

**QUALITY
OF LIFE
AND
WELLBEING**

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AND
WELLBEING**

STATE of the NATION

EDITED BY

REDDY • BOHLER-MULLER • MOKOMANE • SOUDIEN



Published by HSRC Press
Private Bag X9182, Cape Town, 8000, South Africa
www.hsrcpress.ac.za

First published 2024

ISBN (soft cover) 978-0-7969-2663-0
ISBN (pdf) 978-0-7969-2664-7

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This book has undergone a double-blind independent peer-review process overseen by the HSRC Press Editorial Board.

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Copy-edited by Karen Press
Typeset by Robin Yule
Cover design by Riaan Wilmans
Cover photo by Wirestock Creators, Cape Town, South Africa. December 06, 2011, Diverse children playing rugby at school.
Printed by [Name of printer, city, country]

Distributed in Africa by Blue Weaver
Tel: +27 (021) 701 4477; Fax Local: (021) 701 7302
www.blueweaver.co.za

Distributed worldwide (except central and southern Africa)
by Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
Tel: +1 303-444-6684; Fax: +1 303-444-0824; Email: cservice@rienner.com
www.rienner.com

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Suggested citation: Vasu Reddy, Narnia Bohler-Muller, Zitha Mokomane and Crain Soudien (Eds) (2024). *State of the Nation – Quality of Life and Wellbeing in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press

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Foreword

This twentieth-anniversary edition of *State of the Nation* focuses aptly on quality of life and wellbeing, and comes at a critical moment as South Africa commemorates 30 years since our first democratic elections. As highlighted by the volume editors, *State of the Nation: Quality of Life and Wellbeing* connects in a serendipitous manner to the two previous editions that analysed and dissected poverty, ethics and politics. A constant thread running through those volumes, and through the current volume, is the notion of ‘inequality’, or what I would term inequity, as the latter term has a social justice component.

Two decades ago, the inaugural edition of *State of the Nation* set out to illuminate the intricate tapestry of the South African social, economic, political and cultural experience. At the time, South Africa was navigating the complexities of post-apartheid reconstruction and development, with a leadership in denial about the devastating HIV epidemic that was resulting in high levels of morbidity and mortality, and consequent low life expectancy. Against this backdrop, *State of the Nation* emerged as a pioneering voice, offering a critical lens through which to examine the multifaceted dimensions of the progress, fault lines, contestations and aspirations of the ‘nation-state’. Perpetuating this legacy, the present edition is novel in its scholarly focus on quality of life and wellbeing from a critical, multidisciplinary and multitheoretical perspective, and on the intersectionality of quality of life with demographics, politics, the state, economics, culture and society at large.

Drawing on, and complementing, the seminal work of Amartya Sen on capabilities and human development, the contributors grapple with complex questions on quality of life and wellbeing. They enrich their analyses with a range of discipline-specific theories, and in some instances, decolonial and African-centric methodologies. The authors provide thoughtful, albeit contradictory, analyses of and insights into how to make sense of South Africa’s contested and complex political and socioeconomic landscape. They explore the factors that contribute to the quality of life and wellbeing of all citizens, and in some instances, point to possible solutions that could contribute to a ‘good life’ in an equitable and gender-transformative manner. At the same time, the diverse group of contributors highlights the resilience and tenacity of the nation-state, while inspiring critical dialogue, societal introspection and possible policy reform.

This edition of *State of the Nation* invites us to acknowledge the progress made in the 30 years of South Africa’s democracy, and to reflect critically on the path ahead. How have our collective efforts, our acts of omission and commission, shaped the trajectory of quality of life and wellbeing in South Africa? What is the role of science and the academy in enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of all people, especially those who experience vulnerabilities or who live on the margins of the nation-state?

What lessons can be learned from the past to inform our future endeavours? The more than 300 pages in the volume beckon us to reflect mindfully on these questions and, in doing so, contribute to a collective narrative that can continue to shape the state of our nation.

Each of the chapters in the four sections of the book challenges readers to engage with the theories and content that inform its analysis, and to think deeply about their own power, positionality, freedom, and contributions to the quality of life and wellbeing of South Africans. As a whole, the chapters confront South Africa's triple burden of poverty, unemployment and inequity, and the consequences of this burden, and envision all people as active participants in shaping their health, happiness, wellbeing and quality of life. In their deep dive into the state of the nation in South Africa, the contributors draw on international as well as local research and evidence. The number of contributing authors, the varied content and challenging theories they present, and the collaboration among a multidisciplinary group of scholars are all impressive features of the volume.

This timely volume is a valuable contribution to the global discourse on sustainable development and the achievement of a socially just political and economic order.

Laetitia Rispel

January 2024

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Acknowledgements

One of the most gratifying aspects of completing a project, especially a book with many thoughtful contributions such as this one, is thanking all who played a part in its development.

This edition of *State of the Nation* initially arose out of vibrant and robust discussions between the volume editors, three of whom have worked very closely together on previous editions. The volume has been made possible in large part by their collective effort.

While each edition of *State of the Nation* is self-standing, and focused on a salient theme, all the editors agree that in several ways there is a dialogic exchange between the 2019 edition, *Poverty and Inequality: Diagnosis, Prognosis and Responses*, the 2021 edition, *Ethics, Politics, Inequalities: New Directions*, and this volume focused on wellbeing and quality of life. We did not anticipate that these three editions would, in direct or circuitous ways, form a trilogy, and we encourage our readers to revisit the previous editions mentioned so as to make their own assessments of the links between them.

The present volume consolidates a range of perspectives, drawn from various disciplines, multiple theoretical persuasions and diverse methodological approaches, that concern the ways in which issues of wellbeing and quality of life intersect with the experiences and prevalence of poverty, inequality, unemployment, spatial injustice, precarity, migration, mental health, the environment, the economy, the state and South African society at large. It is within this context that we, as the editors, express our gratitude to the people who have accompanied us on the journey we embarked on more than a year ago, and helped to make the publication of this volume possible.

First, we thank all our contributing authors, who are outstanding scholars and deep thinkers, for submitting high-quality chapters that speak insightfully to the thematic focus of the volume. Their participation, which began in the commissioning workshop held in August 2022, and included also the revisions required following peer review of their chapters, has ensured that this is a strengthened, coherent and relevant volume.

Second, we acknowledge the work undertaken by the HSRC Press (and the Press Board) to publish the manuscript. We thank Charlotte Imani, Mthunzi Nxawe, Samantha Hoaeane, Anthea Oosthuizen and Jeremy Wightman for their careful reading and exemplary thoughtfulness and advice at various stages of the project. We also thank the Language Unit at the University of Pretoria for the copy editing of an initial draft, as well as Trevor van Wyk, a PhD student at that university, for his research assistance.

Third, we owe a debt of gratitude to our reviewers who carefully and judiciously helped us to significantly strengthen this edition. The solid blind peer review reports

they compiled provided insightful and critical guidance as we finalised the content of the chapters.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, we thank Dr Yul Derek Davids and his project management team, Advocate Gary Pienaar and Mr Johan Viljoen, as well as the project administrators, Ms Estelle Krishnan and Ms Tanya Shanker, all members of the Developmental, Capable and Ethical State research division at the Human Sciences Research Council, for their unstinting collegiality and steadfast support.

Last but not least, we would like to express our appreciation for those who are often silent co-workers (usually those who are close to us, and are often unnamed): our colleagues, friends, families and loved ones (including our animal friends), whom we thank for their patience and understanding as they supported us throughout this project.

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Introduction

Vasu Reddy, Narnia Bohler-Muller, Zitha Mokomane and Crain Soudien

The concept of the nation-state is core to the social sciences and humanities because of its direct usefulness – in its social, political, economic and cultural dimensions – for understanding the *meanings* and *identities* its subjects wish to project about it. In this sense the *State of the Nation* publications of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) are not purely descriptions, but rather representations of the quality and attributes of the inner workings, position, location, architecture and performance of the state and its multifaceted relationships with society and its citizens. Since the launch of the first edition of *State of the Nation* in 2003, the series has offered public intellectuals, scholars, policy-makers, the media and interested lay members of the public, in South Africa and abroad, informed and stimulating analyses of the state of the South African nation. Internationally, the series has been acknowledged for its important in-depth and independent analyses of the national situation, and has been selected by some university departments across the world as prescribed or highly recommended reading.

Building on this performance and the series brand, this volume focuses on new, fresh and relevant directions that address issues relating to quality of life and notions of wellbeing. As in preceding volumes, and in the spirit of stimulating debate, we make two important qualifications to clarify the approach we are taking in this edition. First, we caution against the overly homogenising idea of the economy being *determinative* of the state of the nation. Conscious and respectful as we are of structuralist explanations of poverty, inequality, quality of life and wellbeing, we take a multidisciplinary approach in this volume. Structuralist explanations, in our view, have tended to focus purely on patterns and arrangements that identify and analyse implicit, hidden and deep structures in society from a singular disciplinary perspective. While these explanations are important, an intentional multidisciplinary approach highlights diverse perspectives on a problem, viewed through a variety of disciplinary lenses, to surface explicit and accepted facts and beliefs that are called into question. Second, we argue against the idea that income inequality adequately encompasses other variables such as ‘race’, gender, culture, and so on, and can be rendered as a proxy for them. While we recognise the important place of the economy in the broader project of development, this volume also responds, as we have done in recent editions of *State of the Nation* (see Bohler-Muller, Soudien & Reddy 2021; Reddy et al. 2019), with some caution to an economic instrumentalisation of poverty and inequality and its relevance for quality of life and wellbeing, ascertained simply through models and metrics (see also Jenkins & Micklewright 2007). We take this approach to conceptualise a framing of human development and wellbeing, the focus of this volume, which is integrated and cross-cutting.

The volume is distinctive because it will be the first text in the *State of the Nation* series fully dedicated to a focus on quality of life and wellbeing. It offers a range of perspectives on quality of life that aim to reflect the complex interdependence involved in how people make lives for themselves, and contribute to the lives of others. We argue that it is in this complex act of *making* lives, of individuals acting in their own interests and the government articulating an agenda for the nation, that we are able to discern the outlines of the state in which the nation finds itself.

Purpose and focus of the volume

The present volume curates a sustained set of arguments by recognised scholars and researchers whose engagement with salient topics features quality of life and wellbeing as both a matter of concern and a lens. Insights from previous volumes concerning intersectionality, ethics and care have been taken into account in the overall frame and brief given to authors of the chapters in this volume. Beyond paying attention to factual, material, empirical and conceptual issues, the volume disavows consensus and unitary positions, aiming rather to make sense of the diversity and complexity of quality of life and wellbeing in ways that account for the broad intersections of their social, human, cultural and economic dimensions. We are not attempting to resolve theoretical disputes by suggesting that there is a universal standard for quality of life, but rather to describe, explain, interpret and theorise prospects for envisioning a good life and subjective wellbeing. To present their case studies, the social and human scientists who have contributed to this volume draw on contemporary research and analysis from a pluridisciplinary theoretical and methodological toolbox to address the accrued meanings of quality of life and wellbeing.

As mentioned earlier, the volume zeroes in on quality of life and wellbeing as modes of living that are shaped by material realities. By this, we mean that the experiences of poverty and inequalities impact people's modes of living and how they come to understand themselves. The latter, the question of ontology, shaped by people's lived experiences and their responses to these experiences, provides us with the knowledge with which we can interpret, understand and intervene in making improvements to life conditions shaped by such experiences. The chapters also focus on addressing that which Mariano Rojas refers to as 'experienced poverty' (Rojas 2008: 1078), as opposed to income poverty, as this gives us a broader and richer description of poverty and wellbeing in relation to quality of life. This edition of *State of the Nation* is explicitly multidialogical and multidisciplinary, drawing on case studies, quantitative and qualitative data sets, and conceptual and policy analyses to present its arguments and thereby allow for new ideas to emerge that take us beyond narrow economics.

Structure and scope of the volume

The volume is divided into four interrelated parts that represent the structure the *State of the Nation* series has adopted since the 2019 edition, with a slight variation introduced in this volume due to its unique approach and subject matter. Part 1, 'Quality of Life,

Politics and the State', investigates the conceptual issues that underpin explanations of quality of life relative to politics and the state. While theoretical approaches feature throughout the volume, the chapters in Part 1 seek to provide sustained insights into the critical theoretical arguments that arise in this work. Part 2, 'Economics', focuses on contemporary challenges facing the South African economy relating to the value of behavioural insights, ageing and remittances, and challenges to an open economy; these challenges prompt us to consider how to effect meaningful transformation towards a more equitable society. Part 3, 'Society, Culture, Identity and Public Good', foregrounds key social dimensions of our analysis. It addresses quality of life from different perspectives relating to issues of public health programmes such as vaccination, political support, mental health among migrants, the spatial turn (and voice), and how the creative field (especially the arts) enables new forms of solidarity. Part 4, 'South Africa and the World', emphasises the fact that quality of life and wellbeing transcend geographies and physical borders. This section zeroes in on our relationships with a continental and a broader world in regard to human security, gender and peace, and including an engagement with Covid-19.

In Part 1, Chapter 1, 'Quality of Life and Wellbeing: A Good Life?' by Vasu Reddy, Narnia Bohler-Muller, Zitha Mokomane and Crain Soudien, interrogates some key conceptual parameters from different theoretical perspectives to argue for a deepening of our approaches to the analysis and practical confrontation of the problem of poverty and inequality in relation to quality of life and wellbeing. The authors argue that definitions and understandings of quality of life and wellbeing have discursive effects, and a direct bearing on the ways in which people structurally impacted by economic hardship are socially represented and how they represent themselves. Central to the argument in this chapter is the question: What are the attributes of quality of life and wellbeing that enable further understanding of the poverty–inequality conundrum? The chapter suggests that quality of life is an evaluation of an individual's current life circumstances; it is multidimensional in nature, value-based and dynamic, and comprises subjective and objective indicators. The authors argue that it is most reliably measured with subjective indicators, by persons capable of self-evaluation. Another key frame used in the chapter is the idea of 'happiness' as an element of the subjectivity of human life. A conclusion towards which the chapter moves is the necessity for understanding wellbeing beyond economic concerns. What, it asks, is a 'good life'?

In Chapter 2, 'The Rights to Environmental and Human Health and Wellbeing', Narnia Bohler-Muller, Gary Pienaar, Yul Derek Davids and Gerard Hagg argue that the notion of wellbeing remains elusive and difficult to define, measure and assess. Nevertheless, levels of human wellbeing have been conceptualised, measured and assessed from various scientific or policy perspectives, including those located in the fields of psychology, philosophy, morality, anthropology, economics and health. Wellbeing can also be assessed using both subjective measures such as public opinion surveys to assess what citizens think, and objective measures such as income poverty lines or the income-related Gini coefficient. Dictionary definitions of wellbeing generally entail a good or satisfactory condition of existence – a state often characterised

by health, happiness and prosperity. The right to a healthy environment, as well as reference to the concept of wellbeing, are found in section 24(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, which states that ‘everyone has the right ... to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing’. The presence here of both terms raises questions about the nature and meanings of the intersections between wellbeing and the environment. This is a unique perspective offered by the authors of this chapter, who argue that human health and wellbeing are influenced, both positively and negatively, by environmental conditions, with significant economic and social implications. Prominent contemporary manifestations of this understanding and appreciation include concerns about human-induced climate change, increased vulnerability of the ecosystems that sustain food and water supplies, and the fact that human expansion into historic wilderness areas exposes humanity to new, more virulent pathogens, such as Covid-19 and its variants. The chapter explores these developments in scientific knowledge, looks at their implications for how we might respond ethically and legally, and surfaces main areas where clearer legal and policy guidance is needed. To do this, the authors consider recent jurisprudence and related literature and case law concerned with air quality, as well as public opinion and statistical data sources such as the Personal Wellbeing Index included annually in the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS)¹ conducted by the HSRC.

In Chapter 3, ‘Wellbeing and Happiness Inequality in South Africa: The Happiness Gap’, Joleen Steyn Kotze reflects on how conventional measures of democracy focus on elections, quality of government, civil and political liberties, and the extent of citizens’ political participation. Increasingly, however, studies demonstrate that central to the quality of democracy are perceptions of subjective wellbeing and happiness, and that these are critical factors in building strong democracies. Measuring subjective wellbeing has two dimensions. The first involves evaluating life satisfaction, which entails a cognitive dimension of evaluation of life; the second involves assessing affective wellbeing, which entails investigating how a person feels about a variety of issues, and whether those feelings are negative or positive, thus reflecting an emotional state (Fors & Kulin 2016: 324–327). Filip Fors and Joakim Kulin (2016: 326–328) argue that, while there may be a high level of life satisfaction among a group of countries, one may also find vast differences in affective wellbeing across countries; this demonstrates that people may have low levels of life satisfaction but may feel positive about economic or political issues. In this context, this chapter engages subjective wellbeing on two levels. On the first level, cognitive evaluations of wellbeing through measures of life satisfaction, and its relationship to democratic quality in South Africa, are analysed, drawing on SASAS data. On the second level, degrees of agreement between affective wellbeing and democratic quality are analysed and correlated, through the creation of an affective wellbeing index based on the SASAS data. The latter approach, as the chapter motivates, enables a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the correlation between cognitive and affective evaluations and assessments of the quality of democracy in South Africa, with its associated implications for democratic legitimacy and continuity in the country.

In Chapter 4, 'Needs, Freedom and Improving Quality of Life in South Africa', by Lawrence Hamilton, the focus falls on Amartya Sen's groundbreaking capabilities framework for assessing and improving quality of life, which brings together objective and subjective accounts of wellbeing, physical conditions, freedom and individual preferences. After laying out the central components of Sen's framework, the chapter argues that the issue of quality of life is ultimately concerned with how best to determine people's needs and freedoms. It goes on to identify the omission in Sen's framework of two central components for improving quality of life: the ever-present power relations that determine levels of inequality, poverty, needs and horizons of what we deem politically possible; and the institutions and associated political change that would be necessary to enable these needs to be addressed and freedoms to be realised. A variety of empirical sources are used to assess quality of life in South Africa, and to demonstrate that this form of assessment is possible given existing metrics. The author argues that the language of needs and freedom is the best means of determining what is politically necessary to improve quality of life. He concludes the chapter by proposing one possible way of reorienting politics in South Africa to enable the recognition of citizens' needs, and improve levels of freedom and power relations among them. A politics of this kind would begin with contextual diagnoses of needs, judgements and institutions. Given current conditions, this would require a set of partisan institutions of representation that institutionalise class and other conflicts so as to withstand economic and political domination. These institutions would enable ordinary citizens and residents to participate more actively in the determination of their needs and freedoms by enhancing both representation and participation. Political representatives would be given greater autonomy in identifying and evaluating existing needs and interests, while citizens and residents would be significantly empowered to critique and veto the decisions of their representatives.

Chapter 5, 'Wellbeing Equity: Expanding the Notion of Quality of Life', by Irma Eloff, presents evidence that globally, research and investment in the fields of quality of life and wellbeing have grown exponentially, especially in the last two decades, and that improvements in quality of life and wellbeing at the societal level are known to be connected to positive social, economic and health outcomes at both the individual and systemic levels. In highly unequal societies, however, the notion of wellbeing equity often competes with more tangible measures of poverty and vulnerability, despite empirical evidence for the compelling kinship between improvements in wellbeing and overall quality of life. This chapter explores the twin notions of quality of life and wellbeing within the South African context, by arguing for increased prominence of the notion of wellbeing equity. The chapter connects global discourses on quality of life and wellbeing by means of examples from resonant contexts, and assesses possible ways in which wellbeing can be understood, improved and leveraged for elevated quality of life in the South African context. The author also reflects on the implications of recent research conducted in the fields of quality of life and wellbeing within the South African context, which has demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between wellbeing and immediate personal environments. This chapter resonates in some respects with the analysis presented in Chapter 1. By postulating an agenda

for wellbeing equity, the author explores the underpinnings of what it means to live a good life. The chapter concludes by framing the conceptualisation of the good life, quality of life and wellbeing in relation to the decolonial turn. In the quest for increased wellbeing equity, the hegemony of residual understandings of quality of life and wellbeing as determined during the colonial era is engaged, in order to open up pathways for nuanced and complex understandings of the good life in South Africa.

Opening Part 2, 'Economics', Justine Burns reflects on 'Why Behavioural Insights Matter for the Good Life' in Chapter 6, which aligns in part with Chapters 1 and 5 (albeit in distinctive ways) and indicates that living the good life is a universal human aspiration. In Burns's view, nobody desires to labour under conditions of deprivation or lack. The pursuit of the good life has a few key attributes: it is a universal aspiration; it involves individual choices, subject to constraints; those choices often involve externalities for others, be they good or bad; and government policies play a key role in mediating the choice environment and the constraint set. She asks why it is that citizens often feel so dissatisfied, and remain in pursuit of the seemingly impossible goal of the good life, even when they are able to exert agency, and where the state offers material support. According to her, this is where behavioural science provides important insights. Understanding the sociopsychological complexity of individuals, who are socially situated and subject to material, emotional and cognitive constraints when they make their decisions in pursuit of the good life, is key. Flowing directly from this realisation is the insight that the way in which opportunities, policies and programmes are conceptualised, designed, implemented and framed matters enormously for whether they achieve their intended outcomes, including improving quality of life. It is entirely possible for a well-intentioned policy to fall short of improving quality of life because it is designed for a mythical citizen who is rational, unemotional, cognitively unconstrained, immune to social context, and able to make optimal choices in any given setting. Behavioural science helps us to understand some of the simple ways in which choice options available to individuals can improve quality of life, even in the context of a society marred by poverty and inequality. The chapter argues that the Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated what might be termed the cognitive bandwidth constraints faced by individuals who find themselves in conditions of scarcity, be this in terms of time, material resources or human connections. Simply put, conditions of poverty and inequality impose harsh punishments on decision-makers, who, subject to the same behavioural biases and behaviours as other citizens, make errors of judgement or poor decisions because they have few options available to avoid or mitigate the consequences of those poor choices. Thus, despite their best attempts to pursue goals related to quality of life, these may be impeded through the cognitive tax imposed by their social context. This underscores the importance of choice architecture in the design of institutions, policies and programmes. Choice architecture takes seriously the fact that, although individuals typically aspire to improve their quality of life, cognitive biases and social context may cause them to fall short of this goal, despite their best intentions. The policy-makers' challenge is to design institutions and programmes that make it easier for well-intentioned citizens to make good choices, without undermining their individual agency.

In Chapter 7, 'Ageing, Remittances and Improvements to Quality of Life', Monde Makiwane and Monde Faku discuss the core features of literature on the subsistence of relatively poor older persons, which has focused on the positive impact of social grants and how older persons use them to support extended families, ultimately shaping how social quality of life and wellbeing are understood. In their view, little has been written about another vital source of subsistence for older persons in underprivileged households, namely remittances. Data from national income dynamics surveys have shown that more money flows to older persons in poorer families in the form of remittances than through social grants. The authors use these data to argue that sharing intergenerational wealth serves a more profound and significant purpose than giving financial support to ageing parents, since it creates a bond that strengthens intergenerational solidarity. In addition, remittances enhance translocality, whereby members of extended families located in geographically varied spaces can live as a close community. In addition to survey data, the chapter also engages with qualitative case studies to assess the extent of intergenerational solidarity and translocality generated by remittances.

In Chapter 8, 'Quality of Life in an Open Economy', Carolyn Chisadza, Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu and Kehinde O Omotoso highlight findings from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Better Life Index that show that South Africa has made significant progress in improving citizens' wellbeing since 1994, with reduced absolute poverty and broader access to public services. However, in critical areas that contribute to better quality of life, such as income, jobs, housing, work-life balance, health status, educational attainment, social connections, environmental quality, wellbeing and personal security, the country still ranks below average compared to similar middle-income countries. Citizens must grapple with these local economic and social issues, and must contend with the effects of globalisation. Economic growth and social progress are the fruits of globalisation, which takes place in the form of human migration (and the concomitant transfer of trade, skills and technology) and in the form of mutually beneficial treaties that lead to the presence in the country of multinational companies and to political stability; yet these same factors have also created challenges for local citizens in their everyday lives. The authors argue that most empirical studies on quality of life focus on household living conditions, income, health and environmental quality, with limited evidence provided concerning issues related to globalisation and how it has impacted citizens' wellbeing. This chapter contributes to and further develops the existing literature by exploring the effects of globalisation, in addition to the usual indicators, on the quality of life of South Africans. Using the latest Afrobarometer survey, as well as SASAS data, and employing a cross-sectional analysis, the chapter investigates the research question: How have citizens' perceptions of issues related to international relationships with other countries influenced the perceptions of their quality of life in South Africa? The chapter also explores citizens' experiences of access to public and social services, their perceptions of quality of governance, and how these factors may also influence their perceptions of their quality of life.

Part 3, 'Society, Culture, Identity and Public Good', begins with Chapter 9, 'Quality of Life and Mental Health: A Situated African Psychological Perspective', by Kopano Ratele, Carmine Rustin and Maria Florence. The chapter draws on data from the World Values Survey to investigate the associations between a number of variables and life satisfaction, quality of life and mental health, using a data sample that comprised 50 per cent female and 50 per cent male South African citizens. The data analysis carried out by the authors reveals significant associations between agency, leisure time, religion, trust and tradition, respectively, and life satisfaction and satisfaction with finances. The importance of friends, work and religion are all found to be negatively associated with purpose and meaning. With regard to mental health, the biggest worries expressed by survey respondents relate to job security and children's education. To highlight blind spots and untapped potential in quality of life research, the authors interpret their key findings using an African psychological perspective. They argue that there is a scarcity of research on quality of life and wellbeing that grounds social and personal wellbeing in the context of the lived experience of individuals in an African society, and that there is a need for further development and refinement of quality of life research that will ground it in the vicissitudes of everyday life experienced by Africans. They conclude the chapter by suggesting that there is a need to develop conceptual tools and interpretations of quality of life from African perspectives.

Chapter 10, 'Covid-19 Vaccines: Key to Improving the Quality of Life and Wellbeing of All South Africans', by Safura Abdool Karim, Maanda Mudau, Koleka Mlisana and Quarraisha Abdool Karim, provides an overview of the role of vaccines in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of South Africans. The chapter begins with a descriptive overview of how childhood vaccines have played a critical role in enhancing key development indicators for infants and children in South Africa, and which vaccines are currently provided by the national Department of Health for children, adolescents and adults. This serves as a backdrop and context for discussion of the Covid-19 pandemic, and of the challenges and opportunities provided by vaccines for addressing three Covid-related issues: transmission containment, reducing severe illness and deaths, and economic recovery. These three objectives prompt several public health-related concerns, such as which vaccines are available in South Africa, threats to vaccine efficacy, and coverage rates needed to live smartly with the virus. This overview is followed by discussion of the legal/human rights perspective that covers citizens' and state rights and responsibilities; the global challenges to production of and access to public goods, including vaccines; within-country rationing and prioritisation of scarce commodities such as vaccines; and issues concerning mandatory versus voluntary immunisation. The chapter also addresses the important issue of misinformation and myths relating to vaccines, and how this extends to public responses to Covid-19 vaccines. The authors consider how views on vaccines are influenced by confidence and trust in the state, and by world views that shape behaviours; how knowledge is curated; and the influence of digital media platforms. The chapter concludes by highlighting the need for citizens to be well informed about the science relating to medical interventions such as vaccines, so that health decisions are not made only by the state or social media, with citizens

remaining passive recipients. A key question framed in this chapter is: How can science transform society and enhance the quality of lives and wellbeing of all its citizens?

Chapter 11, 'Quality of Life and Political Support in South Africa: A Resilient Nation?', by Benjamin Roberts, Yul Derek Davids, Jarè Struwig, Zitha Mokomane and Valerie Møller, argues that the past decade has seen a dramatic decline in levels of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and political trust in South Africa. In addition, the authors show, there remains deep unhappiness among many citizens with basic government-provided services. This has contributed to widespread protest action, leading to claims of a 'rebellion of the poor'. South Africa is not unique in experiencing such developments, leading political scientists to question whether the world may be entering a time of democratic decline. Against this backdrop, the chapter examines the relative influence of political support on subjective personal and national wellbeing in the country. Whether or not this has adversely affected satisfaction with life as a whole, as well as specific domains of wellbeing, remains poorly understood. Using SASAS data, the chapter profiles inequalities in quality of life in terms of single-item and composite measures of personal and national wellbeing, and considers how different political trust measures indicate the denting of the resilience South Africans tend to demonstrate in the face of adversity. In examining the correlates of subjective wellbeing, a multidimensional approach to political support is adopted, in line with the conceptual models developed by David Easton (1965, 1975) and Pippa Norris (1999, 2011). This approach covers diffuse political support measures such as national pride and attachment to democratic principles, as well as more specific measures of political support, including satisfaction with democracy, critical aspects of government performance, institutional trust and trust in leadership. The chapter also considers whether political support measures have a lesser or greater influence on wellbeing than other sociodemographic factors; what the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been on patterns of quality of life; and what this might mean politically in the coming years.

In Chapter 12, 'Mental Health among External Migrants in South Africa', by Steven Lawrence Gordon, the author argues that the mental health and psychological wellbeing of the diverse foreign-born adult population in South Africa is understudied, and that this knowledge gap is troubling, as the quality of life of these migrants provides a 'social mirror' that reflects the societal challenges facing them. The chapter provides a comprehensive empirical analysis of foreign migrants' quality of life in the South African context, using data from the Community Level Social Dynamics Survey. The chapter is primarily focused on mental health concerns, in particular depression, among the foreign-born population. To assess the drivers of depression within this group, three specially designed hypotheses are tested. The study builds on a rich tradition of immigrant-focused quality of life research in Europe and North America.

In Chapter 13, 'The Temporal-Spatial Dimensions of Wellbeing', Karin van Marle considers the implications of the spatial turn for quality of life, wellbeing and the possibility of pursuing a good life. Drawing on spatial theory, the chapter argues for the importance of understanding the distinction between habitat and inhabitation. Whereas habitat is concerned with mere housing provision, inhabitation encompasses

how individuals make a life for themselves in a specific space. Spatial justice is argued for, as something that goes beyond traditional models of distributive justice. The author examines ways in which material problems related to access to land, property and home underscore the intertwinement of time and space. The argument of the chapter relies on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope, as developed by Mariana Valverde (2015), to explore how time and space, temporality and spatiality cannot be engaged with separately. Valverde (2015: 9) explains that Bakhtin devised the chronotope for the precise purpose of analysing how the temporal and spatial dimensions of life and governance affect each other. Van Marle's chapter focuses on recent court judgments concerning issues related to land, property and home, analysing them within the conceptual framework of intertextuality, dialogism and the chronotope to reflect on how dimensions of spatiality and temporality can respond to the themes of wellbeing and the good life.

Chapter 14, 'Quality of Life in the Arts: Radical Solidarity in a Quiet Crisis', by Nomusa Makhubu, uses the Radical Solidarity Summit initiated by the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary African Art (MOCAA) in 2020 as the point of departure for an examination of the needs of South African artists, in particular community-based artists living and working in urban and peri-urban townships, for access to publics and markets for their works. Since it opened its doors in 2017, the Zeitz MOCAA has been criticised for being hierarchical, exclusionary, elitist and blind to glaring social inequalities. The criticism levelled against the museum during its first two years of operation revived debates about the dominance of private institutions and commercial galleries in South Africa. More importantly, it called attention to the fault lines that still exist in art communities, and to socioeconomically reinforced racial divisions. With the appointment of a new executive director in 2019, Zeitz MOCAA shifted its focus to social engagement and collaboration, and the Radical Solidarity Summit was one of the outcomes of this shift. The chapter argues that institutions, independent artists, curators, community arts projects and grassroots organisations that are dependent on public funds continue to struggle to survive and flourish. It describes how, in this milieu, artists have been shifting their approaches to art practice, steering the discourse on decolonial praxis in the arts, working through collaborative public interventions, and engaging restorative themes such as healing, black wellbeing, shared knowledge and collectivity. Through consideration of the Radical Solidarity Summit and the Zeitz MOCAA's recent history, the chapter reviews and critically assesses the strategies employed by artists, activists and curators to address the quality of life of arts practitioners who, though no longer disenfranchised, still experience social inequalities and have a need for restorative justice.

The volume concludes with Part 4, 'South Africa and Beyond'. Chapter 15, 'Human Security, Gender and Wellbeing in South Africa', by Sandy Africa, locates concerns with human security in the global context before turning to its relevance in South Africa, in particular in relation to gendered experiences of security or the lack thereof. The author explains that human security is widely heralded as a conceptual departure from the state-centred, narrow and militarised notions of security that characterised the

Cold War period, and is held up as a benchmark to assess whether states live up to their international responsibilities of protecting their people. However, she highlights a flaw in the current discourse on human security, namely, that it continues to privilege state actors in ensuring that security is ‘delivered’ to populations. The chapter debates the salience of the concept of human security as a basis for understanding and invoking effective responses to wellbeing in the domestic sphere, arguing that the notion of security is inherently limiting in the first place, since it attaches itself to notions of enforcement, control and punishment. This has been problematic in the context of attempts to address gender-based violence in South Africa in recent years. Policy-makers have earnestly put in place a series of initiatives that straddle effective enforcement, swifter and more efficacious delivery of justice, and support for victims. Despite this, South Africa remains a stubbornly violent society, with high levels of femicide. Moreover, forms and sources of violence are transforming as society itself undergoes changes: advances in technology, the transformation of the workplace, and other developments sit side by side with deepening inequality and poverty, marginalisation of the most vulnerable, transnational crime and continuing violent conflict. The chapter examines the trends in human security and insecurity in South Africa, new paradigms and movements for understanding its gendered dimensions, and how effective they have been. It problematises the language and agency implied in the concept of human security, and explores instances of successful, localised, nuanced and people-inspired notions of what wellbeing means. The chapter concludes with a call for a new language for articulating wellbeing, one that does not have as its default an idea that is derived from the contested and now troubled notion of international security.

Finally, Chapter 16, ‘Peace, Wellbeing and the State in Africa: South Africa in Comparative Perspective’, by Funmi Olonisakin, Damilola Adegoke and Alagaw Ababu Kifle, engages with the importance of peace and wellbeing for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges to, and promise of, human progress in Africa. This chapter considers the practical and theoretical relationships of peace and wellbeing, aligned to data collected from Twitter and an online survey conducted in Nigeria and South Africa in a post-Covid-19 context. Olonisakin, Adegoke and Kifle conclude by highlighting the importance of integrating peace and wellbeing into the scholarly and policy worlds.

Conclusion

As this overview of the volume’s chapters indicates, we have in this edition of *State of the Nation* a collection of important new ‘takes’ on how the question of quality of life can be approached. Our objective in this collection is to put the question of quality of life on the political and intellectual agenda. We argue that quality of life is – and this matters a great deal, particularly from a Senian point of view – a generative concept. If people’s aspirations for development are best embodied in that which they value, it is important that policy-makers develop the means to hear and respond to what is being articulated by them. This means that the state must facilitate the development of the mechanisms and modalities – the space – for people to begin to say what is in their best

interests, and to find the critical and self-critical means for them to act on the choices they make, even if these choices are constrained to some extent by externalities. In this we begin to model how a democracy can develop *from below*, through a process of meaningful participation that allows different voices to speak and be heard, as required by the values underpinning the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, namely, dignity, equality and freedom. The freedom to be and to become.

Note

1 <https://hsrc.ac.za/sasas/>.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

Aids	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ANOVA	analysis of variance
AU	African Union
CEO	chief executive officer
CLSDS	Community Level Social Dynamics Survey
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DMRE	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSAC	Department of Sport, Arts and Culture
EA	environmental authorisation
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIA	environmental impact assessment
ELA	Earthlife Africa
EPI-SA	Expanded Programme on Immunisation in South Africa
ESTA	Extension of Security of Tenure Act (No. 62 of 1997)
EU	European Union
FGD	flue gas desulphurisation
FPTP	first-past-the-post
G20	Group of 20
GBV	gender-based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GHS	General Household Survey
GNI	gross national income
GNP	gross national product
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HPA	Highveld Priority Area
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IHDI	inequality-adjusted Human Development Index
JAG	Johannesburg Art Gallery
LGBTQI+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
MOCOA	Museum of Contemporary Art Africa
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NAC	National Arts Council
NEMA	National Environment Management Act (No. 107 of 1998)
NEMAQA	National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act (No. 39 of 2004)
NIDS-CRAMS	National Income Dynamics Study–Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey
NSP-GBVF	National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide

OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PCC	Presidential Climate Commission
PHQ	Patient Health Questionnaire
PR	proportional representation
PWI	Personal Wellbeing Index
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAHPRA	South African Health Products Regulatory Authority
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAL	small area layer
SAQoL	South African Quality of Life Trends
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SASAS	South African Social Attitudes Survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	sexual and gender-based violence
SIU	Special Investigating Unit
TB	tuberculosis
TRIPS	Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
Unicef	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
US	United States of America
VANSA	Visual Arts Network of South Africa
WCDE	Western Cape Department of Education
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
WVS	World Values Survey

PART 1

**QUALITY OF LIFE,
POLITICS AND THE
STATE**

HSRC Press

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1

Quality of life and wellbeing: A good life?

Vasu Reddy, Narnia Bohler-Muller, Zitha Mokomane and Crain Soudien

The concepts ‘quality of life’ and ‘wellbeing’ direct us to deeply human and social questions about whether the idea (and project) of wellbeing and the qualities it opens up lead us to a ‘good life’. Issues pertinent to quality of life and wellbeing are not purely quantitative (in other words, measurable against numerical targets) but rather fundamentally qualitative and inherently experiential. If we ask ‘what is a good life?’ we are interested in the dimensions of life, not as a purely philosophical question (itself important), but as a fundamentally social one that expects us to (re)consider the way in which we think about the state of the nation and the types of interventions that are needed to address poverty and inequality.

This chapter extrapolates some key conceptual parameters from different theoretical perspectives, places and disciplines to argue for a deepening of our approaches to the analysis and practical confrontation of the problems of poverty and inequality. We motivate the view that the definitions and understandings of quality of life and wellbeing have a direct bearing on the ways in which people structurally impacted by economic and other forms of hardship are socially represented, and on how they represent themselves. Central, therefore, to our argument are the following questions: What do we mean by quality of life and wellbeing? What are the attributes of quality of life and wellbeing that enable a better understanding of the poverty–inequality conundrum? These questions, while critically important throughout this volume, are not easily resolved because they initiate more questions than solutions to a fundamental human and social problem about the meaning of quality of life and some of its effects, of which wellbeing is a central one.

Aligned to these questions, the chapter suggests that quality of life is an evaluation of an individual’s current life circumstances; is multidimensional in nature; is value-based, dynamic and fluid; comprises subjective and/or objective indicators; and is most reliably measured with subjective indicators by persons capable of self-evaluation. Another key framing concept used is the idea of ‘happiness’ as an element of the subjectivity of human life. We argue that a ‘good life’ suggests modes of living in affective ways that accrue or can be aspired to, such as happiness. The latter, of course, is contingent on experiences at a personal and collective level, and is shaped by a number of factors that have much to do with subjective elements. A conclusion towards which the chapter moves is the necessity for understanding wellbeing beyond a narrow economics-based approach. Essentially, we ask, what is a good life? This question, like the others we pose, has no easy answers, but again is contingent on subjective responses, aligned to material experiences.

The tussle between pre-existing vulnerabilities (for example, unemployment, mass poverty, health disparities and gross inequalities) and the instinct for survival is an ongoing feature of our human existence and has far-reaching consequences for quality of life and wellbeing. For example, the Covid-19 vaccine rollout was managed reasonably well, but much more needs to be accomplished in treating the broad political, social, economic, cultural and global challenges posed by the pandemic and by limited access to vaccines as we reflect on improving quality of life and wellbeing. If anything, Covid-19, combined with pre-existing ‘wicked’ problems (for example, environmental challenges, poor economic growth, crime, overpopulation, poor health, disease, food insecurity, housing deficits and so on) that besiege the nation-state, has seriously compromised quality of life and wellbeing. Another exacerbating problem facing South Africans is the unprecedented challenge of loadshedding (interruptions of electricity supply to avoid excessive load on the generating plants). A concomitant effect of such interruptions has been an impact on water supply, resulting in water shortages (and low water pressure) for many communities because loadshedding for four-hour periods or longer weakens the capacity for pumping water from reservoirs to where it is needed. Such stark scenarios have come to compromise people’s ability to navigate their lives in manageable ways.

In the tradition of the *State of the Nation* series, we focus on the question of the social, economic and cultural state in which the South African nation finds itself. In this edition, we come to this question of our state – effectively our state of wellbeing – from different perspectives and from multiple disciplines. The aim of the *State of the Nation* series is to tackle issues that plague the state of the nation without dictating to authors the theoretical lens they should apply in doing so. A certain level of freedom à la Amartya Sen is permitted in the evidence-based contributions. In this vein, this chapter places a wide frame around the question of wellbeing, to offer our contributors the opportunity to approach the issues from their own diverse vantage points. We have chosen to frame quality of life, wellbeing and a good life within the context of the work of two pioneering thinkers, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, who collaborated often but offered different perspectives on these themes.

Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum

Against this background, an important concern, articulated, for example, by Sen and Nussbaum, is how satisfied people are with their lives. Sen (1985, 1994, 1999) believes humans possess the strength and freedom to improve their lives through what he refers to as ‘capabilities’. Following Sen’s influential capabilities approach, Nussbaum’s (2000, 2011) contribution to the idea of human flourishing and the good life (see Thomson, Gill & Goodson 2021) derives from the thinking of Aristotle (see Kraut 2018) and Karl Marx (see Grusky & Szelényi 2019: Chapter 5). Accordingly, she argues that living well is about making choices that lead to the enjoyment of a dignified life (see Nussbaum 2000, 2011; Nussbaum & Sen 1993). The concept of a ‘dignified’ life is equally open to scrutiny and to a variety of meanings that will differ depending on how it is understood by people. Notable in the thinking of Sen and Nussbaum is the foundational acknowledgement of

our diversity as human beings. In contrast to Western-centric thinking, they argue that the enjoyment of a good life is influenced by *the material reality of where we live and how we live*. Our cultures – their points of departure for identifying what is valuable and what is not – are all different. Critical, then, in ‘capability theory’ is the fact of our human diversity. The acknowledgement of human diversity is one of the key theoretical driving forces of the capabilities approach, whereas traditional moral and political philosophy has tended to render invisible the lives of those who are not able-bodied and heterosexual white men. The capabilities approach recognises human diversity by including a wide range of dimensions in the conceptualisation of wellbeing, and by acknowledging human agency and the diversity of goals people have in life.

Building on this capacious view of our human differences, Sen distinguishes between two kinds of freedom, namely what he calls wellbeing freedom and agency freedom (Sen 1985). The former comprises those freedoms that generally promote our wellbeing, such as being well nourished, healthy, sheltered and cared for. Agency freedom, on the other hand, not only promotes our wellbeing but constitutes an expression of our ability to choose those things we value – our agency. The recognition of agency freedom, in addition to wellbeing freedom, allows people to pursue a diversity of ways of being and of doing what they do.

Sen’s approach has been challenged from various quarters, not all of which can be addressed here (see for example Kremakova 2013; Sayer 2012; Sugden 2006, 2008). For instance, his emphasis on individual effective freedom as the focal concern of the capabilities approach has been criticised as excessively individualistic. Charles Gore, for example, has argued that Sen’s approach only considers states of affairs and social arrangements in terms of how good or bad they are for an individual’s wellbeing and freedom (Gore 1997). But this excludes consideration of certain other goods that individuals may have reason to value which are ‘irreducibly social’, because they cannot be reduced to properties of individuals, such as a shared language, set of moral norms or political structure.

Nussbaum’s account is motivated by a concept of human dignity (in contrast to Sen’s emphasis on freedom), which she links to flourishing in the Aristotelian sense. She argues that her list of fundamental capabilities follows from the requirements of dignity and has been tested and adapted over the course of an extensive cross-cultural dialogue she has carried out, particularly in India (as related in her book *Women and Human Development* [2000]). It would be incorrect, however, to read Sen’s approach concerned with people’s ability to live a life they have reason to value as not incorporating an *ethical evaluation* of the content of their options. It is not concerned only with increasing people’s freedom-as-power.

These perspectives steer our thinking towards the underlying question of quality of life, wellbeing and the broader implications of happiness and a good life.

Quality of life and wellbeing in broad brushstrokes

The concept of quality of life emerged within medicine and healthcare in the 1970s, and has since coalesced into a discourse in its own right (Dokumaci 2019; Ferrans 1990). At

a conceptual level, quality of life emphasises competing dimensions of life quality (and wellbeing), the notion of values and needs (which usually draws on the work of Doyal and Gough [1991]), and finally, the capabilities approach (Nussbaum 2011; Nussbaum & Sen 1993; Sen 1994, 1999). In broad terms, quality of life ‘can be understood as the values, perspectives, satisfaction, living conditions, accomplishments, functionality, cultural contexts and spirituality’ that impact lived experiences (Fumincelli et al. 2019: 62; see also Moridi et al. 2015). At a global development level, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations (UN) specialised agency responsible for global public health, goes beyond being responsible for universal healthcare, monitoring health risks, coordinating responses to health emergencies and promoting health; it also focuses on wellbeing in the sphere of global public health. Significant here, in terms of our brief and in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, is how the WHO (1996: 3) has conceptualised quality of life as ‘an individual’s *perception* of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns’ (emphasis added).

In this context, quality of life places a premium on social context, social dimensions and the social quality of life emerging from entanglements and ‘contact zones’ that are impacted by poverty and inequality. The latter (drawing on Phillips 2006: Chapter 6) has relevance for socioeconomic security (namely, people’s capacity to have resources over time); social inclusion (the extent to which people have access to institutions and social relations); social cohesion (the nature of social relations based on shared identities, norms and values); and social empowerment (the extent to which the personal capabilities of individuals and their ability to act are enhanced by social relations).

Quality of life has typically also emphasised standard domains that usually feature physical health status and functional ability, psychological status and wellbeing, social interactions and economic status. Quality of life has been significant in rethinking health and healthcare, recognising the reality that if the health of an individual and/or community is compromised, this negatively impacts their life opportunities. This is highly relevant in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic that shaped our material realities and had a bearing on all health-related matters. Albert Musschenga (1997) explores the meaning of the term ‘quality of life’ as it relates to healthcare, with the idea that the aim of medicine and healthcare is the preservation or improvement of quality of life, especially considering that medical treatments do not always benefit patients when they experience debilitating side effects. Initially, quality of life was conceived of as a critique of models of continuous economic growth that do not centre the importance of internal quality of life or external conditions for living. Musschenga distinguishes between wellbeing, which is usually associated with the sociopolitical domain and people’s material welfare, and quality of life, which is seen as more applicable to medicine. We return to Musschenga’s ideas later in this chapter.

While quality of life remains relevant, other elements are necessary to measure, interpret and theorise subjective variables, such as happiness, wellbeing and life satisfaction. The latter are also broad constructs that encapsulate the emotional, social and cognitive functions of human flourishing. These remain central to the poverty–inequality

nexus as we monitor social progress, evaluate welfare and, more broadly, create 'an information base which supports the policy-making process' (Noll 2004: 154) and the setting of priorities. Ultimately, the way in which we understand concepts determines the way in which we engage with policy, inform the debates and search for solutions.

We suggest drawing on the work of Heinz-Herbert Noll, who posits that quality of life, as a concept, emerges 'as an alternative to the more and more questionable concept of material prosperity in the affluent society' (2004: 154). There is an ongoing discussion about whether society is headed towards progress or decline, and despite the disagreements there appears to be some consensus that 'quality of life [is] the goal and potential arbiter of the debate' (Armstrong & Caldwell 2004: 368). From a contemporary perspective, and sociologically speaking, quality of life establishes itself as a language, a vocabulary and a discourse directing us to innovate human and social solutions to poverty and inequality.

The question before us is: what is this creature called quality of life that is directed towards a good life unhindered by poverty and inequality? Undoubtedly, quality of life is a complex, multifaceted concept that, though used in everyday language, continues to defy easy definition. Theorists draw attention to the subjective nature of quality of life, namely an individual's perception (Bowling 1995; Schipper, Clinch & Powell 1990), satisfaction with life (Ferrans 1990; Meeberg 1993) and wellbeing (Ferrans 1990; Ferrell 1996; Mount & Cohen 1995). Other scholars, while acknowledging that quality of life is primarily a subjective evaluation, note that proxy assessments and objective indicators are also necessary or valuable (Aaronson 1990; Sneeuw et al. 1997). The concept of quality of life is also generally regarded as holding the same meaning as wellbeing and its synonym, welfare (Boss et al. 1993: 437), and including happiness (Phillips 2006). It is clear that there are opposing views of quality of life, as it is complex and polysemic and requires that we pay careful attention to its meanings and uses (see, for example, Veenhoven 2000).

Ramkrishna Mukherjee, for example, describes wellbeing as broadly referring to perceptions of the living conditions of people, more specifically, 'standards of living' and the 'style of living' (Mukherjee 1993: 24). Standards of living represent quantitative attributes of living conditions that often focus on the fulfilment of basic needs such as health, income, housing, sufficient food, clothes and durable goods. Cultural aspects such as beliefs, norms, knowledge, art, customs, challenges in life, general satisfaction, privacy, independence and variation represent the style of an individual's life in relation to others and groups (see Andrews & Withey 1976: 11–12; Bowling 1991: 9).

Though quality of life's conceptual roots (as indicated earlier) are in medicine and healthcare, and gained prominence in the 1970s, its historical roots may be traced further back to what came to be known as the 'social indicators movement' (see Bauer 1966; Bognar 2005; Ferriss 2004), which focused narrowly on statistical data as a proxy for welfare. This movement was also linked to the affluence 'crisis' that has beset advanced industrialised societies since the 1960s (Armstrong & Caldwell 2004; Noll 2004; Rapley 2003). The crisis stems from the fact that economically developed

and developing nations increasingly began to face social and wicked problems. The concept of quality of life was, in several ways, 'an antidote to the public intoxication with purely economic measures of social welfare' (Birnbacher 1999: 26).

Conceptually, the notions of quality of life and wellbeing enable – beyond the structural dimensions of poverty and inequality – further opportunities as a field of knowledge with which to identify blind spots beyond the causes, symptoms, management and regulation of social problems.

An extrapolation of quality of life and wellbeing in their multifaceted dimensions

Quality of life and wellbeing, we emphasise here, have been blind spots in our thinking on the state of the nation. This warrants interrogation at several intellectual and practical levels. Given their complexity and nuances, in this section we raise a few themes in relation to some of the emerging critical and conceptual insights, in no order of priority except to highlight some central and intersecting arguments related to a good life: health, welfare life, evaluation, subjectivity, happiness and future aspirations. These are by no means definitive, but suggest the emerging scope and template of the multidimensional and transdisciplinary nature of theories of quality of life and wellbeing.

Wellbeing 'blindness'

Andrew Sneddon (2019) questions why wellbeing is still studied, and argues that due to wellbeing 'blindness' – in other words, the factors that contribute to an inability to assess wellbeing – there may never be a satisfactory theory of wellbeing. As with many philosophical, sociological and political topics, we may never reach a satisfactory state of agreement on it. Current understandings of wellbeing are numerous and varied, and straddle regions, nations and identities. Sneddon points out that theorists have tended to view philosophical accounts of wellbeing as questioning what is intrinsically good, while psychological accounts tend to focus on how one's interests are served instrumentally; however, he disagrees with this distinction, since it is characterised differently by different accounts of it. Interests are one way to theorise wellbeing, specifically 'attentively realised interests' (Sneddon 2019: 150) – those things that are good for us because we choose to pursue and enjoy them – and 'consciously enabled interests' (2019: 150) – those things that are good for us regardless of how we feel about them. Some attentively realised interests are good for certain people but not for others:

The constituents and contributors to our well-being are heterogeneous. Although it is reasonable to think that conscious thought is central to human well-being, our interests stand in diverse relationships to our sentience. Crucially, some of our interests make their contribution to our lives going well without being directly psychologically mediated. We have reason to think, however, that our understanding of ourselves

suffers from biases that incline us towards recognizing some aspects of well-being while simultaneously pointing us away from other aspects. (Sneddon 2019: 151)

Sneddon suggests that consciously enabled interests contribute to our lives *despite* our relation to them, health being an example. However, these are not dichotomous, since someone may be interested in both health and their own healthcare. Further, interests can be in conflict with each other. Interests are heterogeneous and relate to conscious experience in different ways, making them difficult to identify and evaluate. It should be relatively easy to identify attentively realised and individualistic interests, since they are based on the individual's perception of what they like. But consciously enabled and relational interests require information about the wider world. Theories of wellbeing must account for people as agents, people as doers and people as receivers of doing, since an agency bias can lead to too much attention being placed on individuals (a criticism of the work of Sen) rather than on generic patterns and the influence of social construction.

Perfectionism, preference and hedonism

Peter Sandøe (1999), for his part, discusses three different approaches to defining quality of life: perfectionism, preference and hedonism. He considers the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, as well as how successfully each aligns with different methodologies used in quality of life research. There is no agreement as to which theory is best, and each depends on a case-by-case analysis. Sandøe begins by addressing some of the objections people have to the concept of measuring quality of life. The first is that to measure it is to imply that there is a universal standard by which people can be assessed; another critique is that it is paternalistic and may lead to governments interfering with people's life choices. Thus, any attempt to improve people's lives should also entail respecting the autonomy of choices. To define quality of life in terms of preference satisfaction implies that preference satisfaction universally accounts for what makes a person's life go well. However, this does not take into account the various theories of what a good life is. Sandøe extrapolates this argument in the following terms:

Looking at the philosophical tradition, there seem to be three main answers given to the question, What makes a person's life go well?

- *Perfection*
that the person realises important human potentials
- *Pleasure and absence of pain*
that the person has pleasant mental states and avoids painful or unpleasant ones
- *Preference-satisfaction*
that the person gets what he wants. (Sandøe 1999: 23)

Perfection (Sandøe's usage) theory and preference theory may be in opposition, since the former aims to be objective while the latter aims to be subjective. However, hedonism

shares the specificity of perfectionism and focuses on the subjective mental states of preference theory. Most theorists reject the idea of a human 'essence' towards which to strive, but conclude that there must be important human potentials to be realised in order to have a good life. Perfectionism does not allow for autonomy. It also lacks the inclusion and exclusion of non-sentient organisms, and does not address whether the concept of quality of life has certain moral implications. Preference theory is simple and empirical, in that it is possible to observe people's behaviour in relation to their preferences. It is also anti-essentialist, respects autonomy and is clearly demarcated, since preference is a quality of sentient creatures. Preference may change over time, or one may not be aware that a preference has been fulfilled, or one may not feel satisfied by the fulfilment of a preference. It could be said, then, that certain requirements must be fulfilled: contemporaneity, awareness of a preference being fulfilled, and an understanding of what would need to happen to feel satisfied by the fulfilment of a preference. People can experience happiness from something they do not necessarily *prefer*. Preference theory on its own does not provide an adequate account of a good life. Hedonism relies on the idea that experiences that contribute to a person's wellbeing all share the trait of being either pleasant or painful (or sometimes a combination of the two). Hedonism lacks a shared mental quality, since pleasure and pain are broad and varying experiences, and people may also value those experiences differently. We use the term 'mental quality' to refer to the ability to feel, express and engage/oversee/navigate emotional stability.

In his conclusions, Sandøe offers some opportunities to think about quality of life as an unfolding set of ideas, which supports our view of its multimodality:

The question about what quality of life *is* (author's emphasis) has not as yet received a final and definite answer. It may be that there is no definite answer, and probably the answer depends very much on the context within which the question is being asked. This leaves a difficult question to the person who wants to do quality of life research: 'What should I in the context of my own research mean by quality of life?' The answer to this question may interact with two sorts of considerations, methodological and ethical. (Sandøe 1999: 21)

A focus on human health, healthcare and happiness

Returning to the focus on health and the work of Musschenga (1997: 14), there are, he explains, three different meanings of quality of life:

- i. quality-of-life as (the degree of) normal functioning (as a member of the biological species *Homo sapiens*);
- ii. quality-of-life as (the degree of) satisfaction with life; and
- iii. quality-of-life as (a level of) human development.

Musschenga outlines a pluralist metatheory of happiness in which one can distinguish between *self-assessed* happiness and *ascribed* happiness. Self-assessed happiness involves

someone identifying and meeting their own subjective ideals, enjoying their life and being satisfied with their accomplishments. A healthy life contributes to happiness but is not a necessary condition for happiness, since an impairment of health is not necessarily an impairment in one's ability to meet one's life goals. Musschenga (1997: 25–26) provides an example of cancer patients whose satisfaction with life is unexpectedly high:

The appearance of quality-of-life considerations in medical decision-making witnesses to, first, a growing awareness of the ambivalence of many interventions and, second, the change from a beneficence-centered to an autonomy-centered medical ethics. Judgments about the impact of interventions on normal functioning are meant to broaden the scope of medical decision-making. Judgments about enjoyment and satisfaction with life are primarily first-person judgments. Such considerations represent the point of view of the patient in making decisions. It is not likely that quality-of-life considerations will disappear from the scene of medical decision-making. My main objection against 'quality-of-life' is that it is a container concept which can cover quite diverse considerations. For the sake of clarity, I would prefer to use distinct terms such as 'normal functioning,' 'satisfaction with life,' and 'human development.' However, if that should happen, we would lose a term which serves as a banner for all those who have certain reservations against the blessings of modern medicine and health care.

Welfare life

Taking a different cue, and in response to a lack of consensus about what constitutes a good life and the varying views on how quality of life should be measured and understood, Lennart Nordenfelt (1999) outlines some of the ways in which quality of life may be considered. He maintains that 'welfare life' is central to questions of quality of life, meaning that how a person's life is treating them is what is important, and not necessarily all aspects of that person's life, such as their aesthetic and intellectual values. The question of what welfare entails is still uncertain. It may involve possession of objective things, as well as individual judgement of one's situation, or the presence of pleasant mental states. The term 'welfare' is understood by some to mean wellbeing, and for others it is usually associated with state-funded support and services. Welfare and wellbeing are interrelated: support, services and welfare in the service of improving life conditions are critical to the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. In broad terms, therefore, the question of welfare directs us to consideration of the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

Despite the lack of consensus about what constitutes a good life, tools that measure quality of life continue to be used. Nordenfelt engages the divide between subjective and objective measures of quality of life, and notes that there is indeed consensus that a purely objectivist measure is not possible. He discusses the example of a shift

in medicine with the introduction of the concept of quality of life, resulting in doctors no longer wanting merely to assess the objective success of an intervention but also to understand the patient's abilities, preferences, attitudes and emotions as they relate to the medical intervention. In cases where people are asked to assess their own lives, Nordenfelt (1999: 6) questions 'whether the subject is asked to assess his or her situation in the sense of describing the situation in as neutral terms as possible, or whether he or she is supposed to evaluate it in normative terms'. He further questions whether patients should be asked to assess their total state of health or situation of welfare, or be made to focus on specific aspects of this. He evaluates Dieter Birnbacher's position that subjectivist notions of quality of life are more suitable for changing cultures and preserving autonomy (Birnbacher 1999), and notes that instruments of measurement should be more individualised. However, measurements tend to combine both subjective and objective elements but tend to be unclear in their conceptual underpinning.

Nordenfelt points out that there is a tendency to ask people to assess the objective aspects of a symptom or disability, but not to ask them how they feel personally. The main reason for assessing quality of life, at least in medicine and healthcare, is to assess groups in clinical trials or in the context of other opportunities (including ones relating to improvements to wellbeing) for the collection of data. For Birnbacher (1999, cited in Nordenfelt 1999), individual quality of life is more important, since treatment should be individualised to account for the variance in ways that individuals react to treatments. For Nordenfelt, quality of life assessment is, in other words, an ethical issue, particularly in terms of the reduction of inequalities. The notion that quality of life assessment is an ethical issue remains central in rethinking how inequalities constrain the quality of life and wellbeing of citizens.

The value of evaluations

Also central to quality of life are issues that involve evaluation, which has much to do with the calculation of the quality, importance and value of something. Greg Bognar (2005) argues for the indispensability of evaluations in quality of life research *despite* the fact that evaluations can often vary from data gathered through descriptive indicators that aim to examine normative ideas of what should be considered a good life.

His engagement begins by explaining the impetus for social responsibility reports – these reports aim to measure certain social indicators, as it is argued that there has been too much focus on economic indicators that do not sufficiently describe and evaluate the conditions of people's lives in a holistic way. According to Bognar, this led to the rise of social indicator research in the 1970s and, particularly, quality of life research. Dividing lines appeared between those who focused on measuring welfare and those who argued that this approach limited the data. The latter group came to be known as quality of life researchers, and their work focused on developing indices for measuring quality of life. Another division occurred between researchers who focused on objective social indicators based on observable and verifiable phenomena and those who argued that people's own perceptions of their welfare are important. Bognar

extrapolates a key set of issues that ultimately point to the importance assigned to the material experience of people (which matters to the life of citizens in a nation-state):

The position of quality of life researchers arguing for the indispensability of evaluations is not entirely clear. One possible reconstruction of their position is that because of the lack of any systematic correspondence between measurement by descriptive indicators and measurement by evaluations, we have to decide whether the former or the latter is to serve as the ultimate standard for quality of life assessment. Since evaluations are able to capture the role and importance people attach to various sources of their welfare, the ultimate standard for making quality of life judgments can only be people's own evaluations. On this stronger reconstruction of the position, the role of descriptive indicators is, at best, indirect: they may be useful heuristics or rough estimates of people's welfare, and they may have the role of informing the person when she forms her judgment. What ultimately matters, however, is *the person's own view about how well her life is going*. (Bognar 2005: 571, emphasis added)

In Bognar's view, descriptive indicators rely on the idea that there are specific goods that may be measured through objective indicators, such as services and opportunities, that are likely to increase welfare. However, there tends to be a wide variation in people's own evaluations despite their experiencing similar life conditions. Evaluation is difficult, since a person does not necessarily have adequate epistemic access to determining their own situation. However, people are in the best position to *understand* their own experiences and attitudes.

Life experience matters, and it directs attention to subjective factors. In this regard, Eden Lin (2016) draws attention to a subjective list theory of wellbeing called 'disjunctive desire satisfactionism', and compares it to two monistic subjectivist views, namely 'desire satisfactionism' and 'subjective desire satisfactionism'. Lin proposes that subjective list theories of wellbeing are underrepresented. In his view, objective list theories claim that certain basic goods exist that are good for all. Where hedonism claims that pleasure is the only basic good and desire, satisfactionism claims that achieving one's desires is the only basic good. Objective list theories recognise a plurality of basic goods; they claim that there is at least one basic good regardless of a person's attitude. However, a subjective list theory claims that basic goods are those towards which we have a favourable attitude. The meaning here is that your welfare cannot be increased by something unless you view it as good.

In Lin's thinking,

desire satisfactionists think that what matters is whether your life really contains things that engage you or resonate with you, whereas subjective desire satisfactionists think that what matters is whether it seems to you that it does. (2016: 104)

Disjunctive desire satisfaction says that there exists more than one basic good involving both the satisfaction of desires and the subjective belief in the goodness of those desires and their fulfilment. For Lin, 'the basic thought is simple: it is good for you to get what you want, good for you to think you're getting what you want, and even better to have both' (2016: 106).

The virtue of happiness

The idea of satisfaction within quality of life and wellbeing is bound up with the experiential and, in particular, with the domain of happiness. A key argument in this thinking is consideration of whether happiness is a virtue. Exploring the relationship between virtue and wellbeing, Mauro Rossi and Christine Tappolet argue that virtue tends to impact wellbeing positively:

in particular we defend three claims: that virtue is constituted by a disposition to experience fitting emotions, that fitting emotions are constituents of fitting happiness, and that fitting happiness is a constituent of well-being. What follows is that, under certain conditions, virtue disposes the individual to experience well-being-constituting states. (Rossi & Tappolet 2016: 112)

Happiness is defined by Rossi and Tappolet as a psychological state or combination of states, while wellbeing is defined as 'designating the life that is good for the individual living it' (2016: 113). They argue that virtue involves being able to assess 'fitting' emotions for the virtuous action:

Virtues would consist in dispositions to experience fitting emotions. More precisely, virtues would consist in multitrack dispositions organised around the disposition to experience fitting emotions. Thus, for instance, the virtue of courage consists in the disposition to experience the appropriate degree of fear and boldness in specific circumstances. In turn, this disposition orients the other dispositions constitutive of virtue, namely, the dispositions to act and to judge appropriately in those circumstances. In the case of courage, this means that the agent's disposition to experience the appropriate degree of fear and boldness will normally lead the agent to perform courageous actions and to form correct judgments in situations involving courageous people and behaviour. (2016: 116)

For Rossi and Tappolet, positive emotions must be happiness-constituting states:

If virtue involves a disposition to experience fitting emotions, then, to the extent that the external circumstances are propitious, virtue disposes the individual to experience positive fitting emotions. This allows us to restate the initial hypothesis as follows: the relation between well-being and virtue is such that, necessarily, if the external circumstances are propitious, virtue tends to make a person's life go well for her. (2016: 122)

Measuring happiness

Building on the concept of happiness, Elias Khalil (2019) questions how wellbeing may be measured. He argues that wellbeing is used as a term instead of utility or welfare, which tend to describe people's ability to acquire goods they desire, or happiness, which is too vague and describes an ephemeral psychological state.

The 'subjective wellbeing' term seems to be a compromise: it connotes the seemingly objective output implied by the term 'wellbeing', while retaining the supposed subjective role of imaginative thinking that the term 'happiness' invokes. (Khalil 2019: 627)

Due to the wellbeing–happiness paradox (also called the Easterlin paradox), which refers to the idea that happiness and wellbeing are unrelated, the term 'subjective wellbeing' is insufficient, since it does not account for the distinction between happiness and wellbeing. Khalil (2019) highlights the contradictory empirical findings that happiness may or may not reflect or track wellbeing. According to him, we must distinguish happiness from wellbeing. To maintain the wellbeing–happiness distinction, we should, following Khalil (2019), expand rational choice theory: we must posit that happiness is produced differently from wellbeing. While wellbeing is a function of corporeal (material) inputs, happiness is a function of the same wellbeing but contrasted with imagined (immaterial) wellbeing. In other words, once we place the production of happiness along the temporal dimension, we have two facets of happiness: when a person considers the past, the output is happiness-as-satisfaction; when a person faces the future, the output is happiness-as-aspiration.

Richard Easterlin (2001, cited in Khalil 2019) also proposed the 'relative income hypothesis': once one's basic needs are fulfilled, happiness comes from comparison against the average income of one's group. Khalil (2019) argues that this fails to account for people's aspirations and assumes the comparison group to be exogenous. One can be happy by achieving certain goals, and one can choose one's peer group. Khalil proposes that one may even derive 'transcendental utility' (2019: 631) from imagining oneself as being a member of a higher-ranking peer group. Set point theory (Khalil 2019) also attempts to account for the wellbeing–happiness paradox, by explaining that once minimum baseline happiness is achieved, it is resilient to both negative and positive shocks. In the case of a positive shock, the hedonic treadmill means that people adapt quickly to the new situation, and their happiness adjusts. However, Khalil notes that people's happiness can be affected negatively in the long term.

For Khalil, wellbeing can be divided into two concepts, 'realized wellbeing' and 'projected wellbeing' (2019: 640). The former refers to wellbeing as understood through reflection on the past, while the latter is based on a projection of the future. The former can lead to happiness through a sense of satisfaction, while the latter derives happiness from aspiration. He states that 'contemporary philosophers have used the term "life that goes well" in the sense of happiness-as-aspiration, while employing the term "state of mind" in the sense of happiness-as-satisfaction' (2019: 640). In this sense, happiness, as an

effect of quality of life and wellbeing, has much to do with the future, as it is ultimately bound up in the creation of a better society in which people flourish without problems.

Future-oriented wellbeing

Hein Berdinesen (2018) considers the concept of wellbeing in the context of the threat of climate change to global human welfare, and how such consideration requires a conceptualisation of wellbeing that is large enough in scope to account for changes in generation and location. More specifically, he is interested in identifying a concept of wellbeing that best justifies a moral obligation to future generations:

In order to ensure future basic needs, we need a low discount rate in climate economics, something that theories based on preference utilitarianism cannot guarantee; preference utilitarianism promotes actions that fulfill the interests (preferences) of the parties involved, whereas a concept of well-being focusing on basic needs encompass[es] more aspects of the issue. A needs concept of well-being will also provide a better understanding of the different forms of dependency and vulnerability which are to be protected in a sustainable model. Arguments for a low discount rate should therefore be based on a concept of well-being focusing on basic needs. (Berdinesen 2018: 305)

Berdinesen begins by arguing that current discounting – the process of determining investment through cost-benefit analysis – overshadows future generations since it only accounts for the time preferences and utility preferences of present populations and individuals. In his view, the welfare economy is founded on the idea that people are best able to evaluate their own needs and interests; however, people may be epistemically irrational and ignorant of the information necessary to make the best choice:

A basic needs-based concept of well-being will encompass more components of well-being than preference utilitarianism in the context of future generations. This is due to the fact that preference theories fail to guide us when it comes to the preconditions for future well-being. (Berdinesen 2018: 308)

According to Berdinesen's argument, a satisfactory theory must account for the needs of future generations, including both their basic physiological needs and their capacities for fulfilment, since fulfilling physiological needs alone is not sufficient for a good life, and future generations must also be able to achieve their goals:

Individual well-being implies that you are able to develop your rational capacities, or at least have the possibility to do so. As a precondition for an individual's well-being, such opportunities also hold intrinsic moral value because the well-being of others always requires that you are morally considerate. Basic needs should therefore have a central position within any theory that seeks to ensure future well-being. An objective theory concerning basic needs directs our attention towards vulnerabilities

and dependencies that are central within many concepts of sustainable development. (2018: 310)

Berdinesen also advocates for a needs-based concept of wellbeing, as well as a logical evaluation of values according to an objective value theory. In his view, the fulfilment of basic needs could be given priority ‘over wishes and preferences ... over all other needs, and the value of lives in future generations could be of equal value to a good life in our present generation.’ He goes on to state that the fulfilment of a need ‘over a number of years is much better than the fulfilment of a need for just one year’ (2018: 317). He advocates for a future-oriented perspective in thinking about wellbeing, which in his view will ‘require institutions which will provide a stronger normative and political foundation, which then might be used to include future generations in our arguments about justice’ (2018: 317). In other words, an ethical position is advanced in thinking about the purpose of the responsibility of wellbeing in terms of the relations between generations, as he explains: ‘The present generation would not be allowed to pursue other less important interests and needs at the expense of the basic needs of future generations’ (2018: 317).

Considering the crisis we are facing with the challenges of poverty and inequality (as well as climate change and environmental degradation), we cannot but pay attention to this way of thinking about quality of life, wellbeing and happiness.

Public happiness

There is another component of happiness, espoused by Hannah Arendt and refined subsequently by theorists such as Judith Butler. ‘Public happiness’, according to Arendt, can be found in the experience of politics and political participation by acting together as unique individuals in concert with one another in public spaces (Arendt 1958: 38). The essence of this is plurality, the action of participating, and being in relation to one another in a common space and on a horizontal plane. Arendt’s insistence on excluding the private sphere from this notion of happiness has been criticised from many angles, especially by feminists. Butler (2018) is particularly critical of this aspect of Arendt’s theory, as the latter requires appearing together as bodies but does not ‘care’ for their corporeal precarity. What matters most, in Butler’s view, is not the ‘mere appearance’ in public spaces but also a reciprocal commitment to engendering new forms of sociality in which the needs of bodies are taken care of – food, water, shelter, protection from violence (Butler 2018: 119). This links the public and the private in a way that may lead to a sense of belonging and, indeed, embodied happiness.

This postmodern feminist conception of caring for others, even in public spaces, takes the theories of quality of life, wellbeing and happiness to a new level, one that moves towards breaking down the public/private dichotomy and in some ways the dichotomy of objectivity and subjectivity as well. This may be one way of easing the specific critique of quality of life research as overly individualistic. Ultimately our happiness is intertwined with that of others, and our sense of wellbeing is affected by the suffering or happiness of others.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we provide a framing of some key concerns that shape emerging understanding of quality of life and wellbeing as both material and discursive markers, ones that impact the state of the nation and not only the state of the individual. We have drawn on a hybrid theory shaped by transdisciplinary insights in the fields of history, sociology, development studies, medicine, political science and philosophy, among others. Central to our thinking is the idea that quality of life and wellbeing are virtues, values (indeed, ethical matters) that drive practical change, requiring of us, as Valerie Tiberius (2018: 48) reminds us, total value fulfilment, or 'a life as rich in value fulfilment as it could be'. The phrase 'could be' signals a future prospect that is imagined but achievable. Critical for us, as for Tiberius, and for other insights we have drawn into this argument, is the idea that values carry with them different standards of fulfilment that are in part non-subjective, but are also shaped by social convention. A good life, as we motivate, is not an impossibility but something that is made possible through shared efforts; it involves recognising the ongoing tensions between individual perceptions of quality of life in experiential terms and the collective or societal perception, a point also elegantly espoused by David Phillips (2006). Ultimately, a good life demonstrates the inherent contradictions between individual freedoms and a necessary collective life based on responsibility – including obligations to future generations.

Interrogating the concepts as we do in this chapter is not a purely conceptual exercise; it is fundamentally a social one that expects us to rethink and reimagine the state of the nation and the types of interventions that are needed to address poverty and inequalities (Jenkins & Micklewright 2007), enabling us to move beyond mere survival to lives worth living. The provocation fundamentally renders all of our standardised and universalised ideas of wellbeing questionable. And yet, it is also prudent to mention explicitly that our quality of life, wellbeing and even happiness are intrinsically bound to those of others, requiring us to care about injustices and vulnerabilities. An example of this was the moral obligation to isolate, wear masks and adhere to other public health protocols during the worst phases of the pandemic, in order to protect others and ourselves.

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HSRC Press

2 *The rights to environmental and human health and wellbeing: Just breathing?*

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Improved scientific understanding of human–environment interactions has led to a growing appreciation of humanity’s and the planet’s reliance on a healthy environment. In this chapter we focus on how air pollution severely affects the health and wellbeing (and human rights) of the world’s population, with a focus on South African case studies that illustrate the particular vulnerability of the poor living in hazardous areas. According to the WHO (2022), every year around 7 million premature deaths are attributable to air pollution globally – a staggering 800 people every hour, or 13 people every minute. Overall, air pollution is responsible for more deaths than many other risk factors, including malnutrition, alcohol use and physical inactivity. Air pollution, including that derived from coal, affects everyone, but it harms poor populations more than rich populations. Typically, poor people are more exposed to air pollution, partly due to their living close to industrial sites, power stations and other sources of air pollution because accommodation in these areas tends to be more affordable. The poor are also more susceptible to the health impacts of bad-quality air because of their more limited access to health services and fewer resources to pay for them. Approximately 98 per cent of cities in low- and middle-income countries do not meet the WHO’s air pollution guidelines, compared to 55 per cent in high-income countries. Reducing outdoor air pollution – by shutting down coal plants and replacing them with cleaner energy sources – can therefore help to reduce the health and related inequalities caused by air pollution (ODI n.d.).

Furthermore, air pollution is accelerated by and aggravates climate change (UNEP 2019). This scenario has led Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder to state that air pollution is ‘a crime against humanity’.¹

This chapter explores these developments in scientific knowledge and their implications for ethical and legal obligations, as well as their impact on people’s lives. It adopts air quality in South Africa as a case study, and seeks to identify areas of progress and areas where clearer legal and policy guidance is needed to ensure that communities and individuals are protected and enabled to flourish, with a focus on quality of life and wellbeing. To do this, we consider recent jurisprudence on air quality and related literature, policy statements and recent policy developments (such as the Presidential Climate Commission), as well as public opinion data collected annually by the Human Sciences Research Council’s South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS).²

The right to a healthy environment as well as the concept of wellbeing are found in section 24(a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This section provides

that ‘everyone has the right ... to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing’. The presence of references to environment, health and wellbeing here raises questions about the nature and meanings of the intersections between them. For example, human health and wellbeing are influenced both positively and negatively by environmental conditions, with significant economic and social implications. Public awareness of such interlinkages is shown in the SASAS 2020 survey, where more than 50 per cent of the respondents indicated that air pollution, pollution of the country’s rivers, lakes and streams, nuclear power stations, climate change, and pesticides and chemicals used in farming were perceived as ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ dangerous to the environment (HSRC 2020).

SASAS 2020 data showed that about 14 per cent of South Africans believed that their local neighbourhood was affected to a great extent by air pollution, and 17 per cent felt that water pollution and extreme weather events affected their local neighbourhood (HSRC 2020). A global example of the impact of the environment on humans (and vice versa) is the role of human expansion into wilderness areas in exposing humanity to virulent pathogens, such as Covid-19.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the interaction between wellbeing, environmental justice and human rights, whereafter we outline the international and national legal frameworks related to pollution and air quality. The second half of the chapter deals with specific cases in South Africa where the courts have ruled on the rights to a healthy environment and wellbeing, with a focus on air quality in mining areas.

Why and how wellbeing fits with the constitutional protection of human rights

According to Anel du Plessis, the dictionary meanings of wellbeing

typically refer to a good or satisfactory condition of existence; a state characterised by health, happiness and prosperity. Words like wretchedness and misery and a condition of being deficient in health, happiness or prosperity typically describe aspects of ill-being. Wellbeing may further belong to a single person or to a ‘state’, or to people or a group in the collective sense. (2018: 193)

Wellbeing is increasingly viewed as ‘a field of ideas, rather than a single concept with a precise definition’, and includes fields such as

material sufficiency; a dependable and attractive physical environment; good personal and social relationships; dignity and respect; meaningful activity; safety and security; mental and physical health; scope for agency; a positive sense of self; and spiritual nourishment. (White 2014: 3)

Accepting the notion of ‘a field of ideas’ requires us to interrogate the relationship between these ideas. We agree with Du Plessis’s assertion (2018: 193) that ‘a meaningful nexus exists between the environment, human health and wellbeing’. The linkage lies in

the reality that human health and wellbeing 'are influenced by environmental conditions both positively and negatively, with significant economic and social consequences' (EEA 2014: iv).

Du Plessis refers to Amartya Sen's interrogation of 'capability and wellbeing' from the perspectives of economics and philosophy, exploring a particular approach to wellbeing in terms of a person's ability to execute valuable acts or to reach valuable states of being. With Du Plessis, we argue that a person 'should have the freedom to enjoy various possible "wellbeings" as well as the freedom to choose and to act freely' (Du Plessis 2018: 194). Such freedom

arguably lies in access to the quantity and quality of natural resources (for example, air to breathe, water to drink and soil to produce food) as well as natural resources needed for the achievement of other non-basic, needs-related functionings (for example, water for recreational activities, land for purposes of acquisition and biodiversity for aesthetic purposes). (Du Plessis 2018: 198)

Within a constitutional context, such freedom and access are enshrined in human rights.

Important role-players involved in ensuring the fulfilment of the human right to wellbeing include states and international organisations. The *Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement Revised Synthesis Report* published by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2021 (UNFCCC 2021a) showed that nations needed to submit

much stronger national climate action plans in 2021 if [they were] to achieve the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global temperature rise to as close as possible to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial times by the end of the century. (UNFCCC 2021b)

The Paris Agreement called for transformation of production and consumption patterns, and movement towards a circular economy that focuses on reusing, repairing and recycling materials and products to reduce wastage and production.

However, to leave it at the right to freedom to enjoy a healthy environment would not do justice to this topic so closely related to nature itself, and to humanity's claimed dominance over and exploitation of the ecosystems that sustain life. Irigaray (2013) demonstrates that the world's environmental struggle is not solely economic but rather a struggle we face in our relationship with the environment and with one another. As such, she argues that we need to return to the most important element of our existence: air, breath and nature. Irigaray states that 'the breath is a medium, a mediator, which is essential for a becoming of the relations to ourselves, to the world, to the other' (Irigaray 2013: 218). In the same chapter she states that

we must discover a blossoming of life that suits our humanity, a means to grow and to become that does not divide the natural world from the cultural world but links them together. This requires us to turn back

our path in order to *undertake another way towards our development*.
(2013: 222, emphasis added)

Perhaps then we would begin to live, rather than merely surviving.

Intersectionality between the environment, health and wellbeing: International law and practice

It is rare to see people fighting in a garden. Perhaps struggle unfolds first, not at an economic or social level, but over the appropriation of air, essential to life itself. If human beings can breathe and share air, they don't need to struggle with one another. And consequently, it appears to be a basic crime against humanity to contribute to air pollution.³

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has determined that the right to health extends to the 'underlying determinants of health', including safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, safe food, adequate housing and healthy working and environmental conditions (UNOHCHR 2021). The 2019 United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR 2019) report titled *Clean Air and Human Rights* affirmed the obligations of member states relating to the right to breathe clean air – a vital element of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment as promoted by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC 2019). In 2021, the UNHRC for the first time declared that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right. The council called upon states to commit to coordinated action at the household, local, national, regional and international levels (UNHRC 2021).

The 2022 European Environment Agency (EEA 2022) report on the nexus between environment, health and wellbeing argues that they are intimately linked. The environment provides a significant channel for human exposure to polluted air, noise and hazardous chemicals. The report refers to findings by the WHO that estimate that environmental stressors are responsible for 12 to 18 per cent of all deaths in the WHO European Region. Air pollution is also indicated as the single largest environmental health risk in Europe, and is associated with heart disease, stroke, lung disease and lung cancer. It is estimated that exposure to air pollution results in more than 400 000 premature deaths in the European Union (EU) annually. The EEA report emphasises the need to apply a systems approach to addressing the combined threat of a polluted environment and health risks to wellbeing.

Air pollution in context: Climate crisis and the UN's sustainable development goals

Future generations may well have occasion to ask themselves, What were our parents thinking? Why didn't they wake up when they had a chance? We have to hear that question from them, now. (Gore 2006)

The relationship of environmental degradation and air pollution to health and wellbeing has been researched for decades. Major reports and large protest actions have highlighted the crisis that the earth and its inhabitants – human and non-human – face.

The World Economic Forum recently observed that

many air pollutants are also greenhouse gases, and, as such, they accelerate climate change. This means the impacts of air pollution occur both directly – when it causes health issues – and indirectly, by accelerating climate change. As temperatures rise, an increased occurrence of extreme weather events and rising sea levels will pose further threats to human health. This makes tackling air pollution an important priority for planetary health, a concept that describes the interactions between human health and the environments we depend on. (Duong & Oni 2022)

In a World Bank blog of 18 May 2022, Jun Rentschler and Nadia Leonova report that 94 per cent of the world population experience air pollution levels that are considered unsafe by the WHO, while 2.8 billion people face pollution levels that are hazardous, with a mortality rate that is almost 25 per cent higher than in safe areas. The authors also estimate that most people breathing unsafe air live in middle-income countries, where 5.5 billion people are exposed to hazardous PM2.5 (‘fine particulate matter’) levels – compared to more than 40 million people in low- and high-income countries combined (Rentschler & Leonova 2022).⁴

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2022) reports dire implications of such high levels of air pollution for the world’s poor. Global warming and associated loss of biodiversity will impede progress towards each of the UN’s sustainable development goals (SDGs). The Covid-19 pandemic has already impacted heavily on these aspirations. But the pandemic setbacks have a far lower impact than the long-term challenges that climate change presents for meeting and exceeding basic human needs and placing developing countries on the path towards sustainable growth (Patrick 2021).

The UNHRC reports that fine particulate air pollution is the single highest environmental threat to health across the world (UNHRC 2019). Tiny particles that are breathed into the lungs and enter the bloodstream contain a toxic mixture of black carbon, soot, nitrates, sulphates and heavy metals. The amounts experienced may vary depending on the sources and specific locations. In poorly ventilated homes, levels of particulate matter can exceed by a hundred times the acceptable levels.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has observed that

the more we learn, the more we come to realise that this essential source of life for the planet needs some serious taking care of. Without air there can be no life but breathing polluted air condemns us to a life of disease and early death. Now that we know how air pollution harms us, there is no excuse not to act. (UNEP 2019)

UNEP describes similar patterns and pathologies to those noted above and identifies five key reasons 'to reduce and eliminate air pollution from our lives': (i) polluted air is creating a health emergency; (ii) children are most at risk; (iii) pollution and poverty go hand in hand; (iv) the cheaper the fuels, the higher the costs; and (v) the right to clean air is a human right (UNEP 2019).

Research undertaken by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) points to the increased risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, infections, heart disease, strokes, lung cancer and pre-term births and low birth weight (UNOHCHR 2008). The research report refers to a growing body of evidence that links air pollution to other illnesses, such as cataracts, ear infections, asthma in children, chronic deficits in lung function, childhood obesity, stunting, diabetes, poor cognitive development, lower intelligence and neurological disorders afflicting both children and adults. Children are particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of poor air quality due to behavioural, physiological and environmental factors. Their developing bodies and brains are highly sensitive to toxic substances, while their life expectancy may be undermined.

Indirect or secondary effects of respiratory diseases include personal, social, environmental and public impacts. Personal impacts can include reduced physical activity and its side effects, such as obesity and reduced mental alertness. Social and environmental impacts include reduced water and soil quality, which leads to reduced nutritional value of crops. Public impacts refer to the increasing burden on the healthcare system and on the national fiscus.

As noted earlier, the incidence of air pollution is most prevalent in developing countries. These countries are often characterised by lax air quality regulations, the use of older, more polluting vehicles and machinery, the subsidisation of fossil fuels, congested transport systems, rapid increase in industrial activity, and cut-and-burn practices in agriculture. These conditions all contribute to higher air pollution levels (Rentschler & Leonova 2022).

Rentschler and Leonova (2002) also highlight the above-average exposure to low-quality air that is generally experienced by poorer and marginalised communities:

Low-paying employment tends to require physical outdoor labour, with its heightened exposure to polluted air. Pollution sources, such as industrial plants or transport corridors, are disproportionately located in low-income neighbourhoods. And as air pollution increases, prices of housing go down, reinforcing the low-income status of neighbourhoods. In short, as health, wellbeing and productivity suffer, air pollution can reinforce socio-economic inequalities.

As mentioned above, air pollution also impacts on the broader environment. The UNHRC mentions that air pollution has disastrous impacts on biological diversity and ecosystems (UNHRC 2019). Certain air pollutants contribute to increased acid levels of lakes, eutrophication of wetlands and coastal waters, and bioaccumulation of

mercury in aquatic food systems. The earth's ecosystems, including forests, grasslands and soils, are also damaged by air pollutants. Many of the activities that harm air quality also contribute to climate change and its destruction of nature's ecosystems.

