

Bridging Psychology with Societal Development Science: Fifty Countries Research into the Relation Between "Folk Theories of Societal Development" and "Ideal Types of Well-being"

All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

—United Nations, *General Assembly Resolution 1514, 1960*

As the quote above indicates, not only do people have the right to growth and self-determination, but, most importantly, they have the right to choose the right *direction* for this development. Where should the modern societies head toward? Scientists and policy-makers discuss the limitations of an approach that links societal development purely with economic growth, especially after the financial crisis that took place in 2008. There is a call for new potential compasses for societal development. What should these directions be? The basic assumption of the planned project is that people across cultures hold substantially different ideals about what constitutes a good life, and how to achieve it. Yet, little is known about how lay people view these directions and what are their ideals about "happy life". The aim of the proposed project is to investigate societal development processes and understand it from culturally sensitive perspective.

In a large cross-cultural scheme (i.e., data collection will cover at least 50 countries), combined with experimental studies and advanced linguistic analyses of qualitative materials, we will uncover folk theories of societal development and ideal types of well-being. We plan to investigate psychological motivations that shape differences in viewing what is the right path for one's society, and cultural models of selfhoods. We will also investigate the consequences of fit between individual and his or her cultural context in viewing these phenomena. Finally, reaching the above aims will be especially relevant in international cooperation with Norway: this country repeatedly occupies top positions in various well-being rankings. This is why we plan to study the influence Nordic history and culture on shaping the ideas of good life in these countries.

To reach these aims, we have designed 6 workpackages and over 20 studies in at least 50 countries. We will integrate cultural psychology, social and personality psychology and social development research and will employ quantitative and qualitative methods to provide the best answer to the research problem.

Our project will result in conceptualizing culturally sensitive models of societal development that will be prepared in an interdisciplinary effort of psychologists and societal development experts. Our findings may become a novel and important contribution to the public and scientific debate on future paradigms of societal development. Such knowledge may be used to inform policy-makers, and country leaders who could include these perspectives into their strategic goals. This approach could allow countries to go beyond economic paradigms of societal development.