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Editorial Note

Attempting to Bring Valuation and Politics Together – The Politics of Valuation Studies at a Series of Sessions in Copenhagen

Claes-Fredrik Helgesson, Monika Krause, and Fabian Muniesa

> Is 'valuation' anything at all? Apart from a strange excuse for doing things in certain ways? 'Valuation Studies' means 'Nothing-at-All Studies'!
>
> – Participant, "The Politics of Valuation", 33rd EGOS Colloquium 2017

Claes-Fredrik Helgesson, Department of Thematic Studies—Technology and Social Change, Linköping University, claes-fredrik.helgesson@liu.se

Monika Krause, Department of Sociology, London School of Economics, m.krause@lse.ac.uk

Fabian Muniesa, Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation, Mines ParisTech, fabian.muniesa@mines-paristech.fr

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The question was duly raised, in a variety of manners, in a recent discussion in Copenhagen on 'the politics of valuation' that turned intermittently into a conversation on 'the politics of valuation studies'.[1] Is it not becoming fashionable, in several academic circles, to frame everything and nothing as 'valuation'? What does this say about the health, or rather the lack thereof, of the endeavours organised around 'valuation studies' as an alleged field, trend or approach? The social sciences appear to be saturated with valuation as a problem, topic, practice, label, and whatnot. Yet, this apparent saturation seems to be aptly justified by the mounting reality of a valuation syndrome in contemporary liberal societies, with all kinds of problems being incessantly presented—and 'solved'—in terms of valuations. Since valuation seems to stand today as the ultimate key to social policies, economic institutions, environmental measures and democratic processes, it probably warrants some form of social-scientific compulsion to perform critical analyses. But the question of the *specificity* of the subject matter remains open.

There has in recent years been a surge of workshops, conference sessions and tracks, special issues, books and calls for papers in which the study of valuation as a social practice operates as duct-tape, leitmotiv, or key driver (for examples of this surge, see Jürgenmeyer and Krenn 2016; Otto and Dalsgaard 2016). This is not the moment and place to submit this intriguing academic reality to anthropological or sociological scrutiny (see Muniesa and Helgesson 2013; Doganova et al. 2014; Boltanski and Esquerre 2015). Yet, the sessions in Copenhagen produced interesting ideas on how an attempt at specifying an angle on valuation in the terms of 'the politics of' valuation also would attend to the reflexive sides of such a process of examination.

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1 The remarks presented in this note are grounded on the presentations and discussions offered by participants to Sub-Theme 28 "The Politics of Valuation" (convened by Claes-Fredrik Helgesson, Monika Krause and Fabian Muniesa), 33rd EGOS Colloquium (European Group for Organization Studies), Copenhagen (Denmark), 4-6 July 2017. We thanks all contributors for their work: Afshin Mehrpouya, Alexandre Mallard, Amalie M. Hauge, Ana Carolina R. Macatangay, Andrea Mennicken, Angèle Christin, Brice Laurent, Brieuc Petit, Daniel Neyland, David Yarrow, Delphine Gibassier, Désirée Waibel, Diane-Laure Arjaliès, Ebba Sjögren, Fabian Muniesa, Frank Meier, Hans Kjellberg, Henrik Bach Mortensen, Hyojung Sun, Ida Schrøder, José Ossandón, Julia Kirch Kirkegaard, Katherine Robinson, Kathia Serrano Velarde, Klaus Lindgaard Høyer, Koray Çalışkan, Liliana Doganova, Linus Johansson Krafve, Liz McFall, Mariam L. Krikorian, Mette Mogensen, Monika Krause, Nicole Gross, Peer C. Fiss, Peter Karnøe, Philip Roscoe, Rita Samiolo, Robert Cluley, Sarah Wadmann, Stefan Schwarzkopf, Stoyan V. Sgourev, Subhadeep Datta, Susi Geiger, Sveta Milyaeva, Thomas Reverdy, Thorsten Peetz, Véra Ehrenstein, Vern L. Glaser. The conference programme is available from the archives of the EGOS website, https://www.egosnet.org/. The hashtag #PoliticsVal was used for live tweeting during the sessions.

The fact that valuation 'entails politics writ large and small' was presented as an opening premise for our conference sessions. This is in one sense a trivial claim: the establishing, negotiating, delineating and ordering of values are intrinsically political. Yet, the untangling of the political articulations of such processes is not trivial. The call for participants therefore stressed the aim to gather empirical and conceptual explorations of the multifaceted politics of valuation, including both the politics in valuation practices and the role of valuation practices in the distribution of different kinds of resources.[2] We explicitly aimed to include contributions using a variety of conceptual and methodological approaches and exploring a variety of empirical settings. Among the questions devised as evocative siren calls were: What different forms of politics are part of and performed by practices of valuation? What can different approaches within social theory and pragmatist studies of valuation practices bring to our appreciation of these multifaceted politics? Are there conceptual gains in the interface between different approaches to the study of valuations?

The assembled contributions visited a broad range of sites, working within several methodological and conceptual approaches. Both economic and non-economic valuations were in focus, as where mundane under-most-radars politics and front-page POLITICS. Although various qualitative methods dominated, there was no sense of methodological unity. The 'politics of' served as a communicational token rather than as a full fledged concept. Nevertheless, it allowed identifying a number of specificities of valuation understood as a political operation.

Technology was the most dominant among the specificities examined. The systems, devices, instruments and infrastructures that underpin various kinds of valuation (rating, pricing, ranking, accounting, funding, and assessing) were deemed 'political' in at least two, partly contrasting senses. One would revolve around the idea of considering technology as the medium for the political control of things: a pricing scheme, a ranking display, a valuation formula or an assessment method are considered as political technologies insofar as their rationale determines the distribution of resources and opportunities. Another kind of specificity identified through 'politics of valuation' was situations of disruption, conflict, dissent and controversy, rather than of control. Here, it made technologies and entailed stakes visible and open to critical consideration. The extent to which these different directions correspond to different political philosophies is patent, although not always examined. There are

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[2] https://www.egosnet.org/jart/prj3/egos/main.jart?rel=de&reserve-mode=active&content-id=1493586858301&subtheme_id=1442568082016 accessed September 29, 2017.

certainly works in which the political is just equated to power, and others in which it is associated with argument and dissent. A central task when developing an agenda for the study of the politics of valuation would be to explore the possibility to fruitfully draw on domains such as democratic theory or political theology for the examination of valuations as political.

But, as we suggested above, the discussion can additionally be about or include the politics of valuation studies itself. There is a widely acknowledged reflexive sense of the political dimension of the method and scope of social-scientific inquiry. Coming back to our claim about how intriguing and disconcerting the culture of 'solving' all kinds of 'problems' in terms of valuation is, one is entitled to ask what alternatives for 'solution' are left out when things get framed in terms of valuation. A potentially pertinent issue here would be to ask how, if at all, valuation studies can problematize this very frame and, to up the stakes further, if it can enable the bringing in of other alternatives.

One possible avenue for working on a politics of valuation studies emerging from the Copenhagen sessions centres on comparison. There was a call both to engage in more comparisons, and to think harder about how they are done in studies of valuations. Can the specificity of a properly political approach to valuation studies reside just there? We do not know. But we do know that comparisons are both an object and a method for valuation studies, as many examples in current research illustrate. How do the sensibilities we can use when studying comparisons translate when we ourselves do comparisons? In the spirit of recent work on comparison (Deville, Guggenheim and Hrdličková 2016a; see also Fox and Gingrick 2002; Scheffer and Niewoehner 2012), one can ask researchers in valuation studies to compare the way they themselves engage in comparison. As pointed out in the tradition of the sociology of science, the business of establishing a 'comparator' with which we could make this more visible is complex (Deville, Guggenheim and Hrdličková 2016b).

As a method, comparison is sometimes mobilised as a tool for denaturalization: that is, as a way to demonstrate how similar things are different in different sites, or how something deemed regular is not when contrasted against something else. Juxtaposing cases is certainly a way to make differences more salient and therefore more politically salient, at least in the reader's mind. The unit of comparison and its characterization—*what* is the saliency about—constitutes a central element in the politics of valuation studies. We note in this respect that research tends to be framed most explicitly as comparative when they take nation-states as a unit of analysis. Partly because of conventions, which treat the unit of comparison as a cause (Krause 2016), cross-national comparisons remind us of the role of the state as a crucial vector around which the politics of valuation crystallize.

The discussion in Copenhagen covered some ways in which the topic of the politics of valuation, primarily considered throughout the discussion as an angle on the political rationale and determination of valuation technologies, meets a more 'traditional' (jurisdictional, territorial) sense of politics. If valuation studies understood as a field has indeed been a "strange excuse for doing things in certain ways", it has at least been an excuse for doing things in *specific* ways, leading scholars to shed light on the role of practices and technologies previously overlooked. Perhaps, though, we can ask about valuation studies, like about any other project, whether in some ways it has been 'a gain in particular and a separation in general'? A perhaps unavoidable (perhaps not) 'increase in power leading only to a progressive increase in impotence'? The sessions in Copenhagen happened to close with a slide with these words from Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, leaving the agenda open for further attempts to bring valuation and politics together in different senses and in different empirical settings.

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Claes-Fredrik Helgesson is co-Editor-in-Chief of *Valuation Studies* and Professor in Technology and Social Change at Linköping University, Sweden. He is co-editor with Isabelle Dussauge and Francis Lee of the volume *Value Practices in the Life Sciences and Medicine* (Oxford University Press, 2015). Helgesson is currently concluding with Francis Lee the research project 'Trials of Value' which explores valuation practices in the context of experimental design in biomedical research.

Monika Krause teaches at the London School of Economics. She is the author of *The Good Project: Humanitarian NGOs and the Fragmentation of Reason* (Chicago University Press, 2014). She is an editor of *Fielding Transnationalism* (Wiley, 2016) (with Julian Go) and of *Social Theory Now* (Chicago University Press, 2017) with Claudio Benzecry and Isaac Reed.

Fabian Muniesa, a researcher at the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation (Mines ParisTech), is part of the editorial board of *Valuation Studies* (co-Editor-in-Chief) and the co-author of *Capitalization: A Cultural Guide* (Presses des Mines, 2017).

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Measuring Welfare beyond GDP – 'Objective' and 'Subjective' Indicators in Sweden, 1968–2015

Christopher Kullenberg and Gustaf Nelhans

Abstract

This article analyses a series of negotiations on how to measure welfare and quality of life in Sweden beyond economic indicators. It departs from a 2015 Government Official Report that advanced a strong recommendation to measure only 'objective indicators' of quality of life, rather than relying on what is referred to as 'subjective indicators' such as life satisfaction and happiness. The assertion of strictly 'objective' indicators falls back on a sociological perspective developed in the 1970s, which conceived of welfare as being measurable as 'levels of living', a framework that came to be called 'the Scandinavian model of welfare research'. However, in the mid-2000s, objective indicators were challenged scientifically by the emerging field of happiness studies, which also found political advocates in Sweden who argued that subjective indicators should become an integral part of measuring welfare. This tension between 'subjective' and 'objective' measurements resulted in a controversy between several actors about what should count as a valuable measurement of welfare. As a consequence, we argue that the creation of such value meters is closely intertwined with how welfare is defined, and by what measures welfare should be carried through.

Key words: measurement; happiness; welfare; valuation; social sciences; value meter

Introduction– The Crisis of Welfare Economics

What is the measurement of welfare in a nation? In contrast to the notion of 'wealth' in classical economics, welfare has been difficult to reduce to a single economic unit such as gross domestic product

Christopher Kullenberg, Dept. of Philosophy, Linguistics & Theory of Science, University of Gothenburg, christopher.kullenberg@gu.se

Gustaf Nelhans, Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS), University of Borås, gustaf.nelhans@hb.se

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(GDP). This complexity, and the lack of agreement upon what counts as welfare and what does not, has resulted in an absence of standardised units or scales that could be used for cross-country comparisons. Even though there have been many proposals of indicators for measuring welfare, the measurement of welfare beyond GDP has often been contested at the national level, and has for the past half-century been the subject of major revisions in most modern states.

In the 1970s, a new approach to measuring welfare was pioneered by the Social Indicators Movement. A new generation of social scientists began questioning GDP and Gross National Product (GNP) as valid measures of welfare, at least when used as exclusive indicators (White 1983; Cobb and Rixford 1998). Instead, the Indicators Movement started defining various self-reported measures of 'subjective'[1] well-being and quality of life, which actually relied on scales that could easily be administered in surveys, such as Hadley Cantril's Self-anchoring striving scale (Cantril 1965) and Norman Bradburn's Affect-balance scale (Bradburn 1969). Even though the notion of subjective measurements as an indicator of a good society and government dates back to at least Jeremy Bentham's late eighteenth-century idea of a 'felicific calculus' (Bentham 1823 [1789]) — an enlightenment vision of a scientific measurement of pleasure and pain that would guide the legitimate governance of a society— subjective measurements were introduced by the Social Indicators Movement in a slightly new key in the 1970s.

In Richard Easterlin's now famous 1974 article (Easterlin 1974), today commonly referred to as the 'Easterlin paradox', and in the works published in the *Social Indicators Research* journal (launched the same year), GNP as a measurement of welfare was thoroughly criticised. The Easterlin paradox would become a recurring question in the emerging field of happiness studies, and it sparked a scholarly debate on the relationship between economic growth and subjective well-being. Easterlin argued that empirical data showed that economic growth only increased happiness up to a certain level. People living in rich countries were in fact happier compared to people living in poor countries; however, within a single rich country, further economic

[1] Throughout this article we will use the notions of 'subjective' and 'objective' measurements of welfare to denote the contrast that social scientists make between on the one hand the subjective experience of satisfaction, happiness, sadness or any other emotional state, and on the other hand the objective, material aspects of everyday life such as housing, child mortality or nutrition. However, the contrast is not always absolutely clear. Phenomena such as health, human freedom and security all have perceived, subjective dimensions simultaneously as they can be operationalised as objective categories. Such grey zones are of special interest to us as they are contested grounds. The notions of 'subjective' and 'objective' are, however, not used here in the conventional epistemological meaning.

growth (measured as GNP) did not seem to cause increased happiness. Instead, Easterlin concluded that 'higher income was not systematically accompanied by greater happiness' (Easterlin 1974: 118).

Easterlin's paradox is not the only critique of purely economic measures of welfare at this time in history. One of Easterlin's contemporaries, Tibor Scitovsky, published the widely disseminated book *The Joyless Economy* in 1976 (Scitovsky 1976), which critiqued the view of a rational consumer in neoclassical economics and showed how American society created hard-working, increasingly consuming, but quite unhappy citizens that did not experience any real improvements in the general standards of welfare.

However, in the 1960s the crisis in welfare economics had already begun, as manifested by the 1961 United Nations' interim guide to define 'levels of living', as a set of indicators for assessing aspects of welfare beyond economical measurement, for example, education, health, nutrition, freedoms and housing (United Nations 1961). This indicator approach broke abruptly with the welfare economics tradition since it downplayed economic measurements as merely being one of several. Instead, it brought forth a set of 'objective' indicators of actual living conditions, combined with indicators that were more difficult to compare between nations, for example, 'human freedoms', which were regarded as varying between cultures.

The indicator approach and the quest for alternative measures of welfare had gained momentum in many countries also outside the United States. Noll and Zapf (1994) summarise the changes in social reporting in post-war Europe as:

> Whereas the Scandinavian countries, Great Britain, the Netherlands, France and the German Federal Republic were among the trendsetters in the establishment and institutionalization official reporting, the Southern European nations were latecomers. The "classics" among social reports— the British "Social Trends", the Dutch "Social and Cultural Report" and the French "Donnés Sociales"— have now [1994] been published regularly for more than two decades. (Noll and Zapf 1994: 5)

The search for the best possible measure of welfare continues to date. Besides economics, a wide range of social sciences has inquired into what welfare is composed of, how it should be measured and what values to bring into it. At the turn of the millennium, the fields of Social Indicators Research along with 'happiness studies' had presented increasing amounts of research on subjective well-being and life satisfaction, as subjective alternatives to the established practice of measuring welfare as consisting of predominantly objective indicators. From the fields of psychology and sociology came proposals for so-called subjective factors to be included as national indexes (see for example, Diener 2000), which in turn relied on a line of research that had emerged over the past four decades (Kullenberg and Nelhans

2015). As we will show, this 'subjective turn' would impact policy in Sweden in 2015, as new measurements of welfare were investigated in a government report commissioned by the Ministry of Finance, which serves as the locus of this article and as entry point into the controversy between subjective and objective indicators of welfare. However, to analyse the role of such measuring devices of welfare, we will consider a few theoretical implications in the study of what is sometimes referred to as 'value meters'.