Air quality in South Africa as a case study

Due to the enormous scope of these topics, this chapter limits its focus to air quality in South Africa. Various court cases in South Africa dealing with air pollution refer to section 24 of the South African Constitution, which reads as follows:

Everyone has the right

- a. to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing; and
- b. to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that
 - i. prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
 - ii. promote conservation; and
 - iii. secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

Section 24(a) focuses on human health and wellbeing, while section 24(b) is focused mainly on ecological degradation and climate change. The former is the primary focus of this chapter.

South Africa relies on coal for more than 80 per cent of its electricity and on fossil fuels for more than 90 per cent of its energy (DFFE 2019).⁵ In a 2021 presentation to the parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the Environment, former Eskom CEO André de Ruyter stated that

our economy, on a per capita basis, is 25% more carbon-intensive than China, and double the global average. South Africa emits roughly half the total carbon emitted by the African continent, and Eskom emits about 44% of the total South African carbon emissions.⁶

The then-acting deputy director general for primary health stated at the same meeting that the economic costs of illnesses related to air pollution are considerable in South Africa, as these conditions lead to reduced economic activity and retard the development of the country.⁷ Here the link between a healthy environment and economic development is clearly illustrated.

South African law, policy and practice

South Africa, as a developing country, exhibits most of the above-mentioned incidents and impacts of air pollution. The provinces of Mpumalanga and Gauteng are two of the most densely populated areas of the country. Located within close proximity

to Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces are the primary locations of the country's largest coal-fired power stations. A 2019 study commissioned by Greenpeace India used US National Aeronautics and Space Administration satellite estimates of anthropogenic sulphur dioxide (SO₂) emissions from hotspots around the world. The research found that 'Kriel in Mpumalanga, with its high concentration of coal-fired power stations, ranks as the second-worst SO₂ emission hotspot in the world' (Greenpeace 2019). A 2019 assessment by the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE 2019) also found that approximately 5 000 people die prematurely each year on the Mpumalanga highveld from air pollution. The emissions from the coal-driven power stations in Mpumalanga and from Sasol refineries in and near Gauteng were the main drivers for the Deadly Air and #CancelCoal court cases, discussed below.

South Africa is required to set measurable targets to limit global warming to well below 2 °C, ideally 1.5 °C. South Africa's National Framework for Air Quality Management, developed in terms of the National Environmental Management: Air Quality Act (No. 39 of 2004, NEMAQA) declares in its ministerial foreword that it is 'the first national plan to clear our skies of pollution and ensure ambient air that is not harmful to health and wellbeing' (DEAT 2007: 5). The framework refers to South Africa's international 'obligations', but characterises the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC 1998) as international 'policy' rather than as binding law (DEAT 2007: 14). As required by section 7 of NEMAQA, the framework was updated in 2012 (DEAT 2012) and again in 2017 (DWEA 2017), but this characterisation has been retained (2017: 7).

The 2017 framework mentions several achievements since 2007, including that

air quality that is not harmful to health and wellbeing was defined through the establishment of national ambient air quality standards; three national priority areas were declared (Vaal Triangle Airshed, Highveld and Waterberg-Bojanala) and plans to improve and maintain good air quality in these areas are [under way]. (DWEA 2017: vii)

One of the reasons for the litigation pursued by civil society organisations, such as Earthlife Africa, is that the state's improvement plans have not been undertaken expeditiously or consistently. For instance, Eskom has fallen behind the extended deadline for installation of flue gas desulphurisation technology applicable to the 4 800 MW coal-fired mega-power station Medupi in Limpopo. A news report by Sarah Evans highlights how 'Eskom has failed to install flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) technology, commonly known as air scrubbers which scrub the fumes from the station of some of the sulphur dioxide (SO₂) that is emitted'.⁸ The news article refers to a study by the lead researcher at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air at the University of Helsinki in Finland, which notes that if Eskom's Medupi Power Station runs at full capacity, without the FGD technology, it could lead to about 90 deaths every year. It is expected that Medupi will run without FGD for at least a decade. Evans also refers to a separate 2017 study by Michael Holland which found that 'more than 2 000 people have died over the years from illnesses caused by pollution from

Eskom's coal fleet, at a cost of around R30bn to the economy', while Medupi has killed about 364 people each year.⁹

South Africa's National Climate Change Response White Paper declares that

[the] South African health sector is one of the five key priorities of government. It acknowledges that the extreme weather events and increased climate variability associated with climate change provides a number of significant compounding factors that negatively affect the health and resilience of vulnerable communities. (South African Government 2011: 19)

The White Paper highlights the particular vulnerability of 'children, the elderly and socioeconomically vulnerable communities', as well as residents of 'densely populated urban areas, [where] air pollution resulting primarily from the burning of fossil fuels may have serious health effects' (2011: 19). It also acknowledges that women,

as primary caregivers, are put under additional strain looking after sick and elderly household members whilst maintaining a household. This leaves them less time to earn a livelihood putting cyclical pressure on them as they often neglect their own health in prioritising the health of others. (South African Government 2011: 19)

It is therefore evident that, conceptually, air pollution and its impact on wellbeing and quality of life are well understood in government policy. There also seems to exist awareness of the incapacitating situation of individuals, such as women, to change their lived conditions – in Sen's (1993) words, as quoted by Du Plessis (1998: 194), to have 'the freedom to act'. The question is how government responds to the urgency of the crisis.

The White Paper contains a commitment that

under the leadership of the relevant national sector government department, each significantly emitting economic sector or sub-sector will be required to formulate mitigation and lower-carbon development strategies. These strategies will specify a suite of mitigation programmes and measures appropriate to that sector or sub-sector. They will also provide measurable and verifiable indicators for each programme and measure to monitor their implementation and outcome. (South African Government 2011: 28–29)

Accordingly,

South Africa will use Section 29(1) of the Air Quality Act to manage GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions from all significant industrial sources (those responsible for more than 0.1% of total emissions for the sector) in line with approved mitigation plans that conform to the Act's requirements for pollution prevention plans prepared by identified industries and sectors. (2011: 40)

Significantly, in a commitment that appears to indeed recognise the intersectionality between air quality, health and wellbeing, the White Paper identifies ‘the *synergy* between prevention measures to reduce conventional air pollutants and GHG mitigation’ and undertakes that it ‘will be used in a *holistic* approach to manage air quality’ (South African Government 2011: 40, emphasis added). This approach resonates with the concept of a ‘just transition’ that requires systemic change to ensure the transition from coal and other fossil fuels to a society based on clean and renewable energy, and social justice. President Cyril Ramaphosa’s Just Transition Framework, as articulated by the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC),

is a planning tool for achieving a just transition in South Africa, setting out the actions that the government and its social partners will take to achieve a just transition, and the outcomes to be realised in the short, medium, and long term ... The framework sets out the policy measures and undertakings by different social partners to minimise the social and economic impacts of the climate transition, and to improve the livelihoods of those most vulnerable to climate change. (PCC 2022)

Despite this apparently promising recognition, there have been at least four significant court actions – and one pending – as a result of persistent concerns regarding air pollution, air quality and climate change in South Africa in recent years. The first court case will be discussed in some detail below, because it highlights the relationship between air quality and climate change, while the other cases, more focused on air pollution issues, are discussed briefly.

The 2017 Earthlife Africa case

In South Africa’s first climate change lawsuit, *Earthlife Africa Johannesburg v Minister of Environmental Affairs and Others* (ELA Johannesburg 2017), Earthlife Africa (ELA) Johannesburg challenged Minister Edna Molewa’s rejection of ELA’s appeal against the approval given by the then Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) for the proposed Thabametsi coal-fired power station in Limpopo (CER 2020). This approval was granted despite the lack of a comprehensive assessment of the climate change impacts of this new coal-fired power station (ELA Johannesburg 2017). Ultimately the Gauteng High Court decided in favour of ELA, which welcomed the judgment, saying that

[it] sends a strong message to government and to all developers proposing projects with potentially significant climate change impacts in South Africa that permission cannot be given for such projects unless the climate change impacts have been properly assessed.¹⁰

ELA’s case rested on the proposition that section 24O(1) of the National Environment Management Act (No. 107 of 1998, NEMA) requires a climate change impact assessment to be conducted and considered before an environmental authorisation is granted. The review application required the court to determine whether the then

DEA was obliged to fully assess the climate change impacts of a proposed coal-fired power station before environmental authorisation was granted in terms of NEMA (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 12). Of particular importance was the fact that NEMA contains sufficient provisions referring to the intersectionality of quality of life, wellbeing and the environment.

Section 24O(1) of the Act imposes mandatory requirements, including that decision-makers must

- (b) take into account all relevant factors, which may include –
 - (i) any pollution, environmental impacts or environmental degradation likely to be caused if the application is approved or refused;
 - (ii) measures that may be taken –
 - (aa) to protect the environment from harm as a result of the activity which is the subject of the application; and
 - (bb) to prevent, control, abate or mitigate any pollution, substantially detrimental environmental impacts or environmental degradation ...

Regulation 31(2) of the Act provides that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report must contain all information that is necessary for the competent authority to consider the application and to reach a decision. Regulation 34(2)(b) compels the decision-maker to reject the EIA report if it does not substantially comply with the requirements in regulation 31(2) (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 13–14).

ELA ‘raised various concerns in relation to the assessment of impacts on inter alia fauna and flora, wetlands, surface water, groundwater, *air quality* and biodiversity’ (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 41, emphasis added). The EIA report merely briefly asserted that the climate change impacts were relatively ‘small’ and ‘low’ (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 42). ELA argued that this focus on localised issues of air quality was an oversight and that the EIA report should also consider broader climate change impacts. Essentially, they argued for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to EIAs (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 43–44).

ELA’s appeal to the minister showed a firm basis in the internationally accepted conceptual understanding of environmental health and how this understanding is integrated into NEMAQA. The appeal included that ‘everyone has the constitutional right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing’ and that therefore ‘everyone has the constitutional right to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations’ (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa section 24[1][b]). Section 2 of NEMAQA declares that the aim of the Act

is to protect the environment by providing reasonable measures for the protection and enhancement of the quality of air; the prevention of air pollution and ecological degradation; securing ecologically sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and

social development; and generally to give effect to section 24(b) of the Constitution in order to enhance the quality of ambient air for the sake of securing an environment that is not harmful to the health and wellbeing of people.

The court noted that ‘although NEMAQA is primarily concerned with the quality of ambient air, it is secondarily concerned with other kinds of pollution and environmental degradation’ (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 59) because of the close relationship between them. Section 39(b) of NEMAQA provides that when considering an application for an air emissions licence, the licensing authority must consider inter alia the pollution that is being or is likely to be caused by carrying out the listed activity and the effect or likely effect of that pollution on the environment.

Section 1 of NEMAQA defines ‘air pollution’ as ‘any change in the composition of the air caused by smoke, soot, dust (including fly ash), cinders, solid particles of any kind, gases, fumes, aerosols and odorous substances’, and ‘pollution.’ NEMA defines it to include any change in the environment caused by substances emitted from any activity where that change has an adverse effect on human health or wellbeing or on the composition, resilience and productivity of natural or managed ecosystems, or on materials useful to people, or will have such an effect in the future.

The court observed that ‘this all-embracing definition of pollution thus encompasses the emission of GHG as a form of pollution’ (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 59).

The court held that ‘NEMA must also be interpreted consistently with international law’ in accordance with section 233 of the Constitution. Article 3(3) of the UNFCCC enacts a principle ‘requiring all states parties to take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimise causes of climate change’ (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 83).

For these reasons, among others, the court found that climate change impacts ‘are undoubtedly a relevant consideration as contemplated by section 24O of NEMA.’ As the DEA’s chief director had overlooked this relevant consideration, the court reviewed and set aside the decision in terms of section 6(2)(e)(iii) of the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (No. 3 of 2000, PAJA) (*ELA Johannesburg 2017* at 87–88).

The ‘deadly air’ case

There is a lot of dust from these mines and they blast all the time without even informing us. There is also a steel plant nearby. There is black smoke coming from the steel plant every day around 4–5 pm. It gives off a chemical smell like they are burning cables. I think the air pollution is getting worse in the area where I live.¹¹

In the second matter, known as the ‘deadly air’ case, *Trustees for the time being of Groundwork Trust and Another v Minister of Environmental Affairs and Others*

(*groundWork* 2022), the applicants initiated constitutional litigation to request the High Court to

acknowledge that the poor ambient air quality in the Highveld Priority Area (HPA) constitutes a violation of the right to an environment not harmful to health or wellbeing, and to order the government to promulgate regulations to give effect to the Highveld Air Quality Management Plan. (CER 2022b)

The undisputed evidence placed before the court confirmed that, as conceded by the minister,

poor air quality at the hotspots in the Highveld Priority Area has adverse consequences and impacts upon human health and wellbeing ... [and that] 'these levels of air pollution observed over a period of time have not been compliant with National Standards.' (*groundWork* 2022 at 154)

As a consequence of this failure to reduce the levels of air pollution, and the department's own finding that more than 10 000 premature deaths occur each year that are directly attributable to air pollution in the HPA, the court found that the 'inescapable conclusion ... is that the levels of air pollution in this area [are] not consistent with the section 24(a) [constitutional] right to an environment that is not harmful to health or wellbeing' (*groundWork* 2022 at 155, 241).

In a highly significant finding, the court also concluded that the environmental health right in section 24(a) is 'immediately' realisable (*groundWork* 2022 at 163), rather than progressively realisable. The court declared that the minister of environmental affairs 'has a legal duty to prescribe regulations under section 20 [of NEMAQA] to implement and enforce the Highveld Priority Area Air Quality Management Plan (Highveld Plan)' and directed the minister 'within 12 months of this order, to prepare, initiate, and prescribe regulations in terms of section 20 of the Air Quality Act to implement and enforce the Highveld Plan' (*groundWork* 2022 at 241.4). The court further emphasised 'the need for a coordinated response to address air pollution in low-income, densely populated areas' (*groundWork* 2022 at 241.5.10).

It has subsequently been reported that in June 2023, 'the National Air Quality Officer (NAQO) granted Eskom's application to postpone compliance with the Minimum Emissions Standards for deadly pollutants' from Kusile. Eskom is also appealing against decisions by the NAQO to compel compliance with pollution limits at nine other coal-fired plants, which Eskom says it 'cannot afford to take'.¹² Eskom's savings should be viewed in the context of the externalised costs.¹³

The #CancelCoal case

Coal is affecting members of the community's health and comfort – people are living with cancer and respiratory diseases, and rely on oxygen and nebulisers just to survive. This case is a last resort – we are saying there

should be no new coal power – it is too destructive. (Ronald Mhlakaza, quoted in CER 2021b)

The third case, *African Climate Alliance and Others v Minister of Mineral Resources and Energy and Others* (*African Climate Alliance, Vukani and groundWork* 2021), colloquially known as the #CancelCoal case, was launched in 2019 by three civil society organisations: African Climate Alliance, Vukani and groundWork (CER 2021b). The applicants requested the North Gauteng High Court to review and set aside the minister of mineral resources and energy’s decision to approve the building of a new 1 500 MW coal-fired power station, because coal-fired power poses significant unjustifiable threats to several constitutional rights. The applicants’ founding affidavit sets out the rights allegedly threatened as including the right to an environment not harmful to the health or wellbeing of present and future generations in South Africa, as well as the rights to life, dignity, equality, and the best interests of the child (*African Climate Alliance, Vukani and groundWork* 2021 at 328ff). The supporting expert reports document the negative impact of coal-fired power station emissions on air quality, as well as unnecessary costs and job losses, climate harm and negative impacts on the physical, social and mental health and wellbeing for people living in the vicinity and in South Africa generally. It appears that the conceptual understanding of air pollution as part of a wider set of threats to quality of life and wellbeing gained increased prominence in this court case. This may heighten awareness of the crisis, and also requires the court to take the complexity of the crisis into account. The findings of the court may reflect this complexity, and allow government to misuse it in its implementation of the court order, for example, through unnecessarily elaborate multidepartmental strategies, rather than action. Government has indicated its intention to oppose the application, and the hearing of the matter is pending (CER 2022a).

The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance case

The fourth matter, launched by the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and groundWork against the minister of forestry, fisheries and the environment, applies for a court order declaring that the South African government’s approval of a natural gas power plant is unlawful and invalid because it violates the country’s Constitution, its environmental legislation, environmental standards and policy, as well as international obligations (*groundWork and the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance v Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment* 2021).¹⁴

Large-scale gas-to-power plants do not make sense. Growing evidence and research show that gas is not needed in our energy transition away from coal. Investment in such gas projects is costly and detrimental to South Africa’s economy, people, livelihoods and the environment. Forcing in gas will displace renewable energy development, raise the cost of electricity, expose us to volatile gas prices and increase pollution, global warming and climate vulnerability. The burning of fossil fuels has no place in our energy future. (Desmond D’Sa, quoted in groundWork 2022)¹⁵

In April 2021, the two environmental groups filed an application for review of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment's authorisation of the Richards Bay 3 000 MW gas-fired power plant. The plaintiffs allege that the EIA (which includes an 'Air and Climate Change Report') of the project included an insufficient assessment of its climate impacts, in that it failed to assess the full life-cycle emissions of natural gas. Referring to section 24 of the Constitution and South Africa's obligations in terms of its global commitments, the applicants argue that the GHG footprint of natural gas is worse than that of coal and oil on a climate-relevant 20-year timescale. Acceptable alternatives such as renewable energy were not properly considered. The plaintiffs are seeking a court decision to review and set aside government approvals of the power plant (CER 2022).¹⁶

The 2022 Earthlife Africa case

A fifth case was initiated on 29 July 2022, when ELA Johannesburg instituted an application for a judicial review of the decision made by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) to grant an environmental authorisation (EA) for a new coal mine in Lephalale, Limpopo province, and of the minister's decision to confirm that EA on appeal (Earthlife Africa 2022). Earthlife Africa is challenging the EA inter alia on the basis of the absence of a comprehensive climate change impact assessment; the failure of the DMRE to consider the impact of the mine on the region's air quality, the failure to consider water usage, adverse health impacts and inadequate community consultation. Noteworthy are the extensive conceptual basis of the complaint and the urgency of discontinuing air pollution in contravention of existing legislation and policy. Ironically, the proposed site of the mine falls within the Waterberg-Bojanala Priority Area, which is water-scarce and was declared an air pollution hotspot in 2012 under NEMAQA.

The failure of government decision makers to take into account the future climate harms that will result from the mine, as well as the risk the mine poses to the area's air pollution levels ... is inexcusable. This is particularly so considering that the area is already recognised as an air pollution hotspot ... (Thabo Sibeko, Earthlife Africa's coal campaigner, quoted in Earthlife Africa 2022)

Plans for the proposed mine show that it is supposed to supply coal for a new power station that has not yet been built. The applicants, however, quote Professor Brett Cohen, who found that new coal-fired power stations are not economically feasible. Furthermore, the nearby power stations, Medupi and Matimba, have sufficient available coal reserves (Earthlife Africa 2022).

The question remains: what action is government taking in response to scientific knowledge and evidence, protest action and jurisprudence?

Important in these five cases is that the courts have interrogated the science behind climate change and its causes and wider impacts on air quality, and will most probably continue to do so. Such inquiries will doubtless involve a debate about trade-offs

between short-term and long-term costs and benefits, between financial costs and the rights to ‘wellbeing’ and to life, in which fauna, flora, human beings and planet are inextricably bound together. For example, Eskom has informed Parliament that it will cost at least R300 billion over the next 10 years to enable the company to comply with all environmental legal prescriptions.¹⁷ The state, as custodian of our shared future, finds itself in the middle of these ‘competing’ interests and priorities and may find itself facing multiple challenges against the (non-)implementation and enforcement of legislation.¹⁸

The state’s obligation to exercise its custodianship is even more demanding because of the apparent lack of understanding among the general population of the intersectionality between environment, health and wellbeing. SASAS 2020 found that only 31 per cent of the respondents would be willing to pay ‘higher prices’ or ‘much higher taxes’ to protect the environment (HSRC 2020).

Yet, the fact that Covid-19 is a virus that caused so many to die on ventilators, painfully struggling for breath, and that the Black Lives Matter slogan is ‘I can’t breathe’, points to the importance of breath and breathing – and the absence of breath as death.¹⁹ It is therefore not far-fetched to say that the quality of the air we breathe affects our quality of living and sense of wellbeing, and that poor air quality places lives at risk. We must do things differently.

The government has taken some potentially significant steps that may signal that it is taking more seriously the need to act decisively in consultation with social partners, but the absence of a sense of urgency is distressing. One encouraging recent step is that the minister of forestry, fisheries and the environment has established an Expert Panel on Air Quality and Emissions Standards, which ‘will consist of a maximum of six experts appointed by the minister, with qualifications in, and an extensive knowledge of, air quality, human health, economics, engineering, energy and environmental management’ (MFFE 2022).

In another measure, the National Planning Commission has issued a report on its Social Partner Dialogue, *2050 Vision and Pathways for a Just Transition to a Low Carbon, Climate Resilient Economy and Society* (NPC 2019). Following this, the PCC was established in December 2020 as a multistakeholder advisory body ‘on South Africa’s journey to a net-zero economy and climate resilient society’ (PCC 2022c). The PCC unanimously adopted the Just Transition Framework on 27 May 2022. The framework sets out the recommended policy measures and undertakings by different social partners to minimise the social and economic impacts of the climate transition, and to improve the livelihoods of those most vulnerable to climate change. The PCC recently welcomed the acceptance of the framework by President Ramaphosa on behalf of the government (PCC 2022a)²⁰ and, subsequently, Cabinet’s adoption of the framework (PCC 2022b).²¹

Notably, Eskom’s former CEO, Andre de Ruyter, told Parliament that Eskom had identified several projects to decarbonise its electricity generating systems. About 8 000 MW of projects had already been identified which would cost about

R180 billion.²² He also said that South Africa is ‘at an energy crossroads, and the path to a competitive future lies in green energy’.²³ Another of South Africa’s major emitters, Sasol, has reportedly made substantial progress towards compliance with its obligations in terms of the Minimum Emissions Standards – from 80 per cent in 2014 to 98 per cent in 2021 (PMG 2021).

In 2022, De Ruyter told the Africa Renewables Investment Summit in Cape Town that meeting air quality standards would require Eskom to immediately decommission as much as 16 GW of its coal-fired power stations, and a further 14 GW by 2030 – about two-thirds of its generating fleet’s capacity.²⁴

Even if Eskom is managed optimally, its current level of harmful emissions amounts to a breach of human rights, even a ‘crime against humanity’ (and the environment). It is a vicious downward spiral of high costs and high levels of toxicity, which begs the question: what needs to be done to transform energy generation into a virtuous cycle of clean air and clean jobs? Here, most energy experts agree: invest heavily in renewable energy in the course of the next 20 years.²⁵

Conclusion

One of the applicants in the ‘deadly air’ case, Promise Mabilo, articulated the challenges faced by their community and what is needed to address these challenges:

We wish for the government departments to work together with other departments, such as the department of health. We do not just want compliance from the polluters because once we get sick, we even struggle to get proper healthcare because we don’t have money. (Oxpeckers 2021)

Government needs to embark on a just (energy) transition away from our overreliance on fossil fuels in a way that ensures fairness for those who are currently reliant on these energy sources. A just (energy) transition requires clear targets and timelines, and firm resolve in line with the UNHRC’s seven steps to address air pollution (UNHRC 2019), rather than being dragged grudgingly before the courts each time it fails to live up to its commitments. Government needs to move the country decisively away from our current carbon-intensive path to a sustainable and liveable future. At the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) in November 2021, President Ramaphosa ‘joined other leaders in announcing a historic partnership’ with the governments of France, Germany, the UK, the US and the EU ‘to support a just transition to a low carbon economy and a climate resilient society in South Africa’ (South African Government 2021).

A few months earlier, Melissa Fourie, executive director of the Centre for Environmental Rights and a member of the PCC, wrote that the prospect of a just transition

provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change more than just energy sources: it has the potential to be transformational and to progress

the participatory, distributive and restorative justice required for a more stable and resilient society.²⁶

Fourie referenced how, in recent years, ‘civil society organisations and communities affected by coal, proposals for gas extraction and climate change have been developing principles and a vision for such a different future’. One example is the Climate Justice Charter, led by the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre, that was handed to Parliament in 2020 (SAFSC & COPAC 2020a, 2020b).

In July 2022, the Life After Coal campaign released its *Just Transition Open Agenda*, developed in collaboration with community partners (Life After Coal 2022). The agenda calls for systemic change: ‘a just transition from coal and other fossil fuels to a society based on clean, just and renewable energy, and social justice’ (CER 2021a). All these principles are rooted in our Constitution.

Fourie concluded with the following challenge:

The question is whether we can marshal the vision and courage to use the structural shifts of the energy transition to make the bold changes we need to realise the South African society we want: a society that is just and equal, in which the basic needs of all are met and poverty is alleviated, safe for all, and prepared for a harsher climate.²⁷

We propose that government should consider taking the following urgent steps to demonstrate its clear commitment to placing South Africa on a path towards a just and sustainable green economy:

- Recognise that Eskom’s crisis is South Africa’s opportunity: The just transition has the potential to be transformational and to ensure progress in achieving the participatory, distributive and restorative justice needed for a more stable and resilient society.
- Consider the civil society *Just Transition Open Agenda* and explore synergies with the Just Transition Framework unanimously adopted by the PCC and accepted by government, to move the country towards a just, net-zero, circular green economy and climate-resilient society. This entails a multisectoral and ‘whole-of-government’ approach that ensures that policy follows the science, as was relatively well done during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Include civil society organisations such as non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, labour unions, faith-based organisations, and academic institutions in the ‘whole-of-government’ approach, because they all play a vital role in the just energy transition in South Africa. These organisations have a record as watchdogs that hold government and other actors in the energy sector accountable for their actions and policies.
- Take bold decisions and urgent action to move decisively towards a sustainable green economy, as this represents the country’s best available opportunity to benefit from international partners’ recent offer of substantial concessional financial assistance to realise the objective of a green economy (International Partners Group 2022).

- Implement comprehensive integrated planning and budgeting with the objective of reorienting our collective national effort to realise a just transition to a green economy.
- Include all stakeholders in this comprehensive integrated planning and budgeting, especially local government, which has a key role to play in climate governance. Climate change has localised effects, and local government is closest to the people – mostly the chronically poor – who suffer the brunt of the lack of clean water and air to breathe. Local government must therefore monitor and evaluate the impact of environmental threats such as air pollution on the health of vulnerable communities.

Furthermore, NEMAQA aims to protect the health of South Africans through the implementation of air quality management plans and monitoring programmes (Wright 2009). Management plans and monitoring programmes must be adopted in line with the legal and moral requirements to *take action*.

It should be noted that our focus has been on human rights and the right to clean air in order to improve the conditions of our lives *as humans*. However, serious consideration should also be given to the ‘rights of nature’. The Rights of Nature movement calls for rethinking humanity’s relationship with nature, and for a paradigm shift in which nature is placed at the centre and ‘humans are connected to it in an interdependent way, rather than a dominant one’ (Challe 2021). In 2008, Ecuador became the first country in the world to legally recognise the rights of nature, which Ecuadorians refer to as the ‘Rights of Pachamama’ (Mother Earth). The constitutional provisions regarding the Rights of Pachamama state:

Nature, or Pachamama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes. All persons, communities, peoples, and nations can call upon public authorities to enforce the Rights of Nature.²⁸

South Africa would do well to consider this development, and those occurring around the world, as the protection of ecosystems also ensures the protection of humanity and of our health and wellbeing.

Notes

- 1 Irigaray L & Marder M, Without clean air, we have nothing, *The Guardian*, 17 March 2014. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/17/clean-air-paris-pollution-crime-against-humanity>.
- 2 SASAS is a nationally representative survey series. The 2020 survey fielded modules of questions on attitudes to the environment. Part of this engagement has been implemented through membership of the International Social Survey Programme. This chapter draws on the results of the 2020 fielding of the module in SASAS.

- 3 Irigaray L & Marder M, Without clean air, we have nothing, *The Guardian*, 17 March 2014. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/17/clean-air-paris-pollution-crime-against-humanity>.
- 4 On PM2.5 ('fine particulate matter') levels, see <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/clean-identification-the-effects-of-the-clean-air-act-on-air-pollution-exposure-disparities-and-house-prices/>.
- 5 South Africa needs \$250 bn to transition away from coal, *Engineering News*, 26 May 2022. Accessed September 2022, https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/south-africa-needs-250bn-to-transition-away-from-coal-2022-05-26/rep_id:4136.
- 6 Van Diemen E, The cost of pollution: Eskom, Sasol and the vagaries of environmental law compliance in South Africa, *Daily Maverick*, 25 August 2021. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-25-the-cost-of-pollution-eskom-sasol-and-the-vagaries-of-environmental-law-compliance-in-south-africa/>.
- 7 Van Diemen E, The cost of pollution: Eskom, Sasol and the vagaries of environmental law compliance in South Africa, *Daily Maverick*, 25 August 2021. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-25-the-cost-of-pollution-eskom-sasol-and-the-vagaries-of-environmental-law-compliance-in-south-africa/>.
- 8 Evans S, Medupi's killer fumes: The story of a power station's missing air scrubbers, *News24*, 3 March 2020. Accessed June 2022, <https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/medupis-killer-fumes-the-story-of-a-power-stations-missing-air-scrubbers-20200303>.
- 9 Evans S, Medupi's killer fumes: The story of a power station's missing air scrubbers, *News24*, 3 March 2020. Accessed June 2022, <https://www.news24.com/news24/SouthAfrica/News/medupis-killer-fumes-the-story-of-a-power-stations-missing-air-scrubbers-20200303>.
- 10 Bloom K, Energy, land and law: This year, it's personal, *Daily Maverick*, 5 January 2020. Accessed January 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2020-01-05-energy-land-and-law-this-year-its-personal/>.
- 11 Cebile Faith Mkhwanazi, in her affidavit to the High Court (Bloom K, Deadly air: Ramaphosa named in multi-billion-rand coal pollution court case, *Daily Maverick*, 10 June 2019. Accessed January 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-06-10-deadly-air-ramaphosa-named-in-multi-billion-rand-coal-pollution-court-case/>).
- 12 Abdinor B, Mpumalanga Highveld's deadly air about to become even deadlier as Kusile SO2 bypass gets green light, *Daily Maverick*, 6 July 2023. Accessed August 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2023-07-06-mpumalanga-highvelds-deadly-air-about-to-become-even-deadlier-as-kusile-so2-bypass-gets-green-light/>.
- 13 'A report by the Centre for Research into Energy and Clean Air (Crea) has modelled the health impacts of the bypass. An additional 674 human beings are projected to die if the bypass is operational from December 2023 until the end of the postponement period in March 2025. The deaths are attributed to an increased risk of stroke, ischemic heart disease, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and lower respiratory infections. The report also projects other excess health impacts of the bypass, including a projected 3,000 asthma emergency room visits, 1,400 pre-term births, 720,000 days of work absence and 900 years lived with disability due to chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes and stroke. The economic costs are projected to be in the order of R16.8-billion' (Abdinor B, Mpumalanga Highveld's deadly air about to become even deadlier as Kusile SO2 bypass gets

- green light, *Daily Maverick*, 6 July 2023. Accessed August 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2023-07-06-mpumalanga-highvelds-deadly-air-about-to-become-even-deadlier-as-kusile-so2-bypass-gets-green-light/>).
- 14 The case has been adjudicated and judgment was handed down by the North Gauteng High Court: *South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and Another v Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Others* (17554/2021) [2022] ZAGPPHC 741 (6 October 2022).
 - 15 groundWork (2022) *Press release: Civil society in court to challenge gas power plant in Richards Bay*. Accessed August 2022, <https://groundwork.org.za/press-release-civil-society-in-court-to-challenge-gas-power-plant-in-richards-bay/>.
 - 16 On the specific facts and the applicable law, SDCEA and groundWork successfully challenged only government's inadequate public participation process. Application for leave to appeal against the Court's order in respect of other substantive environmental grounds was refused on 18 January 2023: *South Durban Community Environmental Alliance and Another v Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Others* (17554/2021) [2023] ZAGPPHC 19 (18 January 2023).
 - 17 Van Diemen E, The cost of pollution: Eskom, Sasol and the vagaries of environmental law compliance in South Africa, *Daily Maverick*, 25 August 2021. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-25-the-cost-of-pollution-eskom-sasol-and-the-vagaries-of-environmental-law-compliance-in-south-africa/>.
 - 18 Abdinor B, Climate change litigation in South Africa, *Daily Maverick*, 7 November 2018. Accessed November 2018, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2018-11-07-climate-change-litigation-in-south-africa/>; Kaminski I, Dutch supreme court upholds landmark ruling demanding climate action, *The Guardian*, 20 December 2019. Accessed June 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/dec/20/dutch-supreme-court-upholds-landmark-ruling-demanding-climate-action>.
 - 19 In thinking about the importance of breath and breathing, and the vulnerability of communities, the slogan 'I can't breathe' used by the Black Lives Matter movement in the US – referring to the words uttered by George Floyd as a police officer knelt on his neck until he died – is relevant. As Ben Okri writes, 'these few words should become the mantra of oppression – and spark the real change our world so desperately needs' (Okri B, 'I can't breathe': Why George Floyd's words reverberate around the world, *The Guardian*, 8 June 2020. Accessed October 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/08/i-cant-breathe-george-floyds-words-reverberate-oppression>).

Significantly, Okri also notes that "I can't breathe" will become the condition of the world. We ignore the deadly warnings of climate catastrophe. It took the worldwide outcry of the #MeToo movement to signal to the world that millions of women are in situations where they can't breathe, expanding the phrase to encompass other instances of oppression and catastrophe. Okri adds that a hierarchy of being human could 'slowly degenerate into allowing one set of people to suffer and endure conditions that another set of people would not tolerate, for a second, for themselves.' In this chapter this applies to the communities, usually poor and vulnerable, who are most exposed to air pollution, which affects their health and wellbeing.

- 20 PCC (2022a) *Climate Commission on Government's commitment to a transition and calls for integrated planning and budgeting*, media statement, 5 July. Accessed July 2022. <https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/climate-commission-government%E2%80%99s-commitment-transition-and-calls-integrated>
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- 22 Van Diemen E, The cost of pollution: Eskom, Sasol and the vagaries of environmental law compliance in South Africa, *Daily Maverick*, 25 August 2021. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-25-the-cost-of-pollution-eskom-sasol-and-the-vagaries-of-environmental-law-compliance-in-south-africa/>.
- 23 Stoddard E, Let the sunshine in: Eskom's De Ruyter paints a greener future for Africa's top greenhouse gas emitter, *Daily Maverick*, 17 August 2021. Accessed August 2021, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-08-17-let-the-sunshine-in-eskoms-de-ruyter-paints-a-greener-future-for-africas-top-greenhouse-gas-emitter/>.
- 24 Omarjee L, Eskom risks unprecedented load shedding if it meets air quality standards immediately – De Ruyter, *News24*, 28 September 2022. Accessed September 2022, https://www.news24.com/fin24/climate_future/energy/sa-needs-more-renewables-or-stage-15-loadshedding-will-be-a-reality-de-ruyter-20220928.
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3

Wellbeing and happiness inequality in South Africa: The happiness gap

Joleen Steyn Kotze

South Africa will celebrate three decades of democracy in 2024. This comes at a time when democracy is under threat globally. Since 2019 scholars have noted an increase in democratic erosion around the world, highlighting rising levels of distrust in electoral processes, the use of social media to weaken political trust through disinformation, and widespread corruption that undermines trust in politicians and governments (IDEA 2019). Political and social polarisation is on the increase in an age of rising misinformation (V-Dem Institute 2022). The V-Dem Institute describes the phenomenon of declining respect for legitimate opposition and pluralism, and the consequent reduction in sociopolitical participation in society, as ‘toxic polarisation’ (2022: 16). Global freedom is also backsliding amidst the rise of authoritarian and autocratic politics, where eight in every ten people live in a less free world (Repucci & Slipowitz 2022: 1). It seems that the world is becoming a place of increasing discontent.

Concomitantly, the 2019 *World Happiness Report* found an increase in negative affect occurring from around 2016 (Helliwell, Lanyard & Sachs 2019). This means that globally, people are experiencing greater levels of worry, sadness or anger, and doing so more frequently. There is increasing sentiment that democracy is not delivering, democratic commitment is weakening, sociopolitical cleavages and divisions are being magnified, and the demand for a public voice in politics and policy-making is growing (Wike & Fetterole 2021). Increasing levels of inequality and economic dissatisfaction, and high levels of distrust in political elites, are seen as key factors fuelling this global democratic backsliding (Wike, Silver & Castillo 2019).

South Africa has not been immune to this trend of democratic backsliding. Increasingly, scholars are questioning the country’s democratic quality and integrity.¹ We note concern around questions of declining political participation due to lack of political efficacy (Mahlangu & Schulz-Herzenberg 2022), and an increasing trust deficit that impacts negatively on democratic quality and sustainability in South Africa. Only 32% of South Africans are satisfied with democracy, compared to 59% in 2004 (Steyn Kotze 2022b). South Africa, it seems, is a discontented nation.

Conventional measures of democracy focus on elections, quality of government, civil and political liberties, and the extent of citizens’ political participation. Increasingly, however, studies demonstrate that central to the quality of democracy and democratic durability are perceptions of subjective wellbeing and happiness, which are seen as critical factors in building strong democracies. There is recognition that social and economic progress cannot be measured only through income indicators such as gross

national income or GDP. This is evident in the growing sociopolitical and socioeconomic discontent that finds expression in the rise of right-wing and conservative politics in the world's more established and wealthier states (Grindheim 2019; Sandrin 2021). Furthermore, the *Beyond GDP* agenda (Stiglitz, Fitoussi & Durant 2018) highlights that in measuring the health of a country, we need to pay increasing attention to 'the distribution of well-being and sustainability in all of its dimensions' (2018: 12). This includes what is seen as happiness inequality. A focus on income and economic indicators may not necessarily provide a complete picture of the quality of democracy and government. More importantly, it may not present an accurate picture of *human* development in a specific context and country (Stiglitz, Fitoussi & Durant 2018).

Given the rise of democratic discontent globally, citizen assessment of subjective wellbeing, happiness and quality of life becomes increasingly important. Democracy, and quality and efficacy of government, are important. This is because 'government institutions and policies set the stages on which lives are lived. These stages differ largely from country to country, and are among primary factors influencing how highly people rate the quality of their lives'; as such 'there should be growing policy interest in knowing how government institutions and actions influence happiness, and in whatever changes in policies might enable citizens to lead happier lives' (Helliwell, Huang & Wang 2019: 40).

In this context, this chapter engages the distribution of subjective wellbeing and happiness in South Africa. Rising discontent, political disengagement from electoral processes, and growing dissatisfaction with democracy, governance and development shape the scholarly narrative around the country's democratic backsliding. So, too, does a focus on questions of inequality, exclusion and poverty. These are important questions; a caveat, however, is that a critical gap remains in regard to consideration of subjective wellbeing and the distribution of happiness in South Africa. How satisfied are South Africans with their lives? More importantly, how happy are South Africans in a post-apartheid context? And how does (un)happiness shape democratic satisfaction and commitment?

The chapter first presents an overview of the relationship between happiness, subjective wellbeing and democracy. This is important, given that a political regime only enjoys legitimacy for as long as its citizens are happy or content within that system. While we note a deepening delegitimation of democracy in South Africa (Steyn Kotze 2022a), there is a need to determine the extent to which life satisfaction and subjective wellbeing underpin this delegitimation. Democratic legitimation can only be based on effective state capacity to deliver on the hopes and aspirations of citizens for a better life and a transformed social structure. This implies that through delivering on the promise of a better life, and improving the material conditions of citizens (most notably those who are politically excluded under an authoritarian regime), the state will facilitate intrinsic democratic support, as people evaluate the democratic regime in a positive light while their lives improve under democratic rule (Ethier 1990: 15–16).

The chapter then moves on to consider the measurement of subjective wellbeing. This measurement has two dimensions: measuring life satisfaction, which entails a cognitive dimension of evaluation of life; and measuring affective wellbeing, which entails how a person feels with respect to a variety of issues, and whether those feelings are negative or positive, thus reflecting an emotional state (Fors & Kulin 2016: 326–328). The chapter will engage questions of cognitive evaluations of wellbeing through the Personal Wellbeing Index included in the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC 2020) and its relationship to democratic durability and quality. It will then explore the distribution of happiness and subjective wellbeing in South Africa, so as to enable a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the happiness and wellness dynamics that shape sociopolitical citizenship in South Africa.

Happy democracies?

What makes for happy citizens in a democracy? Is it good governance? Free and fair elections? Increased political freedom and civil liberties? Quality of governance? Reduced income inequalities? Increasingly, scholarship focuses on the quality of democracy (Campbell 2008; Mauk 2021; Morlino & Diamond 2004). The quality of democracy assesses key institutional characteristics associated with a well-functioning democracy. These are freedom, the rule of law, vertical accountability, responsiveness, equality, participation, competition and horizontal accountability (Morlino & Diamond 2004: 20).

A high-quality democracy is often equated with a happy society (Baker & Martin 2011; Inglehart 2006; Inglehart & Klingemann 2000; Inglehart & Ponarin 2013). The basis for the democracy/happiness nexus finds expression in several democratic characteristics that advance subjective wellbeing or happiness. For some, because democracy facilitates participation in social and political life it increases subjective wellbeing, leading to happier nations (Baker & Martin 2011: 13). For others, institutionalised forms of agency facilitate positive views of subjective wellbeing and happiness (Frey & Stutzer 2010), and democracy allows for collective choice, recognising that

people have preferences for processes over outcomes and above outcomes. They gain wellbeing from living and acting within institutionalised processes, as they contribute to a positive sense of self, addressing innate needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. (Frey & Stutzer 2010: 567)

Similarly, Ronald Inglehart and Eduard Ponarin (2013: 1098–1099) conclude that

the emergence of democratic institutions increases people's free choice in politics, freedom of expression, and freedom to travel. This, in the long run, tends to produce higher levels of subjective wellbeing. This relationship seems to be reciprocal: high subjective wellbeing is conducive to democracy, and democracy provides a wider range of free choice that is conducive to subjective wellbeing.

There is recognition, as Reinet Loubser and Cindy Steenekamp (2017: 3) note, that subjective wellbeing 'as an outcome of historical experience and culture' is an essential factor in building sustainable democracies, even when economic outcomes might be lacking. Similarly, Marcus Samanni and Sören Holmberg conclude that quality governance makes people happy in both rich and poor countries, noting that 'good government is an essential recipe for making citizens more content with their lives' (Samanni & Holmberg 2010: 2). This is because the higher the quality of governance, the happier citizens seem to be. This implies that good governance is essential for facilitating equality of opportunity that allows citizens to have choice, agency and space to pursue their life purposes and goals.

In essence, representational quality (the effectiveness and/or fairness of institutions in translating public preferences into public policy), quality of government and/or governance (whether or not state institutions function in an efficient, transparent and lawful manner), and the public policy regime and its effects (redistributive and distributive policies that impact society through social welfare and social spending) affect happiness and democracy (Altman, Flavin & Radcliff 2017: 688–689). Therefore, we take note of the fact that the literature that engages questions of subjective wellbeing, happiness and democracy is influenced by strong institutionalist traditions. These institutionalist precepts seemingly draw on the organised nature of human life, which occurs through political, economic and social institutions that shape subjective wellbeing as well as agency within these institutions. Therefore, human agency within these institutions seems to shape perceptions of subjective wellbeing and happiness.

It cannot be denied that there is a correlation between income, prosperity and development on the one hand, and happiness and democracy on the other (Paleologou 2022). There are several studies that tease out the relationship between economic development, income and subjective wellbeing (Altman, Flavin & Radcliff 2017; Helliwell 2002; Inglehart et al. 2008; Khalil 2022; Orviska, Caplanova & Hudson 2014). While the correlation between income, economic development and happiness is a contentious area in the literature, scholars identify two schools of thought on the correlation between income/prosperity (or money) and subjective wellbeing (or happiness). The first argues that for poorer countries, economic factors are important in generating wellbeing, whereas in richer countries, degrees of political freedom and civil liberties predict feelings of wellbeing (Orviska, Caplanova & Hudson 2014: 495). This may be because, as Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel (2002) argue, increased individual choice is a consequence of economic development and democratisation, thus expanding individual human agency and life satisfaction.

However, the income–happiness or Easterlin paradox argues that, according to the data, at a certain point in time happiness may vary directly in relation to income, but as time progresses, happiness does not increase as the country's income increases (Easterlin et al. 2010: 22463). For Richard Easterlin et al., the positive relationship between income and happiness is a short-term one, indicating that in the long term

there are other factors that shape subjective wellbeing and happiness in a country. Therefore, as Easterlin (2001: 465) highlights,

the relationship between happiness and income is puzzling. At a point in time, those with more income are, on average happier than those with less. Over the life cycle, however, the average happiness of a cohort remains consistent despite substantial income growth. Moreover, even though a cohort's experienced happiness remains constant throughout the life span, people typically think that they were worse off in the past and will be better off in future.

For Easterlin et al. (2010), economic growth is thus not necessarily the pathway to increased happiness. Rather, it seems that questions of decision utility (satisfaction with a choice among a range of competing alternatives) and experience utility (overall satisfaction realised from the actual outcome chosen) matter more (see also Easterlin 2001).

Increasingly, there is recognition that democracy impacts positively on the level of happiness in a society.² Indeed, Bruno Frey and Alois Stutzer (2000: 79) highlight that effective channels of democracy, specifically direct democracy, increase happiness in society. This, they argue, is due to the 'utility produced by the political process itself, and not only due to favourable political outcomes' (Frey & Stutzer 2000: 79). The value of democracy arguably does not lie in the outcomes produced, but rather in the extent to which it facilitates a sense of human empowerment and agency through the exercising of free will and choice. This may be why Frey and Stutzer (2000: 92) find that unemployment has a stronger influence on happiness than income, given that employment is a key aspect of empowerment and self-sufficiency. Unemployment, by default, generates dependency and undermines human agency in achieving life's purposes and goals.

A key concept in the relationship between democracy and happiness is building legitimisation. People's increasing happiness under a democratic regime should, in theory, generate a sense of legitimisation of democracy. The same, of course, would apply to authoritarian societies. However, as Inglehart and Ponarin (2013: 1098) observe, if the economic situation in a country is going well, political support for the incumbent regime increases; this applies to both authoritarian and democratic regimes. However, authoritarian regimes can draw on coercive measures to survive, whereas democratic regimes rely on public support, and by default on legitimisation. Thus, incumbent governments in democratic regimes must sustain mass support or they will be voted out. For this reason, Inglehart and Ponarin argue that 'societies with [a] happy public are relatively likely to remain democratic in the long term' (2013: 1098).

A key question, of course, is what it is about democracy that leads to happier citizens. A possible reason, as Inglehart and Ponarin (2013: 1098–1099) note, is that democracy may facilitate the development and strengthening of self-expression values that emphasise individual freedom and autonomy. Democracies, it seems, lead to happiness because of their contribution to human agency and freedom, including economic, personal and political freedom (Loubser & Steenekamp 2017). Therefore, the relationship between

democracy and happiness extends beyond delivering socioeconomic goods; it seemingly depends on freedom and human agency, as well as on choice in making decisions. Democratic legitimation built on freedom is the ‘possibility to choose’, where a person’s ‘conditions allow for choice’ (Rahman & Veenhoven 2018: 437). Thus, happiness in a democracy is located in the extent to which individual choice is possible. And this implies equality of opportunity to make life choices.³

Happiness inequality: The importance of subjective wellbeing and happiness

How do we know if a country or a people are doing well? How do we measure happiness and wellbeing? Douglas Perkins et al. (2021: 1) note that in measuring happiness and human wellbeing, a broader conceptualisation of wellbeing is needed, one that includes non-economic indicators. Thus, while in measuring wellbeing income is a critical barometer to determine how well nations are doing, the major gap within the research and the literature relates to how income is translated into human and social development and advancement, and more importantly, into human agency.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2013) notes that in measuring subjective wellbeing, there is a tendency to restrict this to questions of happiness. For the OECD (2013: 21), subjective wellbeing is a broad construct that goes beyond happiness to encompass ‘good mental states, including various evaluations, positive and negative, that people make of their lives and the affective reaction of people to their experience’. A broad conceptualisation of subjective wellbeing allows one to look at how people evaluate their life as a whole, in addition to measuring citizens’ experience and evaluations in specific areas of life, such as political and economic satisfaction, or satisfaction with health. In delimiting subjective wellbeing, the OECD (2013: 21) distinguishes between life evaluation (reflective assessment of a person’s life or some part of it), affect (feelings and/or emotional states at a specific point in time) and eudaimonia (sense of meaning and/or purpose in life and good psychological functioning).

Ed Diener, Jeffrey Sapyta and Eunkook Suh (1998: 34) conceptualise subjective wellbeing as an individual’s evaluation of their life. This includes cognitive states such as satisfaction with work, life, marriage, health and family life, among others. A key concern, however, is determining what makes for happy lives, and how to measure it. The Easterlin paradox discussed earlier (which Lulu Li and Lei Shi refer to as the Easterlin hypothesis) demonstrates that while income and happiness are correlated in the short term, over time money does not lead to happiness (Li & Shi 2019). The question, then, is what factors influence the sustainability of subjective wellbeing? Diener, Sapyta and Suh note that with increasing democratisation and equality, people need to define wellbeing for themselves, since in a diverse world with different values, goals, strengths and weaknesses, ‘people [need to] decide whether their lives are satisfying based on their individual values, goals, and life circumstances’ (Diener, Sapyta & Suh 1998: 35).

Objective living conditions are an important factor when looking at how people evaluate their subjective wellbeing, given that how people evaluate ‘their own living conditions is strongly tied to their objective living conditions’ (Cronert & Hadenius 2021: 706). Noting that objective living conditions can impact the self-assessment of subjective wellbeing, it is important to consider how these conditions may impact the spread of happiness or wellbeing in a society. Racialised patterns of inequality and poverty breed persistent exclusion and marginalisation based on the proverbial ‘lottery of birth’, and inequality of opportunity where ‘characteristics like gender, economic circumstances, geography, and ethnicity can trap large groups of people in poverty, and specifically affect access to basic services among children’ (Khokhar 2014). The same applies to class dynamics that may undermine the building of a society where equality of opportunity is not dependent on this lottery of birth.

Happiness inequality, which focuses on the vast variance in self-reported wellbeing and happiness within a society, is seen as the psychological equivalent of income inequality (Newman 2016).⁴ If democracies have happier citizens than their authoritarian counterparts because of an enabling environment for human agency and individual choice, we need to look beyond questions of income inequality (Goff, Helliwell & Mayraz 2018: 2); happiness inequality becomes an important consideration when looking at sociopolitical dynamics that sustain democracy.

The link between distribution of happiness in a society and its democratic quality highlights the importance of psychological factors in an assessment of subjective wellbeing and its relationship to democracy. Distribution of happiness also holds important implications for political stability. Indeed, Carmen Sobczak (2011) highlights the fact that

people weren’t unhappy just because their income was lower ... Instead ... greater inequality was linked to reductions in trust and perceived fairness – and it was drops in those attitudes that made people less happy.⁵

Therefore, inequality has not only economic implications, but sociopolitical consequences too. As Dietrich Rueschemeyer (2004) notes, when the impact or effect of inequality is not adequately addressed, it hampers the right to political equality, thus creating inequality in power resources based on social and economic class. For Rueschemeyer, this form of inequality is important to consider as

social status shape[s] interaction patterns, offering entrance to, and imposing exclusion from, different social circles. Politically most important, it defines the chance to be heard and to be trusted; it increases or diminishes one’s political ‘voice’. (2004: 84)

This is linked to questions of public choice and happiness discussed by Frey and Stutzer (2010), and highlights the centrality of creating equality of opportunity in democracies to facilitate democratic legitimation. For Frey and Stutzer (2010: 560), subjective wellbeing and happiness include questions of non-material properties such as social relations, autonomy and self-determination, as well as social outcome indicators such as GDP, health and education.

There are many studies that detail the drivers and dynamics of inequality in South Africa (IMF 2020; South African Government 2014; World Bank 2022⁶). The country regularly claims the title of most unequal country in the world, with race remaining a key characteristic of inequality, given the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. A critical gap within the academic literature and scholarship, however, is consideration of happiness and subjective wellbeing, and of the distribution of happiness in South Africa, in the context of assessment of democracy and political stability. Does happiness inequality mirror patterns of income inequality in post-apartheid South Africa?

To date, there are a limited number of studies mapping the dynamics and distribution of happiness in South Africa. Umakrishnan Kollamparambil (2020: 201) analyses income and happiness dynamics in South Africa and finds that happiness increases, and happiness inequality decreases, against the backdrop of increasing income equality, highlighting that 'happiness inequality may be a useful supplementary measure of inequality in society'. The happiness gap becomes important if we consider rising democratic dissatisfaction and anger, most notably in Africa (Delapalme 2021; Møller et al. 2017), in the context of rising democratic backsliding. And South Africa has not been immune to growing anger and dissatisfaction, as expressed in the July 2021 unrest: several factors created conditions for the proverbial perfect storm that broke over Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal that month. These conditions included institutional weakness and the hollowing out of state institutions; high levels of unemployment; entrenched inequality and widespread poverty; urban overcrowding and poor spatial planning, as well as deficits in rural development; unbridled corruption as seen in the state capture phenomenon; and the impact of Covid-19 and the various lockdowns, which intensified 'feelings of despair among the population' (The Presidency 2021: 37).

Measuring happiness in South Africa

Income inequality – its dynamics as well as its socioeconomic and sociopolitical impact – is well documented in the scholarly narrative on poverty and inequality in South Africa. The distribution of subjective wellbeing and happiness, however, is largely overlooked in the academic and policy narratives, even though wellbeing and life satisfaction are critical to political stability and form a significant conceptual element of human development. They are also important for democratic legitimation through increasing equality of opportunity, especially for citizens who were excluded and marginalised under authoritarian rule. A sense of subjective wellbeing is critical for a cohesive and peaceful society; as Ed Diener and William Tov (2007: 422) note, attitudes towards subjective wellbeing are important in determining attitudes towards peace, because positive assessments of their wellbeing predispose people to trust and cooperate with each other.

South Africa generally ranks low on the scale of happiness measures in the World Happiness Index upon which the *World Happiness Report* is structured. This index draws on variables such as generosity, social support, freedom to make choices and perceptions of corruption, in addition to GDP and health (World Happiness

Report 2022). However, when reflecting on how one measures wellness and happiness in non-Western and African contexts, Valerie Møller et al. (2017: 93–94) note that cognisance of cross-cultural happiness and its expression is important. This was captured in what is constructed as the ‘Nigerian paradox’, where respondents who may have

indicated that they felt happy might not have meant they were truly happy with their situation, but rather they felt that reporting otherwise ‘could only aggravate the matter’. Saying you are happy might have been a way ‘of counter-acting everyday negative life experiences’, they speculated. (Møller et al. 2017: 93)

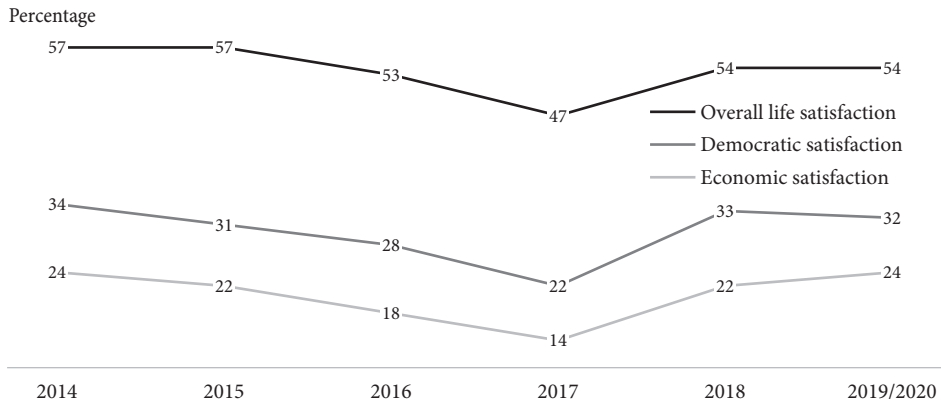
There is thus a need to engage more fully with questions of happiness and subjective wellbeing and the distribution thereof, and with questions of happiness inequality in South Africa, in order to design effective and targeted policy-making and interventions to enhance human development and transformation.

This chapter draws on the SASAS Personal Wellbeing Index (HSRC 2020) to explore the distribution of subjective wellbeing and happiness in South Africa.⁷ SASAS is a nationally representative and repeated cross-sectional survey of South Africans aged 16 years and older, conducted annually by the Human Sciences Research Council by means of face-to-face interviews to administer a questionnaire. Annually, between 2 500 and 3 200 interviews are conducted nationwide, and the data are weighted using Statistics South Africa’s most recent mid-year population estimates. The SASAS takes a holistic approach to measuring life satisfaction, with a focus on key factors that influence human wellbeing. These include health, belonging and associational life, and safety and security. The questions are explored with a focus on the distribution of subjective wellbeing and happiness, and on demographic variables such as gender, age and race.

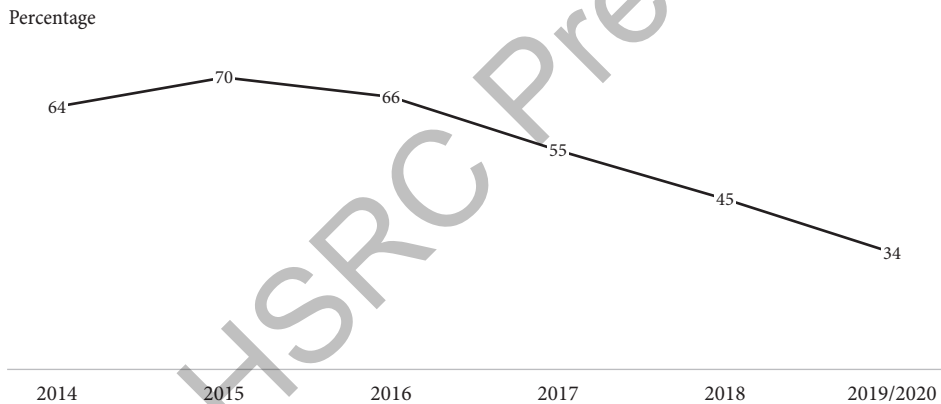
Subjective wellbeing and happiness in South Africa: A dissatisfied but happy nation?

As mentioned in the previous section, South Africa regularly ranks low in the *World Happiness Report*. In 2022, there was a slight improvement in its happiness ranking, with the country claiming the 91st position (out of 146 countries), improving its standing from 103rd in 2021 (World Happiness Report 2022).⁸

South Africans seem to experience relatively subdued levels of overall life satisfaction (Figure 3.1). Only 54% indicated that, considering all things, they were satisfied with their lives in 2019/2020. Life satisfaction levels have, however, remained relatively stable since 2014, with the highest level of overall life satisfaction being 57% in 2014 and 2015. This could be related to what was then the 20-year anniversary of the historic 1994 first democratic election. From 2017 to 2019/2020, in a pre-pandemic South Africa, we saw an almost 10% increase in life satisfaction. What is of interest, however, is that life satisfaction, when cursorily compared to democratic and economic satisfaction, was notably higher in each year between 2014 and 2020. Only 32% of South Africans were satisfied with how democracy was working in 2019/2020, and 24%

Figure 3.1 Overall life, democratic and economic satisfaction, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

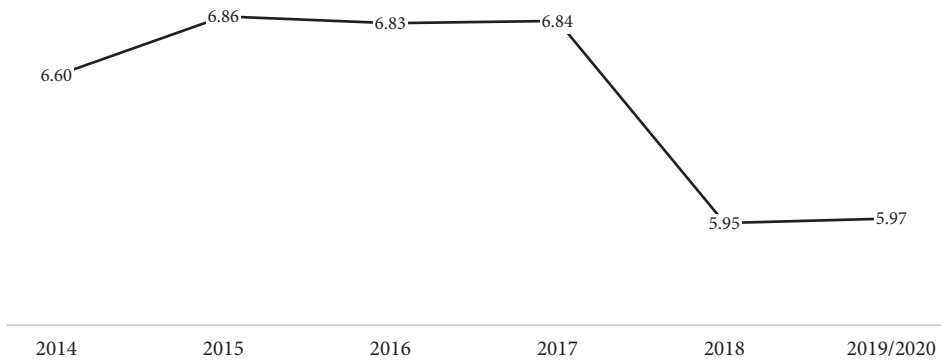
Figure 3.2 Life satisfaction when considering own life and personal circumstances, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

demonstrated economic satisfaction. How does one explain this? This is an important question to address when considering the accepted narrative that democracy has not delivered, and the associated view that there has been democratic delegitimation and discontent with democracy. There is a need to dig a little more deeply to understand the construction of cognitive and affective life satisfaction and their relationship to democratic legitimation. Also of importance would be determining which factors shape interpretations of wellness and life evaluation in South Africa.

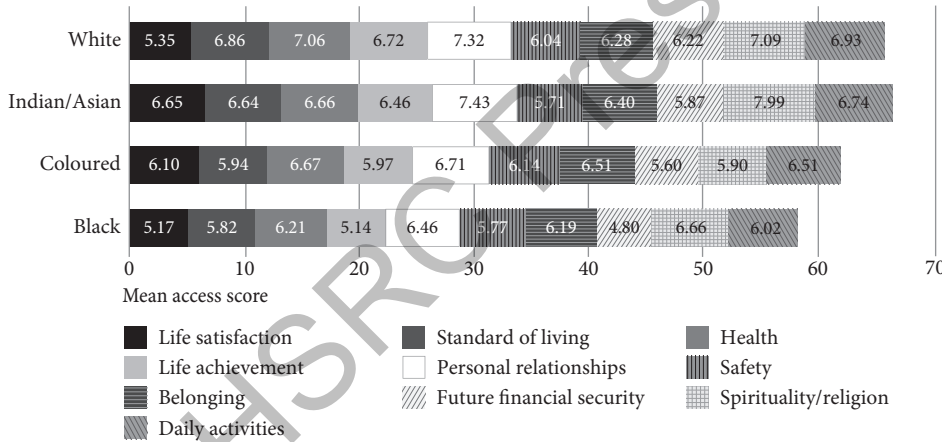
Concomitantly, when South Africans were asked to consider their personal circumstances and own life, a slightly different picture emerged (Figure 3.2). In 2019/2020, only 34% indicated that they were satisfied with their lives when reflecting on their personal situation. This means that almost two-thirds of the population were dissatisfied with

Figure 3.3 Mean subjective wellbeing scores, 2014–20



Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Figure 3.4 Mean distribution of subjective wellbeing measures, by race, 2014–20



Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

their personal life circumstances. There was also a significant decline of 30% in personal life satisfaction between 2014 and 2020.

South Africans hold moderate views of cognitive life satisfaction. Figure 3.3 shows that between 2014 and 2020 subjective wellbeing scores declined from an average of 6.6 in 2014 to 5.97 in 2019/2020.⁹ South Africans therefore demonstrate stable, but modest, perceptions of subjective wellbeing.

Looking at the spread of subjective wellbeing across different racial groups in South Africa (Figure 3.4), it can be noted that the Indian/Asian population has higher levels of life satisfaction, satisfaction with personal relationships and satisfaction with spirituality and religion when compared to other racial groups. White South Africans enjoy a higher level of satisfaction with their standard of living, health, life

Table 3.1 Analysis of variance: Subjective wellbeing and race, 2014–20

Survey questions		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life?	Between groups	8453.555	4	2113.389	3.845	.004
	Within groups	1629170.628	2964	549.653		
	Total	1637624.183	2968			
How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	Between groups	1052.026	4	263.007	41.058	<.001
	Within groups	19390.277	3027	6.406		
	Total	20442.303	3031			
How satisfied are you with your health?	Between groups	260.963	4	65.241	10.294	<.001
	Within groups	19184.636	3027	6.338		
	Total	19445.599	3031			
How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?	Between groups	1089.799	4	272.450	43.356	<.001
	Within groups	19021.751	3027	6.284		
	Total	20111.550	3031			
How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	Between groups	396.982	4	99.246	16.694	<.001
	Within groups	17995.733	3027	5.945		
	Total	18392.715	3031			
How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?	Between groups	91.467	4	22.867	3.206	.012
	Within groups	21593.440	3027	7.134		
	Total	21684.907	3031			
How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?	Between groups	61.479	4	15.370	2.737	.027
	Within groups	16997.212	3027	5.615		
	Total	17058.691	3031			
How satisfied are you with your future (financial) security?	Between groups	863.919	4	215.980	31.924	<.001
	Within groups	20478.959	3027	6.765		
	Total	21342.878	3031			
How satisfied are you with your spirituality or religion?	Between groups	522.257	4	130.564	21.589	<.001
	Within groups	18306.857	3027	6.048		
	Total	18829.113	3031			
How satisfied are you with your daily activities?	Between groups	366.898	4	91.725	16.871	<.001
	Within groups	16456.927	3027	5.437		
	Total	16823.826	3031			

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

achievement, safety, future financial security and daily activities when compared to other racial groups. Concomitantly, black South Africans have comparatively low levels of satisfaction with life, standard of living, health, safety, personal relationships, future financial security and daily activities in relation to other race groups. Coloured South

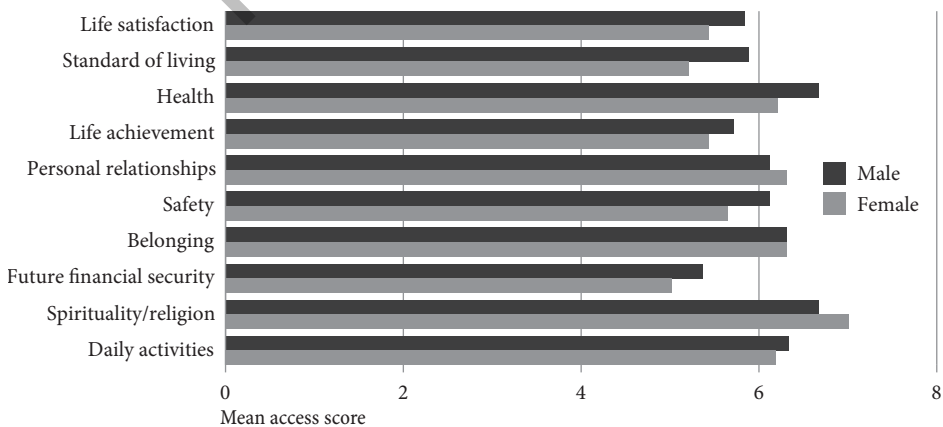
Africans also have lower levels of satisfaction across all measures except belonging, in comparison with white and Indian/Asian South Africans.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test revealed statistically notable differences between perceptions of subjective wellbeing in different racial groups (Table 3.1). There was no significant difference in levels of satisfaction with belonging and safety. The intimate link between race and class, and its link to inequality of opportunity, could explain the difference in cognitive and eudaimonic life satisfaction in South Africa (see Steyn Kotze 2022a). The observed pattern of both cognitive and eudaimonic life satisfaction seems to follow a pattern of unequal distribution across racial groups. A racialised pattern of subjective wellbeing distribution emerges that characterises sociopolitical life in South Africa, as well as racialised patterns of poverty and inequality that shape socioeconomic experiences.

There is a notable gendered difference in subjective wellbeing in South Africa, albeit smaller in some areas. Women enjoy lower levels of subjective wellbeing. Figure 3.5 shows that except for satisfaction with spirituality/religion, women have observably lower levels of cognitive and eudaimonic life satisfaction. Notable areas of gendered difference are life satisfaction, standard of living, health, life achievement, safety, financial security and spirituality and/or religion (where women have more positive levels of satisfaction). Areas displaying statistically insignificant difference include satisfaction with personal relationships, belonging and daily activities. It is nonetheless noteworthy that women enjoy lower levels of satisfaction in these areas.

Therefore, when looking at the distribution of subjective wellbeing, it is evident that demographic factors such as race and gender have an influence on perceptions of subjective wellbeing (Table 3.2). Black South Africans and women report lower levels of subjective wellbeing overall. This, again, could mirror other patterns of resource distribution, such as income and access to basic services, that impact equality of

Figure 3.5 Mean distribution of subjective wellbeing measures, by gender, 2014–20

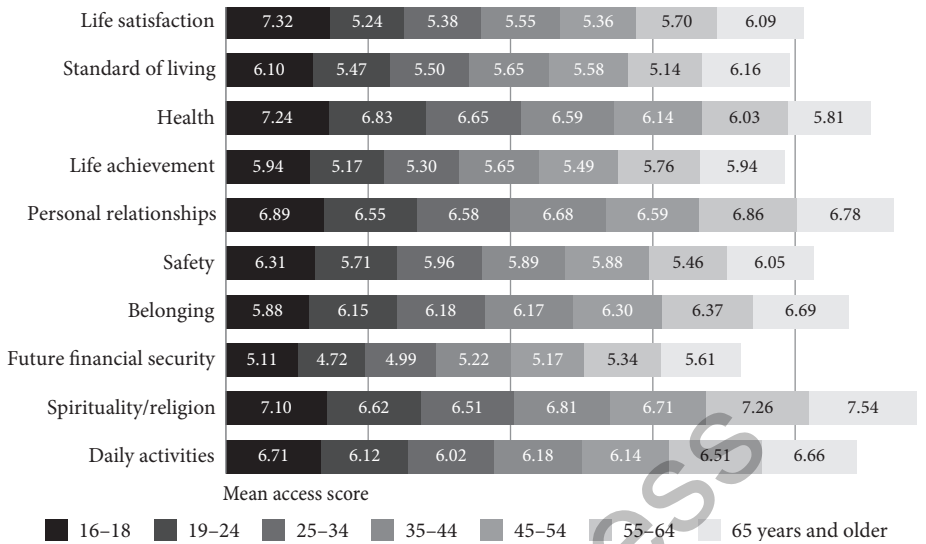


Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Table 3.2. Independent samples test, 2014–20

Survey questions	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						95% Confidence interval of the difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance Two-sided p	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Lower	Upper	
										Mean difference
Thinking about your life and your personal circumstance, how satisfied are you with your life?	2.188	.139	3.197	2699	.001	.3998	.1251	.1546	.6451	
How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	.845	.358	3.888	3030	<.001	.3711	.0954	.1840	.5583	
How satisfied are you with your health?	5.483	.019	4.947	3030	<.001	.4598	.0929	.2775	.6420	
How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?	.199	.655	2.969	3030	.003	.2814	.0948	.0956	.4672	
How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	2.068	.151	2.427	3030	.015	.2200	.0907	.0423	.3978	
How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?	5.083	.024	4.839	3030	<.001	.4750	.0982	.2825	.6675	
How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?	.119	.730	.994	3030	.320	.0869	.0874	-.0845	.2582	
How satisfied are you with your future (financial) security?	.083	.774	3.577	3030	<.001	.3490	.0976	.1577	.5403	
How satisfied are you with your spirituality or religion?	2.142	.143	-3.623	3030	<.001	-.3320	.0916	-.5116	-.1523	
How satisfied are you with your daily activities?	2.578	.108	1.668	3030	.095	.1448	.0868	-.0254	.3149	

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Figure 3.6 Mean distribution of subjective wellbeing measures, by age, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

opportunity and the achievement of life purpose. Subjective wellbeing is key for attaining democratic quality, and it is likely that lower assessments of subjective wellbeing also influence levels of democratic satisfaction. This is further discussed in Chapter 11 in this volume by Benjamin Roberts, Yul Derek Davids, Jarè Struwig, Zitha Mokomane and Valerie Møller, ‘Quality of life and political support in South Africa: A resilient nation?’.

Age affects the distribution of subjective wellbeing in South Africa, with this being comparatively lower for the age groups 19–24 and 25–45 years (Figure 3.6). Satisfaction with standard of living, life achievement and future financial security was also lowest for the age group 19–24.

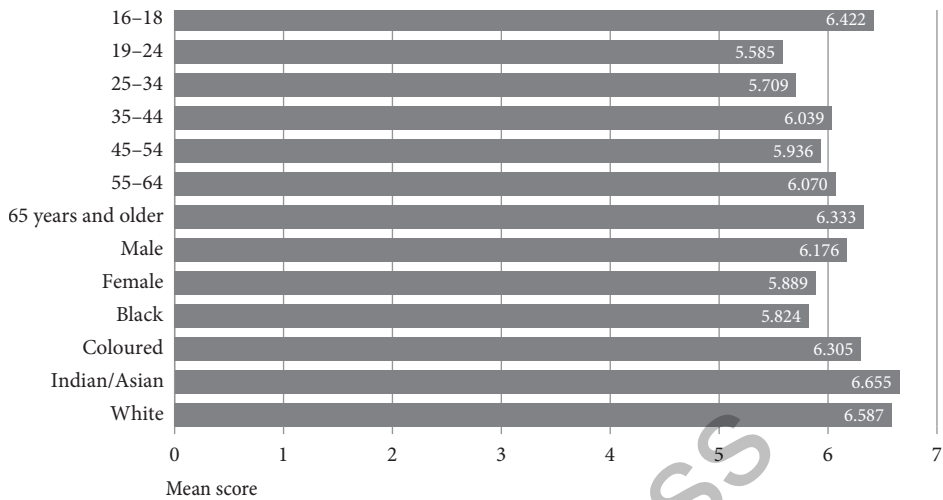
The ANOVA test demonstrates notable differences in various measures of subjective wellbeing based on age (Table 3.3). Specific areas of difference related to age include life satisfaction and satisfaction with standard of living, health, life achievement, future financial security, and spirituality and/or religion.

Table 3.3 Analysis of variance for age and subjective wellbeing, 2014–20

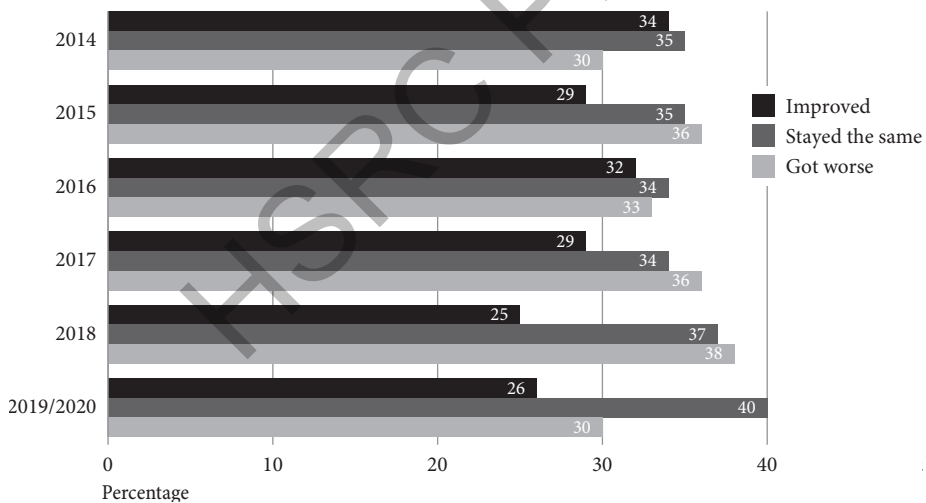
Survey questions		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Thinking about your life and your personal circumstance, how satisfied are you with your life?	Between groups	417.343	6	69.557	6.803	<.001
	Within groups	17835.538	2915	6.119		
	Total	26989.360	2605			
How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	Between groups	148.784	6	24.797	3.688	.001
	Within groups	19598.492	2915	6.723		
	Total	19747.276	2921			
How satisfied are you with your health?	Between groups	391.471	6	65.245	10.356	<.001
	Within groups	18365.356	2915	6.300		
	Total	18756.827	2921			
How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?	Between groups	176.336	6	29.389	4.453	<.001
	Within groups	19239.921	2915	6.600		
	Total	19416.257	2921			
How satisfied are you with your personal relationships?	Between groups	36.258	6	6.043	.996	.426
	Within groups	17687.555	2915	6.068		
	Total	17723.813	2921			
How satisfied are you with how safe you feel?	Between groups	100.991	6	16.832	2.352	.029
	Within groups	20864.193	2915	7.158		
	Total	20965.184	2921			
How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community?	Between groups	93.047	6	15.508	2.753	.011
	Within groups	16421.986	2915	5.634		
	Total	16515.033	2921			
How satisfied are you with your future (financial) security?	Between groups	162.825	6	27.138	3.861	<.001
	Within groups	20490.333	2915	7.029		
	Total	20653.158	2921			
How satisfied are you with your spirituality or religion?	Between groups	324.821	6	54.137	8.848	<.001
	Within groups	17835.538	2915	6.119		
	Total	18160.359	2921			
How satisfied are you with your daily activities?	Between groups	151.505	6	25.251	4.565	<.001
	Within groups	16122.476	2915	5.531		
	Total	16273.981	2921			

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Figure 3.7 shows the demographic distribution of subjective wellbeing across age, race and gender groups. Indian/Asian males aged 16–18 years have the highest levels of subjective wellbeing. Black females aged 19–24 years have the lowest levels of subjective wellbeing. Levels of subjective wellbeing are also comparatively lower in the 25–34-year age group than in older age groups.

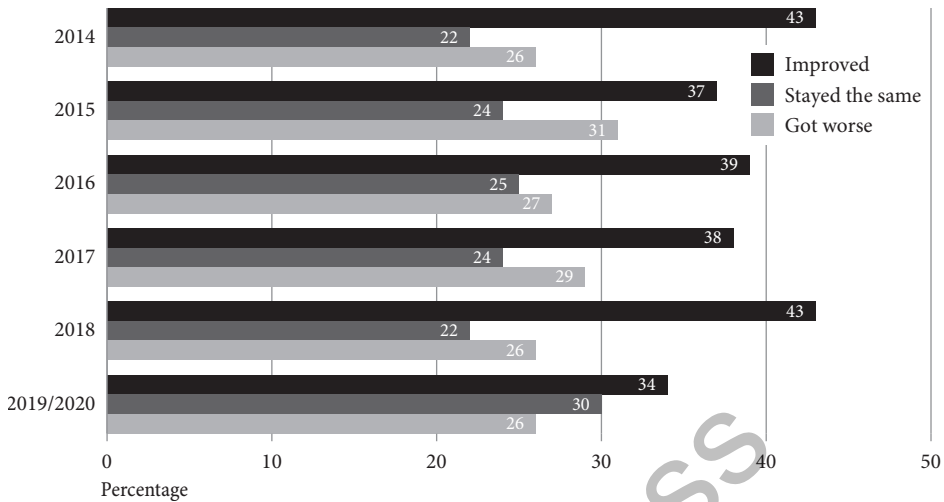
Figure 3.7 Mean distribution of subjective wellbeing measures, by age, gender and race, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Figure 3.8 Outlook of South Africans on past life improvement, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

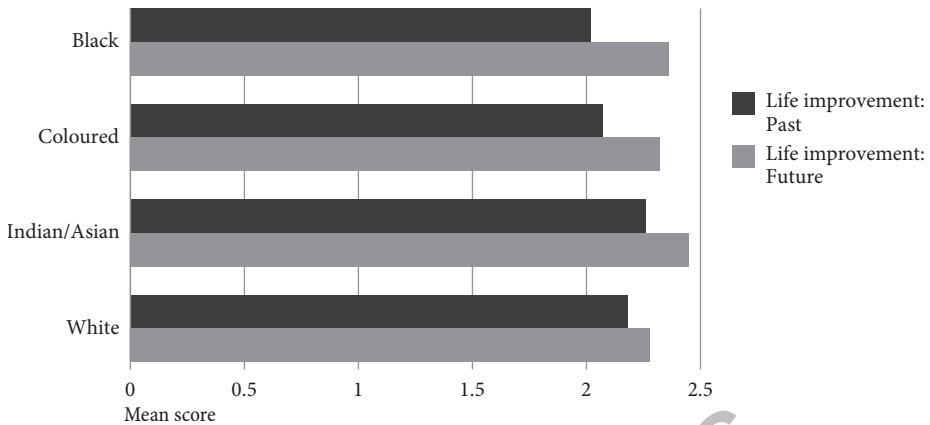
We need to consider, too, a sense of hope for the future. When South Africans were asked whether life had improved over the past five years and whether it would improve in the next five years, a sense of despondency emerged. In 2014, 34% of South Africans felt their lives had improved, compared to 26% in 2019/2020 (Figure 3.8). Concomitantly, in 2018, 38% of South Africans felt that their lives had worsened over a five-year period, compared to 30% in 2019/2020. Therefore, fewer South Africans in 2019/2020 than in 2018 thought that their lives had got worse.

Figure 3.9 Outlook of South Africans on future life satisfaction, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Future life outlook also demonstrates a sense of bleakness and despondency over future life happiness. Between 2014 and 2019/2020, Figure 3.9 shows a decline in future life optimism, with 43% of the population feeling that their lives will improve over 5 years in 2014, compared to 34% in 2019/2020. The number of South Africans who feel that their lives will get worse over the next five years has fluctuated between 2014 and 2019/2020. While 26% felt their lives will get worse in 2014, this number increased to 31% in 2015, before returning to the 2014 baseline of 26% in 2019/2020. Yet, the portion of the population that feels life will stay the same increased from 22% in 2014 to 30% in 2019/2020. This indicates an increased outlook of apparent stagnation in future life circumstances, as people feel that their lives will neither improve nor get worse. It also points to what can be seen as a possible sense of lack of agency in regard to people's personal futures. This will require further in-depth research to determine what factors shape perceptions of future life outlook, most notably how the perception that life will still be the same shapes people's democratic satisfaction. Critical future research is required to establish how future outlook and questions of equality of opportunity will have an impact on democratic satisfaction and legitimization.

South Africans hold varied views on their past and future life satisfaction and life improvement (Figures 3.8 and 3.9), with some feeling that their lives will neither improve nor get worse. Figure 3.10 shows that across racial groups, there is a sense that life has not improved, and will not do so, over a five-year period.¹⁰ This indicates a sense of hopelessness or despondency about future life improvement across all racial groups. However, it must be noted that perceptions that the future will not be better (Figure 3.10) are slightly higher than views that life had improved over a five-year period. Indian/Asian South Africans ($n = 315$, $m = 2.45$, $SD = .82$) hold slightly more negative views on their future life improvement, while white South Africans

Figure 3.10 Mean distribution of outlook on past and future life improvement, by race, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

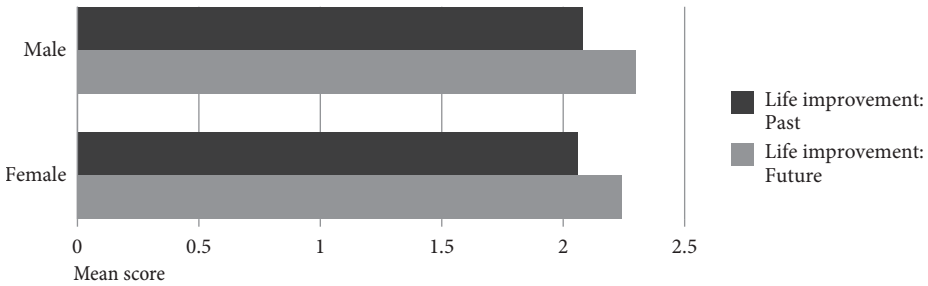
Table 3.4 One-way analysis of variance on past and future life improvement and race, 2014–20

Survey questions		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
In the past five years, has life improved, stayed the same or become worse for people like me?	Between groups	20.704	4	5.176	7.224	<.001
	Within groups	2168.971	3027	0.717		
	Total	2189.675	3031			
Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next five years for someone like you?	Between groups	7.197	4	1.799	0.604	.660
	Within groups	9016.966	3027	2.979		
	Total	9024.163	3031			

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

($n = 289$, $m = 2.18$, $SD = .89$) have slightly more positive views on whether their lives will improve in the next five years. The one-way analysis of variance demonstrates that there is no significant difference in perception of future life improvement based on racial identity. There are, however, notable differences in views that life had indeed improved during the last five years, while hopefulness about the future is somewhat subdued across all race groups (Table 3.4). South Africans hold a negative outlook on future life improvement relative to their stance on whether life has improved over the past five years. This despondency about improved future life quality may also facilitate a deepening sense of democratic delegitimation and discontent.

As shown in Figure 3.11 and Table 3.5, women ($n = 1\,769$, $m = 2.40$, $SD = 1.79$) hold slightly more negative views about life improving in the future than men ($n = 1\,263$, $m = 2.30$, $SD = 1.69$). And women ($n = 1\,769$, $m = 2.06$, $SD = .86$) hold marginally more negative views of whether life has improved over the past five years than men ($n = 1\,263$, $m = 2.08$, $SD = .83$). Overall, however, there is a consistent sense across gender that life has neither improved nor become worse.

