer (who held a neutral role and was thus impartial) and that the MSPs I spoke to were among those who had mentioned the NPF *the most* in parliament and who were therefore interested in it. If *they* were not aware of any examples it is hard to imagine that other MSPs will be. Finally, even if answers were biased – which, by the way, applies to the answers of members of government as well since they, too, have a direct interest in this case in making sure they are not seen as not using their own framework – those of members of interest groups and journalists could be used to provide outside perspectives (similarly to Borgnäs, 2016) and impartially evaluate the views of both groups. And, as we have seen so far, these were predominantly critical.

Furthermore, there are many parliamentary speeches in which both SNP and non-SNP MSPs have highlighted lack of impact of the NPF or admitted not using it (which also shows that some of the references to the NPF made in parliament that we saw above were just *highlighting dissatisfaction with its impact*). Drew Smith (2012, n/a), Labour: 'I am not yet convinced that measurements made in that process [Scotland Performs] are genuinely driving policy choices in Scotland'. Jamie Hepburn (2013, n/a), SNP: '[o]n the NPF, I confess that I have not been particularly engaged in thinking about the Scotland Performs website that is associated with it and have not particularly utilised it'. Kenneth Macintosh (2014, n/a), Labour: '[h]ow do we translate those good intentions into actions? That is where I find the Scottish Government's record to be at its weakest. […] [I]t is difficult to see any specific budget decision that has been taken as a result of the NPF as opposed to traditional policy processes'. To be sure, these quotes are now 8-10 years old. Yet, they were still made 5-7 years *after* the launch of the NPF.

Moreover, even some members of government have recently admitted or suggested that the NPF, and the underlying outcomes-based approach, have not been particularly impactful. At a conference held in 2019, Carol Tannahill (2019, 57:50-58:58), the Scottish Government's Chief Social Policy Advisor, asked by someone in the audience about how integrated the NPF was in the policymaking progress, replied – with visible agreement (and, in any case, no disagreement) from the other two panellists (the Director of Performance and Strategic Outcomes and the then Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government): 'I think we've got a bit of a way to go [...]. We've got a lot of work at an early stage, but I think, you know, hopefully if you came back next year we'd be able to give you a more confident answer to you that truly it is embedded in, in all the ways we do things in Scottish Government'. To say, 13 years after its launch, that "a lot of work" is still "at an early stage" and to put hopes in the future stands as a recognition of failure rather than a demonstration of success. The TED Talk that the First Minister delivered in 2019 (see 4.3.1) is another case in point: at any point did she give examples of use of the NPF or of the results that the government has achieved thanks to it.

At any rate, policymakers[113] might have not been aware of cases in which others have used the NPF, but had *they* ever used it? In this case, only one interviewee claimed so[114], saying that they had 'constantly' been using the NPF, and particularly Performance Scorecards, to hold the government to account. They admitted, however, that that had not been very 'effective'. In explaining why, they mentioned how 'random' and 'unhelpful' the Scorecards that each parliamentary committee was provided were, claiming that they 'encouraged silo thinking'. As the interviewee put it, 'if I chop up the indicators and give three to the Health Committee, and three to

[113] I am referring here only to policymakers based at the Scottish Parliament since I could not ask this question to the remaining policymakers in the sample.

[114] Which shows that their previous answers were not that biased as they would have otherwise taken the opportunity to say that they had used it while government had not, instead they just admitted that they had not used it either.

the Environment Committee and three to the… it doesn't make sense because [...] you are just perpetuating the same system'.

All the remaining interviewees could not cite examples from their own experience. The former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, for instance, was very clear: '[n]o, never'. Asked why, he replied: '[b]ecause nobody understands them [NPF indicators … so] for me to use it [the NPF] even just to make any point in the Chamber or in the press I would have to explain it first', showing thus again that the media and people are thought to lack awareness of well-being metrics such as the NPF, and how inhibiting this can be. Once again, this would not only be true of opposition MSPs. An SNP MSP, for instance, told me that they could not mention any either, admitting that they 'haven't been dealing with it recently'. Additionally, when meeting MSPs' assistants at Holyrood's reception to be escorted to MSPs' offices, I would tell them what my research was about and they would often not know what the NPF was, which indirectly confirms that that the NPF was not on their MSP's agenda.

Finally, as far as journalists are concerned there is no material to present. First, because some simply did not know what the NPF was. Second, because as we have seen the NPF is absent from the media landscape, meaning it is not on journalists' radar. Its absence from the media landscape, though, is once again due to a lack of interest from the government's side in disseminating the NPF, which indirectly suggests that the NPF may have not had indeed much impact on Scottish policymaking.

14. The Use and Impact of Well-being Metrics – Italy

14.1. Analysis of Newspaper Coverage

The metric that was found in the highest number of articles was the Sole 24 ORE QoLR (940), followed by the BES (713) and the ItaliaOggi QoLR (418), with the BCI, the IWI and the PIQ at the end of the scale (all of which returned 0 articles each), for a total of 2,685 articles (Figure 31).

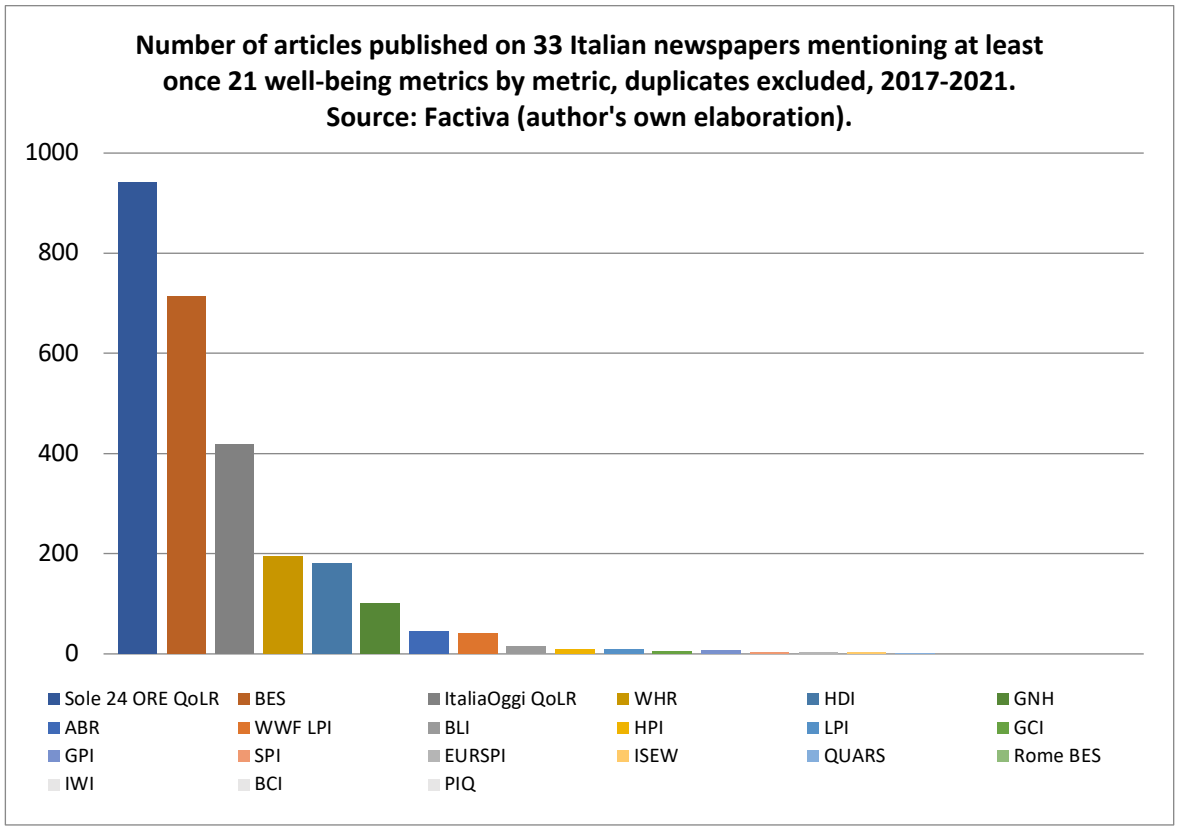


Figure 31.

The overall number of articles increased in 2018, decreased slightly the year after and more significantly by 28% in 2020 (Figure 32). Since one metric was launched in 2018, that year's increase may be due to that. However, the metric in question was the Rome BES, which was not found in any article, meaning the 2018 increase was unaffected by its launch. Such increase may have still been driven by the release of the WWF LPI (not iterated in 2017) but this was mentioned in only 12 articles, whereas the overall gap between 2017 and 2018 articles is much larger (100). As for the 2019 decrease, this was only limitedly due to the non-iteration of the WWF LPI (since this was again mentioned only in a handful of articles in 2018 upon its release) and occurred despite the launch of the ABR. While the 2018 increase cannot therefore be attributed to the release of new metrics or to the iteration of biannual ones but to a genuine increase in interest or to greater dissemination efforts from their promoters' side, the 2019 decrease was conversely due to a decrease in the latter. As for the 2020 decrease, this may be due to the release of the 2020 BES being postponed to 2021. However, the number of articles that was published about the BES in previous years upon its release (22 on average) is much smaller than the number of articles missing (158). Moreover, such decrease occurred despite the release of the WWF LPI. Like in Scotland, the reduction in coverage in 2020 is therefore most likely attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed. In 2021, the total number of articles went back to its 2018 level. This, however, was mainly due to an increase in coverage of the BES (due to the above) and of the Sole 24 ORE QoLR (due mainly to the release of a sub-index in June, see below).

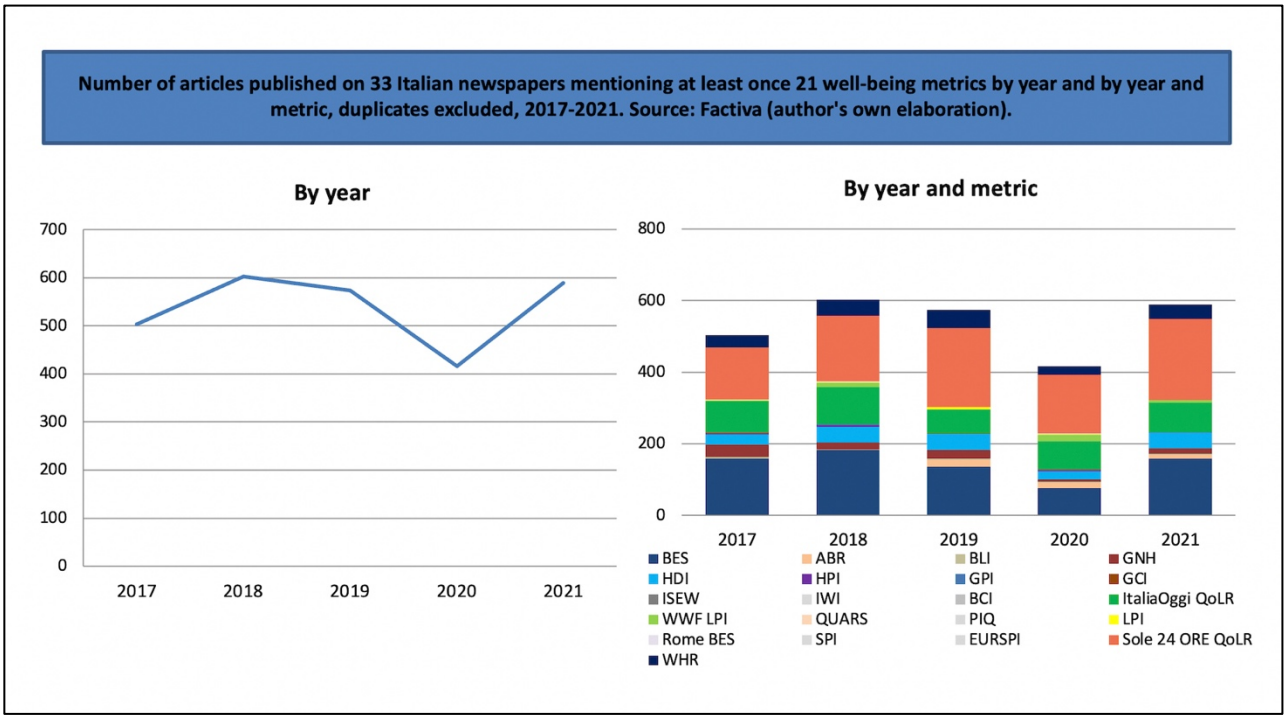


Figure 32.

Like in Scotland, the majority of articles were published in the months in which metrics were released and, within those months, almost exclusively on the day of their release. For instance, below is the number of articles sorted by month for the top two metrics, which 62% of all articles refer to, for the years of 2020 and 2021 (Figure 33). The major peaks were reached in the months in which the metrics in question were issued. Most of the remaining peaks were made when related publications were released, as in June 2021 when *Sole 24 ORE* issued a Youth Quality of Life sub-index. The issuing of metrics and their reporting is so interlinked that in December 2020, when the 2020 BES was supposed to come out before being postponed to 2021, only a handful of articles mentioned it. In other words, not only did the BES get reported upon its release, but it also did *not* when *no* BES Report was issued. Note how the institutionalisation of the BES, and the consequent publication of yearly MEF BES Reports and Appendices, has granted it frequent coverage throughout the year compared to other metrics (and to the NPF). In fact, of all metrics studied both in Italy and Scotland, the BES is the only one that was reported on a regular basis, so much so that between 2017 and 2021 it was mentioned in at least

one article in every but one month, not to mention that in 2021 the MEF BES Report received greater coverage than ISTAT's.

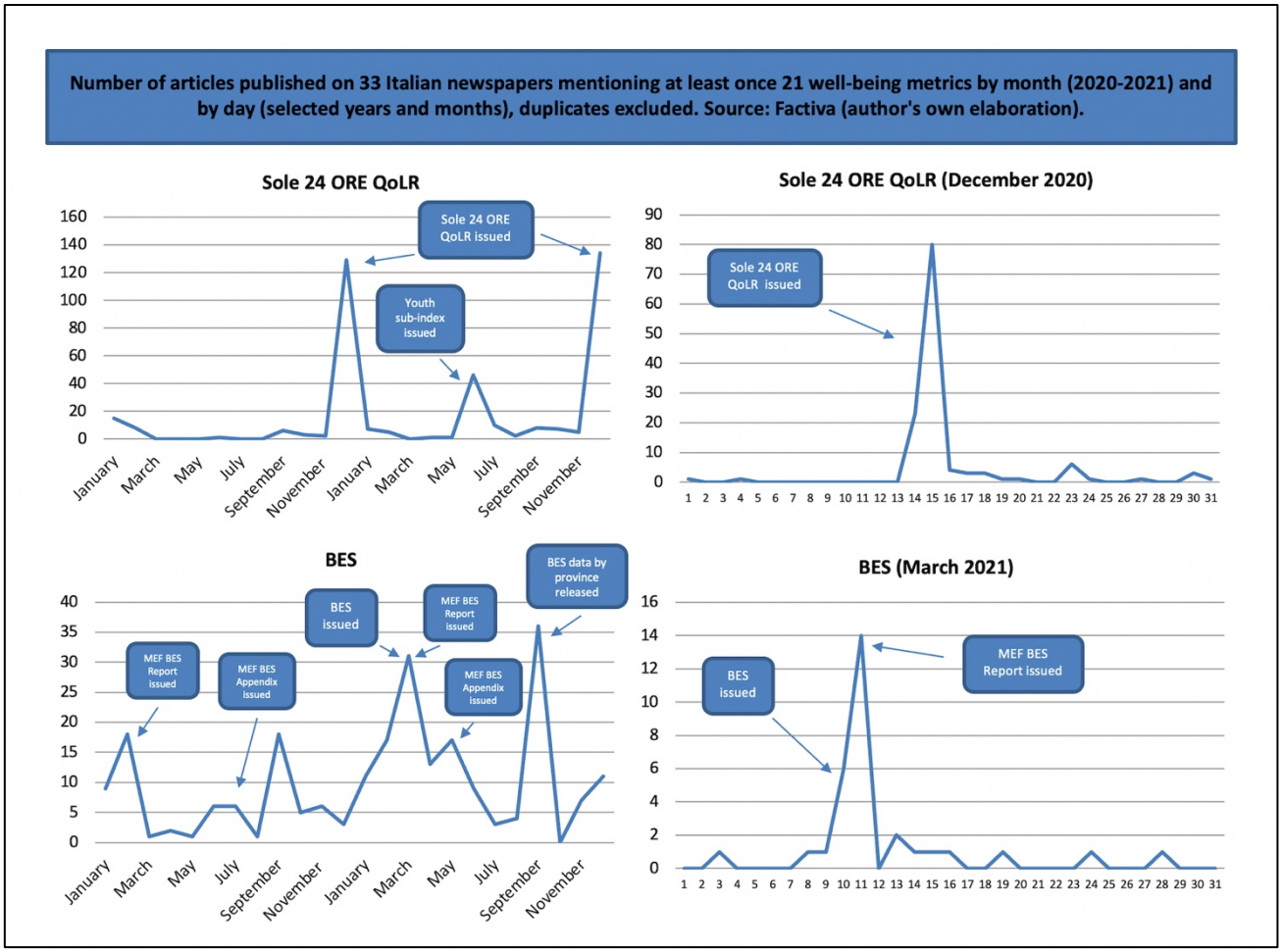


Figure 33.

Half of all articles appeared in seven newspapers (Figure 34). Unlike in Scotland where the sample of metrics was even larger, all sources but one published at least one article each and, among these, there was only one that published less than 10. However, metrics were reported differently between newspapers. For instance, *Sole 24 ORE*, *ItaliaOggi* and *Avvenire* (responsible for their homonymous rankings) almost never talked about their competitor's metric. Yet, they are among the top five newspapers in terms of references to the BES, despite this being a competitor (*Avvenire* is the one reporting it the most, followed by *La Repubblica*, Sole *24 ORE*, *Il Messaggero* and *ItaliaOggi*). Interestingly, of all articles published by the first seven newspapers (in which again half of all articles appeared, and which are also among

the most circulated in the country), only 6% are about the WHR and 3% about the GNH. The most read newspapers in the country thus did not seem interested in metrics that explicitly emphasise subjective indicators, possibly due to (and in line with) journalists' scepticism of subjective indicators that we have seen above.

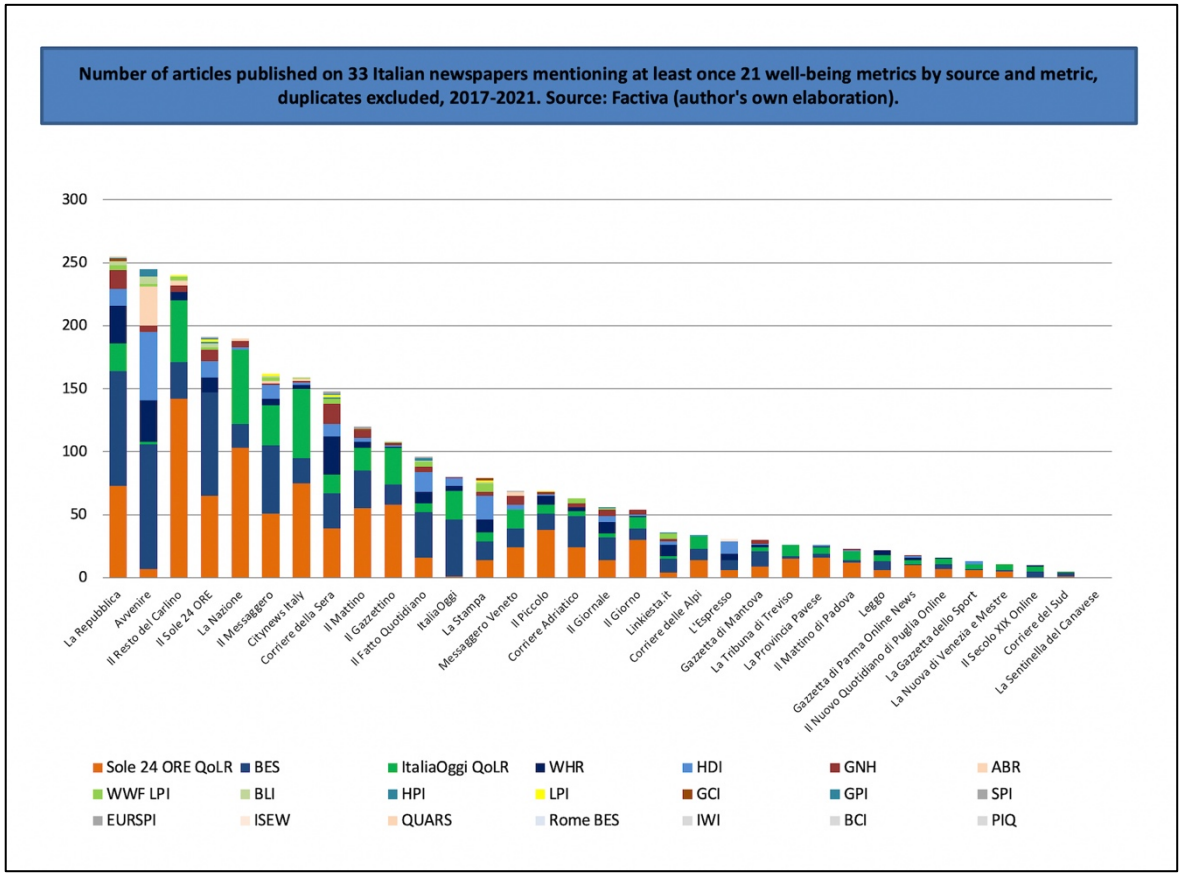


Figure 34.

The number of articles mentioning all 21 well-being metrics combined is 2.8% compared to the number of articles that mentioned at least once GDP over the same period, 14% compared to economic growth and 11% to recession (Figure 35). Compared to 2019, the number of articles mentioning at least once GDP increased in 2020 by 16%, reaching the highest point in the period analysed. To this corresponded a 37% decrease in the number of articles covering economic growth and a slight decrease (-5%) in those mentioning recession, which however more than doubled compared to 2018 and almost tripled compared to 2017 (there was no big change compared to 2019 because in 2019 Italy had already entered a technical recession, hence the increase from 2018 to 2019). Once again, there is reason to believe that

such changes are all connected to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed. In 2021, articles concerning GDP and recession went back to their 2017 levels, and so did articles about economic growth which grew by 43%.

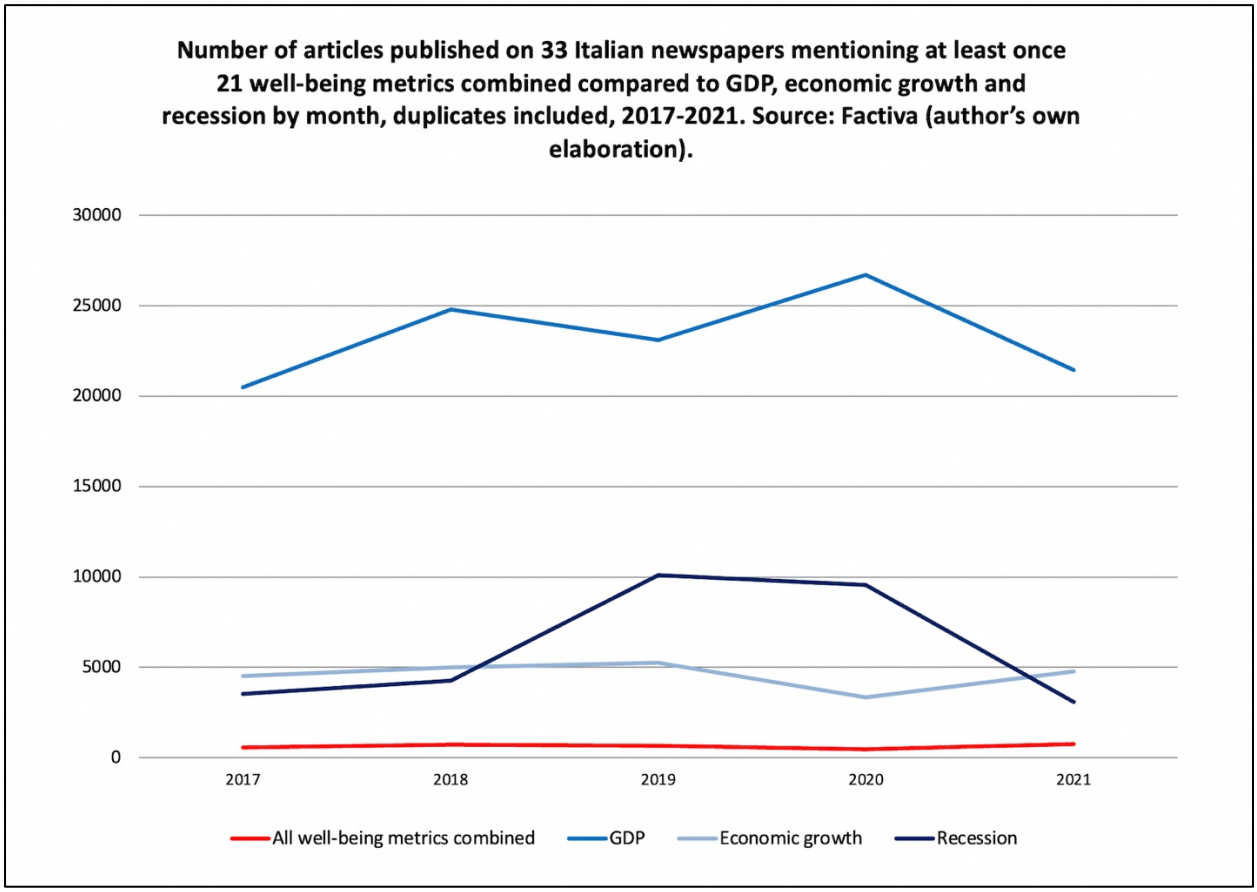


Figure 35.

14.2. Analysis of Radio and TV Coverage

The most mentioned metric over the 38-month period analysed was the Sole 24 ORE QoLR (with 762 references), followed by the BES (645) and the ItaliaOggi QoLR (375), with 9 metrics such LPI and the PIQ at the end of the scale (all of which returned 0 results each), for a total of 2,256 references (Figure 36).

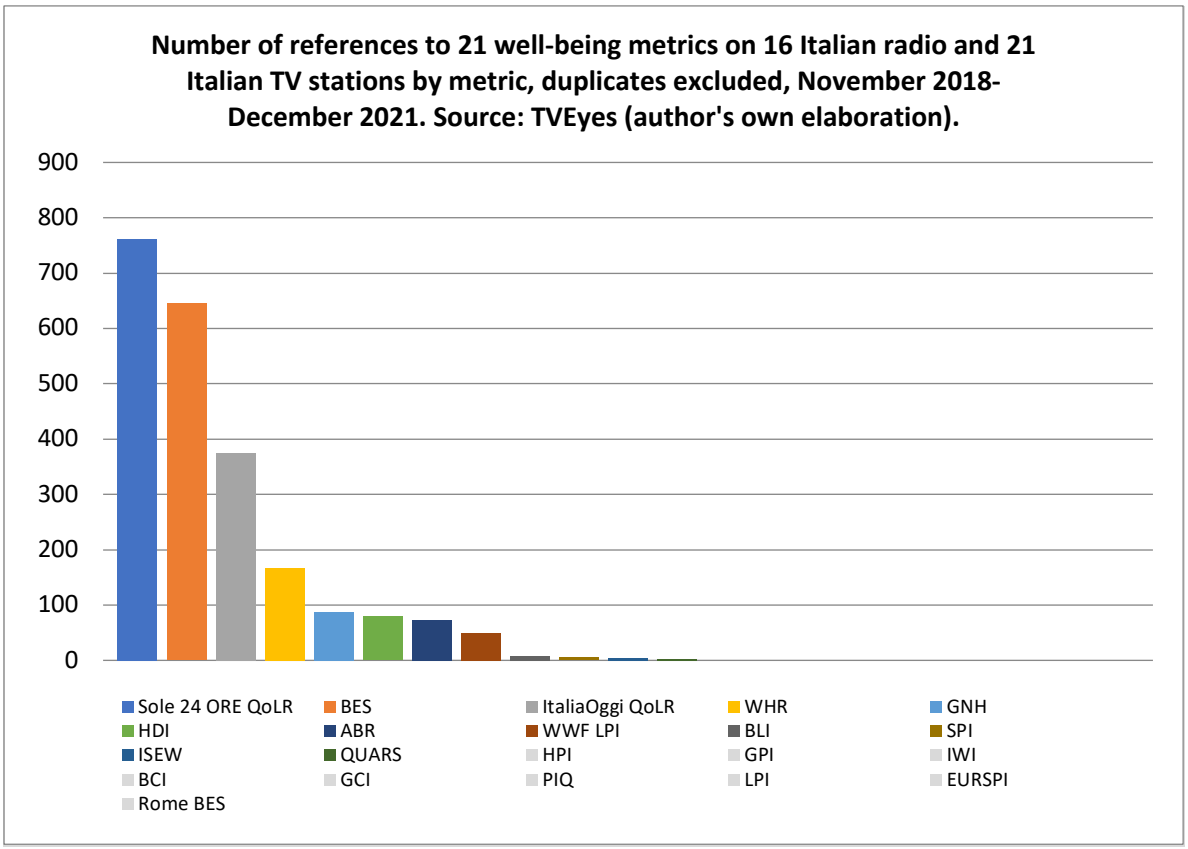


Figure 36.

Overall references increased particularly in November and December 2018, March and December 2019, December 2020, and March and December 2021 (Figure 37). Such peaks are all linked to the releases of three metrics: the BES, the ItaliaOggi QoLR and the Sole 24 ORE QoLR. Compared to 2019, overall mentions decreased by 38% in 2020. Metrics such as the BES (-69%), the Sole 24 ORE QoLR (-32%), the WHR (-60%), the GNH (-45%) and the HDI (-54%) all received less coverage in 2020 compared to 2019[115]. As regards the BES, part of such decrease is due to the release of the 2020 BES being delayed to 2021. However, even if we add references to the BES made in March 2021 (when this was published) to 2020, these would still be 41% lower. Such large decrease in total coverage occurred despite the release of the WWF

[115] References to the ItaliaOggi QoLR increased instead by 63%. However, this is mainly due to the fact that, contrarily to other metrics whose coverage increased, its newspaper and radio and TV coverage for some reasons dropped in 2019 by 37% and 63%, respectively. When compared to 2019, thus, radio and TV references to the ItaliaOggi QoLR did increase, but compared to 2018 they decreased by 39%. Note that as regards radio and TV coverage only November and December 2018 figures are available but, as Figure 38 shows, the ItaliaOggi QoLR was mentioned only in the months of its publication in 2019, 2020 and 2021, so it is likely that this was the case in 2018 as well. At any rate, if additional mentions were made in 2018 this would make the comparison with 2018 worsen, not improve.