Theoretical Perspective: The Study of 'Value Meters'

In this article we wish to draw special attention to certain instruments or devices in modern societies that both render society and the economy knowable, simultaneously with their being acted upon in political decisions. We will analyse the negotiations of establishing a measurement of welfare as being performative—in the sense that the act of measurement co-creates the social order that it was designated to describe. In early actor-network theory (ANT), the institutions that performed such measurements were often referred to as 'centers of calculation' (Latour 1987, 1999; see also Czarniawska 2004) that had the double function of producing statistics used for counting and acting upon the social world (Sætnan et al. 2011). More recently, the notion of value meters has been advanced by Latour and Lépinay (Latour and Lépinay 2009, Latour 2013, also called 'valorimeters' in Latour and Callon 1997) to designate devices of calculation that have a different functionality compared to scientific instruments.[2] Whereas scientific instruments create chains of reference in order to reach remote states of affairs,[3] value meters instead designate devices that both measure something and *take action to change* what they measure. They are especially prolific in economic matters, and are often the products of economic research:

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[2] A similar concept is 'market devices', which consist of 'the material and discursive assemblages that intervene in the construction of markets' (Muniesa et al. 2007: 2). Here Muniesa et al. show how market devices have the dual function of describing and acting upon the market. However, and this is more a matter of detail than of theoretical significance, the notion of value meters is somewhat more flexible for analysing non-monetary transactions that do not immediately act upon the market (such as the measurement of subjective feelings).

[3] This idea has remained more or less intact throughout much of Latour's writing. However, its most recent formulation in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (Latour 2013, esp. p. 77ff) integrates the scientific chains of reference into a philosophical system. This way, the contrast with other modes of veridiction becomes much clearer (for example those of legal systems, political speech or technology), and this is also why the notion of 'value meters' in this work can be contrasted more efficiently compared to previous work, and can be compared to other 'valuation devices' more easily (see Martinus Hauge 2016: 128–9).

> When the disciplines of economization arose, they manifested themselves by the overabundance of these quite particular types of "quali-quanta" that connect the two senses of the French expression *prendre des mesures*: "taking measurements" and "taking measures"—hence the term "value meter." (Latour 2013: 408, emphasis in original).

Value meters, such as stock quotes, balance sheets, scholastic performance in school pupils (for example the PISA scores), indexes of economic growth (for example GDP) or fluctuations in the price of natural gas are measured because they inform a decision about whether to take a certain measure or not. Stocks are bought based upon their price; budgets are based on balance sheets; pedagogics on the latest PISA results; and the decision to begin exploiting energy resources is based upon the current price of natural gas. The measurements do not necessarily need to be monetary, but rather, value meters are *metrological* in character and when 'connected together, little by little, end up building metrological chains which make the inter-comparison of subjectivities increasingly "precise," "accentuated," and "worthy of being objects of speculations of a new sort"' (Latour and Lépinay 2009: 19).

Value meters thus imply both the quality of what is measured— its value— and the quantity of that value, which in turn makes calculation possible. They invent, so to speak, their own measure of what should be measured. In this article we will follow the construction of value meters that measure welfare. We will analyse them prior to their becoming stabilised, in their defining moments, as they are still a matter of debate, just before they turn into common usage and become veiled under a curtain of perceived objectivity, almost as if their qualitative definition of value and their mode of quantifying that value had always been there. Precisely because value meters are so integrated into 'society' and the 'economy', the design choices that were made in order to construct them seem to disappear in their everyday usage.

In this article we will attempt to analyse value meters from two sides. As Zuiderent-Jerak and van Egmond (2015) argue, market devices (or value meters) should not be reduced to what *explains* a certain order. In addition, they also have to be *explained* from the (cultural) context from which they emerge. As our study spans several decades, we will try to alternate between providing an account of both the historical context that make certain calculations possible and how these devices, once they are constructed, render new values quantifiable.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this article is to analyse the disagreement on how to measure welfare in Sweden. We will draw special attention to a

controversy between what sociologists call 'subjective' and 'objective' indicators in social reporting. This way we will analyse how the measurement of quality of life and welfare beyond the GNP/GDP can be stabilised along such lines, depending on the outcome of negotiations taking place in science and politics. We will focus on the 'Scandinavian model of welfare research', particularly the Swedish variety, and trace how it has been both challenged and strengthened from its early formulations in the late 1960s up to today. The goal, however, is not to present a complete history of social indicators in Sweden. Instead, we will approach three defining episodes of negotiations about *what counts and what does not count* as a measurable *value* in relation to welfare; in short, what we discussed earlier in terms of value meters. In other words, we want to understand how welfare has been valued over and above economic measures and calculations, and how such values have been perceived as key components in social progress. We will proceed by identifying a controversy concerning the measurement of welfare, a question that has been expressed both in political terms as well as through social scientific reasoning, and has appeared several times during a time span of almost half a century. We have selected three episodes and sites of controversy, where the first two instances converge in the third trial in 2015, which has not yet been settled and remains an open question to date.

We will enter the debate on indicators of welfare in the late 1960s to give a background of how Swedish sociologists were commissioned by the state to conduct surveys and write reports on 'levels of living'. In their inquiries they defined the 'Scandinavian approach' to welfare indicators, which relied exclusively on what they called 'objective indicators'. Then we will move forward to the mid-2000s and analyse a series of political proposals made by the Swedish Green Party (Miljöpartiet) in which it was suggested that the government ought to measure subjective well-being and happiness instead of GDP as indicators of welfare. Here, we analyse how political discourse utilised scientific knowledge as a key argument to envisage a new way of measuring welfare with subjective indicators, in contrast to the previous approach based on objective indicators. Last, we will focus on a 2015 government report, which commissioned one of the early sociologists who contributed to the Scandinavian model of welfare research, Robert Erikson, to reform the indicators of welfare to be used as official statistics by the state. As we will show, this report supports the objective measurement of welfare. The report can be contrasted with international trends where subjective measures of well-being and quality of life are today used ubiquitously throughout multiple scientific disciplines, some even arguing that there has been a 'happiness turn' in the social sciences (Ahmed 2010; Kullenberg and Nelhans 2015). Consequently, the 2015 report was met with strong

opposition as it was circulated in a round of expert referrals. We will conclude by analysing these discussions, with special attention to how the valuation of the 'welfare of nations' is related to the epistemic practices of the social sciences.

Methodology and Materials

To understand how social scientific knowledge contributes to the construction of value meters in a welfare state, we have collected different types of documents: scientific literature, government reports, think tank reports, proposals, protocols and debates from the Swedish Riksdag, interviews and opinion pieces published in news media and expert referrals made by a wide variety of institutions. As these documents have different ways of telling the truth about their subject matter, what Latour (2013) calls different *modes of veridiction*, they have to be sorted and analysed with special attention to what resources they mobilise when the respective subject matters become controversial.

To study value meters, we have utilised a network approach to detect specific 'crossings' that have made possible productive entanglements between scientific results and values. We have proceeded according to the well-known principles laid out in Latour's *Science in Action* (Latour 1987) but with the important addition of extending the definition of a 'document' to also include accounts that originate outside scientific networks (Latour 2013; Verran 2014). Thus, we have expanded the possible links and citations (what constitutes a network) to also include political speech, accounts circulating in the public sphere, reports and institutional records. This way, we are no longer limited to scientific literature as defined in *Science in Action*, but instead we are able to detect various crossovers between scientific forms of veridiction and other types of statements.

We have utilised a number of databases to collect documents relevant to understanding the process of establishing an alternative measurement of welfare. These include:

- the Swedish Riksdag (parliament) open data platform www.data.riksdagen.se
- the Mediearkivet (Swedish media archive), a paid service provided by the company Retrieve;
- Swepub (Swedish academic publications database), provided by the National Library of Swede;
- government white papers (Statens Offentliga Utredningar), which were recently digitised and made available for full-text search by Linköping University (see www.ep.liu.se/databases/sou/);
- There were 66 referrals to the 2015 Government white paper (Erikson and Blanck 2015) for creating a new welfare index. The referrals were requested as public documents from the Ministry of Finance (Finansdepartementet) and were delivered electronically.

As a general approach, we used the 2015 white paper (Erikson and Blanck 2015) as the entry point in our analysis. Then we proceeded by collecting as many *cited* and *citing* documents as possible (referrals, scientific articles, newspaper articles) in order to generate relevant search strings for the above-mentioned databases. All documents were added to a common database to enable full-text detailed searches. This way we were able to bind together the three empirical sections with citing and cited documents. As a consequence the three episodes, even if they are dated chronologically, achieve their analytical meaning through the connections that hold them together.

First, we will go back to the Scandinavian model of welfare research in the late 1960s up until the late 1980s to show how the objective indicators approach was once assembled and made to function in the Swedish welfare state. This first episode serves as the backdrop necessary for understanding the main account that is played out after the turn of the millennium. As a second episode, we will outline a counter-thread of political proposals arguing in favour of subjective indicators made by the Green Party in the mid-2000s. Third and last, we will return to the reception of Erikson and Blanck's report and the opposing sides in the controversy between subjective and objective measures of welfare to arrive at the main controversy between subjective and objective indicators of welfare.

Episode 1: The Scandinavian Model of Welfare Research: 1968–87

To understand the controversy between subjective and objective measurements of welfare, and why the former has had difficulties in gaining traction in Sweden (at least as official statistics of welfare), a key thread of social scientific history can be followed back to the late 1960s. At this time, there were no systematic surveys to fall back on, and the Social Indicators Movement had begun expressing fresh new ideas about alternative measures of welfare in an international context. In 1961, the United Nations had published a set of indicators (United Nations 1961), and around Europe, social scientists were responding with various systems of social indicators, which to varying degrees were incorporated into official statistics (Noll and Zapf 1994). The United Nations report discussed 'aggregate consumptions and savings' and similar measurements where national income and consumption was divided per capita to form aggregate indicators. The report argued that such measurements were 'ambiguous' in relation to levels of living and should only be accounted for as 'basic information', not as a proper indicator (United Nations 1961:15–16).

In Sweden, the story of indicators began in 1965 when the Interior Ministry (Inrikesdepartementet) appointed Rudolf Meidner to lead the Low Income Committee, which produced a series of reports with the

purpose of increasing knowledge about social groups with low wages. Except for Meidner, who worked at Stockholm University, the rest of the committee consisted of experts from unions (Landsorganisationen and Tjänstemännens centralorganisation) and the Swedish Employers Association (Meidner 1970; Johansson 1973). As part of the report series produced by this committee, Sten Johansson, at the newly founded Swedish Institute for Social Research, Stockholm University, conducted the first Level of Living Survey (Levnadsnivå–undersökningen) in 1968, published two years later (Johansson 1970). The survey made use of Richard Titmuss's notion of 'command over resources' as the definition of levels of living, which meant that the individual was regarded as an acting social being. In this account, the individual was seen as commanding a set of resources, such as money, knowledge, physical and mental energy, social relations, etc., which gave him or her the capability to control his or her living conditions, and thus increase his or her freedom in guiding his or her life (Johansson 1970).

Johansson listed several drawbacks when it came to using monetary measurements (such as GDP) in accounting for the welfare of a nation. He argued that such measurements failed to describe the individual's circumstances, as they did not measure the performance of for example students, children or house wives, as these categories did not produce significant monetary gains. Moreover, monetary indicators lacked precision in accounting for local circumstances. The price of the same house or apartment could be radically different if located in a large city or in a rural area, Johansson argued. Similarly, monetary measurements would also misinterpret real-life contexts. Johansson gave the example of commuting in a crowded subway compared to a short walk to the workplace. Only the former made an imprint in terms of GDP, even though it probably was less beneficial to the individual in comparison with a pleasant stroll. Summing up, Johansson argued that monetary measurements were inherently unsuitable for analysing inequalities in society, something which was indeed incompatible with the Low Income Committee's goal of improving levels of living for the poorest citizens (Johansson 1970:17–19).

Three years later, Johansson published an article in *Acta Sociologica* describing the survey to his sociological peers. He suggested that Level of Living surveys could be seen as part of 'the (now) international "social indicator movement", if that is understood as a push for improved and more relevant social statistics' (Johansson 1973: 212). However, unlike his international peers in the Social Indicators Movement, Johansson opposed what he called 'subjective' measurements and argued that:

> Concentration on resources, rather than on fulfilment of need, furthermore made questions of individual subjective satisfaction recede in the background. This is of rather fundamental importance, since that aspect determines the nature of the data in relation to the political process. Subjective satisfaction data would function as continuous pseudo-plebiscites in themselves while subjective perception data on resources (not to speak of objective data) can only function as a basis for interest articulation and aggregation for political parties, trade unions and other interest organisations. Subjective satisfaction data would simulate the function of interest articulation of the democratic process in a way that is rather controversial. (Johansson 1973: 213)

A returning criticism against subjective indicators, as expressed by Johansson, was the possibility to manipulate the political process. He argued that 'objective' measurements of health, schooling and nutrition could be valuable indicators for politicians. In contrast, 'subjective' measurements of self-reported life satisfaction were 'controversial' because they interfered with the democratic process, as they only measured the (subjective) fulfilment of a 'need'.

The fusing together of scientific measurements and politically relevant indicators was highlighted clearly in Finnish sociologist Hannu Uusitalo's review of Johansson's work:

> One of the central criteria for the structuring of the components of the level of living has been 'manipulability', that is, the study should concentrate on those problems which can be removed by political decision making. (Uusitalo 1973: 226)

The notion of 'manipulability' in this context is perhaps the most crucial difference between scientifically and politically motivated measurements. In the Scandinavian welfare research tradition of the 1970s, 'manipulability' was understood as a criterion of inclusion, with regard to what social problems could be managed by the state and what problems were considered to be out of reach of its welfare system. But, as already mentioned, manipulability with regard to the satisfaction of subjective quality of life, was off limits in a democratic society, according to Johansson and his sociological peers. Manipulating health, housing, schooling or nutrition— the objective indicators of quality of life— should be the task of the welfare state; but manipulating social conditions as a *means* of increasing the subjectively experienced quality of life of citizens should not be part of the politician's toolbox. The notion of manipulability in this context also shows the duality in value meters of this kind, as opposed to strictly scientific measurements. The indicators of the Level of Living survey were meant to simultaneously measure and transform welfare in Swedish society.

The Scandinavian model of welfare research was, however, not uncontroversial. Johansson's Level of Living survey immediately created political controversy because the results showed that there

existed a surprisingly severe level of poverty among the lower working classes. For the ruling Social Democratic Party, this became a pressing issue. Sociologist Casten von Otter, also at the Swedish Institute for Social Research in Stockholm, wrote:

> It is not often that one gets the feeling that sociology really matters. But for once, with the 1968 Survey of Level of Living in Sweden, a mark is established in Swedish sociology whose effects can be seen also in the political history of the country. Not only has it aroused a controversy of considerable dimension but it has also gone a long way in achieving one of its major aims; to provide the discussion on welfare-politics with a more solid empirical basis. At the same time it relieved us, at least temporarily, of that threat against a welfare-state which is inherent in the belief that we already have achieved it. (von Otter 1973: 229)

Johansson's results, together with the Low Income Committee's other reports, had become a hot potato in the Social Democratic Party and Swedish political debate. So hot that the committee was disbanded by the prime minister and the issue became a matter of national concern. Afterwards, Johansson remarked in a footnote that '[t]he political turmoil that followed the dissolution of the Low Income Committee in 1971 has forced some thinking on this problem and on the role of the expert' (Johansson 1973: 213). In retrospect, that was rather an underestimate of the graveness of the debacle. Economic historian Jenny Andersson shows that:

> [d]uring a historic radio debate, the Minister of Finance Gunnar Sträng greeted Per Holmberg [head of the Low Income Committee] with this question: "What person, sound of body and mind, would work for less than five kronor an hour" The Implication was clear: in a social democratic society of full employment and solitary wage bargaining, only those in some way handicapped could possibly remain poor. In 1971, the Committee on Low Income was disbanded by the Prime Minister and party leader Olof Palme. (Andersson 2006: 54)

The Swedish sociologists, Johansson in particular, had not only stirred up a politically sensitive issue of poverty, but they had done so by defining and applying social indicators that went beyond conventional welfare economics, and instead adhered to the emerging social indicators approach (see Figure 1).