Figure 3.11 Mean distribution of outlook on past and future life improvement, by gender, 2014–20

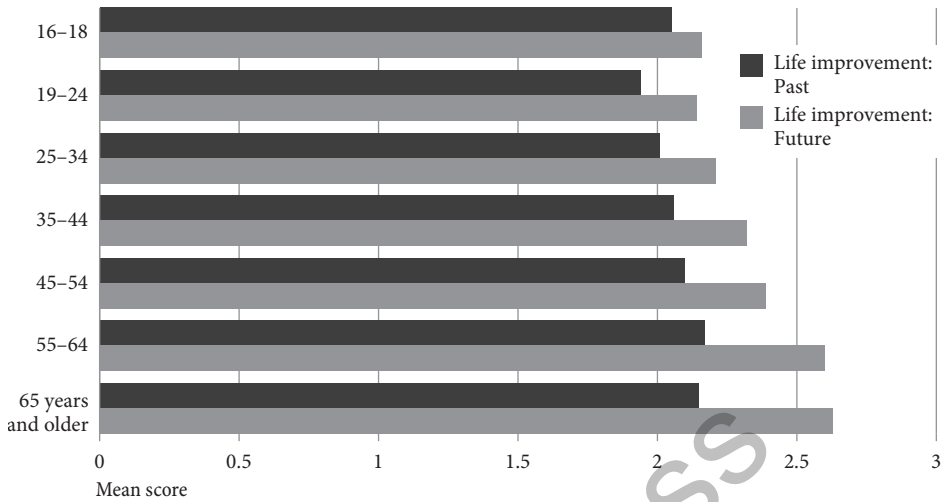
Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Table 3.5 Independent t-test: Gender and past and future life improvement, 2014–20

Survey questions	Independent samples test									
	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means						95% Confidence interval of the difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance Two-sided p	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Lower		
In the past five years has life improved, stayed the same or become worse for people like me?	Equal variances assumed	3.593	.058	.488	3030	.625	.015	.031	-.046	.077
How satisfied are you with your standard of living?	Equal variances assumed	3.702	.054	-1.519	3030	.129	-.097	.064	-.221	.028

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

The distribution of future hopefulness is also consistent across age groups. Figure 3.12 and Table 3.6 demonstrate that older South Africans show higher levels of negativity in their views that life has improved in the past and will improve in the future. The age cohorts 55–64 ($n = 412$, $m = 2.17$, $SD = .87$) and 65 years and older ($n = 360$, $m = 2.15$, $SD = .88$) demonstrate higher levels of dissatisfaction with life improvement over the past five years than the age cohorts 35–44 ($n = 662$, $m = 2.06$, $SD = .84$), 25–34 ($n = 685$, $m = 2.01$, $SD = .79$) and 19–24 years ($n = 330$, $m = 1.94$, $SD = .87$). The age cohort 19–24 ($n = 330$, $m = 2.14$, $SD = 1.5$) holds comparatively more positive, albeit

Figure 3.12 Mean distribution of outlook on past and future life improvement by age, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Table 3.6 One-way analysis of variance: Age and life improvement in the past and future, 2014–20

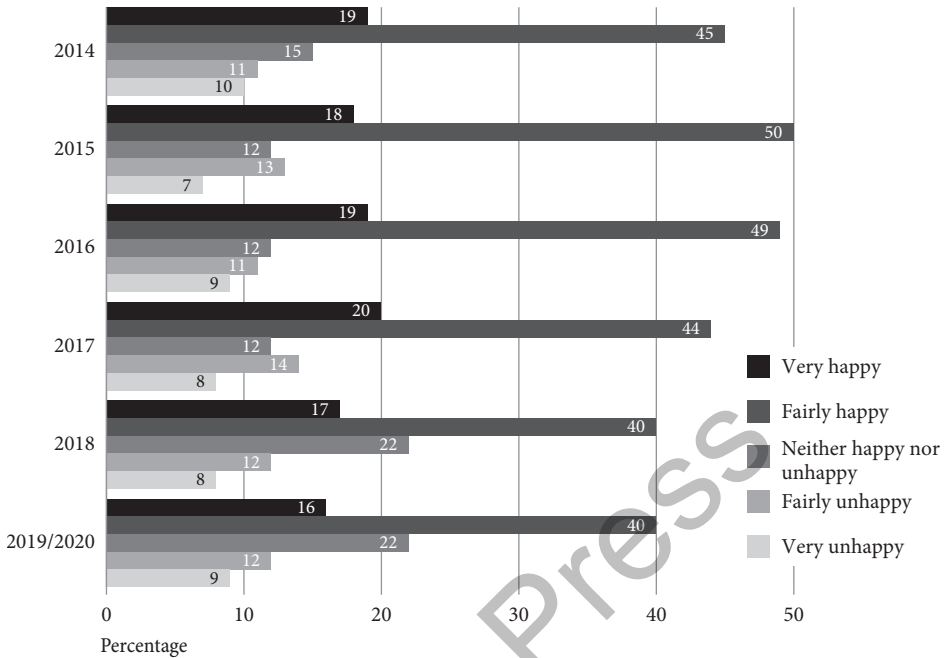
Survey questions		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
In the past five years, has life improved, stayed the same or got worse for people?	Between groups	15.139	6	2.523	3.508	.002
	Within groups	2167.620	3014	0.719		
	Total	2182.759	3020			
Do you think that life will improve, stay the same or get worse in the next five years?	Between groups	85.448	6	14.241	4.805	<.001
	Within groups	8933.023	3014	2.964		
	Total	9018.471	3020			

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

understated, views of the future. There is a notable difference in perceptions of future life improvement based on age, with older South Africans having a more negative outlook on the future.

Consideration of declining levels of subjective wellbeing amidst hopelessness and despondency also necessitates consideration of the distribution of happiness. South Africans have restrained views of their future hopefulness as well as tepid levels of subjective wellbeing. This requires an exploration of the distribution of happiness in South Africa.

Self-reported happiness in South Africa declined between 2014 and 2020 (Figure 3.13).¹¹ Just under one-fifth of the population indicated that they were very happy in 2014. Most South Africans are fairly happy, but there was a 3% decline in this measure

Figure 3.13 *Self-reported happiness in South Africa, 2014–20*

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Figure 3.14 *Mean distribution of self-reported levels of happiness, by race, 2014–20*

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

between 2014 and 2020. Concomitantly, there are slight fluctuations in the number of South Africans who indicate that they are very unhappy. A similar pattern is observed for those who indicate that they are fairly unhappy. Levels of self-reported happiness are substantially higher than levels of subjective wellbeing and future hopefulness (Figure 3.2). This again points to a need for deeper engagement with and research into what factors South Africans consider when reflecting on their level of happiness. In future it will also be necessary to determine to what extent a possible Nigerian paradox could be at play when constructing factors that shape cognition of subjective

wellbeing vis-à-vis happiness. Cognitively, however, there is relative dissatisfaction with life, while affectively there are relatively stable levels of happiness. This creates a contradictory picture of subjective wellbeing and happiness, most notably with regard to cognitive and affective measures of subjective wellbeing (see Figures 3.6 and 3.15).

Figure 3.14 shows that on average, black South Africans (n = 1 942, m = 2.78, SD = 1.28) report lower levels of happiness, indicative of happiness despondency.¹² Indian/Asian South Africans (n = 315, m = 2.21, SD = 1.09) and white South Africans (n = 289, m = 2.25, SD = 1.23) have comparably higher self-reported levels of happiness. This racialised pattern of happiness inequality is potentially linked to entrenched socioeconomic inequalities that continue to characterise post-apartheid South Africa, most notably relating to inequality of opportunity.

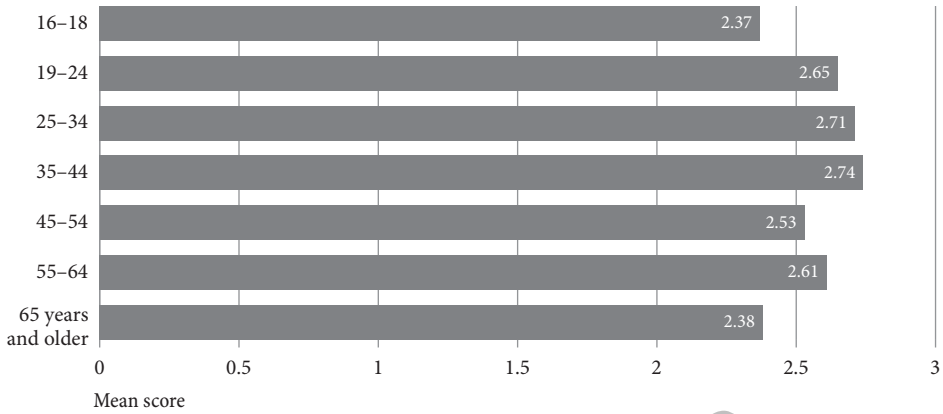
Women (n = 1 768, m = 2.67, SD = 1.26) have marginally higher levels of self-reported happiness when compared to men (n = 1 263, m = 2.55, SD = 1.23). Women report marginally lower levels of subjective wellbeing (Figure 3.5). It will be worthwhile in future to determine the gendered construction of happiness, and what factors shape individual self-assessment of happiness based on gender (see Table 3.7).

Similarly, when one considers age, the age cohorts 65 years and older (n = 3.60, m = 2.38, SD = 1.23) and 16–18 (n = 94, m = 2.37, SD = 1.18) have higher levels of self-reported happiness compared to other age groups (Figure 3.15). Concomitantly, the

Table 3.7 Independent t-test: Gender and happiness, 2014–20

Survey questions	Independent samples test									
	Levene's test for equality of variances		t-test for equality of means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Significance Two-sided p	Mean difference	Std. error difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Taking all things together, how would you say things are these days? Would you say you are very happy, fairly happy, neither happy nor unhappy, fairly unhappy or very unhappy?	Equal variances assumed	3.175	.075	-2.533	3029	.011	-.117	.046	-.208	-.026

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

Figure 3.15 Mean distribution of self-reported happiness, by age, 2014–2020

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

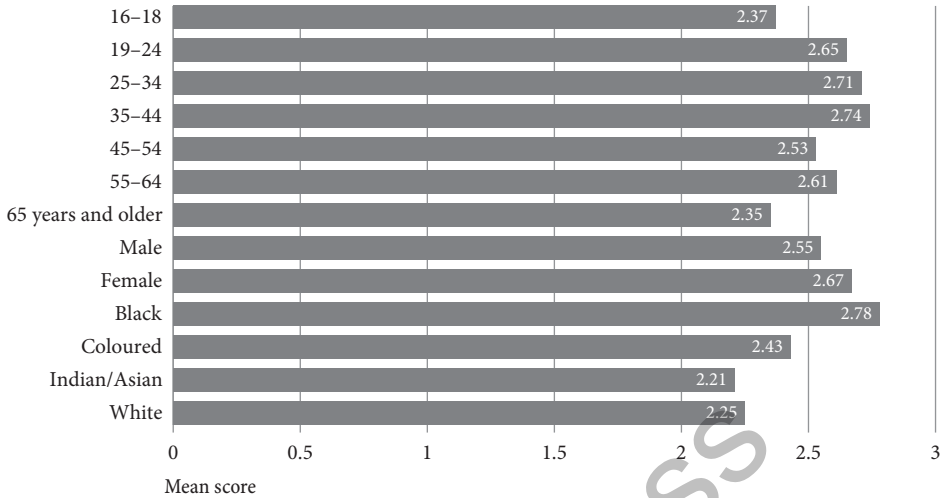
Table 3.8 Analysis of variance: Age and happiness, 2014–20

Survey questions		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Taking all things in your life, how would you say things are these days? Would you say you are very happy, fairly happy, neither happy nor unhappy, fairly unhappy or very unhappy?	Between groups	45.414	6	7.569	4.837	<.001
	Within groups	4715.254	3013	1.565		
	Total	4760.669	3019			

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

age cohorts 35–44 ($n = 662$, $m = 2.74$, $SD = 1.24$), 25–34 ($n = 685$, $m = 2.71$, $SD = 1.28$) and 19–24 ($n = 329$, $m = 2.65$, $SD = 1.20$) have notably lower levels of self-reported happiness. The variance in levels of happiness based on age could be correlated with the challenges younger people in South Africa face. These challenges include high rates of youth unemployment that impact pursuit of life opportunity and meeting key milestones of adulthood, such as full-time employment and being an independent individual with agency over life choices and goals. This may also explain why younger people in South Africa have higher levels of dissatisfaction than older South Africans with what they are achieving in life.

Figure 3.16 shows that individuals with lower levels of happiness are generally between the ages of 35 and 44, female and Indian South African. Individuals with higher levels of self-reported happiness are generally between the ages of 16 and 18, male and white South African. Table 3.8 demonstrates that age does play a role in perceptions of happiness (see also Table 3.3). One therefore finds happiness inequality distributed according to age and race, with marginal differences based on gender.

Figure 3.16 Mean distribution of happiness, by age, gender and race, 2014–20

Source: Constructed from SASAS 2019/2020 (HSRC 2020)

The most notable expression of inequality in South Africa is found in inequality of opportunity, the lottery of birth mentioned earlier in this chapter. States play an essential role in facilitating greater equality of opportunity through the provision of basic services such as healthcare, education and essential infrastructure to facilitate clean water, sanitation and travel (World Bank 2018: 45). When looking at patterns of poverty and inequality in South Africa, the World Bank (2018: 22) found a positive correlation between access to basic services and income level. Poor South Africans tended to have limited access to proper water and sanitation, were generally food-insecure, lived in overcrowded homes, and had lower rates of completion of primary school (World Bank 2018: 22–27). Similarly, access to healthcare and educational outcomes remained unequal across income groups, and given the racialised nature of poverty in South Africa, black and coloured households suffered higher levels of inequality of opportunity compared to other demographic groups (World Bank 2018: 38). It is this inequality of opportunity that may inadvertently shape subdued levels of subjective wellbeing and happiness, given that inequalities in life opportunity impact a person's ability to achieve their life's purpose and goals. The inability to achieve a sense of wellbeing and happiness in a democracy may lay the foundation for a deeper sense of democracy's inability to deliver, leading to a delegitimation of democracy and democratic rule.

Conclusion

Subjective wellbeing and happiness are critical factors in considering democratic quality, democratic legitimation and human development. Given persistent levels of inequality coupled with racialised patterns of poverty and equality of opportunity, there is a need to move *beyond GDP* in assessing democratic quality and health in

South Africa. Happiness inequality may be a driving force for increasing democratic and economic discontent as well as the political disengagement that is evident in the declining numbers of citizens participating in elections. Subdued levels of subjective wellbeing and happiness do not bode well for democratic legitimation and durability in South Africa, which remains a highly unequal country where racialised patterns of poverty and inequality persist, despite almost three decades of democracy and African National Congress (ANC) rule. With the advent of political liberation and its associated euphoria, many expected the material benefits of democracy to follow, through the promise of 'a better life for all', a life in which poverty would decline and societal transformation would reflect racial inclusivity in the new post-apartheid order.¹³ Yet, for the majority of South Africans a sense of wellbeing and happiness remains elusive.

Subjective wellbeing is a critical indicator of both democratic quality and human development. From a policy perspective, unpacking patterns of wellness perceptions and happiness assists in the development of targeted and relevant policies that will deal holistically with crucial societal issues such as poverty and inequality. With a move towards a *beyond GDP* agenda for human development, patterns of subjective wellbeing and happiness become important measures of key variations between different groups in society. Objective measures such as GDP may provide critical data on objective living conditions. However, perceptions of human realities, and how different societal groups experience wellbeing and a lack of their needs being met, provide important information about democratic quality and political stability. If people perceive that their needs cannot be met or their desires fulfilled under a specific regime, increasing levels of discontent may lead to political destabilisation. Unwellness and unhappiness breed discontent, which ultimately negates democratic legitimation since it is premised on the view that democracy cannot deliver opportunities for people to pursue their life's purpose.

As South Africa sets its policy and political agenda for the next three decades, it will be critical to consider subjective wellbeing and happiness, most notably relating to human development, and the transformative sociopolitical agenda. *Human* development necessitates a focus on human needs, including the need for self-actualisation and happiness. As such, in meeting societal needs, it is necessary to keep track of the distribution of wellness and happiness to determine what public goods may facilitate subjective wellbeing and happiness through equality of opportunity. Determining the factors that shape perceptions of subjective wellbeing and happiness is therefore a critical research area that will need significant investment in the future. Understanding how different societal groups construct wellness and happiness will effectively enable policy initiatives that can facilitate the provision of services and other interventions to allow for more equally distributed human development and empowerment. More importantly, the promise of a better tomorrow and how to achieve it relies on people increasingly feeling that they are well and happy in a democratic society. The ability to achieve a happy and fulfilled life is, after all, a central element of the human experience.

Notes

- 1 Teichmann C, The state of democracy in South Africa a cause for concern, *Mail & Guardian*, 16 September 2022. Accessed September 2022, <https://mg.co.za/opinion/2022-09-16-the-state-of-democracy-in-south-africa-is-cause-for-concern/>.
- 2 Wills M, Happiness is a warm democracy, *JSTOR Daily*, 2 August 2022. Accessed August 2022, <https://daily.jstor.org/happiness-is-a-warm-democracy/>.
- 3 A similar argument applies in non-Western societies like China. Yukun Zhao et al. (2021), in analysing collective and individual agency, find that Chinese perceptions of wellbeing are also shaped by a sense of individual autonomy and agency. They conclude that high collective agency with low individual agency results in low quality of life for ordinary citizens. They also conclude that in conditions of coerced collectivism (where the state may push a particular ideological programme), individual agency is crushed. For Zhao et al., it is thus important to consider coerced collectivism in authoritarian regimes versus individual autonomy in democratic regimes. They observe that ‘when individuals choose to pursue collective goals together, we suggest there will be progress. If collective goals are forced to the extent of crushing individual agency, there will be eventual collapse’ (Zhao et al. 2021: 358).
- 4 Why does happiness inequality matter? *Greater Good Magazine*, 24 March. Accessed October 2023, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_does_happiness_inequality_matter.
- 5 World Bank (2022) *New World Bank report assesses sources of inequality in five major countries in southern Africa*, press release, 9 March. Accessed October 2022, <https://rebrand.ly/vq6j49w>.
- 6 Sobczak C (2011) Does inequality make us unhappy? *Greater Good Magazine*. Accessed October 2022, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/does_inequality_make_us_unhappy.
- 7 The Personal Wellbeing Index draws on a five-point scale ranging from (1) very satisfied to (5) very dissatisfied. Specific questions relate to current and future evaluations of life situation. Respondents are asked the following questions: (a) Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole? (b) How satisfied are you with your standard of living? (c) How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life? (d) How satisfied are you with your health? (e) How satisfied are you with your personal relationships? (f) How satisfied are you with how safe you feel? (g) How satisfied are you with feeling part of your community? (h) How satisfied are you with your future financial security? (i) How satisfied are you with your daily activities?
- 8 Nefdt A, How happy is South Africa actually? World Happiness Index weighs in, *CapeTown etc*, 4 June 2022. Accessed October 2022, <https://www.capetownetc.com/news/how-happy-is-south-africa-actually-world-happiness-index-weighs-in/>.
- 9 The Subjective Wellness Index is a 10-point Lickert scale where 0 indicates complete dissatisfaction, 5 indicates neutral, and 10 indicates complete satisfaction. The average was created through an index variable measure of key items of cognitive and eudaimonic wellbeing within the SASAS.
- 10 The data are constructed on a 3-point scale, where 1 indicates improved, 2 indicates stayed the same, and 3 indicates became worse.

- 11 The measure is a 5-point Lickert scale with 1 indicating very happy, 2 fairly happy, 3 neither happy nor unhappy, 4 fairly unhappy, and 5 very unhappy.
- 12 With a mean of 2.78, black South Africans are closer to a measure of 3, which indicates neither happy nor unhappy.
- 13 The ANC created the catchphrase 'a better life for all' for its 2004, 2009 and 2014 electoral campaigns.

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4 *Needs, freedom and improving quality of life in South Africa*

Lawrence Hamilton

South Africa is a paradox in one country: a land of great splendour, full of talented, diverse, brilliant people, and the great achievement of having successfully overcome apartheid and rectified at least some of the cruelties and deprivations of that wretched regime, yet also a place of deep racism, inequality, violent crime, gender-based violence and corruption. The scars of its colonial past remain open, seeping wounds, still festering in the lives of millions of South Africans. This is mainly because the structural inequalities of apartheid have not been overcome by policy-makers, whether for want of ideas regarding real change, because of poor application of existing policies, or through sheer malfeasance. It is no accident that still today the quality of life of most South Africans is largely determined by race. In this chapter, in uncovering the various elements and distortions at play, I shall seek to remain objective, adopting a realist critical lens, but without wishing to diminish the significant recent history of South Africa, its land or its people.

In order to explain and link these objective conditions and identify how they manifest themselves on the ground in terms of quality of life, needs and freedom, I first adopt some of the ideas and arguments central to Amartya Sen's 'concern for capabilities' (Hamilton 2019), to highlight the importance of bringing together objective and subjective accounts of wellbeing, physical conditions, freedom and preferences. I argue that Sen's approach is ultimately about how best to determine people's needs and freedoms. I then focus on five main determining factors as regards quality of life in South Africa: poverty, inequality, unemployment, violent crime and education. I use various sources of empirical data to analyse how these factors structure South Africans' quality of life, particularly the UN's Human Development Index (HDI), which Sen helped to create, and its associated Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI).¹

Then, via an identification of omissions in Sen's framework for improving quality of life, I conclude by proposing a framework for reorienting politics in South Africa to enable the recognition of our needs and improvement of our freedoms and power relations. A politics of this kind would focus on contextual diagnoses of needs, judgements and institutions. It would also require *partisan* institutionalisation of class (and other) conflict to withstand economic and political domination. This institutionalisation would enhance participation and representation. Political representatives would be given greater autonomy to identify and evaluate existing needs and interests, while citizens and other residents of South Africa would be significantly empowered to critique and veto the decisions of their representatives as they actively determine their own needs.

Although I refer to the most recent data in the discussion, I only use comparative data available at the end of 2019, as many current data are skewed both ways by the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns: viewed as a mean they look too gloomy for the past three years because of massive job losses during the unusual economic slowdown; and very proximate data look too rosy due to the recent economic rebound since late 2021 off a low base.

Quality of life, needs and freedoms

Ever since the 1960s, Sen has been criticising the most important assumptions in economics. Utilitarianism and the welfarism it gave rise to have been inadequate in two ways, he argues. First, they constrain what he calls the ‘informational base’ for economic analysis (Sen 1992: 6), especially if the category of need is taken to be central therein. Second, they are crudely unable to provide either safeguards for egalitarian outcomes or principles that a polity might want to enshrine, irrespective of utility calculation. In very broad terms, the idea of quality of life tries to tack a line between supposedly objective indicators (or crude proxies), such as GDP, and individual, subjective mental metrics of utility and happiness, that is, the individual utility of welfarism (Sen 1992: 6).

Sen maintains that these approaches are guilty of both ‘physical-condition neglect’ and ‘valuation neglect’ (Sen 1985a: 20–21). They are guilty of the former because, by only considering mental states, they take no account of the freedom the person has to reach these states, and their objective condition is not considered separately from any reference to how they feel about it. They are guilty of the latter because they leave no room for the possible evaluation of states and conditions. This is because they take wants as given, and as the informational basis for an assessment of the ‘wellness’ of someone’s life (1985a: 30). For example, the very poor person whose conditions of existence would give them a very low objective wellbeing might score quite well on a utilitarian scale that only tests their own analysis of their situation in terms of their happiness or pleasure. They might do so because they have a naturally sunny outlook on life, or because they have become accustomed to penury and hardship – they have formed adaptive preferences.

One of the reasons that utility measurement on its own cannot get out of the starting blocks is the diversity of ways in which individuals respond to the conditions of their lives: some are never satisfied, grumbling as they are showered with champagne and caviar, while others retain a sunny disposition, no matter how bleak their lives may be in objective terms. Sen puts it as follows:

A thoroughly deprived person, leading a very reduced life, might not appear to be badly off in terms of the mental metric of desire and its fulfilment, if the handicap is accepted with non-grumbling resignation. In situations of long-standing deprivation, the victims do not go on grieving and lamenting all the time, and very often make great efforts to take pleasure in small mercies and cut down personal desires to modest – ‘realistic’ – proportions. (1992: 55)

This description exemplifies the circumstantial contingency of desires, and supports the argument that internal criteria alone are bad indicators of what most people would think of as good criteria for an analysis of wellbeing and quality of life (Sen 1985a: 35).

Sen argues that what is missing in all other contending frameworks is some notion of “basic capabilities”: a person being able to do certain basic things’ (Sen 1980: 218). These include the ability to meet one’s nutritional requirements, the wherewithal to be clothed and sheltered, the ability to move about, the power to participate in the social life of the community, and so on (1980: 218). The case for reducing the handicap of the disabled person or the disadvantage of the epidemiologically challenged person, for example, must rest on something other than the internal metric of utility maximisation. Sen thinks it is ‘the interpretation of needs in the form of basic capabilities’ (Sen 1980: 218; see also Hamilton 2003).

The basic notion in Sen’s ‘capability approach’ is a person’s functionings, ‘which represent ... the various things that he or she manages to do or be in leading a life’ (Sen 1993: 31). These are constitutive of the person’s being, and an assessment of wellbeing must take the form of an evaluation of these elements (Sen 1992: 39). The capability of a person ‘reflects the alternative combinations of functionings the person can achieve, and from which he or she can choose one collection’ (1993: 31). The capability to function comprises the various combinations of functionings that reflect the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another; that is, it reflects the person’s ability (which includes her living conditions) to choose from possible lives. The actual functionings of a person therefore make up part of the capability set but are not equal to it.

The capability set is the ‘primary informational base’ because there are four conceptual categories in the capability set which are all valuable for quality of life but are not functionings per se (Sen 1993: 38). They are wellbeing achievement, wellbeing freedom, agency achievement and agency freedom (Sen 1985b: 202). Unlike some approaches that see the person as being able to have an adequate wellbeing achievement without having had much freedom of choice, Sen maintains that there is more to an assessment of wellbeing, and especially the broader quality of life, than the achievement of wellbeing. He places much emphasis on both the ability to achieve wellbeing and the freedom to choose between different lives that lead to wellbeing.

Furthermore, we often have goals and aspirations that are important for our sense of agency, making them important for our quality of life, but that have little or nothing to do with our wellbeing. An example is the doctor who would earn a larger salary and live a life that would increase their wellbeing if they worked in South Africa’s lucrative private medical sector, but who chooses to work in the less lucrative, more demanding but also altruistically rewarding public sector, where there is little room to hide from the brutal realities of the ways in which socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage affect people’s health. Individuals often do things that they feel are important to their lives but that others, and they themselves, know are contrary to their personal wellbeing. An evaluation of a person’s wellbeing, according to Sen, does require an evaluation of their functionings (wellbeing achievement), but he argues that a life worth living

(or quality of life) must incorporate more than wellbeing; it must also consider agent-centred evaluation – self-evaluation – and the freedom to achieve valued functionings.

Similarly, the explanation and evaluation of a person's agency achievement is made more comprehensive with knowledge of their agency freedom, the nature of the choices involved and their feasibility. It could be argued, however, that though it seems obvious that achieving the goals that are central to my life is constitutive of a 'good life', having increased freedom to choose is less clearly connected to the good life. There is an intuitive sense in which too much choice can be counterproductive for both wellbeing and achievement of personal goals. The overabundance of possibilities can be confusing and debilitating. Yet it is a mistake to think of choice only in terms of supplying something which is an addition rather than a subtraction. The choice to rid my life of too many confusing choices is a subtractive choice, but still a beneficial one. It is ultimately choice, therefore, that is valued and productive (Hamilton 1999: 526).

The question of the need for control over every choice, however, is not so clear-cut. For example, having little control over public policy that has rid my area of malaria does not decrease my choices, it increases them. Something outside of my control has led to an increase in my freedom and control (Sen 1992: 68). Although, of course, if public debate is organised such that all (or most) voices that are affected by the policy are at least heard, the detrimental effects of some malaria-control policies would become public knowledge and lead to the more uniform distribution or restructuring of the policies themselves. (The fact that I am born into a malaria-free area and obviously benefit from the policy without having had control over it is another, less problematic point.)

The crux of all of this is that, despite flirting with the idea of conceiving of freedom as control early on in his career, Sen quickly realises that this is a dead end. Instead, he conceives of freedom as effective power. For Sen, what matters in assessments of liberty are often counterfactual considerations of what someone would have chosen had the conditions been different. He points out convincingly that, when thinking about freedom in these terms, we cannot rely on the 'control' view; we can only rely on the 'power' view. This is because in being guided by a preference – what someone would have chosen – we acknowledge that the person should have power over the decision, even if they do not happen to have control over it (Sen 1982: 216). Sen argues that this is best described with reference to the idea of 'indirect liberty', which allows us to make judgements about how best to proceed based on an assessment of what someone would have chosen, that is, based on the use of counterfactual reasoning. He is enough of a realist to see how important this is. As he puts it,

society cannot typically be so organised that each person himself or herself commands all the levers of control over his or her personal life. The policeman helps my liberty by stopping mugging – presuming of course that I would choose not to be mugged if I had the choice – rather than giving me the control over whether to be mugged or not. Outcomes are also relevant for liberty, and not just the procedures of control. (Sen 1982: 216)

As Sen reiterates in his 1984 Dewey Lectures, what matters is that in modern society many powers are indirectly exercised and, in this context, concentration on the levers of control skews our view of freedom (Sen 1985b: 209). Like many others, but in contrast to liberals and libertarians who defend ‘constraint’/‘negative’ and ‘control’ views of freedom, Sen suggests it is obvious that, under modern conditions, we would do best to assess liberty in terms of power, that is, ‘the power to achieve chosen results: whether the person is free to achieve one outcome or another; whether his or her choices will be respected and the corresponding things will happen’. Even from quite early on, Sen calls this freedom ‘effective power, or power (for short)’, and notes that it ‘is not really concerned with the mechanism and procedures of control’. He suggests that it does not matter for effective power precisely how the choices are ‘executed’; indeed, often, the choice may not even be directly addressed. ‘Effective power can take note of counterfactual choice: things might be done because of knowledge of what the person would choose if he actually had control over the outcome’ (Sen 1985b: 208–209).

He returns here to his mugging example, noted in the quote above, suggesting that under modern conditions this kind of situation is much closer to the norm than anything that defenders of freedom as control suggest. If we want the freedom not to be mugged and to move around the streets at liberty, we are concerned, he suggests, with effective power. Precisely who exercises the control may be less important than the ability to achieve what we would have chosen. If the streets are cleared of muggers because we would have chosen not to be mugged, ‘our freedom is being well served, even though we have not been given control over the choice of whether to be mugged or not’ (Sen 1985b: 210). He might have added – but he did not – that, like the matter of public policing (as opposed to private gun-toting), there are many collective-action situations in which it is in fact much more efficient (in terms of achieving what we would have chosen, that is, having effective power) if we do not individually have direct control over the decision and action. His point is well made, but it is at the very least odd that he does not take this next step, especially given that he goes on to note the socially interdependent nature of many of these matters.

As I have argued elsewhere (Hamilton 2014b), despite Sen’s relative outlier status in his time, there is nothing crazy about the idea of freedom as power that he proposes. When I say ‘I am free’, normally I am not saying, ‘I am externally unimpeded’, ‘I am self-determining’ or ‘I am directly in control of a procedure’. What I usually mean is ‘I am free to do X’, which concretely means ‘I have the power or ability to do X’. It follows that it is more helpful to conceive of freedom as a combination of my ability to determine what I will do and my power to do it or bring it about, which is exactly what Sen proposes via his account of freedom of choice coupled with his view of capabilities.

Moreover, freedom as power in this sense chimes with most of the struggles for freedom across the ages: the revolutions that brought about the democracies of ancient Athens; the sharp distinction between freedom and slavery in Antiquity;² subsequent slave revolts like the Haitian revolution and later liberation struggles against colonialism, apartheid and domination; and people’s everyday attempts to gain more independence and freedom from the church, the community, the law, poverty and so on. Frantz

Fanon and Amilcar Cabral both argue, for example, that the human condition is to be free, and that freedom resides in the capacity to choose and to act (Cabral 1974; Fanon 2008: 280).

The important point to take from these engaging, if complex, accounts by Sen is that they provide an alternative conceptual framework for assessing deprivations and how to measure them. The framework is based not on simple matters of GDP or income distribution, but on a more complex set of indicators that draw on the existing material conditions of the lives of individuals, their stated preferences and needs as regards these conditions and what may be wrong with them, and the agency they have in assessing these conditions and their life chances. Sen calls this a ‘concern for capabilities’, but it is probably more simply understood as a focus on understanding development and quality of life through the evaluation of existing needs and freedoms of individuals in the context concerned. To carry out such a comprehensive study in the current South African context would require a full objective and subjective assessment of at least the following conditions: poverty, income and wealth inequalities, unemployment, GDP, access to and quality of education, air and water quality, housing, security, violent crime, infrastructure upkeep affecting mobility, water and sanitation, and so on, and gender inequalities across all of these variables, with particular reference to the scourge of gender-based violence.

However, given space constraints, here I focus on the following five central variables, considered since the early 1990s: poverty, inequality, unemployment, violent crime and education.³ These are not only good proxies for a fuller assessment of quality of life, but if viewed through the lens of the UN’s HDI and MPI, they provide a comparative picture of quality of life in South Africa.

Poverty and inequality

Following a difficult few years under Covid-19 lockdowns, with serious civil unrest, devastating floods and a destructive inability on the part of the state to meet the country’s energy needs (known locally and euphemistically as ‘loadshedding’), not to speak of at least two decades of dire corruption prior to and during the pandemic period, there is some hope in the land – a land that threw off the shackles and barbarities of apartheid without full-blown civil war; successfully consolidated representative democracy, the rule of law, an independent judiciary and a lauded Constitution; and at least until 2008 managed to achieve 14 years of uninterrupted growth. South Africa’s GDP has now recovered and surpassed pre-pandemic levels, reaching just under \$700 billion (Statistics South Africa 2022a). There are also moves afoot to bring before the courts the masterminds of these lost decades of state capture and larceny on a national scale, with their resultant devastating effects on the capability of the state and the trust of citizens. The findings of the Zondo Commission of Inquiry (The Presidency n.d.) will enable and hasten this process, though the wheels of justice continue to turn slowly.⁴

Hope that this will occur is further reinforced by some bare figures concerning the meeting of the most glaring vital needs of South Africans. Since 1994 the government

has built approximately 3.75 million houses, though the rate of per annum increase has decreased markedly since 2010, at which point close on 3 million houses had been built (still leaving a shortfall of at least 2 million in a relatively fast-growing population).⁵ Significantly, all the indices that make up the HDI saw an improvement from 1990 to 2019. Life expectancy at birth rose from 63.3 to 64.1 years. Expected years of schooling rose from 11.4 to 13.8 years. Mean years of schooling rose from 6.5 to 10.2 years. And gross national income (GNI) per capita rose from \$9.975 to \$12.129. Together these have meant that in that period, South Africa's HDI rose from 0.627 to 0.709, a rise of 13.1 per cent (UNDP 2022). In terms of basic – extreme – poverty alleviation, the story seems also to be one of success. If we use the international-level poverty line (\$1.9 per day), between 1996 and 2015 the percentage of South Africans living below this line was reduced from 33.8 per cent to 18.8 per cent (World Bank 2018: xix). And, the proportion of the population with access to electricity, improved water sources and improved sanitation facilities increased steadily between 1994 and 2015, and beyond. In 2015, 93 per cent of the population had access to improved water sources, compared to 83 per cent in 1994. In 1994, 62 per cent had access to mains electricity, rising to 87 per cent in 2014; by 2021 this had risen to 89.3 per cent (Statistics South Africa 2021: 42). In 2015, 66 per cent of the population had access to improved sanitation facilities, following a 13 per cent increase from 53 per cent in 1994 (Statistics South Africa 2021: 20), and there was a big jump by 2021, when the figure was 84.1 per cent (Statistics South Africa 2021: 35).

Some of these improvements are a consequence of direct government intervention to meet needs – electrical connections, housing provision and so on. But another important factor is the extent, reach and effects of South Africa's very large social assistance programmes. By any measure these programmes are extensive. Approximately one in three South Africans is a direct beneficiary of a social grant, while nearly two-thirds of the population (64 per cent) are either direct or indirect beneficiaries of the system. This compares very favourably to 29.6 per cent of the population in 2012 and 12.7 per cent in 2002 (Hamilton 2014a: 49). Transfers are equivalent to 7.3 per cent of households' expenditure nationally and 60 per cent of expenditures in quintile 1, the poorest 20 per cent of the population (World Bank 2021: 5). South Africa spends more on these programmes than most other countries – 3.31 per cent of GDP. The number of grants paid out by government increased from 12.02 million in 2006/07 to 17.81 million in 2018/19.⁶ Of these, child support grants make up the vast majority (paid to 12.45 million children), followed by the older persons' grant (to 3.55 million people) and the disability grant (to 1.05 million people). Together, these three grants account for 94 per cent of total spending on grants and nearly 96 per cent of all grants (World Bank 2021: 4). Moreover, this system is well targeted at those who are most in need of support. The poorest 60 per cent of the population account for almost 80 per cent of all direct and indirect grant beneficiaries, and receive a similar proportion of social assistance benefits. Quintile 1 alone accounts for 29.8 per cent of direct and indirect beneficiaries and 33.1 per cent of benefits. One-third of social assistance benefits accrues to the poorest 20 per cent of the

population, and a further 26.4 per cent accrue to those in the second-poorest quintile (World Bank 2021: 6).

And yet, again by any measure, South Africa remains the most unequal place on earth. Analysis of the distribution of the consumption expenditure per capita shows that inequality has, if anything, worsened since the end of apartheid. The Gini coefficient then was 0.61; in 2015 it had risen to 0.63, where it has hovered ever since. This is – by quite some way – much worse than not only other sub-Saharan countries but also other unequal upper middle-income countries, such as Brazil and Mexico. In fact, on all measures of inequality, South Africa fares very badly. In 2021, the top 10 per cent in South Africa earned more than 65 per cent of total national income and the bottom 50 per cent just 5.3 per cent of the total. Although income inequality has been extreme for as long as records have existed, it has worsened quite significantly since 1994, when the relevant figures were 46 per cent and 12 per cent. The most striking and structurally disturbing figure emerges when we measure wealth inequality. While the richest South Africans have wealth levels broadly comparable with those of affluent Western Europeans, the poorest 50 per cent in South Africa own no wealth at all. The top 10 per cent own close to 86 per cent of total wealth, and the share of the bottom 50 per cent is negative, meaning that this group has more debts than assets. Since 1990, the average household wealth for the bottom 50 per cent has remained below zero (World Inequality Lab 2022).

It is no surprise, then, that the seemingly healthy increase in South Africa's overall HDI masks a more negative reality. Although in absolute terms this increase looks good, during the same period (1990 to 2019) in relative terms the picture is a lot less rosy. Its HDI ranking among all 189 assessed countries went from 73rd to 114th (and in 1994 itself this ranking was as high as 68th) (Countryeconomy.com 2022). In other words, a simple longitudinal comparison of reductions in extreme poverty, while important, leaves a lot out of the picture, which is made even darker by the objective realities of what I lay out in the next section. But a sense of how significantly the extreme inequalities found in South Africa impact directly on quality of life can be given by means of a comparative account of what is called the inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI).

First, an initial comparison: South Africa's 2019 HDI of 0.709 is below the average of 0.753 for countries in the high human development group and above the average of 0.547 for countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Countryeconomy.com 2022).

But watch the change with regard to South Africa's IHDI. The IHDI is basically the HDI discounted for inequalities. South Africa's IHDI is much lower, at 0.468, a loss of 34 per cent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices. The average loss due to inequality for high-HDI countries is 17.9 per cent and for sub-Saharan Africa it is 30.5 per cent. In other words, from occupying a position among the high-HDI countries, once inequality is brought into the picture South Africa ends up with an IHDI not far off much poorer countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Namibia, which have HDIs ranked 149th and 130th respectively: South Africa – 0.468; DRC – 0.430; Namibia – 0.418. And then compare South Africa's HDI

and IHDI with other middle-income countries with relatively high levels of inequality, for example Brazil: HDI – 0.765, IHDI – 0.570; Turkey: 0.820, 0.683; Sri Lanka: 0.782, 0.673; China: 0.761, 0.639 (Countryeconomy.com 2022). The differences are extreme, the situation dire and the results catastrophic.

Unemployment, education and violent crime

Besides many other determinants of this situation – such as the collapse of vital infrastructure due to corruption and maladministration, especially in state-owned enterprises – a uniquely important factor is the fact that macroeconomic and macropolitical policy frameworks have failed to enable an economy that both grows and provides good jobs in significant numbers. The unemployment rate in South Africa has gone from dismal to dire, and in the opinion of many is simply unsustainable.⁷

South Africa is failing badly as regards generating the conditions for secure and meaningful employment – in fact, even for the most basic, insecure work. Statistics South Africa uses two measures of unemployment: an official definition – ‘those 15–64 years who are actively looking for work or would have been available to work’; and an expanded definition – those in the same age range ‘who are not employed and did not look for work either because they have become discouraged from looking for work or ... for other reasons’ (Statistics South Africa 2019, 2022b). In 1994, 20 per cent of South Africans were officially unemployed. That rose to 25.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2011, 29.1 per cent in the last quarter of 2019, and 35.3 per cent in the last quarter of 2021. Moreover, the equivalent, and arguably more significant, figures for the expanded definition are much worse: 31.2 per cent, 35.4 per cent, 38.7 per cent and 46.2 per cent. And if that is not bad enough, a disaggregation of these figures reveals two staggering facts: (a) among the unemployed, the proportion of those in ‘long-term unemployment’ increased from 59.9 per cent in quarter 4 of 2009 to 73.3 per cent in quarter 4 of 2019; and (b) the *official* unemployment rate of young people (aged 15–24 years) in quarter 4 of 2019 sat at 58.1 per cent (with some putting it in late 2022 at 66.5 per cent). Approximately 3.3 million (32 per cent) out of 10.3 million young people were not in employment, education or training (a figure that had risen to 37 per cent in quarter 1 of 2022 and goes up to 46.3 per cent if we expand the group to 15–34 years) (Statistics South Africa 2019, 2022a, 2022b).

This is a very worrying trend for the future of South Africa, not to speak of the quality of life of this very large section of South African society. It is a severe blight on these aspirant young individual lives and the talent and potential – the capabilities – that they instantiate. In other words, not only does this situation make it very hard for this group to meet their vital needs, but it also significantly constrains their freedoms – their capacities and choices to live the lives they may want to live. In some countries situations of this kind are offset by a large and efficient tertiary education sector that keeps this cohort in education and trains it for skilled jobs in the future. South Africa is failing in this regard, too. While more adults in 2019 were attaining upper secondary education than a decade earlier – 82 per cent versus 73 per cent – tertiary attainment in

South Africa is the lowest of all OECD and partner countries. In 2018 only 6 per cent of 25–34-year-olds were tertiary-educated, well below the G20 average of 38 per cent, less than half the attainment in India, and four times less than in an equivalent polity such as Mexico (OECD 2019).

In other words, there is a compounding effect on unemployment. The economy and its macroeconomic masters are not even able to keep unemployment stable. The economy cannot even nearly absorb new workseekers, let alone those already searching or those who have given up looking. Moreover, even if the economy were somehow to begin creating jobs, it is not clear whether those out of work would be able to fill these positions, unless the jobs that were created all required unskilled labour, not exactly a recipe for enabling the reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment in a middle-income country.

Under the social and economic conditions that currently obtain in South Africa, a life trapped in a cycle of poverty is a life without power and thus a life without freedom. Without the financial means to satisfy properly my vital needs, I do not have the power to do or be as I would otherwise do or be. *In extremis* my situation forces me to act in certain ways, often in order to stave off starvation, but even above that floor, if all my resources are directed towards the satisfaction of my vital needs I have no surplus to use for my empowerment.

There are at least two further dimensions to this cycle of unfreedom and how the very high levels of inequality in South Africa skew the relative power and thus freedom of different sectors of society. First, relatively poor citizens are left out of the economic loop in two ways: they fail to prosper from a generally prosperous economy; and they therefore have relatively little or no means of influencing their political and economic representatives, particularly with regard to the macroeconomic decisions that will affect whether or not they could be free and active economic agents in the future. While the large social assistance programmes discussed above assist in keeping many unemployed and impoverished residents out of extreme poverty, they do not enable a way out of these cycles of poverty and less and less freedom.

In contrast, the relatively affluent not only benefit directly from any positive national economic outcomes but also better determine their prospects by dint of their greater influence over macroeconomic policy, not only because of their greater purchasing power but also through their direct and indirect links to policy-makers (Hamilton 2014a: Chapters 3, 4). However, the relatively wealthy are not exempt from the negative effects of high levels of inequality. South Africa's high levels of inequality give rise to a very high incidence of social ills that affect everyone, even the wealthiest and most protected. In the most extreme and direct way, this is felt in the form of violent crime. Although the poor in South Africa are most often the victims of crime (Hamilton 2014a; South Africa Government 2020) – as regards certain forms of crime, such as rape and murder, this is overwhelmingly the case – in no way whatsoever are the wealthy free from violent crime. In fact, they are often specifically targeted due to their wealth; armed robbery in South Africa occurs at very high levels in seemingly highly protected, wealthy suburbs and

neighbourhoods such as Sandton in Johannesburg. National crime statistics from the late 1990s have shown a steady and seemingly unstoppable rise in armed house robberies, skyrocketing murder rates since 2011, a steady overall increase in crime in general, and a veritable pandemic of gender-based violence (South African Government 2020).⁸ Staggeringly, in South Africa approximately 110 people are murdered every day, twice as many as in the USA, which has close to six times South Africa's population of 60 million. The extreme violence of some of these crimes is beyond the explanatory scope of this chapter. But what is clear is that the severe social damage caused by inequality does not stop at violent crime. The high levels of inequality in South Africa also have less direct but equally dire effects on the whole population. These take the form of general stress, mutual distrust, conflict, violence, bad health, short lives, mental illness and low productivity. The persistent very high levels of material inequality make many very distrustful of the poor, very protective of their precarious positions of relative wealth, and they are often plagued by high levels of fear regarding their own and their families' health, safety and security. This leads to a high incidence of syndromes such as depression, phobias of different sorts and basic anxiety.

These consequences are in line with global findings on the links between inequality and poor health. There is a direct and robust causal relation between high levels of inequality and crime, and incidents of mental illness are 500 per cent higher across the whole population spectrum in the most unequal societies than in the most equal ones (Wilkinson 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett 2009).

Moreover, there exists a causal relation between high levels of inequality and power. If I am consistently having to struggle against poor health, I will accordingly lack the time, education or power to do or be as I would otherwise do or be, or determine who represents me; to take part in actively resisting the norms and practices of my society or to affect the judgements of those representatives who determine my economic environment. It follows, therefore, that if we conceive of freedom in terms of power, the high levels of inequality experienced in South Africa severely curtail the freedom of all its citizens. The second way, therefore, in which inequality, high rates of unemployment and poor education skew societal power relations, and thus undermine the freedom as power of most of the population, is through these causal links between inequality, crime, fear, mental and physical illness. This is brought out best by conceiving freedom as power. It is not for nothing that many people in South Africa often speak about how important it is to be 'free from fear'.

In sum, then, a cycle of poverty for some, when associated with high levels of inequality and unemployment, has become a cycle of less and less freedom for all.

Taken together, these statistics on inequality, unemployment, education and violent crime, and their effects on the lives of South Africans, especially young people in South Africa, can easily turn realism into pessimism. Given the above, how can South Africa overcome (and not simply palliate) its problems? Or, put differently, how can government help to improve quality of life in South Africa? As I argue in the next section, much will depend on reorientation of South Africa's macroeconomic and macropolitical institutions.

Improving quality of life in South Africa

Sen's theoretical and practical work has provided invaluable tools for better understanding and measuring quality of life and degrees of deprivation. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere (Hamilton 1999, 2019, 2020), he has not followed this up with diagnostic mechanisms for accessing the root causes of these problems. This is due to various omissions, though I list only two here: an analysis of the ever-present *power relations* that determine the inequality, poverty, needs and horizons of what we deem politically possible; and proposals for the *institutions* and associated political change that would be necessary to enable these needs and freedoms.⁹ These lacunae also make it difficult to see how South African citizens can exercise their political agency to improve their quality of life. Again, as I have argued at length elsewhere (Hamilton 2014a, 2014b, 2021), bar outright revolution, which as history teaches us is a risky alternative indeed, this requires a politics that begins with contextual diagnoses of needs, judgements and institutions, and has as its ends citizen control over the determination of needs and macroeconomic policy that meets needs and enables freedoms for all. In the South African context, this would require at least a two-step process. The first step would need to focus on necessary changes in policy direction. The second would require a set of *partisan* institutions of participation and representation that institutionalise class (and other) conflict to withstand economic and political domination. These institutions would give political representatives greater autonomy in identifying and evaluating existing needs and interests, while also empowering citizens and residents to determine, critique and veto the decisions of their representatives.

Immediate policy imperatives

Changes in policy direction that would be necessary to improve quality of life in South Africa include the following measures:

Sovereignty must be returned to Parliament

In a seemingly anticolonial move, post-apartheid South Africa jettisoned the 'Westminster' model of parliamentary sovereignty, adopting instead a constitutional democratic model, where the Constitution is sovereign. Given the vogue at the time and a large swathe of mainstream thinking, this seemed like the best bulwark for a young democracy and the best means of generating equal political power for all. Yet, especially because it was combined with a new electoral system, closed party-list proportional representation, it has unintentionally disempowered citizens and undermined real, effective means of keeping representatives accountable. In other words, it lessens, rather than increases, the power and freedom of ordinary citizens, who, in parliamentary democracies with geographically defined constituencies, can hold their representatives much more directly to account (tempered, of course, by the role of political parties). Where Parliament is sovereign, if I vote a particular representative into power (into Parliament), and they fail to lead and be responsive to my needs and interests, I can remove them from power at the next election. This is based on the idea of popular

sovereignty; that sovereignty ultimately resides in the people. A precondition for providing this freedom as power to South Africans is, therefore, to return sovereignty to the body that represents the people: Parliament.

Real redistribution of wealth and power must be carried out via policies such as a wealth tax and progressive land redistribution in line with needs

The legacy of apartheid is not simply a legacy of violence, racism, division, distorted development and so on, but also a political-economic order that can only be expected to enable and empower everyone if the unequal race and class repercussions are overcome by direct state intervention in rebalancing power relations. The market cannot be expected to bring about the necessary changes. Market actors seek profit based on the economic and political foundations upon which the market rests. They do not and cannot change those. The market may enable growth, but if these foundations remain the same, the distribution of that growth remains in line with apartheid-generated distortions. If South Africa is to continue to embrace capitalist logic, as seems likely, it cannot expect to improve the quality of life of the majority of South Africans unless it recasts the sociopolitical foundations upon which its market economy sits. Given the indicators relating to wealth distribution in South Africa highlighted earlier, the only way to achieve this is through progressive policy that efficiently rebalances this wealth distribution. The most efficient and fair means of achieving this is via a graduated wealth tax. Land redistribution is also vital. Policies for this have been in place for decades, and the discussions around how to effectively bring about land redistribution are manifold and controversial, but it is unambiguously clear that a rights-based debate and structure have been a very inadequate means of realising land reform in South Africa. A different conceptual framework is required, one based on needs, as I have argued at length elsewhere (Hamilton 2003, 2006).

A new electoral system must be implemented, based on a mixture of proportional representation (PR) and constituency-based first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems

This is necessary to enable real and meaningful competition to represent the various individuals and groups that constitute the South African polity. During the transition to democracy, for a variety of reasons, the constituency-based FPTP model of electing representatives to democracy was discarded and a supposedly more representative and simpler system was chosen: a party-list PR system, in which South Africa is effectively one large constituency and the electorate does not vote for individual representatives from geographically specified locales, but rather for parties that create lists of possible representatives. The number of seats a party wins in Parliament directly reflects the proportion of its national vote tally, and the actual representatives who take up these seats are determined by the list, that is, by a pre-election, party-chosen ordering of candidates. In simplistic terms, this is a more 'representative' system, in the sense that Parliament, as it were, better mimics the electorate's choice, but what it gains in these terms it loses in terms of accountability and competition. Once a party is

in power, it is very hard for individual representatives to be held to account by the citizens of the country, and one of the by-products of this system – coalition politics of various forms (now starting to appear in South Africa) – reduces the prospects of an important element in representative democracy: the competition between parties and potential representatives for the vote (support) of the electorate. The less the degree of competition, the less clear the choice for the electorate, and the less apparent and consequential the lines of accountability. One option would be to revert to the Westminster model completely, as some have argued with great force and élan (Shapiro 2016; Shapiro & Rosenbluth 2018). My suggestion, however, is to adopt a pragmatic approach along the lines of the likes of Germany and New Zealand, and legislate for a mix of PR and FPTP, with rigid constituencies (Hamilton 2014a, 2014b).

Macroeconomic policy should be targeted towards meeting people's needs and overcoming domination and thus empowering all South Africans

All too often and all too widespread across the globe, policy is created and enforced, not in line with democratically determined needs, but in line with pre-political rights, lobby group interests and the sheer self-interest of legislators. This is possible due to the macropolitical structure of our democracies, something the three policy imperatives proposed above and the four institutional proposals in the next section attempt to address. But legislative and institutional changes are only part of the picture. We also need responsible leaders and citizens to push harder for policy that prioritises the democratic determination of needs, and then creates effective public means to meet these, under conditions that empower all South Africans to actively take part in these processes – if not in the actual formulation of policy, then at least in the articulation of where we should be headed, and in the extremely important mechanisms of ensuring that our representatives get us there.

Institutional proposals

The following institutional proposals would enable greater participation, control and effective accountability in the determination of needs and interests, and thus help to advance the quality of life of all South Africans.

District assemblies

These assemblies would enable the articulation and evaluation of needs and interests, the substantive outcome of which would then be transferred by the district's counselor to the national assembly for further debate and legislation;¹⁰ they would make available to citizens full accounts of all the legislative results emanating from the national assembly; they would provide fora for the presentation of amendments to existing legislation; and they would select counselors for the revitalised consiliar system.

A revitalised consiliar system

This system would rest on the network of district assemblies. Each district assembly would select one counselor for a two-year period, who would be responsible for providing counsel to the representatives in the national assembly regarding the local needs and interests of the citizenry and existing institutional configurations and their links to states of domination – that is, regarding what changes are required to better satisfy needs and interests and diminish states of domination.

An updated tribune of the plebs

This would be a partisan, separate and independent electoral procedure by means of which the least powerful groups or classes in society would have exclusive rights to elect at least one-quarter of representatives for the national assembly, alongside the normal, open, party-dominated processes of electing representatives. Membership of this electoral body would be determined either by a net household worth ceiling or by associated measures, enabling those with the least economic power to elect representatives who would be empowered to propose and repeal (or veto) legislation (Hamilton 2014b).

Constitutional revision

This would be a ventennial plebiscite, following a two-week long carnival of citizenship – a public holiday – in which all citizens would have equal power to assess existing social, economic and political institutional matrices in terms of needs, freedoms and quality of life; it would include a right of constitutional revision based on arguments of anti-tyranny, that is, shielding present and future generations from the unchecked power of past generations; and of fallibility, that is, that reason is prone to error and subject to change over time and thus it is important to presume the need for permanent revision to the Constitution; and it would give procedural priority to the satisfaction of vital needs, and to safeguarding counselors and institutions from manipulation and corruption.

Conclusion

In this chapter I highlighted the importance of Sen's ground-breaking work on understanding the relationship between needs, freedom and quality of life. I then utilised a variety of empirical data to assess the state of the nation in South Africa in respect of poverty, inequality, unemployment, education and crime. This assessment paints a grim picture that leaves us with little hope, until we acknowledge the very real possibility of revolution (or at least further civil unrest), at which point all South Africans, including political and economic elites, will, of necessity, see clearly that substantive change is a collective imperative. The final section of the chapter laid out the main changes in policy and institutional reform that would help us to improve quality of life for all in South Africa and thus stave off the real, concrete threat of revolution.

To see the urgency of the need for these changes is to take seriously the unavoidable links between needs, freedom, quality of life and political representation. Above all else, improving quality of life in South Africa requires reform of our institutions of political participation and representation.

Notes

- 1 The HDI was first developed in 1990 and ‘is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living’ (UNDP 2022). The HDI was the brainchild of Mahbub ul Haq, a close colleague of Sen’s. It was designed to steer discussions about development progress away from GDP towards a measure that genuinely ‘counts’ for human lives, ‘built around people’s freedoms to live the lives they want to’ (see UNDP, *Human development data*, accessed July 2020, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center>). Since 2010, we have in addition the inequality-adjusted HDI, which adjusts a nation’s HDI value for inequality within each of its components (life expectancy, education and income) and the MPI, which measures people’s deprivations directly. For further elaboration of these indices, see <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/ZAF.pdf>. And for more details, technical notes and background reports, see <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center>.
- 2 ‘Antiquity’ is a term of art that refers to ancient Greece, Egypt and Rome.
- 3 I do not directly address the role of racial discrimination because it cuts across all these categories.
- 4 The full name of the Zondo Commission is the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State (headed up by Justice Raymond Zondo). See The Presidency (n.d.).
- 5 Reality Check Team, South Africa elections: Has the ANC built enough homes? *BBC*, 3 May 2019. Accessed July 2022, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-48093711>; see also figures in Hamilton (2014a: 41).
- 6 Obviously, this excludes the subsequent temporary beneficiaries of the special Covid-19 social relief of distress grant introduced in 2020.
- 7 See Magome M (2023) South Africa’s unemployment is a ‘ticking time bomb.’ Anger rises with millions jobless. *Associated Press*, Aug 15 2023. Accessed 2 Jan 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/south-africa-unemployment-jobs-economy-un-ab41fc68f3641819cd0d5557e63b17a6>. See also Stoddard E (2021) Economic horror show: South Africa’s Unemployment rate hits new record of 34.9%. *Daily Maverick*, 30 Nov 2021. Accessed 2 Jan 2024, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-11-30-economic-horror-show-south-africas-unemployment-rate-hits-new-record-of-34-9/>.
- 8 For the best account of the role of patriarchy in this pandemic, see Gqola (2015), among many others.
- 9 For more on these and other criticisms, see Hamilton (1999, 2019, 2020).
- 10 For more on district assemblies and an explanation of my adoption of the term and institution of ‘counselor’ from ancient Rome (as opposed to the more normal modern English term and institution of ‘councillor’), see Hamilton (2009, 2014b: 203).

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5 *Wellbeing equity: Expanding the notion of quality of life*

Irma Eloff

All constitutions of government ... are valued only in proportion as they tend to promote the happiness of those who live under them. This is their sole use and end.

Adam Smith, 1759

Worldwide, interest in wellbeing and quality of life has been on the rise for close to a century. Arguably, the emphasis on wellbeing that emanated from decades-old definitions of health precipitated current developments in this field. The Constitution of the WHO, which was adopted in New York in 1946, states:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States. (WHO 2020: 1)

The centrality of wellbeing, the situatedness of quality of life and the systems within which these two constructs need to be understood have therefore been evident since their early theoretical inception. In the decades since, we have learned substantively more about wellbeing. Although there is a multitude of definitions of wellbeing, it has been conceptualised predominantly in terms of eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing (Ryan & Deci 2001) and in terms of specific constructs such as positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning and achievement (Goodman et al. 2018; Seligman 2018).

We have also started to measure global progress in terms of human development indices by gauging wellbeing and quality of life explicitly (Helliwell et al. 2020, 2021). Concurrently, discussions on wellbeing have gained prominence in both scientific literature and popular discourse. More human-centred policies that amplify wellbeing are emerging in countries around the world, and corporations and public institutions increasingly invest in wellbeing.

Within these developments, quality of life and wellbeing are often studied as related concepts (Fuchs et al. 2020; Ryff & Singer 1998; Sanmartin et al. 2022). Both concepts are integrally interdisciplinary and multidimensional and, as such, have benefited from diverse scientific perspectives.

As the discourse regarding wellbeing and quality of life is expanding, the complexities of the measurement of wellbeing and quality of life have also gained prominence. Numerous databanks and dashboards provide indications of what wellbeing and quality of life constitute in different national contexts. These databanks present fine-grained understandings of wellbeing and quality of life within particular populations. Wellbeing indices include indicators such as the Human Development Index (UNDP 2020), the Legatum Prosperity Index (The Legatum Institute 2021), the OECD Better Life Index (OECD 2020), the Genuine Progress Indicator (Gross National Happiness USA 2022), the Happy Planet Index (Wellbeing Economy Alliance 2021), and of course, one of the longest-running national indices, the Bhutan Gross National Happiness Index (GNH Centre Bhutan 2022).

The emergence of wellbeing and quality of life has occurred together with changes in language use in scientific literature and book publications (Barrington-Leigh 2022) – not only in psychology and related fields, but in a variety of scientific disciplines. In an analysis of the Google Ngram database, which captures word frequencies from a large corpus of books that were printed between 1500 and 2019, the occurrence of words related to wellbeing and quality of life (for example, happiness, life satisfaction, subjective wellbeing) has shown a consistently upward trend (Barrington-Leigh 2022: 56–59). The Ngram database utilises corpora from different languages and therefore ‘observed trends are not spurious or idiosyncratic to one language, but rather represent a reproducible measure of widespread changes in interest in a *concept*’ (2022: 57). A similar trend is also evident in rising numbers of academic publications in this field (2022: 61).

The infusion of the terms ‘wellbeing’ and ‘quality of life’ into general public discourses also manifests in long-term fiscal planning at the country level. For instance, New Zealand published its first Wellbeing Budget in 2019 (New Zealand Government 2019). This budget prioritised mental health in the population, improved child wellbeing outcomes in the country, transformed the economy, intentionally supported Māori and Pasifika aspirations, built productivity across the nation and upscaled investment in New Zealand. Annual wellbeing budgets have subsequently been published and have served as guideposts for investment in societal development. In this regard, the 2022 Wellbeing Budget (New Zealand Government 2022) purports to achieve the following objectives:

- Just Transition: Support the transition to a climate-resilient, sustainable, and low-emissions economy
- Physical and Mental Wellbeing: Support improved health outcomes for all New Zealanders, minimise Covid-19 and protect our communities
- Future of Work: Enable all New Zealanders and New Zealand businesses to benefit from new technologies and lift productivity and wages through innovation
- Māori and Pacific Peoples: Lift Māori and Pacific Peoples’ incomes, skills and opportunities through access to affordable, safe and stable housing

- Child Wellbeing: Reduce child poverty and improve child wellbeing through access to affordable, safe and stable housing. (New Zealand Government 2022: 12)

The New Zealand wellbeing budgets illustrate how concepts of wellbeing are integrated into the country's long-term financial planning. They constitute a major policy innovation that incentivises a departure from GDP as a primary driver of long-term planning, and foregrounds aspects such as access to healthcare and experiencing a sense of community that makes life worthwhile, irrespective of immediate circumstances. As indicated by Robert Shalock et al. (2016), quality of life is conceptualised in terms of several domains that constitute personal wellbeing and present it as a multidimensional phenomenon. Inadvertently, these multiple domains are influenced by both personal characteristics and environmental factors. Quality of life at the individual level is the product of these factors, and can be supported 'through quality enhancement strategies that encompass developing personal talents, maximising personal involvement, providing individualised supports, and facilitating personal growth opportunities' (Schalock et al. 2016: 2). This multidimensional approach to wellbeing and quality of life calls for a 'humanisation of the economy, re-embedding it into society and nature' (Lintsen et al. 2018: 565).

Along these lines, the publication *Towards a Nordic Well-being Economy* by the Council of Ministers of the Nordic countries (Birkjær, Gamerdinger & El-Abd 2021) shows a similar trend of a conceptual move beyond GDP as an indicator of wellbeing. This document pertinently advocates for stronger policy alignments to support wellbeing. It also actively encourages multisectoral partnerships to promote wellbeing and quality of life so as to develop a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region (Birkjær, Gamerdinger & El-Abd 2021: 45). The publication furthermore highlights prominent organisations such as the OECD Centre on Well-being, Inclusion, Sustainability and Equal Opportunity (WISE) in France, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in the UK and the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark.¹ It also draws attention to global initiatives such as the Well-being Economy Alliance and the Well-being Economy Governments partnership.² At the core of all these partnerships are data-driven approaches to wellbeing and quality of life.

The shift towards privileging evidence in decision-making processes regarding wellbeing and quality of life is also noted elsewhere. In the UK context, the Office for National Statistics provides a comprehensive data set on *Measuring National Well-being* (Office for National Statistics 2016). *The Well-being Guidance for Appraisal*, popularly known as the 'Green Book' and published by the UK Treasury (HM Treasury 2021), investigates the monetisation of life satisfaction effect sizes in the UK context. The report offers important findings from wellbeing research (HM Treasury 2021: 7–8), such as findings on levels of individual physical and mental health, community interactions (for example, quality of relationships), jobs, where and how people live, levels of personal finance, educational attainment, governance, the economy and the environment. The report also indicates areas that require policy action (HM Treasury 2021: 13–18), thereby

supporting scientific research that indicates that improvements in wellbeing can improve health outcomes individually and systemically, boost productivity within the population and facilitate pro-social behaviours (De Neve et al. 2013; Oswald, Proto & Sgroi 2015).

Similarly, Statistics Canada releases measures on wellbeing and quality of life, and acknowledges ‘the need to integrate information on economic, social and environmental conditions to better measure the wellbeing or Quality of Life and progress of nations’ (Sanmartin et al. 2022: 5). The quality of life framework for Canada consists of five domains that are articulated in terms of prosperity, health, society, the environment and good governance. In addition, the indicators of life satisfaction and sense of meaning and purpose are also included as overall measures of quality of life within the Canadian context (Barrington-Leigh 2022). In this context, self-reported life satisfaction is regarded as a critical indicator of subjective wellbeing, and it is, conversely, directly related to quality of life. By thinking holistically about wellbeing, propagating inclusive thinking in terms of quality of life, and committing to long-term planning for life satisfaction, tangible impacts on wellbeing can be achieved.

In the Netherlands, the discussions that seek to embed wellbeing in long-term strategic planning have also been ongoing. In the book *Well-being, Sustainability and Social Development: The Netherlands 1850–2010*, Harry Lintsen et al. (2018: 564) argue that ‘strategies to resolve contemporary problems of wellbeing imply vast changes, not only in technologies, but also in social and economic practices of production and consumption’. They are of the view that the pursuit of these strategies will require vast efforts, which may be met with resistance, inertia and contestation. In their context, they recommend that suitable strategies should be considered in relation to their historical, structural and spatial embedding in society, as well as in terms of long-term trends.

In South Africa, Marie Wissing et al. (2021: 573) have long argued that ‘well-being is not only a matter of degree – manifestations differ qualitatively in flourishing and languishing states’, thereby highlighting the importance of social context. They propose that ‘positive mental health can be conceptualised in terms of dynamic quantitative and qualitative patterns of well-being’ (2021: 573). While acknowledging social context, they therefore distinguish pertinently between flourishing and languishing states when they indicate that

similar categories emerged for what flourishing and languishing people found important with regard to meaning, goals, and relationships, but the reasons for the importance thereof differed prominently. Languishing people manifested a self-focus and often motivated responses in terms of own needs and hedonic values such as own happiness, whereas flourishers were more other-focused and motivated responses in terms of eudaimonic values focusing on a greater good. (Wissing et al. 2021: 573)

The experience of wellbeing, the resultant quality of life and the flourishing and languishing states that manifest at the individual level therefore remain central in discussions of wellbeing economies, financial planning for wellbeing at the country level,

and fiscal considerations globally. As wellbeing budgets are refined and aligned (Trebeck & Baker 2021), the intricacies of wellbeing and quality of life at the individual level will continue to offer microscopic windows to gauge the same concepts at the macro level.

Quality of life, young people and education

In many ways, the wellbeing of youth is pivotal to broader societal wellbeing. While the wellbeing and quality of life of all population groups are equally important, it is the youth who will be shaping the futures of wellbeing. Investments in youth wellbeing may therefore have long-term benefits at the systemic level.

Closely tied to youth wellbeing is education in general, as well as targeted education on wellbeing. As stated by Richard Estes and Joseph Sirgy (2019: 1145), education 'is another critical sector of human activity that has received substantial attention from quality of life and wellbeing scholars'. In this regard, they argue that the levels of quality education 'can be distinguished in terms of educational well-being outcomes', including their antecedents and consequences (2019: 1146). In turn, educational *wellbeing* outcomes may potentially reflect the desired state of education concerning quality and quantity in education internationally (Estes & Sirgy 2019: 1146; Spratt 2017).

Improved wellbeing outcomes inadvertently improve quality of life outcomes. Conceptually, quality of life is defined in terms of multiple domains, often including personal development, self-determination, interpersonal relations, emotional wellbeing, physical wellbeing, material wellbeing, social inclusion and rights (Gomez & Verdugo 2016; Schalock, Van Loon & Mostert 2018). Although not always explicitly connected to quality of life in educational curricula, these domains are frequently amplified in education. In terms of optimal wellbeing outcomes, Estes and Sirgy (2019: 1147) indicate that educational systems that produce the best educational wellbeing outcomes are systems that are regulated by compulsory education mandates, and that have sufficient financial resources, suitable educational technologies and quality teachers. The intentional inclusion of core quality of life concepts may thus actually yield additional benefits.

Wellbeing equity

Understandings of psychological theories, wellbeing theories and quality of life theories do not, however, always account for contextual dynamics. In this regard, Alude Mahali et al. (2018: 380) suggest that '[as] useful as psychological theories are for understanding well-being, they do not necessarily reflect the influence of different socio-cultural contexts or the role of social relationships in understanding well-being'. In fact, studies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand have posited that wellbeing should essentially be viewed as a social process (Camfield 2006). Such a process includes relational, material and subjective dimensions, and according to Sarah White (2010: 158), wellbeing 'may be assessed at individual and collective levels,

but at base [it] is something that happens in relationship – between individual and collective; between local and global; between people and state’.

Although it was not originally created for the purpose of measuring human development progress, GDP has dominated understandings of development for more than 50 years (Fuchs et al. 2020: 14). However, clear correlations and associations between GDP and subjective wellbeing have increasingly emerged (Ng & Diener 2019): people are reporting higher life evaluation in years of higher GDP in their nation; between-nation effects have shown that individuals in wealthier nations report greater subjective wellbeing, as well as more negative feelings, than people in low-resource nations; individuals in societies of high income inequality report higher life evaluation and positive feelings than those in more equal societies; and national income inequality also seems to moderate the effects of individual-level income on subjective wellbeing (i.e. income showed stronger associations with subjective wellbeing in more equal societies than in societies with high income inequality). This means that high-income individuals have higher positive feelings and lower negative feelings than low-income individuals, but the effects seem to be stronger in equal societies. These findings suggest that money (e.g. financial wellbeing) has a smaller effect on the subjective wellbeing of individuals in contexts of high inequality than on individuals who live in more equal contexts. Within this realm, Ruut Veenhoven (2010) argues that the conditions that constitute ‘a good life’ seem to be quite similar around the globe, but the primary variation resides in the *appraisal* of the good life, for example wellbeing, happiness and quality of life: ‘There is more cultural variation in the valuation of happiness and in beliefs about conditions for happiness’ (Veenhoven 2010: 345).

Refining our understandings of the symbiotic relationship between subjective wellbeing, happiness, quality of life and income levels therefore remains relevant. It is within this space that arguments for wellbeing equity are presented. In this regard, Mahali et al. (2018: 373) critique reductionist conceptualisations of wellbeing and assess its applicability in the global south, ‘particularly in contexts marked by poverty and inequality’. They argue that current wellbeing scholarship is

still largely framed by normative assumptions about what being well means, and the overwhelming majority of conceptual approaches to wellbeing have been conceived and applied by researchers in the industrialised, wealthy contexts of the global North. (Mahali et al. 2018: 373)

Incorporating the sociopolitical dimensions of wellbeing into the dominant theories and understandings of wellbeing may therefore be constructive (White 2010) and advance the notion of wellbeing equity. Sociopolitical dimensions of wellbeing may include notions of social capital, levels of access to resources, structural inequalities, as well as other dimensions of identity, such as social class, gender, religion or disability (Mahali et al. 2018). In short, wellbeing and quality of life entail much more than what can be measured by GDP alone (Fuchs et al. 2020: 15). While measures of economic

growth will be integral to assessments of wellbeing, ‘they need to be complemented with measures of other dimensions of well-being’ (Boarini, Johansson & d’Ercole 2006: 6) too.

However, while acknowledging more nuanced understandings of wellbeing and quality of life indicators, it should also be noted that gains in human wellbeing seem to be much more evident in developing countries than in developed countries (Estes & Sirgy 2019: 1147). As stated earlier, the findings by Weiting Ng and Ed Diener revealed that

income was more important to SWB [subjective wellbeing] in low than high income inequality nations, implying that from a policy perspective, policies focusing on economic development might not be equally efficacious in enhancing the SWB of citizens in all countries. (2019: 168)

It is evident that income inequality can simultaneously have both positive and negative effects, and the varying efficacy of systemic wellbeing interventions is to be expected. For instance, White argues that

well-being is more usefully understood as a process that comprises material, relational, and subjective dimensions. The constellation of these and the dynamics between them vary with history and geography, life cycles, and different ways in which time is managed and space is organised. Well-being may be assessed at both individual and collective levels, but its grounding is in the links between them: well-being happens in relationship. At its best, a collective project to enhance well-being may thus itself become the means through which well-being can be experienced. (2010: 170–171)

The case for wellbeing equity thus rests on interrelationship(s). It is within the highly individualistic notion of wellbeing that expansive, collective wellbeing can be nurtured. Equity, in its essence, is about the collective. Wellbeing equity, in turn, is about creating spaces for collective wellbeing to transcend deterministic, individualistic notions of wellbeing.

Symbiosis between wellbeing and the environment

There are significant differences in levels of average happiness across countries (Veenhoven 2010), yet at the same time there is ‘more evidence for cultural similarities than differences in correlates of well-being’ (Oishi 2010: 56). Therefore, while high variation occurs in levels of wellbeing and the appraisals of wellbeing, the constituent components that contribute to wellbeing are highly similar across social contexts. This symbiosis between wellbeing and the environment calls for considered reflection.

Research into wellbeing often positions the responsibility for wellbeing within the individual (Seligman 2007). While context and environment are acknowledged in wellbeing research, the environment is frequently postulated as a ‘static’ factor in the

wellbeing dynamics at play. In this regard, some researchers (Mahali et al. 2018: 379) have pointed out that subjective wellbeing research ‘is underpinned by the assumption that well-being is a private, individualised phenomenon and consequently the focus of this area of work is on internalised representations’. Yet, individual wellbeing experiences occur within social contexts and through social and environmental processes that extend beyond the individual (Mahali et al. 2018: 379). In addition, they occur over time, leaving a range of possibilities for fluctuation in wellbeing and quality of life.

The combination of the economic, social and political aspects of wellbeing and quality of life, as well as the intra- and intergenerational equity within the environments in which they occur, is thus being emphasised to an increasing extent (Fuchs et al. 2020: 13–15). Research in Ghana, for instance, indicates that adolescents express their subjective wellbeing predominantly in economic and relational terms (Wilson & Somhlaba 2016). Similarly, a study conducted in Hong Kong during the Covid-19 pandemic (Shek 2021) reflects on 12 (environmental) aspects that need to be considered in terms of quality of life. This reflection includes aspects such as health inequalities, gender inequalities, digital divides, the tensions between economic development and the protection of lives, as well as the continued tensions between individual and collective rights. In addition, the study by Daniel Shek specifically highlights the importance of family wellbeing, and the simultaneous prevention of negative wellbeing and promotion of positive wellbeing at the individual level. It also emphasises international collaboration to support quality of life everywhere.

Despite the emergence of more complex understandings of the dynamics between wellbeing, quality of life and environments, conceptual gaps have also been identified in a field where terminology is fluid and concepts are often used interchangeably. For instance, it has been established that correlations and associations exist between subjective wellbeing and contexts. How, then, are understandings of equity impacted? Does ‘equity’ remain within the economic conceptual dominion, or can spaces be created where equity can also be considered in terms of wellbeing? It has been said that the communal life of societies

is shaped by many impersonal forces that take place in the larger social, political, economic, technological, and physical environments. These forces are very powerful, and rarely can they be controlled by individuals or small social units. (Estes & Sirgy 2019: 1138)

Yet, these forces are constituted by the collective. At the individual level, the key constructs that constitute understandings of wellbeing are *non-material* – relationships, meaning, engagement, positive emotions and achievements (Seligman 2012). Even the more recent conceptual additions, which have appeared in wellbeing literature adjacent to the initial psychological constructs (for example aspects of health and vitality such as physical activity and quality of sleep), are non-material.

Coupling wellbeing and quality of life with economic indicators often results in these non-material dimensions of wellbeing becoming muted. While the coupling (for analytical purposes) inserts conceptual richness into international debates on wellbeing

and quality of life, it also presents a conceptual challenge. How can wellbeing be understood in terms of equity? If the variance in wellbeing can be closely tied to the 'appraisal' of wellbeing (Veenhoven 2010: 330), how can key (non-material) wellbeing constructs be foregrounded and account for even more nuanced understandings of both wellbeing and equity?

Conclusion

If the over emphasis on the individual responsibility for wellbeing is expanded by including considerations of the symbiosis between the individual and the environment, the notion of wellbeing equity shifts the debate on the responsibility for wellbeing from a focus on individual responsibility to a concern with shared collective responsibility. In addition, the benefits of emphasising non-material dimensions of wellbeing and quality of life open up a plethora of options to support collective wellbeing.

Over the long history of humankind, there have been significant advances in wellbeing and quality of life (Estes & Sirgy 2017, 2019). However, the conceptual tenets and measurement of wellbeing and quality of life remain a challenge. The wide range of indicators and indices attests to the importance attached to theoretical and pragmatic progress in the field. However, while 'a range of indicator sets has been developed, it is unclear whether any of them is able to adequately capture the broad range of conditions it encompasses' (Fuchs et al. 2020: 12). Although the coupling of economic indicators within an environment with wellbeing may contribute to layered understandings of the phenomenon, it may inadvertently (but simultaneously) also diminish the psychological and social dimensions of wellbeing.

It is critical that we should have positive stories regarding wellbeing and quality of life in various contexts – stories of humans being inventive, connecting and crafting creative ways of supporting wellbeing, improving quality of life, and moving away from the apocalyptic stories that we tend to tell each other about the world. This notion corresponds with the view posited by Estes and Sirgy, who

argue in favor of adopting a more positive view with respect to the many critical societal changes that have taken place over this period as opposed to the negative perspective associated with the steady stream of often negative stories that historically have dominated the mass media and, sometimes, the professional literature. (2019: 1139)

We know that increases in GDP do not necessarily translate into improvements in wellbeing, and that the effects may be mediated by characteristics within the national context (Ng & Diener 2019). However, a demarcation of the notion of human development that includes wellbeing and quality of life does not only impact positively on critical indicators, but also deepens the human experience.

Notes

- 1 For the OECD's WISE in France, see <https://www.oecd.org/wise/>; for the What Works Centre for Wellbeing in the UK, see <https://whatworkswell-being.org/>; for the Happiness Research Institute in Denmark, see <https://www.happinessresearchinstitute.com/>.
- 2 For the Well-being Economy Alliance, see <https://weall.org/>; for the Well-being Economy Governments partnership, see <https://weall.org/wego>.

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PART 2

ECONOMICS

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6

Why behavioural insights matter for the good life

Justine Burns

Achieving the good life requires that choices be made; it does not simply happen, or fall into one's lap. Indeed, central to humankind's quest for the good life are the choices that we as individuals and societies make about the kinds of societies we want to live in, the policies and frameworks that we put in place to look after the marginalised, and the frameworks of political choice we create to ensure regular transitions of power.

At the heart of it all lies the idea of choice, and every choice requires some consideration of the costs and benefits associated with choosing one outcome over another. In some instances, the weighing up of these costs and benefits is trivial, as might be the case with choosing a new toothpaste. However, in these trivial sorts of choice situations, the cost of making a mistake is relatively low – one would be hard pressed to argue that choosing the wrong toothpaste might seriously impede human flourishing in any significant manner. However, there are several other choice domains where the stakes of making a poor choice are far higher, for example healthcare and educational investments, or decisions about saving for retirement. Making a mistake in these domains could have severe consequences that may be very difficult to recover from in later life, such as child malnutrition and stunted growth, or in extreme cases may lead to premature death.

So if making good or smart choices is at the heart of this quest for the good life, decision-makers shoulder significant responsibility to make optimal choices that will produce the human flourishing they so desire. This is true not only for individual citizens who are often the beneficiaries of well-intended policies designed to promote wellbeing – and who must adopt and respond to these policies in order to enjoy the benefits of them – but also for the decision-makers tasked with such constitutional design. The policy visioning, design and implementation process requires that choices be made, and is often premised on a set of deeply embedded assumptions about how the intended beneficiaries will respond. Indeed, these assumptions critically inform the design process and theory of change that policy-makers have in mind in their pursuit of the promotion of wellbeing. A final layer of complexity is that human flourishing requires careful thought about how to maintain individual freedoms without sacrificing social wellbeing. Samuel Bowles (2009) describes this as the constitutional conundrum that every society grapples with, namely, the question of how to structure social interactions in such a way that people are free to choose their own actions while avoiding outcomes that none would have chosen.

The value of critically re-examining choice theory through a behavioural lens

The value of the rise to prominence of behavioural economics in recent decades lies in the fact that it has forced a critical re-examination of the underlying assumptions embedded in choice-theoretical frameworks, especially those of neoclassical economics, about how individuals actually make decisions, and spurred social scientists to grapple with how to incorporate a more behaviourally informed choice model into their theoretical models. This is more than just an academic exercise. If programmes, policies and products are to deliver the good life, it is not enough that they be well designed and well intentioned. This is a necessary but insufficient first step. It is also critical that the intended beneficiaries respond to these interventions in the way that the designers intended they should. Consider a government that decides to build a pedestrian bridge over a freeway to prevent pedestrian deaths caused by citizens crossing the freeway itself. This is a well-intentioned intervention, but it will only achieve its intended effect if the citizens use the newly installed bridge. Simply assuming citizens will obviously use the bridge once it has been provided does not make it so, and is an example of just how deeply embedded, and often subconscious, assumptions about behavioural responses might be when policies and projects are designed and delivered.

This overly simplistic example illustrates why behavioural insights matter. History is littered with examples of well-intentioned policies and programmes that do not enjoy large citizen take-up. The Centre for Public Impact documents a number of examples of policy failures, including low take-up rates of the universal credit scheme introduced in the UK in 2010; poor response to policies implemented by the Japanese government to increase birth rates; and public opposition to the carbon tax initiative introduced by the Australian government in 2011, among others (Irigoyen & Hargrave 2017). Having a good policy or plan on its own is insufficient, especially if that policy or plan is predicated on a particular model or set of incorrect or incomplete assumptions about how the intended beneficiaries will respond. On the flipside, the contribution of behavioural insights also explicitly acknowledges that, despite our sincere desire to live the best life, the choices we make often undermine this goal. This is true for the citizen who chooses not to use the bridge to cross the freeway; is evident in the standard set of New Year's resolutions that individuals perennially fail to achieve and yet continue to aspire to; and underlies negative social externalities such as pollution, corruption and climate change.

Taking behavioural insights seriously simply means becoming more conscious and critically reflective about the set of assumptions being made about how choices are made, and recognising that this underlying choice framework can have important consequences for the design of the choice itself. As such, behavioural science, especially in the domain of economics, offers a socially and psychologically grounded critique of conventional economic choice theory. If one conceptualises individuals as rational, self-interested money maximisers who are capable of absorbing and processing, without error, large amounts of information, one might design a choice environment

quite differently than if one's underlying set of assumptions is that most individuals are error-prone, emotional beings with limited cognitive bandwidth, and prone to making choices that offer immediate gratification. The gap between actual wellbeing and desired human flourishing often occurs precisely because of a mismatch between how choice is theorised and how choices are made.

What does a behaviourally informed choice framework add?

In many social science contexts, the decision-maker at the centre of the choice framework is modelled as though they were devoid of emotion, identity, socioeconomic class or cognitive processing constraints. They are assumed to be able to assemble all information relevant to their choice, carefully and deliberately weigh up the costs and benefits associated with each possible outcome, even those where uncertainty exists, and rationally and unemotionally reach the decision that is in their own best interest. This choice will then lead to a course of action or behaviour that produces a particular outcome which has implications for the individual's wellbeing. Based on this experience, the individual is assumed to reflect fully, and take all learnings into the future with them, allowing for updating of behaviour and future choices that will produce improved outcomes. Different subdisciplines adopt different approaches concerning how these choices that are optimal for the individual aggregate up to ensure social optimality. In neoclassical economics, the natural operation of markets, through price signals, is typically assumed to work to ensure human flourishing at the societal level as well. In political science, the emphasis is on appropriate constitutional design and the exercise of power.

The power and pitfalls of automatic thinking

A key contribution of behavioural economics is to take seriously the details of how individuals think, process information and make choices (Camerer & Johnston 2003). By incorporating the effects of psychological, cognitive, emotional, cultural and social factors on the decisions of individuals and institutions, behavioural science allows for a considered critique of how those decisions vary from the decisions implied by classical theory. Rather than assuming that individuals are purely deliberate in their choices, behavioural science has demonstrated that dual-processing theory (Kahneman 2003, 2011; Stanovich & West 2000) might be a better description of decision-making; that is, choice processes may be influenced by both automatic (system 1) and deliberate (system 2) thinking (Kahneman 2011). Moreover, individuals may switch between deliberate and automatic thinking seamlessly and subconsciously. Jonathan Haidt, for example, argues that reasoning tends to have been overemphasised, and that rather than moral reasoning being the precursor to moral judgement, it is often a post hoc construction generated to rationalise a snap judgement *ex post* (Haidt 2001).

From an evolutionary point of view, there are good reasons why automatic thinking may serve individuals well, especially in moments of crisis where quick action is required to avoid imminent danger. Moreover, the costs of engaging in deliberate,

thoughtful choices in every instance may outweigh the benefits, whereas the benefit of automatic thinking may outweigh the cost of making a mistake and allow for efficient decision-making. However, it remains true that automatic thinking is error-prone, and the contribution of behavioural science is to examine and document those errors, with two aims: making individuals more aware of the potential pitfalls of automatic thinking; and allowing policy-makers to design forgiving choice environments that either try to mitigate these errors, or at the very least mitigate the cost of the errors to the individual and society at large. For example, Lucia Reisch and Cass Sunstein (2014) point out that minimising pilot error may not be best achieved by offering material incentives to pilots to pay more attention, or by further training, but rather through cockpit redesign that anticipates and then mitigates (typical) pilot error. Francesca la Torre et al. (2012) make a similar point in relation to roadside design and reducing accident fatalities.

Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1973) are credited with illuminating many of the numerous biases at play when individuals engage in automatic thinking. Key among these is availability bias, which speaks to the way individuals select and process information when weighing up the costs and benefits of a choice. Rather than collecting and considering all information relevant to the choice at hand, individuals tend to be far more selective in the information they focus on, with a tendency to utilise information that is easily available, accessible and salient to them. Moreover, even if there was some way to ensure that decision-makers had full information (often suggested as the solution to problems of information asymmetry), behavioural science has demonstrated that individuals may be subject to confirmation bias (Nickerson 1998), framing effects (Tversky & Kahneman 1981) and limited computational ability (Camerer & Johnston 2003). Taken together, these biases may cause the decision-maker to overweight low-probability events or underweight high-probability events, which can manifest as overconfidence or overoptimism; and to exhibit loss-averse behaviour, where the prospect of a loss overwhelms any decision-making calculus, often causing the status quo to be preferred even where change offers a potential gain. Biased assessments of risk or outcomes can also influence expectations about the future, and adversely affect how individuals prepare for and respond to crises.

These simple features can have very real consequences for human flourishing. The tendency to underweight high-probability events can cause entrepreneurs to underestimate the likelihood that their business start-ups will fail; or cause individuals to overestimate their ability to complete tasks on time and stick to deadlines; or cause newlyweds to underestimate the likelihood that their marriage will be the one out of two marriages that fails. Consider the fact that many individuals are overinsured for dread disease, but underinsured for household contents or for tyre damage to their vehicles. Individuals who might routinely classify themselves as risk-averse and cautious, especially when it comes to financial decisions and investments, may exhibit risk-loving behaviour in terms of their failure to wear seatbelts or routinely put on sunscreen.