LPI, whose number of mentions increased instead significantly (+1,300%) due however to this not being issued in 2019. As argued previously, there is reason to believe that such overall contraction, which is not therefore attributable to changes in the release of metrics and in fact occurred despite the issuing of biannual metrics, was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed, whose impact could also be seen in 2021. In fact, while overall references increased by 10% in 2021, compared to 2019 these were still 32% lower. Furthermore, such increase is mainly due to the BES receiving greater coverage due to its release being postponed to 2021. If references to the BES made in March 2021 are thus added to 2020, and if the highest number of mentions this received upon its publication before the pandemic is added to 2021, overall references would still decrease by 27% in 2020 compared to 2019 and by 11% in 2021 compared to 2020. In other words, had BES Reports been published in both 2020 and 2021 as in previous years, the number of overall references would have most likely decreased in 2021, too. Lastly, it is worth mentioning that no single metric was reported at least once every single month. However, the BES was again very close, with mentions found in all but three. Interestingly, the 2019 HDI got almost no coverage, whereas the 2020 one (released in December 2020 for its 30th anniversary) did not get any at all, exactly like in Scotland.

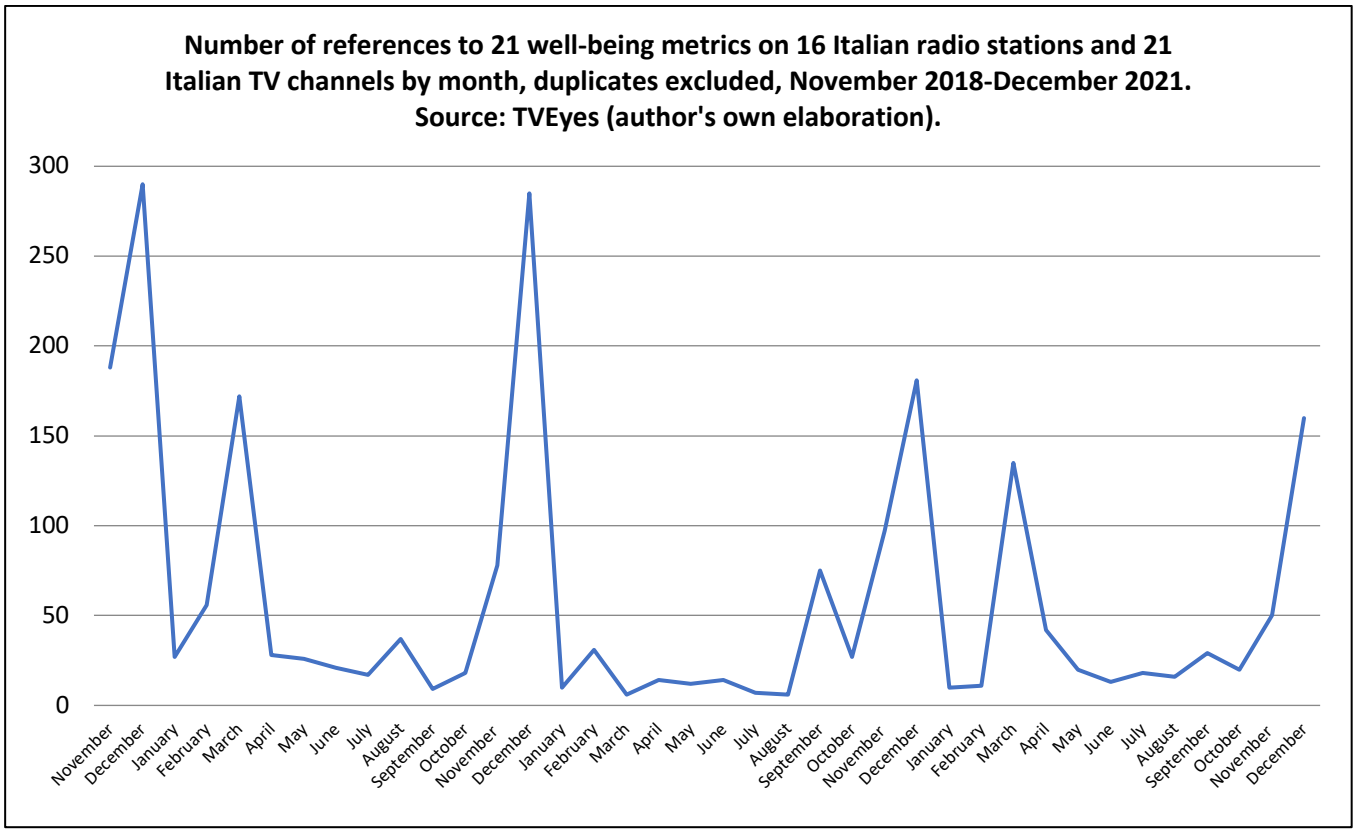


Figure 37.

The majority of references (68%) were made in the months in which metrics were issued (except for those that are not updated regularly). Below, for instance, are references to the top four metrics sorted by month (Figure 38). All the highest peaks were reached when the metrics in question were released. The BES, for instance, received greater coverage when the 2018, 2019 and 2020 ISTAT BES Reports and the 2019 MEF BES Report were issued[116], with half of all mentions made in just these months. In the case of the ItaliaOggi and Sole 24 ORE QoLRs this trend was even more evident, with both getting covered almost exclusively in the months of their releases.

[116] The MEF BES Report was actually published on February 27, but journalists seem to have picked it up one or two days later.

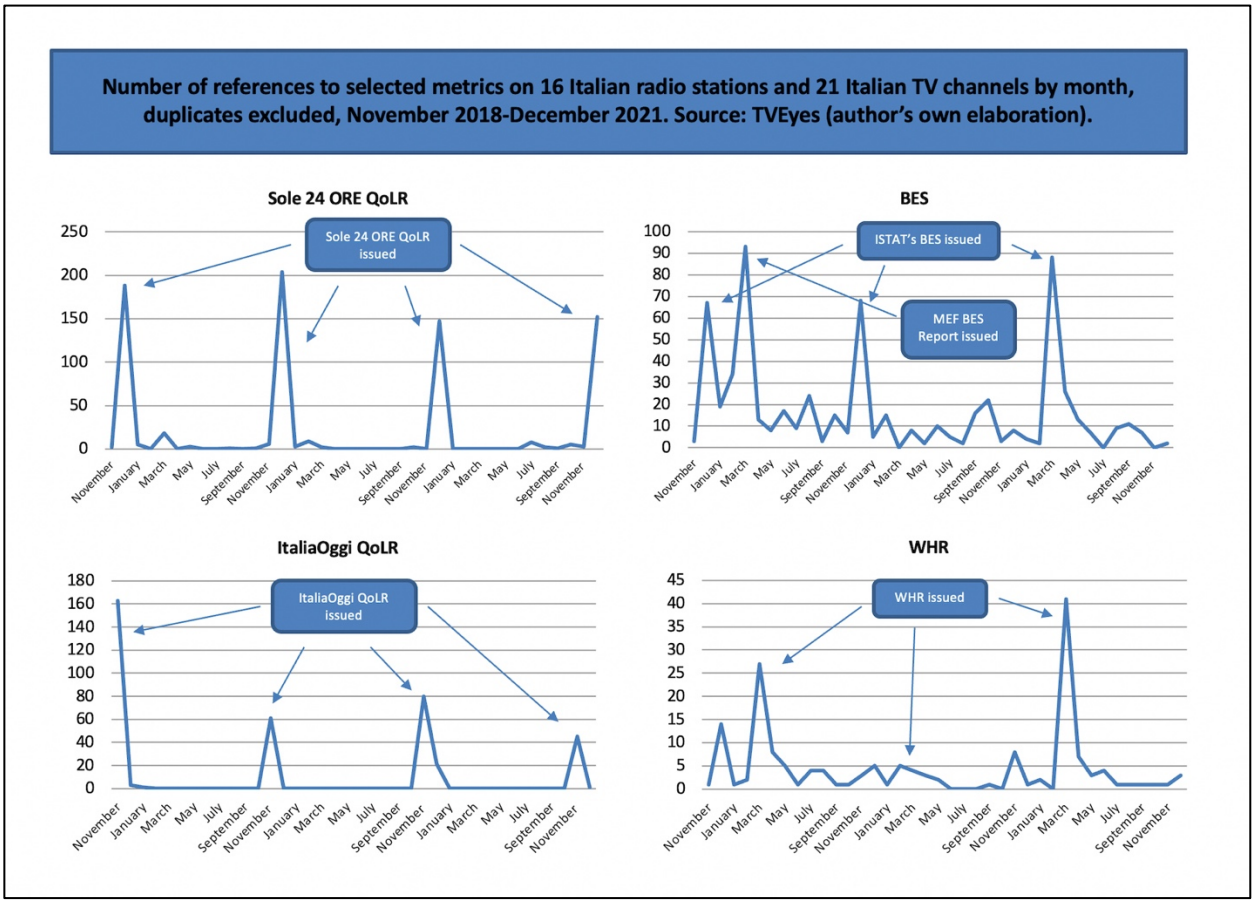


Figure 38.

The majority of references within the above months were made on the days these metrics were issued (Figure 39). Below, for instance, are 2019 and 2020 references to the Sole 24 ORE and ItaliaOggi QoLRs sorted by day for their release month. None of them was reported in the weeks preceding their release; their coverage grew sharply on the day of their issuing (in all four cases a Monday); and their coverage plummeted drastically after one or two days, after which it flattened out. The ItaliaOggi QoLR actually started to be covered on Sunday already (the same happened in 2018 and 2021) but, while I could not speak to its editors, I believe this is simply due to them sending press releases in advance that are not embargoed as a way to increase interest in the Monday release.

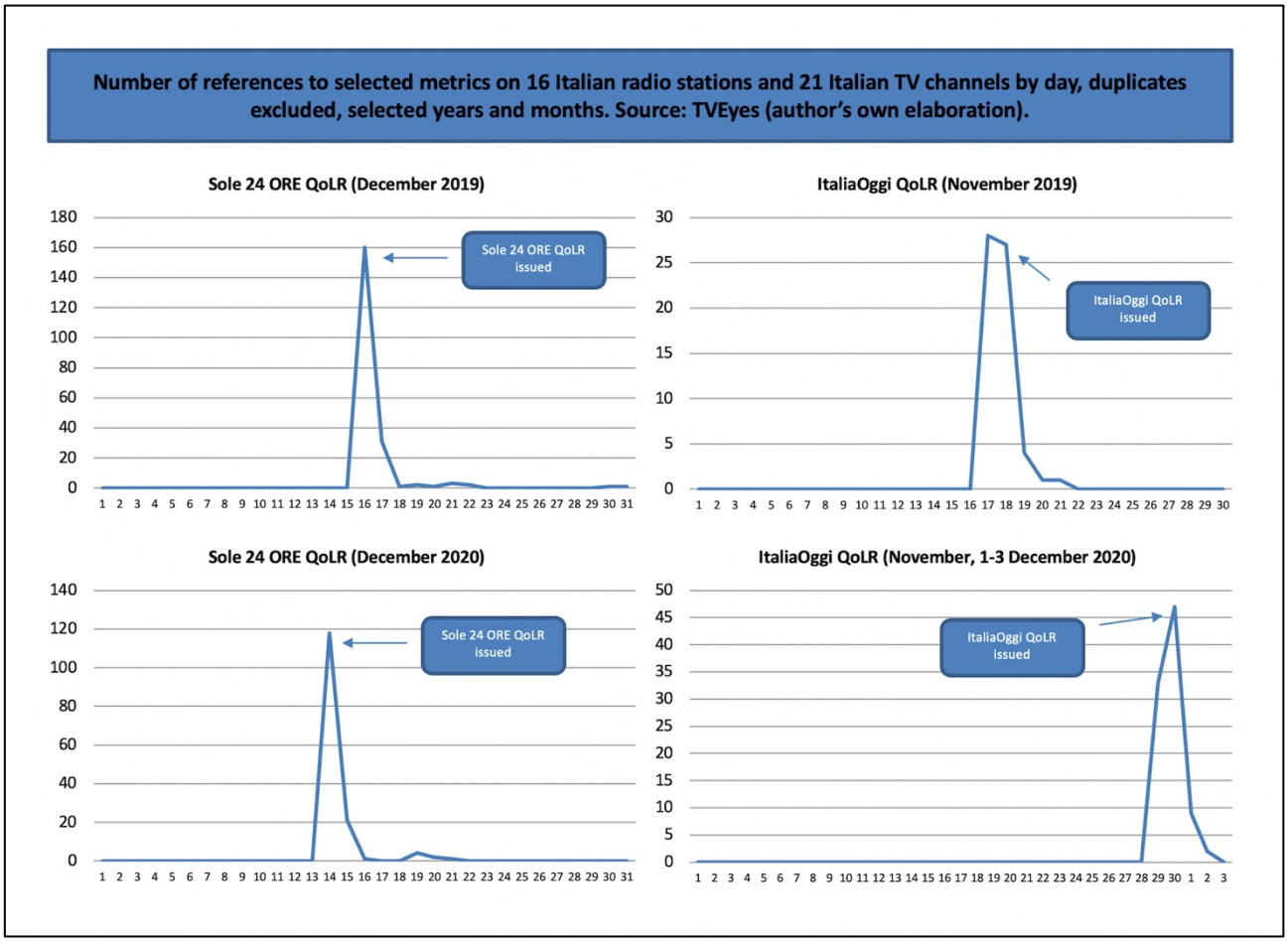


Figure 39.

Slightly more than half of all references (54%) were made on TV (Figure 40). As for radio, half of all references were made on just three stations, all of them sources that specialise in politics and current affairs, whereas only 23% were made on the more "commercial" stations included in the sample (*RTL 102.5*, *Radio Capital*, *RMC*, *Radio 105*, *R101*, *RDS* and *Radio Deejay*). As for TV, the trend is similar, in the sense that the top five sources, which account for 65% of all TV mentions, are all-news channels. Breaking down data further by type of outlet, metric and source (not shown here) reveals again an interesting competition between *Class CNBC* (owned by Class Editori, the same company that owns *ItaliaOggi*) and *Radio 24* (owned by Confindustria, which also owns *Sole 24 ORE*), with both almost completely ignoring each other's ranking. This shows the difference between commercial, newspaper rankings and official, institutionalised metrics such as the BES. In fact, despite the above and the BES being again a competitor, both were among the sources on which

the BES was mentioned the most. Another finding worth noting is that metrics that more explicitly emphasise subjective indicators such as the GNH and the WHR were not mentioned frequently on "news and talk" or less commercial sources. Indeed, of all mentions made on the first five radio stations and TV channels (which account for 67% of all mentions in the sample and are again mainly specialised sources or all-news channels), less than 5% were about the WHR and only 1% about the GNH. This suggests that these metrics are not being taken seriously by the journalists working for these sources or by the policymakers interviewed by them in line with both journalists' and policymakers' scepticism of subjective indicators (see 10.2). Indeed, in several cases journalists made these metrics object of ridicule, demonstrating at times to be also not particularly knowledgeable about them[117] [118].

[117] Excerpt from the show Detto Fatto broadcast on *Rai 2* on November 6, 2019 (Rai Play, 2019a, 1:06:11-1:06:51):
Presenter: Bhutan… which is not a swear word…
Guest: [laughs] Which is not even the gas! So… she [the King's wife], however…
Presenter: And he, wait… the little… Bhutan, which again is not a swear word, is the small Himalayan country that instead of… GDP, put the GNH, the Gross National Happiness [laughter/clapping]. It's a nice thing, Carla, isn't it?
Guest: It's an amazing thing, I like it a lot. We should all do that.
Presenter: Is it true though? Is it true?
Guest: It's true, it's true, I'm told from [people] offstage.
Presenter: [laughs]

[118] On February 1, 2019, at 9:56 A.M., during the show Agorà broadcast on *Rai 3* a journalist said that Bhutan had adopted the BES, therefore showing that she was neither fully aware of the BES nor of the GNH (Rai Play, 2019b).

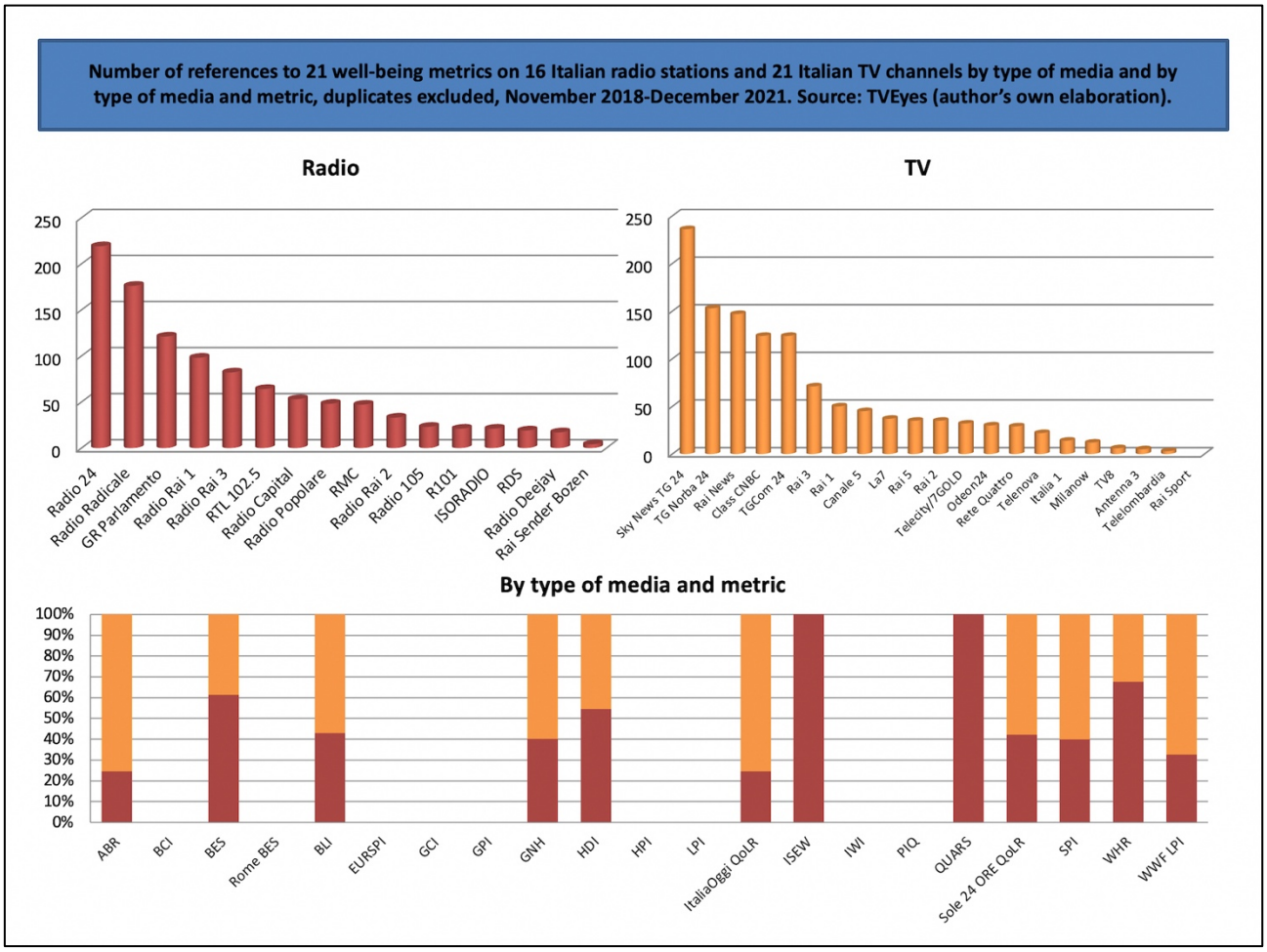


Figure 40.

As for the time of the day in which mentions were made, similarly to Scotland there were three peaks at 7 A.M., 12 P.M. and 5 P.M. (Figure 41). Also similarly to Scotland, only 9% of references were made during prime time (8-11 P.M.) as opposed to e.g. the early morning hours of 6-9 A.M. (19%) or between 10 A.M. and 1 P.M. (17%). This suggests that well-being is a theme that is neither perceived to be worth reporting to a larger audience nor one that is raised frequently by policymakers while participating in talk shows aired during prime time, in line with policymakers' own claims (see 12.1). Data broken down by day also show that about 40% of mentions were made on Mondays. This confirms what some journalists said about exploiting Mondays for the promotion of non-salient issues (see 12.2). Indeed, although it is true that the results below are due to Monday being the day the ItaliaOggi and the Sole 24

ORE QoLRs were released, the fact that these were and keep being released on Mondays is probably exactly for the above reason.

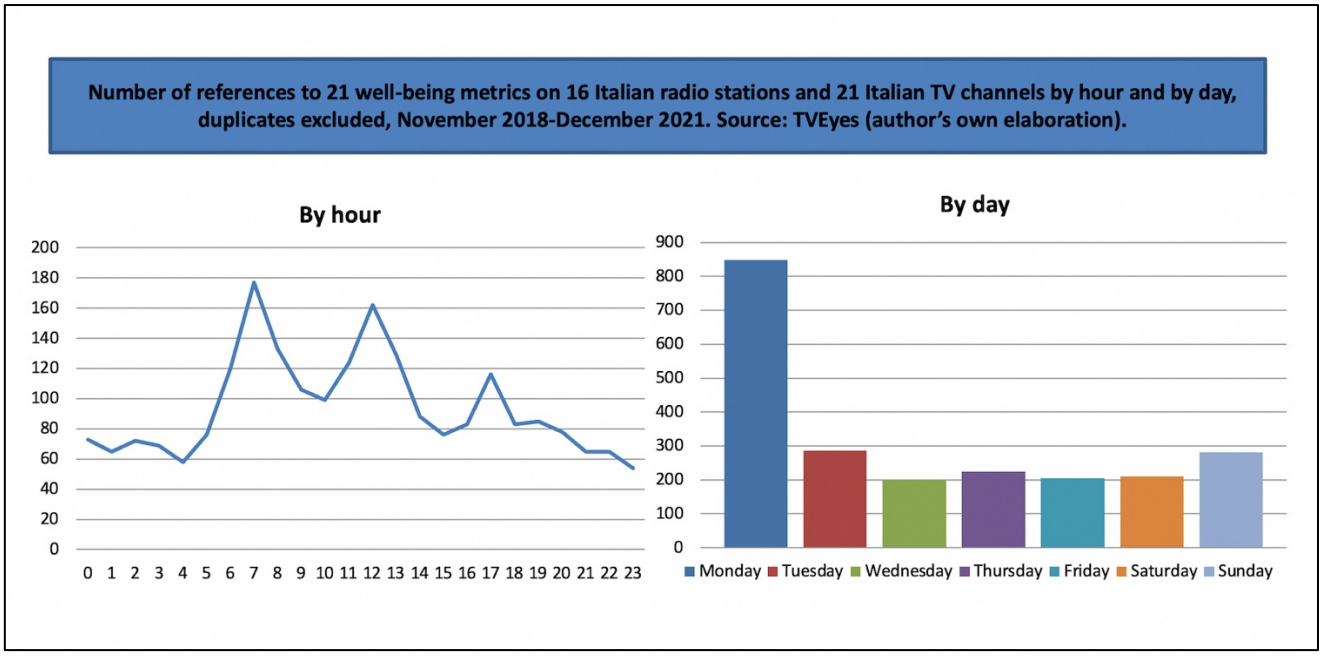


Figure 41.

Finally, below is the number of references to all 21 metrics combined compared to that of GDP, economic growth and recession (Figure 42). Data sorted by month show that there was a sharp increase in references to GDP and recession starting from February 2020 as soon as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country, with the former increasing by 11,549 units (+14%) in 2020 compared to 2019, whereas references to all well-being metrics combined decreased once again by more than a third. While the reporting of well-being metrics was thus affected negatively, that of GDP and related queries such as recession was affected positively instead. In other words, this suggest again that of particular concern during the pandemic was the impact this was having and going to have primarily on GDP and in terms of output than in terms of and on well-being. In 2021, references to GDP returned to their pre-pandemic level, and so did those to economic growth (which increased by 39%) and recession, at least from what December 2019 data suggest. References to all well-being metrics combined increased slightly, due again however to changes in the year of release of the BES.

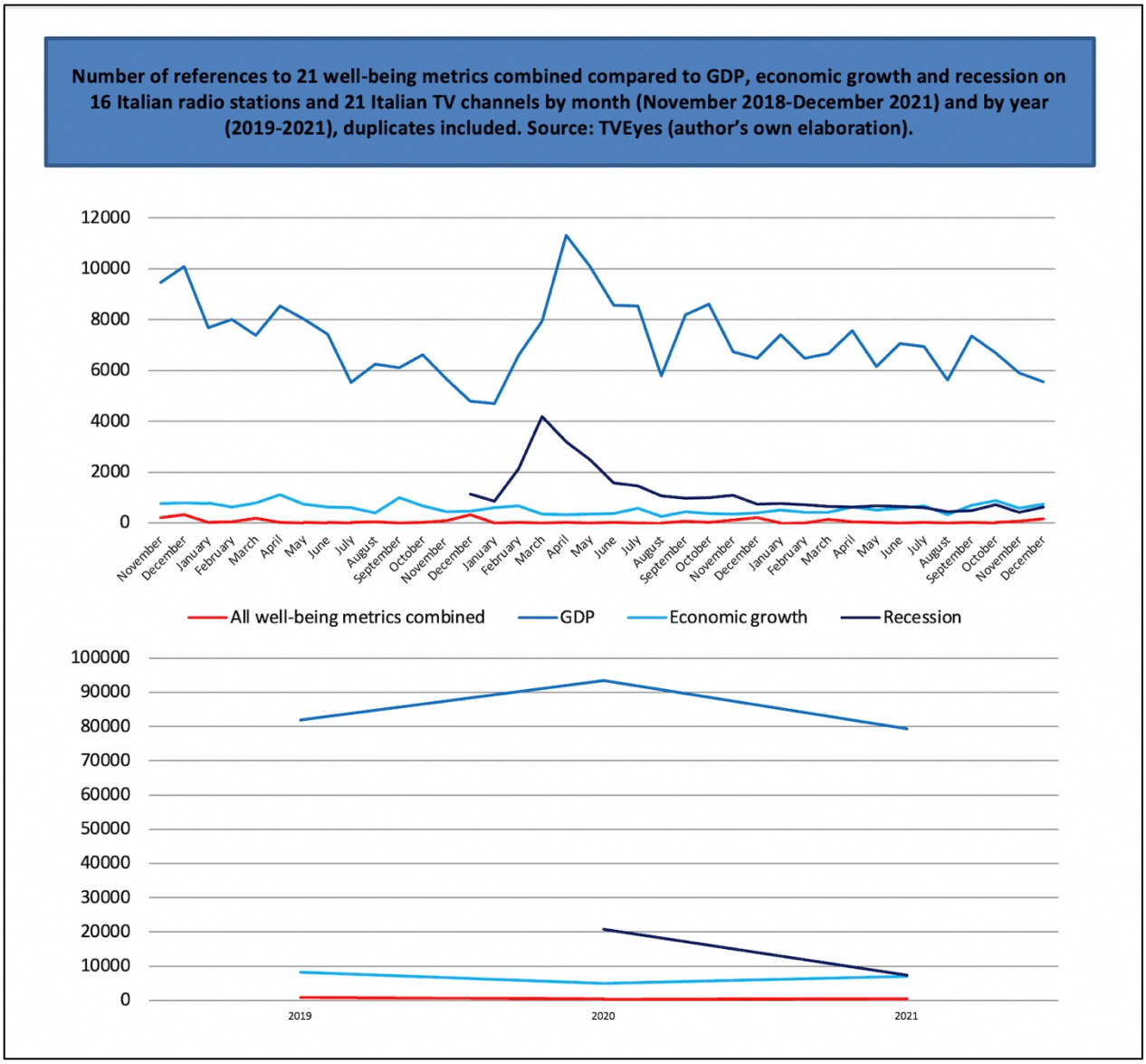


Figure 42.

14.3. Analysis of Parliamentary Debates

In the Italian Parliament, the BES was the most mentioned metric with 158 references, followed by the HDI (18), with 13 metrics at the end of the scale (all of which returned 0 mentions each) for a total of 185 references (Figure 43).

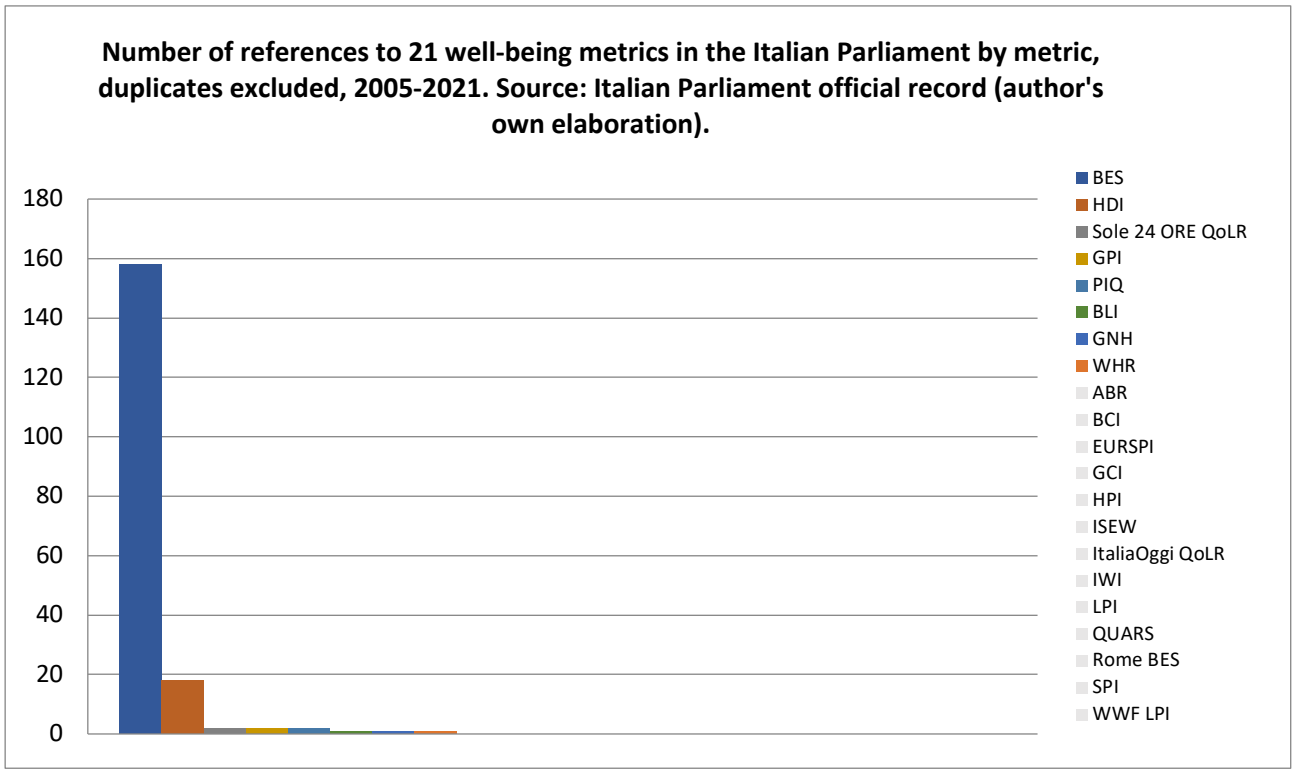


Figure 43.