The impact of the Low Income Committee continued to reverberate through the 1980s and even received international attention. For example, in 1983, the German newspaper *Der Spiegel* published several articles about the failure of the Swedish welfare system, and political scientist Olof Ruin argued that the 'Low Wage [income] Committee' was partially to blame for this crisis in the image of Swedish levels of living (Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå 1983). But the political sensitivity of the new value meter seemed only to make it more relevant as researchers attempted to export it as a wider model of welfare research.

The 1980s: Consolidation of the Scandinavian model

The Swedish Level of Living survey influenced Norwegian, Danish and Finnish researchers who conducted similar inquiries throughout the 1970s (Erikson and Uusitalo 1987; Erikson and Blanck 2015: 76), creating what would be labelled the 'Scandinavian model of welfare research' in international publications. These accounts drew a line of demarcation against subjective indicators into the 1980s, and Robert Erikson, along with his Norwegian, Danish and Finnish colleagues presented this line of research as a coherent entity comparable to other international strands of the Indicator Movement, with only minor differences between the respective countries. A common denominator in the Scandinavian approach was the rejection of subjective quality of life indicators, which were identified as primarily being connected to the American branches[4] of the Social Indicators Movement, in particular the works by Campbell and Andrews, which were described as 'particularly strong in the Unites States … ' [but] ' … [i]n Scandinavia, this variant has fewer adherents' (Erikson and Uusitalo 1987: 185). However, the reasons for relying solely on objective indicators were quite elaborate.

Erikson and Uusitalo argued that Scandinavian welfare research was not primarily driven by academic questions, but instead 'operates on the same levels as policies do' (Erikson and Uusitalo 1987: 189). First, policy centred indicators required '[an] emphasis on applicability [that] is one reason why these studies have used objective and concrete indicators of welfare, since these are the objects of concrete politics' (Erikson and Uusitalo 1987: 192). Second, Erikson and Uusitalo argued that 'objective' indicators were much better suited to study 'inequalities' because marginalised people could also report high levels of subjective well-being, while remaining objectively worse off in terms of lower levels of living. Third, they put forth the argument that subjective indicators represented 'final values', which were particularly unsuitable for a democratic society. If policy were to be guided by, for example, happiness or subjective well-being, it would lead to the risk of a policy that not only allowed for inequalities, but also could be shaped to manipulate state interventions to keep people happy, without improving their lives. Once again, the performativity of the value meter is considered with delicate care, excluding what is understood as subjective elements.

The same year, Erikson and Åberg presented the Scandinavian model to a British readership in the volume *Welfare in Transition*.

[4] Post-war Swedish sociology, particularly up until the 1960s, was predominantly influenced by American empirical social science, especially in its methodological use of statistics and large-scale surveys, as social scientists were often sent to the United States for their academic training (see Fridjonsdottir 1991; Eyerman and Jamison 1992).

Here, they once again stressed that objective indicators (here called 'descriptive indicators') were preferable in comparison to subjective or 'evaluative' indicators, since the latter fluctuated with the individual's valuation of their own situation and could thus not be said to describe people's actual circumstances (Erikson and Åberg 1987: 4). This problem, often referred to as hedonic adaptation, was a point of departure similar to Easterlin's famous paradox (Easterlin 1974), and is a recurring problem in the field of happiness studies.

For two decades, sociologists at the Swedish Institute for Social Research at Stockholm University had established an internationally renowned '[...] concept which bases welfare measurement exclusively on objective indicators as the level of living approach of Scandinavian welfare research' (Noll and Zapf 1994: 3). This way, a programme for measuring welfare beyond GDP had been created, a programme that adhered strictly to 'objective indicators', instead of including 'subjective factors', which was often the case internationally. This way of measuring society, which fused facts with values and drew a boundary between what could be measured and acted upon and what ought to be left alone to the individual to decide upon for him/herself. Once built into a value meter that in turn could be incorporated into the Level of Living surveys, the demarcation between 'objective' and 'subjective' indicators did not have to be reprised for every new survey, but could persist as a standard measurement device of welfare.

Episode 2: A Happiness Index? Green Party Proposals 2007–15

So-called subjective indicators as components of a measurement of welfare are of recent date[5] in Swedish political discourse. Even if such measurements had been presented internationally by academic researchers in the Social Indicators Movement since the mid-1970s,

[5] Political proposals to find alternative measures of welfare had already been put forward in 1971 by the Liberal Party, who argued that GDP did not account for the experience of welfare, as it did not measure aspects such as leisure activities, environment and health (Helén 1971). One year later, the Liberals once again suggested new indicators of welfare to be investigated by a parliamentary committee, since the current GDP measures not only misrepresented welfare, but also neglected regional differences in welfare (Möller 1972). Furthermore, in 1982, the Centre Party proposed that the government should take action to develop a measurement of quality of life to complement the 'bad' GDP statistics, and to begin taking into account the destructive side-effects of economic growth (Hammarbacken 1981). However, these early political calls for reform of the measurement of welfare did not suggest explicit subjective indicators. Instead, they only implicitly referred to 'feelings' of discontent as consequences of a society guided solely by goals of economic growth.

this line of research had neither found its way to Swedish politicians nor gained substantial traction in academic research.[6]

However, a few years into the 2000s, the critique of GDP as a measurement of welfare returned. But in contrast to the sporadic proposals of the 1970s, this time 'subjective welfare' came to play a central role, as opposed to the 'objective' indicators that had ruled the official statistics for decades. In October 2007, Green Party MP Max Andersson proposed for the first time to the Swedish Parliament that 'happiness research' should be supported by the state, and that a national index of happiness should be created as an additional measure that could be used alongside GDP. Andersson argued:

> What is interesting about happiness research is the possibility of rendering into numbers various aspects of human happiness. This radically simplifies the task of giving priority and to balance the utility of [political] proposals. (Andersson 2007, our translation)

A few weeks later, Andersson participated in a happiness research conference at the University of Gothenburg (Johannisson 2007) and shared his results in an academic setting. Also attending the conference was Bengt Brülde, a Gothenburg-based philosopher who had introduced happiness research to Sweden in books and articles. Andersson's proposal was inspired by recent developments in the UK, where happiness research had been successfully put on the political agenda. Besides Jeremy Bentham, Andersson also cited the influential 2005 book *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* by Richard Layard (Layard 2005) and the British Government report *Life Satisfaction: The State of Knowledge and Implications for Government* (Donovan et al. 2002). When interviewed by the newspaper *Göteborgs-posten*, Andersson stated that happiness research supported green politics and that a happiness index would be 'uncontroversial and widely accepted in ten years' (Bjärsdal 2015). These accounts, along with Andersson's proposal, all depart from the Easterlin paradox mentioned in the introduction of this article, that is, increased GDP leads to increased happiness, but only up to a certain level of welfare. Instead, most developed countries in the post-war period have ground to a halt where happiness levels remained unchanged, despite a steady growth of GDP (Easterlin 1974). While this relationship is often expressed in policy documents, the scientific community of happiness researchers is still disputing whether the paradox remains valid in light of new empirical studies (see Hagerty and Veenhoven 2003). At the core of the body of research cited by Andersson in his proposal lay the notion of 'subjective well-being', an approach advanced especially by

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[6] Erikson and Uusitalo mention Finnish sociologist Erik Allardt as a notable exception; he measured subjective components of life satisfaction in combination with objective measurements (Erikson and Uusitalo 1987: 185).

psychologists during the 1980s (see Diener et al. 1999). As a measurement scale, subjective well-being surveys had been tested using different scales and survey methods, and had become a widely used form of measurement in psychology and the social sciences.

By following the Green Party proposals, it is possible to detect both a consistency in adhering to subjective measures of welfare and a number of important additions to the original proposal. In 2008, Andersson submitted the same proposal to parliament with two additions. He cited Brülde's recently published book about happiness (Brülde 2007), arguing that Swedish happiness research had advanced to the level of producing textbooks. But even more important, Andersson had kept up to date with a certain commission appointed by Nicholas Sarkozy in France, which one year later would publish the *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, usually referred to simply as the Stiglitz report. Andersson even cited the liberal author Johan Norberg, who had written a report for the free-market think tank Timbro, where he strongly criticised 'labour economist' Layard for a 'paternalist' view on happiness in society (Norberg 2006). Despite being a political foe, Andersson utilised Norberg's report in his proposal as evidence of a 'growing body of literature' on happiness (Andersson 2008). Hence, the political rhetoric of Andersson contains active modifiers, with the aim of assembling even contradictory statements as part of an argument that happiness research has grown into a mature scientific discipline.

In 2009, as the Stiglitz report had been published, Andersson incorporated its critique of GDP as a measure of welfare, and the same year he co-organised another conference at Malmö University, thus adding the number of connections between his political proposal and academic research by discussing the report commissioned by Sarkozy with social scientists (Lindström and Andersson 2009). In Andersson's 2009 proposal to parliament, a specific section of the Stiglitz report was highlighted:

> […] recommendation 10 suggesting a measure of subjective well-being, often translated less formally as happiness, providing crucial information on people's quality of life, which in turn should be included in official statistics. (Andersson 2009, our translation)

Going back to the Stiglitz report, this formulation was originally stated as:

> Recommendation 10: Measures of both objective and subjective well-being provide key information about people's quality of life. Statistical offices should incorporate questions to capture people's life evaluations, hedonic experiences and priorities in their own survey. (Stiglitz et al. 2009: 16)

Andersson excluded the notion of objective well-being in the Stiglitz report and instead narrowed down his proposal only to the measurement of subjective happiness. This modulation towards the subjective aspects of welfare would continue further down the road for the Green Party politicians. In 2010, Andersson left parliament but handed over the task of suggesting alternative measures of welfare to MP Lise Nordin. Nordin did not make any substantial changes to the 2010 proposal, besides shortening it slightly and dropping the reference to Norberg and the outdated 2002 *Life Satisfaction* report (Nordin 2010). Furthermore, in the same year, Green Party MP Valter Mutt argued in parliamentary debates that Sweden should account for subjective happiness in its official statistics, just as the conservative government in the UK had done, not only to give priority to people's subjective well-being over GDP, but also out of environmental concerns (Mutt 2010).

The Green Party's critique of GDP was in one way not so different from the earlier sociologists' approach. Max Andersson argued similarly that such measurements did not accurately describe the individual's circumstances (Andersson 2008) and that it did not measure welfare, only 'production' (Andersson 2009). However, the point where a major difference appears is when it comes to human happiness. Andersson mainly argued that GDP merely measures the way we are getting richer, not getting happier. Moreover, he wanted to make 'happiness research' on a par with 'economics' in valuating welfare in Sweden (Andersson 2008).

In 2011, Nordin's proposal would both bring in more allies and make new enemies. Previously, UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Labour) released a cross-government programme called New Horizons— A Shared Vision for Mental Health (Cross-government strategy: Mental Health Division 2009). The programme was meant to combat mental illness, but it also stressed the importance of well-being, which Nordin conceived of as happiness, even though such specific terms were absent from the proposal (Nordin 2011). However, there was another important ally in Nordin's plan. In 2011, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution saying that 'the pursuit of happiness is a fundamental human goal' and that GDP 'was not designed to and does not adequately reflect the happiness and well-being of people in a country' (United Nations News 2011). If the scientific aspect of this new value meter was the first line of rhetoric, the second aspect would be to connect it to certain values, such as human goals, and further down the road, with environmental sustainability.

By now, the Green Party proposals had started to circulate in the public debate. The editorial column of the Swedish newspaper *Sydsvenskan* reacted to Nordin's proposal the day before it was presented to the Riksdag, arguing that happiness as a political goal, as

laid out by both Nordin and Sarkozy, was a 'deeply anti-liberal and paternalistic idea, which should be rejected' (Sydsvenskan 2011). The *Sydsvenskan* editorial also cited a statement made by Cameron in 2006, saying '[w]ell-being can't be measured by money or traded in markets' (BBC 2006). In an article in the magazine Arena, Kjell Vowles engaged in a thorough round of interviews to cover the current debates on happiness as a political goal. Here, Nordin elaborated on how politics based on happiness research would lead to 'green politics', emphasising sustainable development rather than economic growth (Vowles 2012). This way, subjective indicators on happiness and life satisfaction were connected to political goals of environmental sustainability. This way, the Green Party established the idea of a politics based on 'subjective' indicators, which would in turn lead to fewer concerns with economic growth, thus enabling a greener politics. Even though it was not as thoroughly tested as in the earlier Level of Living surveys, the proposal for a new value meter of welfare had all the principal components more or less ready. The Green Party politicians referred both to scientific advances in 'subjective well-being' research and to heavyweight institutional bodies such as the UN or the UK Government, thus presenting a new composite of facts and values.

However, the Green Party proposals would not be able to gain the support of a parliamentary majority. In 2014, the Ministry of Finance led by the opposing right-wing government, as mentioned above, instead commissioned Robert Erikson, a fierce advocate of 'objective' indicators as we saw before, to conduct the Swedish Government Official Report on measurements of quality of life.

Episode 3: The Year 2015 — The Subjective Measurement Controversy

Almost half a century after Sten Johansson had conducted the first Level of Living survey to measure welfare in Sweden, the Ministry of Finance decided to return to the question of indicators beyond GDP. Even though sociologists at the Swedish Institute for Social Research had continued to work according to their established methods, GDP still held a firm grip on the way the welfare of nations was measured and compared with other nations. Economic growth figures seemed to be difficult to complement with alternative indicators, even if the researchers argued that they were 'objective' in character.

In 2014, the Ministry of Finance, led by the conservative Moderate Party's (Moderaterna) Anders Borg, announced that they were to commission a state committee to create new measurements of quality of life (Finansdepartementet 2014). As head of the committee, sociologist Robert Erikson at the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI) at Stockholm University was appointed (Frisk 2014). The

committee was to work quite swiftly. Already one year later, the committee had reported back to the Ministry of Finance. The result, authored by Erikson and his secretary Anton Blanck, was the Swedish Government Official Report SOU 2015: 56 (Erikson and Blanck 2015).

Similarly to back in the days of the establishment of Scandinavian welfare research, Erikson and Blanck critiqued GDP as a measurement of welfare for several reasons. According to the report, GDP did not measure activities that were immediately beneficial for society, nor did it account for social, environmental or economic sustainability in a nation. Moreover, GDP measurement did not detect unpaid labour, for example household work or free information on the internet. In short, Erikson and Blanck concluded that GDP did not measure many things that 'we value in society and the environment we live in' (Erikson and Blanck 2015:27–28).

The Ministry of Finance had specified that the commission should investigate a wide range of indicators, among them also 'subjective' ones, and report back with regard not only to their scientific merits, but also in what sense they were useful as indicators that could inform political decision making (Finansdepartementet 2014). Erikson and Blanck would, however, respond with a thorough critique of subjective measurements of quality of life, ranging from a dismissal of Bentham's utilitarianism and its principle of happiness as the goal of government, to contemporary happiness studies and their revival of Benthamian styles of thought (for example Layard 2005).

As a response to the request for a new value meter by the Ministry of Finance, Erikson and Blanck presented a set of indicators for measuring quality of life and welfare that stretched back to the work of Sten Johansson. As presented above, Johansson had conducted the Level of Living survey, a large-scale inquiry on levels of welfare in which a set of indicators were in turn inspired by the United Nation's recommendations. Erikson and Blanck argued that Johansson's survey also had forward-looking qualities because 'the components that Johansson assembled in the Levels of Living survey of 1968 are principally the same as those found in the Stiglitz commission' (Erikson and Blanck 2015: 55, our translation).