Simply not having access to relevant information at the right time can have important consequences. There is ample evidence that providing low-cost, timely and relevant

information about performance to parents and students can improve learning outcomes and activate parental and learner engagement (Andrabi, Das & Khwaja 2017; De Walque & Valente 2023; Islam 2019; Kraft & Monti-Nussbaum 2017; York, Loeb & Doss 2019). In addition, providing information about the financial returns to education has led to improved learning outcomes and learner attendance (Allende, Gallego & Neilson 2019; Avitabile & De Hoyos 2018; Jensen 2010), unless parents and learners have previously overestimated the returns to education, again an example of availability bias at play in the form of overoptimism. Indeed, availability bias may cause poor individuals to overestimate the likelihood that they will enjoy significant economic mobility in their lifetime, possibly muting any collective action response to structural poverty. Conversely, elites may overweight the success of those few individuals who have managed to escape poverty and succeed at the highest levels, thereby muting their response to the plight of the majority who find themselves trapped in poverty, and dampening their willingness to support more radical redistributive measures.

Availability bias may be especially powerful in the domain of performance evaluations in the workplace: rather than evaluate employees on a full-year portfolio, employers may be prone to privileging performance in recent months, which can be detrimental to otherwise productive employees who happen to have had a few mishaps in the weeks or months preceding the evaluation. Alternatively, loss aversion means that individuals are more likely to recall negative incidents or outcomes that involve loss (even if such incidents happen infrequently) and overweight these in their performance appraisals, underweighting the many positive gains that may happen more regularly. As such, a single annual performance appraisal is unlikely to be a fair reflection of the year under review. Similarly, in the realm of financial decision-making, when stock prices drop precipitously investors often rush to sell their shares in order to minimise loss. Again, this behaviour is driven by loss aversion and availability bias, with investors focusing on short-term, easily available information about share performance, as opposed to adopting a longer-term view of share price performance.

Each of these examples carries implications for human flourishing and material wellbeing, and at the heart of each is a set of behavioural drivers related to how individuals select, process and act on available information. It must be noted also that in each case, the market may operate to provide solutions that minimise negative outcomes in these domains, and while these may go some way to mitigating the negative outcomes, they may not be sufficient to do so completely. For example, to ensure that performance appraisals are fair, there has been a shift to utilising 360-degree appraisals, where individuals are evaluated by more than one person. This is certainly an improvement on single-person evaluations, in that it allows for a more diverse set of evaluations, but it still does not deal with the fact that all of the individuals involved in the 360-degree review are themselves subject to availability bias, and may privilege recent performance or negative performance moments. The insights of behavioural science would suggest that this approach, in conjunction with consideration of the timing and frequency of the appraisal, may be key to ensuring a more balanced review. Similarly, there is a proliferation of insurance products to cover any type of

loss. However, if individuals tend to underweight high-probability events, take-up of these product solutions will be less than optimal, until the individuals are made aware of their underlying behavioural proclivity to underweight such events.

Complexity, scarcity and stereotypes

Of course, reliance on automatic thinking and heuristics may be exacerbated when individuals face complex choices, or where they find themselves subject to psychological scarcity which may produce an additional bandwidth tax (Mullainathan & Shafir 2014). Limited computational ability means that an individual's ability to accurately evaluate different options, and their appetite for doing so, declines as the number of options or complexity of possible outcomes increases (Redelmeier & Shafir 1995), making individuals more prone to automatic thinking in these instances. Consequently, individuals may fail to consider whether reframing the choice would produce a different outcome, since this requires additional cognitive effort. Yet framing can have large effects on behaviour, at quite low cost. Marianne Bertrand and Adair Morse (2011) show that when consumers are presented with comparative information about the actual dollar cost of a payday loan compared to credit card borrowing, rather than annual interest rates associated with each, the demand for payday loans is significantly reduced in terms of both frequency and magnitude. Making salient information available to consumers in ways that show clearly the actual cost of the loan, and providing comparative cost information for alternative loan products, assists them in making better choices. While interest rates convey information about costs, they can be confusing for decision-makers and may mask the magnitude and frequency of repayment obligations. Behavioural science suggests that reframing choices can be an especially powerful tool with which decision-makers can evaluate whether they would reach a different decision. This tool has been effectively used to improve tax compliance, especially when the public goods nature of this compliance is highlighted (Antinyan & Asatryan 2019; Karver, Tamazian & Basentsyan 2021). This is evident in the more recent tax season advertising campaigns run by the South African Revenue Service (SARS), with the tag line #Your Tax Matters, and where the content of the campaign reminds taxpayers of the public benefit that results from tax payment.¹

Cognitive limitations and psychological scarcity also help to explain why individuals may favour the status quo, even when change offers the promise of improved wellbeing. The cognitive effort that must be made to consider the alternatives may simply be too much, and as a result, individuals stick with what they know. If one takes this seriously, it means that the starting point or context for any decision-maker, also known as a default option, becomes critically important. Default options can exert powerful effects on behaviour. Brigitte Madrian and Dennis Shea (2001) document that after Harvard University added several health plans to its existing portfolio of plans, incumbent faculty chose the older (pre-existing) plans at a rate of two to four times higher than new staff members, suggesting a status quo bias. Eric Johnson and Daniel Goldstein (2003) provide evidence that in countries where organ donation is the default option, organ donation rates are significantly higher than in countries

where citizens must explicitly opt in to be a donor. In countries where organ donation is the default, citizens can opt out, but most do not, suggesting that the difference has to do with the power of default and a tendency to favour the status quo, rather than a principled stand on organ donation. The power of defaults also helps to explain why individuals fail to switch banks or cellphone service providers even when they might stand to save money by doing so.

The combination of cognitive limits and the power of defaults may cause decision-makers to remain trapped in suboptimal arrangements. However, being aware of these potential pitfalls does offer the opportunity for intentional policy and institutional design to try to mitigate negative outcomes. Consider the Save More Tomorrow programme (Benartzi & Lewin 2012), which has enjoyed success in raising savings rates by leveraging the use of a default, while also explicitly incorporating mechanisms to combat hyperbolic discounting behaviours. Employees who choose to participate in this option, offered by their employer and based on the core principles on the Save More Tomorrow programme, commit in advance to allocating a portion of their future salary increases to retirement savings. Participants who decide they want to save money choose a target savings level, and agree to deductions from their monthly wages starting at a future point in time. This allows individuals to make an active precommitment to saving, but shifts the implementation to a future date, thereby removing the psychological barrier to having to start saving immediately. Once the implementation date arrives, savings deductions begin, and continue until the savings target is reached. However, once the target is reached, individuals must actively opt out of the programme. If they fail to do so, they continue to save money.

Automatic thinking in the context of limited computational capacity also makes individuals prone to representativeness bias (Tversky & Kahneman 1974), which is the mistake individuals make when assessing the probability associated with an outcome by comparing how closely it matches an existing mental model or a prior one they might hold. The error here lies in assuming that representativeness maps to probability, which it need not do. This makes individuals prone to stereotyping (Bordalo et al. 2016), which in turn reinforces mental models. Mental models are deeply held internal images of how the world works, and of one's place in it relative to others; they shape one's sense of right and wrong, and of what is possible and what is not (Senge 1990). A behaviourally informed view of decision-making posits that not only do choices lead to economic outcomes, but those outcomes may reinforce or undermine shared mental models. The outcome of every choice offers an opportunity for those ways of being, often subconscious, to be challenged or reaffirmed. Mental models affect where individuals direct their attention, and provide default assumptions about the individuals we interact with, making us prone to confirmation bias; that is, we may ignore pertinent information that violates our priors, and automatically fill in missing information that accords with our mental model.

Much has been written about the detrimental effects that stereotyping and discrimination have on individual and collective wellbeing. Stereotypes are the precursor to discrimination, which in turn affects the opportunities available to individuals, typically

based on an ascriptive characteristic over which they have little control. Countless studies document the existence and persistence of stereotypes and discrimination based on visible ascriptive characteristics, which themselves are used as information short cuts in decision-making contexts (for example, Bertrand & Mullainathan 2004; Bordalo et al. 2016; Burns 2012; Goldin & Rouse 2000; Hoff & Pandey 2014; Pager 2007). Mounting evidence also shows that stereotypes may be internalised by members of the group being discriminated against, causing them to underestimate their own abilities and even adapt their behaviour, if primed about their group membership (Hoff & Pandey 2014; Shih, Pittinsky & Ambady 1999). Karla Hoff and Priyanka Pandey (2014), for example, show that when members of low-caste groups in India are primed about their status, this results in productivity gaps in maze-solving games, whereas no such gaps emerge when their status is not primed. Margaret Shih, Todd Pittinsky and Nalini Ambady (1999) find similar results in a study focused on gender and mathematics scores. Over and above obvious equity concerns, these behaviours present significant productivity and efficiency losses to any economy, where able individuals are prevented from making their full contribution to society because they are limited either by the mental models of others or by their own.

The persistence and widespread prevalence of stereotypes and discrimination can also be understood in the context of automatic thinking and mental models. Moreover, a behaviourally informed understanding is clear on the fact that while we do learn and can update our views based on life experience, or in this instance, on positive interactions with individuals about whom we hold stereotypes, that updating process may often be incomplete, depending on which information we prioritise and recall, and which information we let go of. Well-designed and well-intentioned policy interventions may not be sufficient if they are not able to disrupt the underlying, often subconscious, mental models that individuals hold, and their tendency towards confirmation bias, which themselves are products of automatic thinking. This is precisely why bold interventions such as affirmative action policies, active mentoring and coaching, and tailored education programmes to address systemic inequality are needed in this arena, not just to change measured outcomes and access to opportunities for members of the disadvantaged group, but to disrupt subconscious mental models as well.

Leveraging human sociality for human flourishing

While automatic thinking may underlie many biases and heuristics that individuals use in making choices, decision-makers are also prone to social thinking. Social thinking acknowledges that individuals are social beings, with a desire to belong and to be recognised. We learn from others by observing the choices they make, and we derive value, acceptance, self-esteem and status from our interactions with others. In addition, we are both other-regarding and process-regarding. That is, we demonstrate altruism, inequality aversion, trust and conditional cooperation on a regular basis, in our interactions with kin and non-kin alike, but we also exhibit concern with the process through which outcomes materialise. Overall, our behaviour is influenced by social expectations, social recognition, social norms, patterns of cooperation, stereotypes and

ingroup/outgroup biases. Understanding this feature of human behaviour offers other avenues through which wellbeing might be improved, such as mitigating availability bias by providing individuals with information on what most other people are doing. For example, numerous studies document that college binge-drinking may, at least in part, be attributable to individuals overestimating how much other students are drinking (Baer, Stacy & Larimer 1991; McEnroy 2005; Perkins & Berkowitz 1986). Providing correct feedback about what others are doing can correct these misperceptions and reduce alcohol consumption (Agostinelli, Brown & Miller 1995; Neighbors, Larimer & Lewis 2004). In the water conservation sphere, Laura Zoratto et al. (2015) show that a descriptive social norm intervention using neighbourhood comparisons reduces water consumption by between 3.7 and 5.6 per cent relative to a control group. Social recognition and pro-social preferences have also been powerfully leveraged in the conservation sphere. Kerri Brick, Samantha DeMartino and Martine Visser (2023) show that in Cape Town, as Day Zero approached (a critical moment when it was predicted that the city would exhaust its water supplies), publicly recognising water conservation and appealing to households to act in the public interest were the most effective motivators for water conservation, especially for wealthier households, causing an additional average reduction in water usage of between 0.6 and 1.3 per cent, over and above the reductions effected by tariffs and water rationing measures. Given the ongoing water scarcity in South Africa, most recently evidenced by the water shortages in Nelson Mandela Bay municipality and in Johannesburg,² the power of these low-cost, behaviourally informed messaging campaigns should be leveraged to deal with high demand pressures, alongside ongoing efforts to maintain and repair ageing infrastructure. Similarly, a campaign by OPOWER, a company that provides a software-as-a-service customer engagement platform for utility providers, to provide residential energy users with a comparison of their energy use to that of their neighbours, reduced energy consumption by 2 per cent, a decrease that would have required a price increase of 11–20 per cent to achieve comparable results (Alcott 2011). These are insights that could assist with the current electricity supply crisis in South Africa. In a world facing global climate change, it should be obvious that the power and cost efficacy of leveraging these behavioural insights to further reduce the degradation of the environment and overexploitation of natural resources are key to future wellbeing.

The Grameen Bank is an example of an institution that has leveraged insights about conditional cooperation and the power of peer influence in the design of its credit rollout to the rural poor (Bernasek 2003). The bank makes loans to individuals who belong to solidarity groups, without requiring collateral. While the group is not required to act as a guarantor for any individual loan, access to future credit is contingent on all group members repaying their loans. This programme encourages mutual trust and reciprocity between the bank and its clients, and between the group members, while also activating peer influence and monitoring to good effect. Peers influence and monitor one another to ensure the money is put to good use, and act as a commitment device for one another, especially for those who may find it difficult to commit to loan repayments. The Grameen Bank model, which explicitly incorporates behavioural

principles into the design of its programmes, has been very successful, being replicated in multiple countries across the world, and receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

Avoiding outcomes that none prefer

Finally, a key insight that arises when one takes the social influence that individuals have on the decisions of other seriously is that macro-level outcomes need not reflect micro motives (Schelling 1978). This stands in stark contrast to the central underpinning of neoclassical economics, which holds that aggregate demand and supply in a society reflect the simple aggregation of the underlying individual preferences of the people who constitute that society. Rather, the presence of social externalities, social norms and peer influence means that such aggregation may not be linear and could even result in multiple equilibria. Simply put, individual preferences do not necessarily aggregate up to the macro level in a way that reflects the underlying individual preferences. The provocation of the Schelling model is that even in a world where most individuals express a preference to live in a diverse neighbourhood, the end result need not necessarily be that neighbourhoods are diverse. In fact, the Schelling model demonstrates that complete segregation is a possible outcome, even when most individuals would like some diversity in their neighbourhood. This outcome operates through social externalities – an understanding that an individual's choice to enter or exit a particular residential neighbourhood holds implications for their own wellbeing, but will also affect the choice environment for others who are considering their neighbourhood choice. The choice of a single individual may thus set in motion a path-dependent process that causes mass exit or entry of one group into a particular neighbourhood, resulting in macro outcomes that none prefer or would have chosen individually.

To nudge or not to nudge?

While there is substantial evidence that incorporating behavioural insights into policy frameworks, programmes and institutional design can be welfare-improving at relatively low cost, there is also the ethical question of whether one should nudge citizens towards outcomes that policy-makers deem good. Some critics have called this libertarian paternalism (Gane 2021). The ethical question is a good one, and should be at the forefront of any policy design process and discussion, but the fact remains that governments design programmes all the time with the aim of enhancing the wellbeing of their citizens. What is key is that the ethical discussion should be had, to minimise a descent into authoritarian command-and-control policies, and citizens should always have the option to opt out of a policy or programme should they wish.

The obvious point remains, however, that the policy-makers and leaders of a society are subject to all of the same biases and behavioural blind spots as that society's citizens and other stakeholders. Decision-makers can fail to help, or inadvertently harm, the very people they seek to lead or help if they remain unaware of their reliance on automatic thinking, their own psychological, material, emotional, relational and other scarcity and bandwidth limits, their mental models of others, and the often subconscious ways in

which they fall prey to social influence. Indeed, the *World Development Report* of 2015 (World Bank 2015), which focuses on the role of behavioural insights in development, dedicates an entire chapter to evidence that illustrates that even well-intentioned development professionals fall prey to these biases.

The 2015 *World Development Report* suggests that leaders may be especially vulnerable to using short cuts when facing complex choices, especially given the high-pressure environments in which they operate and the sheer volume of choices they confront daily. This may be exacerbated by time scarcity, and may impose significant bandwidth taxes (Mullainathan & Shafir 2014). These bandwidth taxes may, in turn, impede optimal decision-making, and not allow time for decision-makers to really consider whether they would arrive at a different decision if the problem they were trying to solve was framed differently, or if the data or choices were presented differently. Moreover, an accountability framework that tends to hold individuals accountable for bad decisions, but not reward them for good decisions, can exacerbate a tendency towards sunk cost bias, that is, the decision to stick with a status quo project or decision once an initial investment has been made, even if the optimal choice would be to end the project or programme concerned. This, coupled with confirmation bias, and with a tendency to be risk-averse over gains and risk-loving over losses, can perpetuate poor decision-making and garner significant financial losses.

The first necessary step in addressing some of these concerns is for leaders and policy-makers to become aware of these biases and acknowledge their potential to undermine good choices. In other words, they need to recognise that it is not simply citizens who are prone to poor decision-making, but that they too are vulnerable in this regard. Building slack into institutional environments to create time and space for reflective decision-making, building a decision-making culture that intentionally reframes every problem and choice before reaching a final decision, actively constituting diverse stakeholder groups in key decision-making forums to minimise confirmation bias, and rewarding bold choices in the face of sunk costs that promise further loss, are a few ways in which leaders can try to design their choice environments to minimise biases.

However, one of the more difficult biases to deal with is the biased view that policy-makers and leaders may hold about the behaviour and choice contexts of the beneficiaries they are mandated to serve. Typically, policy-makers are not poor, and do not experience the same psychological or social context of poverty and scarcity that their intended beneficiaries do, making them unfamiliar with the mental models at play for citizens. The *World Development Report* (World Bank 2015) presents data that reveal a large gap between how development professionals perceive the context of poverty and how citizens who live in the bottom third of the wealth distribution perceive it. Policy-makers may value time and money quite differently, and typically operate in environments that are more forgiving, or provide some form of social security when they make mistakes. Policy-making also comes with its own set of assumptions and technical jargon, and with accepted norms and practices that, while familiar to policy-makers, may be quite foreign to their constituents, and may be at odds with indigenous knowledge systems and governance structures. In the absence of information about how their intended

beneficiaries actually make choices, this can give rise to flawed policy outcomes, especially in contexts where inequality is high. In a country like South Africa, the persistence of racial inequality adds an additional level of complexity to the problem, and requires vigilance in evaluating policy options by asking whom policy is being designed for, and by whom it is being designed. Central to designing and implementing effective pro-poor policies, especially in a country with extreme levels of inequality, must be an explicit consultative engagement process, one that allows those in power to properly engage with, and hear from, intended beneficiaries. Giving explicit recognition to indigenous knowledge systems and governance structures is key, and working to design policies around these systems and structures improves the chances of successful implementation and sustainability, and ultimately, of human flourishing.

Notes

- 1 Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ongoing repercussions of state capture, the SARS commissioner announced a 25 per cent increase in tax revenue collection for the 2021/22 tax year compared to 2020/21.
- 2 See Patrick A & Bhengu C, Joburg water crisis: Two public hospitals struggling, residents fuming as reservoirs run dry, *News24*, 4 October 2022. Accessed October 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/just-in-joburg-water-crisis-two-public-hospitals-struggling-residents-fuming-as-reservoirs-run-dry-20221004>; Stoll D, Water crisis in South Africa: Causes, effects, and solutions, *Earth.org*, 5 October 2022. Accessed October 2023, <https://earth.org/water-crisis-in-south-africa/>.

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7 *Ageing, remittances and improvements to quality of life*

Monde Makiwane and Monde Faku

A leading demographic change taking place globally in our time is that of population ageing. This shift offers opportunities for research into the interaction between population ageing and other societal dynamics. Demographic reports in South Africa indicate a proportionate increase in the elderly population following the country's political transition in 1994 (Joubert & Bradshaw 2006). According to the results of the 2011 South African census, about 8.0% of the population were aged 60 years and older, an increase from the 7.1% reported in 1996 (Statistics South Africa 2014). These South African trends were not much different to those in the rest of the developing world, where the proportion of persons aged 60 years and older was 9%, as against 22% in the developed world. In developing countries, the population of the aged is projected to be as high as 20% by 2050 (UNDP 2011).

In South Africa, as in any other part of the world, the demographic drivers of ageing are the interactions of the three demographic processes of fertility, mortality and migration (Lesthaeghe & Moors 2000). From 1994 to the early years of the twenty-first century, the slow rate of ageing in South Africa was attributed to the high rates of fertility and prevailing patterns of mortality, which were largely influenced by the HIV and Aids pandemic and by other infectious diseases. Among the white and Indian populations, the rate of ageing has been high for decades, mirroring the population trends found in developed countries. There has, however, been a decline in mortality in the black population, due to the rollout of antiretroviral drugs (Statistics SA 2020). This has been accompanied by a sustained decline in fertility among black South Africans. By 2021, the black South African fertility rate was the lowest in mainland sub-Saharan Africa (Bongaarts 2020). Taken together, these factors have accelerated the rate of ageing.

Internal migration in South Africa has had an influence on the spatial distribution of older people (Makiwane & Gumede 2020). Although life expectancy is lower in rural areas, these areas typically have a high proportion of older people. This is due to circular migration, which results in many urban-based individuals who have reached pensionable age settling in rural areas, and in the movement of young adults to the cities. The conditions under which ageing has occurred in South Africa have been compounded by the spatial separation of generations, which poses greater challenges for older persons (Legido-Quigly 2003).

Older persons are in need of support not only because of their increased frailty as they age; in many instances, they are also burdened with caring for children. They often shoulder this responsibility without commensurate support from the middle generation,

which might not be available due to mortality, morbidity or migration (Munthree & Maharaj 2010). While ageing parents and grandparents give care, they are themselves in need of care, and this need increases as they enter their twilight years. Some require long-term care provided by institutional facilities or home-based services to sustain them in their weak, chronically ill and vulnerable state (Douglass 2016). This is where reliable financial support from the middle generation plays a major role in supporting older persons, as it assists them in carrying out the duties that continue to give them a purpose in life.

Intergenerationality, solidarity and quality of life

Throughout the world, loneliness has been identified as having a major detrimental effect on the quality of life of older persons. This is also the case in South Africa, where, in a 2007 study, a large proportion of the elderly (84.3%) stated that they felt lonely at least some of the time (Makiwane & Kwizera 2007). According to Pirkko Routasalo and Kalsu Pitkala, 'loneliness is a geriatric giant leading to impaired [quality of life], greater need for institutional care and increased mortality' (Routasalo & Pitkala 2003: 303). In older people, loneliness is related to many factors, including the high rate of widowhood and the physical and social distance that may have developed between generations. On the African continent, old people were historically absorbed into the single household space of their children, becoming the beneficiaries of full-time care that included monetary, physical and emotional support. This practice was challenged by labour migration, with the middle generation drifting away from their childhood households in search of employment. During the colonial and apartheid eras in southern Africa, a culture of labour migration prevailed for many, especially among black South Africans. As recent studies show, labour migration remains prevalent (Bank, Posel & Wilson 2020). Increased social distance is common among people who are physically distant, although the social and physical distances do not always overlap. Social distance and social closeness can be defined as 'the grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy that characterise personal and social relations' (Karayali 2001: 538). When younger generations are responsible for the social distance, older generations are hardest hit, as this distance translates into neglect, isolation and a concurrent decline in quality of life of older people.

The solidarity model of Robert Kahn and Toni Antonucci (Kahn & Antonucci 1980) describes the relationship between generations using five domains of solidarity (Silverstein & Bengtson 1997): association (social contact, shared activities), affect (feelings, affection), consensus (agreement), function (exchange of aid) and norms (mutual obligation). As an important aspect of maintaining solidarity, association assists in reducing social distance between generations that are physically apart. Coactivity, that is, acting in concert and demonstrating unity of action, enhanced by remittances from those who are physically distant, is an important aspect of maintaining the social proximity of generations, which in turn leads to a reduction in the loneliness generally experienced by older persons in most parts of the world.

Age as a lone variable cannot be associated with quality of life, but certain factors associated with ageing do affect an individual's quality of life. Thus, a study conducted in England documented quality of life among persons aged 50 to 100, and found that quality of life increased up to the age of 68, after which it started to decrease (Netuveli et al. 2006). The decline in quality of life was associated with a number of factors, including financial hardship, functional hardship, lack of at least one trusting relationship, and not staying in a neighbourhood of choice. In another study that required older people to name factors that influenced their quality of life, 'staying at home' was identified as one of the most important factors (Netuveli & Blane 2008). Remittances are directly linked to a number of the factors that reduce quality of life, as they serve to assist older persons in ameliorating financial hardship, maintaining a trusting relationship across generations that reside far apart, and, most importantly, remaining in places they regard as home.

Circular migration and coactivity between generations

Due to an entrenched circular migration system (the constant movement of people and finances between urban and rural areas), the rural–urban dichotomy in South Africa is not as distinct as it is in many other parts of Africa and the rest of the world. This system was institutionalised during the colonial and apartheid eras, and has remained in place post-apartheid (Makiwane & Gumede 2020). Labour migration in South Africa has fostered a strong tradition of rural–urban coactivity. As more people left rural areas for the cities, economic and social codependencies between the two areas continued to grow. This rural–urban coactivity integrates the rural economy into the urban economy and vice versa, through families, businesses and developers who manage to shape their interventions so as to expand multifaceted development approaches that ensure sustainability and sensitivity to rural life. Coactivity can thereby address the state of rural poverty without compromising the essence of rurality, and can form meaningful partnerships among different generations who might dominate separate geographical spaces.

The need for the provision of additional support to people in rural areas is motivated by Takunda Chirau (2018), who argues that in the past rural inhabitants were treated as second-class citizens on their own land, a social phenomenon that one might argue is also evident in the rural areas of post-apartheid South Africa. For many years, the question of rural development in South Africa has not received a great deal of attention, resulting in the poor, who are the majority in rural areas, being pushed even further towards the sidelines of the formal economy. It is against this background that remittances, in addition to the provision of the government's public services and social grant transfers, play a major role in the sustenance of rural communities (Arndt, Davies & Thurlow 2019). To understand this background, and the degree of hardship being experienced, it is important to take note of the drastic changes that have taken place in rural administration. In the course of the transfer of communal land, on which people lived and practised subsistence farming, from traditional leadership to local government structures, agrarian economies collapsed. As they collapsed, there was

expansion of commercialised activities, including corporatised mining. To mitigate these challenges, Tumiso Melembe, Grany Mmatsatsi Senyolo and Victor Mbulaheni Mmbengwa (2021) have appealed for diversification of the rural economy by, for example, expanding ecotourism. They also suggest that government could intervene to promote 'agro-processing and value addition activities' (Melembe, Senyolo & Mmbengwa 2021: 183) to foster farmer participation on subsistence and commercial levels, which could result in income generation and alleviation of poverty. This would narrow the gap between the economic activities of rural and urban areas, and enhance urban–rural coactivities beyond those fostered by remittances and government grants.

This chapter focuses on how the inherent connectedness of different generations living apart in South Africa is enhanced through the transfer of remittances between urban and rural areas. The next section describes the methodology used to investigate this connectedness.

Methodology of the study

Two areas were selected as sites for conducting interviews for the study reported on in this chapter. They were Lusikisiki in the Eastern Cape, a part of this province with a long history of being a migrant-sending area, and Marikana in North West province, which is a recipient of a large group of migrants from Lusikisiki. Within Lusikisiki, two rural villages were selected where focus groups were formed, consisting of 10 participants each. Two focus groups were formed in each village, one consisting of men and the other of women; the participants in each group were parents of migrants, spouses of migrants, children of migrants (older than 18 years), pensioners who were former migrants or pensioners who had never migrated.

In Marikana, in-depth interviews were held with four migrants whose families lived in Lusikisiki, two unemployed migrants, migrant pensioners, and children of migrant workers above the age of 18.

Phase 1: Desktop review

A review of relevant scholarly literature on rural–urban linkages was conducted, with a specific focus on the Eastern Cape. A literature search strategy was also followed, using key term searches among repositories of published and unpublished work. This search covered relevant databases in refereed journals, books, policy briefs and grey literature. Relevant peer-reviewed articles published in academic journals, grey reports published by various international and civil society organisations, websites and other literary depositories were also reviewed. In addition, policies and strategies followed in other parts of Africa to deal with rural–urban linkages were documented.

Phase 2: Secondary data analysis

Statistics South Africa conducts an annual survey of South African homes called the General Household Survey (GHS), which gauges living conditions in South Africa.

The GHS gathers information on housing, access to services and facilities, food security, agriculture, and social, health and educational development. This chapter uses the secondary data from the 2021 GHS (Statistics South Africa 2021). The data were accessed through the DataFirst portal hosted by the University of Cape Town.

Qualitative analysis

As described earlier in this section, a multisite case study design was employed. Two areas were targeted for data collection: one area in the Eastern Cape with massive out-migration (Lusikisiki), and one area in North West that received many migrants from the Eastern Cape (Marikana). For purposes of triangulation, two qualitative research instruments were selected for use: focus groups in Lusikisiki and in-depth interviews in Marikana.

Lusikisiki was selected primarily because a significant number of migrants working on the South African mines are from emaMpondweni in the Eastern Cape, where Lusikisiki is situated. In the late nineteenth century, emaMpondweni served as a laboratory for the labour migrancy project in South Africa, and it remains to this day a major source of labour in the country. Lusikisiki is located in the Ngquza Hill Municipality, and was among the last areas to be annexed during the colonial invasion of South Africa.

Marikana is situated in North West province. It lies between Hartebeespoort and Rustenburg in the Bojanala region, and is best described as the part of North West that is closest to Gauteng. The main mover of the economy in the province is mining, mainly of gold, platinum and diamonds. Marikana is one of the mining towns in this province; the mining community of the town is made up of a mixture of local community members and migrant workers. The migrant workers come from other Southern African Development Community countries and from other parts of South Africa, with the Eastern Cape being the main supplier of labour. The *2007 Community Survey* (Statistics South Africa 2008) showed that approximately 5.7% of persons born in the Eastern Cape subsequently resided in North West.

Different models of economic transfers between generations

Wealth flows between generations are complicated among both poor and rich communities in South Africa (Makiwane & Chimere-Dan 2015). Two models of intergenerational wealth flow are noticeable. One model is that wealth flows from parents to children when children are young. This is followed by a long period when young adults work and little wealth is shared between generations. Connections during this time are usually maintained through phone calls, emails, exchanges of symbolic gifts during special events like birthdays, and planned visits. Eventually, this is followed by a 'windfall' period during which there is a flow of wealth from parents to children in the form of inheritance. This is usually possible if the younger generation acquired sufficient skills early in their youth, if they were able to live an independent life once they reached adulthood, and if, in addition, parents acquired enough wealth

to leave an inheritance for their children when they died. This is common in those sections of society that have experienced relatively stable economic growth over two or more generations.

Another model of wealth sharing is common in poorer communities, especially those characterised by the migrant labour system. This model is distinguished by two distinct phases of wealth flows over the life cycle of two consecutive generations: initially, wealth flows from parents to children when the children are young; later, this is generally followed by a period of mutual beneficence when children reach adulthood and leave the family home, sending regular remittances through which family wealth is held in one form or another. Their obligations to the family are usually higher during crises, or at times of such life-cycle events as funerals. In return, these migrant children of the family benefit at times of social and economic distress. Part of the money sent to parents serves the interests of the migrant middle generation, as this money supports children whom they leave with the elderly. As a member of this group expressed it, 'we give birth to children, and we leave them with our mothers' (interview with a female respondent, Marikana, 2013). In expression of the solidarity of intergenerational relationships, older people tend to rationalise their disproportionate giving of assistance to the succeeding generation. First, they see the future of their children and grandchildren as more important than their own, and therefore worth whatever it costs them to care for the younger generations, even as they grow older. Second, they see their contributions to their children and grandchildren (even at the expense of their material convenience) as a means of gaining relevance and acceptance within their family. Sometimes, however, there is no agreement on how remittances should be used. One respondent reported, for example:

If you give money for something and they use it for something else that creates conflict, you will get stories that things you instructed them to do with the money have not been done. You ask why and they say they have committed the money elsewhere. (Interview with a male respondent, Marikana, 2013)

The second model described above is more efficient if there are uninterrupted relationships between generations – something that is being challenged by the changes in the socioeconomic situation in South Africa – although it might not work perfectly as a means of wealth accumulation over time. Factors that contribute to the disruption of these relationships include the collapse of subsistence agriculture in many rural areas, which has obliterated the most usual means of holding common wealth among generations. Subsistence agriculture has been replaced by a cash-and-carry economy, which does not lead to wealth accumulation over time. In addition, the lack of job security and poor working conditions of migrants have led to migrants' lives being cut short; thus they do not live long enough to accumulate sufficient wealth for their own benefit and that of their children.

Remittances as means of sustaining intergenerational linkages

Most rural African households depend on remittances and social grants, which serve as a lifeline (Ratha 2021). Remittances are most important in retaining linkages between rural and urban areas (Bank & Minkley 2005; Posel 2003). Linkages can be understood as ‘constantly evolving webs of connections between rural and urban spaces and dimensions, rather than a linear relationship’ (Agergaard et al. 2019: 5). Rural and urban areas have different exchanges and interactions across various sectors of the economy and, as such, retaining these connections requires a significant understanding of combined spatial and sectoral dimensions (Agergaard et al. 2019).

While social grants provide a form of economic security (Bekker 2002), they are not enough to sustain a reasonable living standard for the rural community. Although, in other parts of the world, ‘remittances can be conflated with larger sums of money sent by private investors and diaspora members for business investments, property purchases and other financial transactions’ (Migration Data Portal 2021), this is not the case in South Africa. Participants in the study discussed in this chapter noted that the question of whether they received remittances or not could not be addressed by a clear-cut yes or no, as sometimes they received remittances and sometimes they did not. The sending of remittances depended on whether the migrant responsible for sending them was employed at the time. For those employed, the amount of the remittance depended on how much they earned; those who earned more tended to send more, and those who earned less tended to send less. Some remitted money when requested to do so and not of their own volition, while others sent money voluntarily, but not much.

Remittances usually play a prominent role in connecting migrants with their place of origin, especially in societies where the remittances are used for investments and not merely for the middle generation to support other members of the family. Indeed, remittances are income multipliers, playing a significant role in sustaining many developing societies, with some parts of the developing world more likely to reap the benefits of their migrants than others. For instance, in 2004 remittances to Africa contributed as much as \$14 billion to the African economy, most of which (72%) went to North Africa. However, there was an estimated 8% decline in remittances in 2020 and another 4.4% decline in 2021, due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Ratha 2021). Generally, the Middle East region has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of remittances from the West, and in recent years it has more than doubled its receipts (Sander & Maimbo 2005). Households that receive these remittances have tended to use them to boost consumption, for child education and for family health needs (UNECA 2006). It is thought that, as a general rule, areas with low economic activity are less likely to attract remittances from migrants who have left the area (Kaufman 1997). This is related to the remittances also being a form of investment diversification for young adults who have left underdeveloped areas. Thus, areas with less vibrant economies are less likely to attract remittances, as such areas are likely to use remittances mostly for consumption.

Women, the aged and children in rural areas of South Africa traditionally received remittances from their spouses, fathers and sons who worked in urban areas. In return,

migrants were expected to benefit from the investments that resulted from remittances, especially during times of economic and social distress. Historically, men – as traditional breadwinners – moved from rural to urban areas for the main purpose of supporting several dependents back in the rural areas. However, women who joined the migration stream were more consistent than men in sending remittances to their places of origin (Makiwane et al. 2012).

The evidence for whether social grants crowd out remittances remains inconclusive. Some analysts have maintained that this is the case (for example, Maitra & Ray 2003) while others have disputed this (Biyase, Zwane & Rooderick 2017). Furthermore, rural households show steady growth in the contribution of income from household-based labour, providing added evidence to that found in many studies that the introduction of social assistance has acted as an accelerator, rather than an inhibitor, for people in rural areas joining and remaining in the labour force. Thus, remittances and social assistance are not deterrents to rural people entering the labour market (Bank, Posel & Wilson 2020). Older persons not only benefit from remittances from their children who have left for the cities; they also obtain economic relief from their adult children who remain in the household. These children, who are usually less privileged, are aided by remittances to enter the labour force.

However, to better understand the circumstances of people living in rural areas, it must be noted that most of the employment opportunities there are in the low-income informal sector (Makiwane & Chimere-Dan 2015). Thus, despite the generations left behind being involved in economic activities, they still need to be sustained through remittances. Another feature of recent income patterns is clear evidence of a movement away from an agrarian economy, with the contributions from subsistence agriculture being wiped out in a short space of time (Makiwane & Chimere-Dan 2015).

The means of sending remittances in South Africa are diverse. Translocality plays a role in the interconnectedness of a person who resides in a city and their family based in a rural area. Thus, many people who have moved to cities maintain a median identity that is neither rural nor urban, as they continually move between rural and urban spaces, and are constantly involved in activities in rural areas while they are physically located in the cities. If properly managed, translocality could be translated into meaningful coactivity. The activity of financial transfers does more than merely bring financial assistance to rural families. The very process of transferring money ensures the translocality of people who have left rural areas.

Traditionally, the South African Post Office has been the most common means of transfer of remittances, followed by informal methods (Truen et al. 2005). Informal money transfer methods are often used as a supplementary method of transfer; these include using taxi and bus drivers, sending money via friends, relatives or neighbours, or delivering it oneself. Informal methods do carry some costs; for instance, taxi drivers usually charge for the services of transferring money to rural areas. The informal methods carry additional risks associated with the safety of the money being transferred. High transport costs related to collecting monies from service centres reduce remittances, resulting in less savings for recipients.

Business transfers are also conducted across regions. It is not only money that is transferred, but also services, as well as goods from places of origin which might include perishable foods. One respondent reported that she ordered prepared food in bulk from her place of origin to sell in the city, and this was transported by bus. She paid by weight, and a variable rate was applied: the heavier the goods, the lower the price per registered unit. Since the buses were not cooled, some of the foods spoiled on the long journey (interview with a female respondent, Marikana, 2013).

Business transactions across geographical areas also carry risks. For instance, one respondent reported that when she traded expensive items, such as blankets, in rural areas, she would first send a picture of the blanket to the recipient to confirm that it was what the recipient wanted, before using her own money to pay for the item. She would take a photograph of the transfer quotation and send it to the client, whereafter the client needed to confirm the order and agree to the quotation before she paid the transfer costs (interview with a female respondent, Marikana, 2013).

Other means of money transfer include the use of commercial banks and retail shops. Formal transfers also carry risks, mainly associated with fraudsters who trick remitters. More recently, cellphone apps have become a common means of transferring funds (Truen et al. 2005), described as 'mobile money' by the FinMark Trust research group in their 2017 report (FinMark Trust 2017). Although transfers using cellphones work well, as the money can appear immediately, the research group found that mobile money still involves some barriers to transfer. Improvements could be made by, among other things, increasing accessibility to non-bank services and improving coordination between government departments such as the South African Social Security Agency, Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Transport, which would create opportunities to leverage existing payment options (FinMark Trust 2017).

Financial services offered by retail shops are also an increasingly popular method of transferring money to rural areas. Bank transfers are safe and quick but carry several related costs, including transfer and withdrawal charges. However, the biggest costs associated with formal transfers are related to transport, as the service points of formal institutions are usually few and far between for most rural dwellers. The disposable income obtained from remittances is reduced considerably by these expenses, which also affect transfer of goods; the cost of transferring parcels includes travel from residential areas to the nearest service centre, which might be some distance away. More methods have arisen for people in the cities to send money to their rural family members, including services offered by several private commercial entities, for example Postnet, Pep Stores and Amazon.

The growth of the population of young people on the African continent has assisted in bringing about the mobile technology revolution. Remittances and easy communications, facilitated by cellphones, have made coactivity possible, albeit on a micro scale. This is illustrated by this statement from a respondent in Lusikisiki who was left behind by a migrating family member:

I have a son who is working in Cape Town, who has migrated, and this son got a good job that is well paying, he knows that he left mother and father without money, [he knows] that I must put money, whether over the post or bank. He sends material and bricks which are brought to his home, I am speaking about the difference, we are speaking about the difference. (Female participant in a focus group, Lusikisiki, 2013)

The 'difference' referred to by this respondent relates to the standard of living she experiences because of remittances received from her son. Her statement indicates that sending remittances is accompanied by interest being taken in the migrant's place of origin, and facilitates coactivity between migrants and those who are left behind. Such coactivity results in tangible outcomes for families. The assistance is usually not one-sided; rural families help with the care of children, older persons and differently abled persons, as many migrants find it difficult to carry this burden from the cities. This is expressed in the following statement by a respondent: 'He left a 14-year-old child behind, now myself, the mother and the in-laws are carrying the burden of this child' (male participant in a focus group, Lusikisiki, 2013).

Household differences caused by remittances

Migrants who send remittances

Participants in the study noted that when migrants remit money, there are few or no complaints from household members. Women were particularly singled out in relation to remittances. Participants argued that women tended to send more remittances than men, and that they prioritised their children and parents. On the other hand, men were said to prioritise alcohol and their urban families. Many male migrants found themselves supporting two families. Those who married women in the urban areas sometimes also supported their rural wives.

Migrants who do not send remittances

Numerous responses from participants in both the rural and urban focus groups concerned migrants not supporting their rural relatives. Participants noted that some of those who migrated to urban areas did not look back, but simply disappeared, never to return to their rural homes. Such migrants simply forgot about their rural roots and had to be fetched from the urban areas by their families. Rural men who married women in the urban areas often ignored their rural families and stopped supporting them. It was noted that some migrants simply forgot their initial purpose for leaving their rural homes for the city. The following statements indicate how the migrants who did not remit money were described by participants.

Some do support. Some struggle after migration. When he gets there, he sees people there. He then stays there, and you will wait in vain behind. There will be nothing coming. There is no sign that someone left to look for work, it is just poverty. (Female participant in a focus group, Lusikisiki, 2013)

... when migrants send money there are no complaints. If he does not send money home, after migrating, he went and stayed ... That means the person left behind has been left naked. (Male participant in a focus group, Lusikisiki, 2013)

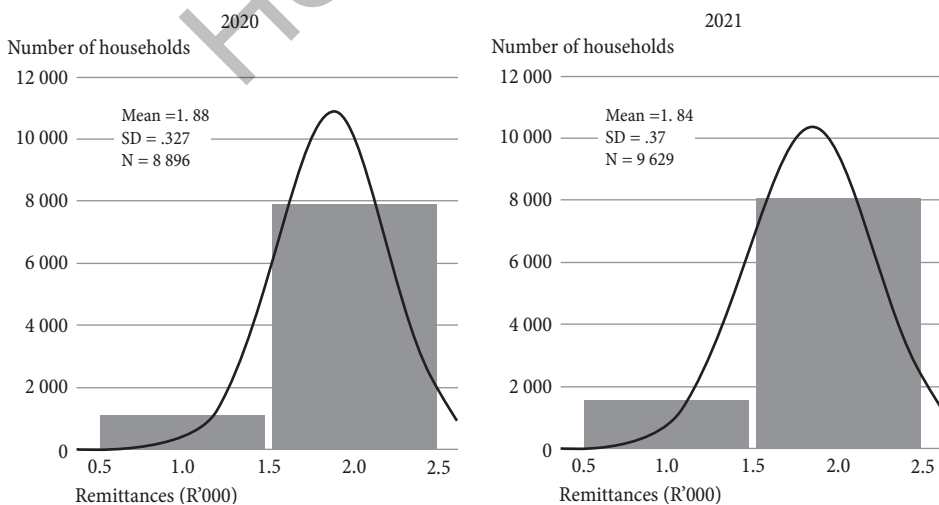
The language used to describe the situation of households that do not receive remittances shows the gravity of the situation. Such households were described as having nothing, lacking support, being 'naked', with the children becoming rascals and the households living in animal-like conditions. Migrants who did not remit funds to support their children and households were described as worse than animals, due to the dire situation of their families. All these descriptions show the importance of migrant remittances. They support households, provide for basic needs (such as food, shelter and education) and ensure that the migrants' families live a dignified, decent life.

Some rural participants noted that remittances made a difference to the household, but this was not enough. Households that received remittances at least had sufficient food, and they could afford maize meal, but when this was finished they had nothing else. Participants who stated that remittances did not make a difference argued that things remained the same at the homes of migrants, in other words, there was no tangible difference in their rural homes from the time when they were growing up.

Distribution of remittances among different households

The data used in this study were obtained from the 2021 GHS (Statistics South Africa 2021). They represent the distribution of monthly remittances in South African households (in R'000) for the period under review, 2020–21. The data were checked for normality using the histograms shown in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1 *Distribution of mean monthly remittances in South African households, 2020–21*



Source: GHS 2021 (Statistics South Africa 2021)

Table 7.1 *Distribution of remittances (R'000) across provinces, 2020–21*

Provinces	Results (2020)		Results (2021)	
	Sample size	Mean	Sample size	Mean
Western Cape	652	1.95	812	1.94
Eastern Cape	1 190	1.84	1 499	1.81
Northern Cape	381	1.92	405	1.87
Free State	519	1.92	540	1.86
KwaZulu-Natal	1 532	1.85	1 831	1.83
North West	588	1.88	626	1.83
Gauteng	1 974	1.92	1 799	1.88
Mpumalanga	790	1.85	839	1.77
Limpopo	1 270	1.84	1 278	1.79
Total	8 896	1.88	9 629	1.84

Source: GHS 2021 (Statistics South Africa 2021)

Figure 7.1 shows the levels of symmetry in the distribution of the remittance data. A highly symmetrical distribution would indicate a lower level of variation in remittances sent to households. Remittance histograms for both 2020 and 2021 postulate that the distribution of remittances is slightly negatively skewed, and the mean and the median are both less than the mode. Thus, most people received remittances less than the average monthly remittance of R1 920 in 2020 and R1 840 in 2021. This indicates a vast degree of disparity in the remittances obtained by different households in South Africa, with a relatively low number of households receiving a high level of remittances, which contributes disproportionately to the recorded averages. The disparity in the level of remittances between 2020 and 2021 is instructive. During 2020 there were stricter Covid-19 lockdowns than in 2021. Figure 7.1 shows that mean remittances received in 2020 were higher than those received in 2021, due to a higher level of windfall remittances; these were presumably transfers from people dying from illnesses related to Covid-19.

In Table 7.1, remittances are used as the dependent variable and provinces as the independent variable for both 2020 and 2021. The Western Cape had the highest mean monthly remittances (R1 950 in 2020 and R1 940 in 2021), followed by Gauteng (R1 920 in 2020 and R1 880 in 2021). The Eastern Cape and Limpopo, which are the poorest provinces in South Africa, also received the lowest mean remittances in 2020, at the height of the pandemic. Thus, rich provinces (those with major metropolitan areas, namely the Western Cape and Gauteng) received more money in the form of remittances while the distinctly poorer provinces (Eastern Cape and Limpopo) received less money. In all provinces, a slightly higher value of remittances was received by households during 2020, when there was a more severe economic meltdown.

Table 7.2 *Percentage of households receiving monthly remittances across provinces, 2020–21*

Provinces	Percentage of households (2020)	Percentage of households (2021)
Western Cape	7.3	3.2
Eastern Cape	13.4	18.3
Northern Cape	4.3	3.4
Free State	5.8	4.8
KwaZulu-Natal	17.2	20.1
North West	6.6	6.9
Gauteng	22.2	14.2
Mpumalanga	8.9	12.4
Limpopo	14.3	16.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: GHS 2021 (Statistics South Africa 2021)

Table 7.2 shows that fewer households in richer provinces received remittances than in poorer provinces. For instance, households that received remittances in the Western Cape constituted only 7.3% of remittances in 2020 and 3.2% in 2021, even though the Western Cape received the largest mean number of remittances per month, as shown in Table 7.1. On the other hand, a higher proportion of households were recipients of remittances in poorer provinces, despite receiving a lower number of monthly remittances. More instructively, in poorer provinces (for example, the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal) fewer households received remittances in 2020 during the time of severe lockdown, while in richer provinces (such as Gauteng and the Western Cape) more households received remittances.

Figure 7.1 and Tables 7.1 and 7.2 amplify the fact that remittances reached more households in poorer areas of South Africa, while a smaller number of households, mostly in affluent areas, were beneficiaries of windfall sums. This is reflected in the fact that in spite of a smaller percentage of households in these areas receiving remittances, their mean remittance per month is higher.

Conclusion

Filial piety has manifested itself in children sending money to their parents, and reciprocity has been reflected in parents taking care of their grandchildren as a way to relieve stress for their urban-based children. Filial piety is a universal cultural norm, driven by reciprocity, although the extent and manner of its expression vary across different communities, as discussed above. In some societies it is expressed through symbolic gestures, while in others it is expressed through constant financial cooperation. Remittances play a large role in fostering social contact between generations. Monthly remittances enhance social contact, encourage shared activities, and make intergenerational family wealth possible. At the same time the prospect of receiving

a windfall amount of money also encourages generations to maintain constant social contact. However, authors of some studies have described generational relations as best explained by the concept of ambivalence, rather than outright conflict or solidarity. Ambivalence presupposes the simultaneous existence of both positive and negative sentiments between generations (Pillemer et al. 2007). This chapter has shown that reciprocity is rarely symmetrical.

While social grants received by poor households in South Africa play a major role in sustaining households headed by older persons, remittances continue to be a significant factor. They go further than providing financial sustenance, playing a major role in fostering coactivity among generations who are in geographically disparate areas. Coactivity enhances social contact and, in turn, enhances intergenerational solidarity. Mobile technology and other electronic devices have made transfer of remittances and constant communication easier and quicker; on the other hand, the amounts that are transferred are reduced by service charges and the cost of travelling distances to collect cash. The analysis of remittances to households during the Covid-19 period has shown that remittances play a big role in managing social perturbations. Thus, during the height of the Covid-19-induced economic meltdown, some city-based workers left the urban areas in order to survive in the low-cost economies of scale that constitute rural households, while others survived because of windfall allowances that were related to the pandemic tragedy.

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8

Quality of life in an open economy

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Over the past few decades there has been an unprecedented increase in the global interdependence of economies. Cultures and populations, as well as businesses and other organisations, have expanded their influence and operations beyond national borders. As a result, general measures of globalisation like trade and migration are no longer adequate. Benefits of globalisation include access to more affordable products and services, rapid improvements in technology, increased innovations in communication and enhanced financial transactions, among others. At the same time, there has been a general shift towards greater collaboration in policy-making and cooperation to achieve various targets of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) (UN 2015), such as improving quality of life through poverty and hunger alleviation, as well as transitioning to use of more climate-friendly resources. However, while globalisation has been associated with growth-promoting benefits to economies, it has also come with its fair share of challenges. Indeed, an adverse effect that has been linked to globalisation is exacerbation of existing inequalities within countries, particularly in developing countries where resources such as income, jobs or housing are already under strain. Although the increase in globalisation has meant that countries are now more connected to each other than ever, and positive developments in one region can quickly spread beyond that region, it has also meant that problems emanating from one part of the globe can rapidly spread to other parts and impact the quality of life there, as the Covid-19 pandemic has clearly shown. Given the various positives and negatives of globalisation, open economies, to which South Africa is no exception, are therefore sometimes faced with the challenge of maintaining the delicate balance between advancing globalisation and protecting the livelihoods of their citizens.

South Africa re-entered the international markets during the 1990s, and as an emerging economy was already experiencing rapid globalisation by the end of that decade (Carmody 2002). Globalisation has promoted economic growth and social progress in South Africa through trade, skills and technology transfers resulting from trade agreements, the migration of people and the presence of multinational companies.¹ It has also promoted political stability through mutually beneficial treaties between countries. These same factors have created challenges for local citizens, such as the need to compete with foreign migrants and conglomerates for resources and business opportunities. According to the OECD Better Life Index, South Africa has made significant progress in improving wellbeing for citizens since 1994, with reduced absolute poverty and broader access to public services.² However, when compared with similar middle-income countries, it still ranks below average in regard to key

components that contribute to better quality of life, such as income, jobs, housing, work-life balance, health status, educational attainment, social connections, environmental quality, wellbeing and personal security. In addition, South Africa has the highest level of inequality in the world, according to the 2021 Gini index (World Bank 2022). As such, not only do citizens have to grapple with these local economic and social issues, they also have to contend with the effects of globalisation. This makes South Africa an interesting testing ground for understanding the perceived impact of globalisation on quality of life.

Most empirical studies of quality of life focus mainly on household living conditions, income, health and environmental quality, with limited evidence provided on issues related to globalisation and how this has impacted the wellbeing of citizens. This chapter contributes to the existing literature by exploring, in addition to the usual indicators, the effects of globalisation on quality of life in South Africa. Using the 2008 and 2015 waves of the Afrobarometer surveys (Carter 2012; Isbell 2016), and employing a cross-sectional analysis, we investigate the following research question: how have citizens' perceptions of issues concerning international relations with other countries influenced their perceptions of their quality of life in South Africa? We further contribute to the literature by exploring the experiences of citizens accessing public (social) services, and their perceptions of quality of governance, and how these factors may also influence their perceptions of their quality of life. Our findings indicate that citizens may be largely unaware of the effects of globalisation on the local economy, and that they are not satisfied with the way the local economy is being managed in terms of migration policies, public services provision and governance. Our focus in the chapter goes beyond purely economy-related perceptions, by also considering social and political aspects of quality of life in South Africa. We believe that by highlighting citizens' views on pertinent issues, this study could assist policy-makers in making informed decisions about ways to improve citizens' quality of life.

Literature review

'Quality of life' is a concept that has been widely adopted and used to assess the wellbeing of individuals and societies generally (Abdel-Hadi 2012). According to Aleya Abdel-Hadi, Mostafa K Tolba and Salah Soliman (2010), quality of life is not only concerned with wealth and employment, but also includes education, physical and mental health, leisure time and social belonging. Globalisation has been conceived by scholars as the diffusion of goods and services, coupled with embodied and disembodied technologies, across national borders (Bordo 2002; Petras 1999; Sirgy et al. 2004). Several theories have been proposed related to globalisation, such as world-system theory, theories of global capitalism, theories of the network society, theories of space, place and globalisation, theories of transnationality and transnationalism, theories of modernity, postmodernity and globalisation, and theories of global culture (Robinson 2007). We briefly summarise below the theories of globalisation closely linked to our study.

The theories of space, place and globalisation point to the larger theoretical issue of the relationship of social structure to space, the notion of space as the material basis for social practices, and the changing relationship under globalisation between territoriality/geography, institutions and social structures (Giddens 1990). Anthony Giddens conceptualises the essence of globalisation as 'time-space distanciation' (1990: 14). He defines time-space distanciation as 'the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa' (1990: 64), as social relations are 'lifted out' from local contexts of interaction and restructured across time and space (1990: 21).

Another important theory is the theory of transnationality and transnationalism. Transnationality refers to the rise of new communities and the formation of new social identities and relations that cannot be defined through the traditional reference point of nation-states. Transnationalism denotes a range of social, cultural and political practices and states brought about by the sheer increase in social connectivity across borders. It encompasses a wide variety of transformative processes, practices and developments that take place simultaneously at a local and global level. Scholars such as Peggy Levitt (2001), Alejandro Portes, Luis Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt (1999), and Michael Smith and Luis Guarnizo (1998) point to the novel character of transnational links in the era of globalisation. Transnational ties among recent immigrants are more intense than those of their historical counterparts, due to the existence of rapid, relatively cheap travel and communications, and the increased impact of these ties in the global and national contexts (Levitt 2001; Portes 1995; Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt 1999).

Some theories of modernity, postmodernity and globalisation conclude that we are now living in a postmodern world, while others argue that globalisation has simply radicalised or enabled the culmination of the project of modernity, and that the process of globalisation represents the universalisation of modernity (Kellner 1998; Robinson 2007). This universalisation of modernity, they argue, is central to the concept of globalisation. It involves the universalisation of the nation-state as a political form, of the capitalist system of commodity production, of Foucauldian surveillance by the modern state, and of the centralisation of control of the means of violence within an industrialised military order. Globalisation is seen as the spread and ultimate universalisation of sets of modern values, practices and institutions through 'isomorphic' processes that operate on a global scale. The growth of supranational institutional networks and of universal modern norms brings about what is referred to as 'world society' (Boli & Thomas 1999; Meyer et al. 1997).

Finally, theories of global culture emphasise globalising cultural forms and flows, belief systems and ideologies over the economic and/or the political. Such approaches distinctively problematise the existence of a 'global culture' and the idea of 'making the world a single place' – whether as a reality, a possibility or a fantasy. They emphasise the rapid growth of the mass media and resultant global cultural flows and images in recent decades, evoking the image famously proposed by Marshall McLuhan of 'the global village'. Cultural theories of globalisation have focused on such phenomena as globalisation and religion, nations and ethnicity, global consumerism, global

communications and the globalisation of tourism (Jensen, Arnett & McKenzie 2011; Robertson 1992; Tomlinson 2007). These theories are pertinent to our study as they highlight the need to be more cognisant of how globalisation dynamics can play out not only at a global level, but also in the everyday lives of citizens.

This study contributes to the extant literature on the determinants of quality of life, more specifically with a focus on globalisation. Several South African studies have examined various aspects of wellbeing. For example, using ordered probit models and a small sample from the Durban Quality of Life survey for the period 1998–2004, Timothy Hinks and Carola Gruen (2007) investigated the factors that affect happiness. Their results indicated that unemployment, absolute household income level, relative household income level, racial group and education influenced the degree of happiness. On the other hand, they found that marital status had no consistent impact on happiness. Meanwhile, being self-employed or temporarily employed reduced the likelihood of being happy. This could be partially explained by the low level of income, self-fulfilment and networking or connectivity associated with being self-employed and with temporary employment in developing countries. Another comprehensive analysis of wellbeing by Neil Higgs (2007) found that relative to other population groups in South Africa, the quality of life of the black population was the worst, while the white population had the overall best quality of life. The study used the term ‘everyday quality of life’ to include both objective and subjective indicators of wellbeing, as well as several determinants such as infrastructure, health, networks, optimism, dignity, self-esteem and employment. It concluded that there was a huge variation in quality of life among people in South Africa. Further evidence provided by Talita Greyling and Fiona Tregenna (2020) reveals that housing, infrastructure, social relations, socioeconomic status, health, safety and governance are reliable measures of quality of life in the Gauteng region of South Africa. They also find that for all the domains except housing, infrastructure and health, there is a positive and significant association between these factors. This implies that improving one or some of the domains will positively impact others.

We have found limited studies related to the association of globalisation with quality of life. A few scholars are of the view that globalisation has both positive and negative implications for quality of life (Shultz, Rahtz & Speece 2004; Tsakiri 2010). Some scholars argue that globalisation has negative implications for quality of life in terms of job reduction, particularly in the manufacturing sector (Michalet 1996; Scott 2001). There is a view that globalisation is establishing a new paradigm in which nation-states and governments are incapable of improving the quality of their citizens’ lives (Guillen 2001; Soros 2000), and that therefore globalisation poses a huge threat to society and should be strongly opposed. A study by Darlington Mushongera, Prudence Kwenda and Miracle Ntuli (2020) also finds that indicators from the Gauteng City-Region Observatory Quality of Life Survey IV-2015/16 related to globalisation (that is, ‘attitude towards foreigners staying in South Africa’ and ‘climate change’) scored very low as a proxy for quality of life.

Other scholars are of the view that globalisation has positive implications for quality of life (Ozawa 1992; Sirgy et al. 2004; Thorbecke & Eigen-Zucchi 2002). In their view, trade liberalisation and improved market integration create prospects for increased efficiency and earnings, which lead to improved quality of life for workers (Sirgy et al. 2004). They argue that the adverse effects of globalisation, such as reduction in manufacturing jobs, are exaggerated, and that the reduction in the manufacturing industry is due to rapid technological transformation rather than globalisation (Krugman 1996). Laura Hirt (2017), for example, finds that globalisation indicators such as foreign direct investment and internet usage have had a positive effect on quality of life for 204 countries over a 50-year period.

While there is an extensive literature related to the determinants of quality of life, it is also important to point out the dearth of evidence-based studies regarding the effects of globalisation on quality of life. The present study therefore contributes to filling this gap by providing an empirical analysis based on South African citizens' perceptions of globalisation and their own wellbeing.

Empirical analysis

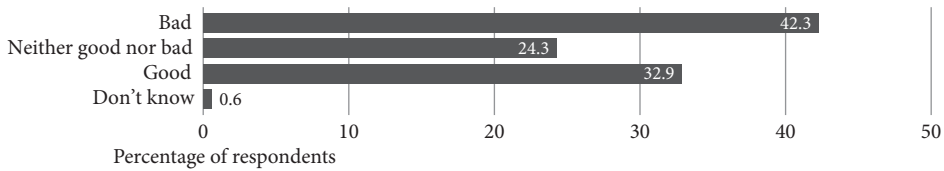
The empirical analysis presented here is guided by the frameworks for quality of life models developed by various social scientists over time. Early models produced by Frank Andrews and Stephen Withey (1976) suggested that quality of life is based on interrelated subjective and objective measures, which they identified as social indicators of wellbeing. These indicators included general indicators that measured how an individual felt about their life as a whole, as well as specific indicators related to housing, employment and family life. However, follow-up models identified the need to capture not only physical and material wellbeing, but also relations with other people, engagements in social, community and civic activities, personal development (that is, education) and recreation (Flanagan 1982). Similarly, the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen (1985) focuses not only on the individual experience, but also on the social and environmental conditions that facilitate wellbeing.³ These later models of quality of life are closely associated with the concept of global quality of life, which is defined as a dynamic interaction between the external conditions of the individual's life and the perceptions they have of these conditions (Browne et al. 1994). These external conditions are formed by life domains such as health, family relationships, social support, residential environment and economic situation, among others, as well as by positive and negative experiences and feelings (Brown et al. 1994).

Based on the quality of life frameworks discussed above, we conducted our analysis by using the repeated cross-sectional data collected by Afrobarometer, which conducts public attitude surveys on democracy, governance, the economy and society in African countries (Afrobarometer 2008, 2015). Subjective evaluations of quality of life, measured in terms of satisfaction scales that represent judgements of an individual's life as a whole or with respect to specific domains, are commonly used in empirical analysis (see Borglin, Edberg & Hallberg 2005; Bowling 2005; Browne et al. 1994;

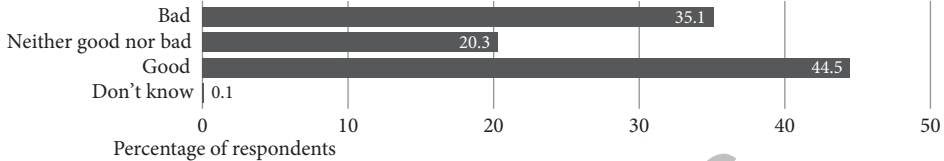
Cummins 2005; Diener 1994). The Afrobarometer surveys are repeated in a regular cycle and record views on issues that affect ordinary African men and women. We used the 2008 and 2015 survey waves, sampled on 2 400 people for each wave. We chose the 2008 wave because that period coincided with riots related to xenophobia (that is, prejudice against people from other countries) in South Africa. Moreover, 2008 is also associated with the global financial crisis, which had adverse effects on the economy, and this might have had a contagious effect on some citizens' perceptions of foreign-related issues. With the increase in globalisation, social issues such as xenophobic attitudes can emerge. According to a report by the Human Sciences Research Council (2009), competition for jobs, commodities and housing, poor service delivery and an influx of foreigners played a contributing role in the xenophobic attacks in 2008. The 2015 survey was the latest survey available at the time of conducting this study. In addition, by using the two different surveys, we were able to observe whether the opinions of the people surveyed in 2008 differed from or were similar to the opinions in a more recent period, especially given that people continually update their opinions as more accurate information is provided concerning certain issues that they might be pleased with or aggrieved about, such as provision of public services or influx of migrants.

Our analysis provides an overview of the attitudes of South African citizens towards quality of life, economic, social and political issues. We used current living conditions to measure quality of life. For attitudes towards economic and political issues, we used the sample's responses relating to government provision of services (that is, public services) and quality of governance in South Africa. For attitudes towards social issues, we included our contribution to the analysis by providing evidence, drawn from the Afrobarometer surveys, of people's sentiments about globalisation, such as how the government is managing immigration, the influence of international organisations (mainly the Southern African Development Community [SADC] and African Union [AU]), free movement of foreign migrants into South Africa, and encouragement of foreign investment through businesses and workers. We are limited to these globalisation measures by what the surveys covered. In most cases, similar questions were asked across the two surveys. In instances where the questions differed, we attempted to use questions that capture similar concepts from both surveys. We have included a description of the variables that we used in the analysis in Appendix A, Table 8.A1.

Figure 8.1 shows a relative reduction over the period 2008–2015 in the percentage of respondents who viewed their current living conditions as bad. For instance, about 42% of the respondents viewed their current living conditions as bad in 2008 while about 35 per cent viewed their condition as bad in 2015. Moreover, there is evidence of overall improvement in quality of life in 2015, with about 45% viewing their current living conditions as good, compared with about 33% who viewed their living conditions as good in 2008. According to the Statistics South Africa General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa 2019), the number of households with access to utilities such as electricity, piped water and/or sanitation has been on the rise since 2002. In addition, Statistics South Africa reports that the percentage of people living in poverty in 2006 (66.6%, translating into one out of every three South Africans) was much higher than

Figure 8.1 Respondents' assessments of their living conditions, 2008 and 2015**Rate your current living conditions**
2008

2015



Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

in 2015 (55.5%, translating into one out of every two South Africans) (Statistics South Africa 2017). These changes could drive citizens' more positive assessments of their living conditions.

When we disaggregate the assessment of living conditions by race and gender in Tables 8.1 and 8.2, we observe that the changes in views on living conditions are mainly driven by the black population, which is plausible as they are the majority group in South Africa. Although we see an increase in the proportion of black respondents who viewed their living conditions as good in 2015 compared to in 2008, it is concerning that a similarly high proportion of black respondents still regarded their living conditions as bad (Table 8.1). We do not observe significant differences across gender (Table 8.2). Responses by both men and women for favourable living conditions were higher in 2015 than in 2008.

To observe the respondents' attitudes to various aspects of the South African economy with respect to their quality of life, we first established their overall opinions of how the economy was performing, what they thought were the main problems affecting the economy, and their views regarding immigration control in the country. Figure 8.2 reveals that sentiments concerning the economy did not change between the two survey periods. A significant proportion of respondents believed that the economy was headed in the wrong direction, and some of the reasons were alluded to in the most important problems they thought South Africa was facing. For example, the quality of governance (issues of crime, corruption, political instability, conflict and gender) continued to be a major concern across the two survey waves, followed by quality of government services and health. Interestingly, the quality of government services (education, housing, electricity and water) appeared to increase in prominence as a problem in the 2015 survey.

Table 8.1 Views on living conditions in South Africa, by race, 2008 and 2015

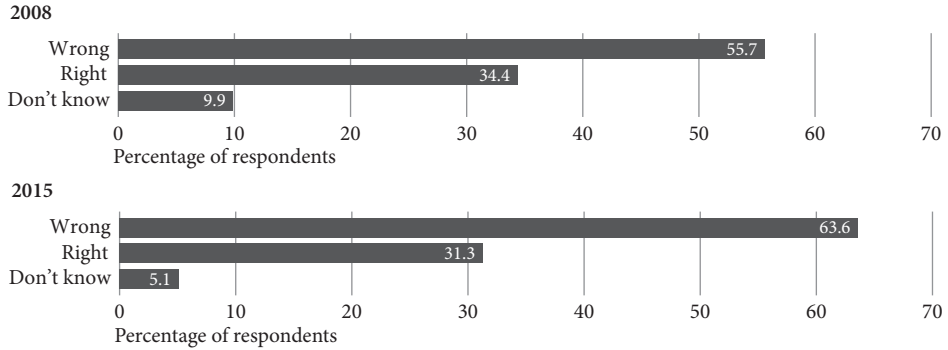
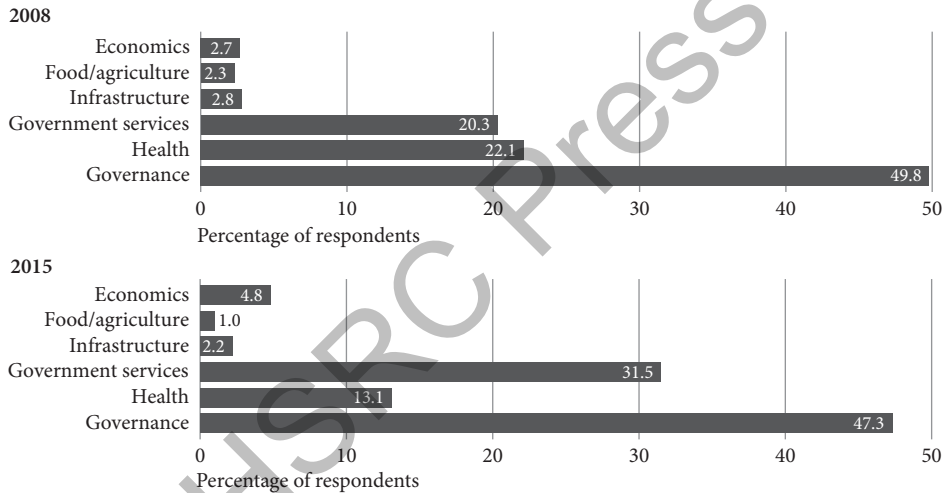
Living conditions	2008					2015				
	Black	White	Coloured	Indian/ Asian	Total	Black	White	Coloured	Indian/ Asian	Total
Bad										
<i>n</i>	692	130	159	30	1 011	639	45	112	43	839
%	68.45	12.86	15.73	2.97	100.00	76.16	5.36	13.35	5.13	100.00
Neither good nor bad										
<i>n</i>	335	112	95	39	581	343	41	74	27	485
%	57.66	19.28	16.35	6.71	100.00	70.72	8.45	15.26	5.57	100.00
Good										
<i>n</i>	487	145	100	55	787	682	164	141	72	1 059
%	61.88	18.42	12.71	6.99	100.00	64.40	15.49	13.31	6.80	100.00
Don't know										
<i>n</i>	9	3	2	1	15	1	1	0	0	2
%	60.00	20.00	13.33	6.67	100.00	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
Total										
<i>N</i>	1 523	390	356	125	2 394	1 665	251	327	142	2 385
%	63.62	16.29	14.87	5.22	100.00	69.81	10.52	13.71	5.95	100.00

Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

Table 8.2 Views on living conditions in South Africa, by gender, 2008 and 2015

Living conditions	2008			2015		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Bad						
<i>n</i>	522	492	1 014	403	436	839
%	51.48	48.52	100.00	48.03	51.97	100.00
Neither good nor bad						
<i>n</i>	281	301	582	238	248	486
%	48.28	51.72	100.00	48.97	51.03	100.00
Good						
<i>n</i>	392	397	789	541	522	1 063
%	49.68	50.32	100.00	50.89	49.11	100.00
Don't know						
<i>n</i>	5	10	15	2	0	2
%	33.33	66.67	100.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Total						
<i>N</i>	1 200	1 200	2 400	1 184	1 206	2 390
%	50.00	50.00	100.00	49.54	50.46	100.00

Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

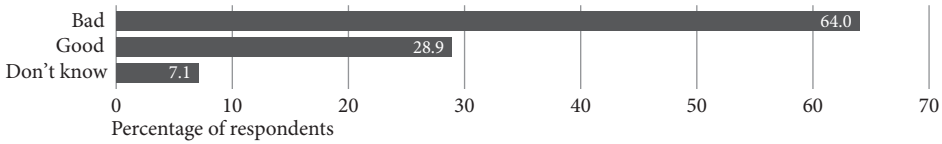
Figure 8.2 Views on problems facing South Africa, 2008 and 2015**a) Overall direction of South African economy****b) What are the most important problems facing South Africa?**

Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

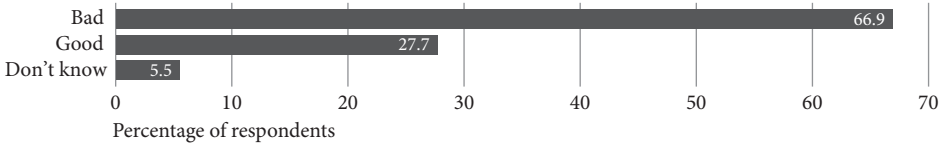
Regarding the government's management of immigration, we find that about 60% of respondents expressed their disapproval across both surveys (Figure 8.3). Moreover, in 2008, about 43% of respondents favoured restricting the number of people allowed across South African borders, compared to about 10% who were in favour of allowing migrants into the country, irrespective of whether or not the migrants had jobs. On the other hand, we observe that in 2015 about 50% of the respondents were in favour of free movement of foreigners into South Africa, compared to about 45% who preferred that there should be limited movement of foreign migrants. The differences in responses between the two surveys may be due to the social unrest associated with xenophobic attacks in 2008. In addition, South African immigration policy, such as the immigration regulations introduced in 2014, has led to the imposition of tighter controls on entry into the country (Moyo & Nshimbi 2020; South African Government 2014).

Figure 8.3 Views on government management of immigration, 2008 and 2015

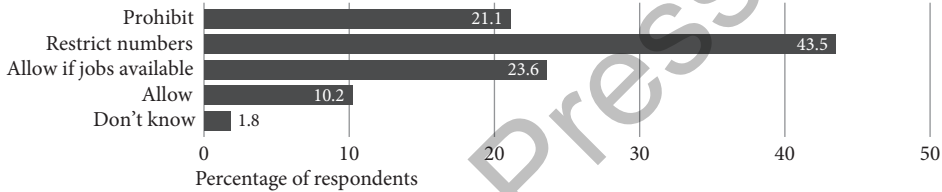
**a) How is government performance with regard to managing immigration?
2008**



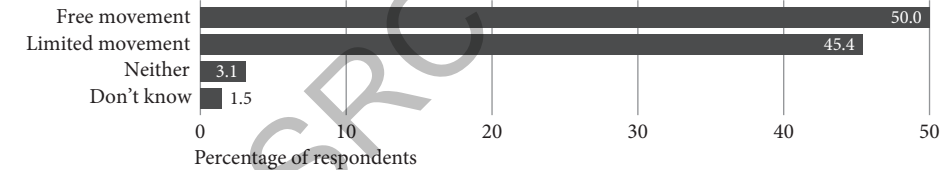
2015



**b) Perceptions regarding movement of foreigners across South African borders
2008: Should people from other countries be allowed into South Africa?**



2015: Free movement of foreigners versus limited movement



Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

When asked about the influence of international bodies such as the SADC or the AU on South Africa, about half of the respondents thought that these international organisations somewhat helped the country (Figure 8.4). However, what is disconcerting is the relatively high percentage of respondents who had no opinion on the influence of these organisations, suggesting possible ignorance about either the role of these organisations or other global matters. Alternatively, the responses may also highlight the lack of awareness or impact these international organisations have on citizens' wellbeing (PSC Report 2020) and on the global context (Welz 2013).⁴

Given our observations of the respondents' attitudes to several economic, political and social issues in South Africa, we subsequently focused our analysis on comparing quality of life with these dynamics playing out in the country. We were interested in how the respondents viewed their quality of life based on globalisation, public services provision and governance. The key question here was: do these issues affect their perceived quality

Figure 8.4 Views on influence of international organisations, 2008 and 2015**a) How much do international organisations (AU) help?**

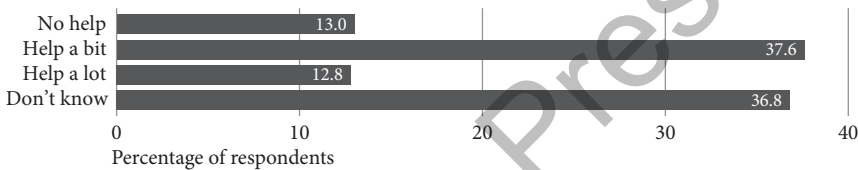
2008



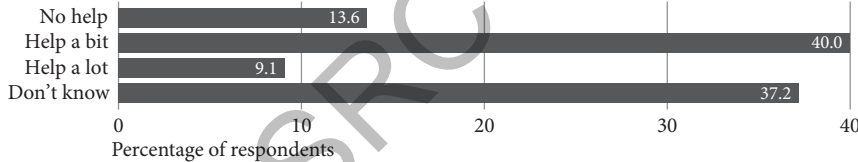
2015

**a) How much do regional organisations (SADC) help?**

2008



2015

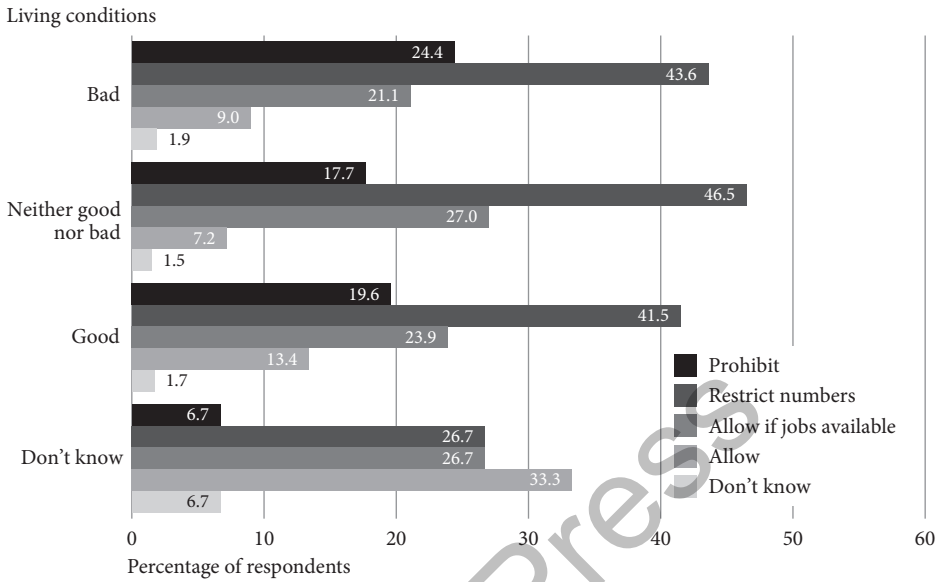


Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

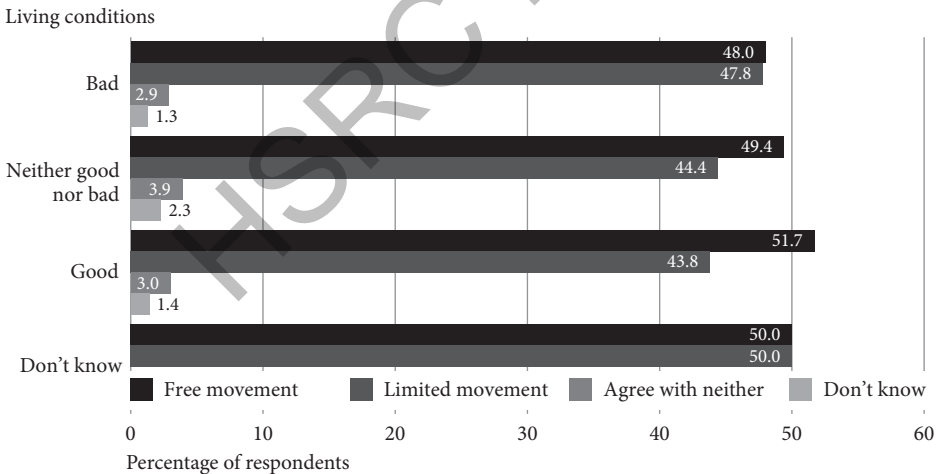
of life? Figure 8.5 shows that out of the proportion of respondents that viewed their living conditions as bad in 2008, about 44% were of the opinion that the number of foreign migrants entering South Africa should be restricted. This sentiment was echoed by about 42% of the respondents who viewed their living conditions as good in the same year. Surprisingly, this finding does not correlate with the responses regarding whether an individual would engage in action to prevent foreign businesses and foreign workers being in the country. According to the responses recorded in 2008 and 2015 (see Appendix A, Figure 8.A1), a significant proportion of the respondents (about 60%) were unlikely to engage in such actions. In 2015 we find no discernible difference on issues relating to foreign migrants among those who viewed their living conditions as bad or good. These attitudes are in line with follow-up questions posed during the same year that report a relatively high response rate in favour of policies that favour foreign skilled labour in South Africa, as well as disagreeing that foreigners take jobs and benefits away from South African citizens (see Appendix A, Figure 8.A1).

Figure 8.5 Views on globalisation, by living conditions, 2008 and 2015

2008: Should people from other countries be allowed into South Africa?



2015: Free movement of migrants versus limited movements across borders



Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

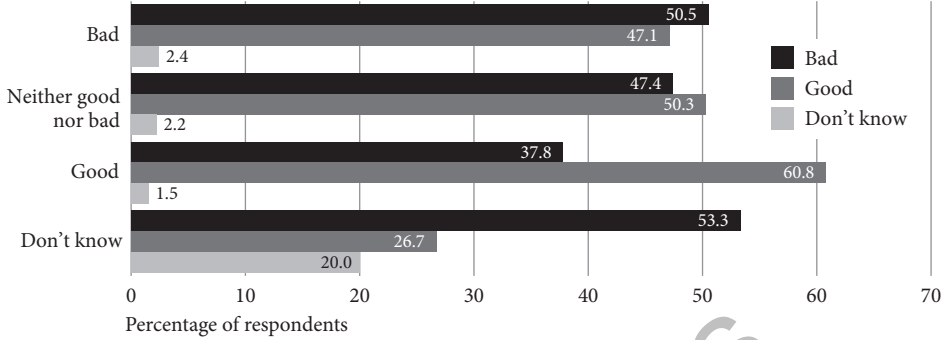
Figure 8.6 shows that among the respondents who viewed their living conditions as poor, a relatively high proportion also expressed disapproval towards the government’s performance in improving public services, whereas among the respondents who believed their living conditions were good, a relatively high proportion expressed a positive attitude towards the public services. These views are similar across the two waves. We also note, in Figure 8.7, that a significant proportion of the respondents

Figure 8.6 Views on provision of public services, by living conditions, 2008 and 2015

How good or bad is government performance at improving public services?

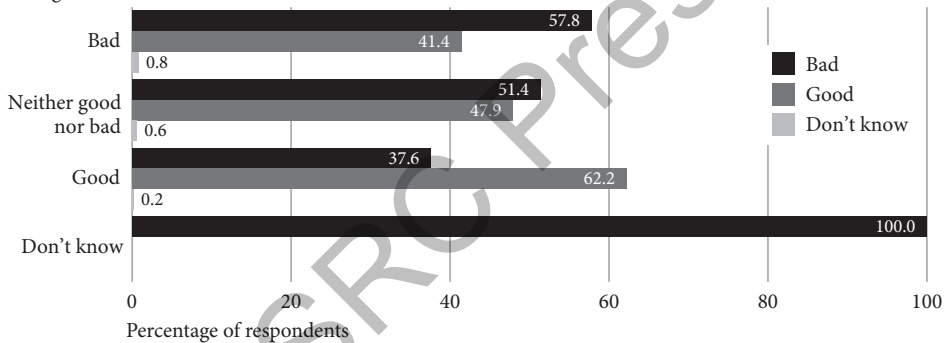
2008

Living conditions



2015

Living conditions



Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

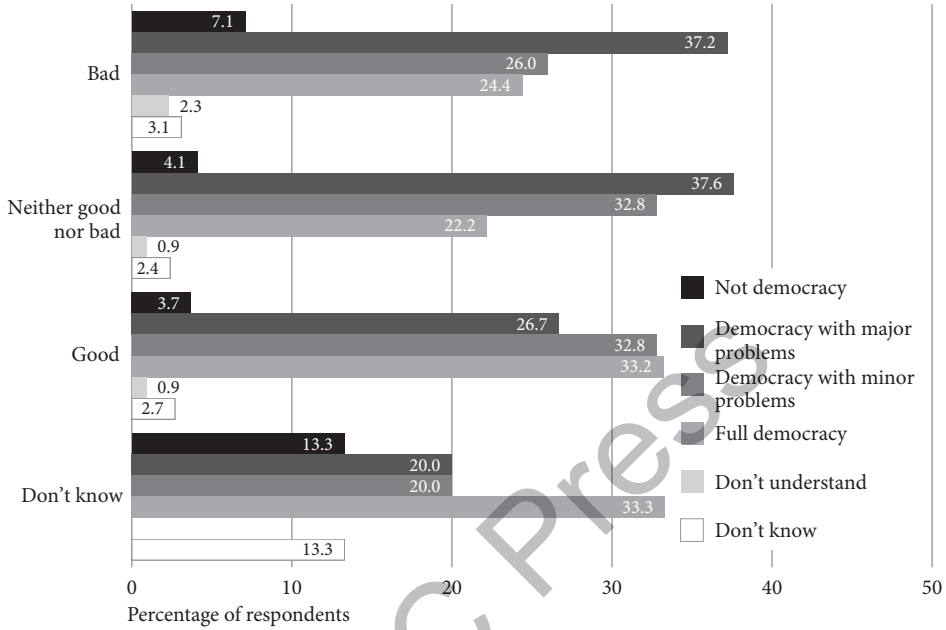
who viewed their living conditions as bad across both survey waves thought that South Africa operated as a democracy, but with major problems to address. Interestingly, we observe a change in attitudes from respondents who viewed their living conditions as good in 2008 compared to their attitudes in 2015. In 2008, the majority of these respondents viewed South Africa as a full democracy or a democracy with minor problems, but this sentiment appears to have changed by 2015, with more respondents in this category expressing concern about democracy in the country. As highlighted in Figure 8.2, governance was seen as one of the major problems affecting South Africa, and further responses expressing attitudes towards management of corruption and inequality corroborated these findings: about 70% of the respondents felt that the government was inefficient in managing corruption and inequality in 2008; this rose to about 80% in 2015 (see Appendix A, Figures 8.A2 and 8.A3).

Figure 8.7 Views on governance, by living conditions, 2008 and 2015

How much of a democracy is South Africa today?