The BES, thus, was by far the most mentioned metric in the Italian Parliament and almost the only one to be so, just like the NPF in Scotland. References to it increased particularly in 2016 in the Chamber of Deputies and between 2016 and 2018 in the Senate (Figure 44). This is when the state's budget was being reformed, when the CIBES reported on its results, and when four indicators were provisionally included in the DEF as an exercise (see 4.3.2). References to the BES in the two houses therefore followed the key initial moments associated with the embedding of well-being indicators into national legislation and, as soon as this was brought to completion, plummeted. Although in the Chamber of Deputies mentions of the BES slightly increased in 2020, these remained extremely low in absolute terms and in 2021 they reached their lowest point since 2015 in both houses. Once again, the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed did not generate any increase in the use of well-being metrics in parliamentary debates, and in fact depressed this even further.

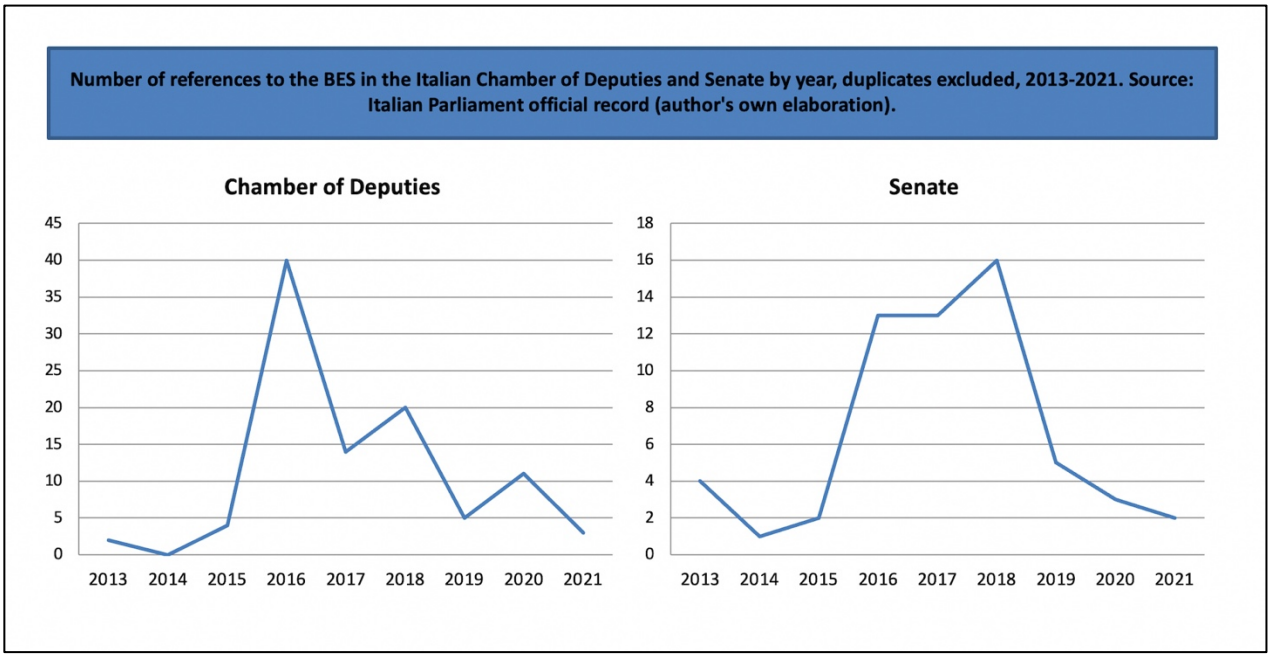


Figure 44.

Data broken down by month confirm that almost all references were made in the months in which key legislative moments such as the one mentioned above occurred (Figure 45). Interestingly, the issuing of MEF BES Reports and Appendices did not generate much attention. The first Report and Appendix did get mentioned later in June 2018 (when the DEF was being debated), however their 2019 iteration was almost completely ignored, and so were their 2020 and 2021 one (not shown here). Moreover, almost no one mentioned the BES in December, which is when the 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 ISTAT BES Reports were issued, or in the months preceding or following their publication. Similarly, no one mentioned the BES in March 2021, when the 2020 BES was released by ISTAT (not shown here).

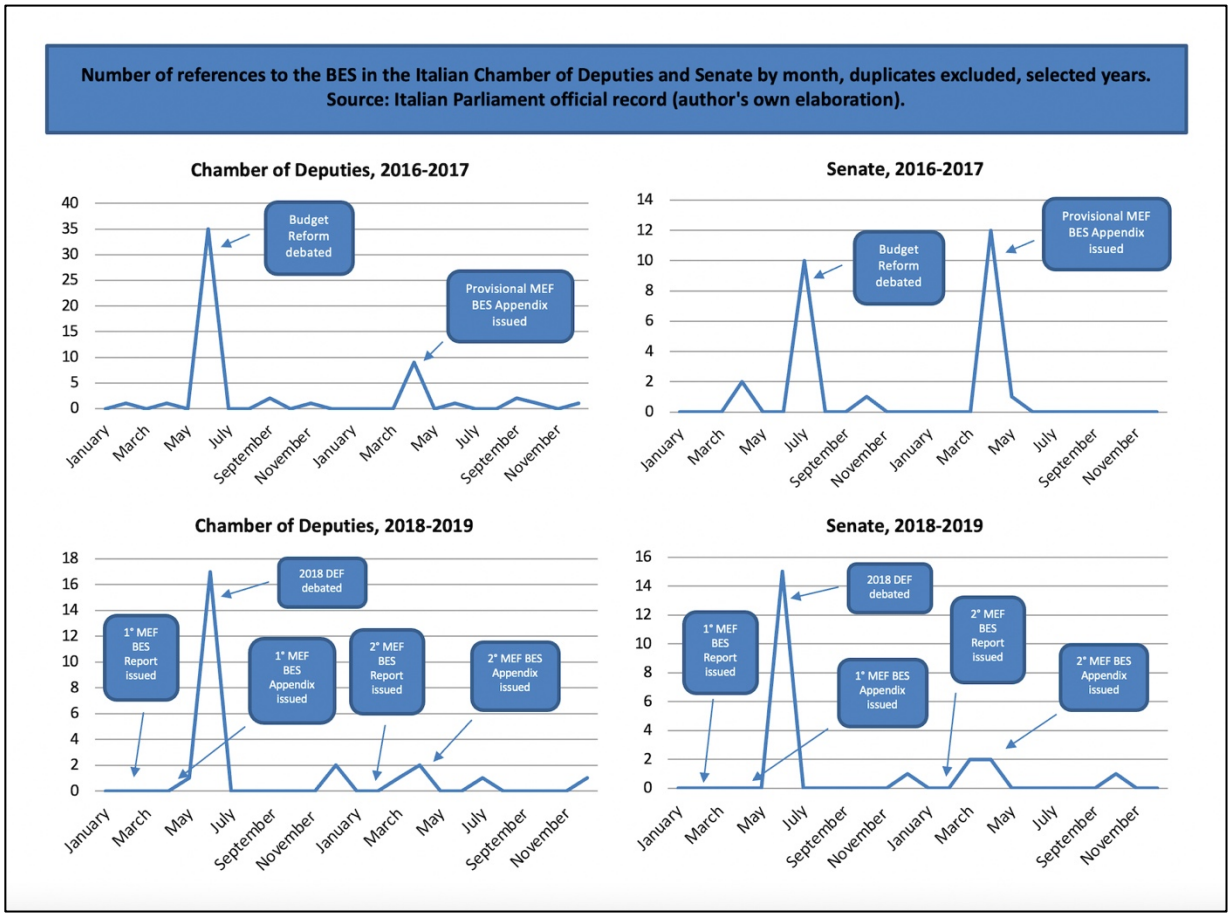


Figure 45.

In fact, in the four months in which the highest peaks above were reached, almost all references (often all of them) were made on a single day when the aforementioned legislative moments occurred, after which no references were made, just like none were made before (Figure 46).

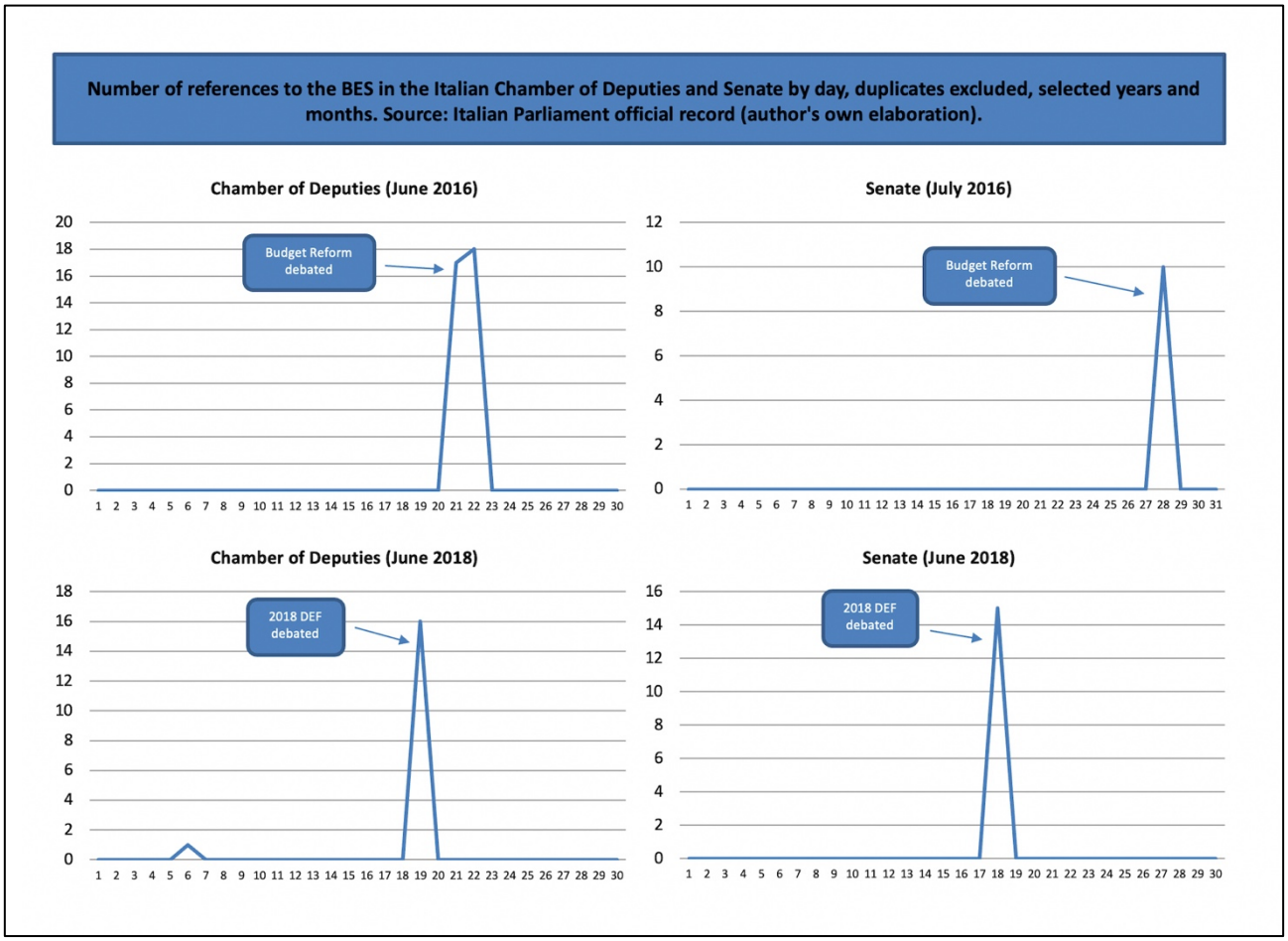


Figure 46.

Almost half of all references to the BES were made by parliamentarians belonging to the M5S, followed by members of the PD (Figure 47). Overall, centre-left and left-leaning parties or parliamentary groups account for 80% of all references, if the M5S is regarded as such[119]. The MP who mentioned the BES the most was Sodano (M5S), followed by L'Abbate and Mangili (both also M5S), Boccia (PD) and Marcon (Left Ecology Freedom or SEL, according to the Italian acronym) who as we saw above championed the embedding of well-being indicators into national legislation (see 12.9). Members of government authored only four references in total, which shows that this is not a metric in their toolkit and suggests that it may have not therefore had much impact on policymaking.

[119] Calculated out of 154 references instead of 158 as 4 references were made by members of government who did not belong to any party. Parties or groups included are: M5S, PD, SEL, Liberi e Uguali, Italia Viva and Misto/Facciamo Eco/Federazione dei Verdi.

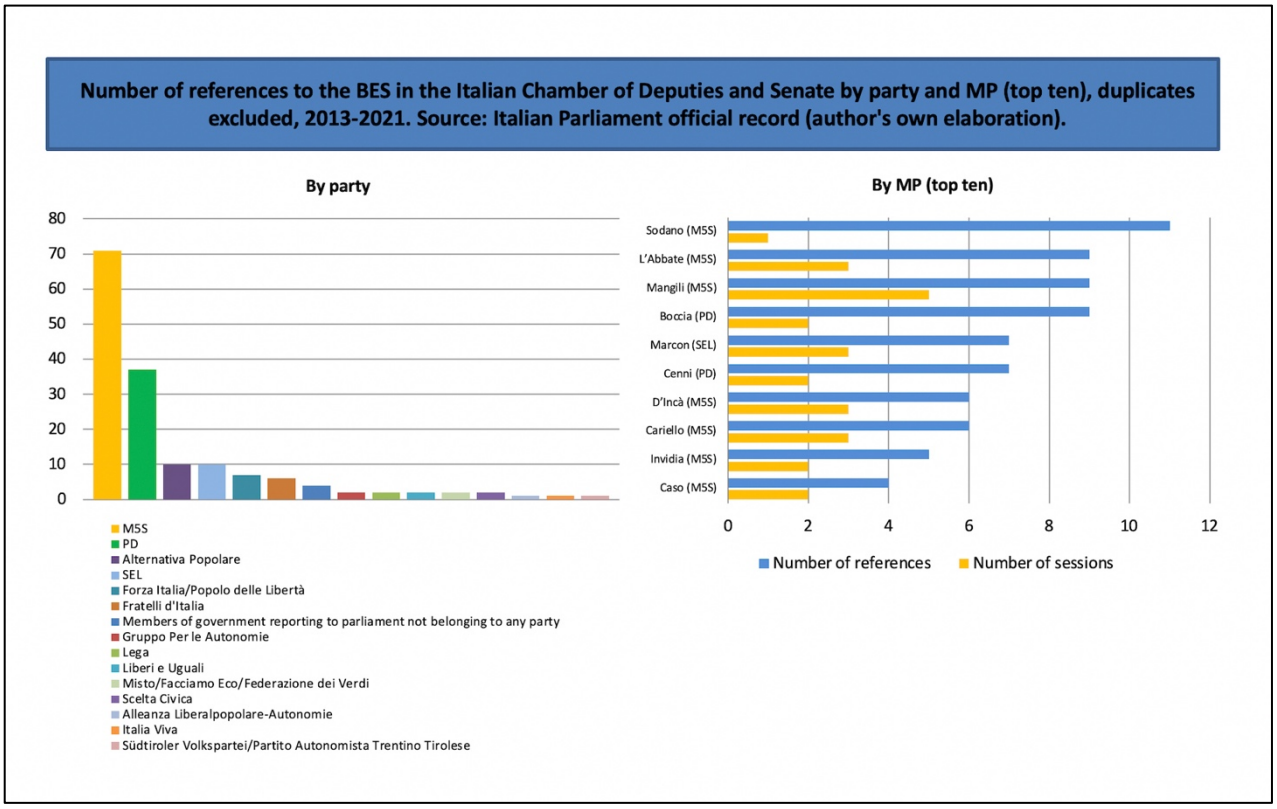


Figure 47.

There is again the question of how much these metrics have been mentioned compared to GDP, economic growth and recession. Unfortunately, in this case it was impossible to perform this comparison since the last queries are all cited so frequently that it would have taken years to collect all references (which is in itself a finding). Suffice it to say that the BES, almost the only metric to be mentioned by MPs and essentially the only one to be so since 2019[120], was cited at least once in 3%, 2% and 1% of Chamber and 3%, 2% and 2% of Senate meetings in 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively (Figure 48). Instead, GDP was so in 56%, 59% and 55% of Chamber and 56%, 60% and 62% of Senate sessions. The percentage of meetings in which GDP was mentioned increased in both houses in 2020, and either went back to its 2019 levels (Chamber) or kept increasing (Senate) in 2021. The percentage of sessions in which economic growth and recession were mentioned decreased instead in 2020 (in the case of recession because Italy already entered a recession in 2019), but while the

[120] In addition to the HDI, mentioned twice in 2020 and in 2021, and the WHR, mentioned once in 2021.

percentage of meetings in which recession was mentioned kept decreasing in 2021, that in which economic growth was so increased in both the Chamber and the Senate. This is line with the media coverage the same queries received in the same period (see previous sections). The COVID-19 pandemic therefore impacted positively on the percentage of sessions in which GDP was discussed, generating once again no sudden increase in the use of well-being metrics in parliamentary debates.

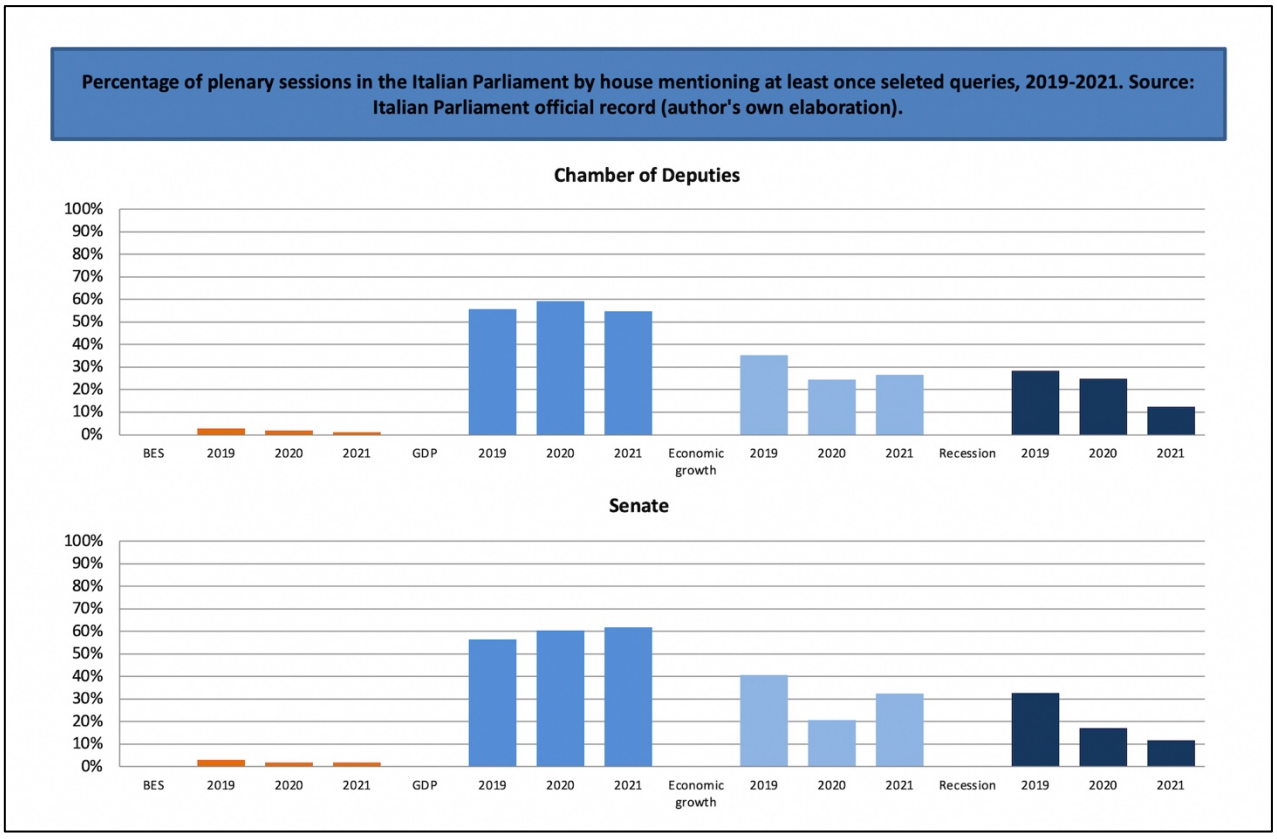


Figure 48.

Finally, it is worth noting that almost no references to any well-being metrics were made prior to 2015, and only four between 2008 and 2012 (all of them to the HDI of which, by the way, none about Italy). Like in Scotland, this shows that well-being metrics were not integral to the political debate that followed the 2007/08 crisis which, as we know, was focused predominantly on GDP and economic growth. To be sure, metrics such as the BES or the WHR were only launched in the 2010s. However, metrics such as the QUARS, the PIQ, the WWF LPI, the HDI, the ISEW and the GPI were already available then.

14.4. Interviewees' Self-Assessment of the Use and Impact of the BES

14.4.1. A National Perspective

National statisticians would usually take some time before replying yet none could give me examples of cases in which they thought the BES impacted on policymaking. A few interviewees, however, pointed out the great achievement of embedding 12 BES indicators into national legislation. As one of them put it, 'introducing indicators that are not strictly economic in an economic process is not an insignificant step'. While this is certainly true, this does not necessarily imply that the BES framework or any of the above indicators will have had any impact. In fact, no one could give me any examples in that sense either, although I should note that the first MEF BES Report and Appendix were published in 2018, thus just a year before interviews took place. As one statistician commented, '[w]e are in the early phase. These 12 indicators are only, so to speak, for consultation. Policies are not changed based on these 12 indicators, not at all'.

Among members of interest groups, no interviewee could identify specific examples of cases in which the BES impacted on policymaking either. 'I can't think of any […] I don't think that there are actual applications that have brought about some change', 'the BES is still a tool for experts [that] hasn't entered political debate', were just some of the comments that interviewees made. The founder of the Happy Degrowth Movement thought the lack of action was so disappointing that he said he had to create a dedicated political movement called Sustainability, Equity and Solidarity to remedy.

Both groups might have not been able to cite any examples due to them being close to but not inside the policy arena – but what about policymakers? Overall, the majority of policymakers could not identify examples either. The former Deputy Minister of the Economy, for instance, after a few seconds' silence concluded that 'BES indicators […] are still largely overlooked' whereas Boccia said that well-being is

'still a niche topic'. Similarly, a former centre-left MP asserted that, despite being embedded into national legislation, the BES 'hasn't entered the decision-making process at all' – or, as he concluded, 'no one cares about the BES'. Another former MP went as far as saying that during the XVII legislature (which ended in 2018) there was 'poor awareness' of BES indicators and that these were just a façade, an 'embellishment'. Still another former centre-left MP concluded, *after a 25-second silence*, that they could not think of any examples[121].

Some policymakers could not cite any examples not because they could not find them, but because they *did not even know what the BES was*. Centre-right MPs particularly would reply very frankly saying things like 'I don't know what the BES is', 'I don't know what it is […] I don't know what to tell you'. But this was a problem across the political spectrum, and a few centre-left MPs, too, would respond in the same way. What is perhaps most striking is that even those who I expected to be aware of the framework were in some cases not. For instance, I once approached a centre-left mayor after their opening address at a conference on well-being. Considering their speech and the setting this was delivered in, I thought that they would be aware of the BES and asked them if they could give me examples of cases in which they had used it. 'The what?', they responded. An even more surrealistic case was that of an MP who has made several references to the BES in parliament and yet asked *me* to explain it to them as they were not particularly knowledgeable and wanted to find out more about it. Moreover, it is worth noting that several interviewees referred in their responses to the BES as an indicator or as an index even though no overall BES composite index exists. This may be due to them simply not knowing the difference between such terms but given previous findings it may also be due to them not being too acquainted with the BES in the first place.

[121] What is even more interesting is how the interview ended. The interviewee gave me a book that they wrote with all their achievements during their time in office. I skim read it and noticed that the embedding of BES indicators into national legislation was not among them, despite them supporting it at the time. I asked why and they replied: '[b]ecause it wasn't relevant'.

There were, however, exceptions. A former Undersecretary of the Economy, for instance, cited as examples some policies adopted by previous governments which the interviewee belonged to. These were: 1) a tax relief for energy refurbishment which initially was limited to private accommodations but later extended to hotels and apartment buildings, the inclusion of which is 'probable' that 'was determined by the fact that at the same time the BES became a matter of parliamentary debate'; 2) certain policies relating to land regeneration which were adopted 'because there have been floods and earthquakes'; 3) the provision of 'incentives for business innovation' which the interviewee described as 'very tied to a particular idea, that is [… that of] Made in Italy' which 'is hard to imagine [… as] detached from a vision of, say, Equitable and Sustainable Well-being'.

However, whether the BES was used and had any impact in these cases is debatable. In fact, the above answers suggest just the opposite. As for the first example, the informant spoke of a probable impact; as for the second example, they themselves said that what drove the decision to adopt those policies was the occurrence of natural disasters; finally, as for the last example this was very vaguely put, and it is not clear how the BES might have been used. Moreover, the interviewee themselves said that it would be 'presumptuous' to claim that there was a 'very clear' ex-ante motivation to impact on BES indicators, arguing that such policies could '*in retrospect* [be] linked to the BES' (emphasis added). To say nothing of the fact that the policies in question were introduced by the interviewee as policies meant to make 'the economy take off again'.

Two informants cited as another example the *Reddito di inclusione* (tr. Inclusion Income or REI according to the Italian acronym), a social assistance benefit adopted by the Gentiloni Cabinet in 2017. A former minister of that cabinet described the REI as having been 'influenced a lot' by the increasing popularity of well-being. However, the Economic Advisor of the Prime Minister and Undersecretary of State of the preceding cabinet who belonged to the same party that later supported the Gentiloni

Cabinet and eventually the REI, admitted that this could be cited as an example, but only in retrospect:

> I don't have an example [of use and impact] in mind. […] If, however, you are asking me [if there are any] political decisions [that] can fit with the path that leads to [the delivery of] those goals [then I can cite you] many: the *Reddito di inclusione* is one of them. […] Yet, if the question is more of a direct one, "when the government took those decisions, did it do so because it wanted to align with that framework?" – not really. I'd say it's more of an ex-post rationalisation. […] While we were waiting for the creation of the Commission of those [BES] indicators, we made a report in which every decision [introduced by] the finance bill was mapped against the goals [the SDGs]. […] That was again a post-rationalisation exercise, though. […] [W]hen we took [those] decisions, […] we were not thinking about this [the BES].

Note the repeated use of the word goal. The interviewee was confusing between the BES framework (which has no goals) and the SDGs, so much so that at some point they even talked about the 'Equitable Sustainable Development Goals'. This demonstrates once again that even among those who were somehow familiar with the well-being agenda, awareness of the BES was not particularly high. It also confirms the worries that some statisticians expressed during interviews about the 'overlap' between the BES and the SDGs and the confusion that this generates.

Three interviewees cited as another example the *Reddito di cittadinanza* (tr. Basic Income) adopted by the M5S-Lega coalition government in 2019. The then Minister of the Economy, for instance, told me that 'the *Reddito di cittadinanza* could be [an example] because it decreases inequalities so it has also an effect on the BES'. A civil servant working for the MEF mentioned it too, pointing out however that 'things work more the other way around', in the sense that only after policies are

adopted these are linked to, and it is considered whether they have impacted on, well-being indicators. Which is exactly what the above concept of "ex-post rationalisation" refers to and the way the then Minister of the Economy framed his above answer.

As for journalists, some could not cite any examples as they had very limited understanding of the BES, in line with findings of the previous chapters and similarly to Scotland. An Economics Correspondent, for instance, admitted that they had just 'heard about it' whereas an Environment and Economics Correspondent said to be unable to 'talk about it in a serious way' as they 'didn't handle it recently'. Sometimes they would not have any knowledge of it at all. For instance, asked if they could mention any examples of cases in which the BES had any impact on policymaking, another journalist responded: '[t]he what?'. Yet, those who were a little more knowledgeable could not cite examples either. A case in point was a comment made by a Senior Economics Correspondent who argued that 'surely it was among the premises of all the various bills […] but it was never the reason why'. Or, as they peremptorily concluded, 'no one gives a fuck about it'.

14.4.2. A Local Perspective from the City of Rome

Informants from the Rome City Council could not identify cases in which, according to them, the city's BES framework impacted on local policymaking. The then Deputy Mayor of Rome said that these indicators were still 'very recent', whereas a then Council Assessor (a member of the local government) said that there were no examples yet because only two BES Reports had been published by the time the interview was being conducted[122].

[122] Similarly, although responding to another question, the then Mayor of Rome noted: 'we're starting to […] introduce new indicators. […] We're talking about a total paradigm change so […] shortly we'll have [… them] formalised', suggesting that this is a process that will take time.

One interviewee, however, hoped that with the launch of the second report in May 2019 – in which there were 'some micro time series' which revealed 'some micro problems' – policymakers would take this as a 'stimulus' to change their policies. Quite contrarily, this seems to have raised several concerns within the administration. First, because their publication effectively meant that the council was officially admitting the worsening of people's well-being in certain domains. Second, because many of the indicators used for the 2019 report were updated as of 2015 or 2016, that is, when the then administration was not in power yet (2015) or when it had just been formed (2016). This means that some of the data referred to the negative (or positive) performance of the previous administration. Or, as a then Council Assessor put it, to years in which 'we weren't there'. Consequently, some members of the council allegedly favoured a careful selection of indicators since they were said to be worried that journalists could have reported their trend without specifying that they referred to the performance of the previous administration. This shows again the important role that the media are thought to play and highlights again distrust of journalists – comments like 'newspapers cite data randomly' would be quite common. Discussions over the selection of indicators seem to have been so heated that one interviewee argued that although there was a lot of interest by many members of the council in adding as many indicators as possible to the framework until that moment, 'from the day after tomorrow' – the interview took place the day before the presentation of the 2019 Rome BES Report – 'I don't know [what is going to happen]'.

Eventually, both the 2020 and the 2021 Reports were published. However, this takes me back to an anecdote I was told by the former President of ISTAT. He recalled being once told that 'the Rome City Council did not publish the report one year because [they] didn't like it'. While he was referring to another study, this confirms once again the need of having independent and impartial bodies overseeing the development and dissemination of well-being metrics to prevent policymakers from obstructing the publication of data that do not put them in a good light.

15. Discussion

15.1. Problem Awareness and Recognition

As I have argued in Chapter 3, for change to take place in the context of this thesis, people need to be aware of GDP's flaws and see them as problematic. Regarding the awareness of GDP's flaws, findings are in line with Thiry *et al*. (2013; see 2.11.1) and show that this varied considerably between groups with these ranking in the same order in both countries except for statisticians in Italy since no statistician was interviewed in Scotland. As one could possibly expect, statisticians were the most acquainted group of all. Not only did they provide very elaborated and informed replies, but none of them was unable to answer. Members of interest groups in both countries followed. Their answers would not be as long and elaborated but nevertheless fairly comprehensive. However, several interviewees, especially in Scotland, were not particularly confident and excused themselves for not being able to give sensible answers. Additionally, some seemed to have radicalised their views about GDP in that they have been criticising GDP so much that they now struggle to find any strengths in it. Policymakers came right after. Some, especially those who had previously taken part in the well-being debate, were particularly knowledgeable. However, most interviewees seemed to have limited knowledge of GDP's flaws, and some struggled to find any in it. In Scotland, this would sometimes be the case even

for those interested in the well-being agenda. Journalists were the least knowledgeable of all groups. While one or two demonstrated good knowledge of GDP's flaws, the vast majority showed poor to no awareness, even though many of them were contacted exactly because they were among those who had reported GDP the most. Sometimes, they would themselves admit to not know much about GDP in the first place.

