



Special Session Proposal

Beyond GDP: Rethinking Progress and Well-Being in Regions and Cities

Mihaela Clincu, mihaela.clinclu@uaic.ro, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi*
Sébastien Bourdin, sbourdin@em-normandie.fr, EM Normandie Business School
Bogdan-Constantin Ibănescu, ibanescu.bogdan@uaic.ro, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi

Abstract

Please insert here a brief explanation of your special session topic – max one page

In recent years, the “beyond GDP” paradigm has gained renewed relevance as societies, cities, and regions confront the intertwined challenges of inequality, climate change, and social transformation. Traditional economic indicators such as GDP have proven insufficient to capture the complex realities of human progress, particularly the environmental, social, and cultural dimensions that shape people’s lives and territorial cohesion (Giovannini & Rondinella, 2018; Shrotryia & Singh, 2020).

This special session aims to explore new frameworks for understanding and measuring well-being and quality of life across regional and urban contexts. The debate calls for multidimensional approaches that combine objective and subjective measures of well-being (Huppert et al., 2009) and recognize the importance of place-based determinants such as governance quality, cultural capital, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability (Crisp et al., 2023). Moving beyond the limits of growth-centric models, recent approaches promote more inclusive and ecologically grounded models of urban and regional development (Büchs & Koch, 2019; Estes & Sirgy, 2019; Stiglitz et al., 2009).

This session invites theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions that address, but not limited to:

- New conceptualizations of well-being, sustainability, and inclusive development at regional and urban scales;
- Spatial and socio-economic inequalities in quality of life;
- The role of local governance, social innovation, and culture in advancing well-being policies;
- Comparative analyses of well-being measurement frameworks and policy approaches in cities and regions;
- Integration of subjective well-being, environmental, and cultural indicators into territorial policy evaluation.



The special session will be organised within the project *SAGES: Spatial Analysis of Growth, Environment and Sustainable Well-being* – project code CF 20/27.07.2023, contract no. MCID – DGGCPNRR 760275/26.03.2024, financed through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan Call no. PNRR-III-C9-2023 – I8_runda 2

References

- Büchs, M., & Koch, M. (2019). Challenges for the degrowth transition: The debate about wellbeing. *Futures*, 105, 155-165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2018.09.002>
- Crisp, R., Waite, D., Green, A., Hughes, C., Lupton, R., MacKinnon, D., & Pike, A. (2023). 'Beyond GDP' in cities: Assessing alternative approaches to urban economic development. *Urban Studies*, 61(7), 1209-1229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00420980231187884> (Original work published 2024)
- Estes, R. J., & Sirgy, M. J. (2019). Global advances in quality of life and well-being: Past, present, and future. *Social Indicators Research*, 141(3), 1137-1164. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-1869-4>
- Giovannini, E., & Rondinella, T. (2018). Going beyond GDP: theoretical approaches. In *Handbook of research on economic and social well-being* (pp. 1-51). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781953716.00006>
- Huppert, F. A., Marks, N., Clark, A., Siegrist, J., Stutzer, A., Vittersø, J., & Wahrendorf, M. (2009). Measuring well-being across Europe: Description of the ESS well-being module and preliminary findings. *Social Indicators Research*, 91(3), 301-315. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-008-9346-0>
- Shrotryia, V. K., & Singh, S. V. P. (2020). Measuring progress beyond GDP: A theoretical perspective. *Emerging Economy Studies*, 6(2), 143-165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2394901520983784>
- Stiglitz, J. E., Sen, A., & Fitoussi, J. P. (2009, September). *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*.