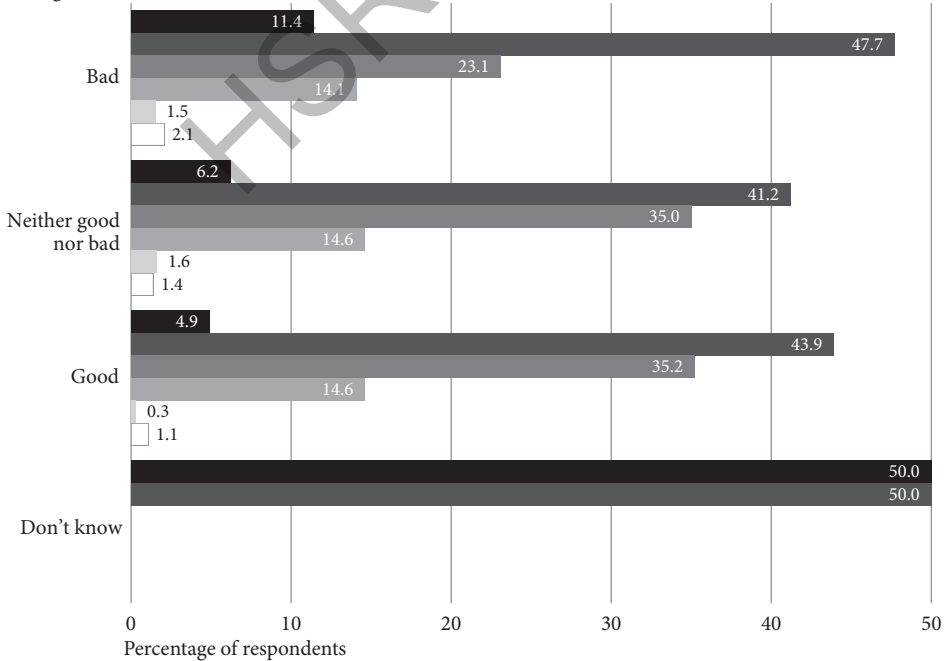
2008

Living conditions



2015

Living conditions



Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

As a final analysis, to explore the effects of globalisation on quality of life, we specify a logit model, based on the following:

$$Y_i = \beta X_i + \delta Z_i + \mu_i$$

where Y_i is a binary representation of quality of life. We convert the responses to current living conditions into a binary measure, that is, 1 = good and 0 = otherwise. X is a vector that includes the explanatory variables for globalisation (immigration control and influence of international organisations), public provision of services and quality of governance. Z is a vector for the demographic controls (race, gender, education, occupation and age). A description of the variables that we use in the analysis can be found in Appendix A, Table 8.A1.

Discussion

We are unable to find a conclusive correlation on the effects of globalisation on quality of life, in line with Clifford Shultz, Don Rahtz and Mark Speece. (2004) and Lina Tsakiri (2010), who find both positive and negative globalisation effects. The contradictory views on the implications of globalisation for quality of life are perhaps the result of the methodology and tools deployed in measuring the impact and huge complexity of parameters characterising globalisation and quality of life (Tsakiri 2010). All we can establish from our analysis is that the ordinary citizen may be poorly informed about the benefits of globalisation, such as increasing innovation and investments in the economy; allowing for free trade of goods and services, which may reduce prices in the domestic market; creating jobs through multinational corporations opening firms in South Africa; allowing for skills transfers through migration; or maintaining political stability within the region by collaborating with neighbouring countries. As such, the average person simply experiences and observes situations in which they may be competing with foreign migrants for jobs and resources, and this can influence their views regarding globalisation.

In a country such as South Africa, with its high unemployment rates, the mixed reactions to globalisation by citizens resonate with evidence from the existing literature. For instance, the fear of losing jobs, which is perceived as one of the negative effects of globalisation, poses a great threat to the embrace of globalisation by workers or citizens (Tsakiri 2010). In addition, local firms can face stiff competition from imported goods, resulting in poor productivity and increased unemployment, which can create negative sentiments among local workers towards exporting countries (Sirgy et al. 2007). Globalisation has also been associated with increased inequalities between the rich and the poor (Ezcurra & Rodríguez-Pose 2013), which further reinforces negative sentiments about globalisation, particularly in South Africa with its pre-existing inequalities carried over from the apartheid past. To a large extent, the impact of globalisation on quality of life is a function of human decisions (Tsakiri 2010). However, the government can tackle the negative implication of globalisation with appropriate policies or decisions, and maximise the resultant opportunities (Tsakiri 2010).

The results of our study show a statistically significant and positive association between good management of the economy and good quality of life across the two waves of the Afrobarometer survey. Similar positive effects on quality of life are obtained from improving basic education and infrastructure. Evidence in the literature indicates that spillover effects of globalisation can include increased public sector spending through increased tax revenues, which can be used to promote investments in education and to upgrade other government services, such as infrastructure and healthcare (Shafeeq, Raza & Ramzan 2019; Sirgy et al. 2007). These findings are in line with the data shown in Figure 8.6, and suggest that governments that can overcome the challenges of providing more equal distribution of public services to all can contribute to a better quality of life for citizens. Table 8.3 presents the marginal effects. The results of our study show a statistically significant and positive association between good management of the economy and good quality of life across the two waves of the Afrobarometer survey.

Regarding quality of governance, we find that even those respondents who were not satisfied with democracy in South Africa in 2008 were associated with a positive quality of life in relation to respondents who perceived that South Africa is not a democracy at all. According to Ronald Labonté et al. (2015), high-level public policies can guarantee that the positive returns from globalisation are inclusive of everyone's wellbeing. Moreover, democracy provides a constitutional avenue for citizens to express their sentiments, through voting or protests, about issues related to their quality of life, such as provision of public services (Frey & Al-Roumi 1999). This finding highlights the importance of quality of institutions, particularly when we observe the inconclusive effects relating to the same issue in 2015, as shown in Table 8.3. As highlighted in Figure 8.7, people's sentiments towards governance in South Africa appear to have worsened between 2008 and 2015. Interestingly, the two survey waves correspond with the period of the Jacob Zuma administration, which, according to reports such as *State of Capture* (Public Protector 2016), was mired in mismanagement of public funds. While the 2008 survey may have been undertaken too early for people to be aware of the state's maladministration, the 2015 survey coincided with the public emergence of various reports related to the state capture investigation.⁵ Some of President Zuma's questionable decisions, and the changes he made to his Cabinet of ministers, may have reinforced people's perceptions about corruption and the way the country was being managed.

The coefficients of the demographic control variables are in line with our previous findings on race in Table 8.1. Race groups other than blacks are associated with better quality of life than this group. People with full-time jobs and tertiary education viewed themselves as having better quality of life than those with no job and no schooling, respectively. These findings are supported by empirical evidence that indicates that education can improve wellbeing through the creation of increased job opportunities and thus economic resources, which are associated with high personal control, reduced poverty and decreased income inequality (Ross & Van Willigen 1997; Zhan, Su & Chang 2022). We also find a non-linear association between age and quality of life. As people become older, entering their working-age phase, their quality of life improves.

Table 8.3 *Determinants of quality of life, 2008 and 2015*

Quality of life	2008	2015
<i>SADC influence (Ref: no help)</i>		
Helps a bit	0.092* (0.048)	-0.010 (0.057)
Helps a lot	0.103* (0.061)	-0.028 (0.070)
Don't know	0.090 (0.058)	0.002 (0.066)
<i>AU influence (Ref: no help)</i>		
Helps a bit	0.084* (0.044)	-0.067 (0.052)
Helps a lot	-0.011 (0.058)	-0.012 (0.058)
Don't know	-0.018 (0.054)	-0.128** (0.064)
<i>Govt management of immigration control (Ref: bad)</i>		
Good	-0.031 (0.028)	0.069*** (0.024)
Don't know	-0.098** (0.048)	-0.045 (0.050)
<i>Govt management of economy (Ref: bad)</i>		
Good	0.071*** (0.025)	0.108*** (0.024)
Don't know	0.132* (0.071)	0.094 (0.086)
<i>Govt improvement of basic education (Ref: bad)</i>		
Good	0.021 (0.027)	0.015 (0.023)
Don't know	-0.064 (0.072)	0.232*** (0.084)
<i>Govt improvement of infrastructure (Ref: bad)</i>		
Good	0.024 (0.026)	0.089*** (0.022)
Don't know	0.016 (0.064)	-0.113 (0.181)

Quality of life	2008	2015
<i>Satisfied with how democracy works (Ref: not a democracy)</i>		
Not satisfied	0.164** (0.078)	-0.018 (0.130)
Satisfied	0.281*** (0.079)	0.151 (0.130)
Don't know	0.209** (0.093)	-0.008 (0.151)
<i>Race (Ref: black)</i>		
White	0.109*** (0.034)	0.201*** (0.029)
Coloured	0.022 (0.033)	0.063** (0.030)
Indian/Asian	0.204*** (0.044)	0.111*** (0.040)
<i>Gender (Ref: male)</i>		
Female	0.052** (0.023)	0.013 (0.021)
<i>Do you have a job (Ref: no not looking)</i>		
No (looking)	-0.074** (0.033)	-0.130*** (0.031)
Yes part-time	-0.036 (0.037)	-0.004 (0.037)
Yes full-time	0.020 (0.031)	0.086*** (0.028)
<i>Education (Ref: no schooling)</i>		
Informal	0.117 (0.105)	0.122 (0.136)
Primary	0.109 (0.067)	0.032 (0.071)
Secondary	0.214*** (0.066)	0.066 (0.069)
University	0.317*** (0.079)	0.226*** (0.074)
Age	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)
Agesq	0.000 (0.000)	0.000*** (0.000)
Observations	2 159	2 380
chi2	163.84***	314.68***

Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

Notes: Marginal effects reported. Robust standard errors in parentheses.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

According to evidence in the literature, employment is a key factor of quality of life (Bilevičienė, Bilevičiūtė & Drakšas 2016; Drake & Wallach 2020).

Conclusion

Overall, the implications of our findings are twofold. First, citizens need to be oriented towards the positive effects of globalisation, and the roles of international communities and bodies such as the SADC and the AU in fostering growth and cooperation among nations, while controlling the rate of migration between and within countries. A good mechanism or institution should be set up or strengthened to increase public awareness of the gains to be made through globalisation, and develop different methods to optimise these benefits in order to improve quality of life. Second, the government needs to provide more transparent and equitable access to basic services that improve quality of life. Transparency in governance is key to engendering citizens' trust in, reliance on and acceptance of policies targeted at increasing general wellbeing. Equity in accessing and sharing national goods and services also plays a major role in ensuring that those who are in dire need of basic services are catered for in the distribution of limited life-enhancing resources. This could ultimately change citizens' perceptions of governance and of their quality of life.

Appendix A

Table 8.A1 presents the questions in the 2008 and 2015 Afrobarometer surveys (Carter 2012; Isbell 2016) that were used to create the variables used in the analysis.

Table 8.A1 Variable questions and response scales, Afrobarometer surveys, 2008 and 2015

Variables	2008		2015	
	Question	Response scale	Question	Response scale
Quality of life	Q4B: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?	Scale of 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good). Don't know is coded as 9.	Q4B: In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions?	Scale of 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good). Don't know is coded as 9.
<i>Globalisation measures:</i>				
Gvt managing immigration	Q57: How well or badly would you say the former Mbeki government was handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? T_SAF: managing immigration.	Scale from 1 (very badly) to 4 (very well). Haven't heard enough is coded as 9.	Q66: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? P_SAF: managing immigration.	Scale from 1 (very badly) to 4 (very well). Haven't heard enough is coded as 9.

Variables	2008		2015	
	Question	Response scale	Question	Response scale
Influence of international organisations such as SADC and AU	Q98: In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say? A – African Union (AU) B – Southern African Development Community (SADC)	Scale from 0 (no help) to 3 (help a lot). Don't know is coded as 9.	Q79: In your opinion, how much do each of the following do to help your country, or haven't you heard enough to say? A – Southern African Development Community B – African Union	Scale from 0 (no help) to 3 (help a lot). Don't know is coded as 9.
Free movement of foreign migrants	Q76A_SAF: How about people from other countries <i>coming to South Africa</i> ? Which one of the following do you think the government should do?	Scale from 1 (prohibit) to 4 (allow anyone). Don't know is coded as 9.	Q76: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Statement 1: People living in southern Africa should be able to move freely across international borders in order to trade or work in other countries. Statement 2: Because foreign migrants take away jobs, and foreign traders sell their goods at very cheap prices, governments should protect their own citizens and limit the cross-border movement of people and goods.	Scale from 1 (agree strongly with Statement 1) to 4 (agree strongly with Statement 2). Agree with neither is coded as 5, and don't know is coded as 9.

Variables	2008		2015	
	Question	Response scale	Question	Response scale
Encouraging foreign investment through businesses and workers	Q77_SAF: How likely is it that you would take part in action to prevent people who have come here from other countries in Africa from: B – operating a business in your area D – becoming one of your co-workers	Scale from 1 (very likely) to 4 (not likely at all). Don't know is coded as 9.	Q83_SAF: In 2014, the Department of Home Affairs introduced a number of new regulations aimed at improving its ability to manage immigration effectively. For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you disagree or agree, or haven't heard enough to say: B – Foreigners should not be allowed to live in South Africa because they take jobs and benefits away from South Africans. C – South Africa's immigration policies should favour exceptionally skilled foreigners and foreign investors to help the economy grow.	Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Haven't heard/don't know is coded as 9.
<i>Economic measures:</i>				
Direction that SA is heading	Q7_SAF: What about the overall direction of the country? Would you say that the country is:	1 = in wrong direction 2 = in right direction 9 = don't know	Q3: Would you say that the country is going in the wrong direction or going in the right direction?	1 = wrong direction 2 = right direction 9 = don't know
Problems facing SA	Q56: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?	Different responses collected under main headings of economics, food/agriculture, infrastructure, gvt services, health and governance.	Q60: In your opinion, what are the most important problems facing this country that government should address?	Different responses collected under main headings of economics, food/agriculture, infrastructure, gvt services, health and governance.

Variables	2008		2015	
	Question	Response scale	Question	Response scale
Problems facing SA	Q57: How well or badly would you say the former Mbeki government was handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? A – managing the economy E – narrowing gaps between rich and poor H – addressing educational needs I – providing water and sanitation services K – fighting corruption in government M – maintaining roads and bridges	Scale from 1 (very badly) to 4 (very well). Haven't heard enough is coded as 9.	Q66: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? A – managing the economy E – narrowing gaps between rich and poor H – addressing educational needs I – providing water and sanitation services K – fighting corruption in government L – maintaining roads and bridges	Scale from 1 (very badly) to 4 (very well). Haven't heard enough is coded as 9.
<i>Governance:</i>				
	Q43: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in South Africa?	Scale from 0 (not a democracy) to 4 (very satisfied). Don't know is coded as 9.	Q41: Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in South Africa?	Scale from 0 (not a democracy) to 4 (very satisfied). Don't know is coded as 9.
	Q42A: In your opinion, how much of a democracy is South Africa today?	Scale from 1 (not a democracy) to 4 (full democracy). 8 = do not understand question/do not understand what 'democracy' is. 9 = don't know	Q40: In your opinion, how much of a democracy is South Africa today?	Scale from 1 (not a democracy) to 4 (full democracy). 8 = do not understand question/do not understand what 'democracy' is. 9 = don't know

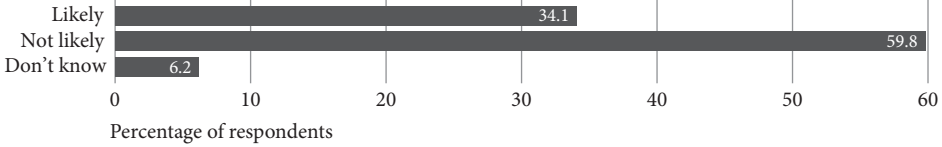
Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

Note: T_SAF, P_SAF, A_SAF and _SAF are naming conventions used in the Afrobarometer surveys for questions that have separate parts.

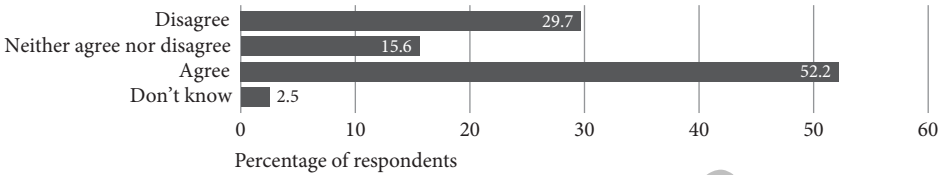
Figure 8.A1 Perceptions regarding foreign businesses and foreign workers, 2008 and 2015

a) Perceptions regarding foreign businesses/skilled labour in South Africa

2008: Would you engage in action to prevent foreign businesses in South Africa?

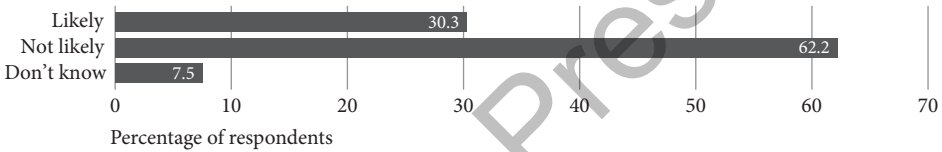


2015: Should policies favour foreign skilled labour in South Africa?



b) Perceptions regarding foreign workers in South Africa

2008: Would you engage in action to prevent foreign workers in South Africa?



2015: Should foreigners take jobs and receive benefits in South Africa?

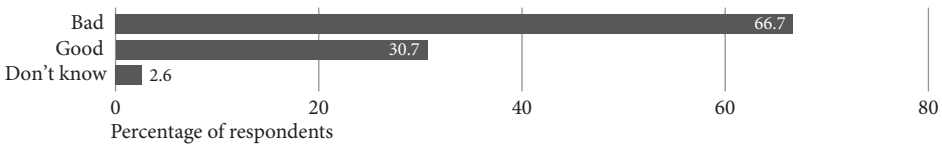


Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

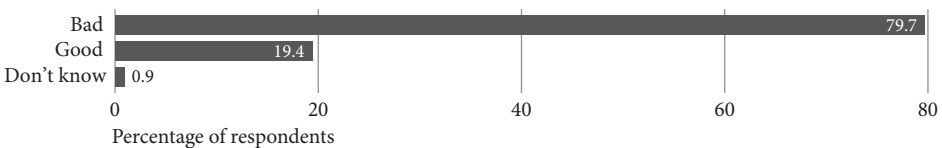
Figure 8.A2 Perceptions regarding government management of corruption, 2008 and 2015

How is government performance with regard to managing corruption?

2008



2015



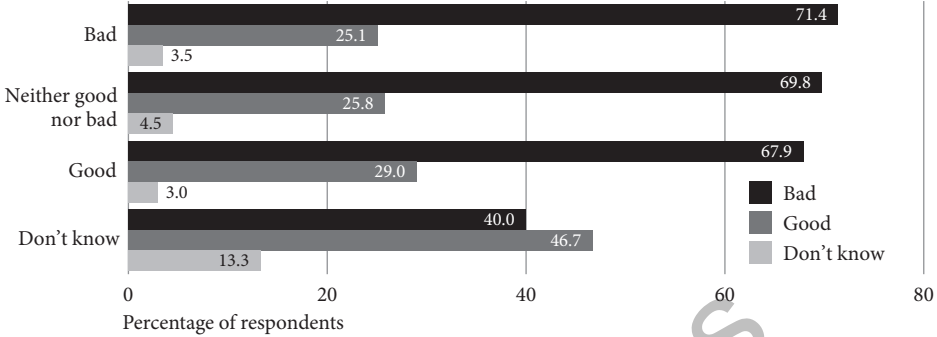
Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

Figure 8.A3 Perceptions regarding government management of inequality, by living conditions, 2008 and 2015

How good or bad is government performance with regard to managing inequality?

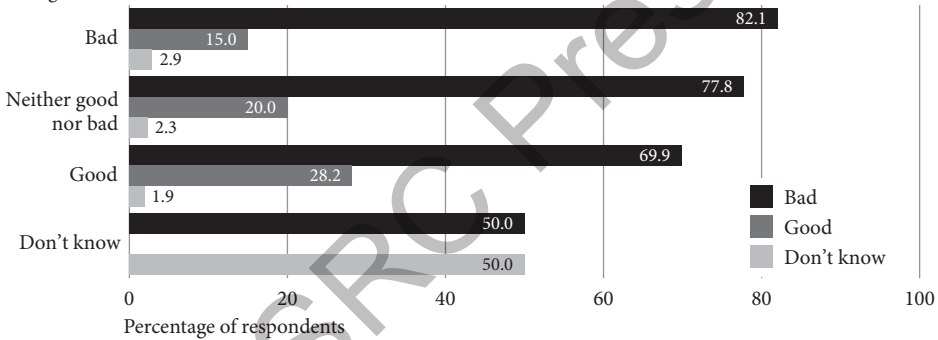
2008

Living conditions



2015

Living conditions



Source: Afrobarometer (2008, 2015)

Notes

- 1 According to the 2019/20 annual report of the South African Department of Home Affairs, the department issued 1 444 business and general work visas and 4 707 critical skills visas during this period (Department of Home Affairs 2019/20: 98). The category of critical skills visas refers to occupations considered to be in high demand, based on the scarce skills lists of the Department of Higher Education and Training. Such skills are therefore considered integral to the achievement of the national development objectives as articulated in the National Development Plan (NPC 2012).
- 2 See Better Life Index, *South Africa*. Accessed October 2023, <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/south-africa/>.
- 3 See Alison Alborz (2017) for discussion of other quality-of-life models.
- 4 Mhaka T, The African Union's crisis of legitimacy, *Aljazeera*, 18 August 2020. Accessed October 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/8/18/the-african-unions-crisis-of-legitimacy>.

- 5 Quintal G, We became more aware of state capture in 2015, says Pravin Gordhan, *BusinessDay*, 19 November 2018. Accessed March 2022, <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/national/2018-11-19-we-became-more-aware-of-state-capture-in-2015-says-pravin-gordhan/>.

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PART 3

**SOCIETY, CULTURE,
IDENTITY AND
PUBLIC GOOD**

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9

Quality of life and mental health: A situated African psychological perspective

Kopano Ratele, Carmine Rustin and Maria Florence

While different conceptualisations of quality of life exist, which can be confounding when trying to make sense of how people think of their lives, in this chapter we consider the notion of quality of life to refer broadly to overall personal and social wellbeing from the perspective and lived experience of the subject. We appreciate that, given the nature of our data, we begin with reduced control over the evidence we will analyse in the chapter. And we are cognisant of the fact that quality of life has also been defined as indicating satisfaction with 'life as a whole as well as different subdomains of life' (Hörnquist 1990: 69). Studies of quality of life have included a focus on psychological health (AhmadiGatab, Shayan & Taheri 2011), physical health (Hjorth et al. 2017), life satisfaction (Novianti, Wungu & Purba 2020), happiness (Nave Leal, Pais-Ribeiro & Martins-Oliveira 2012) and social relations (Xu et al. 2017), as well as environmental and material conditions and economic factors (Anees et al. 2018; Chang et al. 2020; Luburić & Fabris 2017; Nováková & Šoltés 2016). This broad focus of quality of life research can also be a weakness.

South Africa has a respectable body of quality of life studies, although it is relatively small compared to those of other countries (Davids & Gaibie 2011; Makiwane & Kwizera 2006; Møller 1998, 2007; Naude, Rossouw & Krugell 2009; Nglazi et al. 2014; Richards, O'Leary & Mutsonziwa 2007; Tannor et al. 2017). South African studies of quality of life have, among a range of topics, foregrounded perceptions of whether life is improving or not since the advent of democracy in 1994, health issues such as HIV and Aids, housing, basic services and connectedness with others, as elements of quality of life. However, in much of this work there is an underappreciation of the African situatedness of South Africa. That is to say, there is a lack of development or theorisation of approaches to and interpretations of quality of life with an African onto-epistemological orientation (to which we turn presently, focusing specifically on a situated African psychological perspective). In our analysis, given the data set used, we elected to foreground life satisfaction, social relations and economic conditions (with a focus on finances) as important aspects of quality of life. We draw on the South African data in the World Values Survey (WVS) Round Six (Inglehart et al. 2014) to investigate the associations between several variables representing life satisfaction, quality of life and mental health. The sample comprised 3 505 South African citizens, 50 per cent female and 50 per cent male.

A brief overview of a situated African psychological perspective

Of particular interest is that much of the quality of life work produced in South Africa does not have a good grasp of what we understand as the African locatedness of South Africa (Ratele 2019), which is to say the situatedness of South Africans as African people and of South Africa, with its colonial and apartheid history, as an African country. The problem is not that there have not been quality of life studies (for example, Møller 2007; Møller & Roberts 2021; Richards, O'Leary & Mutsonziwa 2007; Tannor et al. 2017), but that there is a need to properly situate the people being studied, as well as the theories, research questions, tools and interpretations used (not forgetting those who do the studies). The scarcity of research that richly grounds social and personal wellbeing from the perspective of the lived experience of individuals in an African society, and of the wellbeing of African nations among nations of the world, has several consequences. Among others, it suggests that our understanding of quality of life may need further development and refinement that will ground it in the vicissitudes of everyday life as it unfolds. More significantly, it suggests a need to develop conceptual tools and interpretations of quality of life from African perspectives.

The contention that quality of life research has not demonstrated a good grasp of the situatedness of South Africans as an African people in an African country might raise hackles in some research quarters. However, it is precisely the fact that South Africa has, for a long time, battled to understand itself as an African country that invites thinking about its locatedness in historical and contemporary Africa. Thinking about the place of South Africa in Africa in turn leads us to think about how we might best approach the study of quality of life from African perspectives.

A body of perspectives that seeks to embed psychological knowledge in African contexts is found in African psychology (Nwoye 2015, 2021; Ratele 2017b). African psychology has been defined as all psychology related to African countries and African people (Ratele 2017a). However, not all psychology practised in African countries centres Africa or Africans as such. Many of the therapies and much of the research and teaching in the field of psychology in a country like South Africa continue to be dominated by colonial sensibilities, alienating ideas and Euro-Americancentric questions, approaches and explanations (Ratele 2019). The same domination of Euro-Americanist life views over Africa in general holds true when it comes to psychological research into quality of life. In contrast, African psychology in a strict sense refers to a specific, decolonial, affirmative way of conducting research, as well as conceptual and practical work (Ratele 2019). To distinguish African psychology in this sense from the expanding body of African psychology whose weaknesses include an extractive, conservative or mythologising inclination, this kind of work can be referred to as a situated African psychological perspective. The greatest potential for social and personal wellbeing offered by this perspective is the advancement of an African-centred, decolonising psychological engagement with subjects and the situations in which they actually exist, as opposed to an imaginary one (Malherbe et al. 2021; Ratele & Malherbe 2022). Such engagement can enable subjects to search for new ways of thinking and feeling about their

situatedness, and act to change their situation in order to improve it and their lives. At the same time, as an onto-epistemic stance, a situated African psychological orientation enables researchers to eschew both mimicry of colonial-modern Euro-American centrism and untethered abstractions – in other words, zero-point onto-epistemologies. This orientation privileges the exigencies of everyday life situations, and the social, economic, political and cultural factors that impinge on that life.

In the next section we discuss studies of quality of life undertaken in South Africa that are not necessarily situated in the sense understood here. We shall then make brief remarks on some of the still inchoate ideas that might compose more situated studies.

Quality of life

As alluded to above, a number of quality of life studies have been undertaken in South Africa, both pre- and post-1994. Given South Africa's history, it is not surprising that such studies in a newly democratic South Africa would focus on quality of life domains related to poverty and inequality, in the hope that these studies would influence the policy choices of a new government (Møller 1997b). Given the numerous articles on quality of life and the space limitations of this chapter, we will restrict our focus in this section to three collections on quality of life: a volume edited by Valerie Møller published in 1997 (Møller 1997a), a *Social Indicators Research* special issue in 2007, and a handbook edited by Irma Eloff published in 2019 (Eloff 2019).

The 1997 volume edited by Møller paid particular attention to social indicators (given the apartheid government's lack of sound, reliable statistical data), which would 'guide and monitor the changes occurring in a new democracy' (Møller 1997b: 1). According to Habibullah Khan, 'social indicators refer to the various attempts made to measure the development of health, nutrition, housing, income distribution and other aspects of social and cultural development' (Khan 1991: 158). Møller's volume therefore includes several chapters on poverty and inequality, as well as chapters on crime, trauma, mental health and matters relating to democracy and optimism, among others. These chapters point to the diversity of what was considered important for quality of life in a South African context, especially in the period transitioning from an apartheid state to a democracy.

Ten years later, the *Social Indicators Research* special issue provided an update on quality of life developments in the first ten years of democracy, along the same lines as the 1997 volume, with a focus on social and economic domains of quality of life (*Social Indicators Research* 2007). It thus included health-related articles (focusing on HIV and Aids), and articles on poverty and inequality. In this issue of the journal Neil Higgs proposed an Everyday Quality of Life Index (EQLi) to measure quality of life beyond economic indicators (Higgs 2007). The domains included in the EQLi were 'socio-economic status (with special reference to poverty), urbanisation, health (nutrition, exercise and fitness), stress/pressure, quality of the environment, satisfaction of human needs, connectivity, optimism, subjective well-being, and the overall measure of well-being' (Higgs 2007: 331). Møller, in her article in the special issue, focused

on life satisfaction in relation to material living standards. Her results indicated that improved material living standards were positively associated with life satisfaction (Møller 2007). Another interesting focus in this issue was on religiosity and quality of life. Stephen Rule (2007) examined three aspects of religiosity, namely, doctrinal orthodoxy, religious denomination and frequency of attendance at religious meetings. The association of these aspects with three quality of life measures – ownership of modern conveniences, satisfaction with government institutions and life satisfaction – was assessed. The results indicated a statistically significant correlation between religiosity and quality of life.

The *Handbook of Quality of Life in African Societies* (Eloff 2019) extends the quality of life focus beyond South Africa to other African countries. It provides insights into some of the factors that impede quality of life for the individual in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as considering solutions to some of the challenges identified. In addition, it provides perspectives on what makes for a good life in African societies. The 25 chapters touch on a number of quality of life domains, including social factors such as connectedness (which we also examine in our analysis, although it is not clear whether our questions measuring connectedness are similar to those discussed in the *Handbook*), community, culture, economy, environment, education, health and family. As in other works, the domains covered under the umbrella of quality of life are wide and varied, which, as suggested above, can be confounding.

In the 'Foreword' to the *Handbook*, Møller says the perspectives it offers are those of

'insiders' who know first-hand what matters for life quality in the local situation – many earlier reports on the state of African societies have been compiled by 'outsiders'. Too often such reports by 'outsiders' have tended to focus exclusively on the 'objective' aspects of quality of life that are captured in facts and figures. Here we are asked to look beyond the present state of 'objective' quality of life to take a more holistic view of African well-being: to consider how best people living in African societies can realise their life goals, and those of their families and communities, using their own resources. (2019: v)

The claim being made here is that the contributions on quality of life in the *Handbook* are based on an African-situated perspective. The strength of the *Handbook* is that it includes contributors from different countries on the continent. In addition, a few of the contributors attempt to richly embed their work within their contexts, rather than using these contexts only as sites of data collection. The present chapter is more aligned to this latter approach that situates quality of life within our lived contexts. We use psychology as a lens to approach quality of life from an African-centred perspective.

From the different aspects of quality of life addressed in these volumes, we observe that quality of life encompasses a broad range of factors that contribute to or impede quality of life; that it is complex and multidimensional; and that it is context-specific. While quality of life studies foreground particular domains, including psychological health, physical health, life satisfaction, happiness and social relations, as well as environmental

and economic factors and material conditions, what becomes evident from the quality of life studies in South Africa and Africa (as noted in the three collections discussed here), is that these domains are limiting when attempting to understand people's perceptions of the quality of their lives within what we can call actually existing complex contexts. Furthermore, we concur with the argument made by Shazly Savahl et al. (2019) that while large-scale quality of life measurements are needed, we should not forego individuals' narratives and subjective accounts of their everyday lived experiences and of what contributes to or detracts from their quality of life.

Mental health

The WHO defines mental health as

a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community. (2013: 6)

Mental health is integral to the overall health status of individuals, along with physical and social wellbeing (WHO 2022). The WHO (2013) argues that it is imperative to operate within a human rights framework when dealing with mental health matters, as this framework foregrounds the protection and promotion of individuals' human rights. However, despite the importance of mental health to overall health and wellbeing, mental healthcare is neglected in many parts of the world. Vikram Patel et al. argue that

the global burden of disease attributable to mental disorders has risen in all countries in the context of major demographic, environmental, and sociopolitical transitions. Human rights violations and abuses persist in many countries, with large numbers of people locked away in mental institutions or prisons, or living on the streets, often without legal protection. The quality of mental health services is routinely worse than the quality of those for physical health. Government investment and development assistance for mental health remain pitifully small. Collective failure to respond to this global health crisis results in monumental loss of human capabilities and avoidable suffering. (2018: 1553)

This picture is concerning, given that mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders account for 10 per cent of the global burden of disease and 30 per cent of the non-fatal disease burden. Depression affects approximately 264 million people worldwide, making it one of the leading causes of disability. And people with severe mental disorders have a shorter life span, dying 10 to 20 years earlier than the general population (WHO 2022). Nonetheless, much can be done to prevent and treat mental health disorders and to promote the mental health wellbeing of people around the world (Patel et al. 2018).

The South African government has taken various steps over the past 27 years to rectify the dire state of mental healthcare in the country, moving from the racially segregated delivery of services to the integration of mental health into a primary

healthcare approach. Key among the initiatives taken have been the promulgation of the Mental Health Care Act (No. 17 of 2002) and the National Mental Health Care Policy Framework and Strategic Plan 2013–2020 (Department of Health n.d.). The intention of the Policy Framework and Strategic Plan is to provide a framework for the further transformation of mental healthcare, as well as to provide guidance on how to deal with the promotion of mental health and the prevention and treatment of mental illnesses across the nine provinces. This policy and strategic plan were developed in recognition of the reality that, notwithstanding the promulgation of legislation, access to equitable, quality, comprehensive and timely mental healthcare in South Africa was wholly inadequate. Despite the development of the policy, however, the state of mental health among the population has not improved much. This became abundantly clear at the time of the Life Esidimeni tragedy in 2016, in which approximately 143 people died in psychiatric facilities, some of which were unlicensed, across Gauteng province.¹

A report by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) on the state of mental healthcare in South Africa (released in March 2019) highlights the continued challenges facing mental healthcare. These include the underfunding of mental healthcare, particularly poor delivery of mental health services to rural areas and correctional facilities, the neglect of services for children and adolescents, and the prolonged and systematic neglect of the implementation of mental health policies, among others (SAHRC n.d.).

The loss of life in the Life Esidimeni case highlights the considerable costs of failed implementation, neglect and mismanagement of mental healthcare in South Africa. Given the foregrounding of a human rights approach to mental healthcare, it is imperative that an intersectional approach to it should be adopted and, as advocated by Patel et al. (2018), should take into consideration the impact of social and environmental factors on the mental health of individuals. An intersectional approach advocates that mental healthcare services should be scaled up considerably, included in the provision of universal health coverage by the state, and integrated into the overall response to health priorities. These priorities include HIV and Aids, non-communicable diseases and, given our current context, pandemics such as Covid-19.

Some quality of life literature appears to suggest that one can investigate the associations of quality of life with mental health, that is, that quality of life and mental health are independent of each other (see Sharpe et al. 2016). There is also literature that considers psychological health as a domain of quality of life (see Post 2014). In other words, one can consider mental health as a component of quality of life to be assessed. In our study, we adopted the latter approach.

Methodology

The study reported on in this chapter employed a cross-sectional correlational design to analyse the associations between a variety of psychosocial variables, life satisfaction, quality of life and mental health, using the South African data from the WVS. While this

imposes limitations on our analysis, because of our lack of control of the data-gathering methods used in the survey and the questions asked of the subjects, the WVS, as an international survey that measures opinions, values and beliefs related to a variety of aspects of the quality of life of citizens across different countries, is significant enough to make our use of these data acceptable, because of the design of the original study and the methods of data collection applied.

The South African data set analysed for this chapter comprised 3 505 South African citizens. A multistage stratified area sampling method was used to select the sample for the original data set. The stages included first the selection of enumerate areas, followed by the selection of qualifying households, with the selection of respondents as the final stage in the selection process. Only those over 16 years of age and living in residential areas were included in the sample, which comprised 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men.

The variables life satisfaction, satisfaction with finances, meaning and purpose of life, and mental health formed part of the analysis for our study, as indicators of quality of life. Life satisfaction was measured with one question about how satisfied subjects are with life as a whole these days, on a 10-point scale. Satisfaction with finances was also measured with one question on a 10-point scale. Meaning and purpose of life were measured on a 4-point scale, with the question asking how often the subject thinks about the meaning and purpose of life. We considered the data for the question 'to what degree are you worried about situations related to jobs, children and education, war, terrorist attack, and surveillance' as providing some indication of the subjects' state of mental health.

Associations were tested between the quality of life indicators described above and tradition, agency, involvement in organisations and importance of family, friends, leisure, politics, work and religion. We analysed the data using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27.0) and computed Spearman's rho correlations and chi-square analyses to test for significant associations.

Results

For the present study, associations were tested between the social and personal or psychosocial factors and quality of life indicators in the WVS, as described above. The psychosocial factors included in the analysis were the importance of certain aspects of the participants' lives (family, friends, leisure time, politics, work, religion); agency; connectedness (involvement in a series of organisations); and tradition. The quality of life indicators were life satisfaction; satisfaction with finances; thoughts about meaning and purpose; and mental health state (indicated by the extent to which participants worry about certain situations). Significant associations between several of the selected psychosocial factors and the quality of life indicators were found in this analysis (see results in Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Chi-square (r) and Spearman's rho correlation (χ^2) coefficients

Factors associated with quality of life indicators		Life satisfaction	Finance	Meaning and purpose	Joblessness	Child education	War	Terrorist attack	Civil war	Surveillance
Family	r	-.015	-.003	.052**	-.068**	.055**	-.011	-.013	-.002	-.007
	α	.378	.842	.002	.000	.001	.500	.438	.916	.696
Friends	r	-.002	-.008	-.088**	-.020	-.013	.006	.001	.003	-.014
	α	.908	.633	.000	.239	.424	.729	.932	.878	.389
Leisure	r	-.081**	-.082**	.018	-.081**	.078**	-.033	-.029	.022	-.024
	α	.000	.000	.289	.000	.000	.052	.080	.192	.148
Politics	r	-.012	-.027	.016	-.084**	-.081**	-.019	-.016	.009	.003
	α	.483	.104	.328	.000	.000	.260	.352	.584	.852
Work	r	-.026	.016	.062**	.095**	.065**	.026	.003	.005	.001
	α	.121	.347	.000	.000	.000	.120	.838	.756	.952
Religion	r	-.074**	-.054**	.036*	.012	.033*	-.011	-.002	.000	-.019
	α	.000	.001	.031	.460	.048	.517	.899	.997	.272
Agency	r	.409**	.398**	-.115**	-.058**	-.032	-.013	-.006	-.024	.039*
	α	.000	.000	.000	.001	.055	.457	.721	.148	.022
Tradition	r	-.109**	-.054**	-.164**	.013	-.007	-.007	-.007	.009	-.001
	α	.000	.001	.000	.446	.692	.695	.687	.579	.945
Church org.	χ^2	32.899**	26.374**	.304	15.934**	2.864	11.193**	10.096**	16.505**	3.301
	α	.000	.000	.582	.000	.091	.001	.001	.000	.069
Sport org.	χ^2	22.207**	15.115**	11.137**	2.557	6.487	18.456**	8.393**	13.184**	13.094**
	α	.000	.000	.001	.110	.011	.000	.004	.000	.000
Art org.	χ^2	4.080	7.749	3.219	.103	.227	6.334	5.248	5.664	3.266
	α	.043	.005	.073	.748	.634	.012	.022	.017	.071
Labour org.	χ^2	15.273**	21.989**	5.778	.935	.301	3.411	2.268	3.264	7.346
	α	.000	.000	.016	.333	.583	.065	.132	.071	.007
Political org.	χ^2	4.159	3.113	5.186	2.152	7.377	1.924	4.047	6.228	1.863
	α	.041	.078	.023	.142	.007	.165	.044	.013	.172
Environ. org.	χ^2	3.733	7.707	.005	1.156	.005	7.974	4.037	5.254	1.385
	α	.053	.006	.946	.282	.944	.005	.045	.022	.239
Profess. org.	χ^2	25.347**	24.517**	.444	6.003	2.697	5.626	3.109	2.392	1.010
	α	.000	.000	.505	.014	.101	.018	.078	.122	.315
Humanitarian org.	χ^2	12.729**	22.755**	1.537	.793	.671	10.259**	5.153	9.667**	5.815
	α	.000	.000	.215	.373	.413	.001	.023	.002	.016
Consumer org.	χ^2	9.307**	20.871**	3.417	2.647	.104	8.946**	3.317	5.022	3.118
	α	.002	.000	.065	.104	.747	.003	.069	.025	.077
Self-help org.	χ^2	10.440**	16.128**	4.382	2.844	.236	7.356	6.309	6.798	3.739
	α	.001	.000	.036	.092	.627	.007	.012	.009	.053

Note: * indicates a significant relationship at $\alpha < .05$; ** indicates a significant relationship at $\alpha < .01$

Our analysis indicates that the more important leisure time and religion are to South Africans, the more satisfied they are with their lives. (Higher scores on leisure time and religion indicate less importance.) The results also indicate that the more agency someone has, the better their life satisfaction is. Regarding tradition, since higher scores indicate that a person is less traditional, the significant negative association indicates that the more traditional they are, the more satisfied they are with their life. This is true for satisfaction with finances as well; that is, importance of leisure and religion, agency and tradition are all positively associated with satisfaction with finances.

Where meaning and purpose are concerned, associations were found with the importance of family, friends, work and religion, as well as with agency and tradition. The positive correlations for importance of family, work and religion indicate that the more important these aspects are, the more thought South Africans dedicate to meaning and purpose in their lives. On the other hand, the more important friends are, the less thought is given to meaning and purpose. Because a higher score indicates less thought about meaning and purpose, the negative correlation with agency indicates that the more agentic the person is, the more they think about meaning and purpose. Because higher scores on meaning and purpose, as well as on tradition, indicate less thought about meaning and purpose and less tradition respectively, the negative association is an indication that the more traditional a person is, the less thought they give to meaning and purpose.

The mental health state variables, measured by the 'worry items' described above, are associated with several of the factors measured. Regarding mental health state, the results indicate that as work becomes more important, there is more worry about joblessness. However, the more individuals worry about joblessness, the less important family, leisure and politics become. Because a higher score indicates less worry about joblessness, the negative association indicates that the more agentic the person is, the more they worry about joblessness. The more important family, leisure, work and religion are, the more they worry about their children's education. However, the more they worry about their children's education, the less important politics becomes. Because a higher score indicates less worry about surveillance, the positive association indicates that the more agentic the person is, the less they worry about surveillance.

Significant associations were found between involvement in a range of organisations and the indicators of quality of life and mental health state. Involvement in nine of the ten organisations (church, sport, art, labour union, political party, professional association, charitable, consumer, self-help, other) is associated with general satisfaction with life, whereas involvement in all but political organisations is associated with satisfaction with finances. Involvement with four of the organisations (sport, labour, political, self-help) is associated with meaning and purpose. Associations were also found between involvement in all of the organisations and at least one (up to five) of the mental health state variables.

Regarding mental health, the biggest worries expressed are with regard to job security and children's education. Those participants who express that family is important to

them are less likely to worry about job security and more likely to worry about their children's education. Those who see leisure time as important are less worried about job security but are also worried about their children's education. When politics is important, they are less worried about job security and about their children's education. When work is important, participants worry about job security and their children's education. When religion is important, they indicate worry about their children's education. There are no significant correlations between friends and these mental health state indicators. More agency is associated with more worry about job security and less worry about surveillance. Tradition is not significantly associated with any of the mental health state indicators.

Discussion of the findings

To make sense of the findings reported above, we return to our framework – the situated psychological perspective (Ratele 2017a, 2017c, 2019; see also, for example, Adjei 2019; Martín-Baró 1994; Nwoye 2017; Osei-Tutu et al. 2022). We have argued that a situated psychological perspective helps us to think of the situation in which individuals live, and their search for different ways of understanding and acting on their situation. Our analysis found associations between the following variables: leisure time, religion, agency and tradition, on the one hand, and life satisfaction and satisfaction with finances on the other. The participants who indicated the most satisfaction with life in general, as well as satisfaction with their finances, were those who viewed leisure time and religion as important and indicated higher levels of agency and being traditional. The importance of family, work, religion and having more agency were positively associated with having meaning and purpose in life. On the other hand, the importance of friends and being traditional were negatively associated with meaning and purpose.

As expected, tradition was found to be positively associated with life satisfaction (Botha & Booysen 2013; Freudiger 1983). In the context of our analysis, the more traditional South Africans are, the more satisfied they are with their lives. Where cultural tradition is what people look towards to make sense of their lives, it is to be expected that tradition will be associated with life satisfaction (Lu 2008). The results of this study further show that the more traditional South Africans are, the less thought they give to questions of meaning and purpose. Although this might seem to contradict expectations, it makes sense from a situated psychological perspective that tradition will provide meaning and purpose for these participants, thereby negating the need to continually think about meaning and purpose in their lives.

African societies are said to have high levels of religiosity. Studies conducted across Africa report on the importance of religion for finding perspective in difficult circumstances and for providing a sense of identity, both of which contribute daily to quality of life (Copeland-Linder 2006; Newton & McIntosh 2013; Wilson & Mittelmark 2013; Wilson, Wissing & Schutte 2019). In the present study, the importance of religion was found to be associated with life satisfaction. The more important religion was,

the more satisfied individuals were with their lives. Rule (2007) points to the expected association between religion and life satisfaction, since four out of five South Africans report that they have a religious faith, and both material wealth and self-assessed life satisfaction are positively related to both religious beliefs and church attendance. Rule's study highlights that religion gives some people an anchor for their lives, implying that the more central religion is to people's lives, the more likely they are to be satisfied with their lives. The findings of the present study are similar, in that it found that in addition to the importance of religion, membership of a church organisation was also associated with life satisfaction and satisfaction with finances, as well as with four of the six mental health state indicators (worry about joblessness, war, terrorist attacks, civil war).

We found that participants were more likely to think about meaning and purpose when family, work and religion were important than when friends were important to them. This could be an indication that friends could serve as a distraction from a focus on meaning and purpose in one's life (Delle Fave et al. 2013). In contrast to tradition, the more important religion was, the more thought South Africans devoted to meaning and purpose in their lives, a finding similar to that of Henry Mason (2018). Possibly, in this case thoughts about God also involved thinking about one's purpose and the meaning of life. The difference in association might also be because the questions of religion and tradition were phrased differently. For the religion item, the question was, 'How important is religion in your life?' The tradition question described a traditional person and asked to what extent the participant identified with the description.

Satisfaction with both life and finances was associated with affiliation to 90 per cent of the organisations listed in this study. Some of the memberships were also associated with meaning and purpose and the mental health state indicators. Involvement in organisations can be seen as an indication of connectedness, which appears to be promotive of quality of life among these South African citizens. The African principle of ubuntu, which finds expression in the idiom '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (a person is a person because of others), undergirds the expectation that interrelationships and interdependence between community members are fundamentally important to wellbeing in the African context (Mulaudzi & Peu 2014). Janna de Gouveia and Liesl Ebersöhn (2019) describe a complex interplay between independence, dependence on others and support for others as making up the concept of connectedness. Their study highlights the value of sociocultural identity for accessing support (De Gouveia & Ebersöhn 2019).

Many recent studies have examined connectedness as a significant pathway to wellbeing in non-individualistic cultures (Baloyi & Mokobe-Rabothata 2014; Delle Fave & Soosai-Nathan 2014; Harrell 2018; Nwoye 2017; Selvam 2013, 2015; Selvam & Collicutt 2013; Urata 2015; Wang et al. 2018; Warren & Donaldson 2018). For example, a South African study conducted by Jane Cramm and associates in the Eastern Cape province found that life satisfaction was determined not only by financial status but also by the ability to live well with others (Cramm, Møller & Nieboer 2010). The most important source of meaning for students in Botswana was found to be family relationships (Wissing 2014).

The explanation offered by Marié Wissing is that in such a context family is considered innately valuable, but also that family members offer each other support. In recent studies it is reported that South Africans list the following as meaningful in their lives: children, family, church, God, life, but also livestock and house (Wilson et al. 2018; Wilson, Wissing and Schutte 2019). This suggests that connection may be as important as access to resources in the South African context. Wilson, Wissing & Schutte (2019) argue that there is a gap in the literature with regard to how meaning, relational wellbeing and context work together in an African context.

Agency has been shown through our study to be closely associated with quality of life. Studies by Martha Nussbaum (2000), Amartya Sen (1999) and Guido Veronese, Fayez Mahmud and Dana Bdier (2023) report similar findings. The results of this study indicate significant associations between agency and all the quality of life variables, including some of the mental health status variables. This supports the findings by Carmine Rustin (2018) that for a sample of South African women, agency and happiness are integrally linked. Similarly, in our study, we found agency to be closely associated with all quality of life indicators for the South African sample. We interpret this in the light of the historical and contemporary struggles of many South Africans against oppressive conditions and for a dignified life (Gouws & Coetzee 2019; Hassim 2006). In a context where most South Africans were denied their human rights in the past and had relatively little control over their lives, the results of the study suggest that personal and social wellbeing are related to agency. We suggest that quality of life studies should have an enlarged focus on agency, and should examine how quality of life is enhanced by the facilitation of agency for South African citizens.

The participants in our study who valued leisure time were those with fewer challenges, as indicated by their satisfaction with their finances. They were also more satisfied with life in general. The importance of leisure time was also negatively associated with concerns about job security. Furthermore, for this sample of South African women and men the same patterns of associations were found for life satisfaction and satisfaction with finances. This is another indication of the impact that socioeconomic status has on the quality of life of South Africans. Aligned to this is the tendency for job security to overtake other concerns such as leisure, politics and even family. This is demonstrated by the significant negative associations between the variables importance of leisure time, politics or family, and the mental health state variable of worry about joblessness. Concern about necessities such as employment and income appears to supersede any less immediate concerns for these participants.

South Africans are concerned about job security, as is to be expected, given the unemployment rate of 34.4 per cent;² and given South Africa's history of inequalities, it is reasonable to expect that joblessness would be associated with mental health (McKee-Ryan et al. 2005; Paul & Moser 2009; Taris 2002). The results of the present study demonstrate how disparities in access to material resources influence the wellbeing and mental health of South Africans. Lack of education, single-parenting and unemployment are considered among the most prevalent social indicators of poverty in South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2017).³ African psychological perspectives

would argue that context has a great bearing on how we characterise mental health (Kpanake 2018; Ratele 2017a); in a context of massive joblessness, concerns about jobs and job insecurity would be evident. Over the years, South African researchers have highlighted the negative consequences of unemployment for South Africans' quality of life (Afrobarometer 2006; Louw 2007; May & Norton 1997; Møller 1993; Møller & Dickow 2002). In the 2007 special issue of *Social Indicators Research*, Møller points towards the Poverty Report produced in 1994 by the South African Labour and Development Research Unit (Saldrú 1994), which shows that income inequalities form a crucial aspect of quality of life for South Africans, thus confirming the connection between subjective and economic wellbeing. According to Stephan Klasen (1997), this connection could be the result of people's living conditions, or due to the fact that they rank so low in such an unequal society. Møller (1998) finds that income is a stronger predictor of quality of life than race for South Africans.

Given that income is a predictor of quality of life, and that joblessness is associated with unfavourable mental health, we assumed that Covid-19, with its effects on the economy and loss of jobs, and the strict lockdown restrictions placed on South Africans by the government, would have had an impact on the quality of life and mental health of citizens (Greyling, Rossouw & Adhikari 2021; Long et al. 2021; Nguse & Wassenaar 2021). As the World Bank economic analysis for South Africa indicated, by the end of 2020 approximately 1.5 million people had lost their jobs, job losses were felt more among low-wage earners, and the wages of employed people had decreased by 10–15 per cent (World Bank 2021). The increase in unemployment would thus have negatively affected the mental health of individuals. This assertion is supported by research conducted in eight countries, including South Africa, relating to Covid-19, quality of life and mental health (Long et al. 2021). Research by Talita Greyling, Stephanie Rossouw and Tamanna Adhikari (2021) provides further evidence that the fear of job loss had a negative impact on happiness among South Africans during this period.

In addition to the associations between jobs and mental health, our study considered the data for the question 'to what degree are respondents worried about situations related to children's education and mental health?'. Alongside job security, children's education was one of the biggest worries expressed by participants. Concerns about children's education and their prospects would also have been amplified during this period, since so many low-resourced schools did not have adequate strategies in place to ensure that the children were able to keep up with their schooling under lockdown conditions. Across South Africa, the schooling learners lost during lockdown amounted to a full year of learning (Unicef 2021).⁴ Linked to people's concerns about employment, then, are concerns about whether their children's education will prepare them adequately to compete for jobs in a struggling economy. Concern about their children's education is exacerbated further by the education system not keeping up with the production of the skills necessary to support a knowledge-based economy. The respondents in the study in informal settlements by Robin Richards, Brian O'Leary and Kingstone Mutsonziwa(2007) identified lack of skills training, higher qualifications and work

experience as obstacles to employment. Lawrence Schlemmer and Valerie Møller (1997) identified this in a study in which they reported that the increasing lack of government resources placed the responsibility on citizens themselves to improve their quality of life through education and upskilling.

Conclusion

A problem in quality of life research is the diverse and at times contradictory conceptualisations of what constitutes quality of life. While our analysis examined some common variables in quality of life research, we also highlighted commonly neglected issues, particularly when looking at people in African contexts from the perspective of their lived experiences.

A key conclusion to be drawn from our analysis is the significance of a sense of belonging and connectedness as a strong contributor to quality of life and mental health for this sample of South Africans. This was expected, given our thinking from a situated African psychological perspective. Our study supports previous African and non-African research that indicates that connectedness is associated with quality of life (for example, Wissing, Schutte & Fadiji 2019) and mental health (Wickramaratne et al. 2022). In the context of the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic presented, not being able to access specifically religious organisations would have impacted greatly on a population that relied heavily on this resource.

Another key conclusion of our study is that agency is a strong predictor of quality of life. Agency does not appear to receive sufficient attention in research on quality of life within African contexts, and we want to encourage more research that focuses on this factor.

The finding that unemployment is a concern that impacts on the quality of life and mental health of this sample is not new in quality of life research. However, it supports previous research that has reported the centrality of unemployment and poverty in quality of life research across Africa over more than two decades (Møller 1997b).

Dynamics related to tradition and religion as contributors to quality of life in the African context are also supported by our findings, as discussed above. Given the research that reports the high levels of religiosity and adherence to tradition across Africa (Wilson, Wissing & Schutte 2019), we anticipated finding such associations between religion and tradition on the one hand, and quality of life on the other.

The contribution of this study to existing research is to draw attention to aspects of quality of life in an African setting, as well as to provide a framework for studying quality of life, and its relationship to mental health, from an African-situated perspective. We tried, given the data set from which we drew, to situate (South) Africa as a dynamic and living context that has an impact on quality of life and mental health, instead of simply treating it as a site of investigation.

A key limitation of our analysis is that we had to make use of a secondary data set, and therefore had little control over the methods of data gathering and the formulation of questions asked of subjects about quality of life. Consequently, the potential to obtain a rich understanding, from an African-situated, decolonised psychological perspective, of the subjects' self-definitions of social and personal wellbeing, and the context and dynamics that influenced those definitions, was limited. While the use of existing data is not precluded, future research from an African-centred perspective will benefit from having control of all stages of the research, from conceptualisation, through research questions and methods to explanations of the findings. As we have argued in this chapter, future studies should begin by developing questions informed by people's lived experience and understanding of quality of life.

Notes

- 1 Child K, New number of Esidimeni dead – 143, *TimesLive*, 10 November 2017. Accessed December 2021, <https://www.timeslive.co.za/news/south-africa/2017-11-10-new-number-of-esidimeni-dead-143/>.
- 2 Reuters Staff, South Africa's unemployment rate hits new record high in second quarter, *Reuters*, 24 August 2021. Accessed December 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/safrica-economy-unemployment-idUSJ8N2KH000>
- 3 Statistics South Africa (2017) *Poverty trends in South Africa: An examination of absolute poverty between 2006 & 2015*, media release, August 2017. Accessed September 2022, <https://rebrand.ly/0d49f6>
- 4 Unicef (United Nations Children's Fund) (2021) *Learners in South Africa up to one school year behind where they should be*, press release, 22 July. Accessed October 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/learners-south-africa-one-school-year-behind-where-they-should-be>.

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10 *Vaccines: Key to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of all South Africans*

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Overview of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us, as a global community, of our interconnectedness and shared vulnerability. It has presented an unprecedented global challenge, negatively impacting lives and livelihoods, with the most vulnerable populations within and between countries bearing a disproportionate burden of these impacts. South Africa's government responded swiftly to the pandemic by declaring a State of Disaster on 15 March 2020. By the end of September 2022, 618 million SARS-CoV-2 infections had occurred globally, and an estimated 6.55 million people had died from Covid-19, the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Our World in Data 2022). In South Africa there were 4.02 million SARS-CoV-2 cases and an estimated 102 000 Covid-19-related deaths between March 2020 and September 2022 (Our World in Data 2022).

The initial anxiety, uncertainty and fear of the unknown experienced by people during the first weeks of the pandemic began to be replaced by awareness of the public health measures put in place to help individuals protect themselves and those around them. Initially, these interventions were directed at slowing the spread of the virus through lockdowns, hand-sanitising, social distancing, mask-wearing, symptom-screening, testing and isolation or quarantines. The development of six efficacious vaccines within a year of the first reported cases of SARS-CoV-2 brought much hope, but as the realities of limited vaccine access became apparent, and variants of concern that were able to evade both natural and vaccine-induced immunity emerged, hope faded (Andreano & Rappuoli 2021; Mistry et al. 2022). However, notwithstanding the ongoing surges of infection experienced globally, vaccinated individuals experience lower rates of severe disease, typically have mild to asymptomatic infection and are less likely to spread the virus to others (Antonelli et al. 2022).

For most low- and middle-income countries, including South Africa, participation in clinical trials to evaluate several vaccines was no guarantee of access to these vaccines. Several countries have yet to receive doses of vaccines (Padma 2022). Despite South Africa eventually securing sufficient vaccine doses, and making them available at no cost to its citizens, uptake remains low (Dzinamarira et al. 2021; Engelbrecht, Heunis & Kigozi 2022), in sharp contrast to childhood vaccination programmes, described below. As the country enters this third stage of the Covid-19 pandemic, namely, living with the virus, and as we try to restore an already struggling economy and address multiple ongoing epidemics of TB, HIV, gender-based violence, the epidemic of non-

communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, and a potential tsunami of long-term sequelae of Covid-19 infection, high population-level vaccination coverage rates remain an important tool for improving quality of life for all. Thus, a better understanding of issues relating to vaccine access and uptake at an individual and population level remains critical. What lessons can we learn from childhood vaccination programmes in South Africa?

Childhood vaccination and improving child survival

A century ago, illness and death from infectious diseases in the first year of life were common (Piret & Boivin 2021). The emergence of a growing number of vaccines against childhood illnesses has changed the life trajectory of infants globally, underscoring the importance of vaccines as powerful public health tools to reduce morbidity and mortality, enhance child survival and lay the foundations for improved quality of life (Levine & Robins-Browne 2009). Routine childhood immunisation programmes built on vaccine access and availability, resulting in high uptake, have played a major role in the realisation of the population-level benefits of vaccinations. For example, the programmatic rollout of the attenuated measles vaccine has reduced measles mortality rates by 90 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa (Levine & Robins-Browne 2009).

While immunisation programmes are widely recognised as among the most cost-effective public health interventions available (Ngcobo 2008), and despite the many benefits of vaccines, low- and middle-income countries continue to face significant challenges in accessing newer childhood vaccines and including them in their immunisation programmes (Blecher et al. 2012). In 1995, the Department of Health in the Nelson Mandela administration introduced a unified Expanded Programme on Immunisation in South Africa (EPI-SA) (Wiysonge et al. 2012). In contrast to the fragmented apartheid-era vaccination programmes, in which access and the allocation of resources were determined by race and geospatial location (Ngcobo 2008; Wiysonge et al. 2012), the EPI-SA offers equitable access to vaccines to all South Africans.

The EPI-SA has led to significant advances in child survival and health because of increasing childhood vaccine coverage rates, and has been a strong platform for the introduction of new vaccines (Table 10.1). Between 2000 and 2006, full immunisation coverage in children increased from 66 per cent to 84 per cent, with significant reductions in cases of measles and rubella and associated mortality rates (Ngcobo 2008). In 2006, South Africa was certified as a polio free country by the Africa Region Certification Commission (Ngcobo 2008). The current EPI-SA vaccine schedule consists of 15 vaccines that are administered from birth until 12 years to both girls and boys, as shown in Table 10.1 (Department of Health 2015).

The EPI-SA has also seen South Africa become the first country on the continent to introduce a number of new vaccines (Table 10.2), and the only country in the WHO Africa region that self-finances its vaccination programme (Blecher et al. 2012). In 1995, the hepatitis B vaccine was introduced, and thereafter, in 1999, the *Haemophilus influenzae* type b (Hib) vaccine was included (Dlamini & Maja 2016). More recently,

Table 10.1 *Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI-SA) revised childhood immunisation schedule from December 2015*

Age of administration	Vaccine
Birth	BCG (tuberculosis vaccine)
	OPV (oral polio vaccine)
6 weeks	OPV (oral polio vaccine)
6 weeks	RV (rotavirus vaccine)
6 weeks	DtaP-IPV-Hib-HepB (diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis-injectable polio-Haemophilus influenza b-hepatitis B vaccine)
6 weeks	PCV (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine)
10 weeks	DtaP-IPV-Hib-HepB (diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis-injectable polio-Haemophilus influenza b-hepatitis B vaccine)
14 weeks	RV (rotavirus vaccine)
14 weeks	DtaP-IPV-Hib-HepB (diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis-injectable polio-Haemophilus influenza b-hepatitis B vaccine)
14 weeks	PCV (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine)
6 months	Measles
9 months	PCV (pneumococcal conjugate vaccine)
12 months	Measles
18 months	DtaP-IPV-Hib-HepB (diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis-injectable polio-Haemophilus influenza b-hepatitis B vaccine)
6 years	Td (tetanus, reduced dose diphtheria vaccine)
12 years	Td (tetanus, reduced dose diphtheria vaccine)

Source: Department of Health (2015)

Table 10.2 *Achievements and milestones of the EPI-SA, 1995–2015*

1995	Hepatitis B vaccine introduced.
1999	Hib vaccine introduced.
2000	Shift from percutaneous to intradermal route for BCG vaccine.
2002	Neonatal tetanus eliminated.
2006	SA declared polio free; last reported case was in 1989.
2008	Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine and rotavirus vaccine introduced.
2009	SA the first African country and middle-income country to introduce pneumococcal vaccine into the public immunisation programme, in April (\$20 per dose = R600 million annually).
	SA the first African country to introduce rotavirus vaccine into public immunisation programme, in August (\$7.5 per dose = R150 million annually).
	Switch from whole-cell pertussis vaccine to acellular pertussis vaccine with the introduction of the pentavalent vaccine (5-in-1).
2014	Rollout of the human papillomavirus.
2015	SA the first country in Africa to introduce a fully liquid hexavalent vaccine (6-in-1) by replacing the pentavalent (5-in-1) and hepatitis B vaccines.

Source: Adapted from Dlamini & Maja (2016: 677)

South Africa became among the first countries in Africa to introduce the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV) and rotavirus vaccine (RV), in 2008 (Dlamini & Maja 2016). Another success was the 2014 rollout of the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to girls above the age of nine, to prevent HPV infection and subsequent cervical cancer (Dlamini & Maja 2016).

All these efforts have been underpinned by a robust and evidence-based decision-making process. The process of introducing a new vaccine takes into account a number of complex factors, including burden of disease, effectiveness of the vaccine, safety of the vaccine, cost-effectiveness of the vaccine, total cost and affordability, feasibility of implementation, international guidelines, and the advice of the South African National Advisory Group on Immunisation (Blecher et al. 2012).

The EPI-SA has averted an estimated 2.5 million premature deaths annually, and reduced the prevalence of disabilities. The introduction of the pneumococcal vaccine resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in pneumococcal disease. The inclusion of the rotavirus vaccine resulted in a reduction in hospitalisation of children from diarrhoea of up to 60 per cent (Dlamini & Maja 2016). Notably, the programme has resulted in improved quality of life for the most vulnerable sections of the population.

Notwithstanding these significant achievements, the benefits of the EPI-SA remain unevenly distributed, with wealthier, urban populations experiencing higher rates of coverage and better health outcomes than rural populations (Bärnighausen et al. 2008). This has been further compounded by the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Covid-19 has adversely affected childhood immunisation programmes globally, due to restricted workforce availability, vaccine supply issues and fear of utilising health services during Covid-19 surges. This is not unique to South Africa. A recent Unicef report highlights a continuing decline in global childhood vaccination rates (Unicef 2022), and estimates that 23 million children missed out on childhood vaccines in 2020 because of disrupted routine health services, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Despite the progressive easing of economic restrictions, a further 25 million children missed receiving childhood vaccinations in 2021 (Unicef 2022). This is the highest number of children missing immunisation since 2009. More than 60 per cent of countries that participated in the WHO Pulse Survey on Continuity of Essential Health Services during Covid-19 in 2020 also reported disruptions in routine immunisation services (WHO 2020a).

In the context of its successful existing vaccination programmes, the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent vaccine rollout presented an unprecedented test of South Africa's ability to procure and successfully roll out a novel vaccine among adults. This rollout was made even more important by the unprecedented impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of South Africans. In the lead-up to the first Covid-19 vaccines being administered in February 2021, the country faced a number of challenges, from vaccine nationalism and hoarding by wealthier countries to reduced confidence in government as a result of corruption, all of which increased vaccine hesitancy among the population and led to the use of 'lawfare' to challenge both the vaccine rollout and

efforts to increase vaccination rates. As a result, the Covid-19 vaccination programme provides a useful case study for understanding the barriers that need to be overcome and the facilitators required to achieve success with future vaccination efforts, and to enable future pandemic preparedness. This case study is the focus of the rest of this chapter.

Covid-19 vaccines

The development of Covid-19 vaccines has been a great scientific success story. By early 2021, several vaccines had been approved as safe and effective by regulatory agencies globally and were being rolled out across a number of countries (WHO 2021a). Studies have shown that these vaccines protect against severe disease (Baden et al. 2021; Polack et al. 2020; Shinde et al. 2021) and that even when breakthrough infections occur, the viral load is lower, thus reducing onward transmission of the virus (Levine-Tiefenbrun et al. 2021). A person who has been vaccinated thus reduces the chances of another person getting infected. The development and rollout of an effective vaccine less than 12 months after the discovery of a virus was unprecedented and was the result of many scientific innovations, including the use of novel platforms, extensive collaboration and data-sharing, as well as extensive public funding of vaccines (Forni & Mantovani 2021; Wouters et al. 2021).

The prioritisation of vaccines as an approach to controlling the Covid-19 pandemic is unsurprising, given the key role vaccines can play in reducing both the transmission of Covid-19 and the severity of illness caused by it. In addition, comprehensive vaccine rollout and high levels of coverage could make it possible for governments to move away from non-pharmaceutical interventions, and therefore allow the economic and social activities halted by lockdowns to resume. The consensus was that a global rollout of Covid-19 vaccines was needed to end the Covid-19 pandemic (Wouters et al. 2021), though more recently it has been recognised that, with the continued emergence of new variants and immune escape, this may not be the case (Karim & Karim 2021).

Ensuring equitable vaccine access globally

Early in the pandemic, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the WHO, recognised the exceptional nature of Covid-19 and that ensuring the affordability of a vaccine against it would require a departure from the status quo, stating that

traditional market models will not deliver at the scale needed to cover the entire globe. Solidarity within and between countries and the private sector is essential if we are to overcome these difficult times. (WHO 2020b)

This recognition was followed by the launch of the Covid-19 Technology Access Pool, an unprecedented effort to support the collaborative development of a Covid-19 vaccine (WHO 2021b). Yet, more than 18 months after the announcement of the development of the first effective Covid-19 vaccines, the distribution of vaccine doses remained highly unequal, with high-income countries vaccinating millions while low-

and middle-income countries struggled to access the quantities of vaccine needed to immunise their own populations.

These difficulties in making a Covid-19 vaccine affordable, available and accessible in low- and middle-income countries are not novel. Many of the same challenges have existed for decades in regard to other health technologies. Though there remain significant inequalities in access to these technologies, there has also been a series of efforts on the part of activists, governments and international organisations to make them more accessible globally. The results of these efforts include the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework, which provides a mechanism to make influenza vaccines affordable in exchange for virus sharing (WHO 2022); the Doha Declaration, which allows for the relaxation of intellectual property protections in the event of a public health emergency (WTO 2001); and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance's Pneumococcal Advance Market Commitment, which enabled the expedited rollout of a pneumococcal vaccine in low-income countries (Gavi the Vaccine Alliance 2019).

However, the 2019 Covid-19 pandemic exposed the limitations of these measures in the context of the need to make a novel vaccine accessible to all. The response to this challenge has been mixed; nonetheless, the pandemic has given rise to novel collaborative efforts to make a Covid-19 vaccine more affordable globally.

The primary challenges in rolling out a Covid-19 vaccine for many low- and middle-income countries, including South Africa, have been lack of sufficient doses of vaccines, lack of sufficient infrastructure for the distribution of vaccines, and high levels of vaccine hesitancy in the general population. These challenges have arisen, in part, from the lack of manufacturing capacity to produce the number of doses needed to vaccinate the majority of the world's population. After the registration of the first effective vaccines, high-income countries received millions of doses almost immediately after the Phase 3 results establishing the efficacy of vaccines had been announced, while low- and middle-income countries have only been able to access limited doses, and with some delays (KFF 2021). This inequity in vaccine distribution and access was the result of advance market commitments that enabled wealthier countries to purchase vaccines in development and gain preferential access to them, and in some instances monopolies, in exchange for funding the development of vaccines (Phelan et al. 2020). This has, in some instances, resulted in wealthier countries having secured enough doses to vaccinate their populations several times over, while poorer countries have been reliant on doses becoming available through the COVAX AMC, a funding mechanism created by Gavi the Vaccine Alliance as a means to give low- and middle-income countries access to Covid-19 vaccines (Yamey 2021).

As manufacturing capacity is scaled up and middle-income countries are increasingly developing their own capacity to produce Covid-19 vaccines, the next challenge to accessing these vaccines is likely to become the intellectual property protections involved, which have presented serious challenges to the affordability of medicines in the past. Intellectual property protections have allowed pharmaceutical companies to prevent others from manufacturing products they develop, creating artificial monopolies

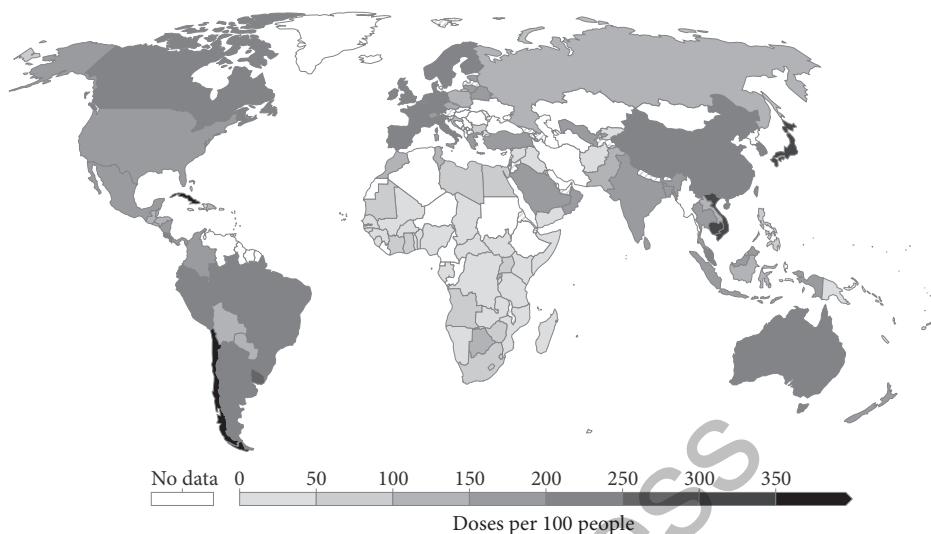
that drive up the prices of life-saving health technologies. Recognising the potential impact of intellectual property protections on access to Covid-19 vaccines, South Africa and India submitted a joint application in October 2020 to have intellectual property protections for health technologies related to Covid-19 waived (WTO 2020). The waiver quickly garnered support and attracted several co-sponsors, including the African and Least Developed Countries Groups at the World Trade Organization (WTO), while high-income countries such as the UK, Norway and Canada opposed the waiver (WTO 2021). Ultimately, the waiver that passed was substantially weaker than the initial South Africa–India proposal, and achieved little beyond utilising existing emergency provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver¹ (Green 2022).

Vaccine rollout in South Africa

The Covid-19 vaccine rollout in South Africa has been complex. The government procured vaccines through a range of different mechanisms, including the COVAX Advance Marketing Commitment, bilateral agreements with manufacturers such as Pfizer, Johnson & Johnson and the Serum Institute of India, as well as through the African Medical Supply Platform (Department of Health 2021a).

Initially, one of the biggest barriers to initiating the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines was the supply shortages, which were exacerbated by inequitable distribution of available doses and vaccine nationalism (The Lancet Microbe 2021; Su et al. 2021). High-income countries such as the US, the UK and Israel were able to achieve high vaccination rates, while low- and middle-income countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, were unable to roll out vaccines for some time. In many countries, Covid-19 vaccine rollout only commenced between late 2021 and mid-2022 (Figure 10.1).

Currently, a total of five Covid-19 vaccines are approved for use in South Africa: Cormirnaty (Pfizer/BioNTech), Ad26.COV2.S (Johnson & Johnson), Covishield (Oxford/AstraZeneca), Covilo (Sinopharm) and Coronavac (Sinovac). However, the current vaccine regime only includes the Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines (Covid-19 Vaccine Tracker 2022). The programme is implemented through a public–private partnership, with the government being the sole purchaser and distributor of vaccines, and public and private institutions being responsible for the administration of the vaccines (Department of Health 2021a). Through this partnership, the government has been able to leverage the infrastructure and systems of the well-financed private health sector to ensure equitable access to vaccines, and thus prevent overwhelming the relatively underresourced public sector on which approximately 80 per cent of the population relies. The government reimburses private sites for the administration of vaccines to uninsured or non-paying individuals.² The public–private partnership has also resulted in the creation of a single information system for the entire vaccination programme, to allow for efficient reporting. The Electronic Vaccination Data System is a website-based platform that manages vaccinations and collects information related to vaccinations (Department of Health 2022).

Figure 10.1 Total Covid-19 vaccine doses administered per 100 people as of 1 September 2022

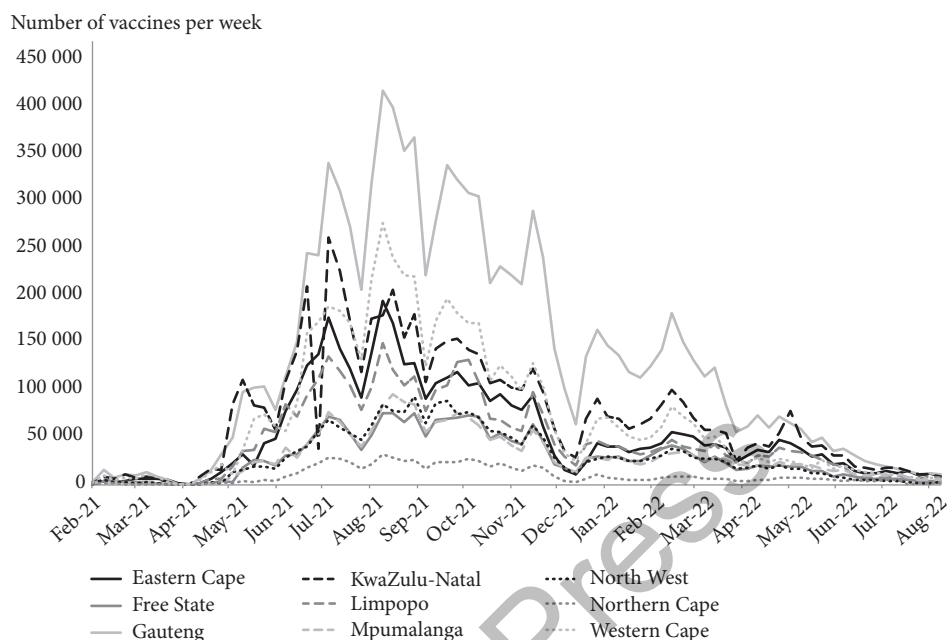
Source: Our World in Data (2022)

Note: All doses, including boosters, are counted individually.

In South Africa, a three-phase rollout programme was adopted that prioritised frontline healthcare workers as the first recipients of a Covid-19 vaccine in Phase 1 (Department of Health n.d.a). In Phase 2, people over the age of 60, essential workers, adults with comorbidities and individuals in congregate settings received the vaccine (Department of Health n.d.a). In the initial stages of the Phase 2 rollout, elderly populations were given access to the vaccine; Phase 2 was then expanded as the rollout scaled up.

After receiving doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca ChAdOx1-S vaccine in January 2021, South Africa halted the rollout of this vaccine due to the emergence of the 501.V2 variant, which substantially reduced the efficacy of the ChAdOx1-S vaccine in the country (Madhi et al. 2021). In February 2021, the first phase of South Africa's vaccine rollout commenced under a Phase 3b trial of the Ad26.COVS Covid-19 vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson. This trial aimed to vaccinate 500 000 healthcare workers, pending the full approval and licensing of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine by the country regulator, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA). By March 2021, 250 000 healthcare workers had been vaccinated through the Sisonke Trial.³ However, in April 2021, the trial was temporarily halted while the US Food and Drug Administration reviewed cases of a rare clotting disorder in six recipients of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.⁴ After two weeks, on 28 April 2021, the Sisonke Trial resumed,⁵ and by the end of the trial in mid-May, more than 480 000 healthcare workers had been vaccinated (Discovery 2021b).

On 17 May 2021, South Africa began Phase 2 of the Covid-19 vaccine rollout aimed at vaccinating 5 million people, including people over the age of 60. Phase 2 of the rollout initially utilised only Pfizer vaccines, while the SAHPRA finalised its approval of the

Figure 10.2 Total number of vaccines administered per week, by province, April 2021–July 2022

Source: Department of Health (n.d.b)

Johnson & Johnson vaccine. The vaccination programme was subsequently rolled out to various population groups using a phased strategy that took into account the risk of infection, severe disease and death (Department of Health 2022).⁶

As of August 2022, more than 37 million vaccine doses had been administered to more than 20 million people in South Africa (Department of Health n.d.b). This meant that 51.15 per cent of the adult population had received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine. Most vaccines were administered between July 2021 and January 2022, with vaccination rates declining as the year progressed (Figure 10.2). Vaccination rates were highest in populations aged over 60 years (71.67 per cent) and those aged 50–59 years (66.81 per cent); 18–34-year-olds had the lowest vaccination coverage (38.10 per cent) (Department of Health n.d.b).

As of August 2023, more than 39 million doses of one of the two vaccines had been administered in the country, with more than 22 million citizens having received at least one dose. However, this was far below the vaccination targets for herd immunity that had been set by the South African government (Department of Health n.d.a). Prior to the implementation of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, the herd immunity threshold was estimated to be the vaccination of 67 per cent of the more than 60 million South African citizens. Since the emergence of highly transmissible SARS-CoV-2 variants, the herd immunity threshold has been revised to approximately 90 per cent of the population (Discovery 2021a). SARS-CoV-2 variants may undermine immunity

conferred by prior infection or vaccination, and result in new waves of infection (Maher et al. 2022). Various factors drive the emergence of new variants; thus far, within-host/individual evolution, especially in regard to immunocompromised individuals, has been described as the main driver of the emergence of new variants (Avanzato et al. 2020; Choi et al. 2020; Nature Medicine 2022). With a high number of immunocompromised individuals due to the presence of people infected with HIV, South Africa is at great risk of experiencing the emergence of new, highly transmissible variants.

The emergence of SARS-CoV-2 variants of concern – alpha, beta, delta, gamma and omicron and its sublineages – added further complexity to the challenge of bringing the pandemic under control (Darby & Hiscox 2021). These variants of concern are associated with greater transmission, as well as with immune escape from existing vaccines, which may lead to changes in mortality and morbidity (Darby & Hiscox 2021; Madhi et al. 2021; Shinde et al. 2021). Insofar as these variants have led to immune escape, they have had a substantial impact on the efficacy of some vaccines (Madhi et al. 2021; Shinde et al. 2021), hampering efforts to bring the pandemic under control and raising questions about the future efficacy of current vaccines. An editorial in *The Lancet Microbe* summarised the challenges posed by the new variants:

Vaccines will be instrumental in the control of Covid-19, but their global distribution will be challenging and their effect won't be immediate. As cases and deaths continue to rise across the world, the non-pharmaceutical interventions to constrain the spread of SARS-CoV-2 that the global population has by now become accustomed to will need to remain in place for a while longer. (The Lancet Microbe 2021)

Factors influencing Covid-19 vaccine uptake in South Africa

Vaccine hesitancy and other factors influencing vaccine uptake

While vaccine hesitancy has been a problem in high-income countries, it is less prevalent in African countries. Nonetheless, it was recognised that, even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were growing rates of vaccine hesitancy in South Africa, particularly in regard to the rollout of the HPV vaccine (Cooper, Van Rooyen & Wiysonge 2021). Studies of Covid-19 vaccine acceptance in South Africa show that acceptance rates range widely, from as few as 49 per cent to as many as 82 per cent of those surveyed indicating that they would take the vaccine (Burger et al. 2022; Cooper, Van Rooyen & Wiysonge 2021; Katoto et al. 2022; Sallam, Al-Sanafi & Sallam 2022). Factors influencing vaccine acceptance include education level, socioeconomic status, trust or mistrust in government and income level (Katoto et al. 2022).

Wave five of the National Income Dynamics Study–Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAMS), conducted in April–May 2021, showed that vaccine hesitancy was declining, and that vaccination uptake had increased (Burger et al. 2021). However, even where there are high levels of acceptance, there remains a gap between intention

to be vaccinated and actual vaccination status (Burger et al. 2022). The NIDS-CRAMS attributes this gap to socioeconomic barriers, including lack of access to cars, inability to take time off work, and lack of access to the online vaccination registration portal. Consequently, the relatively low vaccine uptake in South Africa cannot be addressed solely through improving public trust in vaccines or addressing vaccine hesitancy; strategies for increasing uptake need to address some of the socioeconomic barriers people face when attempting to get vaccinated (Burger et al. 2021).

A rising tide of misinformation and public mistrust in vaccines

Vaccine hesitancy has been a growing concern over the past decade. A survey conducted by the World Economic Forum and Ipsos in July and August 2020 found that 36 per cent of South Africans were unwilling to receive a Covid-19 vaccine (Markovitz & Russo 2020). Key reasons underlying this reluctance included lack of confidence in the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. Research has shown that there are five factors that influence individual willingness to take vaccines: confidence (in the effectiveness and safety of vaccines), complacency (regarding the necessity of the vaccine), convenience (or constraints to uptake of vaccines), risk calculation (of perceived risks related to vaccination versus infection), and collective responsibility (or the willingness to protect others through one's own vaccination). These are known as the 5C-model of the drivers of vaccine hesitancy (Betsch et al. 2018). These factors also provide context for what drives vaccine hesitancy in South Africa.

In the context of Covid-19, the preponderance of misinformation and myths about vaccines has seen an increase in reluctance to receive a Covid-19 vaccine. There are strong links between vaccine hesitancy and misinformation and myths about Covid-19. Increasingly, there have been reports of misinformation regarding the safety of Covid-19 vaccines and a proliferation of conspiracy theories about the vaccine supposedly harming those who take it. The UN secretary-general, António Guterres, has described this phenomenon (dubbed an 'infodemic' by Hernandez et al. 2021) as 'a tsunami of misinformation, hate, scapegoating and scare-mongering' that was unleashed as Covid-19 spread.⁷ It poses a significant challenge to gaining control of the pandemic, and must be addressed urgently (Cooper, Van Rooyen & Wiysonge 2021). Social media has been the main platform through which Covid-19 vaccine misinformation has spread. A qualitative content analysis of one million tweets found a large proportion of 'highly polarized and active anti-vaccine conversations that were primarily influenced by political and nonmedical Twitter users' (Hernandez et al. 2021). Worryingly, the analysis also found that healthcare professionals only accounted for 10 per cent of the most influential Twitter profiles engaging in Covid-19 vaccine conversations. This highlights the existence of a vacuum in regard to factual and credible information, which allows misinformation to thrive unabated.

Factors that influence public trust in Covid-19 vaccines

Several factors influence public trust in Covid-19 vaccines; they include confidence in the effectiveness and safety of the vaccines, competence and reliability of the institutions that deliver them, public engagement and communication, effective and inclusive vaccine policies, and general public trust in the government.

Historically, public trust in the South African government has been very low, due to real and perceived corruption and mismanagement by those entrusted with the power to deliver services to citizens. In the 2020 Edelman Trust Barometer, the South African government was ranked as the least trusted among the 26 countries that had been surveyed just a year before the global pandemic (Edelman 2020). Therefore, going into the pandemic, the South African public sector was experiencing extremely low levels of confidence on the part of citizens. There was an increase in trust in the South African government in the subsequent year; however, this was marginal, and resulted in South Africa moving up only one place in the ranking to become the second most untrusted government (Edelman 2021).

Despite this, South Africans remained confident about the government's response to the pandemic. In a survey conducted by Ipsos in April 2020, 83 per cent of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the government's response to the pandemic and 'mostly' or 'completely' trusted the information it was providing about Covid-19 (Ipsos 2020a). In a follow-up survey, conducted from November to December 2020, confidence in the government's response to the pandemic had declined to 56 per cent (Ipsos 2020b). This decrease in public trust can be attributed to certain actions that the government took in relation to the pandemic, and to some factors outside its control. Below we describe actions that encouraged public trust and those that discouraged it.

Actions that encouraged public trust

Timely and effective interventions

In the early stages of the pandemic, the government was quick to establish restrictions to slow the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, while it built the capacity to cope with an inevitable upward surge in infections. This was relatively successful in comparison with other countries, as the upward surge and initial peak in infections were delayed by several weeks from what would have been expected, had there been no restrictions.

Policies and strategies informed by science

The government demonstrated that it had been working with experts in its response to the pandemic, by providing exposure to the various ministerial and presidential advisors through public engagements. It shared written advisories with the public, and seemed ahead of the curve in implementing the ever-changing recommendations on how to limit the spread of the virus; for example, the country was one of the first to implement nationwide mask mandates.