Nevertheless, except for most (though not all) members of interest groups in Scotland who showed a great level of coherence overall, almost everybody considered zero-growth scenarios or decreases in output highly problematic for well-being irrespectively of whether and how much they were aware of GDP's limitations, in line with what emerged in Thiry *et al*. (2013, see 2.11.1). In other words, GDP's weaknesses (those that interviewees themselves identified, if they did) were not regarded as problematic in cases in which the economy does not grow or shrinks. Rather, the lack of growth was, as if the limitations of GDP only applied to the indicator but not to what it is measured by it. As a former minister in Italy put it (see 8.3), one may therefore concede that economic growth is not always beneficial, but if this is lacking then "there's much less to discuss". The fierce criticism of degrowth in Italy further confirmed that, in line again with the findings of Thiry *et al.* (2013). This resonates with Bache and Reardon (2013, p. 909) who concluded that in the UK 'the lack of growth [... was] seen as the problem, not the pursuit of it'.

On a broader level, the distinction informants made between GDP as an indicator and economic growth as an objective suggests that that of well-being is currently seen more as a statistical agenda than as a call for the current underlying economic model to be changed. This helps explain the discrepancy between the number of well-being metrics launched and their level of use and impact and resonates with Jackson's (2012, n/a) claim that conversations about the measurement of well-being have often advanced 'without questioning the underlying model'. Indeed, the main narrative employed so far has often been one of moving

"beyond GDP" rather than one of moving "beyond economic growth"[123]. The two are however sides of the same coin, and as Laurent (2018, p. 25) argued 'it is our passion for (GDP) growth that should be questioned, not just its measurement'.

Interviewees' almost unanimous consensus regarding the fact that output reductions would be detrimental to well-being and "catastrophic" also confirms by extension findings of previous studies which revealed a prevailing view of economic growth as a prerequisite for well-being (Borgnäs, 2016; Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2017a, 2018a, 2018b; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al.*, 2013; see also 2.11.1). Even and especially left and centre-left parliamentarians shared this view, which supports Hamilton's (2004, p. 120) claim regarding the fact that the inevitability of economic growth is 'accepted uncritically by even the most progressive people'. To be sure, some were not particularly knowledgeable about GDP's flaws as noted above, so the fact that they saw economic growth as necessary should not surprise. However, once again with only minor exceptions even those who were aware shared this view.

Interestingly, the necessity to grow was sometimes justified on the grounds that there is an expectation within society that GDP should always increase, expectation which the First Minister herself highlighted (see 7.3). This is in line with the findings of Drews and Bergh (2016), who showed that people do expect the economy to grow every year, and by a considerable amount. Perhaps even most interestingly, the quest for growth was also justified on the grounds that only with growth can the state redistribute, tackle inequalities, provide services and ultimately promote well-being[124]. This is not the place for a disquisition of the limitations of such reasoning, which for the most part are linked to the limitations of GDP already

[123] A Google Search for *site:oecd.org "beyond GDP"* performed on January 2022 to return all mentions of the query *beyond GDP* on the OECD's website returned 299 results, whereas *site:oecd.org "beyond economic growth"* returned 61. The same Google search returned 294 and 25 mentions, respectively, on the European Commission's website, and 215 and 87 on all UN domains ending in un.org. Similarly, *"beyond GDP"* returned 63 articles on Factiva whereas *"beyond economic growth"* 10 in the case of Scotland and *"oltre il PIL"* 155 and *"oltre la crescita economica"* 2 in Italy.

[124] In contradiction to some of the limitations of GDP that informants themselves had identified. In a way, this may well be a symptom of what Jackson (2009, p. 167) called 'institutional schizophrenia' to describe governments' concurrent interest in pursuing economic growth and in protecting from the harms deriving from that.

previously discussed (see 2.5). Suffice it to say that it has been described as 'very fragile', an 'archaic way of conceiving these [social] policies in the age of environmental challenges' and a 'counterproductive development strategy' (Laurent, 2021, pp. 215-216). Büchs and Koch (2017, p. 32, 113, 112, respectively) similarly recognised that 'if welfare goals are to be combined with ecological sustainability', then the state's role will 'need to change substantially' and 'economic growth as a policy goal would need to be deprioritised'. Interview findings suggest however that such change is far on the horizon: just like in the 1960s (see 2.4), only growth was seen as capable of solving the ills of society, confirming Schmelzer's (2016, p. 345) claim that 'the reliance on growth as a panacea has remained stable'.

The above findings consequently suggest that it might be harder to adopt a well-being agenda when the economy is not growing, and especially when it is shrinking, because in such cases policymakers will be primarily concerned about making sure that the economy grows again, and journalists about following the status of the economy and policymakers' responses in that regard. Indeed, the economic crisis of 2007/08 was not identified as a key source of interest in the well-being agenda and in both countries some thought that the little interest that it did generate was not genuine and meant to only shift the attention away from the lack of growth; well-being metrics were almost absent in parliamentary debates that followed the crisis; and the crisis contributed to the termination of the QUARS and potentially of the PIQ, too. Moreover, the economic crisis that followed the COVID-19 pandemic did not generate any increase in the parliamentary referencing and media reporting of well-being metrics which in fact decreased in both countries, with coverage of GDP and related queries increasing instead[125] (as far as their use in parliamentary debates

[125] In the case of economic growth, coverage decreased in 2020 but this reflected the lack of economic growth which was balanced by an increase in interest in recession. Indeed, as soon as the economy started growing again coverage of economic growth increased and that of recession decreased.

is concerned, this seems to have been affected positively in Italy but less so in Scotland, in which however it remained up to three times as high).

Economic crises therefore do generate punctuated equilibria but in favour of the status quo, depressing rather than fostering the use and impact of well-being metrics. This was even further demonstrated by the fact that conversations about how to promote the NPF have "been put on hold" because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed. Had the crisis been an occasion to 'build back better' (OECD, 2020, p. 2) and provided 'a time of awakening' (Gills, 2020, p. 578), such conversations would have not been put on hold – *they would have moved forward and been strengthened.* After all, *if not now, then when?* Yet, the opposite happened. In fact, in April 2020 the Scottish Government started publishing for the first time GDP monthly estimates. The pandemic thus put conversations "on hold" as far as the NPF is concerned, with no NPF Report yet on the horizon two years after its outbreak, but did not prevent monthly GDP estimates from being launched and related news items from being published every month since. Between the 1970s and 1980s, interest in social indicators was negatively affected by a then precarious economic situation which 'restored prominence to policies aiming at stimulating activity, and to GDP as the main monitoring tool' (Fleurbaey and Blanchet, 2013, p. 5; see also Andrews, 1989). Most recently, Giovannini (2020, n/a) claimed that 'before the 2008-09 crisis, at the OECD we tried to persuade lots of governments to adopt a "beyond GDP" thinking […]. The crisis killed that discussion'. As they say, history repeats itself.

15.2. Solution Awareness, Viability and Emergence

As I have also argued in Chapter 3, for change to take place well-being metrics must be known and regarded as viable. As far as the first point is concerned, the general level of awareness of well-being metrics and the well-being agenda more broadly that

emerged throughout the Solution chapters from both survey and interview findings is in line with findings of the Problem and Use and Impact chapters and of previous studies which revealed or lamented limited or lack of awareness of well-being metrics (Chancel, Thiry and Demailly, 2014; Hezri, 2005; Seaford, 2013; Sébastien and Bauler, 2013; Sébastien, Bauler and Lehtonen, 2014; Thiry *et al*., 2013; see also Hayden and Wilson, 2018b).

National statisticians in Italy emerged as the most acquainted with specific metrics and the agenda overall. Their answers would always be detailed, informed and lengthy[126], giving me enough – often too much – material to analyse. Indeed, no statistician would ever be unable to answer. Members of interest groups in both countries followed. However, in this case several interviewees demonstrated little to no knowledge at all, especially in Scotland and about subjective indicators. Answers would thus vary from being detailed and informed to interviewees giving very short, vague responses or being unable to answer at all. Policymakers came right after. In Italy, where the sample was larger and included several informants who had prior experience in well-being research, they would actually demonstrate a level of acquaintance comparable to that of statisticians, if not even higher. Generally, however, policymakers' level of awareness was lower than that of previous groups. Their answers would be again mixed, but less comprehensive and often less detailed, too. Additionally, official data revealed that in Scotland a large part of the civil service was unaware of the NPF up to 2018 (and remains so to date). In Italy, several interviewees would admit to not know what the BES was and show to be unaware of key metrics such as the HDI, thinking that they were concepts rather than metrics, and indeed policymakers themselves claimed knowledge of well-being metrics and the broader well-being agenda to be low among policy circles (8.5, 14.4.1). Finally, journalists. Some would show a better understanding than others, providing basic and

[126] Which is not in and of itself good, but in this case lengthy answers were due to statisticians thoroughly discussing all aspects of the issues under discussion, not to them talking about irrelevant things.

short yet fairly comprehensive answers. Overall, however, they emerged again as the least knowledgeable group. Many struggled to answer, others confused subjective indicators with happy degrowth and still others admitted or demonstrated to not be aware of some of the key metrics or concepts of the well-being debate. Additionally, some refused to be interviewed exactly because this was not something they had come across often, and most interviewees could not mention cases of use and impact of the NPF or the BES because they were not aware of them in the first place.

One factor that emerged clearly as a barrier, as previously found by Sébastien and Bauler (2013) and hypothesised by Thiry *et al.* (2013), is the proliferation of metrics (see also Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2018a). On the one hand, this is positive as it shows that a healthy discussion is taking place as for how best to measure well-being because each of their developers thinks there is something lacking in the metrics already existing. On the other hand, there are so many metrics now available that not even those who follow the well-being debate know about all of them, and as such there is a risk that they get overlooked and underused or not used at all. It was quite common indeed to hear informants making comments while completing the survey about the 'inflation' of metrics and the fact that there are too many for them to have any impact or, as findings showed, for people to have even just heard of them. This helps explain why parliamentarians have almost only mentioned their country's official frameworks in their speeches and why media coverage was focused mainly on three-four metrics.

As far as the issue of viability is concerned, the almost unanimous agreement among all groups in both countries that GDP should not be replaced but integrated with other metrics is in line with findings of previous studies (Chancel, Thiry and Demailly, 2014; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al.*, 2013; see also CONCORD, 2017) and confirms findings of the Problem and Use and Impact chapters about the importance and salience of economic growth. Indeed, what interviewees most likely meant when they argued that GDP should not be replaced is that *economic growth* should not be

ditched as a policy objective since, as we have seen, GDP (often used as synonym for economic growth) is "crucial for the creation of well-being". This once again suggests that the well-being agenda is more likely to be adopted, internalised and ultimately impactful in a growth context as opposed to one in which growth is lacking.

In terms of what metrics GDP should be integrated with, findings revealed a mismatch between "supply" and "demand". In Scotland, this was not very pronounced as far as the NPF is concerned, given its current form was overall in line with policymakers' preference for dashboards. It was less so with journalists', who seemed to appreciate the idea of having composite indices instead, although the number of journalists interviewed was limited and dashboards were also described as helpful. Yet almost all the remaining metrics for Scotland are composite indices, meaning that while they may help capture journalists' imagination, they may not equally be of interest to policymakers (who indeed have hardly mentioned them in parliamentary debates though of course other reasons may have also determined that). In Italy, the opposite was the case. Both policymakers and journalists were more on the composite-side of the spectrum, thus their preferences were not fully in line with the current hybrid form of the BES. As for all the remaining metrics in the sample, instead, almost all of them are composite indices, meaning offer and demand are better aligned.

However, there is the question of how much the responses of policymakers and journalists were determined by their overall lower level of familiarity with the agenda and with well-being metrics in general. In other words, favouring one option over the other might simply be a consequence of both groups not having considered the issue before enough or at all, or not knowing the advantages or disadvantages of each option (as we have seen in both countries, the word index was often used incorrectly), or not knowing the metrics in question. This is crucial to keep in mind, since one might conclude that, for instance, composite indices are needed to stimulate interest among journalists whereas in fact what is preventing them from reporting certain metrics is

not the lack of such indices but of awareness of those metrics in the first place. Which may explain why, even though policymakers and journalists in Italy claimed to prefer composite indices, sources within ISTAT said that there was neither demand nor pressure from either group to create an overall BES index.

Regarding composite indices, we saw that interviewees justified their creation mainly, if not only, on the basis that these would increase media coverage (similarly to Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012). Their creation was however matter of heated discussions, particularly among statisticians in Italy, which highlights an important difference between the Italian and the Scottish case: the ownership of their official frameworks and the consequent difference in the efforts made to promote them. In Italy, ISTAT oversees the BES. In Scotland, policymakers are both creators *and* users of the NPF. Therefore, national statisticians in Italy and policymakers in Scotland are the two groups in charge of deciding whether their country's framework should be presented as a dashboard, a composite index or as a hybrid, and in which such debate is expected to take place. This was definitely the case in Italy, which explains the strong polarisation of opinions among statisticians, why their responses on the issue were much more detailed and long compared to those of any other group and the frequency which the issue of creating composite indices would come up with[127]. It was not the case in Scotland, instead, where policymakers' answers were in comparison shorter and not particularly elaborated and where indeed discussion was not as heated and positions as radicalised. On the one hand, this was to be expected given statisticians' expertise on the matter. On the other hand, this suggests that little debate may have taken place in Scotland about the way the NPF should be presented[128]. In fact, it often looked to me as if that was a matter that interviewees

[127] Recently, the possibility of constructing a composite index of the BES was even debated during the celebration of the framework's 10th anniversary (see ISTAT, 2021b).

[128] No one among the statisticians working on the NPF accepted to be interviewed thus any conclusions regarding how central this debate may have been remain partial. Yet, policymakers in Italy were generally more informed about the strengths and weaknesses of composite indices than those in Scotland. This is probably because statisticians in Italy talk about the issue of creating composite indices constantly, which may suggest that this is not the case among statisticians in Scotland.

had rarely thought of before. Considering that composite indices were favoured mainly (if not only) for their communicative strengths and ability to generate media interest, lack of elaborated responses and of strong interest in their creation was probably the consequence of the little attention that the promotion of the NPF has received over the years. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 11 and found confirmation in Chapter 13, public engagement and the promotion of the NPF to the media have been largely ignored by the Scottish Government.

The almost unanimous scepticism of subjective indicators that emerged in both countries largely corroborates findings of previous studies (Hák *et al*., 2012; Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al*., 2013; see also Lehtonen, 2013; Sébastien and Bauler, 2013). Such level of scepticism was confirmed by the results of the Use and Impact chapters, in that parliamentarians of both countries were found to have never mentioned metrics such as the WHR or the GNH in their speeches (except for the WHR, which was mentioned once in Italy). To be sure, these metrics did gain some media traction. However, in Italy the most circulated newspapers as well as all-news and more specialised radio and TV sources almost ignored the WHR and the GNH and, although no sentiment analysis was performed, in some cases metrics such as the GNH were object of ridicule which is probably why some policymakers were afraid of being derided if they were to talk about subjective well-being in public and why the term "happiness philosophers" was used derogatorily. Overall, this suggests that the viability and fitness for use of well-being metrics is dependent on the degree of emphasis that subjective indicators are given. Consequently, at least until scepticism prevails, prioritising or emphasising these indicators risks jeopardising attempts to bring about change. We have seen evidence of this in the UK already (see Bache and Reardon, 2013; Hayden and Wilson, 2017b; CONCORD, 2017), with Cameron attacked repeatedly for his "happiness index" (a term that would be used derogatorily). Subjective well-being more broadly,

thus, as Stiglitz told me quoting the National Academy of Science Review, is not ready for 'prime time' yet. As he put it,

> people are still too unsure about it [...]. When GDP was introduced, people didn't really feel confident about it, they used for a while and then they'd understand it. So, I think it's the same way – but there's more arbitrariness 'cause it's a scale and it's people, you know. Different people can make different scales in different ways. So, I think it's just… it will take a while to get used to and to figure out when it's useful and when it's not.

Once again, there is the question of whether such scepticism is due to low levels of familiarity with well-being metrics and/or with the broader agenda in the first place. Yet, as things stand people have "figured out" that subjective indicators are not that "useful", so the less emphasis they are given, the better.

The criticism raised by journalists in both countries of the lack of consensus of well-being metrics is worth discussing. To be sure, developing a one-size-fits-all metric internationally could solve this problem and decrease the chances of individual states trying to manipulate data, which is what some journalists were also afraid of. However, such metric would be more likely to be criticised given that it would be based on a definition of well-being that will not be shared within the country it is meant to be used in. The BES framework, for instance, includes an indicator of coastal bathing waters. Scotland, where bathing waters are not as many and as important for the country's economy, does not, nor do countries like Switzerland which border no seas at all. Let us imagine for a moment that that indicator makes it into an international metric of well-being. How would a Scottish or Swiss journalist find such metric relevant, fair and even usable? Most importantly, such a metric would hardly be comparable, which is exactly what journalists in both countries lamented when criticising subjective indicators and what they highlighted when praising GDP. To be

sure, one could avoid including said indicator, but Italian journalists would then find that unfair and the metric less relevant. All in all, rather than being a demonstration of thoughtful criticism, this sense of suspicion among journalists most likely reveals once again superficial knowledge and limited understanding of the well-being agenda.

Finally, regarding the sources of recent interest in the well-being agenda (which, by extension, will have also contributed to making the limitations of GDP gain prominence), answers were rather heterogeneous between and within groups. Most of the time, this would be due to interviewees citing those factors that fit most with their expertise or interests (or those of the organisations they belonged to), similarly to Swanepoel and Wilson (2011). So, for instance, national statisticians in Italy would mention the publication of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report, the launch of the SDGs and the statistical complications brought by the introduction of the Euro, all of which have in common the focus on statistics; members of environmental organisations such as LINK in Scotland or WWF in Italy would highlight the climate emergency; policymakers would mention the climate emergency and growing inequalities (i.e. salient issues in public debate); and economics journalists would cite the economic crisis of 2007/08.

Such heterogeneity contrasts with the scale of some of the factors that were previously said to have stimulated interest in the well-being agenda, such as the release of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (Bache and Reardon, 2013; Thiry *et al.*, 2013) and the 2007/08 economic crisis (Bache and Reardon, 2013; Hák *et al*., 2012; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al*., 2013; Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012; see also Jackson, 2009). Indeed, more than ten years after their respective publication and occurrence, as we saw above both were described as important only by those who are naturally more receptive to them: statisticians in the case of the former, economics journalists in the case of the latter. The Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report is a case in point. Only one person in Scotland mentioned it, which confirms that this has not had much impact outwith statistical circles – indeed the fact that it was not mentioned was probably due to there being no statisticians among informants in Scotland. To be sure,

interviewees might have given different responses had they been interviewed on a different day or had they had more time to answer. However, this applies to all participants, so the fact that it was almost only statisticians who mentioned the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report seems hardly a coincidence. This is not to say that these events have not been impactful at all, as we know they have[129]. However, their impact needs to be rescaled.

Yet, there were two factors that would tend to be mentioned more frequently than others in both countries. The first one was the climate emergency. This was highlighted by all groups, although not by everyone within them and often very briefly. On the one hand, climate change affects everyone, hence the fact that people from different groups mentioned it was to be expected. On the other hand, the fact that it would not always be mentioned within groups suggests climate change may have played a not-so-crucial role after all. This, in addition to the fact that the economic crisis of 2007/08 also did not emerge as particularly determining, deflates the role often attributed to exogenous events in the policy change literature, especially by scholars of punctuated equilibrium theory (e.g. Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; see 3.1). Once again, this does not mean that neither played a role. However, while they may have contributed to making well-being gain agenda prominence, they seem to have not been *the* catalysts of agenda change, let alone policy change.

The second one was not a factor as such but rather an actor, Giovannini. In Italy, interviewees credited him among other things for creating the BES or for making them come to know about it. In Scotland, too, several informants cited his name during interviews. Now, it could be argued that they did so (just like they mentioned other key Italian people) because they knew I was Italian and doing research on Italy as well, but informants in Italy did not mention the names of Scottish stakeholders despite

[129] Carnegie UK Trust's 2011 Round Table, for instance, was organised following one of the recommendations of the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report (Smith and Herren, 2011; Wallace, 2019).

them knowing I was doing research on Scotland[130]. Giovannini's influence was also acknowledged by all the people I spoke to at the OECD, who defined him as the 'creator' or the 'promoter of all this' and unanimously described him as *the* player. The large role that Giovannini seems thus to have played integrates previous findings which were limited to the cases of the UK Government and EU institutions (Bache, 2013; Bache and Reardon, 2013, 2016)[131] and the OECD (Seaford, 2013; see also Layard, 2020), showing that his influence went well beyond that. This demonstrates that Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) was right in attributing agenda change not only to specific factors but also to particularly active, charismatic and well-networked actors, policy entrepreneurs. It also suggests, however, that policy entrepreneurship has played a much lesser role in Scotland than it has in Italy. Indeed, while several informants in Scotland did mention the name of Trebeck as a key person, her name during interviews was in no way as prevalent as Giovannini's, not to mention that no one mentioned her at the OECD level[132].

Despite only one person mentioning it, it is also worth highlighting the role played by election defeats, a factor that Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) did not fully consider. Kingdon (2003) did mention elections among the factors that could make problems or solutions come into prominence. However, since Kingdon (*ivi*) interpreted agenda as a synonym for governmental agenda, he was concerned with the extent to which the arrival of *winning* parties or coalitions could make items gain prominence as opposed to what might simultaneously happen within those that instead have been defeated and that *used to* be in office. An election defeat can indeed spark a debate about the reasons that led to it and help identify problems that were initially overlooked, which is what the former Italian Deputy Minister of the

[130] Except for Fioramonti, who mentioned Trebeck.

[131] The authors looked at the UK Government, therefore did not study the extent to which Giovannini's influence may have also impacted on Scotland. Likewise, they looked at EU institutions but not at individual EU countries (except for the UK which then used to be a member of the EU).

[132] This was to be expected given that Giovannini previously worked at the OECD. Yet, the OECD is well aware of the Scottish case, so if Trebeck was regarded as a key player her name would have come up more frequently.

Economy suggested occurred in Italy. This confirms what I have argued in Chapter 3 about Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) being wrong in identifying a distinct Political Stream, since the above example clearly shows that politics is among the factors that can generate awareness of problems (and potentially facilitate their recognition).

These are the factors that informants cited during interviews as determining. However, it is also worth reflecting on those that they did *not* mention. In both countries, the work conducted on well-being by the OECD did not emerge as particularly relevant, so much so that no one in Scotland mentioned it. This last finding contrasts with Heins and Pautz (2021). This is probably because the authors aimed to map all organisations involved in the promotion of the well-being agenda in Scotland, whereas in this case interviewees were implicitly asked to reflect only on the most important factors according to their own experience. The absence of the OECD is nevertheless surprising given that many of the informants in both countries attended (and were invited to participate in) several events on well-being organised by the OECD and vice versa, which may be due to the methodology employed in that interviews might have generated different answers had they been conducted at a different time. In both countries no one mentioned the work done by the EU either (in line, this time, with the above study and with findings of the Context chapters in which the EU would sometime emerge as uninterested, as well as with claims made by sources within the EU that I spoke to whose results I could not present[133]), whereas the UN – and, particularly, the 2030 Agenda – would only occasionally be mentioned, mainly by statisticians.

All in all, international organisations do not seem to have played a large role in making well-being gain prominence in both countries recently. This does not mean

[133] One interviewee, for instance, claimed that 'there is no interest' in well-being within the EU, pointing out the almost complete lack of attendance of EU officials among the panellists and attendees of the 6th OECD World Forum as well as the limited efforts put into updating the Beyond GDP initiative's website ('when things were going well already, they were not updating it').

that they have not contributed to the well-being debate. In fact, we know they have (see 2.8, 2.9, 2.10). However, they have also significantly contributed to making the growth paradigm develop and perpetuate, especially the OECD (Schmelzer, 2016). To date, they still play that role displaying thus conflicting priorities. The EU, characterised by a 'contradiction that borders on policy schizophrenia' (Laurent, forthcoming, p. 98), and the OECD, which someone in BRAINPOoL described 'as behaving as "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde"' (Hák *et al.*, 2012, p. 91)[134].

15.3. The Context

As the Context chapters have revealed, there is a plethora of factors that have either facilitated or inhibited the use and impact of well-being metrics in both countries. As for catalysts, these include the embedding of well-being indicators into national legislation; the commitment of key figures such as Boccia and Padoan; and the use of social media such as Twitter to circumnavigate media offices in the public sector. As for barriers, these include lack of media interest; the alleged incapacity of journalists to report complex topics; the short-termism of the news cycle; the compartmentalisation of newsrooms; lack of time to present one's opinions on complex topics when interviewed by journalists; the inability to produce stories for the media regularly; distrust of journalists; lack of political support; the political, non-independent nature of the NPF; silo thinking; lack of or provision of media-unfriendly press material; lack of funding or lack of resources more generally; changes in administration; personal affairs and organisational dynamics; the instability brought by political elections; the perceived left-wing character of the well-being agenda;

[134] As an example of this, I was told during interviews with members of the OECD that a paper titled *Alternative Measures of Well-being* was published in two versions, one by the Economics Directorate (Boarini, Johansson and Mira d'Ercole, 2006a) and one by the Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs (Boarini, Johansson and Mira d'Ercole, 2006b). I uploaded them on a plagiarism tool and I found that both were indeed almost identical, but the former included an additional conclusion which stated that 'measures of economic growth remain critical for any assessment of well-being but they need to be complemented with measures of other dimensions of well-being. How best to integrate these different measures is an open question' (Boarini, Johansson and Mira d'Ercole, 2006a, p. 7).

vested interests; the perceived lack of reliability of self-evaluations; the economic crisis of 2007/08; and lack of interest from civil society and international organisations.

From the above list, one can see clearly that more factors were claimed by interviewees to have impacted negatively than to have contributed positively, similarly to Thiry *et al*. (2013; see also 2.11.1). We must remember that interviewees were generally not asked to comment on specific factors, except for the role of the media which however they were asked in a non-leading way (not to mention that several people would talk about the media even before I had asked them). Therefore, the above factors were mostly cited spontaneously, which points to there currently being a genuine difficulty in adopting the well-being agenda in both countries and which is in line with findings of the Problem and Solution chapters and explains why substantial examples of use and impact of the NPF and the BES were in short supply.

From a comparative perspective, we saw that some factors such as silo thinking or the importance of the media and their perceived low level of interest emerged in both Scotland and Italy, which confirms the similarity between the two case studies. Other factors, instead, were country-specific. This is due to Scotland's and Italy's different political contexts and different degree of activity (in Italy well-being indicators were embedded into national legislation and an attempt was made to create a Ministry of Quality of Life, in Scotland this was never the case) and to the different composition of interview samples (in Scotland no statisticians and only a few journalists were interviewed, in Italy only a few members of interest groups were so).

What there was widespread consensus on in both countries was that the media have a got a key role to play, in line with what was highlighted by previous studies (Bell and Morse, 2013; Hák *et al*., 2012; IN-STREAM, 2011; see also 2.11.1 and 2.11.2). However, with the exact same level of unanimity, the media's current level of interest was described as barely existent, also in line with findings of or claims made in previous studies (Chancel, Thiry and Demailly, 2014; Thiry *et al.*, 2013; Wallace and

Schmuecker, 2012; see also 2.11.2). This seems in conformity with – and possibly consequence of – the fact that journalists emerged as the least acquainted group among all the ones studied[135]. Yet, despite such consensus only a few interviewees in both countries said that they tried to reverse that by proactively preparing or sending promotional material to the media. In fact, some never did. In some cases, informants were discouraged exactly by journalists' lack of interest and awareness, which in the case of policymakers limited their willingness to talk about subjective indicators (Scotland) and well-being more generally (Italy). In others, this was simply due there being specific people or departments in charge of producing and sending such material. In others still, lack of promotion occurred *despite* that.

The most striking example of that is the NPF. This is not press-released (there is, after all, no consolidated annual reporting of the NPF to date), and even when opportunities have arisen for its promotion to the media and the public more generally these have been ignored. The promotion of the NPF does not seem thus to have been a priority on the government's agenda, as interviews confirmed and as argued above. This raises many doubts about the use and impact of the framework, and ultimately its true level of world-leadership. On the one hand, the aim of the NPF is not to be reported by the media and its use and success is not to be gauged by its media presence. On the other hand, one wonders how the NPF can be defined as a framework "for all of Scotland" meant to increase accountability (see 4.3.1) when the media are ignored and when journalists, who are consequently not particularly knowledgeable about it and most of whom consider their role to hold governments to account, see the NPF as a distraction in times of elections. And while there seem to be many genuine barriers to media engagement, news items and detailed

[135] Journalists do not need to know something in detail to report it, as the case of GDP shows. In fact, as several interviewees have argued, journalists often just "copy and paste" from press releases. However, some degree of awareness of GDP's flaws and of the well-being agenda are necessary if journalists are to intentionally pick well-being-related press releases from all the ones that they receive, and even more so if they are to look for that information up on their own initiative like it seems to be the case in Scotland.

publications *are* produced by the Scottish Government on GDP and are so monthly, so the media are not ignored as far as GDP is concerned. The lack of promotional activity around the NPF thus also questions whether the Scottish Government is proud of the framework as it repeatedly claims, given that it is the *government itself* – not journalists – that puts little effort into promoting it. The First Minister herself, in response to a question I had asked her during the first WEGo Policy Lab, noted that 'we have this morning GDP, the latest GDP figures published in Scotland. They will get acres of media coverage, but I guarantee you that what […] will be produced from this conference will not'. This, however, is not due to journalists' uninterest but to lack of interest from the government's side in the first place. Finally, such lack of promotion also gives the impression that the NPF is not being used or impactful (which could be the reason why the OECD report was allegedly concealed) or, perhaps worse than that, that is not showing any progress[136]. After all, as we saw in Chapters 11 and 14, it is the release of data showing adverse trends that is feared, not that which puts one in a good light[137].

In Italy, instead, BES Reports are published annually, they are press-released and journalists are generally contacted in advance proactively. This is a very important difference between the two countries: journalists may well be uninterested, but at least there is interest from ISTAT's side in making sure the BES gets media coverage in line with its aspiration to become Italy's new "Constitution". To be sure, this is not enough and as we have seen ISTAT's BES press releases were unanimously described as media un-friendly. However, ISTAT's GDP press releases (see e.g. ISTAT, 2021c), despite being more stylish, are in some respects even worse as they are longer and more technical. The problem seems thus the way ISTAT drafts its press material in

[136] Which has been suggested by Heins and Pautz (2021) among others.