United Nations (1961, p. 4)	**Johansson (1973, p. 214)**	**Stiglitz (2009, p. 14-15)**	**Erikson & Blanck (2015, p. 23)**
1. Health	5. Health and the use of medical care	2. Health	1. Health
2. Food consumption and nutrition	8. Nutrition	-	-
3. Education	4. Schooling	3. Education	2. Knowledge and skills
4. Employment and conditions of work	1. Work and working conditions	4. Personal activities including work	3. Employment
5. Housing	7. Housing	1. Material living standards	8. Housing
6. Social security	6. Family origin and family relations (social resources)	6. Social connections and relationships	6. Social relations
7. Clothing	-	-	-
8. Recreation	9. Leisure time and pursuits.	(4.) similar as 4 above	9. Time available
9. Human freedoms	3. Political resources	5. Political voice and governance	5. Political resources and civil rights
-	2. Economic resources	8. Insecurity of an economic as well as physical nature	4. Economic resources
-	-	7. Environment	10. Living environment
-	-	-	7. Security of life and property

Table 1. Comparison of indicators for measuring quality of life. English in original, see Nations 1961, p. 4, Johansson 1973, p. 214, Stiglitz, Sen, and Fitoussi 2009, p. 14-15, Erikson and Blanck 2015, p. 23. The concepts have been ordered with regards to the United Nations (1961) order. Numbers are the original order in each document.

However, what would become a matter of controversy was Erikson and Blanck's principal dismissal of 'subjective' indicators. Their arguments against such measurements in their report could be summarised thus:

- Political decisions must be grounded in factual circumstances, not subjective experiences.
- Subjective experiences of welfare are prone to adapt according to factual circumstances.
- Using subjective indicators politically may lead to ignoring objective changes in welfare.

This critique entailed both facts and values. So-called subjective indicators were argued to be unstable for reporting back because of the hedonic adaptation in humans. However, more importantly, such measurements were seen as threatening the value of welfare because, as a 'factual' circumstance, the 'subjective' indicators would divert attention from the 'objective' changes in society.

Table 1 shows a side-by-side comparison of the various sets of indicators measuring welfare and quality of life noted by Erikson and Blanck, who argued that there exists a line of continuity between, on the one hand, the international indicators stated by the UN and the Stiglitz report, and on the other hand, a tradition of research called the 'Scandinavian model' of welfare research. This expressed line of continuity serves as a point of entry for identifying two historical threads that precede the contemporary debate on welfare measurements in Sweden. Lines of continuity, as Kuhn argued, are crucial to making the current research paradigm look linear and cumulative (Kuhn 1996: 138–40), and this also goes for value meters. If they appear as if they came from nowhere, each component has to be motivated and scrutinised, whereas if they build on previous findings and standards, they will appear as less controversial.

The indicator 'economic resources', as found both in Johansson's 1973 account as well as in Erikson and Blanck 2015, refers to Richard Titmuss's notion of 'command over resources', as discussed earlier. Similarly, as the indicator 'political resources', it has a special focus on the individual and his/her 'objective' circumstances. The space of action, which is either widened or closed, should be the locus of both measurement and measures taken by the state. Defining these indicators rather as 'potentialities' or degrees of freedom also mark what the Scandinavian welfare researchers saw as the limit of state intervention. So-called subjective indicators, such as happiness or life satisfaction, would be 'final values' in such a perspective, and should be off limits for the state to decide upon.

The indicators proposed by the Scandinavian welfare researchers resonate well with the 2009 Stiglitz report, at least on one level. The 'capabilities approach' of Amartya Sen, one of the co-authors of the report, chimes closely with the 'command over resources' perspective advocated by Johansson and Erikson, and Blanck. However, the Stiglitz report acknowledges *both* subjective and objective indicators as central to the measurement of welfare. Stiglitz et al. (2009), with especial regard to life satisfaction and (feelings of) insecurity, explicitly

point to the value of including 'subjective' measurements, something that Erikson and Blanck clearly reject in their interpretation of this important report.

As all Official Reports from the Swedish Government are subject to a round of referrals in which selected organisations and authorities review the report and return their verdict to the department that commissioned it, there is rich material for analysing opposing sides in knowledge production. Erikson and Blanck's report was dispatched to 76 consultation bodies (Gumpert 2015) of which 65 responded. In this section, we will give special attention to those referrals that concern the subjective/objective controversy.

Scientific support for subjective measurements

The most comprehensive critique of Erikson and Blanck's report came from a number of Swedish academic institutions. The universities of Stockholm, Gothenburg, Linköping and Umeå all stressed, in contrast to the report, that 'subjective measurements' should be considered and included in the definition of welfare. They argued that scientific inquiries had shown considerable progress in this line of inquiry and that there existed a strong international frontier of research. For example, the School of Business, Economics and Law in Gothenburg argued that 'there is an increasing and important international strand of research concerning happiness and subjective well-being, and plenty of valuable information can be extracted from this variable' (Handelshögskolan, Göteborgs universitet 2015). The Faculty of Humanities at Stockholm University asserted that '[Erikson and Blanck's indicators] should be expanded to also include subjective measures of well-being and quality of life. This follows current research and international standards and such measurements are highly relevant for policy issues' (Stockholms universitet 2015a). Furthermore, the medical university Karolinska Institutet went even further and stated that 'The report advances objective measurements of quality of life— which seems strange, as the point of departure for quality of life can be seen as a subjective judgement' (Karolinska institutet 2015). Umeå University even pointed out two 'misunderstandings' in Erikson and Blanck's report, first that '[falsely] believing that life satisfaction and well-being (sometimes summarised as happiness) cannot be expected to change over time'; and the second that 'believing that there will be absurd consequences if governments act to maximise the subjective well-being of the population' (Umeå universitet 2015).

Thus, several universities referred to scientific advancements in measuring subjective indicators. But they also mentioned policy reports that had begun using such indicators, and seemed less

concerned about the possibility of harmful political uses of subjective measurements.

However, support for subjective indicators was also strong among other institutions writing referrals to Erikson and Blanck's report. *Statens beredning för medicinsk och social utvärdering* (*SBU*) stated that they did not agree with the conclusions as to 'why the commission has chosen to take no account of subjective measurements when quality of life in itself is a subjective concept' (SBU 2015). *Länsstyrelsen i Stockholms län* pointed out that the report 'stood in contrast to the methodology adopted by many other countries and transnational organisations (for example, the UN Happiness Report)' (Länsstyrelsen_Stockholm 2015), a similar argument as in *Folkbildningsrådet* which noted that the subjective dimensions ought to be included just as in the OECD report (Folkbildningsrådet 2015), and the *Institutet för Framtidsstudier* claimed that 'international recommendations' strongly advised subjective indicators to be complementary to objective ones (Institutet för Framtidsstudier 2015). Even if the scientific issues concerning measurements were mentioned, these referring bodies primarily argued that Sweden should adopt 'subjective' measurements because they were already used and recommended internationally.

Scientific support for objective measurements

Although subjective indicators were widely supported among the consulted bodies, there were also actors that supported Erikson and Blanck's strict adherence to objective indicators. Uppsala University wrote in defence of the report's rejection of 'subjective' indicators:

> Concerning subjective measurements the commission's rejection is convincing, as it departs in that only measurements rendering visible changes over time shall be in question. It is shown how subjective measurements are far too dependent on levels of aspiration and adaptation to circumstances, making them unsuitable for comparisons among [social] groups. (Uppsala University 2015)

As mentioned above, Stockholm University had argued in favour of subjective measurements. However, their referral was in fact written in a rather ambivalent fashion since two separate faculties were consulted (this is sometimes the case with large universities). While the Faculty of Humanities had advocated for the inclusion of subjective indicators, the Faculty of Social Sciences— home to the Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI) where Robert Erikson was still active— instead argued along opposite lines, by stating that subjective indicators were in fact rather useless:

> The faculty of social sciences would like to add that the values of subjective indicators of life satisfaction or happiness are strongly limited as they are not knowledgeable about actual life circumstances. Aspirations, discontent, and

> satisfaction are determined by actual circumstances and by circumstances relevant to the lived lives of the persons under investigation. Measurements of happiness are of diminutive value if reported exclusively. (Stockholm University 2015a)

In these accounts, subjective indicators were seen as problematic; both from a scientific point of view due to the adaptation and aspiration effects and because they did not portray the 'actual' circumstances that in turn would affect people's perceived quality of life. This critique, once again, bears resemblance to the Easterlin paradox from the mid-1970s (Easterlin 1974) and Johansson's theoretical point of departure from the Level of Living surveys (Johansson 1973).

Since the SOFI, which was founded in 1972 and integrated with the Faculty of Social Sciences in 1994, had been the host of the Level of Living surveys for such a long time, it is not surprising that they dismissed subjective indicators. What is striking about the referral of Stockholm University is instead how the Faculty of Humanities clashed with the Faculty of Social Sciences in the same referral text, thus leaving a response full of contradictions. The Humanities faculty used words such as that they 'criticise strongly' the interpretation of quality of life as 'freedom of action', as advanced by Erikson and Blanck. Moreover, the Humanities faculty dismissed the idea that 'subjective' indicators cannot describe changes over time (as claimed by Erikson and Blanck) as 'obsolete' and 'false' (Stockholms universitet 2015a).

We followed this controversy a little further by requesting all additional material from Stockholm University. We discovered two preparatory works, which were the sources of the above referral. Here the Faculty of Social Sciences was more precisely defined as SOFI and the Department of Criminology (Stockholms Universitet 2015b), and the response by the Faculty of Humanities was authored by Henric Hertzman and Bengt Novén (Stockholms Universitet 2015c). In these preparatory works the controversy appears in a much clearer light.

The Faculty of Social Sciences wrote that they supported all aspects of Erikson and Blanck's report, except that Statistics Sweden (SCB) should be responsible for the collection of data. Instead they suggested that this responsibility should be delegated to academic researchers. They briefly listed a number of existing academic institutes as potential candidates for the mission, and also wrote that 'under the right circumstances, SOFI looks positively at the opportunity to act as the host institution' for such data collection (Stockholms Universitet 2015b). In other words, SOFI not only supported Erikson and Blanck. They also had a positive view on actually performing such measurements. This formulation was not, however, included in the official referral by Stockholm University, and consequently not forwarded to the Ministry of Finance.

The Faculty of Humanities, however, clearly appears as one of the fiercest critics of Erikson and Blanck. Novén and Hertzman, who

signed this preparatory work, connected the advances made in research on subjective indicators to international research and argued that Erikson and Blanck criticised subjective indicators on false and outdated grounds. Moreover, they drew from the Stiglitz report the same conclusion as the Green Party proposals, namely that it supported 'subjective' measurements.

However, from the perspective of value meters, what is more interesting is the discussion on the relation to political values in measuring welfare. Novén and Hertzman wrote:

> We find it unsuitable to select measurements of quality of life, which depart in controversial normative presuppositions about the role of politics in an equal [socially just] society … Ideological considerations about what is a suitable decision for politicians to make should be left out of this discussion. (Stockholms Universitet 2015c)

This way, the Faculty of Humanities reached all the way back to the problem that the Scandinavian welfare researchers faced in the mid-1970s, only to turn it upside down. The role of a new value meter of welfare should not, according to Novén and Hertzman, tell politicians what types of decisions to make; they should only report back facts free from 'ideology' and 'normative' values. In other words, the role of the expert was questioned, with regards to (the possibility of) neutrality in the measurements that were to be handed over to politicians.

The differing positions on subjective versus objective measurements in the referrals crack open a recurring controversy in the social sciences and their relation to policy indicators— or in other terminology the role of the social sciences in creating value meters. The contrasting ideals concern two interrelated questions: what *can* be measured accurately, and what *should* be measured when the results are handed over to policy makers?

Advocates of subjective indicators have struggled to deal with the effects of (hedonic) adaptation, and this is used as a counter-argument for implementing them as indicators. If people return to the same levels of happiness and life satisfaction, even if their objective circumstances change (for better or for worse), the measurements have no meaning for planning the welfare society. However, even though this discussion has been returned to since at least the 1970s, subjective measurements have been implemented as standard measurements throughout the social and medical sciences in numerous studies (see Kullenberg and Nelhans 2015), and they have become ubiquitous indicators in a number of international reports.

Discussion: Calibrating the Value Meters of Society

Deciding on *what* to measure and, as a consequence, *how* to measure it does not proceed in a straightforward fashion from point of

departure to a gold standard. As we have shown, in the case of welfare indicators, the process of deciding on indicators is a site of negotiation and controversy, where various concepts struggle to define what will be the future measurement of society. To account for the value of society, value meters (such as GDP, kilogram, stock market index, Gross National Happiness of the country of Bhutan, etc.) have to be invented and made durable, both in technical terms and as politically successful measures of some kind of value. When these devices work, in both terms, they make valuation (Helgesson and Muniesa 2013) of the welfare of nations possible.

With this article, we have tried to draw attention to the negotiations present in constructing such a 'value meter of welfare', a device that will by necessity involve a reduction of millions of interactions with statistics. To obtain data, the procedure must first have defined what data to look for. Thus, in this article we have examined how three episodes of debates on alternative valuation measurements to GDP have been related to broader international contexts, which entailed both scientific and policy-related elements. We have investigated how scientific arguments have been mobilised in debates on replacing GDP in favour of a new measurement of welfare and mapped out which actors have been involved in modulating various lines of argument in defining what values are worth counting.

We have shown that there are two interconnected sides of value meters—facts and values—that are fused together to form semi-stable devices that can be used to measure welfare. Methodologically these two sides, each having quite different modes of veridiction, can be difficult to bring into comparison. In this article we have deliberately chosen documents that yoke together facts and values. The way arguments are mobilised point on the one hand to the direction of establishing a measurable relation to something that can be detected with the value meter, such as housing, schooling or life satisfaction. Such knowledge can be put on trial as chains of reference, as social scientific knowledge. However, on the other hand, the value meter also has to be able to take measures in relation to values, such as creating a more 'sustainable' society (as the Green Party argued) or towards a greater 'equality' in society, as the Scandinavian welfare researchers kept coming back to. As these two modes of veridiction are conjoined, the process of firmly establishing the value meter can proceed; but correspondingly, the failure of either side may also bring about a crisis in measurement, as has been—many would argue—the case with GDP for almost half a century.

For a value meter to work, it needs to be backed up by a science. Just as GDP had to be accounted for with reference to economics (Halsey 1934), subjective measures of welfare have often been referred to as a new science of happiness (Layard 2005) in which measures of happiness, well-being, quality of life and life satisfaction have ended up

in several important reports written in the first decade of the new millennium. However, in order to make 'subjective' forms of measurement credible enough to be put on equal footing with 'objective' indicators of GNP/GDP, economists, psychologists and social scientists had to start conducting empirical and quantitative studies that could compete with those supporting other value meters. This is why we have attempted to analyse how 'actors set up the collective socio-technical agencements that make valuation possible, stable, credible, accountable, and liable to compete with alternative perspectives on value' (Kjellberg and Mallard et al. 2013: 22). In part, the stability of the 'objective indicators' approach stems from the way sociologists were able to display a line of continuity going back to the United Nations indicators in the 1960s, and in particular to the Levels of Living surveys conducted more than 40 years ago. For the subjective approach to show the same historical lineage, there are no comparable results or devices to fall back on in the Swedish context. Instead, the advocates of subjective indicators had to start more or less from scratch at the turn of the millennium, as important research findings and reports, such as the Stiglitz commission, were mobilised.

However, scientific stability is not the only matter of consideration when constructing a value meter. The core set of researchers in the Scandinavian welfare research were all concerned with a sense of political stability centred round the interface between the market and the welfare state. Johansson's (1970) theoretical model of social integration especially was based around the political relationship between the labour unions and the employers. Higher levels of living were the outcome of a successful relationship between these actors, and these levels could be assessed 'objectively', Johansson argued. This stands in stark contrast to the 'subjective path' chosen by his contemporary Anglophone researchers, for example Hadley Cantril's influential *The Pattern of Human Concerns* (1965). Here, attention was drawn towards the subjective and immediate experience and the impact of that experience on behaviour. If people were satisfied with their life, unrelated to their actual life circumstances, they would express their aspirations and adjust their behaviour accordingly. In other words, stability could be achieved by monitoring the concerns of the people, and then adjusting politics based on that knowledge. This is what the Swedish sociologists clearly viewed as a form of political manipulation, and they have defended their position ever since.