Multisectoral collaboration

While trust in the South African government is low, trust in non-governmental institutions and business is relatively high. By partnering with private sector and non-governmental institutions, the government was able to enhance the credibility of its response. Further, the government enabled the participation of various sectors of civil society in the policy-making process, which gave it even more credibility.

Timeous and transparent communication

Early in the pandemic, the government set up systems for daily reporting of public health surveillance data. The president also gave regular updates on how the government was responding to the pandemic. Additionally, the minister of health held regular public engagements, which gave experts a platform to address citizens directly. Major developments relating to the pandemic were reported rapidly. The establishment of the network for genomic surveillance very early in the pandemic allowed for early identification and reporting of the variants of concern that fuelled new waves of infection. South Africa was the first country to report on the emergence of the omicron variant (currently the most prevalent variant globally), for which it suffered a backlash from other countries, including the imposition of travel restrictions.

Actions that discouraged public trust

The government imposed restrictions on public activities that lasted for more than two years and, in the face of the declining infection rates and severity of Covid-19, there was an emerging general perception that those restrictions were no longer necessary, and that the government was reluctant to lift them. This fuelled speculation and accusations of conspiracy, with some suggesting that the restrictions were being kept in place for political, rather than public health, reasons.

Uninformed restrictions

Certain restrictions that were put in place at the beginning of the pandemic not only caused an uproar but also led many to question whether the government was indeed following scientific advice. Those restrictions included the ban on the sale of cigarettes and clothing and on e-commerce sales, and curfews.

Procurement fraud

Shortly after the implementation of the Covid-19 control strategy, reports of tender procurement fraud and irregular government contracts emerged. Investigations by the Special Investigating Unit would later reveal that they had investigated and flagged Covid-19 contracts worth R2.1 billion for possible fraud and corruption. This dealt a huge blow to the public's confidence in the government and its actions. This was further compounded by allegations of wrongdoing relating to a tender process against

the minister of health, who was the face of the government's Covid-19 response, and who was largely perceived as competent by the public.

General political instability

South Africa has one of the most inequitable economies in the world, with a large majority of the population living in abject poverty (World Bank 2020). Failure to address this situation since the dawn of democracy has led to intense political contestation, accompanied by bubbling instability. Covid-19 further accentuated the socioeconomic disparities in the country. As a result, there is a general lack of confidence in the government's ability to protect the population. This lack of trust is most pronounced among the poorest people in the country, and has permeated the public response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lawfare as a barrier to Covid-19 vaccination

In the context of Covid-19 vaccines, the right to health imposes obligations on the government to ensure that vaccines are made available and accessible (physically and economically) to citizens (Gostin, Abdool Karim & Mason Meier 2020). In this sense, the law may support the rollout of the vaccine. However, over the course of the pandemic, there has been an increased use of the court system and litigation to undermine public health efforts and, more recently, to prevent efforts to increase vaccine uptake.

When President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the rollout of the Covid-19 vaccine in South Africa, he stated that the government would not impose mandatory vaccination. However, the Department of Employment and Labour issued two directives that permitted the introduction of mandatory vaccination for Covid-19 in workplaces, if there was a sufficient risk (Department of Employment and Labour 2021). Under the aegis of these directives, several universities and workplaces introduced workplace vaccination policies.

In some instances, companies were able to use these policies to increase vaccination rates among their employees. For example, Discovery, a health insurance company, was able to obtain 94 per cent vaccination coverage of its employees as a result of its vaccination policy.⁸ However, both the University of the Free State and Rhodes University faced multiple legal challenges to their vaccination policies from students, workers' unions and associations such as Vaccine Free State.⁹ Following the legal challenges, many universities withdrew or suspended their mandatory vaccination policies¹⁰. Several labour court cases challenged the dismissal of employees who failed to get vaccinated. For the most part, judgments in these cases found that the employees' dismissal was lawful and permissible, except for a single case that followed the withdrawal of the workplace directive¹¹ (Laubscher & Loubser 2022). These court cases not only relied on arguments about the legality of mandatory vaccination policies and the implicated constitutional rights, but also extensively called into question the scientific evidence in support of vaccine use. Often these cases, particularly when brought by anti-vaccination

groups, furthered and repeated much of the anti-vaccination and pseudo science rhetoric, which probably exacerbated public mistrust in vaccines.

The rollout of the Pfizer vaccine for children under 18 years of age was almost halted entirely because of both an appeal against the SAHPRA's decision to approve the vaccine and a court case seeking to interdict the rollout.¹² Both challenges were eventually withdrawn, but the news coverage and misinformation related to these cases still received a lot of attention.

Following the ending of the State of Disaster on 4 April 2022, and the repeal of all regulations related to Covid-19 under the Disaster Management Act (No. 57 of 2002) and occupational health and safety directives, there was much uncertainty about these workplace vaccine mandates, and this has resulted in some companies deciding to cancel their vaccination policies.¹³

Conclusion

The public health benefits of vaccines and the scientific evidence underpinning them are well established. Vaccines have immense potential to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of South Africans, and many pertinent milestones have been achieved through the EPI-SA.

A review of the history of vaccination in post-apartheid South Africa, and most acutely in the context of Covid-19 vaccines, shows that whether or not the benefits of vaccines can be realised depends on the political context and on public trust in vaccination. The Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying increase in rates of vaccine hesitancy have shown that there is a need to increase public trust in both science and vaccines more broadly. However, there also remain socioeconomic barriers to achieving vaccination coverage.

With the ending of the State of Disaster and the repeal of any regulations related to Covid-19 vaccination mandates, it is now up to each South African to play their part in bringing the Covid-19 pandemic under control. As Minister of Health Joe Phaahla has said:

We just need to end with caution that the Covid-19 virus is not yet gone, it is still in our midst, we are just stronger than before, especially with vaccination and we urge those not yet vaccinated to come forward and those due for boosters to also come forward. (South African Government 2022)

Notes

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HSRC Press

11 *Quality of life and political support in South Africa: A resilient nation?*

Benjamin Roberts, Yul Derek Davids, Jarè Struwig, Zitha Mokomane and Valerie Møller

We have faced many crises in our past, and we have overcome them. We have been confronted with difficult choices, and we have made them. In trying times, we have shown courage and resilience. Time and time again, we have pulled ourselves back from the brink of despair and inspired hope, renewal and progress. Now, we must do so again.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, State of the Nation Address, February 2022

The past decade has seen a dramatic decline in levels of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy as well as decline in political trust in South Africa (Hofmeyr et al. 2022). In addition, there remains deep unhappiness among many South Africans with the standard of basic services provided to them by the government. This has contributed to widespread protest action, leading to claims of a ‘rebellion of the poor’ (Alexander 2010; Alexander et al. 2018). South Africa is not unique in experiencing such developments, leading political scientists to question whether the world may be entering a time of democratic decline (Valgarðsson & Devine 2022).

Covid-19 further impacted the quality of life of many South Africans. Narnia Bohler-Muller et al. (2021) indicate that the pandemic impacted the livelihoods of millions of South Africans, in many instances draining their incomes to near breaking point. While the Covid-19 pandemic and the related lockdown measures affected South Africans negatively in terms of their rights to movement, freedom of expression and association, and the rights to privacy and family life, in that emergency situation many felt that the correct measures were being taken to protect lives (Bohler-Muller et al. 2021). According to Gary Pienaar et al. (2021), Covid-19 emphasised the need for a basic income grant, because chronic unemployment and poverty have deepened in South Africa, despite several government interventions. Moreover, these challenging socioeconomic circumstances have far-reaching implications for wellbeing and social cohesion in the country, and weaken our constitutional democracy (Pienaar et al. 2021). Scholars such as Bruno Frey and Alois Stutzer (2000) have shown that, in addition to demographic and economic factors, institutional factors in the form of direct democracy (referenda) and federal structure (local autonomy) have a systematic and sizeable effect on individual wellbeing. Huaxing Liu, Hong Gao and Qing Huang (2020) have examined how the quality of government affects residents’ life satisfaction in a non-democratic context, and have demonstrated that life satisfaction is positively and significantly influenced by government’s trustworthiness and responsiveness, and its performance in public service delivery.

Against this backdrop, this chapter examines the relative influence of political support measures on subjective personal wellbeing in South Africa. Whether or not these measures have adversely affected satisfaction with life as a whole, as well as specific domains of wellbeing, remains poorly understood. Using data from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS), the chapter profiles inequalities in quality of life, using single-item and composite measures of personal wellbeing, and how different political trust measures have dented the resilience that South Africans tend to demonstrate in the face of adversity.¹ In examining the correlates of subjective wellbeing, a multidimensional approach to political support is adopted, in line with the conceptual models of David Easton (1965, 1975) and Pippa Norris (1999, 2011). This approach covers diffuse political support measures ranging from national pride and attachment to democratic principles through to more specific forms of political support, including satisfaction with democracy and with key aspects of government performance, institutional trust and trust in leadership. In addition, the chapter considers whether political support measures have a lesser or greater influence on wellbeing than other sociodemographic factors. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on patterns of quality of life, and what this might mean politically in coming years, is also reflected upon.

However, there is limited literature about good governance and how it impacts quality of life (Liu, Gao & Huang 2020). This chapter hopes to contribute to the literature in order to enable a better understanding of the impact of government performance on quality of life, specifically in the South African context. The intention of the chapter is therefore to explore whether trust in core political institutions matters for personal wellbeing. Specifically, our research questions are: (1) Do people's perceptions of the quality of governance influence their quality of life? (2) Which aspects of government quality signify as important contributors to quality of life?

The chapter is organised in the following way. The next section presents the conceptual framework of the research. It discusses theoretically the importance of the quality of government and its impact on life satisfaction studies, and explains the selection of indicators used to measure quality of government. It also gives a brief description of the data used for this study. This is followed by a section that provides an overview of personal wellbeing in South Africa. The next sections present an overview of trends in the perceived functioning of governance over the past two decades, explain the relationship between political support and personal wellbeing, and summarise our primary findings. The chapter concludes with a reflection on these findings.

Conceptual framework and data used for this study

Conceptual framework

Although survey-based research on the patterns, dimensions and predictors of quality of life has a history that dates back close to half a century, it is only in the past 15 or so years that the association between life satisfaction or happiness and different aspects of the quality of government and democratic performance has received substantive

attention. A fair amount of the evidence produced to date has drawn on the rising availability of comparative survey data, and one of the recurring insights that has emerged is that citizens around the world tend to express greater levels of satisfaction with their lives as a whole if they reside in countries characterised by a relatively better quality of governance (Bjørnskov, Dreher & Fischer 2007; Frey & Stutzer 2000, 2005; Helliwell 2003; Helliwell & Huang 2008; Liu, Gao & Huang 2020; Ott 2010a, 2010b, 2011). Country-specific studies in this tradition nonetheless remain underrepresented in the body of literature, especially literature from the global south, and it is hoped that this chapter will stimulate more research in this vein in South Africa and beyond.

In an early contribution to the literature from South Africa a quarter of a century ago, Robert Mattes and Jennifer Christie (1997) used survey data to examine the political consequences of quality of life in the country, focusing on the association between both perceived individual and collective (national, community) wellbeing and people's support for democratic government. Their findings suggested a fairly weak influence of personal wellbeing on a range of political support measures. The latter included measures of general support for the political system and more specific support measures, such as evaluations of specific political leaders, institutions and policy choices. By contrast, perceptions of collective quality of life had an appreciably stronger bearing on the political support measures. This led the authors to suggest that the public were holding government accountable for patterns of national wellbeing (or illbeing), but additionally for the democratic system more broadly, which they worried might become an impediment to democratic consolidation in the country.

In a similar study, John Helliwell et al. (2018) examined the link between good governance and quality of life evaluations. Their assessment of national-level data from 2005 to 2012 covered 157 countries, and showed that the 10 most improved countries in terms of changes in government service quality had an average life evaluation higher by 0.4 points on the scale from 0 to 10 than the 10 most deteriorated countries. In other words, the study indicated that good governance seemed to influence the quality of life evaluations. However, this cross-sectional analysis was unable to explain whether institutional quality could change or have an influence on subjective wellbeing, which the study defined as how people valued their own lives.

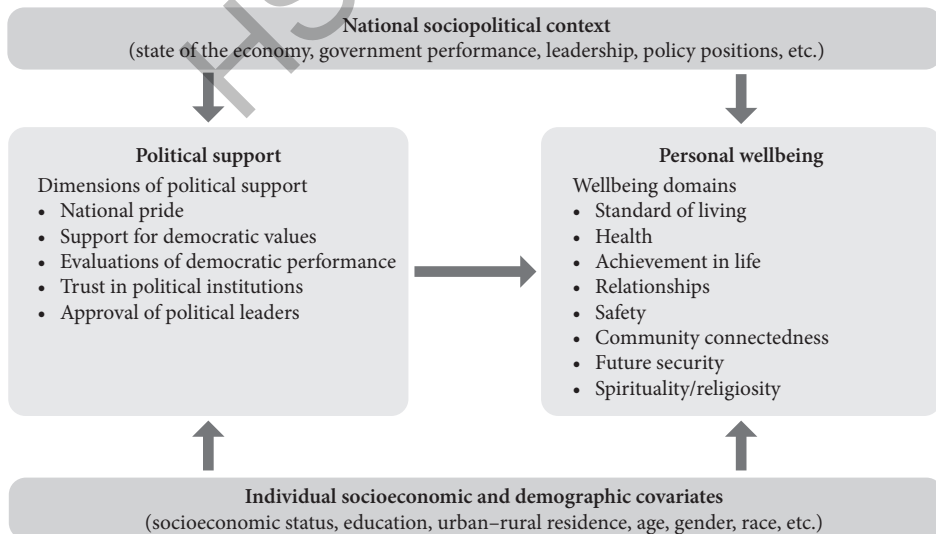
Other quality of life scholars have examined the average extent to which political support measures, such as commitment to democracy over other systems and satisfaction with democracy, determine happiness and wellbeing. Carol Graham and Sandip Sukhtankar (2004) and Graham (2011), for instance, used Latinobarometro and Russian data to examine the influence that democratic evaluations and political satisfaction had on life satisfaction. Their research suggested that, in both contexts, people who were satisfied with how democracy was working and preferred democracy to any other system of government also tended to voice greater happiness with their lives.

Reinet Loubser and Cindy Steenekamp (2017) conducted a 10-nation study assessing the link between subjective wellbeing and democracy. They followed an approach taken by Ronald Inglehart which found that people's beliefs, values and motivations can have

a major influence on social and political realities. It is in this context that personal life satisfaction and happiness are strongly related to stable democracies. Findings from the 10-nation study reveal that there is indeed an association between life satisfaction and the importance of living in a democracy, but that there is no correlation with happiness. Loubser and Steenekamp (2017) argue that countries with high levels of life satisfaction tend to be secure democracies, while countries with lower levels of life satisfaction seem to experience more political and economic challenges. Brazil, Sweden and the US are all democracies, and respondents from those countries display the highest level of life satisfaction. On the other hand, the low wellbeing scores for India and South Africa are concerning in the face of ongoing efforts aimed at the consolidation of democracy in those countries. Although Loubser and Steenekamp (2017) establish that there is a strong association between life satisfaction and democracy, they support the view held by Inglehart and Eduard Ponarin (2013) that it is difficult to establish a direction of causality. Inglehart and Ponarin emphasise that the causal flow is stronger from wellbeing to democracy, and that people cannot be made happier through the establishment of strong democratic institutions.

In this chapter, our quality of life model (Figure 11.1) aims to establish whether, in the context of growing political and economic uncertainty in South Africa, diffuse and specific political support measures are positively associated with personal wellbeing. These include a range of different measures, including general feelings of civic pride, a preference for democracy, evaluations of the performance of the democratic system and specific areas of government's policy mandate, trust in institutions, as well as views on political leadership. Past empirical research suggests that institutional trust and government delivery evaluations might matter the most for personal wellbeing.

Figure 11.1 Model linking political support to patterns of quality of life



The model might also be extended to include other dimensions of democracy and governance, such as views on honest and efficient government, voice, accountability, political stability, and so on. According to our model, positive political support evaluations are envisaged as having a positive influence on overall satisfaction with life as a whole, as well as on specific dimensions of personal wellbeing, while negative political support evaluations would conversely have an adverse impact on personal wellbeing. The domains listed in Figure 11.1 are a common set used in national and comparative surveys of wellbeing domains (Cummins et al. 2003), but others can easily be thought of that contribute to overall life satisfaction ratings. These domain-specific effects are likely to be varied in nature. In addition, various individual socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of South Africans are also likely to have a bearing on both their political support and life satisfaction judgements, as the lived experience of democratic life in the country is likely to be informed in part by an intersection of factors such as socioeconomic status, educational attainment, rural versus urban residence, age, gender and race.

In our conceptualisation, we confine the focus to individual or personal wellbeing, due to the absence of collective wellbeing measures in the survey series. Future surveying is, however, planned that will revisit the Mattes and Christie (1997) hypothesis that political support evaluations in South Africa have a clearer direct influence on national wellbeing than personal wellbeing. Secondly, the issue of the directionality of the associations mapped out in the conceptual model is also likely to remain a source of some contention, though we argue that the changing political context is producing significant changes in political support attitudes, which are likely in turn to have a consequent effect on life satisfaction, unless the public has remained resolutely optimistic in the face of such developments. A third point of note relates to the issue of direct versus indirect effects. It could be contended that the impact of democratic performance and good governance may not have only a direct effect on life satisfaction, as per Figure 11.1, but also an indirect one. This is a point raised by Helliwell et al. (2018: 2), who use the example of corruption to argue that corrupt state practices can have a direct negative impact on wellbeing, but can also impact wellbeing indirectly, for instance through their varied impacts on service delivery and institutional trust. We do not examine any indirect effects, but any that are subsequently identified, over and above the direct influences that are established in our analysis, would point to the further bearing of democratic support on quality of life.

Data description

The principal data source used for this study is the SASAS, a nationally representative, repeat cross-sectional survey series that has been conducted annually by the HSRC since 2003. The survey has been designed as a time series, with the purpose of measuring and monitoring changes in the underlying values of South Africans concerning a variety of topics, including citizenship, democracy, governance and quality of life. Each annual survey round in the series consists of a representative sample of approximately 3 000 respondents, aged 16 years and older, living in private residences. Each year, a sample of 500 small area layers (SALs) is randomly selected as primary

sampling units, stratified by province, type of geographic area (geotype) and majority population group per SAL.² Seven visiting points are randomly selected in each SAL, and a single adult aged 16 years and older, and living at the visiting point at least 15 days per month, is randomly selected using a Kish grid.

All survey protocols and instruments are submitted for review and approval by the HSRC's Research Ethics Committee ahead of each round. Strict ethical practices govern the survey, consistent with international surveying standards and the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013, POPIA). Participation in surveys and other forms of public opinion research is voluntary, and all persons selected for inclusion are provided with a description of the research study sufficient to enable them to make an informed and free decision about their participation. Such informed consent is a crucial part of the ethical code of the survey series, with additional parental or caregiver consent alongside minor assent for those aged 16–17 years.

The mode of interviewing is face to face, and is undertaken in at least 7 of the 11 official languages of the country in each year. Prior to 2018, the survey was filled in using paper-and-pencil personal interviewing, after which a transition to computer-assisted personal interviewing was made. The fieldwork associated with each survey round is usually conducted in the last quarter of each calendar year, between October and mid-December. Once fieldwork has been completed, the data are weighted by benchmarking to Statistics South Africa's most recently published Mid-Year Population Estimate release, ensuring that the data are representative of the adult population.

The realised sample size over the 18 rounds of annual SASAS surveying (2003–21) included in this chapter ranges between 2 500 and 3 300, with an all-year pooled sample of 53 991 responses. As far as possible, the indicators reported on in the chapter have been chosen because of their long history in the series. However, the coverage does nonetheless vary across these selected indicators. The indicators that were present in all survey years include life satisfaction (our core variable of interest), satisfaction with democracy, evaluations of key government performance areas (except for social grants), and trust in core political institutions. National pride was included in all years apart from 2003, 2004 and 2006, while evaluations of social grants were fielded from 2005 onwards. The multi-item Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI; Cummins et al. 2003) has been included in the survey since 2009, the demand for democracy since 2011 (though the Afrobarometer series has fielded it biennially since 1999), and satisfaction with current political leaders since 2012.³

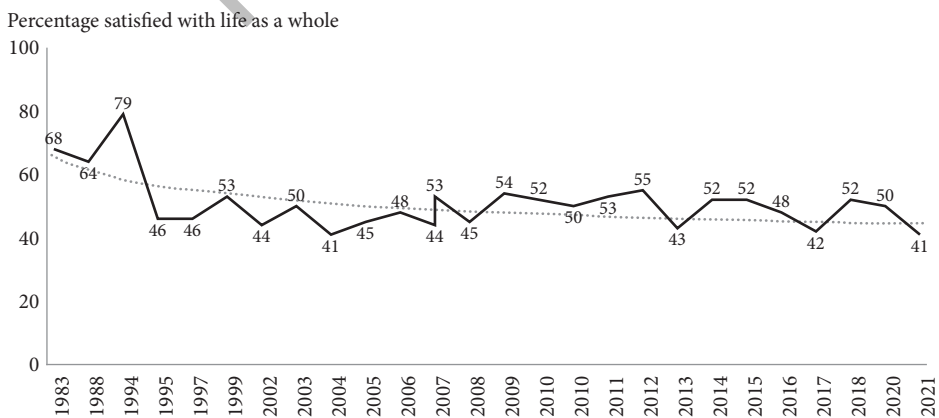
For analytical purposes, we have combined the different years of survey data into a single cumulative data file. This allowed for the easy testing of statistically significant changes in evaluations over different years, and for the running of regression analysis covering multiple years and controlling for year effects. For presentation purposes, we have not presented the regression analysis performed, but rather report on the findings in as straightforward, non-technical a way as possible. The graphs and tables included in the chapter report simple percentages or mean scores for the indicators of interest. All interpretive statements are based on statistical testing, using both bivariate and multivariate methods.

Trends in personal wellbeing in South Africa

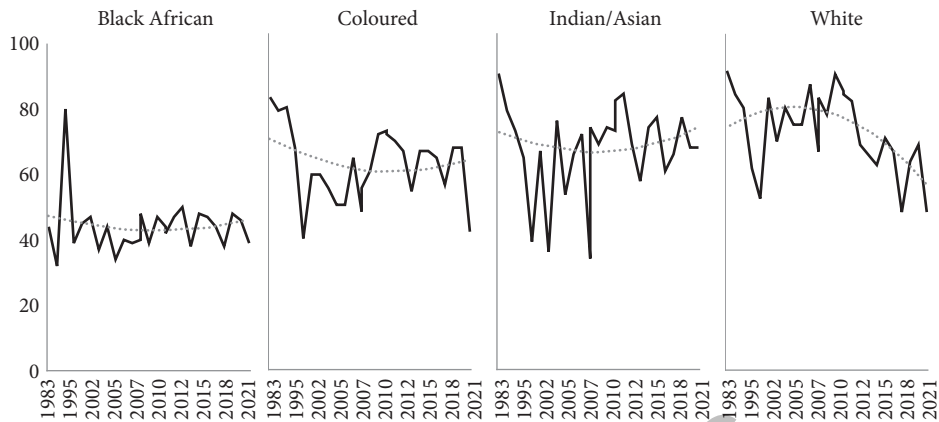
From a global south – and indeed a global – perspective, South Africa has been a relative pioneer in the long-term measurement of quality of life trends (Møller & Roberts 2014, 2021). Following on from the formative American research by Frank Andrews and Stephen Withey (1976) and Angus Campbell, Philip Converse and Willard Rodgers (1976), which inspired an international social indicators movement, parallel surveying of the quality of life of South Africans across the racial divide began in earnest in the mid-1970s. A key sociopolitical study undertaken at the time asked South Africans to rate their current and prospective happiness, using a five-point scale showing smiling and angry faces as a basis for a comparative examination of the hopes and fears of black African and white South African adults (Hanf et al. 1981). The study found that around half (53 per cent) of white South Africans regarded themselves as ‘happy’ in 1977, but only 36 per cent thought they would still be happy in 10 years’ time. In contrast, while only a fifth (22 per cent) of black African adults regarded themselves as happy in the late 1970s, 61 per cent thought they would be happy in 10 years’ time (Hanf et al. 1981: 420). This differential patterning of happiness, hope and fear was also evident along political and class lines. Follow-up surveys examining past, present and future quality of life evaluations were conducted in 1999 and 2002 (Møller & Dickow 2002; Møller & Hanf 2007), and largely confirmed the aforementioned patterns.

Since the transition to democracy in 1994, objective and subjective indicators of quality of life have continued to show the deep political, economic and cultural divides that permeate South African society. Advantaged sectors of society still score significantly higher than disadvantaged ones on almost all social indicators. A notable exception in the month following the country’s first open democratic elections in April 1994 was that all South Africans were equally happy and satisfied at an internationally acceptable level (Figure 11.2).

Figure 11.2 *Satisfaction with life as a whole in South Africa, 1983–2021*



Sources: South African Quality of Life Trends Project (SAQoL) (SASAS (2003–21). See Note 1.

Figure 11.3 Satisfaction with life as a whole, by population group, 1983–2021

Sources: SAQoL (1983, 1988, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2002); SASAS (2003–21)

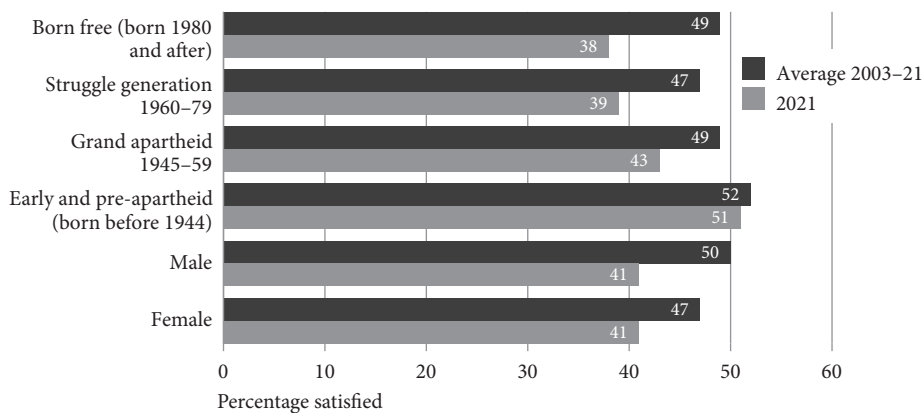
Apart from the euphoric moment that was 1994, aggregate life satisfaction ratings among adult South Africans have fluctuated on average in a relatively narrow range, between 41 per cent and 55 per cent, over the 1995–2021 period. This is consistent with what is known as subjective wellbeing homeostasis theory (Cummins et al. 2018; Cummins et al. 2003). Simply put, this theory argues that subjective wellbeing operates in a manner like blood pressure or temperature – there can be swings in assessment based on positive and negative life events and experiences, but it is generally remarkably stable in character around a particular normal or average ‘set-point’ level. Negative experiences will produce temporary drops in life satisfaction, but life satisfaction will subsequently return to the set-point level. However, a persistent negative condition or environment (chronic pain, low living standards) can lead to a phenomenon known as ‘homeostatic defeat’, whereby the set-point level decreases to a new, lower wellbeing level that is significantly below the normal range for the country. It is for this reason that national surveying in South Africa over decades has produced evidence of substantive inequalities in wellbeing, based in particular on an intersection of race and class.

A short chapter of this nature cannot hope to profile cleavages in subjective wellbeing across multiple sociodemographic attributes and over time in a comprehensive manner. Several previous studies can be consulted in this regard (Davids & Gaibie 2011; Harris 2007; Schlemmer & Möller 1997). Nevertheless, we have chosen to focus on race, generational, gender and class differences in life satisfaction to provide a sense of both inequalities and temporal dynamics. The South African Quality of Life (SAQoL) survey series examined population group differences from 1983 onwards, to better understand the impact of apartheid policies on life satisfaction for different segments of society, and to monitor progress following the transition to democracy. This means the racial differences in personal wellbeing assessments can be charted over almost a four-decade period. These trends are showcased in Figure 11.3.

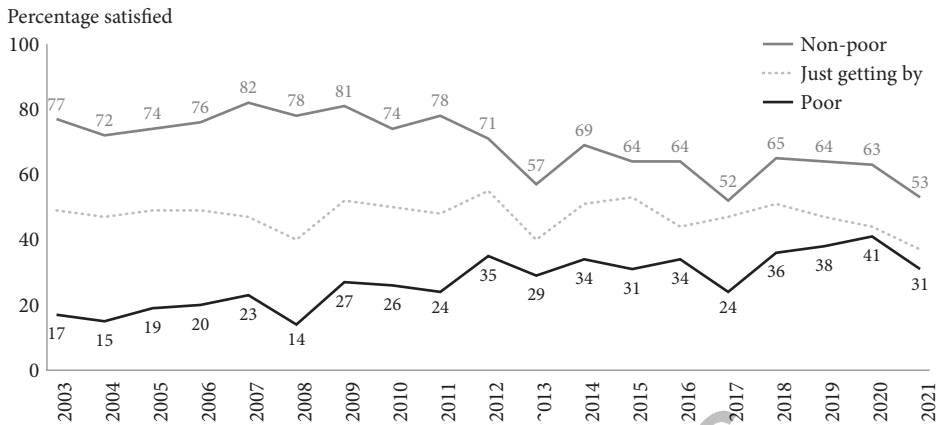
For black African adults, the trend approximates the national average, with a dramatic surge in life satisfaction in the context of the 1994 elections being quickly replaced by more middling levels of satisfaction that for the most part average around the low 40 per cent range. For coloured adults, the enthusiasm of 1994 was followed by a period of volatility, and then a more buoyant period from the late 2000s onwards, punctuated by occasional downturns but averaging around 60–65 per cent. There was a precipitous decline in satisfaction among coloured South Africans in 2021, the lowest figure observed since 1997. Whether this is associated with the Covid-19 pandemic experiences and the beginning of a more sustained lower level of life satisfaction for this population group remains to be seen. Indian adults have generally displayed higher levels of wellbeing than black African and coloured adults, averaging close to 70 per cent satisfaction with life. Again, a certain amount of volatility in assessment is evident, with acute drops in 1997 and 2007, around the time of the Asian financial crisis and the inflation crisis respectively. For white South Africans, who were historically privileged under apartheid, there was likewise a dramatic drop in life satisfaction following the 1994 election, followed by a general upward tendency amid variable assessments until around 2009. During the 1999–2009 period, life satisfaction among white adults averaged 77 per cent, significantly higher than all other population groups. Since 2009, there has been a general erosion in the life satisfaction of white adults, falling from 88 per cent in 2009 to 47 per cent in 2021. The lowest levels of satisfaction over the full period for white adults were observed in 2017 and 2021. The former occurred towards the end of the Jacob Zuma administration, while the 2021 result occurred in a time of pandemic-induced inflationary pressure and high-profile state capture evidence. Whether these were the triggers for the harsh evaluations of white respondents, or aspects of a broader range of personal and societal concerns and fears, requires further investigation (Møller & Roberts 2017).

Differences by age cohort and gender were examined and are displayed in Figure 11.4. There are no appreciable differences in satisfaction with life as a whole by generation

Figure 11.4 Satisfaction with life as a whole, by age cohort and gender, 2003–21 average and 2021 figures compared



Source: SASAS (2003–21)

Figure 11.5 Satisfaction with life as a whole, by subjective poverty status, 2003–21

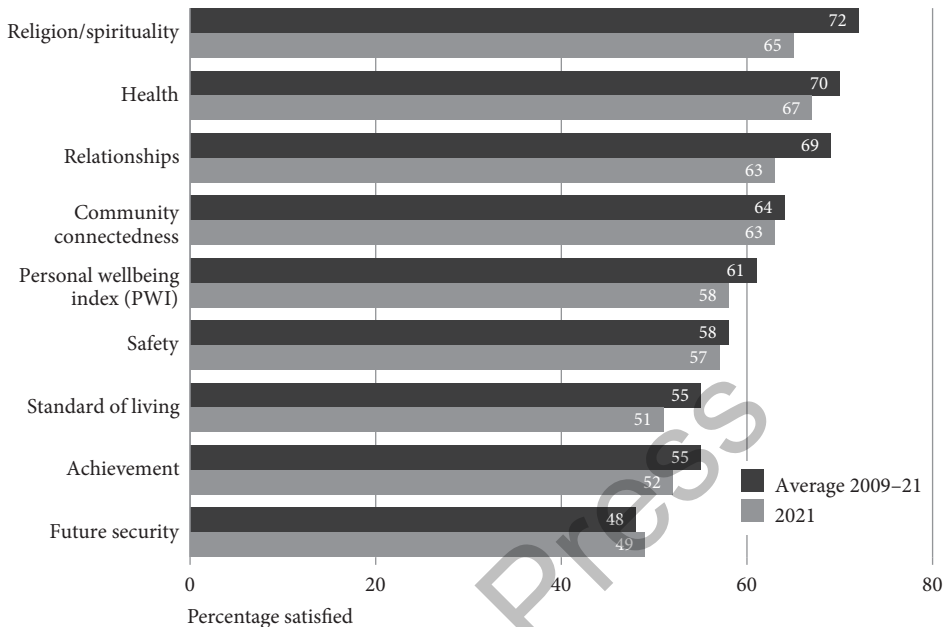
Source: SASAS (2003–21)

on aggregate, with levels ranging between 47 per cent and 52 per cent on average between 2003 and 2021. However, in 2021 it appeared that an age gradient had emerged, with younger generations less satisfied than older generations, and the range increasing to between 38 per cent and 51 per cent. As for gender differences, women reported marginally lower wellbeing levels than men across the full period (47 per cent versus 50 per cent), but the 2021 figures show that there was a decline in life satisfaction for both genders, and the difference in evaluation had fallen away.

The societal challenge posed by poverty, unemployment and inequality in the country translates into appreciable class-based differences underlying evaluations of life satisfaction. In Figure 11.5, trends for this social indicator are presented by subjective poverty status, according to which South Africans were asked to self-classify their own social position. For summary purposes, responses to this question have been clustered into three categories, namely 'poor', 'just getting by' and 'non-poor'. In the early 2000s, the scale of variation in life satisfaction evaluations between poor and non-poor South Africans was around 60 percentage points. However, over time there has been a degree of convergence in life satisfaction. This is mostly due to a progressive increase in life satisfaction among poor citizens (from an admittedly low base), combined with a diminishing tendency among the non-poor since the early 2010s. By 2021, the gap between poor and non-poor had fallen to 22 percentage points, the smallest difference observed over the full period. Also worth noting is the observable and consistent decline in wellbeing for all groups in 2021, which may partly reflect the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdown regulations on quality of life.

Regression analysis was conducted based on a cumulative data file containing all 2003–21 surveys (ordered logistic model, results not shown), controlling for differences by year of surveying. This confirmed that life satisfaction is significantly lower among South Africans who are poor or just getting by, relative to non-poor

Figure 11.6 Domain satisfaction in South Africa, 2009–21 average and 2021 figures compared (mean scores based on a 0–100 scale)



Source: SASAS (2009–21)

adults, controlling for differences by year. Similarly, the modelling showed that black African adults had lower life satisfaction than all other population groups, the poor had lower life satisfaction than those just getting by or the non-poor, those with primary or no formal education had lower life satisfaction than the better educated, and the unemployed had lower life satisfaction than the employed, students and pensioners. Gender lost significance as a predictor of life satisfaction, controlling for other variables.

South Africans do not evaluate different domains or dimensions of their life equally. To impart a sense of this, we rely on the PWI (Cummins et al. 2003), which examines levels of satisfaction across eight different dimensions of life: standard of living, health, achievements in life, relationships, safety, community connection, future (financial) security and religion or spirituality. The PWI is a composite, averaged variable that measures subjective wellbeing based on an aggregation of the eight satisfaction domains. It is scored on a 0–100 scale, where 0 means completely dissatisfied and 100 means completely satisfied. The SASAS series has fielded this set of items annually since 2009. In Figure 11.6, we present the average domain satisfaction scores over the 2009–21 period, ranked from highest to lowest, as well as the 2021 domain scores for comparative purposes.

The 2009–21 PWI average was 61, with religion or spirituality, health, relationships and community connectedness all being rated above average. Future (financial) security, life

achievements, standard of living and safety were all below average, with future security being the only dimension falling below the scalar midpoint threshold of 50. This rank ordering of life satisfaction domains points to the struggles many South Africans continue to experience in securing a decent living standard, accessing opportunity, and protecting themselves from crime, while also reflecting their considerable economic worry and fears for the future. The 2021 figures are largely similar in nature, with relationships, religion/spirituality and standard of living displaying moderately lower scores in comparison with the all-year average.

To impart a sense of the inequality that exists in the different wellbeing domains in South Africa that were evaluated, Table 11.1 presents differences by subjective poverty status as a proxy for class and population group. The table presents the all-year (2009–21) mean scores for each domain for the different sociodemographic groups, as well as the corresponding 2021 figures in brackets. The first main message of the results in the table is that the largest class and racial differences on average across the period can be observed on materially based dimensions – standard of living, life achievement and future (financial) security. In these instances, the difference between those classifying themselves as non-poor and poor is more than 25 points higher on

Table 11.1 *Subjective poverty and population group differences in domain satisfaction, 2009–21 average and 2021 figures in brackets (mean scores based on a 0–100 scale)*

	Standard of living	Health	Life achievement	Relationships	Safety	Community	Future (financial) security	Religion
Subjective poverty								
Poor (P)	40 (36)	62 (58)	41 (39)	63 (55)	52 (48)	61 (58)	33 (34)	67 (60)
Just getting along	55 (51)	71 (68)	55 (51)	70 (63)	58 (58)	65 (64)	47 (48)	72 (65)
Non-poor (NP)	67 (62)	74 (70)	67 (63)	74 (67)	63 (62)	67 (65)	61 (60)	75 (69)
Difference (NP–P)	+27 (+26)	+12 (+12)	+26 (+24)	+10 (+12)	+10 (+14)	+6 (+6)	+28 (+26)	+8 (+8)
Population group								
Black African (BA)								
Black African (BA)	52 (50)	69 (67)	52 (51)	68 (62)	57 (56)	64 (63)	45 (47)	71 (65)
Coloured	61 (53)	73 (65)	61 (54)	73 (66)	61 (58)	66 (63)	52 (53)	74 (67)
Indian	69 (69)	74 (73)	69 (66)	78 (79)	57 (63)	67 (67)	62 (64)	82 (79)
White (W)								
White (W)	70 (57)	73 (61)	71 (56)	76 (62)	61 (58)	66 (59)	63 (54)	74 (60)
Difference (W–BA)	+18 (+7)	+5 (–6)	+19 (+5)	+8 (+1)	+4 (+1)	+2 (–4)	+18 (+7)	+4 (–5)

Source: SASAS (2009–21)

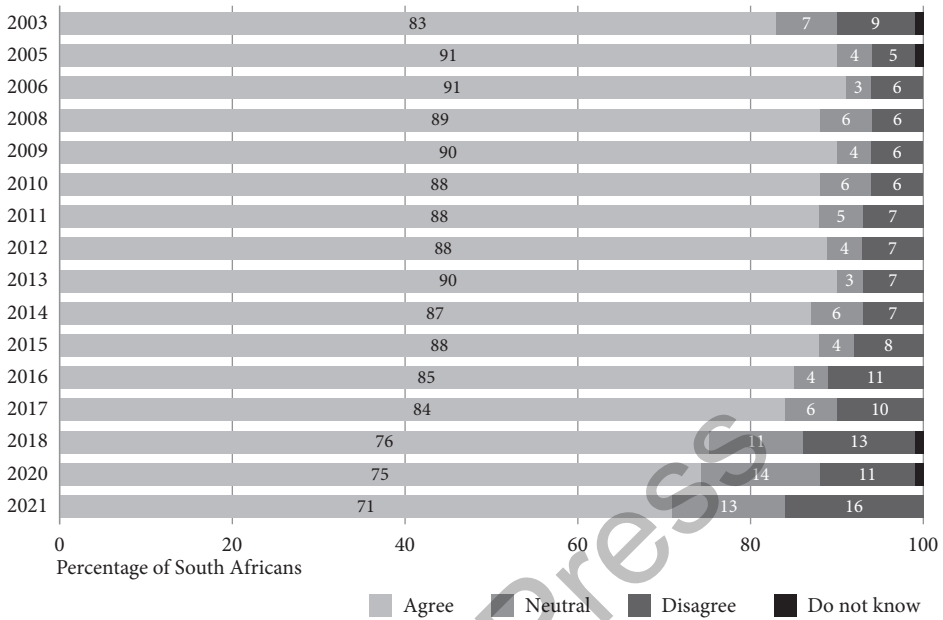
average on the 0–100 scale, while white adults report satisfaction levels that are close to 20 points higher than black African adults on average.

The second main message of the table is that, comparing the 2021 figures to the all-year averages for each of the wellbeing dimensions, the class-based differences have remained largely unchanged. However, the differences between black African and white adults' evaluations of the different wellbeing dimensions have converged, due to the diminishing satisfaction scores provided by white adults. The decline in scores for coloured adults in 2021 relative to the all-year average for this population group is proportionately larger than the national average, with the exception of future (financial) security, where the figures for 2021 and the all-year average are almost equivalent. For Indian adults, the 2021 evaluations approximate the all-year average.

Evidence of democratic backsliding in South Africa: Faltering progress?

In the course of the last decade a number of political commentators and scholars have alluded to the emergence of a global 'crisis of democratic legitimacy' (Dalton 2018; Diamond 2021; Norris & Inglehart 2019). References have been made to declining public trust in government, diminishing faith in democratic institutions, weakening trust in political leadership and growing public discontent (see also Inglehart & Norris 2016). In order to adequately capture political system support and general regime approval among the public, the conceptual framework developed by Norris (2011), which draws on the work of Easton (1975), is used here. Accordingly, indicators of political support are clustered into a multidimensional framework consisting of five components, ranging from the most generalised to the most specific. These components are national identities, approval of regime principles and values, evaluations of regime performance, confidence in regime institutions, and approval of incumbent office-holders.

The first component identified by Norris, namely national identities, represents the most general set of attitudes towards belonging or attachment to the state. Common survey-based measures and indicators for this component include national pride, patriotism and feelings of national identity. The second component of support – approval of regime principles and values – addresses support for fundamental democratic principles and values. The third component is evaluations of regime performance, and is conceived as the views of citizens towards the democratic performance of the government, as well as assessments of decision-making processes, policies and policy outcomes. The fourth component, confidence in regime institutions, refers to trust in public sector institutions. Norris (2011) views the following as public institutions: the government legislature, the executive, the judiciary and courts, the security forces, the different tiers of government (national, provincial, local) and the civil service, in addition to political parties. The press and trade unions can also be included here. The last component is approval of incumbent office-holders, which entails public attitudes towards the president, ministers, party leaders and elected representatives. In this section of the chapter we discuss these indicators of political and regime support, from the most general to the most specific.

Figure 11.7 National pride in South Africa, 2003–21

Source: SASAS (2003–21)

Note: The pride measure was not fielded in 2004, 2007 and 2019.

National pride

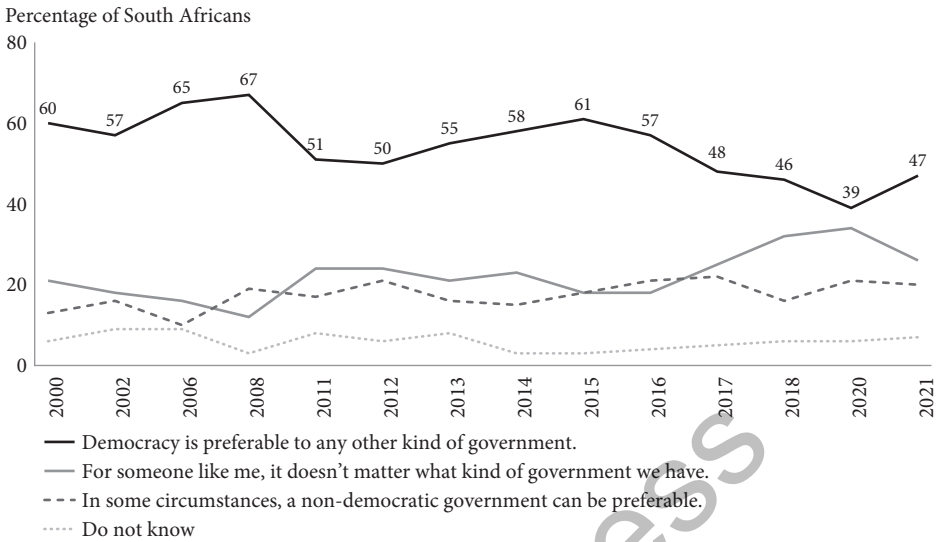
Our analysis begins with one of the most diffuse measures of support for the political system, namely national pride, which is concerned with levels of attachment to the state in its broadest possible sense. To measure national pride or patriotism, a general national pride item that is widely employed in studies is analysed. The item statement is ‘I would rather be a citizen of South Africa than of any other country in the world’.

Evidence from the SASAS series demonstrates that South Africans have historically tended to exhibit a firm sense of pride in the country (Figure 11.7). Despite this, however, a downward trajectory on this measure has been noticed since 2016. Since 2015, the share of South Africans who agree that they would rather be a citizen of South Africa than any other country has declined by 17 per cent, falling from 88 per cent in 2015 to 71 per cent in 2021. Levels of disagreement, on the other hand, grew from 8 per cent to 16 per cent during the same period. These results corroborate the thesis that the general public has become increasingly dissatisfied with the status quo in South Africa over the last decade.

Demand for democracy

Adam Przeworski (1991) maintained that if citizens believe that democracy improves their own economic wellbeing, their support for it will be solid. Survey respondents

Figure 11.8 *Support for democracy in South Africa, 2000–21*

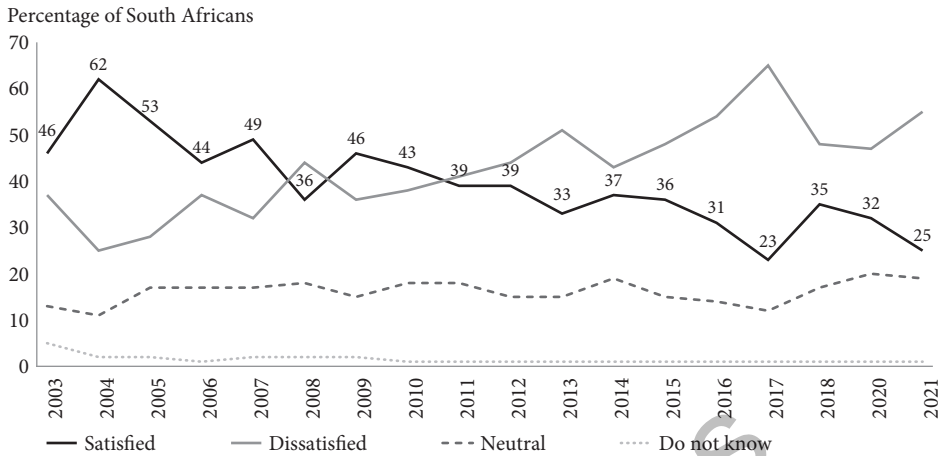


Sources: Afrobarometer Rounds 1–4 (2000–2008); SASAS (2011–21)

were asked to what extent democracy is preferable to any other form of government. As is evident from Figure 11.8, the preference for democracy has declined, especially since 2015. In 2008, more than two-thirds of South Africans believed democracy to be preferable to any other kind of government, and that belief has slowly eroded to its lowest point in 2020, when only 39 per cent believed that democracy is preferable to any other system. In that year more than one-third of South Africans were of the opinion that they did not care which type of government they had. Although there was something of a reversal in this trend in 2021, it is a worrying situation when faith in the democratic system has been eroded to the extent that virtually equal proportions prefer democracy or do not care if a democracy exists (as was the case in 2020). If evaluations of and demand for democracy are aligned to evaluations of general life satisfaction (Przeworski 1991), this does not bode well for life satisfaction in South Africa.

Satisfaction with the way democracy is working

One of the most important indicators of support for any country’s political system is how satisfied its citizens are with the democracy that exists within that system. Jonas Linde and Joakim Ekman (2003) point out that ‘satisfaction with the way democracy works’ is an effective indicator of support for the manner in which the democratic regime works in practice, and is one of the most common indicators of political support for democracy employed in survey research (Blais & Gélinau 2007; Dalton 2004; Norris 1999, 2011). In Figure 11.9, trends in the shares of the adult population who expressed satisfaction with democracy over the past two decades are shown. As the graph demonstrates, there has been a steady escalation in discontent with the functioning

Figure 11.9 Satisfaction with democratic functioning in South Africa, 2003–21

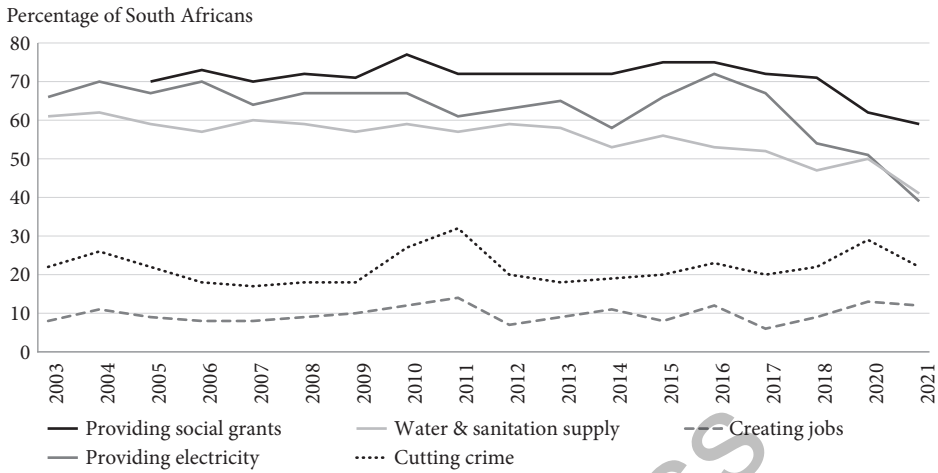
Source: SASAS (2003–21)

of democracy in the country since 2004. In 2008, the share indicating that they were dissatisfied with democracy exceeded the share that expressed satisfaction for the first time since 2003. There was an improvement in satisfaction with democracy following the 2009 national and provincial elections, though this upswing was relatively short-lived, with a declining trend again evident in 2010, a pattern which continued through to 2013. From 2011 onwards, the share of the adult public voicing dissatisfaction with democracy again exceeded the share who are content, a trend that has yet to be reversed. Between 2013 and 2015 levels of discontent seemed to level off, but in 2016 there was again a noticeable decline in satisfaction with democracy. This decline continued, and in 2017 reached a nadir, with only 23 per cent of South Africans being satisfied with democracy. This signified the lowest level of contentment with democracy since 2003. In 2018, there was a significant rise in contentment with democracy and a significant decline in dissatisfaction with democracy. This trend was, however, short-lived, and satisfaction declined again thereafter; in 2021 only a quarter of South Africans were satisfied with democracy. The overall trend is disturbing, and is a clear indication that South Africans are discontent with the functioning of democracy.

Satisfaction with key performance areas

In order to better understand how South Africans viewed the performance of democracy, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with specific aspects of government performance. The survey results reveal a pattern of considerable variance in the way the public perceives government performance across the dimensions examined (Figure 11.10). In the early 2000s, South Africans were generally satisfied with the provision of electricity (66 per cent) and water and sanitation (61 per cent), but evaluations of these services have declined significantly (by more than 20 per cent) over the last two decades, to the point where in 2021 barely two-fifths of people were satisfied

Figure 11.10 Satisfaction with key performance areas, 2003–21

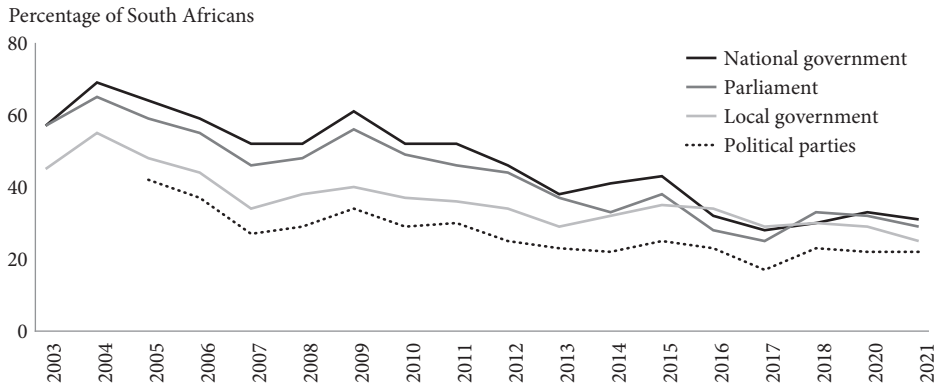


Source: SASAS (2003–21)

with delivery in these domains (41 per cent for water and sanitation and 39 per cent for electricity). Crime has always been a concern of South Africans, and although there have been ebbs and flows in evaluations over the period, South Africans have remained fairly dissatisfied with the efforts of government to cut crime, with only one-fifth on average over the period satisfied with government’s efforts. The area of greatest public concern, namely job creation, has not been successfully addressed over the past two decades, and the level of satisfaction of South Africans in this regard remained at barely one-tenth (12 per cent) in 2021. Government performance in terms of the provision of social grants has generally been positively appraised by South Africans, but as is evident from the graph in Figure 11.10, satisfaction with this performance area has also been declining of late (dropping from 71 per cent in 2018 to 59 per cent in 2021).

Trust in political institutions

There has been a growing interest in public confidence in political institutions in advanced democracies in recent decades (Dalton 2004; Norris 1999, 2011; Putnam 2002). This has been prompted by empirical evidence suggesting that there has been a general erosion of trust in politicians, political parties and central democratic institutions such as national parliaments over the medium to long term. This has raised concerns about democratic legitimacy, and about the implications of this erosion in trust for cooperation with political authorities, especially in relation to political and electoral participation (Tyler 2011). In our analysis we review trust in four core institutions of the political system, namely national government, Parliament, local government and political parties. The percentages of South Africans who trusted or strongly trusted these institutions are depicted in Figure 11.11, for the period 2003–21.

Figure 11.11 Trust or strong trust in core political institutions, 2003–21

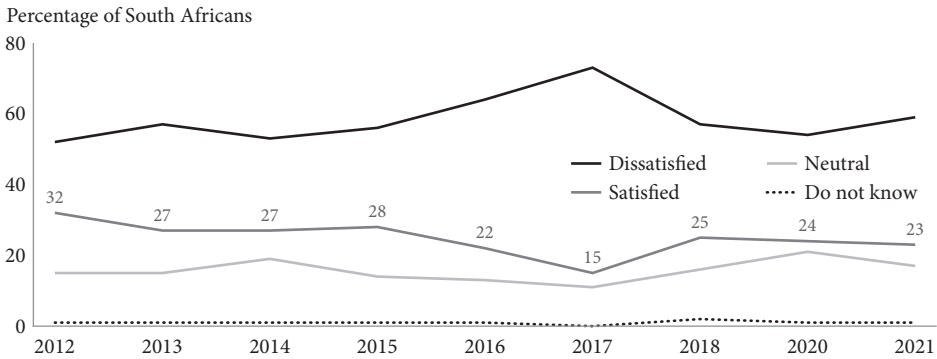
Source: SASAS (2003–21)

In 2004, just over two-thirds of South Africans (67 per cent) trusted national government, 64 per cent trusted Parliament and 53 per cent trusted local government. Public trust in these institutions declined significantly over the 2004–2007 period. Over this three-year interval, trust in national government dropped by 15 per cent and trust in Parliament and local government dropped by more than 20 per cent each. Following this period of declining confidence in government and other institutions of representative democracy, 2008 and 2009 brought a levelling off in trust, and slight improvements were experienced. This stabilisation and recovery were relatively short-lived, and the 2010–14 period was characterised by declining trust. Between 2009 and 2014, all the political and social institutions for which there are available data exhibited falling trust levels, though the largest declines in public confidence were witnessed in relation to Parliament and national government. In these instances, trust fell by 23 and 20 percentage points, respectively. Trust in the political parties dropped by 12 per cent, while more moderate declines were found in the cases of local government. In 2015 this decline was reversed, with trust in all institutions increasing between 2014 and 2015. Between 2015 and 2017, trust again dropped significantly. Following this period of declining confidence, a levelling off and even an improvement in trust were observed, but despite this, trust in these institutions remains worryingly low. These trends signify large-scale decline in public confidence in core political institutions in the country, suggesting growing dissatisfaction with the current status quo.

Satisfaction with political leaders

The most specific aspect of political support in the conceptual framework presented by Norris (2011) relates to levels of approval of the performance of political leadership in the country, and it is therefore important to determine if the same general trend exists in South Africa. To examine this, a general measure that asked respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the nation's current political leaders is depicted in Figure 11.12, for the period 2012–2021. The results show that

Figure 11.12 Satisfaction with current political leaders in South Africa, 2012–21



Source: SASAS (2012–21)

mass attitudes towards political leaders have changed in the last decade. In 2012, satisfaction with political leaders was low, with not even a third of South Africans indicating satisfaction with them. Since then, satisfaction has eroded even further, to the point where less than a quarter (23 per cent) of the adult population was satisfied with political leaders in the country in 2021. From these results it is evident that the vast majority of South Africans have little faith in political leaders in the country, and that this has increased in the last decade.

At this point it is important to mention that, despite disillusionment being broad-based in South Africa, there are noticeable differences in levels of satisfaction between sociodemographic groups. There are sizeable population group differences, with racial minorities (especially Indian adults) reporting extremely high dissatisfaction levels compared to black African adults. Some variation is evident based on self-rated poverty status, with the poor significantly more dissatisfied than the non-poor.

The findings presented in this section show that South Africa faces a democratic legitimacy crisis that extends from the most general to the most specific levels of political support, in terms of the model developed by Norris (2011). The question that now remains to be addressed is whether this negativity and disillusionment impact the life satisfaction of South Africans as a whole.

The relationship between political support and personal wellbeing

Having showcased the patterns of personal wellbeing and democratic evaluations in the country over time, we now return to the question of the extent and nature of the association between views of democracy and wellbeing. The case we will make is that evaluations of democracy matter for the life satisfaction of South Africans, and that the strength of this association has increased in recent years for certain indicators. To ascertain this, we conducted different types of analysis. These ranged from simple descriptive statistics that cross-tabulated the percentages satisfied with life based on the different political support and democratic evaluation measures, to regression

analysis that examined the effect of the different political measures on life satisfaction, controlling for differences by survey year. In this section, a non-technical overview of the findings from this analysis is presented, as encapsulated in Table 11.2.

Associations between national pride and life satisfaction

National pride was weakly and positively associated with life satisfaction on average over the period. It was found to be an inconsistent predictor of life satisfaction over time, with statistically significant associations present in only a handful of survey years. Positive associations with life satisfaction were evident in 2010–11 and 2017–20, but, unexpectedly, negative associations were found in 2005, 2006 and 2008. After the late 2000s, the associations have all been positive. In 2021, national pride was not a significant predictor of life satisfaction.

As for demand for democracy, a belief that ‘democracy is preferable to any other kind of government’ was associated with modestly higher levels of life satisfaction on

Table 11.2 *Summary of associations between life satisfaction and political support/democratic evaluation measures (based on ordered logistic regression analysis)*

Association between satisfaction with life as a whole and ...	Coefficient (controlling for year effects)	Description of association
National pride (2005, 2007–21)	0.0211*	Weakly positive association; as pride increases, life satisfaction increases marginally.
Demand for democracy (2011–21)	0.2421***	Positive association with a belief that ‘democracy is preferable’.
Satisfaction with democracy (2003–21)	0.4274***	Strong positive association, with strength of association increasing over time, especially since early 2010s.
Satisfaction with key government performance areas (2003–21):	0.0636***	Of the five different examples of services provided by government to the public, all exerted a statistically significant effect on life satisfaction, controlling for year of survey. The strongest associations were evident in relation to job creation efforts, electricity access, and water and sanitation. The strength of association between performance evaluations and life satisfaction has increased since the mid-2010s for electricity supply, crime reduction and job creation.
Social grants (2005–21)	0.3010***	
Water and sanitation	0.3157***	
Electricity	0.2204***	
Crime reduction	0.3722***	
Job creation		
Institutional trust (2003–21)	0.3558***	Strong positive association, with strength of association increasing over time, especially since early 2010s; applies to all institutions examined.
Satisfaction with current political leaders (2012–21)	0.3410***	Strong positive association, with strength of association increasing during 2010s.

Source: SASAS (2003–21)

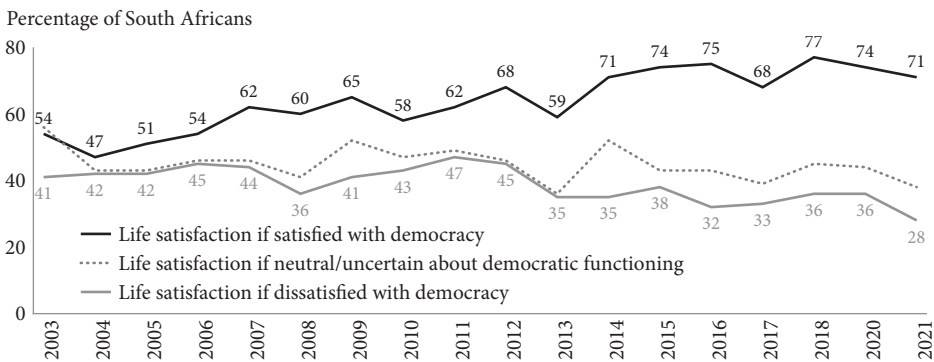
Notes: This is a stylised summary of a series of multivariate models that were conducted, based on pooled data covering all years of surveying. The dependent variable is a reversed satisfaction with life scale, where 1 = very dissatisfied and 5 = very satisfied. ‘Do not know’ responses were recoded to the scalar midpoint (value of 3). Models contained the individual political support item, controlling for survey year. Statistical significance of the associations between the variables and satisfaction with life as a whole from the regression analysis is denoted as follows: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < .001$; *** $p < .0001$.

average. The strength of this association has tended to be characteristically higher in the post-2015 survey years, relative to the early to mid-2010s. Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy yields a far stronger effect on life satisfaction, with greater levels of satisfaction with democracy leading to higher levels of life satisfaction, and vice versa. Running separate models for each year of surveying revealed that the association has increased progressively over time, especially in the 2004–2008 period and again between 2011 and 2021 (over the full period, the regression coefficient rose from 0.188 in 2003 to 0.771 in 2021).

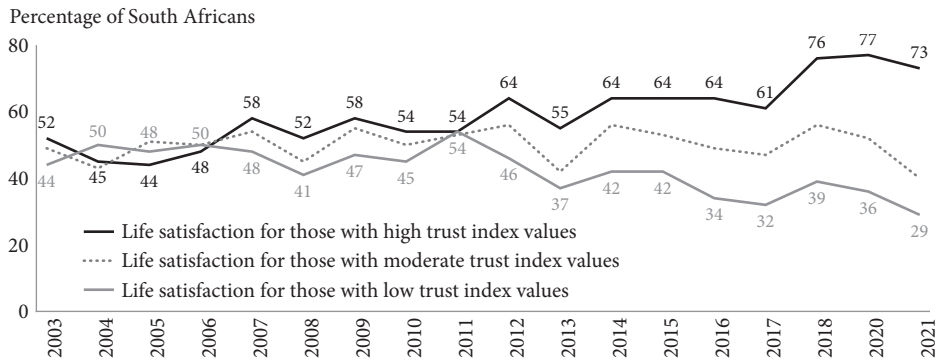
To convey a sense of this change in a straightforward manner, Figure 11.13 shows the shares that were satisfied with life as a whole over the 2003–21 period, based on whether they were satisfied with democracy, dissatisfied with democracy, or neutral or uncertain in outlook. The line graph shows that, in 2003, 54 per cent of those who were satisfied with democracy were satisfied with life. The line rises over time, with the result that, by 2021, 71 per cent of those who were satisfied with democracy were satisfied with life – an increase of 17 percentage points. The converse applies to democratic discontent. Life satisfaction among those dissatisfied with democracy fell from 41 per cent in 2003 to 28 per cent by 2021. These findings speak to the growing influence of evaluations of democracy’s functioning in the country on the sense of personal wellbeing. Given the positive nature of the observed associations, the implication is that intensifying levels of democratic discontent will exert a pull-down effect on life satisfaction.

Staying with the supply of democracy theme, satisfaction with key government performance areas also had a statistically significant effect on life satisfaction. (Dis)satisfaction with social grants, household services such as water, sanitation and electricity, as well as with crime reduction and job creation efforts, were all associated with higher levels of (dis)satisfaction with life as a whole. The strongest associations were apparent for performance in delivering household services and job creation. The strength of association between performance evaluations and life satisfaction

Figure 11.13 Percentage of South Africans satisfied with life as a whole, by satisfaction with democratic functioning, 2003–21



Source: SASAS (2003–21)

Figure 11.14 Percentage of South Africans satisfied with life as a whole, by trust in core political institutions (index), 2003–21

Source: SASAS (2003–21)

Note: The trust index values ranged from 1 (lowest trust) to 5 (highest trust). The distribution was classified into terciles (three equal groups), with low trust values ranging from 1.0 to 2.4, moderate trust values from 2.5 to 3.4, and high trust values from 3.5 to 5.0.

has increased since the mid-2010s for electricity supply, crime reduction and job creation, suggesting that developments in relation to these priority areas, whether positive or negative, are likely to resonate strongly with the public and influence their sense of wellbeing.

Associations between political institutions and life satisfaction

The analysis further confirmed that trust in core political institutions matters for personal wellbeing. Combining trust in national government, Parliament, the courts and local government into a single trust index, we found that greater trust levels were significantly associated with higher life satisfaction in the regression analysis (Figure 11.14). As with satisfaction with democracy, this association has grown stronger over time, especially since 2010 (the regression coefficient on the trust index rose from 0.125 in 2003 to 0.916 in 2021). The same applies if one conducts regression analysis that examines trust in each institution separately, including trust in political parties. The implication is that diminishing confidence in core political institutions in South Africa is, over time, likely to have a depressing effect on levels of life satisfaction.

Finally, the survey analysis confirmed that evaluations of current political leadership matter for life satisfaction. In their recent examination of presidential leadership, Richard Calland and Mabel Sithole (2022) critically examine the character and quality of political leadership in the country since 1994, and how crises have been addressed. They assert that good political leadership is needed now more than ever, given the varied impacts of state capture and Covid-19, combined with poor economic performance and a persistent unemployment crisis. Earlier in this chapter, it was shown that barely a quarter of the public has expressed satisfaction with leadership in recent years (Figure 11.12), speaking to the urgent need for capable and ethical governance in

coming years. A statistically significant association between these views on leadership and personal wellbeing was found over the 2012–21 period, with increased salience over time in a similar manner to satisfaction with democracy and institutional trust.

Hopes and fears in times of uncertainty and adversity

Given the evidence presented above of the strengthening relationship between select democratic evaluation indicators and life satisfaction over time, we conclude this section by briefly addressing the hopes and fears of South Africans, and how these might be a piece of the puzzle explaining some of the recent dynamics observed.

Valerie Møller and Benjamin Roberts (2017) reported on the hopes and fears South Africans expressed for themselves and for the country, based on a 2012 SASAS replication of the approach adopted by Hadley Cantril in his book *The Pattern of Human Concerns* (1965). They concluded that South Africans’ personal aspirations were largely material, concentrated on hopes for a decent living standard and the means of fulfilling this goal. Hopes for the nation tended to focus on economic and political progress needed in order to consolidate democracy in the country. In many instances, the personal and national fears expressed by the public reflected concerns that these aspirations might not be met. There was an appreciable degree of consensus about the top-mentioned hopes and fears among the country’s diverse population. Furthermore, the majority of South Africans projected that life would get better in future.

Table 11.3 Hope and optimism measures in South Africa in comparative perspective, 2015 (% agreeing with statements, with country rank in brackets)

	South Africa	India	South Korea	Philippines	USA	Venezuela
Optimism (dispositional)						
I'm always optimistic about my future.	76 (2)	68 (5)	57 (6)	76 (2)	69 (4)	92 (1)
In uncertain times, I usually expect the best.	70 (2)	62 (5)	66 (3)	55 (6)	63 (4)	90 (1)
Hope (situational/pathways)						
If I should find myself in a jam, I could think of many ways to get out of it.	85 (3)	64 (6)	85 (3)	79 (5)	94 (2)	96 (1)
There are lots of ways around any problem that I am facing now.	73 (5)	72 (6)	76 (4)	88 (3)	91 (2)	93 (1)
I can think of many ways to reach my current goals.	74 (5)	69 (6)	76 (4)	89 (3)	91 (2)	94 (1)

Sources: SASAS (2015); sources for India, South Korea, Philippines, USA, Venezuela data⁵

Notes: The two optimism items are from the Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R, Scheier, Carver & Bridges 1994), while the three hope items are the pathways subset of the 1996 State Hope Scale (Snyder et al. 1996). The fielding of these and other survey items in South Africa and the other countries in the table was based on financial support from the University of Notre Dame.

From a comparative module on hope and optimism included in the 2015 round of SASAS and similar general social surveys in India, South Korea, the Philippines, the USA and Venezuela, it was evident that South Africans have a tendency to be dispositionally optimistic on average. From the data shown in Table 11.3, it is evident that at least 7 in 10 South African adults reported being positive in their outlook for the future, and expecting positive outcomes in times of uncertainty. This optimism was relatively high compared to the five other countries surveyed. As Graham (2011) asserts, this optimism may reflect the need to maintain hope in the face of extremely adverse circumstances, and can be observed in different world regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and even parts of Central Asia. The hope measures presented in the table focus mainly on pathways – in other words, views on what individuals can do to overcome difficulty and achieve their goals.⁴ Again, sizeable shares of South Africans in 2015 believed they could find ways around problems and fulfil their aspirations. The country admittedly ranked lower relative to the other five countries on these measures compared to the optimism indicators, but these views are still common for around three-quarters or more of the public.

The implication of this optimism among South Africans, and of the material underpinnings of their hopes and fears, is that considerable expectation is placed on government to deliver on the promise of a better life for all. However, the experience of recent years, including underwhelming macroeconomic performance, state capture and basic infrastructural decline, high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment, and the socioeconomic duress associated with the national Covid-19 lockdown, signal to the public that their notion of the good life is not being realised. It is likely to have stoked personal and national fears, eroding the optimism, hope and resilience characteristically displayed by South Africans, and replacing it with a creeping despondency. This seems to be more acute for historically more privileged segments of society. The downward trends observed for many democratic support indicators are symptomatic of these phenomena. Past research has shown that optimistic individuals tend to respond and adapt more favourably to key life events and transitions than those with a more pessimistic outlook (Aspinwall, Richter & Hoffman 2001; Aspinwall & Taylor 1992). The balance between optimism and pessimism, hopes and fears, is therefore something that will need to be monitored closely in future, as it matters for quality of life and wellbeing in the country.

Conclusion

This chapter used long-term attitudinal trend data to argue that views on democratic performance and context in South Africa have a shaping influence on personal wellbeing, as measured in this instance by satisfaction with life as a whole. Some might argue for an alternative interpretation, namely that satisfaction with life and happiness instead impacts democratic functioning. High levels of wellbeing in a society may promote a conducive 'climate' of tolerance, freedom and opportunity, which in turn may help to consolidate democratic functioning (Veenhoven 2000: 280–281). However, given political and economic developments in the country over the last 10 or more

years, and the rising frustration and protest displayed by the public, we maintain that the impact that the democratic context (and evaluations thereof) has on life satisfaction represents an important conceptual (causal) framing.

In the late 1990s, Mattes and Christie (1997) found relatively weak associations between democratic evaluations and life satisfaction. The findings presented in this chapter show that the picture has changed appreciably since then, with satisfaction with democracy ratings and levels of trust in key political institutions displaying a progressively stronger association with life satisfaction over time, especially during the 2010s. Given the general declining trends on the political support indicators presented earlier in the chapter, the corrosive effect this is likely to be having on life satisfaction should not be underestimated. National averages may be masking this dynamic, given the divergence in trends observed – an increasingly contented minority displaying a credulous faith, versus an expanding, progressively discontented majority.

Research using the HSRC's SASAS series in the mid-2010s revealed that South Africans on average displayed relatively robust levels of optimism and hope, with a tendency to report a positive future outlook no matter the present circumstances, and an ability to identify pathways out of difficult situations. However, this resilient approach to life may have been severely tested over the past decade, leading to a more sombre view on life for those believing that South African democracy, core institutions and leadership are not living up to expectations. The political and economic crises of this period have perhaps begun to create a scenario in which personal fears are gaining traction over the hopes South Africans are known for, and denting their resilience.

The epigraph to this chapter, drawn from President Ramaphosa's 2022 'State of the Nation' address (South African Government 2022), is correct in observing that South Africans have typically displayed a fierce tenacity in confronting and overcoming crises in the past. However, the evidence of the past two decades presented in the chapter suggests that belief in the ability of the public, especially the socially disadvantaged and vulnerable in society, to continue courageously and optimistically addressing new challenges may be misplaced. The signs are that for many South Africans, resilience is being displaced by resignation, which introduces the risk of further instability and fragility in the country in future if this pattern does not alter.

Notes

- 1 SASAS data can be downloaded from the HSRC data curation website, <http://curation.hsrc.ac.za/Datasets-TAAMAA.phtml>.
- 2 Although there is no such thing as 'race' in biological or physical terms, race continues to influence many aspects of South African society. Through the long history of classification, segregation and injustice in the country, the social construction of 'race' has come to assume meaning and has a bearing on everyday life. In examining survey evidence on key national priorities, such as quality of life and social progress, it is important to consider whether these 'racialised' constructions of reality hold any salience. For this reason, surveys administered by both Statistics South Africa and the HSRC ask people to describe

- themselves in terms of five racial population groups (black, coloured, Indian, white and unspecified/other).
- 3 More information about the Afrobarometer series can be found on the survey website, <https://www.afrobarometer.org/>. Data for the different Afrobarometer rounds can be freely downloaded from the survey website.
 - 4 The hope and optimism module of the study on which Table 11.3 draws was fielded by a subset of country members of the International Social Survey Programme. Apart from the South African contribution (HSRC SASAS data), the module was fielded: (1) in South Korea by the Survey Research Center, Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul, as part of the Korean General Social Survey; (2) in India by the Center for Voting Opinion & Trends in Election Research, Uttar Pradesh; (3) in the Philippines by Social Weather Stations, Quezon City, as part of its Social Weather Survey series; (4) in the US by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago, as part of the American General Social Survey series; and (5) in Venezuela by the Laboratorio de Ciencias Sociales, Caracas.
 - 5 Country data are drawn from the project *Optimism and Hope across Time and Cultures*, with Dr Tom W Smith as PI. Funding came from the John Templeton Foundation with a grant to the University of Notre Dame and Cornell University. See <http://hopeoptimism.com/projects/how-do-optimism-and-hope-vary-over-time-and-across-countries>.

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12 *Mental health among external migrants in South Africa*

Steven Lawrence Gordon

Over the last 30 years, South Africa has been home to a myriad of different scholarly attempts to engage with the topic of wellbeing. In the growing field of wellbeing research, as this edited volume shows, significant methodological progress has been made in certain areas. Within the field of quality of life research, the country has acquired a respected international reputation. Although past South African quality of life research has been concerned with a wide variety of different kinds of people, one group has been largely ignored: external migrants. International migration has become an important feature of life in South Africa during the last few decades, and more than 2 million external migrants now live in the country (UNDP-ESPD 2020). Despite the growth of this population, their mental health and psychological wellbeing are understudied. This constitutes a notable gap in the existing literature in regard to our larger understanding of quality of life in South Africa. This chapter seeks to fill this gap, examining the mental health of poor and working-class external migrants to identify the drivers of quality of life among this group.

The external migrant population in South Africa is quite vulnerable; this is especially true for those who are poor. A growing body of research has emphasised the struggles this group faces, highlighting the societal challenges that they experience (see, for instance, Human Rights Watch 2020). It is clear that interventions are required to assist this group, helping its members safely integrate into South African society. The design of interventions that could affect the livelihoods of external migrants should utilise wellbeing data to optimise the positive impact of these interventions. Such data can help designers think about which projects deserve attention, and how best to maximise expenditure for the societal benefit of this group. Understanding the determinants of wellbeing among external migrants in the country is therefore not only of academic interest, but has practical implications as well.

One of the reasons for the limited scholarship on the mental health of the external migrant population in South Africa is inadequate data availability. Many existing public opinion data sets that include detailed metrics of mental life do not contain a viable sample of foreign nationals for the purposes of analysis. To circumvent this problem, this chapter investigates attitudinal data from a unique survey that covered 10 township communities. It first places the investigation in its proper context by presenting an overview of the relevant literature. This includes a brief outline of the subjective measurement of mental health, as well as a discussion of possible determinants of external migrants' mental health. Thereafter, the data source is outlined, and the results

of the investigation presented. The chapter concludes by delineating the requirements for future research on external migrant quality of life in South Africa, and makes a series of practical policy recommendations.

Setting the scene

Over the last 40 years, most migration patterns in South Africa have been internal rather than external. Although other segregationist laws remained on the books until 1991, the reviled Pass Laws (also known as the Natives Laws Amendment Act [No. 54 of 1952]) were repealed in 1986, and people could move more freely within the country.¹ As a result, the rate of internal migration increased quite rapidly in the late 1980s (Reed 2013). This was particularly true for the rate of rural–urban migration, both within and between provinces. Poor service delivery conditions and a lack of decent work drove rural dwellers to move to urban areas in search of employment and better service delivery. The level of urbanisation in the country increased from 50% of the total population in 1986 to 68% in 2022.² During this period of rapid urbanisation, South African cities became more ethnically heterogeneous and culturally diverse. This process has created many townships that are comprised primarily of migrants (both internal and external), generating new challenges for community and social cohesion.

In 1990, about a million international migrants resided in South Africa, according to UN demographers (UNDP-ESPD 2020). Following the passage of comprehensive immigration reform (as well as bilateral agreements for visa-free travel and labour mobility) in the 2000s, the number of immigrants in the country began to rise.³ The UN estimates that South Africa's international migrant stock was 2.1 million in 2010 and that it increased to nearly 2.8 million by 2020 (UNDP-ESPD 2020).⁴ These external migrants have often had quite a lot in common with their internal (that is, domestic) counterparts. Both groups have tended to be concentrated in urban areas, and both have migrated in search of social and economic mobility. In addition, they both tend to draw upon pre-existing communities of ethnic origin in the areas where they settle, to provide material or financial help and help in finding accommodation, employment and social life (Madhavan & Landau 2011). But much remains unknown about the livelihoods of external migrants in South Africa, especially those living in poor and working-class communities.

South Africa (like many other African countries) lacks reliable data on external migrants. This deficiency underlies a more general deficit in the current body of research on external migrants in the country. Despite the growing diversity of the nation's cities and towns, few quantitative studies have focused on the wellbeing of poor and working-class migrants. Prior quantitative research on migrants has concentrated mainly on the determinants of discriminatory behaviour towards this group.⁵ This can be contrasted with Europe, where empirical research on immigrants' quality of life (and its determinants) is far more extensive (see, for example, Angelini, Casi & Corazzini 2015; Hendriks 2015; Tegegne & Glanville 2019). As a result, we do not

adequately understand the challenges facing foreign nationals living in South Africa's many working-class townships.

Measuring wellbeing in South Africa

There are a number of ways in which external migrants' quality of life can be measured and assessed. This study investigates the quality of life of this group subjectively (by asking people to rate the quality of their lives). The self-reported measurement of social-psychological states (attitudes and feelings) in a given population has emerged as essential for the modern comprehension of mental health. A landmark study in the development of the epidemiology of mental health was undertaken by GERALD Gurin, Joseph Veroff and Sheila Feld (1960). The authors administered a questionnaire to a large representative sample, requesting respondents to evaluate their own lives in terms of both affective (how they feel) and cognitive (what they think) mental health components. Following this momentous study, scholars of the medical sciences increasingly came to embrace subjective survey tools as a valid and important form of measurement of mental health in their work (Spitzer 1987).

Large-scale quantitative quality of life research began in South Africa in the 1990s, reflecting a growing concern for general societal wellbeing within the country (Cooper & Nicholas 2012). Quality of life is, of course, a multidimensional concept that usually includes domains related to cognitive, emotional and social functioning. Consequently, researchers in South Africa have employed a wide variety of large-scale survey instruments to study it. This chapter focuses on one aspect of mental health: depression. This form of psychological distress has been acknowledged as a key aspect of mental health and a particularly pressing national public health concern (Department of Health 2013). Impairment linked with depression can be lifelong, and can be equivalent to (or greater than) impairment brought about by other common chronic medical conditions (Hays et al. 1995). In addition, depression can undermine social functioning, reducing participation in home life and work (see Fried & Nesse 2014).

There are, at the time of writing, few studies of the epidemiology of major depressive disorders in the general South African population. One of the largest nationally representative household surveys on depression was conducted by the WHO in the mid-2000s.⁶ This survey was undertaken in the context of a growing interest in empirically assessing common mental disorders among the population of low- and middle-income countries (Lund et al. 2010). The WHO research highlighted the prevalence of psychological disorders among poor and working-class communities in South Africa. In the total sample, the frequency of a major depressive episode was 4.9% for the 12 months prior to the interview (Tomlinson et al. 2009). However, this large-scale survey included only limited data on the international migrant population. As a result, it presents little information on what the key drivers of depression are among this group.

Identifying drivers of mental health among external migrants

In order to understand the key determinants of depression among external migrants in South Africa, a number of hypotheses are tested in this study. Given the dearth of available relevant literature in the country, empirical studies on immigrants' quality of life in Europe were utilised to design these hypotheses. Existing European research has documented a distinct disparity between migrant and non-migrant wellbeing. Prior studies have mostly attributed this gap to dissimilarities in economic status and perceived discrimination.⁷ Social capital, which has garnered considerable attention in the wider quality of life literature, has also been identified as an important driver of immigrant wellbeing (see Hendriks 2015).⁸ In view of this work, three hypotheses were constructed to be assessed in this study. Each of these hypotheses is outlined and discussed below.

One of the most prominent academic critiques of subjective surveys designed to gauge quality of life emerged from the work of Amartya Sen. He argued that individual adaption to deprivation undermined the utility of this methodological tool to measure human flourishing. In criticising subjectivity as a research instrument for assessing quality of life, Sen used his famous 'happy slave' example.⁹ However, most of the existing empirical work on subjective quality of life suggests that material conditions have a robust impact on self-reported wellbeing. Economic utility theory suggests that as people suffer material deprivation, they lose the ability to meet basic consumption needs and this reduces quality of life (Easterlin 2001). The relationship between economic conditions and wellbeing tends to be strongest in developing country contexts (Howell & Howell 2008). In addition, psychological research has shown that poverty undermines mental health and can result in depression. Although the manner in which material deprivation affects mental health is quite complex, multiple studies have identified a relationship between the two.¹⁰

Based on this prior quality of life empirical research, it is possible to put forward the following hypothesis:

H#1 Experiences of material deprivation will be positively associated with negative mental health outcomes among external migrants.

Discrimination is a stressful experience for people, producing anger, a sense of powerlessness and anxiety in the victim. Indeed, discrimination can act as a social stressor that initiates a variety of physiological responses (for example, elevated blood pressure, heart rate and cortisol secretions) that are detrimental to the psychological health of the individual (Paradies 2006). A meta-analytic analysis by Michael Schmitt et al. (2014) shows a correlation between personal experiences with discrimination and negative mental health outcomes across a range of studies. People who experience discrimination are also less likely to participate in healthy behaviours and beneficial social networks (see Pascoe & Richman 2009). There is some empirical evidence that exposure to prejudice can be detrimental to the mental health of international migrants. A meta-review of studies on the negative effects of xenophobia on foreigners by Shazeen Suleman, Kent Garber and Lainie Rutkow (2018) found that there was an association

between this form of prejudice and certain negative mental health outcomes (such as depression). But, as far as I am aware, there is scarce evidence about the impact of discrimination on immigrant mental health in South Africa.

Given previous research, the following hypothesis can be advanced:

H#2 Feeling discriminated against will have a detrimental impact on the mental health outcomes of external migrants.

Social isolation is a particularly difficult challenge for external migrants. Kipling Williams (2009) famously theorised that social exclusion would inescapably lead to a detrimental stage of resignation among minority groups, characterised by poor mental health. Insular social networks can prevent information and resource diffusion from other networks, reducing the quality of life of network members (Mitchell & LaGory 2002). Building social relationships with host members is *especially* fundamental to migrant integration. In fact, contact with locals can act as a kind of social 'bridge', helping new migrants gain knowledge about how their host society works (Poortinga 2012). Being isolated from locals can create difficulty in navigating a host society, and lead to a sense of powerlessness and feelings of community exclusion (see Ager & Strang 2008). Indeed, a German study of immigrants' quality of life by Viola Angelini, Laura Casi and Luca Corazzini (2015) found a significant association between cultural assimilation and life satisfaction.

After reviewing the current research on how social isolation undermines the mental health of migrants, the following hypothesis was constructed:

H#3 Contact with the domestic-born will have a beneficial effect on the mental health of external migrants.

Data used in the study

Freedom House Southern Africa commissioned Social Surveys Africa to administer the Community Level Social Dynamics Survey (CLSDS).¹¹ The survey was conducted in 10 township communities that provided a good cross-section of poor working-class communities in which foreign nationals are known to coexist with locals. The CLSDS instrument was developed by Social Surveys Africa, which received inputs from Freedom House Southern Africa, the Africa Centre for Migration Studies and the Safety and Violence Initiative, a research unit at the University of Cape Town whose focus is violence prevention and safety promotion. The sample was restricted to those 18 years and older, living in private residences. Fieldwork teams with the requisite language skills were recruited for each of the community sites selected. Interviews were conducted in respondents' home languages, where appropriate.