[137] To be sure, GDP data are released regardless of whether they are positive or negative, but only because it is a much more consolidated metric that is, even if just superficially, widely known and for which demand is consequently greater. The release of newer metrics that are less known can more easily be affected if these include data showing adverse trends since their suspension will generate as little interest as their release.

general. Having an independent and impartial body in charge of overseeing and disseminating well-being statistics does not of course mean that their publication has always been smooth: problems do exist and as we have seen internal conflicts within ISTAT were said to have impacted negatively on the BES and UrBES. Yet, in this case, too, lack of political support was identified as the real culprit, and so it was the fact that people are still much more interested in GDP statistics rather than well-being, a claim that journalists also made to justify their lack of reporting.

In line with the above, what emerged as a deterring factor in both countries was scepticism of official frameworks or evaluations due to their alleged partisanship. While the importance of having data coming from official sources was already identified by BRAINPOoL (Hák *et al.*, 2012) and Wallace and Schmuecker (2012), distrust of official yet political sources is in this context a new finding. In Scotland, this was identified as a problem by all three categories of interviewees. The NPF, after all, remains overseen by the SNP-led government and indicators in every refresh – though with some attempts to increase their legitimacy lately – have always been chosen behind closed doors and, according to some, opportunistically. In Italy, instead, despite the higher number of interviewees no one identified as a problem the fact that the BES is overseen by ISTAT[138], which strengthens the importance of having independent and impartial bodies in charge of well-being frameworks. A further confirmation of which comes from the fact that MEF BES Reports were contrarily criticised by several interviewees exactly because of their alleged partiality and greater likelihood of being manipulated.

Another impeding factor was the economic crisis of 2007/08. Participants in previous studies (Hák *et al*., 2012; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al.*, 2013; see 2.11.1), as well as participants in this study, were split between those who thought the crisis stimulated interest in well-being and those who thought it inhibited it. Findings of the

[138] Except for a few ISTAT statisticians themselves (see 10.3). This, however, does not affect the use that policymakers and journalists may make of the framework.

Context chapters support the latter view, as the crisis seems to have contributed directly to the termination of the QUARS and potentially to that of the PIQ, too. Indeed, the fact that in the aftermath of the crisis local authorities cut their funding to projects such as the QUARS demonstrates that measuring well-being to assess how public policies (or even the crisis itself) were at the time impacting on well-being was not a priority. This is in line with the findings of the Problem and Use and Impact chapters and further supports the idea that it will be harder to promote the well-being agenda in the absence of growth.

Silo thinking also emerged as a deterrent on many occasions, in line with the findings of BRAINPOoL (Seaford, 2013). In Scotland, in relation to the May 2019 GDP press release, the National Outcomes consultation and the Performance Scorecards. In Italy, in relation to the compartmentalisation of newsrooms and claims regarding journalists' incapacity to look at well-being holistically. This suggests, quite paradoxically, that one of the reasons for the relative difficulty in both countries adopting a well-being agenda (which intrinsically promotes the espousal of a holistic, multidisciplinary approach) is *exactly* the persistence of silo thinking.

We previously discussed the role that policy entrepreneurs like Giovannini have played. The Context chapters revealed the existence of an additional category of actors that Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) did not consider. They are not as pivotal as policy entrepreneurs and yet have been much more involved and influential than everyone else. They are what we may call policy facilitators, the main difference with policy entrepreneurs being that the latter, who may not necessarily be policymakers, actively push their agenda or pet proposals and do so irrespectively of the government in office, whereas facilitators play more of an intermediary role when they are in office, often for the adoption of specific proposals. Examples include people like Boccia and Padoan, who were said by many interviewees in Italy to have played a crucial role as far as the embedding of well-being into national legislation in 2016 is concerned, but not regarding prior or later developments (contrarily to

Giovannini). Interestingly, no such type of actor emerged in Scotland where no policy entrepreneur emerged either. This may be due to turnover, i.e. there may have been people who played a key role in the past and who were not credited because they moved on and were forgotten, or because informants forgot due to them having changed job (though if they did play a key role then they should have not been forgotten), or simply because they had just taken up their role and were not aware. The fact that the NPF is managed internally within government and the limited number of people that I was able to talk to from it will also have influenced that.

The Context chapters revealed that there is also another group of actors that Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) did not consider. They are like policy entrepreneurs, only in reverse: they are what we may call policy saboteurs. Contrarily to policy entrepreneurs, policy saboteurs try to hinder change, dismantling what has already been achieved or preventing new decisions from being taken. While no one emerged as particularly opposed to the well-being agenda, there are at least two people who seem to have played a rather obstructing role. One is Alleva, ISTAT's former President, who was accused of attempting to dismantle the BES framework by placing it in the hands of uninterested people and making large cuts, as well as of terminating the UrBES project. Alleva, however, rejected such allegations claiming that he was not uninterested – policymakers were. The second one is Salvini, the leader of the Lega party. Many interviewees in Italy identified him and Lega as completely uninterested in the agenda, this being apparently the reason that determined the party's opposition to the creation of the Ministry of Quality of Life in 2018. That Lega is not particularly interested was confirmed by the fact that only two references to the BES (virtually the only metric mentioned in parliamentary debates in Italy) were made by MPs belonging to it.

So far, we analysed what informants mentioned during interviews. However, it is also worth discussing what they did *not* cite. Indeed, several factors that were not highlighted in this study were so in others, such as the decentralisation of political

systems (PASTILLE, 2002), the lack of targets (POINT, n. d.), and the existence of an ideological barrier linked with the perceived greater state intervention that the use of well-being metrics is thought to require (Hák *et al*., 2012). Interestingly, those factors that are more strictly speaking statistical in nature or related to the construction of metrics such as the timeliness and timing of indicators (Sorvillo *et al*., 2020; POINT, n.d.; Thiry *et al*., 2013), the lack of novelty of metrics (Thiry *et al.*, 2013), and the cost of collecting well-being data (Hák *et al*., 2012) or of certain evaluation practices (Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012) were also almost never raised during interviews. This can be explained by the fact that those who participated in the above studies were for the most part metric developers. In fact, those who ran the project themselves were often statisticians or scholars with expertise in the measurement of well-being. Additionally, interviewees knew I was interested in the use and impact of well-being metrics rather than in their construction, and this probably made them answer accordingly, not to mention that no statisticians were interviewed in Scotland.

15.4. Connecting the Dots: Use and Impact

How do the findings of the Use and Impact chapters connect with those of previous chapters, and do they confirm what the theory of change that I have developed would predict? As far as media coverage is concerned, findings revealed almost the exact same reporting patterns in both countries. Well-being metrics were mentioned occasionally, particularly during weekends in Scotland and on Mondays in Italy in line with claims that some journalists made about these being the best days to talk about well-being, and mainly upon their publication in line with Morse (2011b, 2013). So much so that when this was postponed, their reporting would be postponed, too. On the one hand, this is not surprising. After all, journalists report news and, once the new results of a metric have been reported, these are not news anymore. On the other hand, GDP figures are not released daily yet it – and related concepts such as

economic growth and recession – *do* get mentioned regularly and with a striking frequency. Well-being metrics are thus occasional news items that get covered mainly on a passive basis under the stimuli of their producers through the use of press releases and when there seems to be a news vacuum, whereas GDP is an ordinary component of both countries' public debate that is constantly mentioned proactively.

In fact, what was similar in both countries was also the density and volume of coverage of all well-being metrics combined compared to that of GDP. In the case of newspapers, for instance, the former was 1.6% in Scotland and 2.8% in Italy (though the Italian sample included two more sources). This is similar to what Morse (2013) found. And while his methodology was unrobust (see 2.11.2), findings do support the claim he made about that of well-being metrics being 'hardly […] an extensive coverage' (*ivi*, p. 247), especially when we consider that we are comparing the density of reporting of more than twenty metrics *with that of just one*. This also confirms claims made in the literature about the overexposure of GDP (Fioramonti, 2013) and the lack of coverage of well-being metrics (European Commission, 2013; see also 2.11.1), as well as interviewees' similar perceptions regarding both that emerged on multiple occasions in the Problem, Solution and Context chapters.

Yet, journalists do not only re-post press releases or discuss what they are interested in but also constantly report or broadcast what policymakers say. So, if coverage of well-being metrics has been overall low and lower during prime time, that is also due to *policymakers* not referring to them when speaking to journalists, in public, or when larger audiences are tuned (which is why some journalists recommended sending press releases when no formal political activity is underway, since on other days they will be following the political debate which well-being is not thought to be part of). Likewise, if coverage of GDP and economic growth is high that is due to *policymakers* referring to them constantly (which was indeed one of the strengths of GDP highlighted by journalists – see 7.1 and 10.3). And, since what policymakers talk or do not talk about in public reflects inevitably their priorities and

what is or what is not on the political agenda, this suggests that well-being is still not a priority contrarily instead to economic growth. This is in line with findings of the Problem, Solution and Context chapters, with previous studies that have showed a persistent widespread support of economic growth (see 2.11.1), and with findings of the Use and Impact chapters in which the economic crisis that followed the COVID-19 pandemic generated no increase in the media coverage and parliamentary referencing of well-being metrics in both countries, which in fact decreased, leading contrarily to an increase in coverage of GDP and related terms (as far as their use in parliamentary debates is concerned, this seems again to have been affected positively in Italy but less so in Scotland, in which however it remained up to three times as high). '[P]oliticians, the media, and economic commentators dutifully continue to trumpet the GDP figures as information of great portent', wrote Cobb, Halstead and Rowe (1995, p. 60) almost 30 years ago. Different century, same story.

What differed instead between the two countries is the classification of well-being metrics in terms of their levels of coverage (due to differences in the metrics included in each country's sample and to the fact that, in Italy, the developers of some metrics also owned some of the outlets searched), the periods in which these got covered (due to the above but also to the different political and news cycles of the countries in question), but above all their overall level of coverage. In the case of newspapers, 1,015 articles were published on Scottish and UK-wide sources (almost exclusively on the latter) whereas 2,685 in Italy (the Italian sample included two more sources, but that does not justify such a large gap, not to mention that the actual number of newspapers searched was lower and that the sample of metrics for Scotland was larger). In the case of radio and TV, 281 mentions were made on Scottish and UK-wide sources, whereas 2,256 in Italy, despite the Italian sample including seven fewer sources. As far as Scotland is concerned, Heins and Pautz (2021, p. 100) were therefore right in claiming that a 'surprising dearth of media interest characterises the Scottish wellbeing debate'.

Italy's much higher coverage, combined with the higher number of newspapers that showed interest in well-being metrics (14.1); the availability of regular publications (4.3.2) and press material about the BES, however imperfect (12.2, 15.3), and their converse lack in Scotland (4.3.1, 4.5, 11.2), not to mention the concealment of well-being-related publications there (11.6); the greater engagement of members of interest groups with the media (12.1); the higher self-reported awareness levels of well-being metrics (10.1); the presence of policy entrepreneurs (10.4); the higher number of interviewees conducted with Italian stakeholders due to the difficulty securing interviews in Scotland, especially among national statisticians (6.1.2, 15.2); the embedding of well-being indicators into national legislation and the creation of ad-hoc institutions (see 4.3.2); and indeed Italy's longer and more established history of well-being measurement (see 4.3.2; 4.3.5), all show, from a comparative perspective, that Italy is more advanced than Scotland as far as the promotion and institutionalisation of well-being is concerned. This also possibly explains why ISTAT organised a high-level event to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the BES project, which in the case of the NPF the Scottish Government ignored (another demonstration of how little attention the promotion of the NPF has received).

In fact, another difference between the two countries concerns the level of media coverage of their respective official frameworks, with the BES, which returned 1,358 results between articles and mentions, ranking as the second most referenced metric in Italy, and the NPF, which returned only 35, ranking as one of the least mentioned metrics in Scotland. And the reason for that lies once again in the different ownership of the two frameworks. Since the publication of the first BES Report in March 2013, there have been seven different governments in Italy supported by different majorities. Yet, this has not impacted on the promotion of the BES since this is independently overseen by ISTAT[139]. In Scotland, there have been five governments

[139] Although ISTAT's BES press releases do not seem media-friendly and although Alleva was accused of undermining the BES project, ISTAT nevertheless always produced material for the press about the BES.

since the launch of the NPF in November 2007, all led by the SNP (with the recent addiction of the Scottish Green Party). Yet despite the higher number of years and the lower number of governments, the continued lack of attention towards the promotion of the NPF from the SNP-led government, whom the framework effectively belongs to, has determined its continued absence from the media landscape.

Nonetheless, in both countries' parliaments the NPF and the BES were the most referenced metrics and, in fact, almost the only ones to be so. In theory, this shows that the media do not play that key role that previous research and interviewees suggested: almost all metrics that were covered by the media were not used by parliamentarians in their speeches. However, the level of media coverage of each metric was low in absolute terms, so parliamentarians may have simply not read or heard about them. Some of the metrics in the Factiva and TVEyes samples were also city rankings or local frameworks which are less relevant to national parliaments, and others like the WHR are based on subjective indicators which, as we have seen, almost all interviewees are sceptical of. It is not thus that the media are uninfluential: parliamentarians are not picking up in their speeches those metrics that are instead being covered by the media because these are not relevant to them or not seen as reliable, and they are not mentioning well-being metrics and talking instead much more about GDP and economic growth also because the media are continuously talking about these and limitedly about well-being metrics, as informants *lamented*.

To be sure, the NPF was mentioned by MSPs despite its absence from the media landscape. However, we must remember that a significant number of references to it were not made proactively but driven by key legislative moments, and that most references were made by SNP MSPs and one-sixth by one of its creators. In other words, they were for the most part to be expected irrespective of their media coverage. It is also true that the BES was contrarily absent from recent parliamentary debates despite its presence in the media landscape. However, despite being high compared to other metrics, media coverage of the BES was low in absolute terms,

meaning policymakers may again have simply not read or heard about it. The fact that coverage of the BES was heterogenous throughout the year may have actually been a problem in this regard: the Sole 24 ORE and ItaliaOggi QoLRs received up to 10 times the level of coverage upon their issuing – they only generated interest then but that gave them the possibility of gaining higher prominence on that day and of reaching a wider audience. At any rate, media coverage is not a panacea: it surely can increase awareness of solutions, but for these to be then used policymakers will need to know and agree on the existence of a problem in the first place. And, as we have seen, there are obstacles both in terms of problem awareness and problem recognition.

The analysis of parliamentary debates revealed another difference between the two countries. In Scotland, opposition parties were relatively more interested in the HKI and a motion on it was even put forward by a then member of the opposition whereas no such similar motion has ever been put forward on the NPF. While unawareness of the tool may be one of the motivations, the impartial, political ownership of the NPF has without doubt been a concurring reason. As noted indeed previously and as we have seen in Chapter 13, this made MSPs from opposition parties (as well as some members of interest groups and journalists) say that they were sceptical of it and claim that they were not willing to use it.

In the Italian Parliament, references to the BES were made mainly by members of the M5S and the PD, both of which have been behind the institutionalisation of well-being (see 4.3.2, 12.9). This suggests that the framework (and the broader well-being agenda for that matter) may be of greater interest to left and centre-left parties in line with what emerged, albeit limitedly, in Hayden and Wilson (2016, 2018a, 2018b; see also 2017b). Consequently, what would occasionally be highlighted as a potential barrier in Italy was not the ownership of the framework (in fact, ISTAT's independence would never be questioned) and its *belonging* to *one specific party*, but rather the perceived resonance with *left-wing politics* which in Scotland no one was concerned with instead. This also confirms again that Kingdon (1993, 1994, 2001,

2002, 2003) was wrong in conceiving politics as part of an independent stream since the above examples show clearly that this is among the factors that can significantly affect the acceptance of and perceived viability of solutions.

The analysis of parliamentary debates also revealed another difference. In Italy, the embedding of 12 BES indicators into national legislation has led to an increase in the number of references to the BES in parliament, which could result in policy change of some sort although there is also the risk that the publication and discussion of well-being data becomes just another box-ticking exercise. Additionally, we have seen that MEF BES Reports and Appendices resulting from such embedding have gained media traction, in some cases even more than ISTAT's BES Reports. On the one hand, an analogy can be drawn with Scotland since in both countries' parliaments there were surges of references to well-being metrics on the day specific decisions *about the frameworks themselves* had to be debated, followed by periods in which no mentions were made, just like media coverage would skyrocket upon the release of reports and flatten out afterwards. On the other hand, the two cases differ in several respects. The National Outcomes consultation – mandated by the CEA – has given MSPs the opportunity to discuss the NPF in 2018, but such consultation is set to recur only once every five years. Moreover, no similar embedding has taken place and no similar regular publications exist to date, meaning there are no focusing events for parliamentarians to debate them or for the media to report them, which explains in part why media coverage of the NPF has been almost inexistent.

The fact that well-being metrics get mentioned in parliamentary debates does not mean that they have been impactful. Indeed, in both countries the vast majority of informants could not cite any examples of cases in which the NPF or the BES impacted on Scottish and Italian policymaking, respectively, with interviewees making long silences when asked to give any like in Hezri (2005), often because they were again not aware of either in the first place. Those who could identify some were those who were or used to be part of government. This makes sense as they will be more

aware than others of what decisions are being taken and why. However, their examples may be biased, and the fact that they were *the only ones* to cite any supports this. In fact, while it is true that policymakers from opposition parties may be equally biased in their judgments, the opinions of statisticians, members of interest groups and journalists may be used to cross-check both groups' claims and provide an outside perspective like in Borgnäs (2016), and as we have seen all groups have been very critical[140]. Additionally, we must remember that in Scotland several MSPs from across the political spectrum (including SNP members) have explicitly highlighted in the past in parliament the lack of use of the NPF or admitted not having used it (see 13.4), meaning some of the references to the NPF made over the years were critical in nature. Likewise, we shall remember that the former Head of the Performance Unit herself also previously talked about the non-use or under-use of the NPF (see 4.3.1), and so have some members of government recently (13.4).

Moreover, whether biased or not, the examples highlighted by members of government in both countries might have been described as aligned with the two country's frameworks *afterwards* in an "ex-post rationalization" attempt, as a few interviewees themselves admitted. It is also important to remember that most of the examples that were mentioned in both countries were vague, the link with either the NPF or the BES and how these were used unclear and, in some instances (like in the case of Michelin), remarkable yet merely anecdotal. So, while a different project would be required to study the issue more in depth, the opinions gathered in this thesis currently point to the limited use and impact of both countries' official frameworks. Such conclusions acquire even greater strength if we consider that the people I interviewed were *the* most interested in the well-being agenda. If there were any examples or if they had used the framework, they would be the ones to be aware

[140] While many journalists were unaware of the NPF or the BES, a few were more knowledgeable than others yet could not mention any examples either.

of that as it is unlikely that those with less expertise and interest, who perhaps do not even know what the NPF or the BES are, will be or that they will have used them.

Overall, findings largely support the theory of change that I have developed drawing on Kingdon's (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) MSA. As I claimed in Chapter 3, for change to take place a problem needs to first be known and recognised as such; solutions need to be also known and recognised as viable; and the context must be propitious. As for the first condition, as documented and summarised above, in the case of policymakers and journalists – and, sometimes, of members of interest groups, too – knowledge of GDP's weaknesses was not always great and, in some cases, lacking. Moreover, almost the entirety of interviewees distinguished between GDP as an indicator and economic growth as an objective, considering economic growth a prerequisite for well-being regardless of the limitations of GDP and therefore its lack as *the* problem. As for the second condition, we saw direct and indirect evidence of the lack of awareness of metrics such as the NPF and the BES among interviewees, especially policymakers and journalists, as well as a mismatch between interviewees' preferences for and the current supply of dashboards vs. composite indices, confusion with degrowth, the SDGs and happiness, and an almost unanimous scepticism of subjective indicators (though of course some of these issues will be due exactly to lack of awareness). As for the third and last condition, we saw that more barriers than stimuli are at play (with some factors such as silo thinking still permeating not only the policy process but also newsrooms). Therefore, the findings of the Use and Impact chapters, in which almost all interviewees were unable to identify cases in which their country's official frameworks had been used or impactful, and in which the economic crisis that followed the COVID-19 pandemic was found to have generated no increase in the referencing and reporting of well-being metrics and to have actually increased coverage of GDP and related terms (which reflects also an increase in their use made by policymakers when talking to journalists), provide clear and incontrovertible evidence in support of the above theory.

16. Conclusions and Recommendations

We started this thesis with the following question: what factors promote or inhibit the use of well-being metrics in Scotland and Italy? Some of these factors were already identified or suggested by previous research, and this thesis contributed to confirming their importance. Among the promoters, examples include: the presence of policy entrepreneurs (PASTILLE, 2002) like Giovannini (Bache and Reardon, 2013, 2016; Bache, 2013; Seaford, 2013; see also Layard, 2020); the embedding of well-being metrics into legislative frameworks (Thiry *et al*., 2013; Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012; see also Borgnäs, 2016); the media, theoretically at least (Bell and Morse, 2013; IN-STREAM, 2011; Hák *et al*., 2012); and the release of reports for the generation of media coverage (Morse, 2011b, 2013). Among the barriers, examples include: weak levels of awareness of GDP's flaws and/or of well-being metrics (Chancel, Thiry and Demailly, 2014; Hezri, 2005; Seaford, 2013; Sébastien and Bauler, 2013; Sébastien, Bauler and Lehtonen, 2014; Thiry *et al*., 2013; see also Hayden and Wilson, 2018b); a prevailing view of economic growth as a prerequisite for well-being (Borgnäs, 2016; CONCORD, 2017; Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2017a, 2018a; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al.*, 2013; see also 2.11.1); scepticism of subjective indicators (Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al*., 2013; see also Lehtonen,

2013; Sébastien and Bauler, 2013) and the consequent inhibiting role of "taboo words" such as happiness (CONCORD, 2017; Hák *et al.*, 2012; Hayden and Wilson, 2017a, 2017b); lack of or limited political support (CONCORD, 2017; Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al*., 2013; Bache and Reardon, 2016); the proliferation of metrics (Seaford, 2013; Sébastien and Bauler, 2013; Thiry *et al*., 2013; see also Hayden and Wilson, 2016, 2018a); the neutrality of data sources and the greater perceived reliability of data collected by national statistical offices (Hák *et al.*, 2012; Seaford, 2013; Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012); silo thinking (Seaford, 2013); and lack of media coverage (Chancel, Thiry and Demailly, 2014; Thiry *et al.*, 2013; Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012).

Yet – and this is the first original contribution of this thesis – some factors did not emerge as relevant or determining as in previous studies. The first such factor is the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report. A landmark publication, this is believed to have exerted great influence (Noll, 2011) and indeed was identified as an agenda driver in Thiry *et al*. (2013) and Bache and Reardon (2013). However, it was very rarely cited as a source of recent interest in well-being by anyone other than national statisticians in Italy. Moreover, despite policymakers and journalists being among its intended audiences (Stiglitz *et al.*, 2009) these were the least knowledgeable about GDP's flaws, the well-being agenda and well-being metrics in general, not to mention that the use of subjective indicators, recommended by the report, was almost unanimously rejected. This is not to say that the report has had no role at all, but thirteen years after its release its influence needs to be rescaled.

The second one is the economic crisis of 2007/08. This was previously claimed to have acted both as a catalyst and as a barrier (Hák *et al.*, 2012; Seaford, 2013; Thiry *et al*., 2013). Although interviewees did not explicitly highlight it as a barrier (due to the type of questions I asked[141]), the economic crisis did nevertheless not emerge as

[141] I asked interviewees to think about the factors that may have brought well-being back onto the agenda, i.e. they were not asked to identify barriers.

a stimulus but among economics journalists, and possibly exactly because of them being *economics* journalists, not to mention that the crisis was the reason that made local authorities cut funding to projects such as QUARS and potentially a factor that contributed to the termination of the PIQ. In fact, objective data about parliamentary referencing and media coverage support the view of economic crises as barriers, in line with the overall findings of this thesis which show an almost unanimous agreement about the importance of economic growth despite the limitations of GDP. Well-being metrics were not really part of the post-crisis parliamentary debates of Italy and Scotland, and the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed not only led to a decrease in media coverage and parliamentary referencing of well-being metrics in both countries, but also to a parallel increase in the reporting of GDP and related terms, especially in 2020. This is where a further original contribution of this thesis lies, in that the COVID-19 pandemic provided me with an occasion to conduct research before and during an economic crisis that occurred at the same time in both countries, which makes this thesis unique.

Another original contribution is having identified several factors that did not previously emerge as crucial, that were previously under researched or not identified at all. These include: the association and confusion of the well-being agenda with the degrowth agenda and the SDGs, of degrowth with recession, and the perception that measuring well-being be just about measuring happiness (which confirms the claim of the OECD regarding well-being being conflated with happiness – see 2.10); the radicalisation of views about GDP; journalists' scepticism of well-being metrics due to fear of manipulation; the representation of well-being frameworks as stakeholder management tools; the stimulating role of election defeats; distrust of official yet political sources; the compartmentalisation of newsrooms; the existence of what I have called policy facilitators and policy saboteurs; the impact of organisational dynamics on terminating metrics; lack of interest from international organisations;

and the mismatch between the year of publication of well-being statistics and the political administrations whose performance data refer to.

Beyond the identification of new stimuli and barriers, further original contributions of this thesis include: having conducted a survey to investigate the level of awareness of well-being metrics among the key stakeholders involved in the well-being debate in Scotland and Italy (no such survey was ever conducted in either country and, as far as I am aware, previous studies which reported participants' awareness levels of specific metrics did so in general terms based on focus group conversations – Thiry *et al*., 2013 – or interviews – Chancel, Thiry and Demailly, 2014; Hezri, 2005; Seaford, 2013; Sébastien and Bauler, 2013; Sébastien, Bauler and Lehtonen, 2014); having aggregated and studied informants' preferences regarding the way well-being metrics should be presented; having examined informants' perceived level of use and impact of specific metrics similarly to previous studies (see 2.11.1) for countries and metrics which however had not been studied before; having interviewed journalists and gathered their thoughts about, among other things, the newsworthiness of specific metrics (previous studies did highlight the key role of the media yet journalists were hardly ever interviewed); and having conducted the highest number of interviews for the study of any two countries in the sub-field of well-being research concerned with the policy use of well-being metrics[142].

A further original contribution is having provided an in-depth investigation of media coverage and parliamentary referencing of well-being metrics for both countries, on which no data were available (see 6.4). In fact, to the best of my knowledge no such data have ever been made available for any other country. It is true that studies were conducted about newspaper coverage (Bassi, *et al.*, 2011; Hák *et al*., 2012; Morse, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; 2015, 2016, 2018), but the methodology employed was unrobust and findings unreliable (see 2.11.2). My thesis therefore

[142] This is also among the studies in the same field for which the highest number of interviews was conducted in general, just behind POINT (ca. 130) and BRAINPOoL (ca. 120).

substantiated for the first time claims made in the literature about the overexposure of GDP (Fioramonti, 2013) and the lack of coverage of well-being metrics (European Commission, 2013). Moreover, media reporting tools such as TVEyes seem to have been rarely used in academia, so not only has this thesis provided the first ever analysis of radio and TV coverage of well-being metrics but it has also contributed to exploring the use of new research tools. The breakout of the COVID-19 pandemic also enabled me to provide the first analysis of media coverage of well-being metrics before and during an economic crisis, which other studies will not be able to conduct, at least with reference to this crisis, given that 2020 radio and TV transcripts have already been deleted from TVEyes and that 2021 ones will be so shortly. Methods-wise, the incredibly efficient transcription strategy I excogitated is also worth highlighting as research handbooks (e.g. Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018; Flick, 2018; Leavy, 2020) still provide no alternatives to manual transcription[143].

Yet, one of the most important original contributions of this thesis is having offered a theoretically grounded analysis of findings based on a theory of policy change that I developed drawing on Kingdon's (1993, 1994, 2001, 2002, 2003) MSA. As previously discussed, Kingdon presented a theory of agenda change which he attempted to turn into one of policy change. However, this attempt was poorly formulated – which, as I have shown, has generated confusion about the meaning of the MSA[144] –, at best incoherent and ultimately unconvincing. Nevertheless, Kingdon put centre stage two key concepts: problems and solutions. These are the two main pillars of what I have called the Bridge of Change Model and constitute the foundations of the theoretical framework that I have developed and tested in this thesis. This framework helped me choose my interview questions and analyse findings, and such analysis in turn corroborated the strength of the framework: if

[143] Silver and Lewins in Leavy (2020, p. 914) do mention voice recognition software packages but wrongly suggest that they can only be used by 'listening to sections of the recording and then reading back the sections in your own voice'.
[144] Which is another original contribution of this thesis given that such confusion has, to be the best of my knowledge, never been highlighted before.

problems and solutions are partially or not known at all, if problems are not recognised as such and solutions are not or only partly deemed viable, and if the surrounding context is not propitious, change cannot be expected as a result which is why substantial examples of policy change lacked in both countries and why media coverage of well-being metrics was both in absolute and relative terms low (when compared to GDP and related queries). This was possible thanks to the selection and analysis of case studies, which as highlighted in Chapter 4 enable to develop and test new theories (Bennett, 2004, 2005; Bryman, 2004).

So, what could help increase the use and impact of well-being metrics in both countries? Below is a list of recommendations that I have elaborated based on the findings of this thesis. Some are country-specific or targeted at specific groups, but most of them apply broadly (ideas for future research are presented further below).

1. Increase awareness of GDP and its flaws

It is crystal clear that the first and most important recommendation is to increase awareness of GDP and its flaws as well as of the shortcomings of economic growth more generally. Too many are still not aware or not fully aware of these, especially among policymakers and journalists but even among those forwarding the well-being agenda themselves. Awareness is crucial, as Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009, p. 6) also concluded reflecting on the 2007/08 crisis: 'the excessive focus on GDP metrics – and a failure to understand the limitations of that measure – meant that these [well-being] statistics were not given the prominence they deserved'.

Nevertheless, this will not be enough if the pursuit of economic growth, hereby intended as the growth in the sale and provision of goods and services that can be positive *as well as* negative in nature and that can have positive *as well as* negative impact on well-being, is not recognised as problematic as it currently is the case in Scotland and Italy. To argue that GDP is a flawed indicator and see economic growth

tout court as necessary for people's well-being *anyway* is like saying that some piano keys are broken but pretending that any music that will be played on it will nevertheless be pleasant to hear. As Diener and Seligman (2004, p. 22) argued, '[a] central question is when, and to what degree, economic growth produces increases in well-being, and when it works against well-being'. If that question is not asked, if GDP and economic growth are not seen as two sides of the same coin as they unquestionably are, change will remain a chimera and indeed this is probably why substantial examples of policy change were again lacking and why previous studies which concluded that the impact of well-being metrics has been limited showed a widespread support of economic growth among their participants (see 2.11.1).