However, the subjective turn in happiness research grew stronger, and this line of studies would have similar outlooks to Cantril's work. Cross-national surveys, which did not exist readily at hand for the economists of the 1970s, fuelled the trend of 'subjective' indicators, both as they provided large amounts of data, and would produce continuous indices where nations could be compared with each other. Happiness economics and new measures of welfare were constructed

as a detour via scientific research, before it could be implemented in policy reports. Studies by Ed Diener (Diener et al. 1995, 1999; Diener 2000), Rut Veenhoven (Veenhoven 1991) and Ronald Inglehardt (Inglehart 1990) were based on large-scale cross-national surveys, such as the Eurobarometer (since 1973), the World Values Survey (since 1981) and the World Database of Happiness (since 1980). These surveys have often been cited not only by researchers, but also by the mass media, which frequently publishes ranking lists of 'the happiest countries'. Here, subjective indicators were implemented and calibrated, tested against vast amounts of survey data, and were then turned into indicators during the 2000s.

When value meters are made to work, facts produced by the social sciences have multiple ways of escaping their scientific contexts to become constitutive elements of state measurements; or to use a more familiar term: they may become *statistics* (Porter 1995; Desrosières 1998). The negotiation for determining indicators of welfare is a constant endeavour towards decreasing uncertainty and assembling a value meter that can be put to work outside the contingencies of scientific knowledge. It is primarily when value meters are discussed in relation to the state that the tension becomes intense. This explains why the group of sociologists behind the Levels of Living surveys could treat 'subjective measurements' as intellectually stimulating on a scientific level, but at the same time ward them off completely when official statistics were under consideration.

How welfare and quality of life is *measured* will affect how welfare is *made*. Social scientists play an integral and performative role in the co-production of scientific devices and social values as they create many important value meters that we live by in modern societies. However, new measurements are not easily invented and immediately adhered to. Rather, as we have tried to show in this historical account, they change only after series of negotiations, and sometimes fall back on measurements stabilised decades ago.

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Christopher Kullenberg is a Researcher in Theory of Science at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. He has a long-standing interest in the role of quantitative social sciences in modern societies. His dissertation, The Quantification of Society. A Study of a Swedish Research Institute and Survey-Based Social Science, analysed the way survey methodologies worked in relation to epistemic practices. During recent years he has worked on the emergence of happiness studies as a field of research and how it reconfigures the relation between social science and politics.

Gustaf Nelhans is Senior Lecturer at the Swedish School of Library and Information Science (SSLIS) at University of Borås, Sweden. His research focuses on the performativity of scientometric indicators as well as on the theory, methodology and research policy aspects of the scholarly publication in scientific practice. Presently his focus of interest inclines towards other forms of impact measure such as the professional impact of research, e.g. in clinical guidelines and treatment recommendations.

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Valuing Species: The Continuities between Non-Market and Market Valuations in Biodiversity Conservation

Aurora Fredriksen

Abstract

This article explores how the rise of new markets for biodiversity has been facilitated by existing, non-market-based valuation practices within the field of biodiversity conservation. Where others have considered biodiversity markets in terms of capitalist and/or neoliberal expansion, I argue that the abstraction of the value of living things in markets is made easier by the existing valuation practices of species-based biodiversity conservation. After briefly contextualising the terms 'species' and 'biodiversity' within the history of Western conservation, the article shows how biodiversity conservation—as science, policy and practice—subordinates the value of individual living organisms and emplaced ecologies to the abstract categories of species and habitat types. This conceptual move performs a condition of ethical commensurability between individual organisms and places, thereby prefiguring the equivalence of value between units of the same category needed to establish new markets for biodiversity. The article considers this link between the valuation practices of species-based biodiversity conservation and new markets for biodiversity as an instance of performative continuity. The article concludes by reflecting on the critical use of attending to the links between existing valuation practices in biodiversity conservation and new biodiversity markets.

Key words: biodiversity conservation; species; valuation; markets; performativity

In this current decade—designated by the UN as its 'decade on biodiversity'—the idea of valuing 'Nature' in economic terms has risen to prominence on national and global agendas (see ten Kate and

Aurora Fredriksen, School of Environment, Education and Development, The University of Manchester, aurora.fredriksen@manchester.ac.uk

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http://valuationstudies.liu.se

Crowe 2014; Helm 2015) and in popular media representations of the value of nature (e.g. Adler 2013; Juniper 2013). In one of the fullest realisations of this move towards the economic valuation of non-human nature, new markets for biodiversity offsetting have started appearing as part of environmental governance and corporate responsibility schemes (see BBOP 2016). Excellent existing research on biodiversity offsetting has explored the *how* of new market-based valuations of biodiversity—the calculative manoeuvres, acts of abstraction and performative framings involved (e.g. Robertson 2012; Sullivan 2013a; 2014; Carver 2015; Carver and Sullivan forthcoming). As with other novel domains of economisation and marketisation, a number of scholars attribute this rise in market-based valuations of nature to advancing neoliberalisation and/or capitalist expansion into new frontiers (e.g. Brockington and Duffy 2011; Büscher and Fletcher 2015). By focusing on forces advancing from the outside, however, these arguments fail to recognise the ways in which the existing, non-market valuation practices in the field of biodiversity conservation have not simply been pushed aside, but have paved the way for the entry of new market-based valuations. In this article I argue that the rise of market-based valuations in the field of biodiversity conservation is *not only* a marker of advancing capitalism or neoliberalism, *but also* an extension of the ongoing orderings and reiterative performances of the non-market-based valuations of living things in the field of biodiversity conservation. That is, the rationalising and universalising aspirations of biodiversity conservation (as a hegemonic framework for guiding conservation science, policy and practice), *already enact* the values of living organisms and emplaced ecologies through the abstract categories of species and habitats, effecting a commensurability between places and things that facilitates new market-based valuation practices.

More specifically, I argue that biodiversity conservation—as science, policy and practice—abstracts the value of living organisms and emplaced ecologies from individuals and their irreducibly complex relations within emplaced lifeworlds, locating it instead at the level of the categories of species and habitats. This conceptual move, in turn, performs a condition of ethical commensurability between individual organisms and places, thereby prefiguring the equivalence of value between units of the same category needed to establish new markets for biodiversity. The article works through this argument as follows: after brief sections introducing biodiversity offsetting markets and contextualising the concepts of biodiversity and species, I look at the work that biodiversity conservation does to order the unruly proliferation of life on earth into abstract, universalising categories of species and habitat units, setting up the condition of exchangeability required by new biodiversity markets. I then consider the performative continuity between these prior, non-market valuation practices of

biodiversity conservation that locate the value of organisms and ecologies in abstract species and habitat units and new, market-based valuations in biodiversity markets. A concluding section briefly reflects on what attention to the links between existing valuation practices in biodiversity conservation and the rise of new biodiversity markets can add to critiques of the latter.

Before proceeding, there are a few things to note. First, in referring to biodiversity conservation, I mean to indicate the currently hegemonic assemblage[1] of mainstream biodiversity conservation policy and practice informed by the science of conservation biology (see Brockington et al. 2008; Braverman 2015a). Although they are not discussed here, there are, of course, other contemporary modes of wildlife conservation that involve different practices of valuation (see Marris 2011), including ones that perform value through care and responsibility for individual living organisms and particular places (e.g. van Dooren 2014) and ones that foster unruly becomings (e.g. Lorimer and Driessen 2013). Second, this article tends towards a focus on animals rather than other living organisms like plants, fungi or the great variety of single celled living organisms. This choice in part mirrors the priorities of biodiversity conservation, but it also mirrors my own interests in the ethics of our (human) relations with non-human animals (Fredriksen 2016; see also Haraway 2008; van Dooren 2014; Despret 2016).

New Markets for Biodiversity

In recent years, new markets for biodiversity have emerged in the form of species banks and offsetting schemes (see Fox and Nino-Murcia 2005; Benabou 2014; ten Kate and Crowe 2014). As in other areas where economic values are being assigned to non-human nature (see Helm 2015 for an extensive review of 'natural capital'), to achieve the commensurability between particular organisms and places necessary for exchange, the irreducible complexity (Braun 2008) of emplaced ecologies must be simplified and differences between individuals of the same species obscured. Indeed, a growing body of scholarship explores how new markets for biodiversity employ a great deal of simplification and abstraction in order to render bits of nature exchangeable with one another (e.g. Robertson 2012; Sullivan 2013a, 2013b; Carver and

[1] I use 'assemblage' here following from the French '*agencement*' (see, generally, Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Callon 2007), to indicate a coming together of things 'which are simultaneously human and nonhuman, social and technical, textual and material—from which action springs' (MacKenzie et al. 2007: 14–15). While the assemblage concept is often used to highlight emergence, multiplicity and indeterminacy—disordering—this incessant becoming is only one possible dynamic of an assemblage (Anderson and McFarlane 2011: 124). Assemblages may also tend towards stabilisation, normalisation and repetition—ordering (Dewsbury 2011).

Sullivan forthcoming). The consequences of this simplification and abstraction, in turn, have been criticised for the disposability they impose on actually living things and the associated ethical inadequacy of such responses to ecological destruction (see Yusoff 2011; Sullivan 2017).

Sian Sullivan's (2013b) discussion of the proposed offsetting scheme for barbastelle bats (*Barbastella barbastellus*) in southern England exemplifies this last point: in this case the proposed construction of a new power plant involving the degradation of a habitat where barbastelle bats currently live is proposed to be offset by the restoration of bat habitat at a future date, but, as Sullivan writes, '[i]t is difficult to know what the bats should do during the time lag between habitat impacts and on-site habitat creation' (Sullivan 2013b: 90). The suffering or death of individual barstabelle bats, however, is not a matter of concern for biodiversity offset markets: the ordering of individual living barstabelle bats and the great variety of emplaced ecological relations in which they are entangled into species and habitat units allows them to be exchanged with other individual animals categorised into the abstract species unit of *B. barbastellus* and other places framed as equivalent habitat units. Despite the violence done to actual lives, biodiversity offsets appear to satisfy the interests of marketised biodiversity conservation by performing a 'zero-net-loss' in pecuniary biodiversity conservation value (Sullivan 2013b). Thus, Sullivan concludes that this marketised version of biodiversity conservation works to devalue the lives of the actually living individual bats that will be displaced and possibly face death in the interval between habitat destruction and habitat 'restoration' (ibid.).

Research like Sullivan's is indispensable for showing the disturbing efficiency with which new biodiversity markets devalue actually living things and render individual animals killable. At the same time, in the spirit of further exploring these processes, I suggest that the way in which new biodiversity markets devalue actually living, individual organisms and make them killable is a difference in degree rather than kind from contemporary non-market biodiversity conservation practices. This is because the non-market-based valuations of biodiversity conservation *also devalue individual animal lives and render them exchangeable for others of the same kind*. In other words, the rise of market-based valuations of living things in new biodiversity markets can only partly be attributed to the incursion of economic values from outside of the biodiversity conservation assemblage (e.g. Büscher and Fletcher 2015); this is because the ability of economic values to gain purchase in the field of biodiversity conservation has been facilitated by the quality of exchangeability between individual living things already enacted by the non-economic, non-market-based valuations generated from within the biodiversity conservation

assemblage. As a first step in exploring the links between the non-economic valuations of living entities generated within the discourses and practices of biodiversity conservation and the economic valuation of animal lives in new markets for biodiversity, the following section briefly situates the concepts of 'biodiversity' and 'species'.

Biodiversity and Species in Conservation

While biodiversity conservation expressly locates value at three levels —species, genes and ecosystems—it is the species category, as Irus Braverman observes, that serves as 'the foundational ontological unit' by which life is known and calculated within conservation biology, the scientific discipline that informs biodiversity conservation (2015b: 185; see also Braverman 2015a; Lorimer 2015). It is not that genes and ecosystems don't garner significant attention as loci of value in biodiversity conservation, but rather that value at these levels is often calibrated in relation to the value of relevant species categories. This is apparent in the case of genetic diversity, which is valued in biodiversity conservation to the degree that it is useful for propagating valued species (Friese 2015), a point underlined by the framing of the value of preserving diverse genetic types in living populations or frozen 'gene banks' as an 'insurance policy' for endangered species (Soulé et al. 1986). Ecosystems, meanwhile, are increasingly being valued for the 'services' they provide for human society and economy (see Helm 2015). However, within biodiversity conservation (versus other versions of environmental science and governance) their value is still often framed as an effect of their ability to support a diversity of species (see, for example, EEC 1992). Alternately, the species category is sometimes promoted within biodiversity conservation as a foundational unit of genetic and ecosystem value, as when the IUCN describes species as 'the bearers of genetic diversity and the building blocks of ecosystems' (IUCN Red List n.d.). As well as the foundational ontological unit, then, the category of species also serves as a locus, and basic unit, of non-economic value in biodiversity conservation. Before exploring how this shaping of non-economic value facilitates market-based valuations in biodiversity conservation in more detail, however, it is useful to briefly contextualise the modern biodiversity conservation apparatus.

The primacy of the biodiversity concept and its associated use of the species unit as a universal, rationalising category for valuation is a relatively recent way of ordering the conservation of non-human nature. Early iterations of the modern conservation movement in late nineteenth-century North America were concerned with the specificities of the places and animals targeted for protection, attaching agency as sublime power to particular places and agency to some individual animals in various romantic (generally hunting-related)

narratives (Cronon 1996; see Taylor 2016 for a detailed history of this early iteration of conservation). As conservation became more scientifically oriented in the twentieth century, however, the focus began to shift from particular places to generalisable types of habitats and from specific emplaced groups of animals to biologically defined species. Through the 'Earth Day era' of the 1970s (Lemann 2013), however, the general categories of habitats and species continued in much of Western conservation practice to be focused through the particular: particular cases of emplaced environmental harm or threat, and on the tangible and affective connections between individuals and particular places and animals (see Rome 2013 on the tangibility of conservation causes in the 1970s; Lockwood 2012 on the 'affective legacy' of *Silent Spring*, a seminal conservation text from this period). The shift from places and animals to habitats and species, from the particular to the universal, was only more fully realised in subsequent decades with the rise of biodiversity as an organising force in conservation science and policy.

Brought to public attention by a group of scientists in the mid-1980s, the concept of biodiversity (short for 'biological diversity') was rapidly taken up in conservation discourse and practice following the signing of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 (CBD n.d.). Denoting the variety of life on earth at the level of species, genes and ecosystems (ibid.), biodiversity was first promoted as an organising framework for conservation science and policy as a means of rationalising its theretofore widely variable, piecemeal approaches to saving species (Takacs 1996). In other words, it was an express attempt to move away from the particular and affective impulses driving earlier conservation practices. Acting as what Bruce Braun (2006) calls a 'global nature' (see also Lorimer 2015), the biodiversity concept thus proposes a universal way to assess, rank and respond to—and thereby *to value*—conservation problems. In locating 'biodiversity value' at the level of species, genes and ecosystem types (CBD n.d.), biodiversity conservation seeks to rationally order organisms and emplaced ecologies into abstract categories that serve as separable and comparable units, which can then be rationally compared and evaluated to direct conservation action (Barad 2003; Lorimer 2015). By providing a universal language for discussing, and a framework for rational comparison of, non-human organisms and the ecologies where they live, the biodiversity concept attempts to remove the subjective, leaving behind what Jonathan Franzen (2015) calls the 'novelistic' character of conservation —that is, the particular, place-specific and affective, wherein 'No two places are alike, and no narrative is simple' (ibid.). To achieve this, biodiversity frames out the lively agencies of individual living animals in their particular interconnections with specific places, replacing the

irreducible complexities of individual organisms and specific places with the more manageable categories of 'species' and 'habitats'.