Of the 10 communities selected for this study, three were in Gauteng, two were in the Western Cape, two were in the Eastern Cape, and the remainder were located in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and North West. Fieldwork was conducted in two phases, the first between 13 July and 28 July 2016, the second between 17 January and 4 February 2017. At each site, fieldworkers were given strict sample quotas to maintain gender, age and

Table 12.1 *Sample distribution across the 10 communities selected for the Community Level Social Dynamics Survey (CLSDDS)*

Area	Research phase	Province	N	% of total sample
De Doorns	2	Western Cape	400	9.87
Diepsloot	1	Gauteng	402	9.92
Durban South	1	KwaZulu-Natal	399	9.85
Elim	2	Limpopo	400	9.87
Grahamstown	1	Eastern Cape	400	9.87
Khayelitsha	1	Western Cape	401	9.9
Makause	2	Gauteng	429	10.59
Mamelodi East	2	Gauteng	402	9.92
Marikana	1	North West	399	9.85
Motherwell	2	Eastern Cape	420	10.37

Source: CLSDDS

Note: Data in this table are unweighted.

nationality balance. About 400 respondents were interviewed per site. Details of the sample are provided in Table 12.1. After data cleaning, 4 052 interviews were retained for analysis. After collection, the data were weighted to be representative of the adult population of the 10 communities visited.¹²

Nearly a fifth (18%; N = 712) of CLSDDS respondents were non-migrants, and 70% (N = 2 844) were internal migrants. Of the internal migrants, about half (N = 1 654) were long-term residents, while the remainder were either medium-term (N = 606) or short-term (N = 584) residents.¹³ The sample included 493 respondents who reported that they were born outside South Africa (that is, they were first-generation migrants); this group was classified as ‘external migrants’. In terms of origins this was a diverse group, although most originated from neighbouring countries in the southern African region (such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Lesotho). About half (45%) of this group had been living in their current neighbourhood for less than five years, 28% were medium-term residents and 26% were long-term residents.

Data analysis

This section first presents unweighted descriptive summary statistics on levels of depression for the external migrant population in the 10 communities under consideration, in Table 12.2. Thereafter, the construction of different independent variables created to generate a series of multivariate regression models is outlined. These models were produced to test the three hypotheses designed for this study. STATA 16.1 software was utilised to compute all the results reported. The CLSDDS questionnaire included items on the respondents’ demographic characteristics. Using these items, a number of standard demographic and socioeconomic dummy variables were constructed for this

Table 12.2 *Univariate summary statistics for the external migrant population in the sample*

Variable label	Observation	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
Age	493	33.21	11.03	18	100
Gender					
Male	304	0.62	0.49	0	1
Female	187	0.38	0.49	0	1
Household size	493	2.81	1.96	0	26
Formal secondary education					
None	141	0.29	0.45	0	1
Some secondary	261	0.53	0.50	0	1
Completed or above	89	0.18	0.39	0	1
Work status					
Employed	148	0.30	0.46	0	1
Unemployed	344	0.70	0.46	0	1
Documented					
Undocumented	220	0.45	0.50	0	1
Refugee/asylum-seeker	148	0.30	0.46	0	1
Other	123	0.25	0.43	0	1

Source: CLSDS

Note: Data in this table are unweighted.

study. A categorical documentation status variable was also produced for the analysis, allowing a distinction to be made between undocumented and documented migrants.¹⁴

The CLSDS questionnaire included a series of items on recent experiences of material deprivation. Respondents were asked: ‘Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or anyone in your household gone without: (i) enough food to eat; (ii) enough clean water for home use; (iii) medicines or medical treatment; (iv) enough fuel to cook your food; and (v) electricity in your home?’ Responses to these questions were captured on a 0–4 categorical scale with 0 representing ‘never’ and 4 ‘always’. The items were combined to produce a composite measure labelled the Recent Deprivation Index. This metric was scaled 0–10, with higher values indicating a higher frequency of deprivation experiences. The mean index score for the adult external migrant population was 2.07 (SE = 0.103) and 23% of this group scored 0 on this indicator.

Survey participants were questioned on whether they had ever felt discriminated against based on a range of different forms of prejudice. These included: (i) gender; (ii) sexuality; (iii) race; (iv) nationality; (v) ethnicity; and (vi) religious group. The most common form of prejudice experienced by external migrants was, perhaps unsurprisingly, nationality, with 43% reporting this experience. If a person felt discriminated against in these terms, they were more likely to have felt some other form of prejudice.¹⁵ This demonstrates the intersectionality of modern discrimination, with certain vulnerable

people exposed to multiple interlocking types of intolerance. Given this finding, it was necessary to create a composite index of discrimination experience, designated the Multiple Discrimination Index. The index metric was placed on a 0–10 scale, with the higher value denoting the greater number of forms of prejudice faced by the respondent. The mean index score for the adult external migrant population was 1.86 (SE = 0.116); this was twice the mean score of the non-migrant population (M = 0.87; SE = 0.035).

CLSDS respondents were questioned about how much contact they had with the following groups: (i) ‘South Africans who speak other languages than you’; and (ii) ‘South Africans of other race groups than you’. Answers to these two items were recorded on a 1–4 categorical scale, with 1 representing ‘every day’ and 4 representing ‘never’. The two items were merged to create a composite metric, which was labelled the Local Contact Index.¹⁶ The scaling of the measure ranged from 0 to 10, with higher values signifying a higher regularity of contact. The mean index score for the foreign population was 7.83 (SE = 0.050), and 40% of this group scored 10 on this metric. This result seems to imply that most external migrants are not isolated from locals in the communities in which they live.

Depression among external migrants

The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) is a version of the Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders diagnostic instrument for common mental disorders, and contains a module on depression (the PHQ-9).¹⁷ This module on depression was included in the CLSDS questionnaire. The PHQ-9 items were combined and an index (the Level of Depression Severity Index) was produced (Table 12.3). The metric was scaled 0 to 10, with the higher value indicating the higher severity of depression. The vast majority of adults in the 10 communities surveyed had no depressive disorder; the mean score on the index was 1.40 (SE = 0.031). About a quarter (23%) of the adult population exhibited subthreshold levels of depression, and less than a twelfth (12%) had moderate levels. Only a thirtieth could be classified as suffering from major depression.

Table 12.3 Mean level of depression severity (PHQ-9), scale (0–10), by gender and migration status

Migrant status	Male				Female			
	Mean	SE	95% Confidence interval		Mean	SE	95% Confidence interval	
Non-internal migrant	1.13	(0.090)	0.95	1.30	1.42	(0.090)	1.24	1.60
Long-term internal migrant	1.30	(0.070)	0.07	1.44	1.64	(0.070)	1.51	1.77
Medium-term internal migrant	1.28	(0.107)	0.11	1.49	1.47	(0.110)	1.26	1.69
Short-term internal migrant	1.15	(0.100)	0.10	1.35	1.52	(0.130)	1.27	1.77
External migrant	1.00	(0.101)	0.10	1.20	1.70	(0.160)	1.38	2.01
Total	1.20	(0.041)	1.12	1.28	1.57	(0.045)	1.48	1.66

Source: CLSDS

The adult host population had a higher mean Level of Depression Severity Index score ($M = 1.42$; $SE = 0.033$) than external migrants ($M = 1.29$; $SE = 0.090$). Among the host population, internal migrants had higher mean index scores ($M = 1.44$; $SE = 0.037$) than non-migrants ($M = 1.29$; $SE = 0.065$). Women were found to have, on average, higher levels of depression ($M = 1.57$; $SE = 0.045$) than their male counterparts ($M = 1.20$; $SE = 0.041$). This gender disparity is consistent with what was observed in the South African Stress and Health study by Mark Tomlinson et al. (2009). Table 12.3 displays mean scores for the PHQ-9-derived index by gender and migration status. It was apparent from the data that, regardless of migration status, women were more liable to suffer from depression than men. The disparity between men and women was found to be particularly stark for external migrants, as well as for recent internal migrants.

The chapter will now model the correlations between the Level of Depression Severity Index (that is, the dependent variable) and a range of different independent variables. With the aim of identifying the determinants of the index, a linear regression approach was utilised. The data used for this analysis were restricted to the external migrant population. To allow for a better comparison between independent variables, beta coefficients were computed. The predictive power of the Recent Deprivation Index is tested in the first model, and the Multiple Discrimination Index is introduced in the second. Finally, the host contact hypothesis is evaluated in the third model using the Local Contact Index. Each model contains all the standard background variables included in Table 12.2, and model outcomes are portrayed in Table 12.4.

As might have been expected, self-reported deprivation was discovered to be a strong predictor of whether an external migrant felt depressed. In Model I, a one-unit increase in the Recent Deprivation Index increased the relative log odds ($\beta = 0.405$; $r = 0.942$; $SE = 0.140$) of having depression. Of all the independent variables tested in the first model, deprivation had the most robust correlation with the dependent. If the first model was adjusted to focus only on the host population, then we find that the Recent Deprivation Index was a weaker correlate ($\beta = 0.251$; $r = 0.629$; $SE = 0.052$) of depression among this group. It would appear, therefore, that material deprivation is a more powerful determinant of international migrants' quality of life than is the case for South African-born adults. Martijn Hendriks (2015) argues that this observed disparity could be due to the fact that psychological threats increase the priority given to extrinsic goals. Because immigrants are under threat, they tend to become more extrinsically oriented, and more negatively affected by poor material conditions.

The Multiple Discrimination Index was a statistically significant correlate of the dependent in the second model. The size of the observed correlation ($\beta = 0.140$; $r = 0.102$; $SE = 0.036$) implies that a positive one-unit change in this metric will increase the likelihood that a person will suffer from depression. In other words, the more forms of prejudice an external migrant faces, the more liable they are to experience depression. It is, of course, possible that an even more robust psychological effect might have been observed if the Multiple Discrimination Index was able to gauge the severity of the bigotry experienced by the individual. As Suleman, Garber and Rutkow (2018) acknowledge, the impact of discrimination on wellbeing will depend

Table 12.4 Linear regression on the Level of Depression Severity Index (PHQ-9) among the foreign-born population

Independent variable	Model I			Model II			Model III		
	Coef.	SE	Beta	Coef.	SE	Beta	Coef.	SE	Beta
Age	0.001	(0.021)	0.003	-0.003	(0.021)	-0.007	0.000	(0.022)	0.000
Gender (ref. male)	1.425	(0.477)	**	1.378	(0.478)	**	1.269	(0.482)	**
Household size	-0.032	(0.118)		-0.013	(0.118)		-0.020	(0.114)	
Formal secondary education (ref. none)									
Some secondary	0.182	(0.546)		0.212	(0.556)		0.257	(0.551)	
Completed or above	-0.126	(0.638)		-0.181	(0.637)		-0.040	(0.639)	
Employed (ref. unemployed)	-0.598	(0.427)		-0.657	(0.157)		-0.453	(0.421)	
Documented (ref. undocumented)									
Refugee/asylum-seeker	0.835	(0.562)		0.897	(0.571)		0.934	(0.564)	
Other	0.559	(0.613)		0.406	(0.621)		0.464	(0.626)	
Recent Deprivation Index	0.942	(0.140)	***	0.922	(0.136)	***	0.863	(0.140)	***
Multiple Discrimination Index				0.275	(0.097)	**	0.275	(0.096)	**
Local Contact Index							-0.273	(0.106)	*
Number of obs.		491			490			489	
R-squared		0.253			0.267			0.281	
Root MSE		1.476			1.465			1.453	

Source: CLSDS

Notes: Standardised beta coefficients are used. A positive correlation indicates a greater likelihood of experiencing depression. The data are restricted to those born outside South Africa. *, **, and *** indicate that the differences in mean scores are significantly different at the 5% ($p < 0.05$), 1% ($p < 0.01$) and 0.1% ($p < 0.001$) levels respectively.

on the severity of the experience. Exposure to violent prejudice, for instance, may have a more robust impact on migrants' quality of life than other forms of discrimination (see Schmitt et al. 2014). Unfortunately, measures of the intensity and character of the discrimination experienced by the respondents were not present in the CLSDS data set.

Analysis of the data shows that even when taking other socioeconomic characteristics into account, contact with people from South Africa improved the mental health of external migrants. In the final model, a one-unit increase in the Local Contact Index reduced the log odds ($\beta = -0.132$; $r = 0.106$; $SE = 0.273$) of experiencing depression. It was interesting to assess, as a robustness test, whether contact with other groups had a similar effect on migrants' wellbeing. The final model was adjusted to include a variable that accounted for contact with people from neighbouring countries.¹⁸ Contact with this group was a positive correlate ($\beta = 0.019$; $r = 0.041$; $SE = 0.118$) in this new model, but the correlation was not statistically significant at the 5% level. This outcome is noteworthy, given that Mesay Tegegne and Jennifer Glanville (2019) expect bonding social capital to have a robust effect on immigrants' quality of life. It could of course be argued that the *quality* of contact could have a more important impact on mental health than its *quantity* (De Silva et al. 2005). However, measures of this nature were not available in the CLSDS data set.

Regardless of which model is considered, gender is a robust correlate of the dependent. Being female, even when controlling for a range of socioeconomic variables, increases the chance that an external migrant will suffer from depression. If the final model is modified to focus only on adults from the host population, we find that being female has a weaker correlation with the dependent ($\beta = 0.064$; $r = 0.214$; $SE = 0.062$) than what was observed for the external migrant population ($\beta = 0.138$; $r = 0.470$; $SE = 0.178$). This confirms the pattern of results observed in Table 12.3, which shows that migrant women, on average, reported higher levels of depression than other groups. The possible factors that may account for this observed disparity include the gender division of labour, as well as greater exposure to hardships such as sexual abuse, domestic violence and the effects of sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁹

Data limitations of the research findings

A systematic and rigorous analysis of depression among external migrants in 10 prominent urban communities has been presented in this chapter. Following a review of the literature, three hypotheses were constructed and tested using a unique data set. The results of these tests show that material deprivation, discrimination and contact with diverse host populations were major drivers of depression among this group. Of the three drivers identified in this study, recent experiences of material deprivation had, by far, the largest impact. These findings have improved our understanding of quality of life among external migrants in the South African context. Although this study adds to the existing body of knowledge on the mental health of immigrant populations, it also has its own shortcomings, which must be acknowledged.

First of all, the data used were cross-sectional, and the direction of causation of any of the observed relationships could not be identified. Because migration is a selective phenomenon, as Hendriks (2015) argues, this can present a special challenge for empirical studies of immigrants' quality of life. Existing research in Europe suggests that the determinants of quality of life may differ between migration generations (Angelini, Casi & Corazzini 2015). A second limitation is that the focus of this study was the foreign-born (that is, first-generation migrants) and, due to data limitations, it ignored second-generation migrants. In addition, there are potential concerns about the metrics used to gauge mental health in this study, which focused on distress and dysfunction. The adoption of a more positive measure of quality of life could broaden the field of analysis, providing a new window on the psychological functioning of external migrants in South Africa.

The final, and perhaps most serious, limitation of this study concerns the representivity of the CLSDS sample. Although it was a large data set that contained many external migrants, the CLSDS was only representative of 10 township communities in South Africa. In order to provide a more comprehensive picture of the adult external migrant population as a whole, there is a need to implement a survey with a larger and more inclusive sampling framework. This will require specially designed recruitment options that will allow fieldworkers to identify and interview this difficult-to-reach group. Future research should build on the work of this study, and help to develop more robust data sets that can measure the wellbeing of the country's international migrant population. As discussed in the next section, improved data sources like this could help policy-makers design new and more effective interventions to help external migrants.

Policy recommendations for improving migrants' wellbeing

This chapter has contributed to the existing body of literature on the quality of life of external migrants. The study presented here has, in particular, improved our knowledge of how material deprivation undermines mental health among this group. But the benefits of understanding the drivers of foreigners' mental health are important not only for academics, but for policy-makers as well. Exploiting the CLSDS data set, important policy interventions can be designed to protect and improve the mental health of external migrants in South Africa. Recognising the drivers of mental health (and their relative strengths) is essential for those policy-makers interested in achieving the full integration of immigrants into their host society. This final section of the chapter focuses on the practical implications of the research findings for integration policy in South Africa.

One of the most progressive interventions that can aid external migrants consists of programmes that assist foreigners to integrate into host communities. The lack of well-resourced immigrant programmes in South Africa has been recognised as a problem by state officials (Department of Home Affairs 2016). Migrant integration is a long-term process, and therefore requires long-term strategic planning. Effective integration policies cover a wide variety of different domains of life (Ager & Strang 2008). It is best,

therefore, to think of an immigrant integration policy not as a single programme, but rather as an interconnected system of interventions that touch on different areas of life. These would include protections from discrimination, access to basic services (for example, housing, education and healthcare), and programmes that help foreigners enter the job market. Interventions should be specially targeted at vulnerable external migrant groups (for example, women).

Successful integration policies in South Africa must prioritise cultural assimilation. Proper interventions to facilitate cultural assimilation could have great potential to help this group engage in positive contacts (friendly and cooperative interactions) with locals in their host communities. Effective examples of such interventions would include language courses, civic and cultural activities, as well as mentorship programmes. Consider, for instance, the dedicated centres set up by the Portuguese government to help foreigners navigate their new host society.²⁰ The Portuguese integration policy-making architecture comprises several institutions that were established in the mid-2000s. The most important of these are Local Immigrant Support Centres, the National Immigrant Support Centre and the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (later renamed the High Commission for Migration). The Portuguese government, through the High Commission, has also funded research on immigration and explored ways in which this research could inform policy-making.²¹

In addition, more must be done to protect working-class international migrants from discrimination. Migrant victims of discrimination in South Africa are often uninformed about their rights, and have poor access to legal remedies (Human Rights Watch 2020). Many migrants suspect that enforcement agencies such as the South African Police Service are not on their side, and do not report violations of their rights (see Edwards & Freeman 2021). Interventions that have been shown to improve access to justice for victims include shorter procedures, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and greater provision of legal aid. Successful immigrant integration programmes are not easy to achieve, and effectively implementing the policy interventions described above would involve challenges that would need to be faced. But the data presented in this chapter do suggest that such integration programmes will have a meaningful impact on the mental health of working-class external migrants living in South Africa.

Notes

- 1 The two most important legislative changes that ended racial segregation in South Africa were the Population Registration Act Repeal Act (No. 114 of 1991) and the Abolition of Racially Based Land Measures Act (No. 108 of 1991). These laws repealed the following segregationist laws: the Population Registration Act (No. 30 of 1950), the Natives Land Act (No. 27 of 1913), the Native Trust and Land Act (No. 18 of 1936) and the Group Areas Act (No. 36 of 1966).
- 2 Data obtained from the United Nations Population Division under the World Urbanization Prospects (2018 Revision) (UNDP-ESPD 2020).
- 3 The laws governing immigration in South Africa were reformed under the Immigration Act (No. 13 of 2002) and then subsequently amended in 2004 and 2007 (for a discussion of these

reforms, see Aurelia Segatti 2011). South Africa has concluded a number of agreements with different countries in southern Africa, but the two most important are with Lesotho and Zimbabwe. Although the South African government has signed formal Bilateral Labour Migration Arrangements with its neighbours, it has also relied heavily on less formal Memorandums of Understanding. The International Organization for Migration (IOM 2021) provides a discussion of these agreements, with a focus on the Lesotho–South Africa and Zimbabwe–South Africa corridors.

- 4 This figure is down from 2015, when 3.2 million migrants were estimated to be living in South Africa. These estimates were retrieved from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDP-ESPD 2020).
- 5 For a review of this work, see Steven Gordon (2020).
- 6 The South African Stress and Health Survey was conducted in 2003/2004 as part of the World Mental Health Survey Initiative funded by the WHO (for a detailed overview of this initiative, see Kessler et al. 2006). The survey tracked different forms of psychological disorders related to depression, self-esteem, anxiety and aggression.
- 7 For a review of this research, see Mesay Tegegne and Jennifer Glanville (2019).
- 8 Based on Carol Ryff's (1989) work on psychological wellbeing, positive relations with others have been identified as crucial for mental health. Her work contended that when studying quality of life, we cannot ignore how individuals are embedded in social structures and communities (see also De Silva et al. 2005).
- 9 When talking about mental states, Sen (1985: 188) argues that 'if a starving wreck, ravished by famine, buffeted by disease, is made happy through some mental conditioning ... the person will be seen as doing well on this mental states perspective'. In the same volume, he considers how individual preferences may be shaped by state repression, and concludes that the poor may even lack the ability to imagine conditions beyond their current subjugation. His conclusion is that any metric of self-reported wellbeing will provide only a distorted view of societal deprivation.
- 10 For a systematic review, see Crick Lund, Alison Breen, Alan Flisher et al. (2010).
- 11 Freedom House Southern Africa is the regional office in southern Africa of Freedom House, a non-profit organisation that researches political issues and engages in advocacy. The organisation is based in Washington DC.
- 12 All data represented in this chapter were weighted, unless otherwise indicated.
- 13 The categorisation of an internal migrant was based on length of residence in the community. A long-term internal migrant had stayed in the neighbourhood for more than 10 years, while a medium-term migrant had resided there for between 5 and 10 years. A short-term internal migrant was an individual who had lived there for less than 5 years.
- 14 Respondents who were not born in South Africa were read a comprehensive list of different types of migration document (for example, a permanent residence, study or visitor permit, confirmation of refugee status, and so on). Then they were asked if they had any of these documents. The reader should, of course, be aware that social desirability bias may have influenced how respondents answered this question.
- 15 Pearson's product-moment correlation tests showed that, among the foreign-born, feeling discriminated against based on nationality was strongly correlated with feeling discriminated

- against based on ethnicity ($r(490) = 0.612, p < 0.001$) and race ($r(491) = 0.468, p < 0.001$). Reliability checks on all six of the discrimination items, using inter-item correlations and Cronbach's alpha (0.706), found that they loaded satisfactorily onto a single index.
- 16 Standard tests, applying inter-item correlations and Cronbach's alpha (0.685), showed that they fitted suitably into a single index.
 - 17 The module consists of nine items on depression. Respondents are read a problem statement and then asked: 'Over the last two weeks, how often have you personally been bothered by these problems?' Each item has a response options range from 0 ('not at all') to 3 ('nearly every day'). For a more detailed discussion of this measure, see Kurt Kroenke, Robert Spitzer and Janet Williams (2001). In the CLSDS data set, the internal reliability of the PHQ-9 was very robust, with a Cronbach's α of 0.877 among the general sample.
 - 18 CLSDS respondents were questioned on how much contact they had with people from neighbouring countries. Response options ranged from 1 ('every day') to 4 ('never').
 - 19 For further discussion of this issue, see Dorrit Posel and Adeola Oyenubi (2023).
 - 20 A good example of one of these Portuguese programmes is the Immigrant Job Centres Networks, which cooperate with local employment services and provide technical training. Alongside traditional support services, these centres provide support for participation in volunteer activities, and support for entrepreneurship. In addition, the National and Local Immigrant Support Centres provide information and targeted services to foreigners, as well as running special pilot programmes.
 - 21 For a discussion of these institutions and their evolution, see Maria Cook (2018).

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13 *The temporal-spatial dimensions of wellbeing*

Karin van Marle

My focus in this chapter is on two stories (cases) that reflect the enduring inequality of spatial relations in South Africa. Each of the two stories involves either a group of people or an individual affected negatively by the assertion of a certain understanding of law, specifically property law and the concept of ownership. I consider the implications of this understanding of law for the right to quality of life, wellbeing and the good life. I read the cases through theoretical gestures that draw on aspects of spatiality, and on concepts developed in literary and cultural theory. My argument is that how we make sense of space and spatiality on a conceptual level directly influences how we make sense of the way in which the law, in particular the law relating to property and the use of property, should be applied in concrete contexts. I argue further that how people live, the quality of their lives and their wellbeing are affected by how the law engages with and responds to spatial relations and spatial justice. I elaborate on these connections below.

In the discussion in this chapter I focus on a few concepts drawn from spatial theory that I employ when engaging with the cases. I reflect on law's spatial turn, spatial justice, relational space, and the distinction between a provision of habitat and inhabitation. This distinction – habitat being concerned with access to space in an abstract manner, and inhabitation encompassing how one would make a life in a specific space – is illustrated in the examples from case law that I discuss in the chapter. In the case of Maria Mampies, for instance, the question before the court was to decide on the meaning of the term 'reside' within the context of legislation providing for tenure, which underscored the importance of the provision of inhabitation and not merely habitat. I consider and support an understanding of spatial justice that goes beyond traditional models of distributive justice, with reference to the South Africa context.

The cases reveal how material problems related to access to land, property and home underscore the intertwinement of time and space and many other relations. I rely on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the 'chronotope', or spacetime, as developed by Mariana Valverde (2015), to explore how time and space, temporality and spatiality cannot be engaged with separately. I also invoke briefly Bakhtin's terms 'heteroglossia' and 'dialogism', which, as a third theoretical gesture, I relate to Sarah Nuttall's work on entanglement (Nuttall 2009). The case of Grootkraal examined in the chapter involves the multiple stories of a community or communities over time, in a specific space, and their troubles when a new owner invoked what he perceived to be his right to ownership. This action by the owner can be seen also as a failed attempt to disentangle himself from relations that had developed over many years in a specific place.

In considering what wellbeing and the good life might entail in a South African context in the light of these two cases, I draw on the work of Tshepo Madlingozi (2018), who argues that any attempt to address past injustices by way of (re)membering and (re)constituting should include all three realms of African belonging in the world, namely the spiritual, the social and the material. The life stories of those involved in the two cases underscore the importance of this triad for wellbeing. I begin with the stories of the Grootkraal community and Maria Mampies as reflected in their engagements with the law, whereafter I turn to the theories and concepts at play.

Two stories

The Community of Grootkraal

A recent land case decided by the Supreme Court of Appeal – *Community of Grootkraal and Others v Botha NO and Others* (2019) (the *Grootkraal* case) illustrates the extent to which spatial and temporal issues overlap. The case also reveals the presence of entanglement, and gives meaning to the notion of inhabitation unpacked below. The dispute underlying this case arose in 2009, when the Botha family bought the farm Grootkraal at a public auction following the death of the previous owner, John van der Veen. When the Bothas bought Grootkraal farm, they were aware that a small primary school, the Grootkraal United Congregational Church Primary School, operated in a number of buildings on a corner of the farm approximately 4 500 m² in size. They subsequently decided that they wanted to utilise this small corner of the farm. Knowing that the school operated under the auspices of the Western Cape Department of Education (WCDE), and that there had been a previous lease agreement for the land between John van der Veen and the department, the Bothas first tried to renew the lease so that they could earn an income from the school's presence. When that failed, they tried to get the school to leave voluntarily and then applied to the Western Cape High Court for the school's eviction, directing their initial application against the school, its governing body and the WCDE.

After these steps had been taken, it became clear that the land was not only used by the school. A church (at that time the Independent Kerk, Oudtshoorn) used the same portion of land and buildings for its services and other activities. In addition, the broader community of farm and other labourers living in the area (including those who did not belong to the Independent Kerk) used the land and the buildings on it for a variety of community activities such as dances, bazaars and singalongs, and generally as a place to meet and interact socially. Realising that any eviction order would also affect them, the Independent Kerk and the surrounding community, calling themselves the Community of Grootkraal, applied to join the eviction proceedings and resist the eviction. The community and the church also launched a counter-application for an order declaring their rights to the use and occupation of the land, in order to prevent the eviction. I read this as a story of entanglement of various communities (educational, religious, cultural) and the property owners, and of different rights.

It is important to note that neither the school nor the church nor the community were clearly defined entities that could be litigated against as discrete 'opponents' with discrete,

delimited rights or interests in any useful sense. Henri Lefebvre's understanding of perceived, conceived and lived space in terms of bodily inhabitation (Butler 2012), discussed below, is illustrated by the interactions and activities of the community. The story of Grootkraal shows that the school, the church and the community all had an inordinately long and uninterrupted history of association with the time and space of the land. The community's story illustrates the overlap of time and space and of many entanglements.

Moreover, this long association with the land of various black communities and the successive white owners of Grootkraal farm illustrates the entanglement invoked by Nuttall (2009) that I discuss below. The initial permission to use the land for church purposes was willingly given to the London Missionary Society by the then landowner in the early 1800s, under what precise arrangement no one knows, and then extended to the Independent Kerk once it dissociated itself from the Society. Over the course of about 200 years there was no attempt to remove the church, school or community from the land, until the Bothas sought to do so in 2009. The church was, over time, allowed to erect a number of buildings on the land. When the school was started in 1930, it was with the permission and full support of the landowner, whose wife taught at the school. The owner, John van der Veen, from whose deceased estate the Bothas acquired Grootkraal, sought for more than 60 years to find different ways in which to formalise and protect the church, school and community's use of the land, concluding a nominal rental agreement with them and later attempting to subdivide the relevant portion of the farm so that it could be transferred to them in title.

The case was resolved through an order of the Supreme Court of Appeal that

the Community of Grootkraal, being all the families and individuals who live and work on farms in the valley which is known as the Grootkraal-Kombuys area, as a portion of the public, has the right, in the form of a public servitude, to use and occupy the [disputed] property ... for the purposes of a Christian church and any related community activities, including the conduct of a school. (*Grootkraal* at 72)

This order and resolution, which mirror the content of the community's counter-application, illustrate how unsuited apartheid notions of absolute ownership rights at the apex of a hierarchy of land rights are in the context of the post-apartheid land question.

The community's right does not arise and exist because of some legal fact or occurrence – that is, from the law – but because of the absence of any legal fact, the absence of law. It arises from historical study, from history, from the past. Importantly, the boundaries of this history are also relativised. The right arises because of the absence of any one story, history or grand narrative of the land and the community's past; because of the existence of many possible different, overlapping and even conflicting histories or narratives. In the words of the court:

The inevitable conclusion from the history canvassed ... is that the circumstances in which the church community at Grootkraal came into being, and obtained the use of the property for the church and church-related purposes, are lost in the mists of time. (*Grootkraal* at 47)

The story of Maria Mampies

In the district of Groblershoop in the Northern Cape province of South Africa lie three adjacent farms: Boplaas ('Top Farm'), Middelplaas ('Middle Farm') and Onderplaas ('Bottom Farm'). Many years ago, these farms all belonged to Jan Pieter Engelbrecht. He farmed them as one unit; there were no fences, and he and everyone else referred to them together simply as Montina Farms. About 37 families of farm workers worked for Engelbrecht on Montina Farms. Although most of them lived on what was technically Onderplaas, they were not aware that Montina Farms was actually three separate farms: their work took them to all three; they had unrestricted access to all three; and they were allowed to graze their livestock and to cultivate patches of land across all three farms. Importantly, they were also allowed to bury the deceased on Montina Farms – at first in a small graveyard on Onderplaas, but when that became full, at another spot on Middelplaas. In 1991 Engelbrecht decided to scale down, and sold Boplaas and Middelplaas. The two farms have since then passed through the hands of a succession of owners, but the current owner is Sandvliet Boerdery.

Maria Mampies, a farm worker, lived and worked for her entire life on these three farms. As described above, although they were separate cadastral units, the farms were used and regarded as one. While Mampies's house was on Onderplaas, she and her family had unrestricted access to the other farms and always buried their dead on Middelplaas. When, in 1991, the three farms were split up and Middelplaas and Boplaas were sold off, Mampies remained living on Onderplaas. When a close relative – her niece, who also lived on Onderplaas – passed away, she wanted to bury her on Middelplaas. Middelplaas's new owner – Sandvliet Boerdery – objected, and refused her access, so Mampies turned to the courts, applying for an order declaring that she had the right to bury her niece on Middelplaas and interdicting Sandvliet from preventing her from doing so. Her case, *Sandvliet Boerdery (Pty) Ltd v Mampies and Another* (2019) (the *Mampies* case), was decided in terms of the Extension of Security of Tenure Act (No. 62 of 1997, ESTA), a piece of constitutionally mandated legislation intended to give effect to the constitutional right to security of tenure for those whose tenure is insecure due to past racially discriminatory laws or practices. ESTA provides protection against eviction for, and describes the rights of, people ('occupiers') living on another's land without any legal right to do so, other than the explicit or tacit consent of the owner. At issue in this case was particularly section 6(2)(dA) of ESTA, which describes an occupier's burial rights as follows:

Balanced with the rights of the owner or person in charge, an occupier shall have the right to bury a deceased member of his or her family who, at the time of that person's death, was residing on the land on which the occupier is residing, in accordance with their religion or cultural belief, if an established practice in respect of the land exists.

There was no disputing that Mampies in fact buried her dead on Middelplaas in terms of her religion and culture, and as a manifestation of an established practice. But Sandvliet Boerdery argued that while Mampies certainly had the right to bury

her niece on Onderplaas, where her house was, she had no such right with respect to Middelpaas, where it was not. Sandvliet fixated, in other words, on the term ‘land’ in section 6(2)(dA) – the physical space, physically defined according to cadastral lines on a map – as determinative of her and its own rights. The Supreme Court of Appeal rejected the understanding of space underlying this argument as simply a geographical notion, and instead confirmed Mampies’s right to bury members of her family where she always had, on Middelpaas. To do so, it focused on the term ‘residing’ – that is, on Mampies’s and her relative’s relationship with the physical space, what they did with the space – as determinative of her rights and as the space to which she had those rights. In short, it held that to ‘reside’ on land means to live on it, or to have one’s home on it. While this certainly includes having one’s physical house on the land, where one sleeps at night, it also includes whatever else one does as part of living on land – perhaps cultivating it, or having one’s livestock grazing on it, or, as in this case, burying one’s dead on it. Mampies’s dwelling might have been on Onderplaas, but her and her family’s practice of burying family members on Middelpaas meant that her ‘residence’ extended to that ‘separate registered portion of land’, so that she had the right to continue doing so.

I return to these two cases below, after considering some theoretical concepts that illustrate the relation between spatiality, temporality and webs of entanglement underlying these stories.

Theoretical gestures

The spatial turn, spatial justice, relational space, habitat and inhabitance

Legal theorists have, over the past three decades, drawn more and more on spatiality, including geographical terms such as ‘scale’, ‘territory’ and ‘boundary’, and on concepts such as practices of emplacement and consideration of local conditions, to name a few. Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos remarks that, based on the former, we have come to the point where it can be said that ‘the law has turned spatial’ (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015: 15). However, he cautions against any ‘grand’ belief in law’s spatial turn and asks three questions: (i) Can law indeed make such a turn?; (ii) Does the spatial turn treat space adequately?; and (iii) Is this turn indeed meaningful? His answers are not of direct relevance to the present chapter, but the questions open up a way in which to consider the extent to which the law can take spatiality into account in its analysis of spatial relations, and respond to spatial theory and to material and more abstract (spatial) examples. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos makes an important observation about law’s turn to space, namely that ‘the space of law’s spatial turn is non-Euclidean, non-measurable, non-directional, non-unitary, non-linear and non-metaphorical’ (2015: 16). He highlights the way in which feminist theory engages spatiality as a valuable contribution to addressing exclusion and discrimination, in particular the extent to which it unearths ‘ontological vulnerability [which] opens up a new legal space that transcends the distinction between private and public and establishes a demand for the law to protect the vulnerable’ (2015: 18). He notes that in new materialist theory,

vulnerability is referred to as the ‘fragility of things’ (2015: 18). Property law holds some examples of law’s spatial turn that all underscore the most important insight, namely that ‘land is not a thing but relations over the thing’ (2015: 20). A notable South African example of this view is that held by André van der Walt, who insisted on a transformation from a private law conception of property rights to a constitutional notion of property (Van der Walt 2012). In both the *Grootkraal* and *Mampies* cases the law’s relation to space is illustrated in a manner that opens up possible new ways to understand and apply legal concepts such as property, ownership and rights, breaking with a traditional individualist notion of ownership.

Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos argues that law’s spatial turn can be regarded as ‘disturbing in many ways’ (2015: 25): it challenges the positivist view of the law as immaterial, universal and abstract; it disturbs a sociolegal account of the law as grounded; and it enables a critical account of the law as embodied. As he notes, the first disturbance, namely the challenge to positivism, is obvious, but the other two disturbances might ‘sound odd’, as not only do sociolegal and critical literature approach the subject of law from a perspective that makes a proper engagement with spatiality possible, but it is exactly through these approaches that spatiality was introduced into law and legal theory (2015: 25). However, instead of delving into spatial theory, much of this work fell into ‘comfortable patterns’ (2015: 25). One way in which law engaged questions of space was through the legalistic idea of jurisdiction, which, instead of opening up possible ways for space to enter law, reified it. A second way was to regard space as a process, which, although it treated space as fluid and dynamic, idealised it to save law from its limits; this paradoxically ended up confirming the law’s superiority. A third way was, as Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos states, ‘to add space and stir’, reducing space to merely “another” social factor’ (2015: 27).

For law’s turn to space to go beyond these patterns, it is important to adopt a relational understanding of space. Space should be seen not merely as jurisdiction, ideality or geography. According to the feminist geographer Doreen Massey, space is ‘a product of interrelations and embedded practices, a sphere of multiple possibilities, a ground of chance and undecidability, and as such always becoming, always open to the future’ (Massey 2005: 33). Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, drawing on Massey’s explanation, argues that what follows is that if law is spatial, it is also always embodied, which means that ‘all bodies participate in its emergence’ (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos 2015: 33); this allows for an engagement with the hierarchical differences between various bodies at a material level. The point here is that a proper engagement with space will prompt law to be self-reflexive; it will bring about ‘a new self-understanding of the law’ (2015: 33). Such a new self-understanding is crucial for the role that law plays, or could and should play, in a society’s wellbeing and pursuit of the good life. In the *Grootkraal* case, the court was faced with multiple and interrelated claims to the use of space that related directly to the wellbeing of the various communities involved in the case. What would spatial justice imply in such a case? For Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, ‘spatial justice emerges as withdrawal, namely a body’s moving away from its desire to carry on with the comfort offered by supposedly free choices,

power structures or even by fate' (2015: 2). Spatial justice, in this view, goes beyond distributive justice or notions of regional democracy, and is an 'embodied desire that presents itself ontologically' (2015: 3). Spatial justice in this vein is not a solution, but rather 'a process of legal reorientation' (2015: 3). In my reading of the cases later in this chapter, I ask if the courts' judgments could perhaps be regarded as examples of baby steps towards such a legal reorientation. For example, in the *Grootkraal* case the court accepted counsel's reliance on a common law notion not typically used in land cases to respond to the needs of the community. In the *Mampies* case, the court rejected an abstract notion of space in favour of a notion of lived space. This brings me to Lefebvre's distinction between habitat and inhabitation.

Chris Butler, in a work in which he reflects on the significance of Lefebvre's social theory for law, notes the emphasis placed by Lefebvre on the notion of the everyday (Butler 2012: 104). The everyday for Lefebvre provides a space into which the state can extend capital accumulation and administration, but is at the same time also a space where exactly those two things can be resisted. Butler emphasises the inherent relationship between the everyday and modernity identified by Lefebvre, which made it possible for him to show that the everyday in form and structure is very important for any understanding of the 'social, political and aesthetic dimensions of the crisis of modernity' (2012: 104). For Butler, Lefebvre's work exposes 'everyday life as a site of convergence between the aesthetic and the political' (2012: 105). The distinction between habitat and inhabitation is a result of technological modernism's reduction of inhabitation to habitat, which concerns a mere functionalist requirement of housing provision, focused only on economic and technical questions. 'Inhabitation' opens up possibilities for how one lives, for political engagement and affect – in short, it refers to the entirety of one's living in a space. Inhabitation is directly related to everyday life, and captures lived experience in terms of the inhabitation of space (2012: 105). Butler underscores the relation of the everyday to the struggle between "bodily inhabitation and the logic of habitat and between cyclical rhythms and linear forms of repetition" (2012: 106). The *Grootkraal* and *Mampies* cases illustrate how inhabitants of spaces were confronted with the assertion of a right or law from a formalist and functionalist angle that thwarted their wellbeing and possibility of pursuing a good life on a very basic level. In the case of the *Grootkraal* community, the owner wanted to prevent the continued existence of a school, a church and cultural activities. In the *Mampies* case, the owner refused Mampies permission to bury a loved one in the place where she wanted to do so. Butler (2012: 106) underscores the extent to which Lefebvre regards the everyday as including spaces of tragedy and utopia, which open up possibilities for transformation and radical social change (2012: 106). The three elements of social space, namely the perceived, the conceived and the lived, relate to bodily inhabitation. Perceived space is concerned with the material occupation of space. Butler, quoting Lefebvre, explains that 'spatial practice, which lies within the realm of the perceived "presupposes the use of the body"' (2012: 125). Conceived space, on the other hand, invokes 'dominant epistemological conceptions of the body's relationship to nature and its social environment' (2012: 125). Lived space consists of

aspects of the perceived and the conceived. Butler notes how this triad is present in all bodily engagements with space. He emphasises Lefebvre's belief in the potential of the body 'to actively resist the encroachment of abstraction and continually reshape its contribution to the production of space' (2012: 126).

Relations, multiplicity, spacetime

Valverde argues that the work of literary theorist Bakhtin, in particular his notions of the chronotope, intertextuality, heteroglossia and dialogism, can be valuable for an analysis of law and governance (Bakhtin 1981; Valverde 2015). She believes that in particular, the idea of the chronotope can help to engage with the extent to which issues of spatiality are treated separately from those involving time or temporality. The chronotope, inspired by early twentieth-century relativity theory, asserts the idea of a 'dynamic and "relativistic"' (Newtonian) notion of spacetime. It is a way of recognising the intertwinement of time and space. It is 'the intrinsic connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (Valverde 2015: 9–10).

Intertextuality treats languages as 'always already social, as always already dialogical' (Valverde 2015: 5). The term refers to the extent to which 'meaning is produced in the always situated and never completely determined relationships that people have with one another' (2015: 5). Bakhtin (1981) shows how texts and speech acts are always in constitutive relationships with one another and with the wider society. Valverde underscores the importance of the idea of intertextuality for law, and laments the failure of legal scholars to recognise this. She relates intertextuality to Boaventura de Sousa Santos's work on 'interlegality', which asks sociolegal scholars to make sense of legal power not in a merely abstract and structural way but in terms of relations (De Sousa Santos 1987; Valverde 2015: 6). The importance of these terms is the extent to which they provide a way to make sense of communication that could be useful for legal analysis.

The term 'heteroglossia' (or 'dialogism') refers to the 'multiplicity of perspectives, narratives and modes of speech that exist around us' (Valverde 2015: 7). In terms of literary theory, heteroglossia refers to the extent to which the novel (the genre on which Bakhtin's theory focused) discloses multiple voices and perspectives. However, heteroglossia, Valverde notes, 'is a general feature of the world', namely that 'there is no one single point of view' (2015: 7). Dialogism involves not only relations, but also the way in which, by speaking and writing, we respond to and enter into a much wider conversation. Dialogism and heteroglossia can be of value to decentre hegemonic and authoritarian approaches to law and to reveal relational and plural accounts.

I believe that in reading the stories revealed by the *Grootkraal* and *Mampies* cases, notions of intertextuality, dialogism, heteroglossia and the chronotope enable a better understanding of the way law and its invocation affects wellbeing than are enabled by traditional approaches to law. For example, the extent to which in *Grootkraal*, the passage of 200 years of relations between the community and what later became Botha's land determines and shapes the relations that this community and the Bothas

have with the land, and with one another, concerning land, illustrates this ‘intrinsic connectedness’ of the chronotope.

Entanglement

Nuttall defines entanglement as ‘a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited’ (Nuttall 2009: 1). She describes the concept further as one that can identify a relationship or group of relationships that is ‘complicated, ensnaring, in a tangle, but which also implies a human foldedness’ (2009: 1). Entanglement, albeit not blind to difference, is concerned with overlap, which is often ignored. In analysis of cases, entanglements between various legal subjects, and their entanglement with law, space and time, are encountered. Nuttall relies on entanglement in her engagement with literary and cultural formations. She identifies six ways in which entanglement has been employed to engage with cultural theory in the aftermath of apartheid: historical entanglement, spatio-temporal entanglement, ideas of seam and complicity, entanglement of people and things, DNA and race.

Expanding on the idea of the seam, Nuttall invokes Leon de Kock, for whom, she says, the seam ‘is the place where difference and sameness are hitched together – where they are brought to self-awareness, or displaced’ (Nuttall 2009: 5). She notes how Mark Sanders invokes complicity to argue that we will be able to make more sense of apartheid and its aftermath if we not only focus on apartness but also ‘track interventions, marked by degree of affirmation and disavowal in a continuum of what he calls human foldedness’ (2009: 6). Nuttall unpacks how difference was used by postcolonial studies as a strategic tool to respond critically to the pervasiveness of universalism and Western homogenisation (2009: 31). She argues, however, that after 1994, it was possible for critical theory to rethink the ‘absoluteness of difference’, and considers the extent to which entanglement could assist in creating ‘the possibility of a different cartography’ (2009: 25). Invoking the concept of entanglement is not a way to deny or contest separation and difference, she argues, but a means to address identities, spaces and histories to find possible points of intersection (2009: 20).

I am interested in entanglement as both a critical theoretical approach and a method of analysing law – in how the concept of entanglement, together with the insights gained from the spatial and social theory discussed above, could assist in reorienting law and legal theory. I make some tentative connections between these theoretical gestures and the *Grootkraal* and *Mampies* cases in the next section.

Tentative connections

I am cautious about bringing the theories and concepts discussed above to bear on the case studies in this chapter in a way that might reduce or oversimplify both of them. My sense is that these two cases, like others, open up possibilities and perhaps provide impetus for more interdisciplinary work, that is, for law, and jurisprudence in particular,

to heed and learn from spatial theory. This volume is concerned with questions related to quality of life and wellbeing, and underscores the need for a discipline such as law, in a place such as South Africa, at a time when we are faced with past and enduring inequalities thwarting those very aspirations to a good life, to explore further the reorientation of law to justice. The connections that I make between theory and the case studies are offered more in the mode of suggestion than application.

In light of the discussion earlier in the chapter, I believe that the *Grootkraal* case illustrates the extent to which spatial and temporal issues overlap. The way in which the community lived and used the space in question was intertwined with the history of the community, and the many years spent living in that space in a specific way. As noted above, this case also reveals the presence of entanglement: it is impossible to consider the interests of the school, or the church, or the cultural activities separately from each other. The case gives meaning to the notion of inhabitation; it reveals how people lived in a space – children to learn, some people to worship, others to dance. The story of Grootkraal shows that the school, the church and the community all had an inordinately long and uninterrupted history of association with the land, and illustrates the overlap of time and space and of many entanglements.

These cases are linked to a central issue in South African land law and the search for justice with respect to land, namely the fact (or problem) of networks of overlapping rights and interests to land – registerable ‘legal’ rights such as ownership or servitudes or contractual lease rights, imbricated or overlapping with informal tenure rights of occupation, residence and use for different spiritual, cultural, material and other purposes, all with respect to the same land, at the same time. This fact is a problem to be taken account of not only in instrumental terms, but also and more importantly, because it reflects a range of other differences or potential conflicts at play in regard to land issues. The overlapping sets of rights reflect, in the first place, different systems of law – ‘civil’ property law and African land law (‘customary’ law, as it is called in the South African Constitution). These systems of law in turn reflect different epistemologies and even ontologies – African and ‘Western’. The displacement of one set of (African) land rights by another, Western set of rights that were implemented during the eras of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa is, as such, not only a displacement of one set of rights by another; it is also the displacement of one system of law by another; of one epistemology and ontology by another – the enactment of epistemic violence, in other words. The negotiation of the overlap between sets of rights becomes, in this sense, an important site of response to such epistemic violence.

There are two aspects of the court’s decision in the *Mampies* case that are suggestive of ways to take account of the problem of overlapping rights and its broader implications. The first has to do with the manner in which the court determined the space to which Mampies’s rights applied; one finds hints in its judgment of what in spatial theory has been called relational or lived or experiential space, as opposed to Sandvliet Boerdery’s clearly abstract, geographic, conceived, map-based notion of space. The second aspect has to do with how one occupies or lives in space: again, there are faint

echoes in the judgment of Lefebvre's distinction between habitat and inhabitance as ways of occupying space.

Critical geographers and spatial theorists have long problematised the prevalent simplistic, geographic notions of space. In her theorisation of space, Massey supports the notion of relational space that rests on three intertwined propositions: that space is a product of interrelations, in other words, must be recognised as constituted through interactions; that it is the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity, or of 'co-existing heterogeneity'; and that it is 'always in the process of being made. It is never finished, never closed' (Massey 2005: 9). Closely linked to this is Lefebvre's distinction between conceived and lived space, with the former being the *space without life, peopleless space* or the *space of lawyers*, and the latter the *space of representation and of experience* (see Butler 2012; Lefebvre 1991). These contrasting notions of space, although obviously not articulated in the *Grootkraal* and *Mampies* cases, are clearly at play in both of them.

In the *Mampies* case, Sandvliet Boerdery, the owner of the land, turns to the map and determines the space at issue from the lines drawn there. Those living in the space and how they interact with it are deemed irrelevant. The court in turn explicitly rejects reliance on the map and its drawing of lines between different 'registered portions'. It focuses rather on lived space – on Mampies's relation to and interaction with the space – and holds that space is not fixed or natural, but is continually determined by what is done with it, fact-specific, that is, with reference to the material use of the space.

At the heart of coloniality lies epistemic violence – the extent to which local knowledges are rejected, marginalised and in some cases wiped out. The law as a central trope of colonialism is guilty of this kind of epistemic violence. Epistemic violence, of course, goes hand in hand with ontological violence – the extent to which ways of living and being are rejected, marginalised, elided. In South Africa, as probably everywhere else, there is a clear link between how land was taken, and lost, and epistemic violence.

The post-apartheid history of burial rights in South Africa provides a clear example of this. ESTA at first made no reference to burial rights, initially providing only for a right to visit existing burial sites and graves on the land of another, and for a right to religious and cultural freedom and expression. In a series of cases decided in the late 1990s, attempts were made to base a right to bury the dead in the latter right to religious and cultural freedom and expression. These attempts failed. Burial rights are, of course, about far more than simply a practical issue of where to dispose of one's dead. They are essential to both an epistemology and an ontology; in spatial terms they are related to inhabitance rather than simply to habitat. To deny these rights is an instance of epistemic and ontological violence. The issue of burial rights was addressed by the legislature in its enactment of section 6(2)(dA) of ESTA, which now explicitly extends the right to religious and cultural freedom and expression to include the right to bury one's dead on the land on which one lives, even where that land in formal legal terms 'belongs' to someone else and that 'owner' has not given consent. This amendment amounts to a limited, but important, recognition of the epistemic

and ontological significance of burial rights in the context of land in South Africa. The Supreme Court of Appeal's interpretation of Mampies's 'residence' in the space to which she relates echoes clearly, if not explicitly, Lefebvre's notion of inhabitation, rather than simply habitat. It is formulated in opposition to the interpretation offered by Sandvliet Boerdery, which is limited to the space where Mampies has her dwelling, (to habitat only, in other words) as encompassing the entirety of her living on the land.

The extension of burial rights that the court enabled with its interpretation of burial rights as applying also to land on which Mampies did not have her house, underpinned as it is by the broader notion of inhabitation of land that was at play in the case, holds potential for a broader recognition of the issue of epistemic and ontological violence than that which was initiated by the enactment of section 6(2)(dA) of ESTA. In the *Grootkraal* case, the court acknowledged the relation to and inhabitation in lived space. In the conclusion to this chapter, I reflect on the extent to which the decisions in *Mampies* and *Grootkraal* could be seen as orienting law differently, and thus as possible steps towards spatial justice.

Concluding remarks

Brenna Bhandar, in a chapter of a *Festschrift* in honour of the late André van der Walt, notes how the 'colonial order of things imposes a way of seeing' that 'is spatial and material [and that] structures the way individuals and communities inhabit' (Bhandar 2018: 402). She raises as one of the most challenging and fundamental questions of the transition from apartheid to a democratic society the question of whether law and a transformative Constitution can bring about a new political order. Van der Walt, in his meticulous analysis of private property, exposed the extent to which it is 'capable of being interpreted, constructed and lived very differently' (Bhandar 2018: 405). Bhandar, drawing on Van der Walt, argues that "Provincialising" European (Dutch and Roman to be more specific) legal concepts of property ownership in the context of indigenous and multiracial South Africa has immense potential for transforming existing relations of power' (2018: 407). Van der Walt argued for a radical shift in the understanding of property law, namely a shift to the perspectives of those in the margins (Van der Walt 2009). Bhandar relies on a literary term, 'estrangement', to elaborate on what the notion of property on the margins might entail. She refers to Leo Tolstoy's employment of estrangement to create an opportunity to reconceptualise something well known, and suggests that the shift to property on the margins may mean to situate oneself on the margins of legal analysis, and to 'estrangle and alienate the meaning of property' from how we know it (Bhandar 2018: 418). The court's treatment of property and ownership in both the *Grootkraal* and *Mampies* cases can be understood as a form of estrangement, a dissociation from traditional notions of property and ownership. I propose that the notions of property on the margins and estrangement could be seen as forms of withdrawal from conventional notions of property and ownership, but also as withdrawal from bodies that may allow for spatial justice and a different orientation of law.

Achille Mbembe concludes his work *Necropolitics* by calling for an ‘ethics of the passerby’ (Mbembe 2019: 184). For him, ‘becoming-human-in-the-world is a question of neither birth nor of origin or race’ (2019: 187). Writing on Frantz Fanon, he notes that

for him a ‘place’ was any experience of encountering others, one that paved the way to becoming self-aware, not necessarily as a singular individual but as a seminal fragment (éclat) of a larger humanity, a fragment grappling with the inevitability of a never-ending time, the main attribute of which is to flow – a passing par excellence. (2019: 187)

Mbembe provides another perspective on the concept of inhabitation, and says that to inhabit a place entails also that one allow ‘oneself to be inhabited by it’ (2019: 187). I invoke Mbembe here because I read him as underscoring relationality as both ontology and epistemology. Perhaps Van der Walt’s biggest insight and contribution to South African property law is his insistence on an understanding of property not as a system of rights, but as the regulation of relationships that has ontological and epistemological implications. I relate this to the triad of African being that Madlingozi (2018) asserts, namely the spiritual, the social and the material, which are also ontological and epistemological.

In this chapter I argue that the law’s spatial turn holds possibilities for alternative engagements with both law and spatiality. An understanding of space as relational, of inhabitation and lived space viewed in terms of chronotopes, dialogism, intertextuality and heteroglossia, can contribute to such engagements. A different understanding of property and ownership from that inherent in formalist law, placing law on the margins and thus estranging it, could open up the possibility of spatial justice that I believe could positively affect wellbeing and quality of life, and contribute to the creation of the good life.

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HSRC Press

14 *Quality of life in the arts: Radical solidarity in a quiet crisis*

Nomusa Makhubu

A quiet crisis: #ArtistsLivesMatter

On 3 March 2021, a sit-in was begun by Abahlali Base NAC at the offices of the National Arts Council (NAC), a public entity of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), in Johannesburg. Led by the opera singer Sibongile Mngoma, the sit-in was a 60-day protest against the lack of transparency and mismanagement of the Presidential Employment Programme funds worth R300 million that were the NAC portion of government funds disbursed widely during the Covid-19 lockdown period. Abahlali Base NAC – borrowing their name from Abahlali base Mjondolo, the movement advocating for public housing, land and service delivery and against evictions of shack dwellers – organised a demonstration that was described as ‘an unprecedented action in the history of the arts and cultural industry of South Africa’ (Assitej 2021). The protest action followed Mngoma’s initiation of Im4theArts in 2020 – a platform that brought together artists across disciplines (music, theatre, dance, visual arts, and so on) and proclaimed 15 March 2020 as a Day of Action. Its aim was to turn a spotlight on the ‘inhumane’ working conditions that creative professionals and artists are faced with in South Africa. They sought ‘to message the President of South Africa on Points of Action regarding the creative industry and the arts community’, and ‘to challenge the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture to invest in building a thriving and healthy creative sector’ (Im4theArts 2022). Brandishing #ArtistsLivesMatter placards, artists demonstrated against state corruption in the arts and its impact on funding. Although the sit-in arose in response to the extraordinary circumstances created by the conditions of lockdown, it was also a symptom of the fissures in the South African arts ecosystem and the erosion of public art institutions that affect artists’ quality of life.

Mngoma and other artists protested at the NAC on 2 November 2021, when a meeting with Minister of Arts and Culture Nathi Mthethwa was postponed at the last minute. For her role in the protest, Mngoma was harassed and shamed in public, with police manhandling her, leaving her topless. She described the experience as ‘rape of the psyche’ and said,

I was not humiliated, because I did nothing wrong. Like a group of gang rapists, the men who brutalised me wanted me to feel shame when what they did was shameful. What happened last week was ... an attempt to silence me, but I was exercising my right to protest.¹

Im4theArts declared that since ‘artists [had] now reached breaking point’ and ‘[had] lost faith in the department’ there would need to be a system of accountability put in place, including establishing an office of the ombudsman. They stated:

We will no longer accept that the ministry of arts continues to be the dumping ground for people that our government cannot find jobs for elsewhere! We want those who have been stealing money from arts and culture to be held to account. We want all our artists who are struggling presently to become the biggest beneficiaries of these funds so that they may feed the starving soul of our nation with their magic. Artists are not prioritized in your department. As a result we are falling victim to those who have an advantage over us. We are constantly looking for financial backers and sponsors and yet your department has a budget that is supposed to cater for the arts. Some of these ‘funders’/‘mentors’/‘patrons’ look for funding on our ‘behalf’ and then run away with the funds when the funds come through.²

The artists’ discontent with government entities was further reflected in the persistent criticism levelled against the then minister of arts and culture, Nathi Mthethwa, for what some saw as his inability to understand the arts.³ Writing in the *Mail & Guardian*, Njabulo Zwane referred to this failure as an ‘ideological crisis’ arising from the state’s lack of principles and ideals.⁴ In another *Mail & Guardian* article, Heather Dugmore described it as a failure to recognise the arts as integral to politics and as a ‘barometer for a healthy democracy’.⁵ Drawing on the words of the poet Keorapetse Kgositsile, who described the situation as one that arose from the governing party’s ‘criminal backwardness about culture’, Zwane contended that ‘the bureaucratisation of the arts and culture is largely to blame for the dramatic shift from the emergence of community-based cultural organisations openly aligned to the struggle against apartheid to the post-1994 function of the arts and culture as an instrument of rainbow nation social cohesion’.⁶

The ‘crisis’, as I outline in this chapter, points to what can be defined as the state’s neglect of artists, and the suppression of a critically minded civil society through the weakening of public institutions, leaving the arts predisposed to seek support from the private sector, which generally views art as a commodity rather than a public good. It also suggests the lack of a political appetite to develop progressive policy for the arts, and to reconfigure the apartheid-era racial spatialisation that continues to be economically sustained and to create barriers for marginalised artists. The delay in the adoption of the 1996 White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage (DACST 1996) serves as a key example. As Matthieu Maralack (2021: 395) points out,

the fact that there was a 17-year gap between the inaugural White Paper and the start of its review, and then a further seven-year gap between this review and the final draft being adopted by Parliament, shows that the sector was compromised for 24 years at the hands of government.

Under these conditions, it is necessary to pay attention to the infrastructures that affect the quality of life and wellbeing of artists, that is, art institutions, as well as the solidarity strategies that civil society organisations have initiated to address these shortcomings. Art institutions and civil society organisations determine the complex social networks in terms of which quality of life for artists is formulated, differentiated and made accessible or inaccessible.

In South Africa, it is commonplace to hear of great artists who lead tragic, shortened and impoverished lives, who are abandoned by the state, exploited by promoters, art brokers and dealers, and who eventually succumb to alcoholism and narcotics. Artists, as Tuulikki Pietilä argues, may gain symbolic value in ‘reputation and fame’, but

so many past and present stories of South African artists dying as ‘paupers’ after a most magnificent career, remind us that symbolic value and its markers do not guarantee regular earnings and lasting wealth. (2015: 132)

While regular earnings are not the only factor involved in achieving a good quality of life in the arts, income and good working conditions in a neoliberal society often determine artists’ access to rights and the realisation of desires that constitute what may be deemed a fulfilled life. In the arts, most practitioners do not have a stable income, are dependent on public and private patronage, and experience the conditions of un-unionised and unprotected labour without social benefits. Where there are unions for artists, they are ‘not generally treated with respect by government or parastatal agencies’ (Van Graan 2004: 251). The 1996 White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage acknowledges that ‘in the past, publicly-funded cultural institutions and practices allowed, and at times encouraged the exploitation of artists’ and that ‘with the decline in subsidies over the years, the salaries of practitioners, technicians and administrators in arts institutions are unacceptably low’ (DACST 1996). As the playwright Mike van Graan (2004: 247) shows, the first decade of democracy in South Africa ‘witnessed a shedding of full-time jobs in the sector’ despite the funding made available through government agencies. ‘Artists’, he argues, ‘do not generally enjoy these rights’ and protections as other workers do (2004: 249). The formation of movements such as Im4theArts demonstrates that this inequity has hindered the possibility of creating the conditions necessary for the realisation of a fulfilled quality of life.

In my discussion in this chapter, I consider the determinants of a good quality of life to be multifaceted, drawing on both the ‘Benthamite tradition’, in which ‘quality of life is contentment’, and the ‘Aristotelean sense’ that advances the notion of ‘*a meaningful and fulfilling life*’ (Sirgy 2021: 6, emphasis in the original). As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum and the economist Amartya Sen argue, quality of life, gauged in terms of ‘how people are able to conduct their lives’, requires an approach that takes account of a number of factors such as life expectancy, access to education and health, type of labour and ‘the political and legal privileges’ that can be enjoyed, among others (Nussbaum & Sen 1993: 1–2). Although the arts are generally perceived as activities based on doing what one ‘enjoys’, art professions in South Africa lack the broad-based

public institutional infrastructure that would enable their equal access to the elements that contribute to a good quality of life, with protected rights and freedoms that can be actualised. Such access to and enjoyment of rights and privileges has historically been differentiated by race, gender and class. Apartheid policies limited the kinds of freedoms available to most art practitioners for them to flourish, forcing many artists into exile. In the democratic era, these imbalances have taken different forms but have not been adequately addressed.

With a focus on the visual arts, this chapter attends to the state of public and private institutions as indicators of recent changes in infrastructural disparities and how these have shaped the lives of artists. Given that these institutions follow the spatial designs of racial segregation in terms of where they are located and which publics they serve, the chapter addresses some of the ironies entrenched in the art ecosystem. It also addresses the revived sense of urgency present in solidarity actions undertaken by artist-led civil society organisations through the ethics of care, healing, self-preservation and other contingent strategies of survival and sustainability, in the hope of creating a structurally altered art ecosystem modelled on generosity, shared resources, collective empathy and the pursuit of wellbeing and quality of life. Through a discussion of two art institutions, one public and the other private, as examples of the present institutional conditions, the chapter seeks to understand how varying notions of solidarity are formulated in a context of fragmented, and racially and economically differentiated, publics.

Arts ecosystems: Spatial planning and uneven access for artists in South Africa

Arts ecosystems – the networks and interdependent relationships between various entities in the arts – enable and sustain the production and consumption of art across societies. Although regarded as a field where workers ‘nurture a passion’, the arts are notorious for elitism, and for highly competitive, exploitative working conditions (Quigg 2011). In the South African arts ecosystem, practitioners and organisations compete for dwindling resources, whose provision is dominated by banks and wealthy investors. There is a marked difference between deficient public resources or institutions and inordinately affluent privately funded institutions on which individual artists depend. This is further compounded by the perpetuation of racial economic inequality and its fragmentation of ‘the public’. Attributed to apartheid’s spatial engineering, and the failure of post-1994 governments to forge a vision that could effectively address and counteract the impact of apartheid, the inequalities in the arts persist (Peffer 2009).

The government’s post-1994 vision for art can be discerned in the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, which states that ‘for the first time in the history of our country, all arts and culture practitioners have the right to participate in creating public policy and structures which directly affect their lives and livelihood, and the quality of life of the community at large’ (DACST 1996). In the White Paper, the state also signals its intention to secure the rights and status of artists. These rights, however, are contingent on access. The White Paper acknowledges that ‘infrastructure to support

the creation and dissemination of the arts and culture is largely located within the centres of major cities', and that 'museums, galleries, theatres and community arts centres are generally inaccessible to the large majority of people living in these cities, not least because of their distance from where people live'. It recognises that the 'primary need for infrastructure is in rural and black urban areas, close to where people live', arguing that 'the establishment of urban and peri-urban townships as dormitories, without proper facilities for recreation and leisure, is a feature of apartheid' and that this 'deprivation cannot be continued in the new dispensation which is concerned with improving the quality of people's lives at a local level' (DACST 1996). To date, there have been no major arts institutions built in black townships. While there is admission that apartheid spatial planning continues to affect quality of life, there is a failure to conceive integrated plans in which the arts are not seen as merely 'recreation and leisure', with facilities needing to be 'added' in black townships, but are part of a radical restructuring in which such racialisation of space and distribution of resources no longer resemble old legacies.

Townships, the geographical expression of colonialism and apartheid, designed to house the black urban working class needed to supply labour for South Africa's racial capitalist economy (see Legassick & Hemson 1976), continue to be abandoned by the state and are seen as too risky for the private sector to invest in. A comprehensive research report produced by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture, notes that

of the surveyed business and organisational entities, the great majority identified themselves as being located in the central business districts and suburbs of major urban centres, with almost none located in township or deep rural/remote contexts – though significant numbers of artists live and work in township contexts. (Hagg 2010: 38)

This reflects the bifurcation of South African publics by race, space and class. Far-flung townships remain central to the black experience, even as a significant stratum of black artists with social mobility has moved to live in inner cities and suburbs. In general, the weakness of state entities and spatial shadows of apartheid impose heavy burdens on black township artists and residents, in terms of transport costs and exposure to deficient living conditions. The dearth of adequately resourced, accessible creative arts education institutions and organisations, as well as the concentration of these institutions, whether public or private, in historic cores and gentrifying nodes of cities, far from black townships, reproduces racial disparities and dependency on limited funding. This leaves many artists trapped in a vicious cycle, in which they are unable to afford expensive art materials, forced to sell their works cheaply, and have limited networks for support and for circulation of their works.

Recent reports compiled by the art consultant Mary Corrigan suggest that 'White male artists continue to dominate the primary art market, though only marginally by 57%' and that the majority of art dealers in this market are white (2019: 14). Although there is a significant emergence of black gallerists and dealers, of the major galleries –

including the Goodman Gallery, Stevenson, Everard Read, Gallery Momo and SMAC, among others – only one, Gallery Momo, is black-led, and all cater to mostly white and international markets. This is also noted in the HSRC research report, which shows that the South African visual arts sector has a ‘highly educated workforce’ and that ‘[although] there is evidence of a changing demographic ... the senior management and ownership of businesses and organisations continues to be largely vested in white people’ (Hagg 2010: 8).

These reports also note that South African cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg are among the major art capitals on the African continent. South Africa, Corrigan states, ‘has the most evolved art ecosystem though it has no biennale’, and ‘Cape Town is the dominant art capital in South Africa’ (2018: 18). In this context, South Africa’s ecosystem remains ‘inextricably interlinked to a global one’ where ‘53% of galleries in South Africa participate in fairs outside the African continent’ (Corrigan 2019: 13). The HSRC report records that South Africa has

the most robust and structurally sophisticated visual arts economy on the continent, with an annual turnover of nearly R2 billion and a contribution of over R1 billion to the national economy but it is ‘largely commercially driven’. (Hagg 2010: 8)

Although there are more recognised black artists in South Africa than there were previously, many of whom have been ‘validated’ by the international market, institutional power rests with the art dealers and investors. In some ways, it can be argued that the ‘success’ of South Africa’s art capitals, Cape Town and Johannesburg, as well as the apparent rising visibility of black South African artists on the global stage, divert attention from the ongoing exclusion of the black proletariat and block development of visual arts within townships, especially at school level. Arts ecosystems tend to centre on commercial circuits, overlooking the roles of public institutions, civil society organisations and artist-led initiatives. In general, the weakness of state entities and the monopolistic control of the private sector seem to impact disproportionately negatively on the quality of life of impoverished black citizens.

Public art museums: On precarious grounds

In contrast to extravagantly moneyed private institutions, public arts institutions are struggling for resources. Public art museums ‘are dramatically underfunded’ (Hagg 2010: 7). Moreover, public funding is often sparse, making it difficult for public institutions to support art practitioners through acquisitions and programming. For some institutions, funds cover only salaries and the maintenance of buildings. The funding dispensed by the NAC is generally project-based, and so minimal that independent artists, curators, community arts projects and grassroots organisations often have to seek multiple sources of funding. While there are more black professionals appointed in public art institutions than there were previously, they often work under disproportionate public scrutiny, with limited budgets, and face constraints in working across different sites and locations to reach artists and publics in townships. Public

art institutions, which were formerly mostly white-led, also face the ‘flight’ of white patrons or the looming presence of the old guard of museum professionals who are nostalgic about the past.

If one takes as an example the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) – a public gallery ‘administered and funded by the City of Johannesburg [that] forms part of the Metropolitan Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage Services’ (Keene 2004: 13) and has from time to time received patronage from the private sector, one can see the impact of these imbalances on the infrastructure that might enable access to a good quality of life. JAG was built by the architect Edward Lutyens, but had not been completed when it opened in 1915. Located in Joubert Park in the inner city, it was built as part of a project to reconstruct British middle-class city life in Johannesburg, aiming ‘to be an institution that would bring European culture to the rough young mining town’ (Leibhammer 2016: 54). As Pauline Guinard notes, Joubert Park, with the gallery, had been ‘very attractive for white people since its foundation’, when Hillbrow was a whites-only area, but like ‘the rest of the inner city’, it ‘has been facing a cycle of decline from the late 1980s, marked by white flight, urban decay and violence’ (Guinard 2012: 57). With the black working class moving into the inner city after 1994, ‘a fence was erected around the Johannesburg Art Gallery ... to protect it from the supposedly “dangerous” people living in the area.’ Guinard argues that ‘from then, two separate spaces and publics have emerged, separated from one another not only by a fence, but also by mutual fear’ (2012: 57).

These divisions can be sensed in the articles lamenting the state of the gallery and pushing for the art collection housed there to be moved elsewhere. An article published in the *Daily Maverick*, titled ‘Once Vibrant Joburg Art Gallery is Crumbling into Ruin’, bemoans the ‘decaying but once beaming Johannesburg Art Gallery.’⁷ Images of flooded rooms, furniture in disarray, cracked damp walls and empty parking lots are used to reinforce the argument put forward by an anonymous former curator of historical art collections at the state-run Iziko Museums of South Africa that ‘this, sadly, is where many of our public museums in South Africa are presently being compromised, with the collections inside of them being imperilled.’⁸ Upon seeing the state of JAG, former curator Christopher Till said he was ‘devastated. I mean, it’s the same sort of feeling when you see the tragedy of wonderful buildings being blown up in Ukraine’. He continued: ‘When I came down and took over we turned the Johannesburg Art Gallery into the epicentre of the art world in Johannesburg by a long way. It was vibrant, it was alive.’⁹ The risk, Julia Evans argued, was that the collection of

European masters like Pablo Picasso, Francis Bacon, Pierre-Auguste Renoir and Rembrandt, to name a few ... a large collection of late 19th and 20th century works by South African artists [and] traditional African art from southern Africa [including] the Jacques Collection of headrests, the loan of the Brenthurst Collection of Southern African Art (from the Oppenheimer family), and the Horstmann Collection [were in a gallery where] water [was] dripping in, [and there was] a lack of security and temperature control.¹⁰

The assumption is that the institution had been neglected because it was ‘still perceived by many as a colonial imposition, its value to our heritage ... lost’, according to art historian Anitra Nettleton.¹¹ Articles such as this one by Evans form part of the advocacy to move the collection away from what has become a black working class area. A letter written by Councillor Ronald Harris, an employee of the City of Johannesburg, published in *Art Times* on 25 April 2022, states:

We understand the urgency in removing artworks from the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG), which are at risk of being destroyed due to structural damages to the building ... our plan is to move the artefacts to the Anglo-American’s 44 Main Street building in Marshalltown because the company has contributed to the arts in Joburg by investing generously in paintings.¹²

This preference for a private sector intervention further illustrates persistent patterns of power affecting the agency of black art practitioners.

In her *Daily Maverick* article, Evans points out that ‘museums in the city have never been a priority, but even with the budget it did have, the repairs at the JAG have faced issues’, and ‘to protect the works, they need to move them off-site and store them safely and create a satellite gallery.’¹³ It is also generally argued that the problem is not only that the building was not well built and has not been maintained, but that it is in the ‘wrong’ location. Brian McKechnie, an architect quoted in another article by Evans, states: ‘You can spend a billion rand fixing the gallery, but you still have the disaster of unmanaged taxis, lack of bylaw enforcement, urban decay.’¹⁴ Therefore, Evans reports, stakeholders are ‘engaged in a process of exploring all possible avenues of safeguarding the future of the institution, including possible PPPs [public-private partnerships]’. The former director of arts, culture and heritage for the City of Johannesburg, Steven Sack, is quoted saying that he had been ‘trying to move the JAG out of Joubert Park since 2010 due to safety concerns for patrons walking, driving or using public transport to the gallery.’¹⁵

This narrative has been proffered and refuted multiple times over the years. The chief curator at JAG, Khwezi Gule, argued that ‘there is no truth to the rumour that JAG is moving downtown to the vacated Anglo building.’¹⁶ Gule, whose opinion has been left out of most media articles about the state of JAG, has been at the helm of many critical exhibitions at JAG addressing the hold of the colonial legacy over art institutions, and how this shapes the interpretation of art production along racial lines. He was ‘the first Black chief curator’, appointed in 2017, and has ‘sought to reimagine the gallery for a public previously kept at arm’s length by its colonial origins’ (Moilola & Mokgotho 2021: 72). The narrative of JAG being alive under white administration and dying under black administration has been criticised by art historian Jillian Carman, who argues that

reports of the Johannesburg Art Gallery’s (JAG) death have been greatly exaggerated. It has been dying on and off for the past 30 years, in fact for most of its life since the incomplete Edwin Lutyens gallery opened, without ceremony, in Joubert Park in 1915.¹⁷

She points out that

it has often been ignored and even killed off, then and now ... Between the rumoured and imagined deaths have been some spectacular remissions, the first under the directorship of P Anton Hendriks in the 1940s and 1950s.

Further, she states that

JAG's Lutyens building is not collapsing, its Meyer Pienaar extensions are being repurposed, it is not moving, its collection is safely stored and exhibited, it is central in an environment that is developing in exciting ways, and it remains relevant in a changing world.

And she recalls how Sack's previous attempts to relocate the collection were opposed by 'prominent figures like artist William Kentridge and former Constitutional Court judge, Albie Sachs'.

In 2022, artists initiated an intervention, *Occupation*, in response to the politics of JAG. Conceived by the cultural workers, curators and artists Thulile Gamedze, Zen Marie and Gilles Furtwängler, *Occupation* is a series of performances, screenings and curation of works from the JAG art collection aimed at 'producing space for as-yet unknown discourse about the difficulties and possibilities of a post democratic museum' (Nkosi 2022).¹⁸ Involving a number of artists, *Occupation*, held at JAG, revealed and subverted the hidden structures of institutional power, foregrounding the relations of artists with institutions and with bifurcated publics. Given that the discourse pushing for the privatisation of the JAG collection in the media has been focused on the value of art objects as opposed to artists, it is notable that *Occupation* was about the presence of artists and the centrality of dialogue in the questioning, making and unmaking of institutions and how they relate to different publics.

The possibility of shared public spaces is trumped by conflicting interests, arising from the bifurcation of public spaces and public amenities through racial legacies sustained through economic apartheid. It is telling that the argument to relocate the JAG collection is aimed at middle-class publics, while working-class publics are deemed 'unsafe'. There is an increasing sense that government institutions are in a precarious situation where there are no adequate public funds to sustain art institutions that service all publics, and where private interests reinforce segregated public spaces. *Occupation*, an artists' initiative, demonstrates what it may mean to advocate for access to the right to shape infrastructures that might enable a good quality of life.

The paradox of solidarity and philanthrocapitalism: Private institutions in context

In the past few years, a few new, lavish, private art museums and art foundations have been created in South Africa. Among the most prominent are the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), named after the German businessman

whose contemporary African art collection is housed there, and the Norval Foundation, named after the real estate mogul Louis Norval, whose twentieth- and twenty-first-century art collection is the basis of the institution. There is also the A4 Arts Foundation, funded by Wendy Fisher through the Kirsh Family Foundation of the businessman Nathan Kirsh. Although Corrigan points out that major foundations and art museums 'have been new additions to the African art ecosystem' (2019: 13–14), the establishment of private art institutions in South Africa is not necessarily a new or unusual phenomenon. An example, discussed in the previous section of this chapter, is JAG, which opened in 1910 as a venture initiated by Florence Phillips, the spouse of mining magnate Lionel Phillips, who donated her collection and secured public funds from the city to build the museum (Carman 2006). Although JAG was administered as a public institution, its establishment and art collection were 'funded by Randlord wealth' (Carman 2011: 29). Many major art collections and institutions globally are built on the basis of the private collections of wealthy patrons. In other contexts, the corporate sponsorship of the arts – often by arms manufacturers, as well as by oil and tobacco companies generally facing criticism for their extraction from, and destruction and pollution of, the environment, among other things – has been termed artwashing (Evans 2015). In essence, art 'in its modern, autonomous sense' has increasingly become, as Octavian Esanu argues, 'a product of modern bourgeois capitalism' (2021: 98). The arts are dependent on corporate philanthropy, or philanthrocapitalism.

In the South African context, this phenomenon presents a paradox in which, on the one hand, corporate sponsorship, in the absence of substantive public funding, seems to be the lifeline for a dynamic art industry in which artists can have an income and the possibility of quality livelihoods, while on the other hand, it perpetuates vicious racialised inequality. In a very general sense, artists, curators and creative practitioners are faced with the predicament of looking past the negative impact of big corporations and 'where the money comes from', so as not to bite the hand that feeds them. For example, in 2018, the A4 Arts Foundation was mired in controversy about how Wendy Fisher and the Kirsh Family Foundation are 'complicit in the destruction of Palestinian lives and the "rebranding" of Israel'.¹⁹ Once the dust of this controversy had settled, the Foundation continued to operate. The hero-villain Janus face of private institutions is further compounded by their inclination to appoint black curators, exhibit the works of black artists, and stage panel discussions about the concerns of black practitioners and, more broadly, the discourse that emerged from decolonial debates. The effect is what Asher Gamedze, writing about the A4 Foundation, refers to as a 'mirage', in which 'the Foundation aspires to be an arts space that contributes more broadly to public cultural life in Cape Town, hosting 'a number of exhibitions, musical performances (e.g. Shabaka and the Ancestors), and educational workshops (e.g. Gladiolus) most of which have been run by local black artists', which enable it to 'emerge as somewhat of an oasis: a welcome alternative within a scene so thoroughly dominated by commercial galleries'.²⁰ In a similar vein, the Norval Foundation and Zeitz MOCAA have centred the work of black curators, artists and practitioners, amidst the cloud of unabated expropriation and accumulation associated with the business of their founders and sponsors.

It is important, however, to understand the complex sociogeographical and financial landscape in which black arts practitioners are positioned. With only one major black-owned commercial gallery in the country, most black arts practitioners are negotiating different conditions of practice within white institutions. Gamedze summarises the situation as follows:

Black art in Cape Town exists in a hostile context. From racist untransformed galleries competing for relevance by making money out of the hippest artists, to the stubborn colonial architecture of the settlement – the step-mother city has never really been about black cultural life thriving. Following the closure of community-oriented art centres in the 1980s and 1990s (as per democratic transition) and the deepening neoliberalist policies implemented in the past twenty years, there are fewer spaces and increasingly less funding for artists outside of commercial galleries.²¹

In this milieu, artists have been shifting their approaches to art practice, steering the discourse on decolonial praxis in the arts, working through collaborative public interventions and engaging restorative themes such as healing, shared knowledge and collectivity. Although the visual arts industry has changed in the course of the post-1994 decades in terms of racial representation, and black arts practitioners are no longer a marginalised minority in art institutions, much of the *financial power* in these institutions remains white. The significant shifts in the white-controlled and -dominated visual arts industry can be attributed to black curators, artists and writers who have undertaken initiatives to transform institutional cultures.

An example is Zeitz MOCAA. It was touted as the ‘first Contemporary African Art Museum on the continent’, and ‘the Tate of Africa.’²² In 2020, the museum hosted ‘The Radical Solidarity Summit’ – a platform that brought together artists, scholars and writers working across disciplines to collectively formulate ideas on various modes of solidarity such as collaboration, knowledge-sharing and transnational mobilities, and reflect on the intellectual legacies of pan-Africanism. Its overarching message emphasised ‘practising togetherness’ (Kouoh 2020). In her opening address to the summit, Koyo Kouoh, the executive director and chief curator of Zeitz MOCAA, argued that solidarity is a ‘fundamental dimension of life’. In conceptualising this event, Kouoh (2020) said, the Zeitz team had asked: ‘What can we do for ourselves, what can we do for others, what can we do together?’

One of the aims taken up by Kouoh after being appointed in 2019 was to ‘bring a certain degree of institutional humility’ (Kouoh 2020). This would be a necessary shift, given the apparent aloofness of the museum in its initial year under its first director, Mark Coetzee.²³ Following its launch in 2017, Zeitz MOCAA faced criticism for lack of transparency, abuses of power, failure to engage local art professionals and establishments,²⁴ the domination of white males, and inequity (Sargent 2017;²⁵ Suarez 2017), among other things. Located at the obscenely opulent Victoria and Albert Waterfront, Cape Town, in the context of abysmal racial economic inequality, Zeitz

MOCAA has had to work hard to shake off what Kouoh (2020) accurately defines as ‘institutional arrogance’.

Cape Town, colloquially called the ‘Europe of Africa,’ has long been labelled one of South Africa’s most racist cities (McDonald 2008). This branding has impeded social solidarity, even at a local level within the country. Cape Town’s spatial planning encumbers the expediency of pan-African solidarity beyond the discursive platforms that are, in general, frequented by mostly middle-class participants. While these changes in institutional cultures have been progressive, they exist within a system of deep inequality. As such, the class divide, or economic apartheid, is difficult to address. Considering this, the position that museums should be community- and artist-led adopted by Zeitz MOCAA is progressive, but necessitates cautious navigation of a context that is beleaguered by confounding and often inhospitable social dynamics. So what are the civil and micro foundations of solidarity as the basis for quality of life and wellbeing in the arts?

It was pointed out by Kouoh at the Radical Solidarity Summit that the crisis in the arts, as well as protest and civil unrest in the country more broadly, had ‘intensified the general call for care and for humility’. ‘Radical’, Kouoh remarked, need not only be ‘loud and extreme’ in the form of protest, but could also be ‘silent, subtle and steady defiance of any given state of affairs’. Solidarity implied ‘the condition of living under a constant drive for care, consciousness and sensitivity to the matters that surround us’ (Kouoh 2020). Solidarity was foregrounded as a shared *responsibility* to enrich artists’ livelihoods, in addition to their individual contentment and fulfilment. It was a resounding call to gather and share resources, and collectively advocate for and build support networks across class.

Kouoh’s remark about the museum’s civic role, ‘its responsibility to rebuild citizenship and political engagement’ (Kouoh 2020), is pertinent when one considers how state-owned institutions fare when compared to privately owned ones in fostering debates about citizenship. Given South Africa’s (neoliberal) ‘democracy’ – a word that Stuart Hall (2002: 21) sees as ‘so proliferated’ that ‘it is virtually useless’ – the parameters of citizenship and associated rights seem anchored in the racial economies of private property and private philanthropy. Generally, state-owned museums, which should centre the objective of rebuilding citizenship, are not always well resourced for projects at a transnational scale, while privately owned museums in South Africa, often white-owned, are not always driven by sincere social justice objectives. Arguably, the private sector-led revival of democracy vitiates the claim that democracy is about elected forms of public representation. As a not-for-profit museum, describing itself as a ‘public’ institution but privately owned, Zeitz MOCAA provokes well-timed questions about these imbalances, and specifically the implications for how solidarity is conceived and projected in public and private institutions.²⁶

In addition to these complexities, Zeitz MOCAA has also had to establish its relations with institutions, organisations and practitioners beyond South Africa, positioning itself as the first museum that, in Kouoh’s words, ‘sets out to present, collect and engage

with the artistic and intellectual production in a pan-African and Afro-diasporic scale, and placing emphasis on ‘mutuality and plurality’. Kouoh defines the inclusion of the entire continent as well as its diaspora as an ‘urgent necessity’, but one with an older trajectory (Kouoh 2020).

Making art institutions people-centred has proven difficult, not only because the industry is in the firm grasp of corporate investors, but because of the spatial politics of institution-building. Zeitz MOCAA is located at the Waterfront in Cape Town, while the Norval Foundation is located in the affluent Cape Town suburb of Tokai. JAG was built in Joubert Park when Hillbrow was still a white area. This limits what curators working in these institutions can do and how they engage specific publics. For example, a curator, commenting during a panel discussion in which she was a participant, remarked that she would not be able to exhibit work in black townships because art collectors would not loan their works to be exhibited there. Works made by top black artists are owned mostly by white patrons, for whom these works are a private investment housed in institutions that charge exorbitant entrance fees, making them inaccessible to proletarian publics.²⁷

Taking care: On solidarity

In response to the gaps in arts infrastructure, worsened by state neglect, independent civil society organisations (which include advocacy groups, artist-run residencies, development-centred initiatives, and so on) play a key role in supporting artists and sustaining solidarity networks. For example, in 2021 the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA) initiated ‘Take Care’ – a toolkit for art practitioners focusing on mental health. Take Care is a response to ‘the systems that upheld unhealthy ways of working and being’ (VANSA 2021). The director of VANSA at the time, Refilwe Nkomo, stated that the toolkit ‘came about as a response to what we had seen and experienced in the sector. It comes ... out of the acknowledgement that our individual and collective care is all our responsibility’. Nkomo positioned Take Care as a platform that ‘approaches mental health not as an attempt to encourage people to be happy or productive all the time, but as a collective effort to enable sustainable, supported environments for visual arts practitioners to strive for their own sense of equilibrium’ (VANSA 2021).

This initiative evokes the US-based think tank Createquity, which advocates for healthy arts ecosystems as systems that ‘maximize the arts’ capacity to improve the lives of human beings in concrete and meaningful ways’, drawing from ‘literature in the social sciences on quality of life and its conceptual cousin, wellbeing’ (Createquity n.d.). Among other things, they point out that healthy arts ecosystems focus on people. They frame the arts as a collective good, ‘where opportunities to improve lives are distributed in an equitable fashion’, and maximise ‘the net benefit for all individuals in the system today and in the future’, with the understanding that ‘individual wellbeing is mediated through the wellbeing of the communities in which people live, work, and play’ (Createquity n.d.). The quest for slowing down and caring to rejuvenate dignifying social relations has revived the struggle for social, epistemic, economic

and environmental justice in the arts. In the context of crude systemic violence, care work and solidarity are not only ideal but necessary.