2. Avoid supporting the replacement of GDP and criticising economic growth

Until the above conditions have been met, if well-being is to become a real policy objective and part of policy and public debate, a second recommendation is to avoid showing support for the replacement of GDP and/or strong, public criticism of economic growth. This is because, once again, despite the recognition that GDP may be a flawed indicator and a limited measure of well-being, it is generally not deemed possible for well-being to improve because of output reductions. And this emerged from conversations with those who are most interested in the well-being agenda, so one can imagine this belief to be even stronger among those who are little or not aware of it at all. Criticising economic growth under current conditions is thus comparable to committing *hara-kiri*: we have seen evidence of this with the degrowth agenda in Italy which, *despite having many features in common with the well-being agenda*, was heavily criticised, whereas the latter was not. This explains incredibly well why the cooperation agreement between the SNP and the Scottish Green Party (which has often called for a replacement of GDP in the past) announced in 2021 for the creation of a majority government *explicitly* included, as the *very first excluded*

matter, the following: '[w]hile we share an ambition that Scotland should be a wellbeing economy […], the role of Gross Domestic Product measurements, and economic principles related to concepts of sustainable growth and inclusive growth, are excluded from this agreement' (Scottish Government, 2021c, p. 9).

This requires to also avoid a particularly critical language, and perhaps even maintaining a growth-oriented language if possible. Mishan (1977, p. 261) concluded *The Economic Growth Debate* commenting: 'the seemingly most powerful economic group in the modern nation state' – he was discussing the role of what he called entrenched interests – 'is unwaveringly committed to continued economic growth. It may be "purified" growth, "humanised" growth, "harmonious" growth or any other variety; it may be given new titles, a new set of credentials and "a new direction". But growth it has to be'. More than forty years later, little seems to have changed – green growth, sustainable growth, smart growth, inclusive growth and similar expressions all have one word in common: growth. And this is exactly because economic growth is regarded as a prerequisite for well-being. To contrast that with a language that dismisses, opposes or reveals scepticism of economic growth, one that for instance preaches that "less is better", risks jeopardising attempts to bring about change. This is exactly what Fioramonti (2021, 34:50-35:10) meant when, responding to a question I asked him, firmly stated: '[i]t's very hard for politicians to go out there and say to people: "guys, we need to do less", "guys we need to try and avoid doing that", "guys we need to try and, you know, contract". [… We need a] forward-looking language'.

3. Promote well-being more when the economy is growing

As things stand, as I suggested and repeatedly found confirmation throughout this thesis, more effort should be put into promoting the well-being agenda when the economy is expanding as opposed to periods in which growth is lacking. This is because in such cases the attention will predominantly be on how to put the economy

back on a growth track, because *that* is *the* problem. At one of the panels of the OECD Workshop on Putting Well-being Metrics into Policy Action held in October 2019 with speakers from both Scotland and Italy I asked what would happen if another economic crisis was around the corner – would the attention shift away from well-being and go back to economic growth? 'Lessons', I was told, 'hopefully have been learnt' (OECD, 2019, 1:24:12-1:24:14). That was October 2019. Four months were enough to show the exact opposite.

4. Strengthen solution awareness and recognition

Moving on to solutions, it is crucial to raise awareness of existing metrics among their intended users. It is impossible to expect metrics to be used consciously when people do not know them. As one journalist said about the possibility of covering the NPF, "unless we do know about it then we can't do that" (see 11.3). This resonates with Laurent (2018, p. 195), who argued that the well-being transition will 'result from a combination of both knowledge and belief. […] It is necessary first to know, and then to believe […] in order eventually to act'. Raising awareness will have a twofold effect: greater knowledge among journalists, for instance, could result in them asking more questions about well-being and stop policymakers refraining from talking about it due to fear of being derided and attacked. As they say, it could kill two birds with one stone. Awareness can come of course in many different degrees and remains a necessary yet not sufficient condition for change. However, in both countries many informants were unaware of well-being metrics, especially of official national frameworks, meaning the question is still more one of letting them surface from obscurity than adjusting the light they are receiving. Since this thesis did not aim to assess which awareness campaigns worked best and why, no suggestions can be made in that regard. The recommendations that follow, however, all directly or indirectly contribute to the aim of raising awareness.

5. Develop national, official, independent frameworks

More effort should be put into developing national frameworks. Some global metrics do gain media traction (especially the WHR and, to a lesser extent, the HDI and the WWF LPI). However, most of them do not and, in any case, almost none of them has ever been mentioned in national parliaments contrarily to the NPF and the BES. Metrics should not only be national but have also an official grounding. Indeed, the NPF and the BES were again the only two metrics that were essentially ever debated in national parliaments of both countries, in contrast to national yet unofficial metrics, not to mention that it was BES indicators (and not e.g. ItaliaOggi ones) that were chosen to be embedded into national legislation. The development of an official framework is so important that as we have seen in Italy it made some terminate their metrics, in some cases *exactly* because their goal was to lead to the creation of such official framework. Even in terms of media coverage, the officiality of a framework can make a significant difference: despite the release of media-unfriendly press material, in less than a decade the BES managed to become the second most mentioned metric in Italy (just below the Sole 24 ORE QoLR, a 32-year-old publication, and above the ItaliaOggi QoLR, a 23-year-old one), the only metric to be mentioned heterogeneously throughout the year and to be so especially by *Sole 24 ORE* and *Radio 24*, and *ItaliaOggi* and *Class CNBC* despite these not talking about each other's ranking. This seems to apply globally, too: it does not seem a coincidence that the WHR and the HDI, both UN outputs, have gained much more traction than the SPI, the HPI, the LPI and so on[145].

The optimal condition, however, is achieved when metrics are also overseen by an independent, impartial body. While it is true that in the Scottish Parliament the NPF was mentioned five more times than the BES in the Italian Parliament, this was

[145] As for the WWF LPI, it is true that this was the third most covered metric in Scotland. However, the index is a joint effort between the WWF and the ZSL. Having the former its roots in the UK and being the latter an UK institution, the WWF LPI is probably of greater interest to Scottish and UK journalists, with whom developers of the index will also have more connections, than to those of other countries (and indeed in Italy it was *not* among the most reported metrics).

so mainly by SNP MSPs whom the framework effectively belongs to, and one sixth of all mentions were made by none other than one of its creators (also an SNP member). Unsurprisingly, members of opposition parties described it as an SNP-tool and claimed to be sceptical of it and so did several journalists and members of interest groups. And it is exactly its political ownership the reason why the NPF, despite being an official national framework, got almost no media coverage, as the Scottish Government has been putting little effort into promoting it. Having an independent, impartial body in charge of overseeing the publication and dissemination of well-being metrics like in Italy gives these frameworks greater authority and credibility and, if efforts are made to promote them, it ensures again some media coverage, too. This also prevents information from being concealed, as it allegedly was the case in Scotland where a report written by the OECD was not released for it contained some critical remarks. In Italy, too, the publication of well-being data risked not being published, *exactly* however when their dissemination was not overseen by ISTAT. To be sure, the release of data by government or ministerial sources can gain media traction as the case of MEF BES Reports shows (which is why some journalists regarded a Scottish Government "label" as appealing), but this again was matter of criticism due to their alleged lack of impartiality and greater likelihood of being manipulated, whereas the reliability of ISTAT's BES Reports was never questioned.

6. Consider diverting resources if metrics are not being used and impactful

Those planning to develop metrics should consider whether currently it might not be better to divert efforts and resources to awareness campaigns that enhance the use and impact of already existing metrics, and to improve them if necessary, as opposed to creating new metrics altogether that might just make the Pandora's box of well-being get bigger and result in no tangible impact. Those who have developed them already, especially global ones, should similarly consider whether it makes any sense

to invest resources in iterating metrics that are not achieving their aims. As Morse (2011a, p. 1687; 2015, p. 94, respectively) noted, '[t]here seems little point in creating and evolving indices if they do not make a significant contribution to experience and new knowledge amongst those charged with bringing about change' and which therefore end up becoming 'a talisman that must be published even if it is not used by anyone'. Metrics such as the SPI, the HPI and the LPI, which aim to spark a debate about well-being, have hardly sparked a debate among journalists and parliamentarians in crucial countries like Scotland and Italy, if at all. And, considering that official national frameworks are struggling to bring about policy change, it is hard to imagine that they will have that transformative force instead, especially considering their absence from the media landscape.

7. De-emphasise the use of subjective indicators

In both countries, we saw that subjective indicators were regarded as unreliable by almost all interviewees, in line with previous research (see 2.11.1). We also saw that the measurement of subjective well-being – and happiness particularly – was in some cases an object of ridicule, and that indeed some policymakers were afraid of being derided if they were to talk about subjective well-being in public. And, while it is true that metrics such as the WHR and the GNH received some media coverage, none of them was ever mentioned in national parliaments (except for the WHR, cited once), not to mention that in Italy the newspapers in which most articles were published (which happened to be the most circulated in the country) as well as the top radio stations and TV channels on which most references appeared (mainly all-news and specialised sources) almost ignored both. Therefore, under current conditions at least, if well-being metrics are to be taken seriously and used by policymakers, so-called subjective well-being and the use of subjective indicators should be de-emphasised, if not overlooked altogether, which could also help avoid equating the

measurement of well-being with that of happiness (see 2.9, 9.3, 12.9). This, of course, does not mean that subjective well-being should not be measured and be subject of academic inquiry. However, as things stand shifting the attention to so-called objective well-being may be the best and above all the least damaging strategy.

8. Draft and make press releases available to journalists

This may sound obvious, but as we have seen press releases are not always drafted, let alone disseminated. Yet, this is not enough to increase the media profile of well-being metrics. Press releases should be short, well-written, they should avoid technical jargon and contain a story and an overall journalistic title. They should be sent to news desks and possibly to specific journalists who are interested in the well-being agenda and are therefore likely to be more receptive. They should not just be published online on platforms such as Twitter waiting for journalists to find them (especially considering journalists may be unaware of the metrics in question). Finally, press releases should be sent in advance to allow journalists plenty of time to write pieces or segments about them and should be so considering the day and time journalists are more likely to be receptive and when the news cycle is going to be more propitious. Data from both countries show indeed that well-being metrics were mentioned particularly in the early morning, at lunchtime and in the afternoon, but not much during prime time. They also show that, as far as radio and TV are concerned, they get reported especially during weekends in Scotland and on Mondays in Italy, due to there being a sort of news vacuum in these days. Until well-being metrics gain currency and saliency, exploiting these days and times to launch metrics is going to be the most impactful strategy, as indeed some are already doing (the Bank of Scotland QoLS and the Sole 24 ORE and the ItaliaOggi QoLRs, for instance, are published on Saturdays and Mondays, respectively, which possibly explains why they are among the most covered metrics).

9. Regularly report on progress

As far as Scotland is concerned, an annual publication reporting on progress (or lack thereof) should be introduced. Such a report should be published by an independent and impartial body rather than the Scottish Government, to minimise the chance that information will be concealed and help overcome claims of partiality which may hinder its dissemination. The introduction of such publication, if backed by a proper communication strategy, will create an opportunity for journalists to report it which will help make of the NPF the accountability tool that it was always meant to be. It could also create an opportunity for parliamentarians to talk about it, though evidence from parliamentary debates in Italy suggests that this should not be taken for granted. Indeed, for MSPs and policymakers more generally to use such information they will first need to be aware of the problems and solutions at stake and recognise them as such. To be sure, such publication could increase awareness of both, but only if it is accompanied by a proper, well-thought-out dissemination strategy.

10. Reconsider expectations around composite indices

Most composite indices were almost if not even fully ignored by journalists and parliamentarians, whereas those metrics that lack an overall composite index such as the BES were among the ones that journalists picked up the most, not to mention that both the BES and the NPF (a dashboard) were almost the only ones to be mentioned in national parliaments. It is often believed (see Wallace and Schmuecker, 2012), as many interviewees of this thesis also thought, that composite indices will help obtain greater media coverage and achieve in turn greater policy change. Yet, constructing composite indices is not as important as ensuring that (the right) journalists are sent well-written, newsworthy press material and that both them and policymakers are aware of the problems and the solutions at stake in the first place and that they

recognise them as such and regard them as viable, respectively. Moreover, even if composite indices were to be created, one of the main barriers to their reporting would remain unsolved: what newsroom, in the lack of a well-being desk, should report the results of a well-being index?

The above recommendations differ from those given by other scholars, which is where another original contribution of this thesis lies. In a Discussion Paper published by the European Commission, Terzi (2021, p. 18), for instance, identified two strategies to increase the use and impact of well-being metrics in policymaking: one which involves the publication of 'more comprehensive tables of complementary indicators', and another one, deemed more likely to succeed, to select (or develop) a few composite indices that should *not* substitute GDP[146]. These recommendations, based on the author's own judgments rather than on empirical evidence, wrongly and misleadingly suggest that the reason why well-being metrics have been underused or unused is either their lack of comprehensiveness or the lack of composite indices. As we have seen, these are in no way *the* inhibiting factors – in fact, they are not even always seen as problems and metrics lacking an overall composite performed relatively well in terms of parliamentary referencing (NPF, BES) or media coverage (BES – the NPF did not but again mainly because of lack of leadership and interest).

Regarding Scotland, Carnegie UK Trust (2019) published a list of seven recommendations to make the NPF more impactful which involved: changing the name of the framework, clarifying the terminology used, linking the framework to budget decisions and communicating the NPF more and better. Apart from the last point (which is in line with my recommendations), we are misleadingly led to believe that the low use and impact of the NPF are due to the language employed, whereas

[146] Which demonstrates again that economic growth is deemed an essential objective. In fact, the EU itself has shifted from using the term "Beyond GDP" to "GDP and Beyond" given that the former was 'seen as potentially too radical a shift politically' (Bache, 2013, p. 29) whereas the latter was welcomed for it helped 'to clarify that GDP would remain a central part of the EU's measurement agenda' (Bache and Reardon, 2016, p. 83; see also Thiry *et al*., 2013, p. 79).

as we have seen many are simply not aware of it or sceptical of its affiliation with the SNP. Moreover, while it is true that the link with budget decisions is weak, trying to improve that without addressing the main problems that this thesis has identified is likely going to be unsuccessful – budget decisions would otherwise have long been linked with the framework already.

Finally, in *Replacing GDP by 2030*, Hoekstra (2019, p. 16) argued that 'the ultimate problem' for the use of well-being metrics is the lack of a 'coherent Beyond-GDP community'. In particular, he claimed that such community has not been institutionalised contrarily to GDP and lacks a structure and common language (too many disciplines involved, too many frameworks and too many metrics) and a clear objective (some scholars aim to promote well-being, others sustainable development, etc.), recommending thus to make changes accordingly. Regarding the issue of institutionalisation, we have seen that the embedding of well-being indicators in Italy and the CEA did stimulate parliamentary referencing, but only temporarily and with dubious impact on policymaking. Regarding structure and language, the number of metrics did emerge as problematic. However, creating a "common language" will not solve the actual problems: lack of awareness and lack of problem recognition. In fact, both countries *have* adopted common frameworks, yet policy change seemed nevertheless far on the horizon. Regarding objectives, we saw that in both countries *there was* actually a common objective, economic growth, which was seen as a prerequisite for well-being and which actually shows why Hoekstra's recommendations are destined to fail from the very outset: there is hardly any support for a replacement of GDP, let alone of economic growth, either now or indeed by 2030.

At this point of our journey, it is worth discussing the limitations of this thesis. To begin with, the number of people I spoke to represent only a fraction of those involved in both countries in the policymaking process and in the promotion and realisation of the well-being agenda. However, they were for the most part the most

interested in it and just like Scotland and Italy represent two crucial cases, the informants of this thesis are also crucial – if they were not aware of the limitations of GDP, of well-being metrics or of cases of use and impact of the NPF or the BES, it is unlikely that others will be instead.

In relation to my analyses of media coverage and parliamentary referencing, when presenting initial results at conferences I would often be told that in many cases MSPs and journalists will have not referred to specific metrics but to individual indicators within them. This is certainly true. However, if, say, a journalist cited an indicator from the NPF without mentioning the latter, that would be impossible for anyone to find out. Moreover, and most importantly, if they only cited one or a handful of indicators then the framework *as a whole* will have been in a way useless, as almost all the indicators included in the NPF already existed before its creation and the point of having them together is *exactly* to highlight the interconnectedness of different policy areas and break silo thinking. The First Minister herself recently noted that, pointing out that 'the National Performance Framework is intended to be a cross-cutting framework and it is important not to see anything that we capture in isolation' (Sturgeon, 2021, n/a). After all, as one statistician in Italy said (see 12.1), "there are other publications" in which individual indicators can be found. Or, as one interviewee in Scotland put it (see 13.4), "chopping up" frameworks defeats their very own purpose.

In further relation to my media analyses, the number of articles and references was not weighted to reflect the different circulation or viewing figures of each outlet as done by e.g. Morse (2011a). However, the aim of the study was to find out how many times journalists (and, indirectly, policymakers) mentioned well-being metrics and not the number of people that read or heard about them. To be sure, weighting may be applied in future research, but it would then need to be so in other contexts as well which would raise critical questions: how should a reference made by an MSP

representing Edinburgh Central be weighted compared to one made by an MSP representing Shetland, if at all?

As far as newspaper coverage is concerned, the number of overall mentions is missing; no sentiment analysis was conducted; and coverage figures of GDP and related terms include duplicates (this last point applies to radio and TV coverage as well). Regarding the first issue, this cannot be solved unless significant funding is available to cover the large amount of time needed to go through each article. Regarding the second issue, if articles about GDP were largely critical then during the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis that followed those mentioning well-being metrics should have increased and those mentioning GDP and related terms decrease, whereas the opposite happened[147]. In a way, then, the COVID-19 pandemic *did* enable me to perform a sentiment analysis. Regarding the third issue, figures do include duplicates but exclude cases in which references were made using other expressions which are much more commonly used, so it is likely that on balance they will be fairly accurate, *if not even an underestimation*.

What directions should future research then take? First, this could explore the opinions of academics, the business world and society at large. Academics to begin with are just as crucial for bringing about change (or for the maintenance of the status quo): the students of today, after all, are the policymakers and journalists of tomorrow. This is why BRAINPOoL called for the inclusion of the well-being agenda in economics curricula since 'to date, economic textbooks pay limited attention to a broad concept of welfare; there is still a strong emphasis on GDP-growth as welfare proxy' (van Bree *et al*., 2014, p. 18). Indeed, a study of seven UK Russell Group universities found these to be highly skewed toward the teaching of neo-classical economics (Earle, Moran and Ward-Perkins, 2016), and there is reason to believe that

[147] Articles mentioning GDP reached their peak in 2020. Those mentioning economic growth decreased (in line with the lack of growth) but grew in 2021 as GDP started growing again. Articles mentioning well-being metrics decreased in 2020. They kept decreasing in 2021 in Scotland but not in Italy due mainly to changes in the release of some metrics, with the level of coverage of *all well-being metrics combined* remaining at any rate incomparably lower.

this is the rule rather than the exception. Future research could therefore explore the extent to which a well-being lens approach is being taught in Scotland and Italy, as well as the level of familiarity with GDP's flaws and well-being metrics across different university departments and how the pursuit of economic growth is perceived between and within them.

As far as business is concerned, this is undoubtedly the temple of growth *par excellence.* All companies want to not shrink and grow, and business growth is used universally as synonym for success. This narrow, short-sighted view is the exact same one that underpins GDP: it does not differentiate between good and bad. During the 2007 Beyond GDP conference, Pervenche Berès (2007, 3:15-3:41; see also European Commission, 2009b, p. 44), then Chair of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs of the European Parliament, argued that '[w]e need to realise that even activities that are not strictly speaking really adding something to society, […] still provide people with a job and therefore with an income. You may think of activities like repairing a lock after a burglary or cleaning a beach after an oil tanker was broken [shipwrecked]'. It is crystal clear that if a well-being agenda is to be truly adopted things will need to be seen from a different perspective and harsher, braver choices will need to be made about the economic activities whose growth is to be promoted and celebrated and the ones whose decline is to be equally promoted and celebrated. After all, if such choices are not made there is simply no point in talking about well-being: car thefts and oil spills cannot be seen as positives just because they provide car dealers and cleanup specialists with an income and, if they are, then the whole conversation about well-being is pointless. Future research could thus investigate whether business owners, business confederations such as Confindustria in Italy (which produces the Sole 24 ORE QoLR) and trade unions, especially if operating in sectors that produce "bads", realise the implications that the promotion of well-being intrinsically carries. By extension, future research could explore the degree to which

policymakers realise such implications, too, and if they are willing to or what prevents them from making such choices.

Regarding society at large, we saw claims in both countries about the unawareness and uninterest in the well-being agenda among people. But are these claims true? While no study has been conducted to date on the former as far as I know, regarding the latter Globescan (2007, 2010, 2013, 2020) found unsteady but significant public demand for "beyond GDP" metrics in several countries, including Italy (2007, 2010) and the UK (2007, 2010, 2013, 2020). While promising, findings are however unreliable[148]. In fact, we saw that some statisticians in Italy talked about there being an "abyss" between searches on ISTAT's website for BES and GDP statistics and a pilot sentiment analysis of internet users' perception of well-being and economic growth showed indeed huge differences between the two (Battaglia, Plata and Stefanini, 2018). In Scotland, the Scottish Government (2021d) recently released webpage analytics for the NPF. These showed a 49% decrease in the number of unique pageviews for the old website from 2015 to 2019, with the new website recording in 2019 less unique pageviews than the old website *despite its launch and the refresh of the framework* (which shows once more that the promotion of the NPF has not been a priority). However, no similar data have been made available for GDP statistics and in Italy no official data have been released altogether. Future research

[148] A representative sample in each country was asked to choose between the following statements the one that they agreed the most with:

> The government should measure national progress using money-based economic statistics because economic growth is the most important thing for a country to focus on.
>
> Health, social and environmental statistics are as important as economic ones and the government should also use these for measuring national progress (Globescan, 2007, p. 4).

The first statement leads respondents to choose the second one as it is unlikely that they will agree that progress should only be measured using economic statistics. It also actually contains two different statements: one about economic statistics, and one about economic growth. These should have been separated – as we have seen, people distinguish between GDP and economic growth. Moreover, the first statement asks participants whether they agree that "economic growth is the most important thing for a country to focus on", which the second one does not (making it unclear whether this is about a non-growth or degrowth scenario or one in which economic growth is not *the* most important thing). Also, only two options were available, and while the first one mentions the possibility of measuring progress by considering economic statistics only, that of measuring progress by considering only health, social and environmental statistics is not provided.

could fill these gaps, either by collecting such data independently or by requesting that official data be released. Questions that could be addressed include: are people aware of GDP's flaws and of well-being metrics, and of the shortcomings of economic growth more generally? To what extent, if at all, do they perceive economic growth as a fundamental prerequisite for well-being?

Future research will also need to explore how to practically break silo thinking. As we have seen in Scotland, approaching things holistically was seen by some as an attempt to step over their remit rather than as a request for cooperation. After all, the very idea of having separate ministries denotes a separation of remits and priorities – one may well introduce a multidimensional framework that aims to promote well-being, but "one can't expect the Ministry of the Economy and Finance not to care about the growth of GDP". This begs the question of whether a framework is sufficient to encourage a holistic approach to policymaking, or whether the way the policymaking process is structured needs to be completely redesigned and if so how. Likewise, the compartmentalisation of newsrooms was a strong inhibitor in Italy as press releases of multidimensional nature were seen as somebody else's and at the same time no one's responsibility, resulting in these ending up "in the bin". Future research could investigate how to discourage silo thinking within newsrooms (would having a well-being news desk help or will awareness campaigns suffice?). More generally, future research should explore how to increase awareness of the fact that different policy fields do not exist in isolation and of the benefits that may derive from such interconnectedness. A first step in that direction could be to replace a cost-benefit with a co-beneficial approach (Laurent *et al.*, 2021).

Finally, Scotland and Italy were selected as crucial cases due to their interest in the well-being agenda and experience in the measurement of well-being. Future research could look instead at countries which usually rank at the top of global happiness rankings (such as Finland, Sweden or Denmark), thus countries that are crucial in that respect, to see whether any similarities or differences exist. Are

subjective indicators perceived more favourably there, or does scepticism coexist with the pride of being "the happiest people in the world"? Has being on top of such rankings facilitated the use of well-being metrics, or has this not had any tangible consequences? Is the ranking achieved still matter of public and policy debate, or has it lost its salience?

In conclusion, we have seen that while remarkable progress has been made in both countries, much more needs to be done if well-being is to be put at the heart of policymaking (and to also become a matter of public debate). Multiple factors are preventing change from taking place. Most prominent among these is the inadequate awareness of GDP's flaws and of well-being metrics, compounded by the lacking recognition of a problem due to a schizophrenic distinction that most interviews made between GDP as an indicator and economic growth as an objective, as if the limitations of the former did not apply to the latter. So why does economic growth remain a pivotal policy objective, why does the growth paradigm persist? Because there is hardly any opposition to it, even among well-being supporters. Back in the 1960s, the social indicators movement was criticised for not having a shared set of goals and for not being clear whether it supported the replacement or the integration of GDP with other metrics ("to GDP or not to GDP?"). Sixty years and counting, in Scotland and Italy both problems seem to have been solved: GDP should not be replaced and that is because *economic growth* is *the* shared goal.

Appendix A

The Interview Invitation – Sample

The following example is an e-mail tailored to be sent to an MSP.

> Dear [name],
> my name is Fabio Battaglia and I am a Social Policy PhD Candidate at the University of Edinburgh working on the politics of well-being.
>
> In more detail, my research aims to identify what factors promote or inhibit the use and impact of well-being metrics in Scotland and Italy. As I am sure you are already aware of, both countries are pioneers internationally in the measurement of well-being – Scotland, with the NPF.
>
> As far as I am aware you have always been quite interested in the NPF. An analysis of parliamentary debates that I carried out as part of my PhD showed indeed that you are not only one of the few MSPs who have ever referenced to the NPF in their speeches but also among the ones that have referenced to it the most.
>
> For this reason, and since [name] also personally recommended me to get in touch with you, I was wondering whether you would be happy to meet and discuss with me your opinions about the NPF and the broader "beyond GDP" agenda, to conduct an interview for my PhD (~30-40 mins).
>
> I sincerely thank you for taking the time to read my e-mail. I look forward to hearing back from you soon. Feel free to ask for further information, should you need any.

With best wishes,

Fabio

Note that my name linked to my academic profile so that recipients could click on it and find right away who I was and what I was doing. Since this is hosted on the School of Social and Political Science's website, this might have helped me obtain greater authority and trust in the invitee's eyes.

Appendix B

List of Questions in Italian

13) Secondo lei quali sono i principali punti di forza e di debolezza del PIL?
14) Alla luce di quanto ha appena detto, pensa che la misurazione del PIL debba essere migliorata, per esempio includendo l'impatto della crescita economica sull'ambiente, che sia meglio integrarlo con altre metriche sotto forma di cruscotti o indici compositi, o che sia invece meglio sostituirlo del tutto?
15) Pensa che sia un problema se il PIL non cresce o diminuisce?
16) Gli indicatori sociali e di benessere sono disponibili da molto tempo. Cosa pensa li abbia riportati in auge?
17) Tra questi indicatori vi sono gli indicatori soggettivi. Cosa pensa riguardo la loro affidabilità e utilità?
18) Come mai ha/avete smesso di pubblicare il (metric's name)?
19) Può farmi degli esempi di casi in cui il/la (metric's name) ha avuto un impatto a livello decisionale, portando a dei cambiamenti in termini di politiche?
20) Può farmi degli esempi di casi in cui lei ha usato il/la (metric's name)?
21) Che ruolo pensa svolgano i media nel promuovere o inibire l'uso e impatto delle metriche del benessere, se mai ne svolgano alcuno?
22) Ha mai promosso il/la (metric's name) ai media? 10.1) Come? Che cosa ha trovato particolarmente efficace e cosa no, e che risultati ha raggiunto? 10.3) Come mai no? Cosa l'ha ostacolata?

23) Come mai ha solo raramente/non ha mai menzionato il/la (metrics' names) nei suoi articoli/servizi?
24) Questo è l'ultimo comunicato stampa dell'ISTAT sul BES. Può dargli una guardata e dirmi quali pensa siano i suoi punti di forza e di debolezza?

Appendix C

Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form (English)

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in research on the use and influence of measures of progress and well-being in Scotland and Italy. Fabio Battaglia, PhD student at the University of Edinburgh is conducting this research. Before you decide to take part it is important you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The purpose of the study is to identify what factors inhibit, and what factors promote, the use and influence of measures of progress and well-being in Scotland and Italy.

WHY HAVE I BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

You are invited to participate in this study because you either have knowledge of and experience in furthering the well-being agenda in Scotland or Italy or because you are working in a field that is relevant to this research (e.g. you are a parliamentarian, a member of parliamentary staff, a member of an international organisation that has contributed to the development and promotion of the "Beyond GDP" agenda, a civil servant, an academic or a journalist).

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

No – it is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, please keep this Information Sheet and complete the Informed Consent Form (see below) to show that you understand your rights in relation to the research, and that you are happy to participate.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DECIDE TO TAKE PART?

You will be asked a number of questions about e.g. your experience in furthering the well-being agenda and in promoting the use of well-being indicators in Scotland or Italy, or about your engagement with interest groups and policymakers. The interview will take place in a safe environment at a time that is convenient to you. Ideally, we would like to audio record your responses (and will require your consent for this), so the location should be in a fairly quiet area. The interview should take around 45-60 minutes at most to complete, although this is just an estimate.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

By sharing your experiences with us, you will be helping Fabio Battaglia and the University to identify the main factors that inhibit and promote the use and influence of measures of progress and well-being in Scottish and Italian policymaking.

DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Your data will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Law. All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential. Unless they are anonymised in our records, your data will be referred to by a unique participant number rather than by name. Your data will only be viewed by the researcher and his supervisors, Elke Heins and Neil Thin (contact details can be found below). All electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer file and all paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses in order to minimise risk.

LEGAL BASES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH USING PERSONAL DATA

As a publicly-funded University, The University of Edinburgh has to ensure that it is in the public interest when we use personally-identifiable information from people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use your data in the ways needed to conduct and analyse the research study. Thus, in general terms, we use your personal information (including, where appropriate, sensitive personal information) to carry out academic and/or translational research in the public interest.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY?

The results of this study may be summarised in published articles, reports and presentations. Quotes or key findings will always be made anonymous in any formal outputs unless we have your prior and explicit written permission to attribute them to you by name. Information may also be kept for future research.

WHO CAN I CONTACT?

If you have any further questions about the study, please contact the researcher, Fabio Battaglia , s1516840@ed.ac.uk).

If you wish to make a complaint about the study, please contact Elke Heins or Neil Thin . In your communication, please provide the study title and detail the nature of your complaint.

You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats if you ask us. Please contact the researcher on or s1516840@ed.ac.uk and quote your reference number.

For general information about how we use your data go to:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Reference number [____]

Study Title [temporary]: To GDP or not to GDP? Identifying the factors promoting and inhibiting the use and impact of well-being metrics in Scotland and Italy.

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study. ☐
2. I have been given the opportunity to consider the information provided, ask questions and have had these questions answered to my satisfaction. ☐
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary. ☐
4. I understand that my anonymised data will be stored indefinitely and may be used in future ethically approved research. ☐
5. I agree to take part in this study. ☐
6. I consent to the researcher recording this interview. ☐
7. I consent to the researcher using my name for the production of formal research outputs (e.g. theses, journal articles, conference papers, reports). ☐

Name of person giving consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

Appendix D

Participant Information Sheet and Informed Consent Form (Italian)

SCHEDA INFORMATIVA PER I PARTECIPANTI

È stato/a invitato/a a partecipare ad una ricerca sull'uso e l'influenza delle misure di progresso e benessere in Scozia e in Italia. Fabio Battaglia, dottorando di ricerca presso l'Università di Edimburgo, sta conducendo questa ricerca. Prima di decidere se partecipare, è importante capire perché la ricerca viene condotta e che cosa implicherà. Si prega di prendere del tempo per leggere attentamente le seguenti informazioni.