With its origins in Platonic forms and subsequent metaphysical systems of classification and taxonomy (Ghiselin 1997), the concept of species as it appears in biodiversity conservation is variously based on grouping organisms according to biological understandings of genetic or morphological similarities, evolutionary lineages and/or reproductive compatibilities. Critically, as Audra Mitchell (2016: 26) points out, despite differing on the specifics, these competing ways of defining species 'all treat species as categories that transcend the organisms, cells or genes that compose them, and that maintain integrity despite the perishing of these components'. Thus the species concept positions the worth of individual animals within the same species category as subordinate to the transcendent species type (Ansell-Pearson 1999; Smith 2014). This positioning, in turn, engenders a biopolitical dynamic within biodiversity conservation wherein governance techniques and technologies of administration and scientific expertise are used to separate valued lives from unvalued ones in pursuit of securing life at the level of species (on biopolitics generally see Foucault 2003; on biopolitics in conservation see for example Chrulew 2011; Friese 2013; Lorimer and Driessen 2013; Biermann and Mansfield 2014; Braverman 2015a, 2015b; Lorimer 2015; Fredriksen 2016). The following sections now turn to the question of *how* this positioning of value at the level of species is achieved in the valuation practices of biodiversity conservation.

The Ordering of Immanence in Biodiversity Conservation

The irreducible complexity and incessant movement of living ecosystems has been pointed out by various natural scientists interested in modes of thought such as complexity and uncertainty theories and non-equilibrium ecology (see DeLanda 2009 for an overview), as well as by the growing group of social theorists interested in vital materialities (e.g. Bennet 2010; Ingold 2011), relational ontologies (e.g. Law and Mol 2011; Latour 2016), and other more-than-human approaches (e.g. Braun 2008; Hinchliffe 2008; Lorimer 2012). These works all suggest that the trajectories of life, both human and non-human, are not wholly knowable in advance, but unfold in unpredictable 'manifold lines of becoming' (Ingold 2012: 347). This focus on immanence, whereby things and their character are never fixed, but always in the process of becoming (see Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Deleuze 1988; Massey 2005), challenges the ontological positivism assumed by biodiversity conservation's stable species and habitat units. Rather than the relatively stable and distinct types posited by the species category, an ontology of immanence

directs attention to the ongoing processes and unruly mixings of inventive life (Hinchliffe 2008; van Dooren 2014; Fredriksen 2016). The premise of immanence and its implication of life's inherently disordering tendencies to 'become otherwise' (Lorimer and Driessen 2013: 255; after Deleuze and Guattari 1987), however, do not foreclose the possibility that such immanence can be subject to reigning in and systematic denial through the orderings enacted by biodiversity conservation assemblages.

Pacifying lively agencies

In his work on economisation and marketisation, Michel Callon shows how entities brought into market relationships for exchange ('marketized') must be actively defined and valued (Çalıskan and Callon 2010). In the process of this defining and valuing, a divide is enacted and reproduced between 'the "things" to be valued and the "agencies" capable of valuing them' (ibid.: 5). As all entities involved are understood to have certain capacities depending on their relational entanglement with other entities, those that are to be valued for exchange in this divide must first have their agencies 'pacified': rendered stable so they are amenable to standardised calculations for exchangeability (ibid.). On the other side of this enacted divide are those entities with the capacity for calculating the value of that which is pacified. Which entities are pacified and which are enacted as capable of pacifying is a matter of the unequal distribution of power within market assemblages (ibid.).

The pacification of lively entities for exchange on biodiversity markets involves ordering market spaces such that certain things are emphasised within the frame of the market and others left out of or actively excluded from this frame (Hinchliffe et al. 2007; Sullivan and Hannis 2014). In conventional economics, the latter are referred to as externalities. The economic imagination of externalities is one that revolves around the categories of costs and benefits: if something is left out of a market it is either a cost or a benefit to some party outside that market. However, in recognition that many of the things framed out of markets cannot be readily understood as either costs or benefits —indeed, by virtue of their being left out of the frame many have not yet been subject to the processes of economisation by which they would be framed as such—Callon (e.g. 2007) has argued that externalities might be better understood as 'overflows'.

This framing process is apparent in the shaping of values for organisms and ecologies in biodiversity offsetting and species banking markets. In these novel formations, the agencies of living habitats and animals must be pacified so that they can be rendered into units of commensurable values for exchange. To do this, the irreducible complexity of specific ecosystems and differences between individuals of the same species must be left out of the market framing (becoming

overflows). However, while the valuations involved in biodiversity markets certainly advance this pacification process, they do not initiate it *ex nihilo*. Rather, they start from the species and habitat units established by biodiversity conservation, which *already* pacify the agencies of the lively organisms and irreducible complexities of ecological relationships that they represent.

Ordering devices and non-market valuations in biodiversity conservation

As noted above (see section on 'Biodiversity and Species in Conservation'), the valuation of animals in biodiversity conservation relies on the ordering of non-human animals into abstract species units. Categorising the great variety of living organisms and ecological relations into stable species and habitat categories renders these animals and ecologies systematically knowable, fixing them as subjects for scientific investigation and targets for generalisable policy action—*pacifying them*, in Callon's language (above). Indeed, assigning individual animals and ecologies to stable species and habitat categories, which can then be catalogued and ranked according to characteristics such as rarity or level of vulnerability, is one of the most prominent techniques by which biodiversity conservation establishes the relative value of different living things (Bowker 2005; Yusoff 2010). The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ (hereafter the IUCN Red List) is the largest and most influential of such catalogues, aspiring to consolidate and standardise knowledge of animals and ecologies on a global level, and thus serve as a universal tool for assessing the relative, non-economic values of different organisms and ecosystems in accordance with their position within a global picture of biodiversity (Braverman 2015b).

The work of ordering different organisms and habitats into generalised species and habitat categories for biodiversity cataloguing is significant. For a start, to be put into a species or habitat category, animals and ecologies have to be made present (Hinchliffe 2008). That is, they must be identified and described by science, assigned to a species or habitat category and enumerated. Notably the IUCN Red List is currently, in its own words, 'biased' towards animals rather than plants or fungi—not to mention single celled organisms like bacteria and protists—and, within the animal kingdom, towards terrestrial animals living in forest ecosystems (IUCN Red List n.d.). This speaks both to the way in which some organisms are more easily encountered by researchers, as well as to the persistence of non-rational, affective attachments to animals that are 'big like us' (Hird 2009) to the exclusion of 'unloved others' (Rose and van Dooren 2011).

Importantly, making things present in biodiversity catalogues (and therefore present as potential subjects of biodiversity conservation

more generally), makes other things absent (Callon and Law 2004; Hetherington 2004). Organisms that are not easily encountered, subjected to scientific examination, or enumerated are less likely to be made present as targets for biodiversity conservation through catalogues and databases like the IUCN Red List. At the extreme, there are some organisms—primarily single celled bacteria and protists—whose qualities make them particularly resistant to identification and stabilisation into species units for biodiversity conservation (see Lorimer 2006; Haraway 2008; Friese 2010). In line with biodiversity conservation's ideal of rationalising conservation, however, the IUCN Red List aspires to overcome its current 'gaps' in coverage, listing expanding taxonomic and geographic coverage as the first 'key result' sought in its Strategic Plan 2013–2020 (IUCN Red List Committee 2013). There are some organisms, however, whose absences from the IUCN Red List and other devices for biodiversity conservation surveillance are not understood as gaps, but which are instead intentionally excluded as targets of biodiversity conservation. This group includes organisms that are framed as 'invasive', 'non-native' or hybrid (and therefore 'unnatural'), all of which are framed in biodiversity conservation discourse as valueless threats to valued life (e.g. van Dooren 2011; Atchison and Head 2013; Fredriksen 2016).

In sum, the species unit in biodiversity conservation acts to pacify the lively agencies of living things so that they can be ordered into bounded categories of more or less valued life. Individual organisms are framed as being either inside or outside of species units, and the unruly tendencies of organisms to mix and unfold beyond stable species categories as well as differences between individuals within a species category are excluded from this frame (Grosz 2004; Lulka 2004; Hinchliffe 2008; Bear 2011; Mitchell 2016).[2] Biodiversity catalogues thus make organisms present for conservation by conceptually abstracting them from their messy lifeworlds and bringing them into stable species categories, which can be ranked according to various assessments of value, for example their rarity, phylogenetic distinctiveness, or level of endangerment. And, by positioning individual organisms as equivalent within species categories, biodiversity conservation's orderings pacify the agency of living things and establish the quality of interchangeability between individual living things that supports notions of commensurability

[2] Although it should be noted that within some spaces of biodiversity conservation, such as labs and captive breeding programmes, certain differences between individuals within a species do come to matter, namely differences at the level of genes, which are used to mark individual organisms as being more or less valuable to the continued life of the species (e.g. Haraway 2008; Friese 2015). Within these spaces the value of individuals of the same genetic type are equivalent in much the same way that individuals within the same species category are positioned as having equivalent value in the spaces of biodiversity catalogues.

necessary for exchange in species banking schemes and biodiversity offsetting markets. In other words, the ordering of life into the stable categories of species and habitats sets the stage for the market-based valuations of different organisms that circulate in new markets for biodiversity. This ordering, of course, is not simply a one-off achievement, it takes reiterative work. In such reiterative work, one can further detect a line of continuity linking new market valuations in biodiversity conservation with prior non-market valuations. The next section explores this reiterative work, considering it as an aspect of the performative quality of biodiversity conservation's valuation practices.

The Performativity of Biodiversity Conservation

Understanding the stabilisation of entities in terms of acts of 'performativity'—the proposition that reality is performed, or done, rather than observed (Mol 2002)—provides a further avenue for thinking through the links between market and non-market valuations in biodiversity conservation. As with the matter of pacifying agencies, the role of performativity in effecting values has been central to theorising economisation processes (e.g. MacKenzie et al. 2007). For Callon (1998) the concept is used to describe the ways in which economics and economists do not describe a pre-existing reality—'The Economy'—but instead participate in—'perform'—its making; they do so through their implication in the formatting of the relations between elements within assemblages that constitute markets and other economic entities (Callon 1998; Mitchell 2002; MacKenzie 2006; MacKenzie et al. 2007; Muniesa 2014). Similarly, in biodiversity conservation markets, assessments of the relative market values of different species and habitat types do not simply reflect some given reality about the relative worth of different species and habitats, but are actively involved in shaping these values (see Carver 2015; Carver and Sullivan forthcoming, for an exemplary case study of these processes). At the same time, as with pacifying agencies, biodiversity conservation markets do not performatively enact relative market values *ex nihilo*, but performatively reiterate the relative non-market values of species and habitats that are already being performed by non-market biodiversity conservation (see Butler 2010 for a longer discussion of the reiterative character of performativity). Thus the non-market values of habitats and species performed by biodiversity conservation will guide the market values: the habitats and species that are assigned high non-market values by conservation biology—for example due to their rarity or phylogenetic uniqueness—are those that will be assigned the highest market values in biodiversity offsetting markets (e.g. ten Kate and Crowe 2014). More fundamentally, market values in biodiversity conservation markets are performatively located at the level of species or habitat units, which reiterates the earlier performative locations of non-market value in biodiversity conservation.

The performativity of species as the locus of value in biodiversity conservation is performed both discursively (as speech act) and through biodiversity conservation practices. Discursively, the day to day language of biodiversity conservation is one wherein species (rather than individuals) are the locus of moral concern and the target of action. Rather than referring to animals as groups of individuals, for example by saying that Amur leopards are threatened by habitat destruction, there is a tendency in both advocacy practices and conventional speech to say 'the Amur leopard' is threatened by habitat destruction, referring to the species whole rather than to individual imperilled lives. This effectuation of moral worth at the species, rather than the individual, level is captured by Justin Smith (2014: n.p.) in his astute observation that 'we say that the Steller's sea cow was hunted to extinction, in much the same way we might say that the vicar has succumbed to gout'. Such commonplace speech acts are one basic site where the value of individual animals is performatively subverted to the species unit (cf. Derrida 2008; Bear 2011).

The law is another discursive site where the value of animals is performatively located in abstract, clearly defined species types. Elsewhere (Fredriksen 2016) I have written about the conservation of Scottish wildcats, in which the unruly mixings of wildcats and feral domestic cats threatens to destabilise the whole endeavour. After decades (and likely centuries) of interbreeding, conservation biologists are finding it nearly impossible to reliably say whether an individual wild-living cat in Scotland is a 'pure' Scottish wildcat or a hybrid. The difficulty conservationists encounter in stabilising a species type to target for 'Scottish wildcat conservation', however, hasn't stopped conservationists from pressing on with ever more sophisticated efforts to separate valued wildcats from devalued hybrids and even more devalued feral domestic cats. This is not simply a matter of blind ideology (though there is some of that in the mix), but also a pragmatic response to the current legal environment which affords strict protection for Scottish wildcats but allows hybrid and feral cats to be shot on sight (ibid.). Indeed, such constraints in the wider governance of biodiversity conservation, prominently including national and international legal regimes, generally afford protection for animals only at the level of clearly defined species (Braverman 2015a), thus acting as another site where the value of animals and other organisms is performatively located at the level of species.

As well as these discursive iterations, the value of living organisms is also performatively located at the level of species rather than individuals through the many fleshy encounters of biopolitical practices within biodiversity conservation, including the management of animal populations through culling 'for the good of the species' (Lulka 2004; Smith 2014); captive breeding programmes that subject individual animals to confinement, invasive procedures, forced

couplings, and euthanasia in the name of regenerating the species (Chrulew 2011; van Dooren 2014; Braverman 2015a); and the distribution of care and harm to individual organisms based on their categorisation as 'native' or 'invasive' species rather than an assessment of their particular actions and relationships (Marris 2011; van Dooren 2011).

Critically, in performatively subverting the value of individual organisms to the species unit, biodiversity conservation practices position individual animals as interchangeable with other individuals who are categorised as members of the same species. In deciding which animals are most representative of, or whose survival is most beneficial for, the species—and therefore most worthy of preservation—of course, biodiversity conservation experts and practitioners also performatively shape species. This is most evident in captive breeding programmes where animals are selected and bred according to stringent plans for maximising genetic diversity while maintaining an ideally designated and fixed species form (Haraway 2008; Braverman 2015a; Fredriksen 2016) and in the subset of these programmes focused on genetic technologies, wherein animals who possess genetic types that 'don't "give back" to the population'—because they are common or 'redundant'—are characterised by those working in biodiversity conservation as embodying 'forms of waste' (Friese 2015: 165). The species category is also performatively shaped in biodiversity conservation practices in less immediate ways, as through the management of in situ populations of protected species with practices such as limiting spatial ranges, providing supplemental feeding, administering vaccines or other medications, and culling or sterilising 'problem' animals like hybrids or others that are perceived to threaten the viability of the ideal species form (Lulka 2004; Braverman 2015a; Fredriksen 2016).

The case of Hawaiian crows (*Corvus hawaiiensis*) provides one final and particularly evocative example of such performative valuation practices in biodiversity conservation. Van Dooren (2016) shows how the valuing of the Hawaiian crow species unit—as defined by a fixed, ideal genetic type—in captive breeding programmes is proceeding at the expense of particular crow cultures, which are not being—cannot be—learned in captive breeding sites. This loss is a low priority for the conservation of *C. hawaiiensis*, the species as a genetic type and on which biodiversity conservation places value. In Thom van Dooren's analysis this problematic focus on the species as defined through genetic type puts 'ways of being in the world … at stake' (2016: 36). In terms of the present discussion, crow culture is being framed out of crow conservation and becomes an overflow from this conservation assemblage centred on the value of species (defined through genetic identity). While this overflow could destabilise the *C. hawaiiensis* conservation assemblage if, for example, lost crow cultures limit

crows' ability to survive outside the captive breeding facility, it is perhaps more likely that it will not do so. Instead, the continued existence of animals with the genetic make-up of *C. hawaiiensis* in the world, whether wild-living or held indefinitely in captive facilities, will likely mark this conservation effort as a success through the hegemonic discourse of biodiversity conservation.