Solidarity – civic, social, cultural or political – among art institutions, organisations and practitioners has become vital in the pursuit of a good quality of life in the arts. It is now possible, for example, to imagine the repositioning of institutions like museums as ‘spaces of care’ and habituate therapeutic activities – sometimes ritualised and mysticised – in various initiatives, programmes, events and discursive platforms. The focus on recuperation and repair from psychosocial woundedness, social injustice, decreased quality of life and compounded trauma has enlivened the quest for slowing down to be in communion with others, for the wellbeing and improved quality of life of all those in the arts industry.

However, solidarity as an abstract ideal can be hollow. In the neoliberal age, concepts of community engagement, solidarity, care and decolonisation become politically manicured, washed down, such that they are almost unrecognisable. In the arts, where there are sharp class disparities redlining ‘the struggling artist’ away from obscenely wealthy art collectors, curators, gallerists and select artists, solidarity is inevitably politicised when understood in context. It is predicated on volatile, uneven publics. As relational praxis, solidarity requires an understanding of affiliative politics in order to recognise the shifts in the kinds of bases upon which it is formulated. It assumes that there are clear ideas about who is in solidarity with whom; whose and which resources are brought into the struggle; and what positionalities, political principles and rewards (personal or professional) are at stake.

In many ways, solidarity is both cooperative and agonistic. Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty considers it ‘in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships among diverse communities’ (Mohanty 2003: 7). Mohanty draws on Jodi Dean’s (1996) concept of reflective solidarity, which frames solidarity as ‘a result of active struggle to construct the universal on the basis of particulars/differences’ (Mohanty 2003: 7). It presents three positions, formulated as: ‘I ask you to stand by me over and against a third’ (Dean quoted in Mohanty 2003: 7). In this way, solidarity should be understood in relation to affiliative politics in the struggle for rights and resources; this is key to understanding quality of life. The sociologist Mohammed Bamyeh, for example, bases the question of solidarity on affiliations and relationships among citizens and the state. He regards fluid solidarity as ‘frames of affiliation and agendas that are not coterminous with state ideologies’ (Bamyeh 2009: 39). He distinguishes it from solid solidarity, which defines hierarchical and state-led notions of collectivity. Solidarity, he argues, is ‘essentially fluid in nature’ (2009: 39) and transmutes one form of solidarity into another. Fluid solidarity, the organic organising of civil society, is the recognition of ever-changing meanings in the bases upon which different kinds of solidarity are formed (2009: 39). The question is: what are the forms of solidarity, whether lacking or present in current practice, demanded of art institutions, organisations and practitioners in the current context?

The recuperation of the care ethic by feminist, decolonial social justice movements has generated a buzz in institutions, museums and universities globally, and seeks to attract audiences from marginalised communities. It is also shaping alternative approaches that can be taken by artists, curators and art writers, encouraging the pursuit and retrieval of local knowledge for healing and repair. Given the seemingly permanent global social, environmental and economic crises, transnational solidarity is fundamental to the renewal and survival of art institutions. Yet, care may also spiral into fatigue and indifference. In her keynote address to the 2021 African Feminisms conference, Peace Kiguwa (2021) asked: ‘What can care look like under racialised capitalism ... what are the freeing functionalities of care therein ... [and] what are the oppressive functionalities of care therein?’ These questions are instructive, especially considering the oft-cited statement by Audre Lorde that ‘caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare’ (1988: 131), and by Angela Davis (2018), who argues that ‘radical self-care means we’re able to bring our entire selves into the movement’. For Davis, self-care would enable movement beyond trauma. Kiguwa’s questions attend to the specificity required of the word ‘care’, in order for it to account for contradictions and internal conflicts. She recalls what Lorde referred to as ‘shed[ding] each other’s psychic blood’, and asks: ‘What does it mean to come together in our woundedness?’ (Kiguwa 2021). She points to the psychopolitics of care, which she warns focuses on interiority, and shifts attention away from social and political conditions, neutralising and pathologising trauma rather than politicising it. Care, as an act of solidarity, can be redemptive, but it is not an end in itself. Care exists in the messy, convoluted and volatile relationships forged within political communities. This reintroduces many questions about the ways in which care is fashioned in cultural institutions marred by a history of imperial violence.

Art’s alternative public artworlds

One of the major challenges facing South African art ecosystems, like others globally, is how to reformulate the colonial spatial legacies in which they exist. These legacies have created barriers for artists who are trapped in townships, and have limited the kinds of art practices that circulate in the art market. They also make it difficult for artists to attract or retain a common public across race and class. In other words, quality of life in the arts is contingent on structural changes to the system of racial segregation bolstered by economic apartheid. While this might not be achievable in the short term, it is important to be critical of the kinds of institutions that are built, where they are built, and which publics they serve. Without this, solidarity and care could easily be no more than a placebo pacifying the middle class. Radical solidarity, however, necessitates working across class divisions to negate the spatial designs of apartheid and to conceptualise different types of institution-building activities, geared towards enhancing artists’ quality of life and wellbeing.

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PART 4

**SOUTH AFRICA
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15 *Human security, gender and wellbeing in South Africa*

Sandy Africa

In the early 1990s, when the Cold War had ended and global geopolitical realignments were taking shape, many states reframed their international and domestic security aspirations in terms of the widened notion of ‘human security’. South Africa’s transition to democracy coincided with these global shifts, and the reframing of the democratic, post-apartheid state’s philosophy of peace and security reflected this change in discourse.

However, the full realisation of human security has remained elusive. South Africa remains one of the most unequal societies in the world, with a historically privileged minority white population generally better positioned to access opportunities and resources than the much larger majority of black citizens, who bear the brunt of poverty, economic marginalisation and social inequality. This disparity led former President Thabo Mbeki to describe South Africa, in 1998, as a country of ‘two nations’ (Department of Internal Relations and Cooperation 1998), a characterisation that in many ways holds true more than two decades later.

Inequality in South Africa remains racialised, gendered and spatially skewed. In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic plunged the country into a deep crisis, exacerbating the inequality and poverty many were already facing. A quality of life survey conducted by the Gauteng City Region Observatory (De Kadt et al. 2021) revealed that, even in the province where personal income levels were generally higher than in other parts of the country, a significant number of people had slipped back into poverty during the period of the State of Disaster that national government had declared as a response to the pandemic.

The 2022 report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *New Threats to Human Security in the Anthropocene: Demanding Greater Solidarity* (UNDP 2022c), cites the Covid-19 pandemic, ongoing violent conflict, economic inequality and re-emerging geopolitical risks, as well as unprecedented harm done to the earth and its atmosphere, as major drivers of insecurity in the Anthropocene, the name given to ‘the era in which humans have become central drivers of planetary change, radically altering the earth’s biosphere’ (Antonio Guterres quoted in UNDP 2022c: iii). The report points out that globally, women are disproportionately affected by fragile healthcare systems, violent conflict, economic crises, food insecurity and natural hazards. In deeply patriarchal societies, these impacts are exacerbated by additional burdens placed on women, such as unpaid care responsibilities within the family, and by gender-based violence (GBV), including intimate partner violence, to which many are exposed (UNDP 2022c: 98–99).

This chapter analyses the relationship between gender inequality, human security and wellbeing in South Africa. The damaging effects of the Covid-19 pandemic loom large in this analysis. The effects of the pandemic on human security and wellbeing have been severe for the majority of people, but especially so for black, working-class women. Using the concept of human security as a lens, the chapter attempts to understand what has happened to women's wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic. It references data and analyses provided in the Gender Development Index (GDI) in UNDP *Human Development Reports* (UNDP 2022a), and other research assessing current trends in gender inequality.

Human security and the South African Constitution

The South African Constitution does not make explicit reference to human security. The preamble invokes notions that are associated with human security, stating that the Constitution was adopted as the supreme law of the Republic in order to

heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights; lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each; and build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

Similarly, the Bill of Rights – Chapter 2 of the Constitution – does not use the expression 'human security', but states rather that it 'enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom' (Chapter 2 section 7.1).

In Chapter 11 of the Constitution, which deals with the security services, four governing principles are spelled out for 'national security':

- a) National security must reflect the resolve of South Africans, as individuals and as a nation, to live as equals, to live in peace and harmony, to be free from fear and want and to seek a better life;
- b) The resolve to live in peace and harmony precludes any South African citizen from participating in armed conflict, nationally or internationally, except as provided for in terms of the Constitution or national legislation;
- c) National security must be pursued in compliance with the law, including international law; and
- d) National security is subject to the authority of Parliament and the national executive. (Chapter 11 section 198)

While there is no explicit reference to human security in the Constitution, an expanded approach to security can be construed from the above clauses. They are a clear indication of an intended shift in focus from the narrowly focused 'state security' and regime-

centred security agenda that characterised the apartheid era to a security agenda that is inclusive, egalitarian and just.

The first five years of South Africa's democracy were characterised by an extensive rollout of policies, legislation and programmes aimed at creating a single state and building an equal, prosperous and just society. But racism and class exploitation, gender inequality and injustice, which were critical instruments in upholding the apartheid system, have persisted. Shortly before the first democratic elections in April 1994, under pressure from the multiparty National Women's Coalition that acted as a lobby group for the inclusion of women's interests in the negotiations for a democratic South Africa, several international instruments promoting gender equality were adopted by the outgoing South African government, with a view to normalising the country's international relations. Conventions signed by the government included the UN Convention on Political Rights for Women, Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Sadie & Van Aardt 1995: 80).

In spite of these developments, gender inequality has continued to mark the experiences of women in South Africa long after the country's political transition in the 1990s, highlighting the enduring character of gender inequality and insecurity in post-conflict contexts. Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey note that

even in times of supposed peace, many women do not enjoy peace and security in their homes, workplaces or on the streets. Furthermore, there is much evidence that the more general, everyday violence that women are specifically subject to is especially commonplace in pre- and post-war situations. (2008: 3)

This is acknowledged by South African policy-makers. The country's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2020–2025 states that:

South Africa is often portrayed as a leading example of gender mainstreaming in the security sector. It is among those countries with the highest representation of women in this sector globally. However, it has not been able to effectively translate this representation into protecting women against gender-based violence, or other forms of violence, or ... creating a peaceful and inclusive society. (South African Government 2021: 23).

In the first six years of democracy, among the laws adopted to promote the rights of women were the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (No. 92 of 1996), the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act (No. 120 of 1998), the Maintenance Act (No. 99 of 1998), the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998), the Domestic Violence Act (No. 116 of 1998) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (No. 4 of 2000). In the decades that followed, more laws and policy frameworks were introduced. They included the Protection from Harassment Act (No. 17 of 2011), a National Policy Framework for the Management of Sexual

Offence Matters (2012) and the Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (No. 7 of 2013) (South African Government 2021: 31). Aimed at reversing the effects of apartheid, these measures were meant to open up possibilities for greater choice and improvements in the living standards of women. However, patriarchy has been difficult to erase, and women have systematically been the social group whose opportunities and options have been most restricted.

The challenge for gender equality in post-apartheid South Africa

Racism and class exploitation, gender inequality and injustice were critical instruments in upholding the apartheid system, implying that steps would need to be taken to reverse race, class and gender oppression in a democratic South Africa. Improvements in the social wage – including access to social grants, tax relief and the provision of some free basic services – have been important and transformative gains of the post-apartheid period. However, they have been inadequate to meet the needs addressed in, and enact the rights to a decent standard of living guaranteed by, the Constitution. The economy overall has been unable to absorb the growing population; land reform has been delayed and drawn out; health, education and nutritional indicators fare poorly; and the unequal distribution of income has perpetuated an unevenness in people's quality of life (Marais 2010). The economy grew on average 2.8 per cent annually during the period 1994–2018 (RSA 2019: 26), but this was not enough to absorb the number of people seeking work, with youth and women being the most insecure.

The persistence of economic exclusion, gender inequality and oppression has continued to mark the experiences of women in South Africa long after the country's political transition. It is important to recognise that there are also differences in access to opportunities among South African women, with significant disparities in the material conditions of women living in rural and urban areas. This reflects a trend across the whole of Africa, where levels of education for rural women, their access to the internet and therefore information, and opportunities for employment are generally lower than for their counterparts living in urban areas (Patel 2020). Compared to men, women bear the brunt of unemployment. According to Statistics South Africa, in 2022, 47 per cent of working-age South African women were recorded by the International Labour Organisation as being economically inactive, compared to 35.6 per cent of men. Typically, women were working in economic sectors characterised by low wages, low productivity and difficult working conditions. And only 5.8 per cent of employed women occupied management positions, compared to 9.8 per cent of employed men (Statistics South Africa 2022).

Even in the political sphere, the status of women is overshadowed by that of men. According to Statistics South Africa, there has been an increase in the proportion of parliamentary seats held by women, from 33 per cent in 2004 to 46 per cent in 2019. However, the picture is bleaker at local government level, where in 2022 only 3 in every 10 mayors nationally were women – this despite national and municipal voter turnout being significantly higher among women (Statistics South Africa 2022). In the

context of South Africa's constitutional democracy, much can be said for the recognition of gender equality in spaces such as education, sport, the media, arts and culture. In reality though, when disaggregated, there are systemic impediments permeating political, social and economic life in South Africa that reinforce gender inequality.

A capabilities approach to wellbeing

How should we measure progress in attaining human security and the wellbeing that it implies, and how can this help us to evaluate the status of women in society over time? The measurement of wellbeing has been the subject of research by development theorists and practitioners for decades, influencing the ways in which governments evaluate improvements in the quality of life of their citizens. Such measurement has helped to expose the reality that in many societies, women and girls suffer disproportionate inequality based on their gender.

South Africa's transition to democracy coincided with a decline, in international development policy circles, in regarding indicators such as gross national product (GNP) as appropriate measures of wellbeing. The rationale for this shift was that GNP was seen as reflecting the performance of a country's economy, and not the wellbeing of its population. Development economist Amartya Sen, a leading authority on the capabilities approach to wellbeing, argued that wellbeing should be assessed in terms of a person's 'ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being,' rather than in terms of measures such as the acquisition of wealth, or access to libertarian rights or resources (Sen 1993). Central to Sen's notion of capabilities is the individual's freedom to access and choose ways of living and being, thereby maximising their agency.

For Martha Nussbaum (2000), who worked closely with Sen, wellbeing can be correlated with a number of central human capabilities: bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, play, and control over one's environment (Stanton 2007: 9). Nussbaum argues that there is

a threshold level of each capability beneath which it is held that truly human functioning is not available to citizens; the social goal should be understood in terms of getting citizens above the capabilities threshold.
(2000: 6, emphasis in the original)

In other words, for an individual to live in dignity as a human being, the opportunities they should have to realise their capabilities must be of a minimum standard. Nussbaum rejects the notion that there should be different standards of wellbeing for different nations, or for groups or individuals within nations. The significance of the contributions of scholars such as Sen and Nussbaum in the early 1990s was that they provided a framework for developing the indicators of human development that in turn have shaped understandings of human security, and can be cross-referenced across countries (Stanton 2007: 3).

The UN Human Development Index (HDI) embodies Nussbaum's and Sen's capabilities approach to understanding human wellbeing, and emphasises factors such as the

whole of society enjoying a healthy life and a decent standard of living, rather than focusing on aggregate factors that could disguise existing disparities. The HDI is a measurement tool that has been used by the UN since 1990 to measure and compare all countries' levels of social and economic development. The statistics on which the HDI calculations are based cover three categories that are seen as proxies for a decent standard of living in a population: health (measured by life expectancy at birth); knowledge (measured by expected years of schooling and mean years of schooling); and purchasing power potential (measured by gross national income [GNI] per capita in the population). While the HDI measurement tools have been refined and adapted over the years since 1990, they have remained relatively constant, making it possible to obtain dependable trend lines for what has been happening to human development globally, as well as in individual countries.

For South Africa, which is struggling to reverse deeply entrenched and historical patterns of poverty and inequality in the economic, political and social spheres, the HDI framework of capabilities provides useful benchmark data against which to assess public policy interventions in quality of life. For example, access to education for the population has been broadened since the end of apartheid. However, the conceptualisation of the HDI has limitations, and has come in for criticism. Micky Lee (2011), for example, argues that it uses indicators that position countries in the global north as having higher indices than countries in the global south, polarising responses to mutually shared challenges. It also does not take into account the power imbalances between different genders, and the fact that structural and systemic factors are the impediments at the root of persistent disparities in the HDI. The choices that individuals are able to make to address their income levels, educational attainment and health outcomes are a direct result of the structural relations between the wealthy global north and poorer global south, and of the power dynamics between men and women in these societies.

Wellbeing and the ontology of human security in the Anthropocene

The intersections of race, class and gender have increasingly been the focus of feminist scholarship when assessing human security in South Africa (Haysom 2013; Hildsen 2019; Lewis 2006). Two additional factors have made this assessment more complex. The first is the growing emergency occasioned by the Anthropocene – more regular and prolonged periods of drought threatening food security; unusually heavy rains and flooding of areas inhabited by humans; and the outbreak of new diseases and pandemics, such as Covid-19. The second factor is the persistence, and in some cases deepening, of violent patriarchy within the socioeconomic and political fabric entrenched by centuries of colonial racism and then apartheid (Ratele 2013; Thobejane 2018). These factors have created an existential storm for women. The way in which they played out in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic rolled back some of the gains that had been made in tackling gender inequality up until that point. The HDI as a measurement tool for assessing progress (or regression) in the wellbeing of women must therefore

be looked at alongside women's rights and access to peace, safety and bodily integrity, as well as their protection from the deleterious effects of the Anthropocene.

Crain Soudien (2020) proposes a conceptual lens, ontological wellbeing, that enhances the study and understanding of human security. This can be traced back to a concept used by psychologist David Laing in his 1965 work, *The Divided Self*, as quoted in Soudien (2020: 2), in which he describes a situation where an extreme loss of ontological security leaves the individual in a state of uncertainty about the 'stability of his autonomy' (Soudien 2020: 2), engulfed by a constant state of dread about what the future holds. The concept of ontological security has been applied subsequently in other academic fields, including sociology and international relations. At its core is a concern with the pervasive existential insecurity that individuals experience under certain conditions. For sociologist Anthony Giddens, ontological security concerns 'a person's fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people'. Obtaining this trust is 'necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological wellbeing and avoid existential anxiety' (Giddens 1991: 37, as quoted in Kirke 2020: 1). Examination of the state of insecurity and uncertainty that people feel because of the many threats to security that have engulfed their lives, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, is useful for understanding the levels of human (in)security experienced in the Anthropocene.

The UNDP special report on new threats to human security in the Anthropocene (UNDP 2022c) raises the human security implications of migration and displacement, which are happening today on an unprecedented scale due to violent conflict, poverty and economic desperation, as well as weather-related climate disasters. The human security crises stemming from migration and displacement include hazardous journeys undertaken by vulnerable people to escape insecurity; the smuggling, trafficking and exploitation of people; and detention, deportation, family separation and human rights abuses at the hands of authorities. Other security challenges that are becoming more prominent include adverse risks associated with digital technologies that, wrongly used, can also impact the individual's access to information and freedom of association, or facilitate harm being done to them through, for example, bullying, harassment, fraud and misinformation (UNDP 2022c). Artificial-intelligence-based decision-making (such as facial recognition technology), applied disproportionately and inappropriately, can be intrusive and can undermine human rights. Discrimination against people whose identities do not conform to traditional gender norms and roles is another source of human insecurity. For LGBTQI+ people, such discrimination increases their marginalisation and stigmatisation, and the risks of abuse in multiple spaces such as the home, school, workplaces, public spaces and online (UNDP 2022c).

This complex set of challenges suggests that we may be entering a *posthuman* security era, one in which we need to be seized with concern for both the security of the planet and the security and integrity of human identity and agency. Feminist scholar Heidi Hudson (2018) highlights the need to explore the unfolding intersections brought about by this latest confluence of factors in a world rendered vulnerable because of the impact of humans, and yet so advanced as a result of rapid developments in

technology and computing. Whenever crises occur, the central question that arises is, 'Which humans matter?' Hudson argues that '[a] feminist posthuman security approach therefore goes beyond just asking for the inclusion of women, and underscores agentic relations between (all) humans, the natural environment, technology and objects' (2018: 48). This approach underscores the dramatic changes in human interactions with the environment, which increasingly raise existential questions about all who inhabit the earth, and their rights to do so. Hudson argues that the notions of security and 'human security' have to be unlearned, reproblematised and reconceptualised away from existing binaries, and proposes this as an agenda for decolonising human security. She therefore poses the challenge of expanding the notion of human security to better incorporate the challenges of contemporary times.

Such an expanded reconceptualisation of human security must include the question of why gender inequality remains so entrenched in the era of the Anthropocene, why women remain so marginalised and what can be done about it. No problem can be resolved, however, without exploring the opportunities for change, and the analysis should uncover those areas where interventions have been made to challenge structural impediments to bringing about such change, and explore how the ontological security of women, girls and all people who experience discrimination on the basis of gender is being, and can continue to be, reimagined.

Gender, human security and the Covid-19 pandemic

The UNDP *Human Development Report 2021–2022* warns that a global 'uncertainty complex' emerged during the period under review, and that for the first time ever the HDI declined for two straight years (UNDP 2022b). The Covid-19 pandemic drove reversals in human development in almost every country during this period; wars in various parts of the world strained the multilateral international system; and floods, fires, storms and record-breaking temperatures, and their impact on life, were proof of a rapidly developing climate emergency (UNDP 2022b). South Africa was not spared the impact of this complex uncertainty.

According to UNDP data, South Africa's HDI value for 2021 was 0.713, which put the country in the 'high' human development category, positioning it at 109th out of 191 countries and territories (UNDP 2022d). Between 1990 and 2019, South Africa's HDI value showed a continuous upward trend. Then, in keeping with global trends, the country's HDI dropped in 2020 and 2021. In 2019 the HDI value was 0.736 (up 0.010 from 2018). Life expectancy at birth was 66.2 years; expected years of schooling were 13.6; mean years of schooling were 11.4; and GNI per capita was \$15 366. In 2020, the HDI value was 0.727 (down 0.009 from 2019), reflecting a decline in living standards. Life expectancy at birth was 65.3 years; expected years of schooling were 13.6; mean years of schooling were 11.4; and GNI per capita was \$12 450. In 2021, the HDI dropped even further to 0.713 (down 0.014 from 2020). Life expectancy at birth dropped yet again, to 62.3 years; expected years of schooling were 13.6, while mean years of schooling were 11.4 years; and GNI per capita rose to \$12 948.

Table 15.1 *Gender Development Index data for South Africa, 2019–21*

Year	Life expectancy at birth (years)		Expected years of schooling		Mean years of schooling		GNI per capita	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
2019	75.7	70.6	12.8	12.6	8.4	8.9	12.082	21.164
2020	68.0	62.2	14.0	13.3	9.7	12.2	9.505	15.563
2021	65.0	59.5	14.0	13.3	9.7	12.2	9.935	16.129

Source: Information extracted from the UNDP GDI (UNDP 2022a)

These trends correlate with the GDI compiled by the UNDP for the same period. The GDI is a measure that examines globally, and per country, the gender gap in achievement between men and women, in regard to the same dimensions measured by the HDI. In South Africa, the GDI statistics recorded for 2019, 2020 and 2021 (Table 15.1) reflect a decline in living standards, with women being most adversely affected economically.

These trends, in particular the economic data, are supported by other studies. According to Haroon Borhat et al. (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on employment during 2020, with informal and domestic workers (a significant number being women) accounting for almost 50 per cent of all jobs lost. Bianca Parry and Errolyn Gordon (2020) describe the harsh realities already facing women in South Africa at the start of the pandemic: more than 42 per cent were responsible for female-headed households; women carried a disproportionate share of work in households; social protections available to them were poor; and they were subject to high levels of intimate partner violence.

The South African government attempted to provide a buffer against the effects of the pandemic with an economic stimulus plan, aimed at keeping the struggling economy afloat and providing at least some social support to the most vulnerable (Bhorat, Oosthuizen & Stanwix 2021). However, political strife and economic uncertainty had a major impact on livelihoods. The provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng were rocked by widespread looting and riots over a 9-day period in July 2021, leaving more than 350 people dead and resulting in economic losses estimated at more than R50 billion. The unrest was triggered by the sentencing of former President Jacob Zuma to a 15-month term of imprisonment because of his non-cooperation with the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State (popularly known as the Zondo Commission).¹ People were already experiencing considerable hardship at the time of the unrest, with the country having one of the highest reported Covid-19 death tolls in the world. At the end of June 2021, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases reported that the total number of laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 cases in South Africa was 1 973 972, with Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, the provinces where the violence erupted, having borne the brunt of cases (NICD 2021).

Less than a year later, while the country was still struggling to come to terms with the effects of the July 2021 unrest, devastating floods washed through KwaZulu-Natal,

leaving more than 350 people dead. This nightmarish scenario further undermined the sense of ontological security of a large segment of the population, and drove home the reality that the Anthropocene had arrived. People from all walks of life were affected, but the most hard-hit were people living in informal dwellings, many of whom were women who had moved from rural to urban areas in search of better economic opportunities. Global climate insecurity features prominently in the UNDP human security report (UNDP 2022c). In regard to South Africa, Khumo Lesele points out that GBV spikes in the wake of climate-induced disasters like cyclones and floods; the patterns of providing for households are disrupted and women are put at risk while securing food; and sometimes women are forced to migrate, with all the risks entailed, since gender inequality exacerbates many of the harms and human rights violations to which poor, marginalised women are ordinarily exposed. This makes it important for women's voices to be heard in the process of developing strategies to enhance justice when addressing climate insecurity.²

As the Covid-19 pandemic gained momentum, the government's response was to declare a State of Disaster, and to introduce a 'hard lockdown'. This mirrored the way in which many governments around the world were reacting in order to control the spread of the coronavirus. But the conflation of the health emergency with a security response implicated the security services in the state of insecurity to which the public, especially the poor and marginalised, were exposed. At the height of the lockdown, people required permission to move between provinces, and were confined to their residences during night-time curfews. Trade was restricted, and the operation of public services was limited (Pinheiro & Kiguwa 2021). The security forces were inserted into public spaces in a militarised or securitised framework, when in fact the public, in the face of a health scare, was in a vulnerable state and in need of care.

Gabriela Pinheiro and Peace Kiguwa (2021) argue that the state's lexicography of war in response to the Covid-19 pandemic was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, there was a sense of inclusion and unity of purpose in the high-profile national response. On the other hand, the processes of decision-making were hierarchical, militarised and marginalising. They argue that

the voices that were largely excluded and/or silenced during South Africa's 'War on Covid-19' represented social actors who do not have significant amounts of agency within heteropatriarchal systems of masculinist politics and national military cultures. With the leaders of the response being the South African Government, the NCCC [National Coronavirus Command Council] and a network of associated scientists and experts, little space was left for other voices to be foregrounded during the health crisis. (Pinheiro & Kiguwa 2021: 83)

These marginalised voices included the voices of health workers, a large proportion of whom were women working on the frontline of the pandemic, and who were the 'war heroes' on whom an effective response to Covid-19 was dependent.

Another serious factor undermining the wellbeing of South African women is the high level of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the country. In his 2020 'State of the Nation' address at the opening of Parliament, President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged the following:

We will amend the Domestic Violence Act to better protect victims in violent domestic relationships and the Sexual Offences Act to broaden the categories of sex offenders whose names must be included in the National Register for Sex Offenders, and we will pass a law to tighten bail and sentencing conditions in cases that involve gender-based violence (GBV). (South African Government 2020b)

Ramaphosa had been supportive of the efforts leading to the adoption of the National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (NSP-GBVF) in 2020. In his foreword to the NSP-GBVF, he wrote:

South Africa holds the shameful distinction of being one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman. We have amongst the highest rates of intimate partner violence, and recently released data from Statistics SA show that rape and sexual violence have become hyperendemic. This is a scourge that affects us all: young and old, black or white, rich and poor, queer or cis, rural or urban. It pervades every sphere of our society. (South African Government 2020a: 2)

South Africa has instituted several noteworthy governmental initiatives to combat SGBV, including specialised Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences units in the South African Police Service, Thuthuzela care centres under the National Prosecuting Authority to assist rape survivors, and specialised sexual offences courts – but these are not sufficient in number or adequately resourced to address the challenge of SGBV. There are also many interventions by civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, and research and advocacy institutions to assist victims of SGBV, or provide training to other service providers, the police and government departments, or raise awareness and try to shift people's consciousness of and attitudes towards SGBV. At times it appears that the problem of violence is worsening. In an article on GBV in 2022, Matodzi Amisi, Emily Bridger and Kudakwashe Vanyoro referred to a Medical Research Council brief on femicide that showed a drop in the number of femicides between 1999 and 2017.³ They argued that this drop was the result of activism by gender activists that had led to changes in government policies and measures, a sign that change is possible if appropriate action is taken.

GBV in South Africa is deeply rooted and needs to be tackled holistically, including by addressing the key drivers of it. These are identified in the NSP-GBVF as gender norms, including ideas of masculinity and femininity that encourage women's subordination to men; historical economic injustices that perpetuate poverty among women and lead to their dependence on men; the socialisation of children into violence, and normalisation of abuse and violence in society and the home; a lack of access to education and therefore

opportunity, exposing women to greater likelihood of intimate partner violence; and high levels of alcohol consumption that are associated with interpersonal violence, crime, physical and mental health risks (South African Government 2020a). The prevalence of GBV also has implications for how security is framed in national policy, and for the strategies to combat GBV that are implemented by the security services at national and local levels.

Expecting women to ward off political turmoil, and to deal with the insecurity brought about by climate uncertainty, places a heavy burden on them. There has to be more emphasis placed on changing social norms and behaviour, and on addressing violent masculinities. Violence against women cannot be reduced without addressing more widespread violence in the country, and the larger societal issues that it confronts. The government's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (South African Government 2021) is an attempt to reinforce the existing policy frameworks on SGBV, provide protection and support for women experiencing physical and structural violence, and begin to address some of the behavioural changes required of society.

Conclusion

Human security is a concept that arose in the context of debates about the future of international security in the 1990s, and is widely heralded as a conceptual departure from the state-centred, narrow and militarised notions of security that characterised the Cold War period. Examining human security within the framework of capabilities provides a set of tools to measure progress in improving the status of women. The UNDP HDI is informed by the capabilities framework, and uses life expectancy, educational levels and income as indicators to compare levels of wellbeing. The fact that these data are also available through the UN GDI allows governments to track progress in these areas and address systemic impediments to improving the position of women.

HDI statistics compiled by the UN, and other research (Statistics South Africa 2022), have shown that the marginalisation of women in South Africa remains structurally intact. According to the UNDP GDI (2022a), in the period 2020–21 the life expectancy at birth for South African women plummeted, as did their income relative to that of men (as shown in Table 15.1). This compounded the ontological insecurity that underpins the lived realities of all women in South Africa. With GBV being endemic, women live in a constant state of dread, and live with constant uncertainty about when the minimal sense of stability or security they enjoy will be disrupted.

The environmental and social challenges arising in the Anthropocene exacerbate the existential threat to women. Women are hardest hit by climate change, economic contraction, violence, conflict and food insecurity. The tendency of the state to opt for a securitisation of South Africa's complex security crises and challenges (in the form of paramilitarised responses, excessive use of force, surveillance and a closing down of democratic space for dissenting voices) is a short-term and unsustainable solution. While more effective and accountable policing, defence and intelligence services are

needed to counter and prevent crime and instability, the security institutions are in no position to address the social and political fissures that are the source of the problems, and the complex emergencies of the current period, on their own. Moreover, these institutions are themselves open to abuse if not subjected to strict regulation and oversight. What is needed, therefore, is a paradigm shift in the framing of insecurity.

There is a need to expand the range of strategies available for creating pathways to human security – ones that move away from an overreliance on coercive instruments of force – as a basis for improved public policy responses to the state of insecurity and instability currently endemic in South Africa. This implies a need for introspection on the part of state actors about which humans matter. It also requires that resistance and challenges by marginalised groups should be included in policy-making and decision-making processes concerning issues that affect their lives. A gendered perspective on security will put women in particular at the centre of these processes, involving them in decisions about what human security looks like for them, and what capabilities are needed for them to live meaningful and fulfilled lives. Moreover, these processes, and the policies and decisions they give rise to, need to be grounded in an expanded notion of capabilities, one that anticipates the increasing challenges posed by the effects of climate change and other changes in the non-human world. South Africa is seeing increasing incidents of climate disaster in the form of floods, droughts and rising sea levels, all of which have profound implications for human security. The capabilities that are needed – the things that people can choose to do – are under the circumstances different to what they might have been 30 years ago. An expanded conception of human security must acknowledge this, too.

Notes

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- 3 Amisi MM, Bridger E & Vanyoro K, Framing gender-based violence as a 'crisis' merely bandages a festering societal wound, *Daily Maverick*, 19 July 2022. Accessed August 2023, <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2022-07-19-framing-gender-based-violence-as-a-crisis-merely-bandages-a-festering-societal-wound/>.

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16 *Peace, wellbeing and the state in Africa: South Africa in comparative perspective*

Funmi Olonisakin, Damilola Adegoke and Alagaw Ababu Kifle

Peace and wellbeing are two value-laden concepts that are competing for the attention of policy-makers globally. The discourse on wellbeing as a measure of policy success has received wider appeal across the developed world in recent decades. Attempts by policy-makers to include this as one consideration in formulating and implementing policies, and the increasing academic output on wellbeing, demonstrate this. This emphasis on wellbeing emerged from dissatisfaction with GDP-based conventional measures of economic and social progress (CMEPSP 2009). In the developing world, where achieving increasing GDP growth is daunting, a multidimensional approach to wellbeing often appears to be a luxury (Gough & McGregor 2007). Where misery and destitution are rampant, it is tempting to want to focus on objective sources of illbeing rather than on subjective perception of wellbeing. However, as Ian Gough and Allister McGregor (2007) indicate, even in the midst of misery, poor people in the developing world in general, and in Africa in particular, achieve some measure of subjective wellbeing that reduces their perception of life as unbearable existence. Issues of violence and peace, on the other hand, are the running theme of social science discussions in the developing world, largely due to the disproportionate levels of organised violence in these countries. The literature on violence and peace vividly depicts how violence has been the source of human illbeing of the worst kind: death, injury, rape, trauma and dehumanisation, among other things (UNECA 2016a, 2016b).

At first glance, peace and wellbeing seem to have a lot in common. They both stand for desirable values; they both seek to overcome their opposites, namely, violence and illbeing (direct and indirect); and they both reflect human aspiration for a better world. However, the bodies of literature on peace and wellbeing are not integrated, and there is little effort at cross-fertilisation of their discourses. This chapter aims to highlight the significance of integrating the discussions of peace and wellbeing in order to capture holistically the challenges to, and prospects for, human progress in Africa. We argue for this integration on both conceptual and empirical grounds. Conceptually, the two notions would benefit from cross-fertilisation. Practically, actual people in situations of illbeing may not compartmentalise their predicaments in terms of peace and wellbeing: indeed, they might draw alternatively from these two discourses depending on their usefulness for the practical purpose at hand. The chapter explores practical and theoretical linkages between the two concepts, drawing on the outcomes of data mining on Twitter and an online survey about peace and wellbeing conducted in Nigeria and South Africa in a post-Covid-19 context. Highlighting the significance of integrating peace and wellbeing is part of the current global, integrative

move evident in the discourse on sustainable development, for example in the UN's sustainable development goals (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs n.d.).

The next section of the chapter discusses the relationship between peace and wellbeing theoretically, and in terms of the values they aspire to realise. This conceptual discussion is followed by empirical presentation of survey and data-mining results relating to how people view peace and wellbeing. These results inform the conceptual discussion by highlighting how actual people do (not) make a strict distinction in their circumstances between being more or less peaceful and more or less well. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the data and their implications for wellbeing, peace and the state in Africa.

Exploring the linkages between peace and wellbeing

Both peace and wellbeing are essentially contested concepts with contested meanings (Atkinson 2013; Galtung 1996). The varying conceptions of these terms entail varying understandings of their linkages, for example, peace as an external condition for wellbeing, peace as wellbeing, peace as a mask camouflaging illbeing, peace as a tool to reconceptualise wellbeing, and wellbeing as a tool to reconfigure peace. Different aspects of these linkages are foregrounded by different and contending understandings of peace and wellbeing, as discussed briefly below.

The notion of wellbeing generally presupposes leading a life that is worth living. However, this is where agreement among scholars of wellbeing ends. There is neither agreement on what a good life worth living is, nor on how to measure progress to this end. The issue of quality of life is philosophically approached in two ways. One approach, drawing on utilitarian philosophers, views a good life as a happy life, as defined by the agent living it, and entails the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain; the other approach, drawing on the Aristotelian notion of 'eudaimonia', understands a good life to be a life that flourishes so as to uplift humans to the most virtuous, excellent and self-sufficient life (Bache & Scott 2018; Duvall & Dotson 1998). These two philosophical underpinnings of the idea of a good life lead to different notions of wellbeing. The former approach gives rise to the idea of subjective wellbeing, usually measured in terms of the degree of life satisfaction. According to this view, asking people how happy they are, or how satisfied they are with their life, would tell us what their psychological state of wellbeing is (Anand 2022). The latter approach gives rise to notions of 'objective wellbeing', referring to externally defined qualities identified to be necessary for a life to qualify as a good life (Gough & McGregor 2007). These external qualities are often identified as basic needs and resources (primarily goods or capabilities), the possession of which is necessary to lead a flourishing life (Bache & Scott 2018). Multidimensional measures of poverty such as the Human Development Index (UNDP 2023) and other related indices (see, for example, Alkire, Kanagaratnam & Suppa 2022) are developed using this latter conception of wellbeing, whereas life satisfaction surveys draw from the former conception of it.

That said, scholars are also quick to remind us that practical policy measures emerging from both approaches tend to suggest the same solutions to the problem of how to

enhance human wellbeing, albeit for different reasons, and therefore the distinction between them may not have huge practical ramifications (Layard 2022). Indeed, factors identified as the major sources of human misery, whether described in terms of subjective or objective wellbeing, tend to be felt as such by people who are in situations of illbeing, thus indicating the possibility of subjective and objective overlap. Surveys of subjective wellbeing conducted in developed countries, for instance, have identified certain factors as the major sources of misery, an identification confirmed by objective measures of wellbeing. These factors are mental health, physical health, employment, quality of work, relationship, income and education (Layard 2022). The Commission on Measuring Economic Performance and Social Progress (CMEPSP) also identifies some overlapping and yet comprehensive domains as measures of wellbeing; these include material standards, health, education, personal activities such as work, political voices and governance, social relationships, environment, and physical and economic insecurity (CMEPSP 2009). Results such as those presented by Richard Layard and the CMEPSP indicate the overlap of subjective and objective wellbeing studies. Other studies, however, express concern that the subjective wellbeing discourse renders individuals responsible for their own wellbeing, thereby overlooking structural and institutional constraints to a good life (Scott 2012).

The discussion on peace is equally contested, with two broad categories of thought dominating the academic literature since the concept of peace was first defined by Johan Galtung in 1969 (Galtung 2018). The first has to do with peace as the absence of direct violence, whether of the bodily type manifested in physical harm, or the psychological type manifested in the use of threat. Most studies of peace and conflict are deeply concerned with this notion of peace, making some level of disaggregation even within this subcategory: interpersonal violence (such as bullying), localised violence, guerrilla warfare, civil war, interstate war, terrorism, and so forth. The second type of peace, propounded by Galtung, is the notion of positive peace, which is realised when violence built into the social structure of society is overcome. According to Galtung, structural violence arises when inequalities built into social structures affect relations among people in such a way that there is a gap between their potential and actual somatic and mental realisation (Galtung 2018). This dimension of peace is not widely referenced, as it is framed alternatively in terms of issues of social justice. Of course, it is not uncommon for the notion of peace as the absence of direct violence to invoke the notion of positive peace; but this is done only in relation to the effect of the latter on the former, for example, in a discussion of whether poverty, inequality or relative deprivation causes war (that is, the effect of structural violence on direct violence). As contemporary critiques of liberal peace-building initiatives also indicate, efforts aimed at overcoming structural violence may not necessarily address direct violence (Campbell, Chandler & Sabaratnam 2011). Galtung advocates an integrated peace in which both direct and structural violence are overcome, and therefore actual and potential somatic and mental realisations of peace converge through the pursuit of contextually mediated and carefully reflected measures that enhance both types (Galtung 2018).

Subsequent definitions of peace have generally fallen within the conceptual ambit of Galtung's conceptualisation of it. Based on their extensive review of the literature, Christian Davenport, Erik Melander and Patrick Regan (2018) argue that the absence of direct violence is the lowest common denominator of all definitions of peace offered by scholars; these definitions differ from one another in terms of the additional elements they would like to include in their conceptualisation of peace. Scholars who consider Galtung's idea of positive peace to be too broad, and yet are not satisfied with limiting peace to just the absence of violence, have introduced more nuanced definitions of the concept. Peter Wallensteen, for instance, has introduced the idea of 'quality peace', defined as 'conditions that make the inhabitants of a society (be it an area, a country, a region, a continent, or a planet) secure in life and dignity now and for the foreseeable future' (Wallensteen 2015: 7). Security, dignity and predictability – the three components of his definition – go well beyond the absence of violence, and yet exclude some elements of Galtung's idea of positive peace. Melander approaches quality peace as politics guided by the principle of respect for the physical safety of one's adversary, consensual decision-making and equality value, a term that refers to the extent to which people believe that it is morally illegitimate to impose one's will on others (Melander 2018). Davenport approaches peace as mutuality between actors, where a sense of shared identity is reflected in the behaviours, organisation, language and values of the actors (Davenport 2018). Regan approaches peace as a condition in the status quo that is preferred to violently changing this status quo (Regan 2018). While these understandings of peace approach it as more than the mere absence of direct violence, they fall short of embracing Galtung's expansive definition. Hence, for the purpose at hand, these reconceptualisations of peace, situated broadly on the negative peace–positive peace spectrum (Galtung considers negative and positive peace as dichotomous variables, but they could also be placed on a spectrum), do not lead to different relationships between peace and wellbeing.

Another approach to peace highlights the fact that conceptions of peace may vary depending on the cultures, states and societies concerned. Oliver Richmond (2014), for instance, argues that different societies might have different ideas of what peace is, and of what the elements related to peace are. According to Takeshi Ishida (1969), these culturally different conceptions of peace arise because different cultures respond differently to the two dilemmas of how to avoid waging war in the name of peace, and how to encourage resistance to injustice while shunning war and violence. Different definitions of peace offered by scholars may thus be reflective of differences in culture, and of the fact that there may be societal visions for peace that are not adequately covered in Western-dominated scholarly work (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer 1998), a point highlighted by the literature on the local turn in peacebuilding (Cardenas 2022; Firchow 2018; Paarlberg-Kvam 2019). At any rate, these different conceptions of peace and wellbeing could give rise to different understandings of the connection between them. The next section considers possible ways of viewing this connection.

Presumable and potential connections between peace and wellbeing

The summary of key conceptual approaches to peace and wellbeing presented above reveals various presumable connections between them that may be identifiable, in the interests of creating a potentially mutually enriching discourse, depending on the approach taken. The first of these is that peace (defined as the absence of direct violence) can be taken as one of the conditions essential for the realisation of wellbeing. In a context of pervasive violence, or the threat of it, it is hardly possible to improve the objective and subjective wellbeing of individuals. A brief look at the human and economic cost of conflict in Africa reveals staggering numbers and lists of social ills generated by violent conflict: loss of life (the climax of illbeing), injury, mass displacement, impaired livelihood, destruction of public amenities, a culture of fear, human rights abuses, sexual and gender-based violence, trauma, and so on. Between 1990 and 2007, the Horn of Africa lost per capita GDP of \$4 757.24–\$8 777.96 to conflict (UNECA 2016b). Similarly, a study on the Sahel argues that the impact of conflict in that region manifests itself in such a way that human security is inseparable from human development (UNECA 2016a). These results, when viewed alongside other effects of conflict such as the dehumanisation of purported enemies, show that violent conflict is one of the greatest sources of human misery and destitution in Africa. They indicate how the converse of peace and wellbeing are connected, constituting a vicious circle: violent conflict breeds illbeing, and illbeing sustains violent conflict.

While the results of conflict outlined above indicate the value of negative peace, merely overcoming violent conflicts might mean little in terms of human wellbeing. A second connection between peace and wellbeing is that negative peace (absence of war or direct violence), maintained through or in the context of an exploitative, marginalising, repressive and predatory political order, might present a semblance of order and tranquillity while undermining other dimensions of human wellbeing. Hence, peace in a context of structural violence can simply be a camouflage for widespread undercurrents of human misery and illbeing. In this sense, peace and wellbeing are not mutually reinforcing, since negative peace is valued over human wellbeing. Admittedly, this argument rests on the debatable presumption that marginalising, repressive and predatory behaviour would have been avoided without a descent into violent conflict. At one level, therefore, peace or violence and wellbeing or illbeing might be viewed as constituting the components of a virtuous or vicious circle; yet at another level, this connection may break, and peace (in its negative form) might be a source of illbeing. Given the difficulties of realising both positive peace and wellbeing, and the frequent need to balance different dimensions of each of them, some societies may choose to pursue negative peace at the expense of wellbeing. Hence peace may be a camouflage for pervasive misery.

A third connection between peace and wellbeing is that, in an idealistic scenario where both negative and positive peace are realised, the distinction between peace and wellbeing would disintegrate, as peace would actually be wellbeing. This is the implication of Galtung's definition of peace as the equalisation of actual somatic and

mental realisation with their potential realisation. According to Galtung (2018), the potential can be defined in terms of what human civilisation in a given age is able to realise; any deviation from this potential is the result of inequality. There is a notable overlap between peace and wellbeing in this holistic understanding of peace. Admittedly, while the physical aspect of realisation of peace is clear, Galtung does not clarify which areas of the gap between actual and potential mental realisation should be considered. The literature on wellbeing, on the other hand, identifies these areas. Most of the definitions of peace reviewed above approach peace as more than the mere absence of violence, and do incorporate some elements of wellbeing into their understanding of it. Be it Wallensteen's (2015) idea of secure enjoyment of life and dignity, Melander's idea of respect for the adversary's life, consensual decision-making and equality value, or Davenport's idea of mutuality between actors (Davenport, Melander & Regan 2018), they all include some element of wellbeing or conditions essential for wellbeing. When there is peace of these types, wellbeing is significantly enhanced.

In this fourth sense, wellbeing is considered as a lens to reconstitute the conception of peace, and peace as the lens through which wellbeing may be reconceived. Weaknesses and strengths in the literature on peace and wellbeing do indeed indicate the need for such mutual reorientation. Three factors are worth mentioning in this regard. First, the literature on wellbeing only indicates what to consider to enhance wellbeing, and which areas to target to overcome illbeing – it is not clear what achievable wellbeing in a given context is. The possibility of conflict among various goals constituting wellbeing is not often the focus of attention. In this regard, the positive peace literature has a clear formula for determining what is realisable: at the global level the potential is human civilisation's highest-ever achievement in various dimensions of human wellbeing, with which other actual achievement can be compared. On the other hand, the deficit in the positive peace literature in regard to identifying those elements of mental realisation necessary to make judgements of violence and its level, can be enriched by the literature on wellbeing which, as noted above, identifies a number of domains.

Second, scholars of wellbeing talk about inequality of wellbeing, which the positive peace conception of Galtung rejects, equating inequality with violence. This conception attributes the disparity between actual and potential peace to inequality, and considers this inequality to be a form of violence. In this sense, the social justice agenda of Galtung's positive peace is maximalist in the value it seeks to realise, whereas the wellbeing literature is informed by a strong dose of pragmatism and empiricism, aiming to first overcome known sources of illbeing, while acknowledging progress and lags in this regard. That said, the recent literature on the notion of quality peace (Davenport, Melander & Regan 2018; Joshi & Wallensteen 2018; Wallensteen 2015) recognises hierarchies of peace whereby society could be viewed as more or less peaceful. However, even when such an attempt is made, the peace literature does not tend to give sufficient attention to subjective assessment of a sense of security in the conceptualisation of peace. The literature on wellbeing has something to add to this omission.

Third, the discourse on peace is influence-centred, and therefore highlights the interaction between individuals inhabiting a given structural and interactional space.

Galtung is explicit on this when he argues that ‘*violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations*’ (Galtung 2018: 36, emphasis added). He approaches violence as the cause of the disparity between actual and potential realisation of human wellbeing, and therefore is cognisant of the human and structural impediments to peace. Along this line, for instance, indicators developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace to measure positive peace identify a range of political, economic and social measures of positive peace, including well-functioning government, a sound business environment, less corruption, equitable resource distribution, good relations with neighbours, high levels of human capital, acceptance of the rights of others and free flow of information (IEP 2022).

The dominant literature on wellbeing, on the other hand, approaches wellbeing as qualities or states of individuals and not as something inherent in a relationship. While the literature discusses the notion of social capital as a component of wellbeing, it views this social capital in terms of its effect on individual doing and being, ultimately reducing wellbeing to a quality or feature that can be acquired by individuals (Atkinson 2013). In this view, peace helps to reconceive wellbeing, and wellbeing can be used to reconfigure peace. Indeed, the literature on wellbeing shows a recent shift in emphasis to the contextual and relational nature of wellbeing, thereby acknowledging aspects of it previously indicated by the peace literature. Sarah Atkinson, for instance, argues that wellbeing should be reconceptualised as ‘complex assemblages of relations not only between people, but also between people and places, material objects and less material constituents of places including atmosphere, histories and values’ (Atkinson 2013: 142).

Finally, if one relies on definitions of peace that highlight the concept’s context-sensitive nature, it is possible to argue that a linkage between peace and wellbeing may be different from society to society and from culture to culture. When subjective wellbeing and vision of peace differ from society to society, the linkage between the two is presumed to be mediated by the context. Indeed, the data presented later in this chapter tend to confirm this.

An integrative view of peace, wellbeing and the state from a practical perspective

The merit of this potential cross-fertilisation of discourses on peace and wellbeing, enabling mutual reorientation and learning through alternating conceptual lenses, would be the foregrounding of some factors essential for both peace and wellbeing. One such factor is the state. The state, as an essential actor emerging from, reflecting and potentially transforming the nature and dynamics of peace and wellbeing, would be essentially recentred, in this integrative view. As a human construct, the state cannot simply be approached as an external determinant of wellbeing, a role which the literature on wellbeing seems inclined to accept. Rather, it is the complex interactions among individuals and their institutions that shape the state and individual progress. Restricted to individual qualities, the notion of wellbeing lacks the conceptual apparatus to capture this holistic order, tending rather to judge whether this order is welfare-enhancing or

not. The peace literature, on the other hand, as reflected in the discussion of positive peace above, can characterise this order as more or less peaceful.

This call for integration of the peace–wellbeing–state problematic may also be formulated from a practical perspective: the way people approach these issues and the relationships between them in their daily life may entail an integrated conception of peace and wellbeing. Theories of wellbeing, peace and the state are often propounded in regard to individuals, and by using surveys and data mining to examine how they themselves approach their circumstances one can gain significant insights into whether and how peace and wellbeing need to be integrated, and the role of the state therein. Language used in an everyday setting does indeed express how people understand the notions of peace and wellbeing; it also shows how they approach the relations between the two on the one hand, and the role of the state on the other. The discourses on peace and wellbeing, and on the role of the state in advancing them, encapsulate the shared meanings ascribed to them by society, and thus offer evidence of how the peace–wellbeing–state problematic is actually approached by ordinary people. To the extent that efforts to achieve both peace and wellbeing are underpinned by the same goals and values of realising social progress and overcoming critical obstacles to it, reflecting on how people approach the two notions in ordinary encounters with each other would make an important contribution to our understanding of how the peace and wellbeing agenda might need to be pursued. In applied research, academic concepts and discourses should somehow reflect the ways in which people actually make sense of their lives; to achieve this, an analysis is recommended of the opinions and language games (see Wittgenstein 1953) of individuals in a social setting.

Youth as a specific category

The next section of this chapter explores whether that which emerges from the empirical evidence based on data mining and online opinion surveys in South Africa and Nigeria, in the context of Covid and post-Covid experiences, offers further insight into the peace–wellbeing–state problematic. In doing so, the section considers youth as a specific category of society who are often seen as having distinctive concerns of wellbeing and especially complex relations with peace and violence. Some accounts from the global north indeed indicate that the youth have tended to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic. A survey conducted in the UK, for example, indicates that the economic and wellbeing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affected the youth, due to its substantial effect on labour displacement and disruption of social activities (Daly & Delaney 2022). According to Annette Bauer (2022), this was a continuation of the already existing trend of a higher proportion of young people than older people expressing low satisfaction with life. Nicole Goldin, Payal Patel and Katherine Perry, who developed indicators of youth wellbeing, also indicate that youth often have fewer economic opportunities and achieve fewer wellbeing outcomes than adults, even in countries with higher overall wellbeing. They are three to four times more likely to be unemployed than adults, and the growing level of youth dissatisfaction is, at times, unrelated to their level of economic prosperity (Goldin, Patel & Perry 2014).

These findings, together with the perception that the period of youth is an especially vulnerable life stage, with adverse effects of illbeing during this time not only lingering for generations, but also generating many violent and disruptive sociopolitical relations, have at times led to ‘policy panic’ about violence in relation to the youth (Ismail & Olonisakin 2021). Stylised facts and simplistic narratives have been propounded about how a youth bulge – in the context of unemployment, limited economic opportunities and availability of lootable resources – leads many African states into violence, an argument that has also been widely welcomed in the policy world (Ismail & Olonisakin 2021). However, emerging studies and observations not only highlight the complex relations between youth and violence – often mediated by ‘the social agency of youth [their rationalities of thought and action] and the power context of society’ (Ismail & Olonisakin 2021: 379) – but also underscore the peace-building and socially transformative roles of youth in Africa and beyond (Bangura 2022). These observations, therefore, point to the need to foreground the agendas and politics of the youth that are often ‘contrary to or significantly at odds with dominant accounts of who “youth” are, what is happening now, and where we are heading’ (Bessant 2021: 533).

Using these observations as points of departure, this chapter approaches the issue of peace and wellbeing from the perspective of youth in Africa. The survey and online data mining ask these questions: How is the notion of peace being used in ordinary social media conversations? What meaning of peace is envisioned in these conversations? What kinds of discursive acts are performed by the term ‘peace’? What patterns of conception of peace and wellbeing (and linkages between the two) are apparent in participants’ responses to the survey questions? How dynamic or static are these opinions when seen in the light of one of the most catastrophic health emergencies of the twenty-first century? What pattern of variation is discernible in the opinion survey and data-mining results?

Methods of data collection: Data mining and online survey

The countries selected for research were South Africa and Nigeria, and the focus of the data mining was Twitter users. Twitter was the social media platform of choice for two reasons: First, because it allows researchers Application Programming Interface (API) access to their collections without the limitation that is placed on other regular accounts; and second, because of the characteristics of Twitter posts, especially their bounded brevity. In November 2017, Twitter doubled its original 140-character limit to a maximum of 280 characters.¹ A study conducted by Kokil Jaidka, Alvin Zhou and Yphtach Lelkes shows that this singular feature led to less uncivil, more polite and more constructive discussions online (Jaidka, Zhou & Lelkes 2019). This character limit guaranteed some level of certitude and exactness in the use of words and expressions, unlike the forms of expression found on other social media without such features; this made the analysis of content, discourse and narrative easier. These factors therefore made Twitter suitable for our purpose.

Since most Twitter users do not always activate the location features of their devices when posting tweets, it was difficult to ascertain the geospecificity of their posts and thus get geolocated data on peace from Twitter users in the selected countries. We navigated the problem by using the search query terms ‘peace AND “South Africa”’ and ‘peace AND “Nigeria”’ separately. We mined the data from 1 January 2020 to 30 June 2022, to coincide with the period when Covid-19 was declared a public health emergency of international concern by the WHO (2020). We were able to collect a total corpus of 252 480 tweets in all (South Africa, $n = 26\ 838$; Nigeria, $n = 225\ 642$).

Given the volume of tweets mined, it was impracticable to analyse and derive meaningful insights from the entire corpus. To this end, we adopted a simple random sampling technique to draw out representative tweets. Findings by Hwalbin Kim et al. (2018) suggest that a simple random sample is necessary to produce ‘a sufficient sample size when analyzing social media content’ (Kim et al. 2018). This sampling approach led to a sample collection ($n = 379$) drawn for South Africa, and another ($n = 383$) drawn for Nigeria. These two different subsets of tweets were used for the content-context analysis.

Since data mined from social media are historical, we sought to balance this by including an online survey conducted on Facebook, thus counteracting the disadvantage of one method with its alternative. The added benefits of this approach were to control for bots in the mined data, and to enable us to compare historical and more recent data gathered. We set up the online survey using the Survey for Pages App to control for bots, and we configured the form to restrict it to one entry per participant. We used Facebook to disseminate the content, but in order to exclude bias we did not offer any incentive for responses. We received responses from Kenya (47.3%), South Africa (23%), Nigeria (12.2%), Zimbabwe (4.1%) and 8 other African countries. Apart from undertaking a general analysis of the responses to the Facebook survey, we narrowed our focus to Nigeria and South Africa. The responses were across different age cohorts: 16–25 years (28.4%), 26–35 years (45.9%), 36–45 years (21.6%), and 46 years and above (4.1%). This brought the youth (16–35) participation to 74.3% of the total.

The choice of Nigeria as a comparative country case study to South Africa was motivated by both platform demography and language. According to a 2022 report by Hootsuite’s Data Reportal cited by Twitter, South Africa has the highest number of Twitter users in Africa (9.3 million), followed by Egypt (5.15 million) and Nigeria (3.05 million).² Since Nigeria and South Africa are both anglophone countries and are of similar economic and political status in Africa, this provides some basis for comparison. Although, according to Hootsuite’s Data Reportal, Kenya has the fifth-highest number of Twitter users, and it is also an anglophone country, for purposes of convenience, we opted for Nigeria and South Africa.

More Kenyans completed the online survey than respondents from any other country, but this was not enough justification to suggest that Kenya has more social media users than the other countries with fewer respondents. We used the Facebook account of the African Leadership Centre, whose headquarters are in Nairobi, to conduct the online survey, and this might account for the higher representation of Kenyan

respondents. In future studies, we plan to include more countries across the different regions of Africa in the data collection process, to increase the analytical scope and quality of the research.

Content-context analysis

The subset tweets for South Africa and Nigeria were subjected to a manual coding process by three independent coders. Where disagreement arose over a thematic code ($n = 12$), and context ($n = 12$), we discussed and resolved the contending issues.

We recognised that themes or concepts do not exist in isolation, and to make sense of whatever thematic codes or categories we might extract from the subcorpus of tweets for the different countries, we had to place each code in context. For instance, ‘*Rest in Peace, South Africa*’ and ‘*Rest in Peace Archbishop Desmond Tutu – BBC*’ express both *condolence* and *peace*, and might be framed or coded accordingly. Without identifying the context, an observer looking at only the code might be misled into assuming that the two discourse statements were similar. However, the former conveys *peace* as *condolence* in the context of the *state*, while the latter communicates *peace* in the context of *news*. Tables 16.1 and 16.2 present descriptions and samples of the thematic codes and contextual categories we used for our analysis.

Peace discourse: Nigeria

The leading thematic codes for the Nigerian subcorpus (Figure 16.1) are *tranquillity* ($n = 95$), *wellbeing* ($n = 78$), *condolence* ($n = 60$) and *stability* ($n = 46$). This shows that *peace* is constructed and understood largely in relation to calmness, absence of conflict or violence, and wellbeing (prosperity and health). It is also used to console the bereaved, as well as to express a concern for political stability. Figure 16.2 shows the contexts of the thematic codes used in the Nigerian subcorpus. When *peace* is used to express *tranquillity*, it is used mainly within the discursive contexts of the *state* (*government*), *politics*, *reflection*, *prayer* and *curse*. *Peace* as *wellbeing*, on the other hand, is used mainly within the contexts of *state* and *politics*. These two contexts dominate the discursive range in Figure 16.2. An example of *peace* used in the *state* context is this tweet:

Vice President Yemi Osinbajo on Sunday said God has a promise for Nigeria. The VP expressed confidence that the country will become an oasis of peace, security and prosperity in Africa and beyond. [@omololaakinyem1 26/04/2021 10:25] – Thematic code: wellbeing; Context: state

Table 16.1 Descriptions and samples of thematic codes

Theme	Description	Sample tweet
Condolence	An expression of sympathy towards someone who is suffering the death of a loved one.	<i>Rest In Peace to Denis Goldberg. One of the few white people who were against apartheid South Africa</i>
Tranquillity	It is a state of being calm, restful, devoid of conflict.	<i>Ya Rabb Forgive us and restore peace back to Nigeria...</i> 🤲
Descriptor	A word used to describe a state of being.	<i>Face of Alagbaka Area, Akure this morning. We come in peace! We stand for a New Nigeria! #EndPoliceBrutalityinNigeriaNOW</i>
Wellbeing	A state of being comfortable, secure, healthy, protected, happy, or fortunate.	<i>People of South Africa must wake up and throw out hatred of others. Love one another, it brings peace and happiness.</i>
Appellation	A designation, title, epithet or honorific.	<i>SA vs IND: Players Observe Moment of Silence in Honour of Desmond Tutu: Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa's Nobel Peace Prize</i>
Stability	A state of being steady, reliable, sturdy or firm.	<i>Alleged Extremist group murders a Zimbabwean, South African officials urge for peace Situation in South Africa has turned violent in recent days as the threat extremist or vigilante groups poses in the country</i>
Harmony	A state of togetherness, consensus, cooperation, unity or kinship.	<i>How can you ease something which is thousands away while South Africa is not at peace, tension between races</i>
Salutation	A word or an expression of greeting, obeisance or homage.	<i>Peace unto the women and children across the globe 🤲 @ South Africa</i>
Reconciliation	A reunion, a propitiation, a restoration of friendly relations.	<i>Another lesson of peace and reconciliation! This time not from far away land, South Africa; but from our neighbor, Kenya! God help our motherland, Ethiopia to teach its children, the political elites how to reconcile, apologise, forgive & forget! 🤲</i>
Religion	An expression related to sacred, religious issues or creed.	<i>Religion of Peace again. 30 Killed in Northeast Nigeria Bomb Blast on Crowded Bridge</i>
Sarcasm	A word used to express irony, mockery, joke or satire.	<i>please after Omojuwa is done talking about 'Political activism in Nigeria' on your platform, can you do Nigerians a favour by inviting Abubakar Shekau to talk about 'Peace and religious tolerance in Nigeria?' Since we are a joke to you</i>
Resignation	A forbearance, stoicism, an acceptance of the inevitable.	<i>Nigeria might be irremediable, I am beginning to make peace with this</i>

Table 16.2 *Descriptions and samples of contextual categories*

Context	Description	Sample tweet
State	Tweet is about government or the country.	<i>Rest in Peace South Africa</i> 🙏🙏🙏
Politics	Tweet is about political campaigns, issues or foreign affairs.	<i>Is this the same Nigeria that spent billions fighting against apartheid regime in South Africa? Is this the same Nigeria that spent billions on peace keeping in Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone? #Dede #Buhari #Bubu</i>
News	Tweet is about news.	<i>Very sad to read this. Archbishop Tutu was part of the fabric of our lives. His work for peace was trojan. Few people change the world. He did. Rest in peace. BBC News – Desmond Tutu: South Africa anti-apartheid hero dies aged 90</i>
Reflection	Tweet is about personal thoughts, observations expressed by the user.	<i>They are scared of it here developing countries coming to bring peace to Nigeria to help kick them from their seat, that is why they prefer their people being non-educated and always feeding from their leftovers. For fear of their people revolting against them</i>
Exhortation	Tweet suggesting admonishment, encouragements or persuasion.	<i>Family matters! Let go of past hurts & as far as it depends on you live at peace with everyone! #Inspire #Connect #Empower @ Pretoria, South Africa</i>
Service	Tweet about advertisement or in recognition of a service or commitment.	<i>Nigeria will arrive with Air Peace Airplane ✈️</i>
Immigration	Tweet about immigrants and immigration policy.	<i>Love, caring, peace and happiness. The agenda of Zimbabwe has failed. It failed the overwhelming majority of the Zimbabweans which is why they are in South Africa. I agree that they must go home with the agenda that Zimbabwe must be the Province of SA.</i>
Prayer	Tweet expresses prayers.	<i>Cheers and peace be upon me and upon you at The Guardian Newspaper Nigeria</i>
Sport	Tweet relates to sport, sporting events or clubs.	<i>Sundowns to lose with 3-2 today so we can have peace in south Africa</i>
Curse	Tweet invoking curse, imprecation or malediction.	<i>A new Nigeria must emerge! May those involve in these never see peace for the rest of their lives.</i>
Virality	Tweet is related to hash-tagged events or is made to circulate widely.	<i>Dear @realDonaldTrump @POTUS @RandPaul @SenRonJohnson On behalf of Nigerians, I plead with you to use your influence to stop this massacre going on in Nigeria as am speaking. While on earth will you shoot Protesters who were just seeking peace. #EndSARS #EndSARSImmediately</i>

Figure 16.1 Frequency of thematic codes for peace in the Nigerian subcorpus

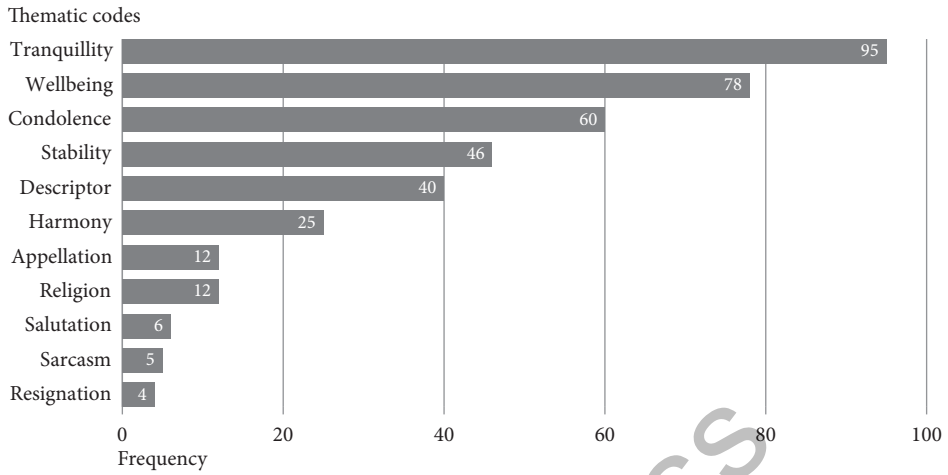
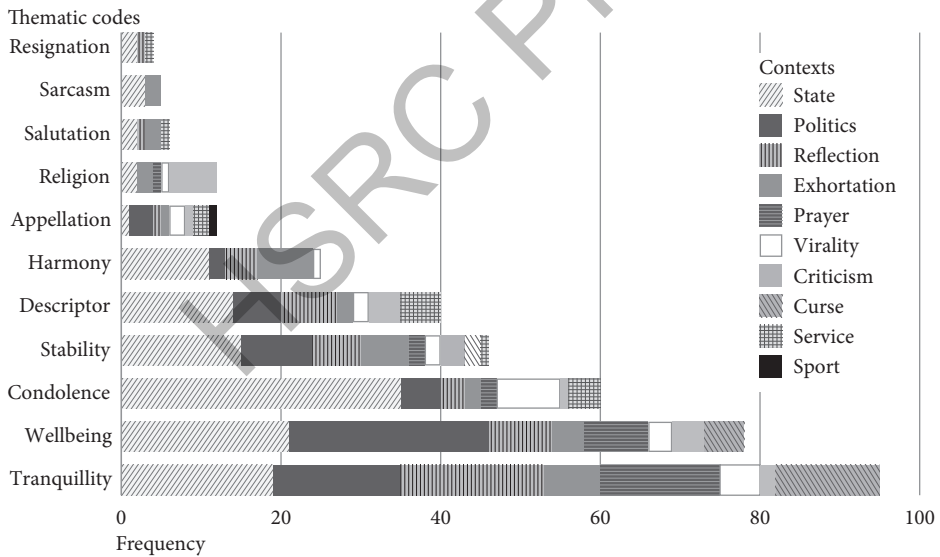


Figure 16.2 Horizontal stacked bar chart of peace thematic codes in the Nigerian subcorpus, by context



Peace discourse: South Africa

In the South Africa subcorpus, the leading thematic codes are *condolence* ($n = 71$), *tranquillity* ($n = 71$), *descriptor* ($n = 65$) and *wellbeing* ($n = 61$) (Figure 16.3). *Peace* as *condolence* and *tranquillity* dominate this subcorpus, partly because of the demise of Archbishop Desmond Tutu during this period, leading to messages being sent from

Figure 16.3 Frequency of thematic codes for peace in the South African subcorpus

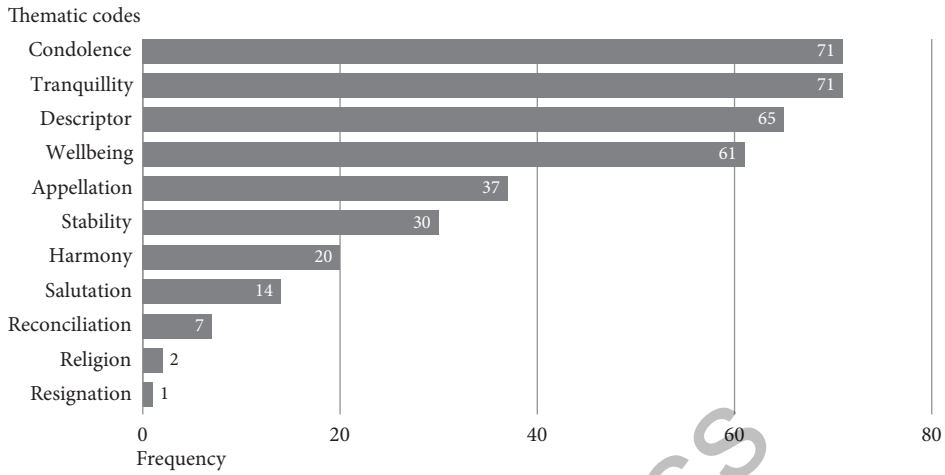
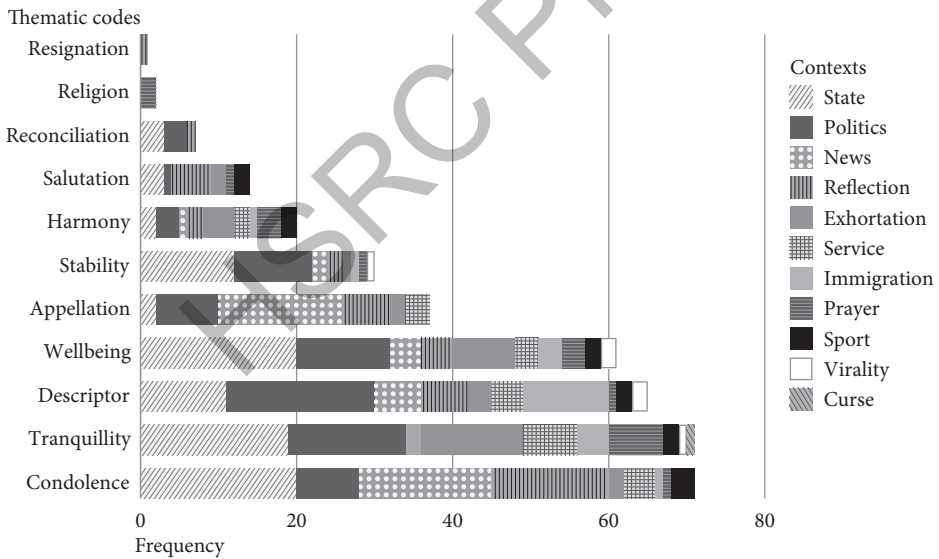


Figure 16.4 Horizontal stacked bar chart of peace thematic codes in the South African subcorpus in context



around the world. This could have greatly impacted the thematic representation. The predominance of this theme is more striking since the analysis of discursive contexts (Figure 16.4) shows that these messages were written against the interpretive backdrops of *state*, *politics*, *news* and *reflection*. In South Africa, *peace* is used more frequently in the context of *sport* across the four dominant categories than in Nigeria. It is also used more frequently across the thematic codes in the context of *reflection* than in Nigeria.

Peace discourse in South Africa is personal narration of the user's opinion, whereas in Nigeria, *peace* is used more frequently in relation to the *state*. There is more calling out of the government, mention of the *state* and interrogation of political leadership in Twitter discussions of *peace* in Nigeria than in South Africa. The term *peace* is used more frequently in relation to *prayers* and *curses* in the Nigerian subcorpus than in the South African subcorpus. This can be interpreted as Twitter users engaging political leadership more frequently in Nigeria, as in this example:

Until you drop what belongs to the masses, you will have no peace. @Nigeria. [@kingVetDoc 26/10/2020 23:09] – Thematic code: tranquillity; Context: curse

Peace as a vernacular and an academic concept

The results of this data mining can be juxtaposed with the way scholars use the concept of peace. According to the review by Davenport, Melander and Regan (2018) discussed earlier in this chapter, at the centre of all definitions of peace is the idea that peace entails the absence of violence, with different scholars adding other relevant elements to this core idea, including harmony, order, justice, trust, reconciliation, social integration and human rights. Figure 16.4 shows that, while there is some overlap between the scholarly and daily uses of the word 'peace', there are also some variations in usage. Notions such as stability, tranquillity, harmony and reconciliation tend to be used both in the everyday peace discourse and in the intellectual work of peace scholars. However, in its everyday usage, peace is used to do far more than what it is possible to capture in the scholarly discourse. In its everyday usage, the concept is not necessarily anchored to the idea of absence of violence, which is the lowest common denominator of peace for many peace scholars. Therefore, Milton Rinehart's (1995) observation that there are concepts of peace in society that are not necessarily captured by the scholarly work on peace seems to hold. To this we may add that the language game the word 'peace' is supposed to perform in everyday usage is far more diverse than what it is used to refer to in the scholarly world, including but not limited to expressing condolence, sarcasm, salutation and resignation.

Results of the online survey

The online survey conducted as part of our research sought to explore the conceptions of peace and wellbeing, and the apparent linkage between the two, in participants' responses to the online survey questions, while also assessing whether the experience of Covid-19 had changed their ideas about peace and wellbeing. We also sought to determine whether there were noticeable variations between the survey findings and the data-mining results discussed in the previous section. Of the first 100 participants in the survey, 45% were between 26 and 35 years; 29% were between 16 and 25 years; and 22% were between 36 and 45 years. In addition to the general responses to the question seeking to understand the factors or actors that prevent respondents from

Figure 16.5 Factors or actors that prevent survey participants from feeling at peace (word cloud), South Africa and Nigeria



Table 16.3 Top 20 factors or actors that prevent survey participants from feeling at peace, South Africa and Nigeria

South Africa			Nigeria		
Word or phrase	Count	Relevance*	Word or phrase	Count	Relevance
anxiety	3	1.00	poverty	3	1.00
relationship	3	1.00	health	2	0.57
crime	2	0.57	hunger	2	0.57
unemployment	2	0.57	insecurity	2	0.57
difficult trial	1	0.27	security	2	0.57
lack of money	1	0.27	war	2	0.57
toxic people	1	0.27	compromised security	1	0.27
toxic relationship	1	0.27	lack of love	1	0.27
violent crime	1	0.27	lack of means	1	0.27

Note: * The relevance score is calculated by multiplying the relative term frequency by the inverse document frequency (IDF) score (the measure of the uniqueness of a word). IDF is a weight depicting how commonly a word is used. The higher the prevalence of a word across documents, the lower its IDF score, and, consequently, the diminished significance of the word.

$$IDF = \log \frac{N}{DF_t}$$

In this context, 'N' represents the overall count of documents in a text collection, 'DFt' corresponds to the number of documents that include the term 't', and 't' denotes any word within the vocabulary.

feeling at peace, namely, 'What factors or actors prevent you from feeling at peace? Please list them', as shown in Figure 16.5 and Table 16.3, the analysis presented below captures the perspectives of participants from South Africa and Nigeria, who constituted a third of the survey participants.

South African respondents emphasised anxiety, stress and unemployment as the key factors that prevented them from feeling at peace, while Nigerian respondents identified compromised security, bad governance, health, social inequality, war and discrimination as the key factors. This variation is understandable, given that people define peace in

relation to what concerns them most. Many studies of local and everyday peace do indeed highlight that what peace is, and what can be taken as its indicators, is generally defined in the light of the everyday experiences and priorities of communities. Drawing on her experience in Uganda and Colombia, Pamina Firchow, for instance, argues that ‘everyday indicators of peace are directly correlated with everyday aspirations and needs of communities’ (Firchow 2018: 120). While communities in Uganda identified economic development and infrastructure-related factors as determinants of peace, communities in Colombia tended to focus more on social relationships, conflict resolution and reconciliation. Likewise, Sara Hellmüller’s (2013) study of the Democratic Republic of the Congo highlights the fact that local and international actors identify different causes of conflict, and therefore suggest different solutions.

In response to the question ‘Has your idea of being at peace changed because of Covid? If yes, could you explain what has changed?’, 65% of the South African respondents ($n = 17$) agreed that their idea of being at peace had changed because of Covid-19, while 35% indicated no change in how they understood being at peace. Of the Nigerian respondents ($n = 13$), 46% agreed and 54% disagreed. The key explanations provided by South Africans whose idea of peace had changed were hindrance to basic lifestyle choices, effect of Covid-19 on jobs, inability to fulfil their dreams, and the direct impact of the pandemic. In Nigeria, the key reasons provided for the respondents’ changed idea of peace were general lifestyle change, change in the economy, fear and increased poverty. Interestingly, some of the Nigerian respondents who did not see a change in their idea of peace also provided reasons for this, including persistent issues such as the state of the economy, banditry, herdsman–farmer conflict, and jobs – all of which pre-dated the pandemic.

In response to the question ‘Has your idea of wellbeing changed because of Covid? If yes, in what ways has it changed?’, 59% of South African respondents ($n = 17$) answered yes, and 41% said there had been no change in their idea of wellbeing. Of the Nigerian respondents ($n = 11$), 64% agreed and 36% disagreed. In explaining how their idea of wellbeing had changed, South Africans highlighted the loss of jobs, salary changes, mental wellness, rising costs and vaccines as key factors. In contrast, Nigerians highlighted levels of kindness and humility as the key changes. In explaining how their idea of wellbeing had changed, South Africans highlighted loss of jobs, salary changes, mental wellness, rising costs and vaccines as key factors, while Nigerians highlighted levels of kindness and humility as the key changes.

Returning to the issue of youth as a distinct category requiring attention, we asked respondents: ‘Do you think the youth have a different idea of wellbeing? If yes, could you explain what is different in the youth’s idea of wellbeing?’ Just under half the respondents (45.8%) agreed that youth have a different idea of wellbeing, while 54.2% did not think so. South Africans who responded in the affirmative emphasised youth mental health and wellbeing, job security and being part of the category ‘youth’ as the central features of the difference. Nigerian respondents identified education, life challenges, jobs, the state, youth and ‘pain’ as key markers of the difference in the youth’s idea of wellbeing.

Still on the question of youth, we asked respondents: ‘Do you think that the interests of the youth are effectively defended by the state?’ There was a marked difference in responses to this question between South African and Nigerian respondents. Of the South African respondents ($n = 17$), 71% did not believe that the state defends youth interests effectively, while 29% thought that the state does do so. On the other hand, only 42% of the Nigerian respondents ($n = 13$) agreed that the state defends youth interests effectively, with 58% thinking that it does not do so.

Peace, wellbeing and the state: Discussion of the data mining and survey results and their implications

The results of both the data mining and the online survey presented above, and the wider literature on the local turn in peace-building, generally support the position advanced in the conceptual discussion in this chapter. Social media users and online respondents tend to use the term ‘peace’ to refer to a range of states or relationships, some of which overlap with their expressed perceptions of wellbeing. These uses of the term range from the avoidance of violence of various sorts, to acceptance of what is intolerable, to a life-enriching harmony, and point towards the discussion on how different approaches to peace mediate the relationship between peace and wellbeing. Answers to the question ‘What prevents you from being at peace?’ also point to the observation, noted earlier, that threats to peace and threats to wellbeing could indeed overlap and mutually reinforce each other. The answers cover wide-ranging issues, including poverty, war and conflict, relationship issues, sickness, unemployment, problems of governance, hunger, and anxiety and stress. Hence, the factors that undermine peace are the same factors that undermine wellbeing.

In addition, the responses are strongly influenced by state-level factors that affect how people experience these threats to peace and wellbeing. Survey respondents in South Africa tend to identify economic and personal challenges as factors that prevent them from being at peace, whereas those in Nigeria tend to identify macro- and meso-level factors associated with the state and governance. For the South African survey respondents, challenges related to finding employment, managing stress and anxiety, and other personal challenges tend to be the main threat to their sense of peace, whereas in Nigeria threats emanating from war, social injustice and inequality tend to be perceived as the main threat to respondents’ sense of peace. The results point to the influence of societal and country contexts on both the conception of what peace is and the understanding of what is threatening the peace of respondents. Therefore, the recent shift towards contextual sensitivities in the pursuit of peace and wellbeing is a move in the right direction.

The findings of the online survey confirm the conclusions reached through the analysis of the social media (Twitter) data. State-level factors tend to have a strong influence on achievement of a sense of peace and comfort at a personal level. Generally, the results of both the social media data mining and the online survey indicate that people use the word ‘peace’ in line with both the negative and positive peace traditions. Peace and

wellbeing can thus be approached as both overlapping and separate, depending on the conception of peace one has in mind. The most common normative orientation in the use of the word 'peace' seems to be 'something valued', which is reflected in its use on social media, for example, in prayers that peace may prevail, to express condolence that somebody may rest in peace, to curse somebody by hoping that they may be deprived of peace. That said, there are also instances in which the use of the word 'peace' supports the notion that 'peace' is a camouflage for illbeing, for instance, in the tweet 'Nigeria might be irremediable, I am beginning to make peace with this.'

Another observation that emerges from the online survey is that peace and wellbeing are determined not only by country circumstance, but also by episodic yet critical events such as the Covid-19 pandemic. More than two-thirds of the respondents to the online survey indeed indicated that their sense of peace and wellbeing was influenced by the pandemic. The pandemic seems to have affected the life of respondents in South Africa and Nigeria in a more or less similar way. The lifestyle changes in both countries were probably related to lockdown measures, such as having to wear masks and work from home. In addition, the economic effects seem to have been felt intensely by communities in both Nigeria and South Africa: the pandemic seems to have caused loss of jobs, generated an increase in the prices of goods, and increased poverty in both countries. However, while residents of both countries experienced hardship as a result of the pandemic, in the case of Nigeria this was surpassed by worries relating to war, governance problems and social injustice. The responses of South Africans to the factors that undermined their sense of peace tended to overlap with those problems they identified as having been generated by the pandemic. There was less overlap in the case of Nigeria, which indicates the existence of other pressing issues.

On the question of whether the concept of wellbeing held by youth differs from that of adults, of the South African respondents ($n = 17$), 65% affirmed that it does, while 35% claimed there is no difference between youth and adults regarding this concept. In Nigeria ($n = 13$), 54% of respondents affirmed that there is a difference, while 46% said there is no difference. This is surprising, given the dominant scholarly and policy discourse affirming not only that the youth are disproportionately affected by factors that undermine wellbeing, but that their wellbeing concerns are distinctive to the extent that they must be measured separately. As discussed in the first part of this chapter, the youth wellbeing index developed by different agencies is inspired by this consideration. Those who argue that youth wellbeing is essentially different to adult wellbeing tend to name vague reasons for this, such as their youth status, mental health concerns and educational concerns.

In both Nigeria and South Africa, most of the respondents thought that the state is not focused on advancing the interests of the youth, which generally reflects the level of legitimacy of these states: since youth constitute a demographic majority in both states, a legitimate state in the view of the youth would be expected to have high legitimacy. Somewhat surprisingly, the proportion of South Africans who believed that the state does not serve the interests of the youth (68.8%) was higher than the proportion of Nigerians who thought so (55.6%). This is ironic, given that more

Nigerian respondents identified state- and governance-related issues as a threat to their peace and wellbeing than was the case for South Africans.³ Because of this, one should qualify the earlier assertion that integrating peace and wellbeing essentially calls forth the state as a responsible agent: this varies from country to country, and in our case, is more applicable to Nigeria than to South Africa.

In concluding this chapter, three key factors are worth noting. The first is that there is some observable conceptual convergence between peace and wellbeing, as highlighted earlier, creating practical linkages of peace with people's everyday experiences of wellbeing or illbeing in the context of the states where they are located.

Second, notwithstanding these conceptual and practical linkages, South Africans' and Nigerians' different perceptions and experiences of peace and wellbeing shed further light on, add nuance to, and pique further interest in the linkages between peace, wellbeing and the state in Africa. The absence of both positive and negative peace, associated with challenges facing the state in Nigeria, is clearly connected to the absence of a sense of wellbeing. In South Africa, where responses indicate a semblance of negative peace, the question arises whether other aspects of wellbeing are being undermined in a context where the state is not overtly managing, or responding to, situations of direct violence.

Finally, the question of whether the concept of wellbeing held by youth differs from that of adults requires further research, because, notwithstanding use of a sample for the present study in which nearly 75% of respondents were under the age of 35, the limited sample size makes it difficult to draw any clear conclusions from this finding.

Overall, this chapter has sought to contribute to the bringing together of literature on peace and wellbeing, while establishing linkages between them both conceptually and practically, through the perspectives of people who encounter challenges to peace and wellbeing in their daily life. In general, the data mining together with the online survey, as limited as the latter is, support the effort to integrate notions of peace and wellbeing apparent in scholarly and policy worlds.

Notes

- 1 As of January 2022, Twitter's standard API rate limits restricted a regular user token to a maximum of 900 requests within a 15-minute window. The number of tweets the regular user could retrieve with each request might vary; typically up to 200 tweets were allowed. This was contingent upon the specific endpoint and the type of data to be retrieved. Researchers were granted an elevated access level via the Twitter Developer Program to collect more data. These terms changed with the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk in October 2022. The cost of access now ranges between \$100 and \$40 000 per month. See <https://rb.gy/bnzvax>, accessed October, 2023; <https://rebrand.ly/i33qjmz>, accessed November 2023.
- 2 See <https://twitter.com/AfricaFactsZone/status/1504549844169469963?lang=en>, accessed August 2023.

- 3 The Nigerian state is afflicted by multifaceted crises, including terrorism, insurgency, farmer–herder conflict, climate change-related challenges and corruption. Nigerian respondents identified these issues as threats to their wellbeing, and since these are issues that need to be addressed by the state, their existence signifies the state’s failure and therefore its illegitimacy.

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