



Beyond GDP Measures and the Link with Natural Assets Accounting: the ISTAT Experience

Fabiola Riccardini¹

Abstract

The measures of “progress” try to identify what really count for people and planet wellbeing. With this aim the United Nations, after the Pact for the Future (2024), has pushed forward for a framework of indicators that can complement GDP as the world’s primary yardstick of progress. The UN High Level Expert Group (HLEG) beyond GDP has published recently the most significant international assessment of progress measurement in a generation. The National Statistical Authorities should embrace the recommendations stated in the Report. Many other International Organizations follow this process, such as OECD, UNECE, UNCTAD. In the HLEG framework different dimensions are conceived: environmental, social, economic and governance with a capabilities-based framework (Sen’s capabilities approach) and coherent with Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Report Recommendations. The presentation will focus on the idea that “the wellbeing of people mostly depends on healthy ecosystems and humanity’s future is at risk if the extinction crisis isn’t addressed”. In another words, it is important to consider the intrinsic value of the planet and its environment, as well as the environment as critical determinant of human wellbeing. The intrinsic value of the environment strengthens the case for protecting the planet even when there are no apparent immediate economic benefit of doing so. The environment also sets the boundaries within which humanity can thrive, including through climate stability, biodiversity, fertile soil and clean water. Therefore, it is crucial to select appropriate measures for the environmental dimensions of wellbeing, which is a multidimensional concept. In doing this we should look to strong instead of weak sustainability, because the weak sustainability conceived in the comprehensive wealth accounts (World Bank approach), means that the different forms of capital: natural, human, produced, are in principle substitutable, meaning what human capital or productive capital accumulation can mask ecological degradation or wealth indicators overstate sustainability. In this regards it will be presented what Istat has done until now with the BES and SDGs projects and how the SEEA EA framework could contribute to the beyond GDP measures.

Keywords:

Beyond GDP; wellbeing; environmental sustainability

¹ Istat