Conclusion

The framing of specific animals and places as commensurable species or habitat units in biodiversity markets renders them interchangeable with similarly framed units of equal value such that they can be swapped for another without losing value through the exchange. This new mode of valuation in biodiversity conservation, with its premise of 'zero-net-loss' has generated much thoughtful critique (e.g. Yusoff 2011; Büscher et al. 2012; Sullivan 2013b, 2017). As I have argued throughout this article, however, while the register of value—economic value circulated in biodiversity markets—is new to biodiversity conservation, the rendering of individual animals and places as units of species and habitats on which the commensurable values of new markets are based, is not. Rather, new markets for biodiversity conservation are new iterations of longer-standing performative valuings of animals in biodiversity conservation practice that subsume the value of individuals to that of the species.

This is not to argue that market iterations of biodiversity conservation are not more worrying than non-market iterations. New markets for biodiversity simplify and accelerate the performance of interchangeability between living entities and they promote a discourse that holds that if things are not assigned economic values then there is no way to prevent their degradation. Thus the deployment of economic valuation and markets in the field of conservation is often justified as the most viable way of making conservation 'count' (Helm 2015). The inverse of this narrative, of course, is that if things don't have economic value, they are worthless (see Sullivan 2014, 2017). Thus in new markets for biodiversity, the calculation of values for living things has the effect that 'paradoxically and against the avowed intent of those calculating, the valued entities which emerge, although more quantitatively defined … [appear] more disposable than ever' (Bracking et al. 2014: 2). To return to the case of Sullivan's (2013b) barstabelle bats, for example, the proposed offset is designed in such a way that value is measured only at the point of exchange: the value of the bats being displaced or killed by the new development is calculated at the point of securing the offset and thus the lost value of the original bats paid for; the future fate of these bats and their potential replacements at the offset site will not retrospectively change the market values established at the point of exchange.

It is clear that the market valuation of living things in biodiversity conservation markets heightens the risk that living organisms will be devalued through the very practices aimed at valuing them and should thus be resisted. What I have argued here, however, is that resisting the devaluation of living things and fostering relations of care and responsibility in conservation practice require more than resisting the economic valuation of living things in biodiversity conservation markets; they also require resisting the non-economic value orderings of biodiversity conservation that subordinate the value of individual living things to abstract species units and frame the irreducible complexities of emplaced ecologies as interchangeable habitat types. They require resisting the pull of the rational and universal and attending to the novelistic aspects of emplaced conservation—'staying with the trouble' to borrow from Donna Haraway (2016)—in order to encourage multispecies flourishing (Collard et al. 2015).

In exploring just one field where new economic valuations are gaining purchase—that of biodiversity conservation—this article has explored how attention to different types of valuation practices, economic or not, might help us to look more thoughtfully at ostensibly new forms of valuation, and their relationship to previous valuations, in other sites of newly economised public policy and environmental management. In this article I have identified a line of continuity between the modern scientific orderings and performativities of value at the abstract level of species and new market orderings of value in the field of biodiversity conservation. Investigation of other sites where novel market valuations are taking hold might turn up different relationships between existing and new valuation assemblages. But in all cases I suspect a careful unpacking of valuation practices of different types will prove useful in understanding what, exactly, is at stake and where resistance might most tactically be aimed.

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Aurora Fredriksen is a Simon Research Fellow in Geography at the University of Manchester's School of Environment, Education and Development. Her research is concerned with more-than-human geographies of care, affect and assemblage in the empirical contexts of biodiversity conservation and other human relationships with wildlife and emplaced ecologies. She has previously explored similar themes in the empirical settings of contemporary practices of humanitarian and development aid.

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Research Note

Watching Valuation Coevolve with Production

Christopher Leary

Abstract

This research note uses interviews and observations of anthology editors to explore how valuation practices shift depending on the stage of anthology construction. In the textual environment described here, editors tended to value texts related to their own lives during the early stages of construction. Later on in the process, editors sought texts related to the texts they had already gathered. In this later stage, editors performed "constant comparison," scanning texts for concepts related to concepts identified in previously acquired texts. The research note also describes the complex relationship between editors' valuation and writers' production. Valuation trends became known to writers, who then shifted their production practices, which became known to editors, who then shifted their editorial practices, which became known to writers, and so on. The note concludes with speculative commentary on implications for other fields such as art collecting.

Key words: editing; circulation; writing; texts; teaching; anthologizing

Each semester at Queensborough Community College, the students in my introductory writing classes construct anthologies from their classmates' impromptu writing, which puts me in a good position to witness texts being produced, categorized, hidden, translated, circulated, interpreted, traded, and finally displayed in a table of contents. Watching editors edit is fun and long before I sensed the research opportunity, I consumed it as a spectacle (see Muniesa and

Christopher Leary, Queensborough Community College, City University of New York, cleary@qcc.cuny.edu

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Helgesson 2013). Like the audience of *The Price is Right* watching contestants guess the price of refrigerators, I like watching editors scrutinize the texts they encounter. And like viewers who yell at the TV while watching *Love Connection*, I get frustrated by "mistakes" in valuation.

I had one student named Layla,[1] for example, who produced fascinating impromptu writing that I looked forward to reading. Her hastily-written texts cursed, complained, and lashed out at real and imaginary foes, before walking it all back and blaming herself, then finishing things off with a nihilistic punch line. In the absence of prescribed genre conventions, Layla invented her own. Whenever her writing became available for acquisition by her classmates, I expected a bidding war to ensue. Her texts had that relatability that editors said they were looking for. Good penmanship, too, almost artistic. But I came to realize that just because her writing was valuable to me didn't mean it would be valuable to her peers, and more often than not her texts would languish on the surplus pile, underappreciated.

Moments like these sparked me to investigate why texts move when and where they do, so in 2016, I began to track student texts as they moved in and out of edited collections. Two main sources help me to track the texts: (1) introductory prefaces written by students after they finish the anthologies; and (2) "editor logs" written by students as the process unfolds. The latter are especially revealing because they offer fresh accounts from editors as they keep certain texts and trade away others.

Case Study: Editors Editing

My approach derives from "new materialist" methods elaborated by scholars like Brennan Breed (2014) and Laurie Gries (2015), both of whom highlight material dimensions of texts (what texts do and what is done to them) while downplaying representational dimensions (what texts mean). To access the material dimensions, both Breed and Gries zoom out from the scale of individual texts to larger scales where texts form alliances with other objects, weave in and out of rhetorical formations, and become transformed in the process. Breed, a biblical scholar, tracks the transformation of Job 19:25–27 during its encounters with different regions of the world; depending on circumstances, the passage will experience translation, elaboration, redaction, and/or preservation. He compares his tracking of Job 19:25–27 to research performed by nomadologists who study the cultures of nomadic people. "One must follow the tracks through the steppe," he writes, "and watch for patterns of movement and action that always change over time and space" (Breed 2014: 203). Gries, for her part, concentrates on the "multitude of activities" that visual

[1] Students' names have been changed.

rhetoric participates in "when it circulates and engages in a multiplicity of associations" (Gries 2015: 101–102). In order to elaborate a technique she calls "iconographic tracking," Gries followed the Obama Hope image as it circulated with great velocity and consequence during the 2008 election season.

Unlike Job 19:25–27 and the Obama Hope image, the texts that circulate in my class typically resemble the tomatoes studied by Heuts and Mol (2013) in that they are "neither exotic nor politically hot" (2013: 127). At the end of every class period, I ask my students (often tired and hungry students with varying skill and enthusiasm) to anonymously write at least half a page on any topic they want. I collect these texts as they walk out the door and whoever makes it on time to the following class is rewarded with a random text written by an anonymous classmate.[2] These random texts can be kept if they want them or traded away if they don't. To facilitate the trading of texts, I oversee a simple market with "fake" money as the medium of exchange.[3] By the end of the semester, punctual students accumulate around 25 texts, they arrange those texts in a table of contents, and they write an introductory preface that explains their selection criteria.

One editor, for instance, noticed "First World Problems" recurring in the texts he encountered. Even though he "got kind of annoyed by my classmates' complaints," he was interested enough to keep pursuing it, partly because "I do the same thing sometimes." Eventually, he assembled a collection of texts that "complain about the weather, not doing good on a test, not finding the television remote, stuff like that." Another editor named Kathy said that when she began to gather texts from her classmates, she "had no idea what theme I would try to develop." She felt "very lost" but "by the time I gathered around five texts, I noticed that people like to write about emotion." After that, she began to "check the texts very carefully for ideas about emotion and eventually found fifteen, which I divided into 3 subsections: personal emotions, emotions related to family, and emotions related to love."

For Kathy and her fellow editors, timing is everything. *When* they encounter a text is often just as important as *what* the text says. Two distinct phases of editorial valuation stand out in their logs.

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[2] To my great relief, this actually works in terms of getting students to come on time to class. Students at this branch of City University of New York often have multiple obligations competing with school—jobs, kids, elderly parents—so attendance problems are unrelenting.

[3] More on the market: If Jerry is building a collection of texts called "Romantic Entanglements," but he receives a text about agriculture, he can use the market to trade away his agriculture text in exchange for "cash" which then can be used to purchase a text closer to his romantic entanglements theme.

- In phase 1, editors sought texts that related to their own lives.
- In phase 2, editors sought texts related to the texts they had already gathered.

In phase 1, early on in the semester, editors felt unsure of what kind of collection they wanted to build and therefore found it difficult to place value on texts. Some succumbed to paralysis, including one editor named Isaiah who refused to part with any texts during this time because he "was worried about losing valuable pieces that have tons of potential which I haven't seen yet." He didn't want to make the mistake made by a classmate who said that she "traded away, for some reason, this beautifully-worded story of a person remembering lost love." Exaggerating somewhat, she wrote, "My heart never mended, as if I gave away my firstborn."

In the absence of reference points to guide assembly of classmates' writing, most editors sought "relatable" texts that seemed connected to *their own lives*. For example, Matthew reported:

> Some texts were special, ones that I knew for sure will never be traded. Like the text that showed me I wasn't the only one feeling uneasy about our school environment with so many people who keep to themselves. Like me, my classmate feels lost in a new environment with new people. Back in my native country, it was easy to make friends because we speak the same language and share the same cultural background. Migrating to the United States has changed everything. I'm not sure if this has made me shy but I find it more difficult to talk to new people and often I just remain silent.

Matthew treasured his classmates' text because it confirmed what was already on his mind. Other editors, such as Diana, placed value on texts that reminded them what they forgot: "Whoever wrote 'Choose Now' sparked an awakening in me because I have been so focused on college, what I want, and stress about bills that I forgot God is taking care of me." In both cases uptake and retention centered around the relationship between a particular text and the editor's own life.

Midway through the semester, one student named Johanna noticed how abundant these "relatable" texts had become and wondered if it was her own example that went viral.

> Throughout the semester, in my freewriting pieces, I wrote about my day and my feelings in hope of influencing others to do the same. I am not sure if I am the one who started the journaling trend but halfway through the semester I realized that the majority of pieces I encountered seemed like diary or journal entries.

Sensing that our mini-society was miniature enough for her to mold, Johanna intentionally produced and circulated the types of texts she wanted to be surrounded by, and by her account, succeeded. Her speculation on the power of her own example evokes the findings of

Barbara Herrnstein Smith (1988), who wrote about the accumulation of social power by influential artworks. According to Herrnstein Smith, a canonical text does not merely survive and stay relevant, it acts to "shape and create the culture in which its value is produced and transmitted and for that very reason to perpetuate the conditions of its own flourishing" (1988: 50). Johanna speculates that her own writing could ascend to canonical power at the miniature scale of our classroom.

Another possibility is that alert writers sensed how valuable these "relatable" texts had become to editors and then shifted their style accordingly. A student named Katrina, for instance, noticed that her abstract, philosophical writing was "still being exchanged between classmates" during our bimonthly markets. Her impromptu writing could not find a home in any of her classmates' collections and it bugged her. "This freewriting clearly isn't my strong suit," she wrote, "but I'll try." The rest of the piece describes her adoption of a cat with special needs: "I love the fact that I'm adopting a special needs animal. They are always the least adopted when they could be happy living such simple lives." I happen to prefer her more abstract writing from earlier in the semester, but her warm and fuzzy "wobbly cat" reflection was probably quickly acquired.

Not all writers were as cooperative as Katrina. One ironic contrarian named Gary began to produce cold, "unrelatable" texts so he could later retrieve them from the proverbial ash heap:

> I noticed that when I write about something boring or something people can't relate to, it always filters back into the surplus pile. So I started writing boring, unrelatable texts such that I might easily come across them in the surplus pile. Hopefully this very text I am writing right now gets returned to the surplus pile so I can add it to my growing pile of my own writing.

Although Gary rebelled against the emergent value system, most did not and the sheer volume of "relatable" texts posed a problem for editors who resist that form of appeal. One curmudgeonly editor describes his defenses being broken down:

> As I amass a pile of writings, it's evident that my peers really like to talk about themselves. At first, I would roll my eyes when I'd get another story about someone's day. My initial reaction was to trade them in, get rid of them as soon as possible. But they've started to make me smile. Especially the ones about a small pug named "Chestnut," which the writer received as a gift from a family member. As my classmate trains "Chestnut," she exclaims, "I think my pug puppy and I could not only be family but also friends!" This warmed my heart in a way because I know what it is like to train a puppy.

Here we see an editor's selection criteria coevolving with the production practices of writers. To contend with the available

resources, he calls upon a more sentimental side of himself. Just as the decisions made by editors filter down to the production practices of writers, decisions made by writers filter up to the editorial practices of editors.

Phase 2: Constant Comparison

As I mentioned above, "relatable" texts lost some of their appeal as the semester neared its end. With the due date approaching, editors focused less on finding texts they could relate to and more on fleshing out subthemes within their tables of content. Instead of seeking texts related to their own lives, they sought texts related to *the texts they had already gathered*. In other words, they practiced "constant comparison," a term I borrow from social science research, particularly grounded theory.

Constant comparison refers to an inductive process whereby researchers code incoming data with attention to data they have already coded (Charmaz 2014: 342). Sifting through a set of transcribed interviews, "grounded theorists" will code each passage in terms of themes that they have previously identified. In the latter stages of building their collections, editors in my class do the same thing. When I randomly hand them a text at the beginning of class, they immediately scan it for connections to the themes they have previously identified. I don't have to tell them to do it; it is simply the obvious thing to do.

Zyanna nicely captured the shift to constant comparison: "Instead of just accumulating a whole bunch of texts that I like, I want to start trading them in for texts that's about my topic and what I am interested in finding out about." Another editor named Stefan explained how his perspective changed between "phase 1" and "phase 2":

> At the beginning, I didn't know what texts to keep because my direction was hazy, so I mostly went with texts that I could relate to. Now, though, relatability isn't quite as big an issue. Yes, I enjoy my classmates' writing when it shows their perspectives, devotions, and ways of thinking. But even when I enjoy it, I trade it away if it doesn't fit into one of my categories.

The shift in values described by Stefan is consistent, again, with the findings of Herrnstein Smith, who explained that different features of a text become more visible to readers as their interests and resources change. As new features become visible, readers respond with new valuations (Smith 1988: 48). Indeed, as the valuation landscape shifted, editors traded away texts that they once deemed valuable. "After the patterns have presented themselves," Shameka wrote, "you have to eliminate the odd ones."

As in phase 1, alert writers caught on to the shifting rubrics of their classmates, and they began to target subcategories in their classmates'

tables of content. For example, one altruistic student named Norma noticed that her friend had a really thin collection of texts because of her poor attendance. To help her friend, Norma started writing about her friend's subthemes every day, even writing multiple texts at the end of class instead of just one. She asked me if she could bypass the normal distribution channels and give the texts directly to her friend, so that other editors couldn't intercept. (I agreed. Why thwart generosity?)

Another altruistic writer named Marcy similarly targeted a subtheme of her classmate's collection. Upon hearing that a classmate sought texts about "connections," Marcy wrote something that would fit right in with that and even called out to the editor in question: "I am writing this for the person trying to expand her category called 'Connections.' School is the biggest connection machine because so many people leave their familiar homes for faraway places just to go to school." The text goes on from there, developing her point about school as a connector. In addition to supporting the editor who aspired to saturate her "Connections" section, this strategy benefitted Marcy as well—it feels good to know your writing will probably find a good home.