QUAL È LO SCOPO DELLO STUDIO?

Lo scopo dello studio è identificare quali fattori promuovono e inibiscono l'uso e l'influenza delle misure di progresso e benessere in Scozia e in Italia.

PERCHÉ SONO STATO INVITATO A PARTECIPARE?

È stato/a invitato/a a partecipare a questo studio perché ha una conoscenza e/o un'esperienza nel promuovere l'agenda del benessere in Scozia o in Italia o perché sta lavorando in un campo che è attinente a questa ricerca (ad esempio, è un parlamentare, un membro del personale parlamentare, un membro di un'organizzazione internazionale che ha contribuito allo sviluppo e alla promozione dell'agenda "Oltre il PIL", un dipendente pubblico, un accademico o un giornalista).

DEVO PARTECIPARE?

No – dipende interamente da lei. Se decide di prenderne parte, la preghiamo di conservare questo foglio informativo e compilare il modulo di consenso informato allegato per dimostrare che comprende i suoi diritti in relazione alla ricerca e che è felice di partecipare.

COSA ACCADRÀ SE DECIDO DI PRENDERE PARTE?

Le verranno poste una serie di domande su ad es. la sua esperienza nel promuovere l'agenda del benessere e nel promuovere l'uso di indicatori di benessere in Scozia o in Italia, o sulle sue relazioni con gruppi di interesse e rappresentanti politici. L'intervista si svolgerà in un ambiente sicuro in un momento che le è più conveniente. Idealmente, vorremmo registrare l'audio delle sue risposte (previo suo consenso), quindi è preferibile la realizzazione dell'intervista in una zona abbastanza tranquilla. Il colloquio dovrebbe durare al massimo tra i 45 e i 60 minuti, sebbene è da tenere a mente questa è solo una stima e la durata varia di caso in caso.

QUALI SONO I VANTAGGI POSSIBILI DELLA MIA PARTECIPAZIONE?

Condividendo le sue esperienze con noi, aiuterà Fabio Battaglia e l'Università a identificare i principali fattori che inibiscono e promuovono l'uso e l'influenza delle misure di progresso e benessere a livello decisionale in Italia e Scozia.

PROTEZIONE DEI DATI E RISERVATEZZA

I suoi dati saranno trattati in conformità con la legge sulla protezione dei dati inglese (*Data Protection Law*). Tutte le informazioni raccolte su di lei saranno mantenute strettamente riservate. A meno che non siano resi anonimi nei nostri archivi, i suoi dati saranno contrassegnati da un numero partecipante unico piuttosto che dal nome e verranno visualizzati solo dal ricercatore e dai suoi relatori, Elke Heins e Neil Thin (i cui contatti sono disponibili a fondo pagina). Tutti i dati elettronici saranno archiviati su cartelle protette da password e tutti i registri cartacei saranno archiviati in un archivio fisico chiuso. Le informazioni relative al suo consenso verranno conservate separatamente dalle sue risposte al fine di ridurre al minimo qualsiasi tipo di rischio.

BASI LEGALI PER CONDURRE RICERCA UTILIZZANDO DATI PERSONALI

Come Università finanziata pubblicamente, l'Università di Edimburgo deve garantire che sia nell'interesse pubblico l'uso di informazioni identificabili di persone che hanno accettato di partecipare a questa ricerca. Ciò significa che quando accetta di prendere parte a uno studio, utilizzeremo i suoi dati nei modi necessari per condurre e analizzare lo studio di ricerca stesso. Pertanto, in termini generali, utilizziamo le sue informazioni personali (comprese, se del caso, le informazioni personali sensibili) per effettuare ricerche accademiche e/o che rientrino nell'interesse pubblico.

COSA ACCADRÀ CON I RISULTATI DI QUESTO STUDIO?

I risultati di questo studio potranno essere riassunti in articoli accademici, relazioni e presentazioni. Le citazioni o le scoperte chiave saranno sempre rese anonime in tutti i documenti formali futuri, a meno che non abbiamo il suo previo ed esplicito permesso scritto di attribuirle per nome. Le informazioni possono anche essere conservate per ricerche future.

CHI POSSO CONTATTARE?

Se ha ulteriori domande sullo studio, contatti il ricercatore Fabio Battaglia (fbattagl@ed.ac.uk, s1516840@ed.ac.uk).

Se desidera presentare un reclamo, contatti Elke Heins o Neil Thin . Nella sua comunicazione, fornisca il titolo dello studio e i dettagli sulla natura del suo reclamo.

È possibile ottenere questo documento su audiocassetta, in Braille, in caratteri di grandi dimensioni e in vari altri formati, qualora lo richieda. Si prega di contattare il ricercatore a o s1516840@ed.ac.uk e di indicare il numero di riferimento che le è stato attribuito.

Per informazioni generali su come utilizziamo i suoi dati si consiglia anche:
https://www.ed.ac.uk/records-management/privacy-notice-research

MODULO DEL CONSENSO DEL PARTECIPANTE

Numero di riferimento [____]

Titolo dello studio [temporaneo]: To GDP or not to GDP? Alla ricerca dei fattori che promuovono e inibiscono l'uso e impatto delle metriche del benessere in Scozia ed in Italia.

Si prega di firmare con le proprie iniziali

1. Confermo di aver letto e compreso la scheda informativa del partecipante relativa allo studio sopra citato. ☐
2. Mi è stata data l'opportunità di prendere in considerazione le informazioni fornite, porre domande e avere risposte a queste domande in modo soddisfacente. ☐
3. Comprendo che la mia partecipazione è volontaria. ☐
4. Comprendo che i miei dati resi anonimi saranno archiviati indefinitamente e potrebbero essere utilizzati in future ricerche approvate eticamente. ☐
5. Accetto di prendere parte a questo studio. ☐
6. Acconsento alla registrazione audio di questa intervista da parte del ricercatore. ☐
7. Acconsento all'utilizzo del mio nome da parte del ricercatore per la produzione di materiale formale di ricerca (come ad es. tesi, articoli accademici, *working* o *conference papers*, etc.). ☐

Nome della persona che dà il consenso	Data	Firma
_____	_____	_____

Nome della persona che ha preso il consenso	Data	Firma
_____	_____	_____

Appendix E

List of Newspapers

Scotland	Italy
Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser	Avvenire
Ayrshire Post	Avvenire Online
Blairgowrie Advertiser	Citynews Italy
Daily Record	Corriere Adriatico
dailyrecord.co.uk	Corriere Adriatico Online
Dumfries and Galloway Standard	Corriere del Sud
East Kilbride News	Corriere delle Alpi
Evening Express	Corriere della Sera[149]
Evening Times	Espresso.it[150]
Hamilton Advertiser	Gazzetta di Mantova
Holyrood	Gazzetta di Mantova Online
Kilmarnock Standard	Gazzetta di Parma Online News
Lennox Herald	Il Fatto Quotidiano
Paisley Daily Express	Il Fatto Quotidiano Online
Perthshire Advertiser	Il Gazzettino
Stirling Observer	Il Gazzettino Online
Strathearn Herald	Il Giornale
Sunday Herald	Il Giorno
Sunday Mail	Il Mattino
Sunday Sun	Il Mattino Online
The Galloway News	Il Mattino di Padova
The Herald	Il Messaggero
The Irvine Herald	Il Messaggero Online
The Press and Journal	Il Nuovo Quotidiano di Puglia Online
thescottishsun.co.uk	Il Piccolo
West Lothian Courier	Il Piccolo Online
Wishaw Press	Il Resto del Carlino
UK-wide	Il Secolo XIX Online
Daily Mail*	Il Sole 24 ORE Digital Replica of Print Edition
Daily Star Sunday	Il Sole 24 ORE – Online
Daily Star*	ItaliaOggi
dailystar.co.uk	ItaliaOggi7
express.co.uk	La Gazzetta dello Sport

[149] 15 January 2021 edition not available.
[150] Gap in coverage between 5 February and 25 March 2021.

Financial Times	La Nazione
Financial Times (FT.Com)[151]	La Nuova di Venezia e Mestre
i	La Provincia Pavese
Independent Online[152]	La Provincia Pavese Online
Mail Online	La Repubblica
Metro*	La Repubblica.it
Mirror.co.uk	La Repubblica Bari
Sunday Express*	La Repubblica Bologna
Sunday People*	La Repubblica Firenze
sundaytimes.co.uk	La Repubblica Genova
The Daily Express*	La Repubblica Milano
The Daily Mirror*	La Repubblica Napoli
The Daily Telegraph*	La Repubblica Palermo
The Guardian	La Repubblica Roma
The Independent	La Repubblica Torino
The Mail on Sunday	La Sentinella del Canavese
The Observer	La Sentinella del Canavese Online
The Sun*	La Stampa[153]
The Sunday Telegraph*	La Stampa Online[154]
The Sunday Times*	La Tribuna di Treviso
The Telegraph Online	Leggo
The Times*	L'Espresso
thesun.co.uk	Linkiesta.it
thetimes.co.uk	Messaggero Veneto
	Messaggero Veneto Online
Tot: 56 (27+29)	**Tot: 58**

*: includes Scotland edition

[151] The Financial Times is subject to a 30-day embargo, hence 2021 data in the case of Scotland were collected in February 2022.

[152] Gap in coverage between 28 August 2020 and 1 September 2020, and between 26 September 2020 and 28 September 2020.

[153] Gap in coverage between 23 April and 6 May 2018.

[154] Gap in coverage between 23 April and 8 May 2018.

Notes:

- to collect information about all the Scottish, UK-wide and Italian sources covered by Factiva I had to click on every single source and take note of the type of coverage provided and the date this started, ceased or was suspended, as well as the language and the country of origin of each publication (this took me four months to complete). Lists of sources available can be found by opening the Search Builder, clicking on Select Source Category, By Region, and then on the country of choice. As regards the UK, sources can only be filtered by Sub-Region. This means that I could get a list of all Scottish sources, but not of UK-wide ones. However, sources without Sub-Region codes, as in the case of UK-wide titles, and particularly UK-wide newspapers, can be found under By Type, By Newspaper, and by then selecting the Newspapers: UK filter (at the time of writing, February 2022, the above process cannot be followed as such filter does not include UK-wide newspapers only anymore but all newspapers that circulate within the UK).
- For a detailed list of all supplements and local editions covered, please refer to the information provided by Factiva under the "i" button next to sources which can be retrieved either by following the above process or by searching for every source manually in the Search Builder.

Appendix F

List of Radio Stations and TV Channels

Scotland	Italy
Radio (owner)	**Radio (owner)**
Central 103 FM (New Wave Media/John Quinn)	GR Parlamento (RAI)
CFM Carlisle (Bauer)	ISORADIO (Rai)
Clyde 1 (Bauer)	R101 (RadioMediaset)
Forth 1 (Bauer)	Radio 105 (RadioMediaset)
Forth 2 (Bauer)	Radio 24 (Gruppo 24 ORE/Confindustria)
Heart Scotland East (Global)	Radio Capital (GEDI)
Heart Scotland West (Global)	Radio Deejay (GEDI)
Kingdom FM (DC Thomson)*	Radio Popolare (ERREPI)
Moray Firth (Bauer)	Radio Radicale (Centro di Produzione S.p.A./Associazione Marco Pannella)
Northsound 1 (Bauer)	Radio Rai 1 (Rai)
Original 106 FM (DC Thomson)**	Radio Rai 2 (Rai)
Radio Borders (Bauer)	Radio Rai 3 (Rai)
Tay FM Dundee (Bauer)	Rai Sender Bozen (Rai)
Wave 102/Pure Radio (DC Thomson)	RDS (Radio Dimensione Suono S.p.A.)
West Sound (Bauer)	RMC (RadioMediaset)
TV (owner)	RTL 102.5 (RTL 102.5 Hit Radio S.r.l.)
BBC Scotland (BBC)	**TV (owner)**
BBC 1 Scotland (BBC)	Antenna 3 (Mediapason)
ITV1 Border (ITV)	Canale 5 (Mediaset)
STV (part of the ITV network)	Class CNBC (Class Editori)
UK-wide	Italia 1 (Mediaset)
Radio (owner)	La7 (Cairo Communication S.p.A.)
Absolute Radio (Bauer)	Milanow (Mediapason)
Capital XTRA (Global)	Odeon24 (Gruppo Striscione)
BBC 1 Radio (BBC)	Rai 1 (Rai)
BBC 2 Radio (BBC)	Rai 2 (Rai)
BBC Radio 1Xtra (BBC)	Rai 3 (Rai)
BBC Radio 3 (BBC)	Rai 5 (Rai)
BBC Radio 4 (BBC)	Rai News (Rai)
BBC Radio 5 Live (BBC)	Rai Sport (Rai)
BBC Radio 6 Music (BBC)	Rete Quattro (Mediaset)

Kerrang! (Bauer)	Sky News TG 24 (Sky Italia)
LBC (Global)	Telecity/7GOLD (7 Gold S.r.l.)
LBC News (Global)	Telelombardia (Mediapason)
Share Radio (Share Premium Ltd)	Telenova (Multimedia San Paolo S.r.l.)
talkRADIO (Wireless)	TGcom24 (Mediaset)
talkSPORT (Wireless)	TG Norba 24 (Telenorba S.p.A.)
XFM (Global)	TV8 (Sky Italia)
TV (owner)	
5STAR (ViacomCBS)	
BBC Four (BBC)	
BBC News 24 (BBC)	
BBC Parliament (BBC)	
Channel 4 (Channel Four Television Corporation)	
FIVE (ViacomCBS)	
Sky News (Sky)	
Sky Sports F1 (Sky)	
Sky Sports News (Sky)	
Tot: 44 (16+15) + (9+4)	**Tot: 37 (16+21)**

* Acquired by DC Thomson in March 2019.
** Acquired by DC Thomson in March 2019.

Notes: I attributed references made on Kingdom FM and Original 106 FM after the above dates to DC Thomson, and those made before to their previous owner, labelling duplicates accordingly.

Appendix G

List of queries searched for – Scotland

Notes:

- Factiva is not case-sensitive. TVEyes is only case-sensitive when it comes to the use of operators such as AND or OR. As far as TheyWorkForYou is concerned, while this does not seem to be case-sensitive, the Frequently Asked Questions section of the website includes a few examples of operators that can be used to refine searches, and these are all written in block capitals. To be on the safe side, every time I used any search operators I wrote them in capital letters.
- Double quotation marks were used to locate exact results. Except in one case (see notes on the BLI), they were not however used on Factiva since this already locates exact results.
- As far as TVEyes is concerned, it is worth noting that in some cases it was not possible to use the "*main word in metric's name" AND ("developer's name" OR "acronym if commonly used")* string (see 6.3.2.3). When a common query like *quality of life* was associated with a less common one like *Monocle*, this would usually return 0-50 results which would enable me to look at them and manually delete any irrelevant mentions (it turned out all of them were). When none of the queries were common (as in *vibrant economy* and *Grant Thornton*), things would be even easier as TVEyes would usually return no results at all. However, when both queries were popular, or when one was the result of a mistranscription, the number of results returned would be too high for me to even skim read their transcripts which is why the above string could not be used. Searching for *"Human Development" AND ("UN" OR "United Nations")*, for instance, would have returned all segments in which speakers mentioned the UN and its work on human development, or quoted someone from the UN talking about human development, or in which words such as 'un-necessary' and 'human development' appeared together, even though in all such cases no one referenced to the HDI.
- In the case of TVEyes and parliamentary archives I had to search for queries separately (see 6.3.2.4, 6.4.2). The · sign is therefore used below to separate queries from each other.
- In the case of TheyWorkForYou, mentions of different queries relating to the same metric which were only meant to spell out the metric's name were labelled as duplicates (e.g. in the case of phrases like "the NPF, the National Performance Framework, is Scotland's…" only one reference was counted).

Metric	**Factiva** (newspapers)	**TVEyes** (radio and TV)	**TheyWorkForYou** (Parliament)
Bank of Scotland QoLS	**Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey or Halifax Quality of Life Survey or [Quality of Life near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (Bank of Scotland or Halifax)**	• **"Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey"** • **("Bank of Scotland" AND "Quality of Life") NOT "Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey"** • **"Halifax Quality of Life Survey"** • **("Halifax" AND "Quality of Life") NOT "Halifax Quality of Life Survey"**	• **"Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey"** • **"Bank of Scotland" AND "Quality of Life"** • **"Halifax Quality of Life Survey"** • **"Halifax" AND "Quality of Life"**
	The indicators in the Bank of Scotland and Halifax surveys are the same, the only difference is that the latter is measured for the UK whereas the former is measured for Scotland only and therefore branded as a Bank of Scotland output (both Halifax and Bank of Scotland are part of the Lloyds Banking Group). The Halifax QoLS is therefore relevant to a Scottish audience (whereas the Bank of Scotland QoLS will not be relevant to a Welsh audience), which is why both names were searched for.	Contrarily to Italy (see Appendix H), in the case of Scotland I did not add a list of keywords such as *report* after e.g. *("Halifax" AND "Quality of Life")*. This is because contrarily to e.g. ISTAT or *Sole 24 ORE*, Halifax is not used as widely (since Halifax does not issue official statistics or own a TV channel or a radio station), meaning the number of results returned was always small and this did not require the addition of other words. Note that I could not search for e.g. *("Halifax" AND "Quality of Life") NOT ("Halifax Quality of Life Survey" OR "Bank of Scotland Quality of Life Survey")*, so I checked manually whether Halifax references had already been counted under Bank of Scotland and vice versa.	There was no need to add *NOT "metric's name"* because the first and third queries returned 0 results each.
	There was no need to add the Saxon genitive to the metric's name as in *Bank of Scotland's Quality of Life Survey* since items in which this expression was used were captured by the second half of the string in the case of Factiva and the *("main word in metric's name" AND "developer's name")* string in the case of TVEyes and TheyWorkForYou.		
BCI	**Basic Capabilities Index or Basic Capabilities Report or [Basic Capabilities near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Social Watch**	• **"Basic Capabilities Index"** • **"Basic Capabilities Report"** • **"Basic Capabilities" AND "Social Watch"**	• **"Basic Capabilities Index"** • **"Basic Capabilities Report"** • **"Basic Capabilities" AND "Social Watch"**
BLI	**Better Life Index or How's Life Report or How is Life Report or [(Better Life or How is Life or How's Life) near15 (index or**	• **"Better Life Index"** • **"How is Life Report"** • **"How's Life Report"**	• **"Better Life Index"** • **"How is Life Report"** • **"How's Life Report"**

	report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (OECD or "Organi?ation for Economic Co-operation and Development" or "Organi?ation for Economic Cooperation and Development")	• **("Better Life" OR "How's Life" OR "How is Life") AND ("OECD" or "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development")**	• **("Better Life" OR "How's Life" OR "How is Life") AND ("OECD" or "Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development")**
	The ? sign is used to yield articles in which both the word organisation and organization have been used. Double quotation marks were in this case used since the full name of the OECD contains *and* in it which Factiva therefore interprets as the *and* operator.	Both with and without the hyphen and with *Organization* in place of *Organisation*. Note that in the case of TVEyes coverage of the second and third queries starts from June 2019. However, this is unlikely to have affected findings since both queries never returned any results since (not to mention that no How is Life Report was published in 2018).	
EURSPI	Given that the EURSPI contains the words *Social Progress Index* in its name, I just read the items in which mentions of the SPI were found to see which ones were about the SPI and which ones about the EURSPI instead.		
GCI	**Good Country Index or Good Country Report or [Good Country near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Simon Anholt**	• **"Good Country Index"** • **"Good Country Report"** • **"Good Country" AND "Simon Anholt"**	• **"Good Country Index"** • **"Good Country Report"** • **"Good Country" AND "Simon Anholt"**
GGCI	**Good Growth for Cities Index or Good Growth for Cities Report or [Good Growth near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (PwC or PricewaterhouseCoopers)**	• **"Good Growth for Cities Index"** • **"Good Growth for Cities Report"** • **"Good Growth" AND ("PwC" OR "PricewaterhouseCoopers")**	• **"Good Growth for Cities Index"** • **"Good Growth for Cities Report"** • **"Good Growth" AND ("PwC" OR "PricewaterhouseCoopers")**
		Note that coverage of the first two queries starts from June 2019. They never returned any results since, and the GGCI as the analysis of newspapers also showed was among the least mentioned metrics in the sample, hence this small gap in coverage will have had little to no effect.	
GIP	**Glasgow Indicators Project or [Understanding Glasgow near15 (index or indicator or indicators or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or**	• **"Understanding Glasgow"** • **"Glasgow Indicators Project"**	• **"Understanding Glasgow"** • **"Glasgow Indicators Project"**

	league table or league tables)] near15 (Glasgow Centre for Population Health or Glasgow Center for Population Health or GCPH)		
	The words *indicator* and *indicators* were added given that the GIP is a dashboard of indicators, hence journalists may have used them instead of e.g. report. *Understanding Glasgow* was not searched for individually because it is an expression that could be used for other purposes as well.	There was no need to add other queries because the ones above returned a handful of results each, in fact often none at all, hence I could just go through each of them manually.	
GNH	**Gross National Happiness**	**"Gross National Happiness"**	**"Gross National Happiness"**
GPI	**Genuine Progress Indicator**	**"Genuine Progress Indicator"**	**"Genuine Progress Indicator"**
HDI	**Human Development Index or Human Development Report or [(Human Development or HDI) near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (UN or United Nations)**	• **"Human Development Index"** • **"Human Development Report"** • **"HDI"**	• **"Human Development Index"** • **"Human Development Report"** • **"HDI"**
		As I explained above, I could not add the query "*Human Development" AND ("UN" OR "United Nations")* given the popularity of the words in question.	
		Note that for some reasons I cannot retrieve data for the period of November 2018-April 2019. While there is therefore a small gap in coverage, the remaining 85% of coverage, which includes the releases of the 2019 and 2020 HDI (no HDI was issued in 2021), is unaffected.	
HKI	**Humankind Index or Humankind Report or Human Kind Index or Human Kind Report or [(Humankind or Human Kind) near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Oxfam**	• **"Humankind Index"** • **"Human kind Index"** • **"Humankind Report"** • **"Human kind Report"**	• **"Humankind Index"** • **"Human kind Index"** • **"Humankind Report"** • **"Human kind Report"** • **"Humankind" AND "Oxfam"**
	The query *human kind* was added because contrarily to all other metrics the HKI contains a word in its name (humankind) which may have been written/transcribed incorrectly as two separate words (as indeed I found to be the case).		
		Due to *Humankind* and *Oxfam* being common words, I could not add the query	Contrarily to TVEyes, I could search for the last query since both words are mentioned

		"Humankind" AND "Oxfam" (I did search for it anyway unofficially to make sure I was not missing relevant mentions, but I never found any).	less frequently by MSPs than they are by journalists (e.g. Oxfam was mentioned in 2,150 articles between July and December 2021 in the newspapers included in the sample, but only 11 times in the Scottish Parliament).
HPI	**Happy Planet Index or Happy Planet Report or [Happy Planet near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (NEF or New Economics Foundation or WEAll or Wellbeing Economy Alliance)**	• **"Happy Planet Index"** • **"Happy Planet Report"** • **"Happy Planet" AND ("NEF" OR "New Economics Foundation")** • **"Happy Planet" AND ("WEAll" OR "Wellbeing Economy Alliance")**	• **"Happy Planet Index"** • **"Happy Planet Report"** • **"Happy Planet" AND ("NEF" OR "New Economics Foundation")** • **"Happy Planet" AND ("WEAll" OR "Wellbeing Economy Alliance")**
	The last two queries in the case of Factiva and the fourth queries in the case of TVEyes and TheyWorkForYou were added in 2022 since the 5th iteration of the HPI, published in October 2021, was supported by WEAll and not NEF (having subscribed to TVEyes for the last time in January 2022, in the case of TVEyes coverage of this last query is limited from July to December 2021).		
ISEW	**Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare**	**"Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare"**	**"Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare"**
IWI	**Inclusive Wealth Index or Inclusive Wealth Report or [Inclusive Wealth near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (UN or United Nations)**	• **"Inclusive Wealth Index"** • **"Inclusive Wealth Report"** • **"Inclusive Wealth" AND ("UN" OR "United Nations")**	• **"Inclusive Wealth Index"** • **"Inclusive Wealth Report"** • **"Inclusive Wealth" AND ("UN" OR "United Nations")**
LPI	**Legatum Prosperity Index or Legatum Prosperity Report or [Prosperity near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Legatum**	• **"Prosperity Index"** • **"Prosperity Report"**	• **"Prosperity Index"** • **"Prosperity Report"**
	There was no need to add the Saxon genitive to the metric's name as in *Legatum's Prosperity Index* since articles in which such expression was used were captured by the second half of the string.	I did not add *Legatum* since, being it a Latin word, there is a high chance that TVEyes will not transcribe it correctly. Instead, I used a simpler string and excluded any irrelevant results manually. I also did not search for *"Prosperity" AND "Legatum"* because of the commonality of the word prosperity and the fact that, as I found, people from the Legatum Institute are frequently interviewed and often use the word prosperity	I did not add *Legatum* since the first query only returned one (irrelevant) result and the second one zero, hence there was no need to add other words.

		when talking to journalists about prosperity in general without necessarily referring to the LPI.	
Monocle QoLS	**Monocle Quality of Life Survey or [Quality of Life near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Monocle**	• **"Monocle Quality of Life Survey"** • **"Quality of Life" AND "Monocle"**	• **"Monocle Quality of Life Survey"** • **"Quality of Life" AND "Monocle"**
	There was no need to add the Saxon genitive to the metric's name as in *Monocle's Quality of Life Survey* since items in which such expression was used were captured by the second half of the string in the case of Factiva and the *("main word in metric's name" AND "developer's name")* strings in the case of TVEyes and TheyWorkForYou.		
NPF	**(National Performance Framework or Scotland Performs) near15 (Scottish Government or wellbeing or well-being or progress or website)**	• **"National Performance Framework"** • **"NPF"** • **"Scotland Performs"**	• **"National Performance Framework"** • **"NPF"** • **"Scotland Performs"**
	Searching for *National Performance Framework* only would have returned too many irrelevant results as different National Performance Frameworks exist in the world. The same applies to Scotland Performs, which if searched for alone returns articles in which journalists talk about how Scotland performs compared to e.g. England (once again, Factiva is not case-sensitive). This is the reason why I added a few keywords such as *website* and *progress* since Scotland Performs used to be the website where one could find information about progress made by the Scottish Government in achieving the objectives of the NPF.	Contrarily to Factiva, I added *NPF* because, given the smaller number of items TVEyes and TheyWorkForYou search, fewer results were returned so I could check manually whether they were about the NPF or not. Also, it is more likely that a policymaker will have used the acronym NPF in a radio conversation in which they already explained what the NPF stands for or in a parliamentary speech in which it is assumed that the audience will know its meaning rather than in a newspaper article in which there is less space for doing that. As already explained (see 6.4.2), every time I searched for metrics by their acronyms I manually went through every item returned and double checked if the mentions identified were actually about the metrics I was interested in. Note that this applies to the query *Scotland Performs* as well, meaning I manually excluded all references which were about how e.g. "Scotland performs compared to…".	
RMHI	**Royal Mail Happiness Index or Royal Mail Happiness Report or [Happiness near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Royal Mail**	• **"Royal Mail Happiness Index"** • **"Royal Mail UK Happiness Index"** • **"Happiness Index" AND "Royal Mail"**	• **"Royal Mail Happiness Index"** • **"Royal Mail UK Happiness Index"** • **"Happiness" AND "Royal Mail"**
		I had to add *Index* to the third query because given the commonality of *happiness* and *Royal Mail* searching for	

		"Happiness" AND "Royal Mail" would have returned hundreds of irrelevant results.	
	There was no need to add the Saxon genitive to the metric's name as in *Royal Mail's Happiness Index* since items in which such expression was used were captured by the second half of the string in the case of Factiva and the *("main word in metric's name" AND "developer's name")* strings in the case of TVEyes and TheyWorkForYou.		
SPI	**Social Progress Index or Social Progress Report or [Social Progress near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Social Progress Imperative**	• **"Social Progress Index"** • **"Social Progress Report"** • **"Social Progress" AND "Social Progress Imperative"**	• **"Social Progress Index"** • **"Social Progress Report"** • **"Social Progress" AND "Social Progress Imperative"**
uSwitch QoLI	**uSwitch Quality of Life Index or uSwitch's Quality of Life Index or [Quality of Life near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 uSwitch**	• **"uSwitch Quality of Life Index"** • **"Quality of Life" AND "uSwitch"**	• **"uSwitch Quality of Life Index"** **"Quality of Life" AND "uSwitch"**
	There was no need to add the Saxon genitive to the metric's name as in *uSwitch's Quality of Life Index* since items in which such expression was used were captured by the second half of the string in the case of Factiva and the *("main word in metric's name" AND "developer's name")* strings in the case of TVEyes and TheyWorkForYou.		
VEI	**Vibrant Economy Index or Vibrant Economy Report or [Vibrant Economy near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 Grant Thornton**	• **"Vibrant Economy Index"** • **"Vibrant Economy Report"** • **"Vibrant Economy" AND "Grant Thornton"**	• **"Vibrant Economy Index"** • **"Vibrant Economy Report"** **"Vibrant Economy" AND "Grant Thornton"**
WHR	**World Happiness Report or World Happiness Index or [Happiness near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (UN or United Nations)**	• **"World Happiness Report"** • **"World Happiness Index"** • **("Happiness Index" AND "UN") NOT ("World Happiness Index" OR "World Happiness Report")** • **("Happiness Index" AND "United Nations") NOT ("World Happiness Index" OR "World Happiness Report")** • **("Happiness Report" AND "UN") NOT ("World Happiness Index" OR "World Happiness Report")** • **("Happiness Report" AND "United Nations") NOT ("World Happiness Index"**	• **"World Happiness Report"** • **"World Happiness Index"** • **("Happiness Index" OR "Happiness Report") AND ("UN" OR "United Nations")**

		OR "World Happiness Report")	
	World Happiness Index is the only unofficial alternative name I searched for, which as I expected and as I found is often misused as a synonym for the WHR, despite the former being another metric.		
		Given that the first two queries yielded hundreds of results, I had to add the *NOT* part to the remaining strings to avoid including the same references twice (see 6.3.2.3).	In this case adding *NOT "metric's name"* was not necessary since the WHR was never mentioned by MSPs.
WWF LPI	**Living Planet Index or Living Planet Report or [Living Planet near15 (index or report or reports or survey or surveys or list or lists or ranking or rankings or league table or league tables)] near15 (WWF or World Wide Fund or Zoological Society of London or ZSL)**	• **"Living Planet Index"** • **"Living Planet Report"**	• **"Living Planet Index"** • **"Living Planet Report"**
		Given that the WWF owns a Living Planet Centre and that *Living Planet* and *WWF* are therefore both common queries, as well as the fact that the word WWF could be returned as a mistranscription of other words in the case of TVEyes, I could not search "*Living Planet" AND "WWF".*	

Appendix H

List of queries searched for – Italy

Notes:

- see notes above in Appendix G.
- As regards the archives made available by the Italian Parliament, the Chamber's search tool does not allow the use of any operator whereas the Senate's does. However, the Chamber's archive allows the use of three filters: *Tutte le parole*, which replaces the AND operator; *Frase esatta*, which replaces double quotation marks; and *Almeno una parola,* which replaces the OR operator. Queries shown below were thus searched for with double quotation marks on the Senate's archive and without on the Chamber's, turning the *Frase esatta* filter on in this case. Note that only one such filter could be used at a time. This means that I could not use advanced search strings that contained, for instance, both double quotation marks and the AND operator (e.g. *"qualità della vita" AND "Sole 24 ORE"*). In such cases, I searched for strings without any operators but with the *Tutte le parole* filter on to replace the AND operator (I could not use the *Frase esatta* filter to replace double quotation marks since that would have searched for *qualità della vita Sole 24 ORE* which would have returned no results given that *qualità della vita Sole 24 ORE* is grammatically incorrect in Italian and therefore meaningless differently from English in which *e.g. Bank of Scotland quality of life* could return items mentioning the Bank of Scotland Quality of Life survey). This means that the queries I searched for could be found in any part of the transcripts returned without necessarily being next to each other. This significantly increased the number of potentially irrelevant results, which is why I checked each transcript manually to make sure only relevant mentions were counted.
- In the case of TVEyes and of parliamentary archives I could not use elaborated strings with too many queries (6.3.2.3, 6.4.2). This means I could not use a list of keywords like the one I searched for on Factiva but instead had to search for less advanced strings separately and then delete any irrelevancies manually. However, in three cases (those of the BES and of the ItaliaOggi and Sole 24 ORE QoLRs) I had to add some keywords because otherwise too many irrelevant results would have been returned. Once again, I could not add too many queries at the same time, hence I could only use some of the keywords that I searched for on Factiva.

