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From subjectivity to inter-subjectivity? Not quite so!

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From subjectivity to inter-subjectivity? Not quite so!

LEANDRO PRADOS DE LA ESCOSURA

Thanks for your reply. Let me answer point by point.

1) You claim not to be against composite indices of well-being. However, this is not what transpires from your text.

2) You propose to move away from particular subjective indices towards a common framework. Fair enough, but I reject my work's depiction as *ad hoc* and subjective. As I tried to explain in my reply, my work builds on the capabilities approach to well-being that depicts human development as enlarging people's choices. This is one of the possible way to address well-being as the utility (welfare) or the opulence (income) approaches are (Sen 1984).¹

3) As you insist on Amendola, Gabbuti and Vecchi (2018) contribution, perhaps you should acknowledge that they are simply against composite indices. Read your quote from their paper again: «any history based on composite indices is one where both data and history play a minor role, if any».

4) Your description of GDP as a weakly founded concept only distantly related to welfare economics ironically places it, together with the HDI (and Auke Rijkma's welfare index derived using factor analysis), in Ravallion's «mashup' indices» waste bin.

5) You refer to GDP as a «very convenient measure». This was exactly the purpose of the HDI. As Amartya Sen (2020) put it, its purpose was «to compete with the GDP with another single number – that of human development – which would be no less vulgar than the GDP, but would contain more relevant information than the GDP managed to do».

6) You say the well-being debate is undermined because it is a «very abstract concept». I would add that well-being could be depicted as a «latent» variable and that is why a composite index such as the *Augmented Human Development Index* may provide a solution.

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¹ For example, Daniel Gallardo-Albarrán (2019) recently made an important contribution to the study of long-run well-being from a welfare perspective.

7) There is no lack of consensus about how to measure well-being, but there are different approaches. I would like to remind that the HDI is already 30 years old and remains widely used unlike many other attempts to provide a synthetic index of well-being over the last 70 years (Klasen 2018). This means that it has been accepted by many, including scholars. Obviously not everybody does like it, but this also happens with GDP as a measure of well-being.

8) You use «subjective» in a very loose way. There is nothing more subjective in the capabilities approach than in the welfare approach to well-being.

9) Let us resume our conversation about the assessment of well-being. Surely different cognitive perspectives will help to improve it.

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