Metric	**Factiva** (newspapers)	**TVEyes** (radio and TV)	**Italian Parliament official record**
ABR	**Classifica del ben vivere or classifica del benvivere or classifica sul ben vivere or classifica sul benvivere or classifica benvivere or classifica ben vivere or [(ben vivere or benvivere) near15 (indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini or mappa or mappe)] near15 Avvenire**	• **("ben vivere" OR "benvivere") AND "Avvenire"**	• **"Benvivere"** • **"Ben vivere"**
	Contrarily to the search string I used in the case of other quality of life rankings (such as the *Sole 24 ORE*'s), I added the first six queries because in a small number of articles the ABR was mentioned by *Avvenire* without any references to the name of the newspaper. Being the ranking published by it, it makes sense that they will have not always mentioned their name when talking about their own ranking. This again applies only to this ranking and not to *Sole 24 ORE*'s and *ItaliaOggi*'s. This is because the latter have the same name (so searching for *Classifica della qualità della vita* returns articles in which both the Sole 24 ORE and the ItaliaOggi QoLRs were mentioned) and because both metrics also include a much more common expression (quality of life), whereas in the case of the ABR *ben vivere* and *benvivere* are very uncommon so any articles mentioning the *classifica del benvivere* will almost certainly be about the ABR. Note also that *mappa* and *mappe* (tr. map, maps) were added because both terms are occasionally used by journalists to refer to quality of life rankings specifically.	Contrarily to the search string I used in the case of other quality of life rankings (such as the *Sole 24 ORE*'s), there was no need to add a list of keywords such as *rapporto* or *graduatoria* because again the words *benvivere* and *ben vivere* are very uncommon, so using this string returned very few results which enabled me to double check them manually.	The queries *qualità della vita Avvenire* (Chamber) and *"qualità della vita" AND "Avvenire"* (Senate) were not searched for contrarily to the cases of the Sole 24 ORE and ItaliaOggi QoLRs because both *qualità della vita* and *avvenire* are very common words but, contrarily to *Sole 24 ORE* and *ItaliaOggi*, the word *Avvenire* is not just the name of a newspaper – it also means either future or to take place, to happen. Hence, given that the Chamber's and Senate's search tools are not case-sensitive, adding the above queries would have returned many irrelevant results.
BCI	**Basic Capabilities Index or Basic Capabilities Report or indice di capacità di base or**	• **"Basic Capabilities Index"** • **"Basic Capabilities Report"** • **"Indice di capacità di base"**	• **"Basic Capabilities Index"** • **"Basic Capabilities Report"** • **"Indice di capacità di base"**

	indice delle capacità di base or rapporto delle capacità di base or rapporto sulle capacità di base or [(Basic Capabilities or capacità di base) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 Social Watch	• **"Indice delle capacità di base"** • **"Rapporto delle capacità di base"** • **"Rapporto sulle capacità di base"** • **"Capacità di base"**	• **"Indice delle capacità di base"** • **"Rapporto delle capacità di base"** • **"Rapporto sulle capacità di base"** • **"Capacità di base"**
		Since the BCI was never mentioned, I just searched for the last three queries and deleted any irrelevant results manually.	
BES	**Benessere equo e sostenibile or [(benessere or BES) near15 (indice or indici or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini or indicatore or indicatori) NOT bisogni educativi speciali] near15 (ISTAT or Istituto Nazionale di Statistica)**	• **"Benessere equo e sostenibile"** • **("BES" NOT "benessere equo e sostenibile") AND ("indicatore" OR "indicatori" OR "indice" OR "indici" OR "rapporto" OR "rapporti" OR "report" OR "indagine")**	• **"Benessere equo e sostenibile"** • **"BES"**
	Like in the case of the GIP (see Appendix G), I added the words *indicatore* and *indicatori* because several BES *indicators* were included in the DEF. I added the query *indici* because given the above journalists may have well used indices as a synonym for indicators or to refer to the different composite indices included in the BES being this a hybrid (see 4.3.2). I did not search for *benessere and (ISTAT or Istituto Nazionale di Statistica)* because this would have yielded hundreds of irrelevant results given the popularity of the first two terms particularly. As for the use of acronyms, see 6.3.1.3.		
		Searching for *BES* without any additional keywords will have returned thousands of irrelevant results since it could be a mistranscription of other words (particularly of the word 'beh', which means well as in 'well, I think that…' and which is frequently used in everyday language). Searching for *BES* using the above keywords returned irrelevant results, too – about 98% – but helped to reduce them significantly.	There was no need to add *AND ("indicatore" OR "indicatori" OR "indice" OR "indici" OR "rapporto" OR "rapporti" OR "report" OR "indagine")* after *BES* because a) contrarily to TVEyes only a few items were returned so I could check manually whether they were about the BES or not; b) the platform would have not allowed that anyway. I did not add *NOT "Benessere equo e sostenibile"* because I could not use the *NOT* operator. However, once again I went through each item returned and manually excluded not only references that were not about the BES

			but also those that I had counted already.
BLI	**Better Life Index or How's Life Report or How is Life Report or indice di vita migliore or indice della vita migliore or indice di una vita migliore or indice di migliore vita or indice della migliore vita or indice di una migliore vita or rapporto come va la vita or rapporto la vita come va or rapporto su come va la vita or rapporto sulla vita come va or rapporto di come va la vita or rapporto della vita come va or [(Better Life or How is Life or How's Life or migliore vita or vita migliore or come va la vita or la vita come va) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 ("Organi?ation for Economic Co-operation and Development" or "Organi?ation for Economic Cooperation and Development" or Organizzazione per la cooperazione e lo sviluppo economico or Organizzazione per la co-operazione e lo sviluppo economico or OECD or OCSE)**	• **"Better Life Index"** • **"How's Life Report"** • **"How is Life Report"** • **("Better Life" OR "How's Life" OR "How is Life") AND ("OECD" OR "OCSE" OR "Organizzazione per lo sviluppo e la co-operazione economica")** • **"Indice di vita migliore"** • **"Indice di migliore vita"** • **"Indice della vita migliore"** • **"Indice della migliore vita"** • **"Indice di una vita migliore"** • **"Indice di una migliore vita"** • **("Come va la vita" OR "migliore vita") AND ("OECD" OR "OCSE" OR "Organizzazione per la Co-operazione e lo Sviluppo Economico"** • **("Come va la vita" OR "migliore vita") AND ("OECD" OR "OCSE" OR "Organizzazione per la Co-operazione e lo Sviluppo Economico")**	• **"Better Life Index"** • **"How's Life Report"** • **"How is Life Report"** • **"Indice di vita migliore"** • **"Indice di migliore vita"** • **"Indice della vita migliore"** • **"Indice della migliore vita"** • **"Indice di una vita migliore"** • **"Indice di una migliore vita"** • **"How's Life"** • **"How is Life"** • **"Come va la vita"**
	See notes above on the BLI in Appendix G regarding the use of double quotation marks.	Both with and without the hyphen.	Given that *OR* and *AND* operators are not allowed on the Chamber's archive, and since the BLI was hardly ever mentioned, I just searched for the last three queries and deleted any irrelevant results manually.
EURSPI	See notes on the EURSPI in Appendix G. In the case of Scotland, all variations of the EURSPI's name always include the words 'social progress' (e.g. index of regional social progress, regional social progress index), hence there was no need to use additional queries. In the case of Italy, however, different possible translations of the EURSPI exist in which the words 'progresso sociale' may not always appear one after the other. For this reason, in addition to any references to the EURSPI found among references to the SPI, mentions returned using the following queries were also counted.		
	Indice del progresso regionale sociale or indice di progresso regionale sociale or rapporto	• **"Indice del progresso regionale sociale"**	• **"Indice del progresso regionale sociale"**

	del progresso regionale sociale or rapporto sul progresso sociale regionale or [progresso regionale sociale near15 (index or report indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (Social Progress Imperative or UE or Unione europea or European Union or EU)	• **"Indice di progresso regionale sociale"** • **"Rapporto del progresso regionale sociale"** • **"Rapporto sul progresso sociale regionale"**	• **"Indice di progresso regionale sociale"** • **"Rapporto del progresso regionale sociale"** **"Rapporto sul progresso sociale regionale"**
GNH	**Gross National Happiness or felicità interna lorda**	• **"Gross National Happiness"** • **"Felicità interna lorda"**	• **"Gross National Happiness"** • **"Felicità interna lorda"**
GCI	**Good Country Index or Good Country Report or indice del buon paese or indice del paese più buono or indice del paese buono or [(Good Country or paese buono) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 Simon Anholt**	• **"Good Country Index"** • **"Indice del buon paese"** • **"Indice del paese più buono"** • **"Indice del paese buono"** • **("Good Country" OR "paese buono" OR "buon paese") AND "Simon Anholt"**	• **"Good Country Index"** • **"Indice del buon paese"** • **"Indice del paese più buono"** • **"Indice del paese buono"** • **"Good Country"** • **"Paese buono"** • **"Buon paese"**
			See notes on the BLI.
GPI	**Genuine Progress Indicator or indicatore del progresso genuino or indicatore del progresso reale or indicatore di progresso genuino or indicatore di progresso reale**	• **"Genuine Progress Indicator"** • **"Indicatore del progresso genuino"** • **"Indicatore del progresso reale"** • **"Indicatore di progresso genuino"** • **"Indicatore di progresso reale"**	• **"Genuine Progress Indicator"** • **"Indicatore del progresso genuino"** • **"Indicatore del progresso reale"** • **"Indicatore di progresso genuino"** • **"Indicatore di progresso reale"**
HDI	**Human Development Index or Human Development Report or indice di sviluppo umano or indice dello sviluppo umano or [(Human Development or sviluppo umano or HDI or ISU) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (United Nations or Nazioni Unite or ONU)**	• **"Indice di sviluppo umano"** • **("HDI" OR "ISU") AND "Nazioni Unite"** • **"Indice dello sviluppo umano"** • **"Human Development Index"** • **"Human Development Report"** • **"Rapporto dello sviluppo umano"** • **"Rapporto sullo sviluppo umano"**	• **"Indice di sviluppo umano"** • **"HDI"** • **"ISU"** • **"Indice dello sviluppo umano"** • **"Human Development Index"** • **"Human Development Report"** • **"Rapporto dello sviluppo umano"** • **"Rapporto sullo sviluppo umano"**
	UN was not added because it means 'the' in Italian, hence it is a word that is used on an ordinary basis and since none of the tools is case-sensitive adding it would have returned thousands of		

	irrelevant items. Note that I searched not only for the English acronym HDI but also for the Italian one ISU. However, irrelevancies and duplicates excluded, neither of them returned any results.		
		The query *ONU* was excluded because it appears frequently in transcripts but only as a mistranscription of other words. Also note that the coverage of the fourth query starts from December 2019. However, this is unlikely to have affected findings since it only returned four references between December 2019 and December 2021, so the HDI does not seem to be reported much by its English name contrarily to what Morse (2015, 2016) assumed.	The difference from TVEyes is the way acronyms were searched for. This is because on TVEyes HDI or ISU can appear as mistranscriptions of other words so searching for them alone returns thousands of results. In this case, they returned only a handful of items so I could check them and eliminate any irrelevancies manually.
HPI	**Happy Planet Index or Happy Planet Report or indice del pianeta felice or indice di un pianeta felice or rapporto del pianeta felice or rapporto di un pianeta felice or rapporto sul pianeta felice or [(Happy Planet or pianeta felice) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (NEF or New Economics Foundation or WEAll or Wellbeing Economy Alliance)**	• **"Happy Planet Index"** • **"Happy Planet Report"** • **"Indice del pianeta felice"** • **("Pianeta felice" OR "Happy Planet") AND ("NEF" OR "New Economics Foundation")** • **("Pianeta felice" OR "Happy Planet") AND ("WEAll" OR "Wellbeing Economy Alliance")**	• **"Happy Planet Index"** • **"Happy Planet Report"** • **"Indice del pianeta felice"** • **"Pianeta felice"** • **"Happy Planet"**
	See notes above on the HPI in Appendix G.		See notes on the BLI.
ISEW	**Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare or indice di benessere economico sostenibile**	• **"Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare"** • **"Indice di benessere economico sostenibile"**	• **"Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare"** • **"Indice di benessere economico sostenibile"**
ItaliaOggi QoLR	**[qualità della vita near15 (indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini or mappa or mappe)] near15 (ItaliaOggi or Italia Oggi)**	• **"Qualità della vita" AND "ItaliaOggi" AND ("graduatoria" OR "rapporto" OR "classifica" OR "dossier" OR "mappa" OR "ranking" OR "indagine" OR "report")** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Italia Oggi" AND ("graduatoria" OR "rapporto OR "classifica" OR "dossier" OR "mappa" OR "ranking" OR "indagine" OR "report")**	Chamber only • **Qualità della vita ItaliaOggi** Senate only • **"Qualità della vita" AND "ItaliaOggi"** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Italia Oggi"**

	Note that I did not only search for *ItaliaOggi* but also for *Italia Oggi* since a) these are used interchangeably; b) in the case of TVEyes, this might have transcribed them with or without spaces depending on how the speaker pronounced them; c) *ItaliaOggi* is composed by two common words, 'Italia' and 'oggi', which TVEyes again might have not recognised as the paper's name but as to separated words; and d) to their regular usage which increased the likelihood of all points above. And I was right – in the case of TVEyes, using alternative spellings returned, duplicates and irrelevancies excluded, 116 additional results.		In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on. It was impossible to run the same search using *Italia Oggi* instead of *ItaliaOggi* because being both 'Italia' and 'oggi' very common words and parliamentary archives searching full days' business records, doing so would have returned hundreds of irrelevant results.
	See notes on the ABR regarding the addition of the queries *mappa* and *mappe.*	As explained above, I had to add keywords like *rapporto* to limit the number of irrelevant mentions returned: searching for *"qualità della vita" AND* either "*ItaliaOggi"* or "*Sole 24 ORE"* would have yielded many irrelevant mentions due to the frequent usage and popularity of both the query *quality of life* and of the two newspapers' names.	
IWI	**Inclusive Wealth Index or Inclusive Wealth Report or indice della ricchezza inclusiva or indice del benessere inclusivo or indice di ricchezza inclusiva or indice di benessere inclusivo or rapporto della ricchezza inclusiva or rapporto del benessere inclusivo or rapporto sul benessere inclusivo or rapporto sulla ricchezza inclusiva or [(Inclusive Wealth or ricchezza inclusiva or benessere inclusivo) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (United Nations or ONU or Nazioni Unite)**	• **"Inclusive Wealth Index"** • **"Inclusive Wealth Report"** • **"Indice di ricchezza inclusiva"** • **"Indice della ricchezza inclusiva"** • **"Indice di benessere inclusivo"** • **"Indice del benessere inclusivo"** • **("Inclusive Wealth" OR "ricchezza inclusiva" OR "benessere inclusivo") AND "Nazioni Unite"** • **"Ricchezza inclusiva"** • **"Benessere inclusivo"**	• **"Inclusive Wealth Index"** • **"Inclusive Wealth Report"** • **"Indice di ricchezza inclusiva"** • **"Indice della ricchezza inclusiva"** • **"Indice di benessere inclusivo"** • **"Indice del benessere inclusivo"** • **"Inclusive Wealth"** • **"Ricchezza inclusiva"** • **"Benessere inclusivo"**
	See notes above on the HDI regarding the exclusion of the query *UN.*	See notes above on the HDI regarding the exclusion of the queries *UN* and *ONU.* See notes on the BLI regarding the last two queries.	
			See notes above on the BLI.
LPI	**Legatum Prosperity Index or Legatum Prosperity Report or indice della prosperità or indice di prosperità or rapporto della prosperità or rapporto sulla prosperità or [(prosperity**	• **"Prosperity Index"** • **"Indice della prosperità"** • **"Indice di prosperità"** • **"Prosperity Report"** • **"Rapporto sulla prosperità"** • **"Rapporto della prosperità"**	• **"Prosperity Index"** • **"Indice della prosperità"** • **"Indice di prosperità"** • **"Prosperity Report"** • **"Rapporto sulla prosperità"** • **"Rapporto della prosperità"**

	or prosperità) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 Legatum	**• "Prosperità" AND "Legatum"**	Chamber only **• Prosperità Legatum** Senate only **• "Prosperità" AND "Legatum"**
		Note that the coverage of the fourth, fifth and sixth queries starts from June 2020. They returned no results since, and the LPI as the analysis of newspapers also showed was among the least mentioned metrics in the sample, hence this small gap in coverage will have had little to no effect at all. Additionally, the main names used to refer to the LPI, so the ones that will have been mentioned the most, were unaffected. Also note that contrarily to Scotland I was able to search for *"Prosperità" AND "Legatum"* because Legatum representatives are not interviewed in Italy as they are based in the UK, hence both queries are less likely to be found in the same transcript.	In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on.
PIQ	**Prodotto interno di qualità or (PIQ and Symbola)**	**• "Prodotto interno di qualità"** **• "PIQ" AND "Symbola"**	**• "Prodotto interno di qualità"** Chamber only **• PIQ Symbola** Senate only **• "PIQ" AND "Symbola"**
	I searched for *PIQ* as well because the aim of the PIQ was to be compared to GDP – the word PIQ itself sounds similar to the word PIL (GDP) – and it is thus likely that some will have cited its acronym only, even though this has not become as popular as e.g. HDI.		In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on.
QUARS	**Indice di qualità dello sviluppo regionale or indice di qualità regionale dello sviluppo or indice della qualità dello sviluppo regionale or indice della qualità regionale dello**	**• "QUARS"** **• "Qualità dello sviluppo regionale"** **• "Qualità regionale dello sviluppo"**	**• "QUARS"** **• "Qualità dello sviluppo regionale"** **• "Qualità regionale dello sviluppo"** Chamber only

	sviluppo or rapporto della qualità regionale dello sviluppo or rapporto sulla qualità regionale dello sviluppo or rapporto sullo sviluppo di qualità regionale or rapporto della qualità dello sviluppo regionale or [(sviluppo regionale or QUARS) near15 (indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (Sbilanciamoci or Lunaria)	**• "Sviluppo regionale" AND ("Lunaria" OR "Sbilanciamoci")**	**• Sviluppo regionale Sbilanciamoci** **• Sviluppo regionale Lunaria** Senate only **• "Sviluppo regionale" AND "Lunaria"** **• "Sviluppo regionale" AND "Sbilanciamoci"**
			In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on.
Rome BES	**[Benessere equo e sostenibile near15 (Roma Capitale or Comune di Roma)] or [BES near15 (indice or indici or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini or indicatore or indicatori) NOT bisogni educativi speciali] near15 (Roma Capitale or Comune di Roma)**	**• "Benessere equo e sostenibile" AND "Roma Capitale"** **• "Benessere equo e sostenibile" AND "Comune di Roma"** **• "BES" AND "Roma Capitale"** **• "BES" AND "Comune di Roma"**	Chamber only **• Benessere equo e sostenibile Roma Capitale** **• Benessere equo e sostenibile Comune di Roma** **• BES Roma Capitale** **• BES Comune di Roma** Senate only **• "Benessere equo e sostenibile" AND "Roma Capitale"** **• "Benessere equo e sostenibile" AND "Comune di Roma"** **• "BES" AND "Roma Capitale"** **• "BES" AND "Comune di Roma"**
	Contrarily to the case of the BES, *benessere* was not added after *BES* because Rome's Council has a directorate for Green Policies and Animal Wellbeing, so adding it will have returned irrelevant articles that mentioned either the directorate or the Council Assessor responsible for it.		In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on.
Sole 24 ORE QoLR	**[qualità della vita near15 (indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini or mappa or mappe)] near15 (Sole 24 ORE or Sole24 ORE or Sole 24ORE or**	**• "Qualità della vita" AND "Sole24Ore" AND ("graduatoria" OR "rapporto" OR "classifica" OR "dossier" OR "mappa" OR "ranking" OR "indagine")**	Chamber only **• Qualità della vita Sole24ORE** Senate only **• "Qualità della vita" AND "Sole24ORE"**

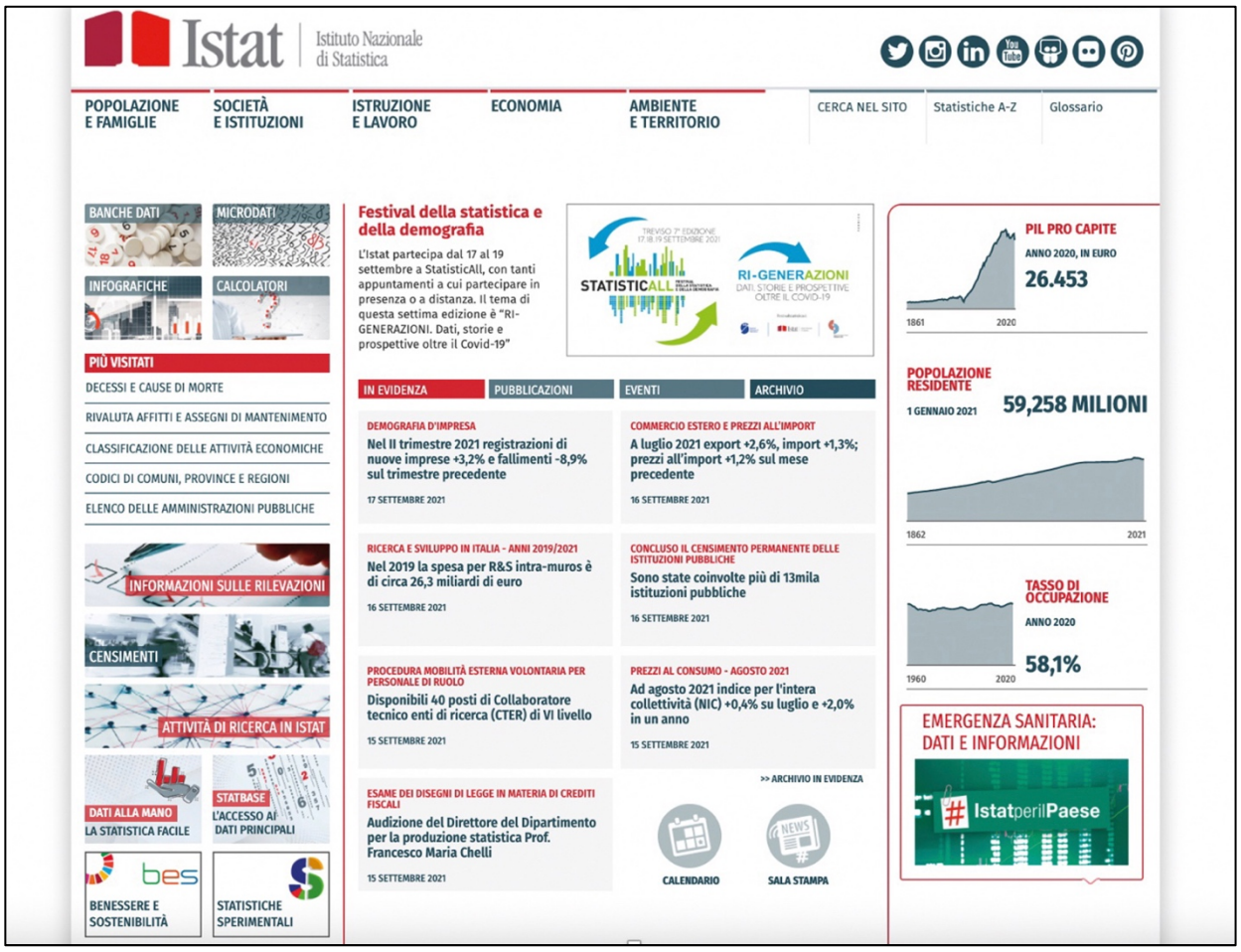
	Sole24ORE or Soleventiquattrore or Sole ventiquattrore or Soleventiquattr'ore or Sole ventiquattr'ore)	• **"Qualità della vita" AND "Sole 24 Ore" AND ("graduatoria" OR "rapporto" OR "classifica" OR "dossier" OR "mappa" OR "ranking" OR "indagine")**	• **"Qualità della vita" AND "Sole 24ORE"** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Sole 24 ORE"** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Sole24 ORE"** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Soleventiquattrore"** • **Qualità della vita" AND "Sole ventiquattrore"** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Soleventiquattr'ore"** • **"Qualità della vita" AND "Sole ventiquattr'ore"**
	See notes on the ABR regarding the addition of the queries *mappa* and *mappe.*	See notes at the beginning and on the ItaliaOggi QoLR. There was no need to use alternative spelled-out versions of *Sole 24 ORE* because TVEyes recognises the paper's name and as such it always transcribes it the correct way (I did try searching for e.g. *soleventiquattrore* but no results were ever returned).	In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on. Contrarily to the case of the Senate, I could not search for alternative spelled-out versions of *Sole 24 ORE* for the same reasons highlighted above in relation to the ItaliaOggi QoLR.
	See notes on the ItaliaOggi QoLR.		
SPI	**Social Progress Index or Social Progress Report or indice del progresso sociale or indice di progresso sociale or rapporto del progresso sociale or rapporto sul progresso sociale or [(Social Progress or progresso sociale) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 Social Progress Imperative**	• **"Social Progress Index"** • **"Indice del Progresso Sociale"** • **"Indice di Progresso Sociale"** • **"Social Progress Report"** • **"Rapporto sul progresso sociale"** • **"Rapporto del progresso sociale"** • **"Progresso sociale" AND "Social Progress Imperative"**	• **"Social Progress Index"** • **"Indice del Progresso Sociale"** • **"Indice di Progresso Sociale"** • **"Social Progress Report"** • **"Rapporto sul progresso sociale"** • **"Rapporto del progresso sociale"** Chamber only • **Progresso sociale Social Progress Imperative** Senate only • **"Progresso sociale" AND "Social Progress Imperative"**
		Note that the coverage of the last three queries starts from December 2019. However, as the analysis of newspapers also showed the SPI was among the least mentioned metrics in the sample, hence this small gap in coverage will have had little to no effect at all. Additionally, the main	In the case of the Chamber, the search was performed with the *Tutte le parole* filter on.

		names used to refer to the SPI, so the ones that will have been mentioned the most, were unaffected.	
WHR	**World Happiness Report or World Happiness Index or indice mondiale di felicità or indice mondiale della felicità or indice della felicità del mondo or indice della felicità nel mondo or indice di felicità del mondo or indice di felicità nel mondo or rapporto mondiale della felicità or rapporto mondiale sulla felicità or rapporto della felicità del mondo or rapporto sulla felicità del mondo or rapporto della felicità nel mondo or rapporto sulla felicità nel mondo or [(happiness or felicità) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (United Nations or Nazioni Unite or ONU)**	• **"World Happiness Report"** • **"World Happiness Index"** • **"Rapporto mondiale sulla felicità" NOT ("World Happiness Report" OR "World Happiness Index")** • **"Rapporto mondiale della felicità" NOT ("World Happiness Report" OR "World Happiness Index")** • **"Felicità" AND "Nazioni Unite" NOT ("World Happiness Report" OR "World Happiness Index" OR "rapporto mondiale della felicità" OR "rapporto mondiale sulla felicità")**	• **"World Happiness Report"** • **"World Happiness Index"** • **"Indice mondiale di felicità"** • **"Indice mondiale della felicità"** • **"Indice della felicità del mondo"** • **"Indice della felicità nel mondo"** • **"Indice di felicità del mondo"** • **"Indice di felicità nel mondo"** • **"Rapporto mondiale della felicità"** • **"Rapporto mondiale sulla felicità"** • **"Rapporto della felicità del mondo"** • **"Rapporto sulla felicità del mondo"** • **"Rapporto della felicità nel mondo"** • **"Rapporto sulla felicità nel mondo"**
	See notes above on the HDI regarding the exclusion of the query *UN*.	See notes above on the HDI regarding the exclusion of the queries *UN* and *ONU*.	
		The last query was added to return articles in which the WHR may have been mentioned using expressions like 'del mondo' instead of 'mondiale', as well as alternative spelled-out versions of the WHR's unofficial name (World Happiness Index). This query was not used for Scotland since the name of the WHR is not translated there.	There was no need to add the *NOT* part of the string like in the case of TVEyes since the WHR was only mentioned once by MPs, hence there were no duplicates.
WWF LPI	**Living Planet Index or Living Planet Report or indice del pianeta vivente or indice di un pianeta vivente or rapporto del pianeta vivente or rapporto di un pianeta vivente or rapporto sul pianeta vivente or [(Living Planet or pianeta vivente) near15 (index or report or indice or rapporto or rapporti**	• **"Living Planet Index"** • **"Living Planet Report"** • **"Indice del pianeta vivente"** • **"Indice di un pianeta vivente"**	• **"Living Planet Index"** • **"Living Planet Report"** • **"Indice del pianeta vivente"** • **"Indice di un pianeta vivente"**

	or classifica or classifiche or graduatoria or graduatorie or ranking or dossier or indagine or indagini)] near15 (WWF or World Wide Fund or Zoological Society of London or ZSL or Zoological Society di Londra or Società di zoologia di Londra or Società zoologica di Londra)		
		See notes in Appendix H on the WWF LPI regarding the exclusion of the string *("main word in metric's name" AND "developer's name").*	

Appendix I

ISTAT's website's homepage



Source: www.istat.it [taken on 19/09/2021].

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