Conclusion: Constant Comparison by Established Collectors

What could possibly compel a man to kill for art? This disturbing question provides the basis for a 2010 episode of *White Collar*, a middle-brow television program about the surprisingly sexy world of financial crime. The episode opens with two handsome detectives (who could not be more different) puzzling over this mystery: unconnected owners of identical elephant sculptures have been murdered. Long story short: the detectives come to realize that the killer sought to round out his collection of "jade elephant" sculptures. He owned three of the five in the set and was willing to kill to get the other two.

Anthologists, art collectors, archivists, and social scientists assess new material based partly on what they have already acquired. This valuation practice, while recognized by the imaginative writing team at *White Collar*, is not always appreciated by experts on the art market. For example, in his authoritative book titled *The Value of Art,* Michael Findlay (2014) argues that there are five attributes that make a specific artwork valuable: provenance, condition, authenticity, exposure, and quality (2014: 36–48). Findlay's argument is largely persuasive, except for the fact that his list completely ignores constant comparison—the importance of what a collector has already acquired.

Although my research site involves somewhat eccentric circumstances (inexperienced editors working with hastily-written texts), I hope it "builds on and resonates" with the findings of Findlay,

Heuts, Mol, and Herrnstein Smith, "while adding its own specificities," thus leaving scholars better equipped "to study valuing (valuation, evaluation, valorisation, etc.) in the next site" (Heuts and Mol 2013: 139–140). While Herrnstein Smith (1988) has written extensively about coevolving valuation and production in the context of literary canon formation, circulation of texts, at that scale, occurs among institutions as much as it does among individuals. At the more "human-sized" scale of anthology construction and collection building, researchers like myself can easily ask participants what's going on.

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Christopher Leary is an Assistant Professor of English at Queensborough Community College, Queens, NY. He has published articles in the Journal of Basic Writing and the Basic Writing e-Journal.

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From Valuation to Instauration: On the Double Pluralism of Values

Antoine Hennion

Abstract

At the request of Valuation Studies, Antoine Hennion reflects on his own investigative trajectory as a way to explore the ways in which the sociology of attachment, which lies at the heart of his pragmatist approach, can refine our understanding of a number of recurring problems with which the sociology of valuation is confronted.

Key words: attachment; value; constructivism; amateurs; pragmatism; James; Latour; Souriau

I have been struck by the ruthless collective self-criticism in 21 points written by the editorial board of *Valuation Studies* in 2014 under an expressive title: 'Valuation Studies [no italics…] and the Critique of Valuation' (2014: 87-96). I will thus echo some debates that took place in previous issues, as the journal invites us to do, rather than pretending to contribute to a ready-made frame of analysis: no such thing exists. Mostly, it is not wanted. Notably, points 14 to 17 of this editorial note were seriously questioning some trends already taken by VS in its understandable effort to focus on specific matters. Heavily drawing on authors defending pluralistic ontologies, as Haraway and Latour, or, recently, Scott and Puig della Bellacasa, the Board raised issues very close to my own concerns about the value of things: a plea for considering attachments rather than values, in order to counter the idea of liberal choices made between clear alternatives; a redefinition of objectivity as what we are the more committed with, not the more detached from; the necessary involvement of valuers into ongoing situations that they themselves help perform. Finally, a plea was

Antoine Hennion, MINES ParisTech, PSL Research University - CSI - Centre de sociologie de l'innovation, antoine.hennion@mines-paristech.fr

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explicitly made with activism: a politically decentered care does not only concern human beings, but the world, and any fragile entities: if she had to rethink valuation, no doubt Haraway (2016) would speak of a 'becoming-with', rather than of measuring and preserving a resource for our own sake.

Here I will not address the emphasis put on economics in many VS papers: the editors rightly consider economization as a crucial matter of concern in the present time. Discussing it is legitimate in VS, and VS is an appropriate place to do so. Among the other trends pinpointed in the editorial note, I will discuss two of them, maybe less explicit and more pernicious: a shift from coping with the value of things to describing valuation as an activity; and still, in this description, a stress put on technical devices rather than on a global approach of valuation as work. This implies first, the risk of reinforcing the opposition between valuation and the thing valued; and second, the risk of reducing the necessity of taking objects into account to such devices. In fact, these two trends are connected. One may assume them, in what I would consider a restricted STS perspective, that a slogan as the following one could catch up: "Valuation studies are not dealing with values but with valuing." In other terms, they should not be directly concerned by the value of things but by how valuations are made. To me, such a stance does not refer so much to the long-run debate on facts and values (Dewey 1939; Vatin 2017) or to the famous Parsons' Pact on value and values (Stark 2009: 7), as to a long-standing problem in social analyses: the role granted to objects. To take valuation only as an activity amounts to maintain a dualist conception staging a human action operating on passive things. But then, how and to what extent can we grant objects agency?

Drawing on my background in STS, my work on music and amateurs, and the sociology of attachments I try to elaborate, I will relate the present issue on the status of valuation to the ambiguous notion of social construction, which tends to evacuate the objects in question in favor of human practices; I will lean on amateurs' experience in order to learn more about other forms of 'valuing things'; defending the necessity of the present ontological turn, I will indicate how it may also be of help here to specifically resort to James' pragmatism (1912): far from defining a pluralistic perspectivism on inert objects, this amounts to sketching a conception of valuation as a co-sustainment of plural worlds 'in process of making'.

A Sociology of Attachments

How then can current debates on *valuation* benefit from lifelong experience in the sociology of *attachments*?[1] In many ways, probably. I began my career by analysing hit parades and charts in popular music (Hennion and Vignolle 1978). Music also features quite prominently in the problem of prices and markets. Take this question, for example: why does not the price of recordings first depend on the music itself or the artist, but mostly on the material medium? Or this one: why is there not something comparable to the art market for musical works? Those idiosyncrasies are certainly a challenge for economic sociology. Conversely, in contrast to those peculiarities, music is certainly a rich field for the study of varied forms of assessment and valuation, from international competitions, grand prizes and school juries (McCormick 2015), to highly diverse forms of media and literary criticism. If I take music as a case study, indeed valuing, prizing, estimating, rating and marking is everywhere. Even the fact that ranking or pricing music is not that easy is interesting from that perspective.

But as I said, I will not borrow questions, concepts and arguments from the sociology of valuation and apply them to music or wine (Hennion 2015a), or care (Hennion and Vidal-Naquet 2017) or other forms of attachment. My point is to insist on the resistance of things. I rather see valuation as a way of sustaining their openness and not of domesticating their plurality. The reason why, from my beginnings in sociology, I was interested in music is precisely that I was highly frustrated by the inability of the social sciences to take into account its quality. What is the meaning of dealing with music, if you meticulously avoid addressing the only issue that matters for any music lover—i.e. is it good or not? The word 'value' itself is highly problematic here, so heavily loaded with paralysing dualisms: good/bad vs true/false, normative vs descriptive, or conceptual vs empirical (Abbott 2016), and, more specifically with regard to the social sciences, 'value' vs 'values', following Parsons' Pact. The point has been thoroughly discussed in VS. So, in the steps of Stark's shift to 'worth', why not drop the word value and go back to the question behind it? The question, as Stark puts it, is: what counts? If we understand 'valuing' as 'making things count', and if we try to apply this to empirical sociological inquiries, then the notion is very close to what I am after with the notion of 'attachments': what we hold to and what holds us; but also and mostly, a way of keeping unseparated our objects of attachment and our ways of keeping us attached to them (Hennion 2007). This is what I would like to explore by outlining some

[1] An earlier version of this text was presented at the From Prices to Prizes and Vice Versa workshop held in Bologna, 13-14 January 2017, organized by David Stark and Elena Esposito as part of the Performances of Value project and sponsored by The Leverhulme Trust.

problematic issues—problematic insofar as they lead to more or less radical reconsideration of what the social sciences and social inquiry consist (see also Hennion 2016).

Social Sciences in Trouble when Confronted to Objects

For sure, things have troubled the social sciences from their very origins (Latour 2005). But the problem is even more serious now, when new issues as diverse as climate, gender, health, markets and finance, or energy and access to natural resources, migrations and war all take the form of open realities, uncertain, inextricably engaging science and technology, ethics and law, politics and economics (Latour 2013; Haraway 2016) . What is left then to a purely social analysis, taking all objects *either* as natural things out of its scope, *or* as signs, stakes, beliefs, or even constructions, that need to be returned to their social foundation? Be it in a top-down model, as in critical sociology, or in a bottom-up one, as in labelling theory, can sociologists continue to stop at the point where they show that things are not what they are, but what we pretend or believe they are? As science and technology studies and pragmatic sociology have shown, from different angles, to answer 'no' requires that we radically revise sociology, in order to make it less dissymmetrical, and at last capable of properly taking objects into account: to me, this is the hidden stake lying behind the 'value issue'.

But giving more space to objects is not a side issue. Even if we speak of construction, if we insist on instruments and devices, if we describe assemblages and elaborate on performativity (Callon 1998; Callon et al. 2007; MacKenzie et al. 2007; Muniesa 2014), we still run a high risk of emphasizing the collective action of human beings, while letting things observe us from their passivity. It is not only a matter of *building* things, then, but of having them exist more—exactly what 'valuing' says better: things only exist to the extent that they are worth something, to the extent that they are 'for' something. But what for, then? Are we to get back to the old 'value issue' we wanted to escape from? And not only that: reciprocally, what if objects make us as much as we make them? What if 'valuing' them (recognizing, materializing, testing what they are worth) also means that, as their own agency overflows our action to make them exist, they in turn 'value' us and make us exist more (individually or collectively), in the uncertainty of worlds still to come?

Were We *Really* Constructivists?

There is a crucial factor here, which is that of recognizing in objects this 'making' of things, both the fact that they are made and the fact that they make their making. This is a making that cares for things and

does not oppose them (does not denaturalize or deconstruct them) because they are fabricated—the latter being quite a different aim, that of social constructivism. This moment of divergence and explication was a very important one for the tradition I contributed to in the past, that is, for this 'us' that links me to my colleagues at the CSI (Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation) in Paris, known to many as the birthplace of actor–network theory (ANT). At the beginning the theme was confused, the question difficult and open to all sorts of misunderstandings. Bruno Latour, a crucial part of that 'us', suggested various solutions for extricating ourselves. One was to contrast constructivism as such to social constructivism, call it 'constructionism' and not 'constructivism'. Another was to talk instead of 'fabrication', of 'factishes', these hard *facts* that positivists were throwing at us but whose very name carried the mark of them being actually *made* (Latour 2009). The word 'pragmatism' no doubt helped us realize that in reality we were not constructivists *at all*, in the sense of 'the social construction of'. Of course, initially, every sociological move is constructivist in the broad sense of the term. Faced with its object, whether it is art, religion, truth, morality or culture, sociology shows that it is historical, that it depends on a time and a place, that it is conveyed via corporeal practices and that it varies according to context, that it has procedures, that it is underpinned by convention, that it is supported by institutions. The initial move of a sociological enterprise is certainly to show the believer how belief is produced, as Bourdieu claimed (1980).

Doing sociology necessarily means that you, to some extent, partake in the original constructivism of the discipline. On the topics of science and culture, we thus travelled along with sociologies very different from our own, as long as it was a matter of being opposed to the absolutism of truth in itself, or the beauty of 'Art for Art's sake'. But as we went further, our use of the same term—constructivism—came to designate two divergent paths: showing that things are constructed, *and that therefore they are nothing* (to be more precise: that, for instance for critical sociology, they are everything, absolute when they relate to science; and they are nothing, purely arbitrary signs when they relate to culture). Or, on the other hand, giving things themselves a role to play in these matters. We, of course, were following the second path. And we first had to understand ourselves, and then make understood at what point this path radically departed from what is generally understood as constructivism, whether it is Bourdieu's version or that of the linguistic turn, the one put forward in the sociology of scientific knowledge, a large part of science and technology studies, or cultural studies. From a common starting point, the paths go in completely opposite directions.

Obviously, things do not have an inherent nature. The work of the social sciences is to show their *instauration*. But once this is done, the next question that arises is even more arduous, a decisive bifurcation that Latour expressed admirably with his 'factishes'. Does this fabrication of things have to be played out *against* them or *with* them? Why not treat the objects in question in the same way that Bourdieu repeatedly treats bodies, collectives or apparatuses (but notably not objects)? Why not see them as beings in formation, open, resistant, making each other in a reciprocal fashion, acting reflexively on those who cause them to come into being? The social sciences will remain at the threshold of this new territory as long as they maintain at any price their two founding intangible distinctions—between human action and the agency of objects, and between social interpretation and natural realities—the very distinctions that ANT had challenged (Latour 2005).

Not to throw the baby (sociology) out with the bathwater (sociologism) is a real issue. The stake is not to return to 'deeper', eternal philosophical questions, but to improve our ways of making social inquiries after having borrowed (as far as I am concerned, in a minimal dose!) what is imperiously needed (and only that) from other modes of thinking, such as philosophy. Why is philosophy 'needed' here? Precisely because in breaking Parsons Pact—and thus, beyond this, in reconsidering Durkheim's foundational gesture (see Hennion 2015b, ch. 1)—whether we want to or not, we once again have to face questions of ontology: exactly the ones that positivism and scientism succeeded in chasing away. For sure, this is a demanding task. It is the price to pay to regain a capacity of coping with worthwhile objects.

Attachments to Objects Rather than Values of Things

At first glance, attachments are very close to what have been elaborated as 'values' in sociology. At the same time, I use the word precisely because it goes in an opposite direction. What attaches us, and what we are attached to is everything but an abstract, dualist, a priori or arbitrary choice made by a free subject. The word is a breaker of dualisms: first between objectivity and the social (Latour 2005; Daston and Galison 2007), but also between the passive and active modes (Gomart and Hennion 1999; Hennion 2017). To hold to something is a relationship which is fundamentally reciprocal. Be it about love, taste or political opinion—or smoking, as in Latour's Mafalda (Latour 1999)—it is not that easy to say who holds what or what holds whom, what is determining and what is determined. Attachment is neither a cause nor an effect; it is rather an action and its results, *seized together*, a performance. One is not attached without doing many things; in that sense it is very active, but most of those actions are unable to directly produce a result: as a musical

enchantment, it is never the sole effect of voluntary purposes. Rather, their value precisely emanates from the fact that they cannot be reduced to their causes. When such things emerge (or do not emerge), they exceed the efforts made to make them happen (Hennion 2007).

Finally, it means that attachments are highly political: by using the word, I also advocate making social inquiries on sensitive matters and things that count for people and thus require making choices; to fight against other choices, and to engage in favour of actions made in order to make things better.

The Amateur's Lesson

Objects have their own presence. They make themselves by making us. What a mysterious relationship: works that we create, that we fabricate, that escape us and come back changed! The amateur is the *lover*, not the layperson. Amateurs are experts in this consequential testing of objects they are passionate about. They confront them; they do whatever is necessary to test and feel them (in French, *éprouver* has these two meanings), and they thus accumulate an experience that is always challenged by the way in which these objects deploy their effects. Rather than experts, they are experimenters, *éprouveurs*, or even, why not, 'valuers', as long as we take them not just as experts, but as active producers of value? It is from this perspective that I would like to draw on amateurs and go back to the issue of taste: both taste as an appreciation of things, and as what comes about via the act of appreciation itself. In other words, I take taste less as an object of study, than as an experience to be approached (Hennion 2007).

Amateurs are not believers caught up in the illusion of their belief, indifferent to the conditions under which their taste came about. On the contrary, their most ordinary experiences are those of doubt and hope. They are well placed to know, experiencing one disappointment after another, that there is nothing automatic about the appearance of the work or of their emotion. They are on the hunt. The experience of taste continually forces them to question its origin: is it my milieu, my habits, a quirk of fashion? Am I being taken in by an all too easy procedure? Could I be too much under the influence of so-and-so, or the plaything of some projection that makes me see something that isn't there? This question of the determination of taste is at the very heart of the formation of the amateur subject. It is a long way from being the sociologist's discovery of a truth that everyone has repressed. No one feels more than do amateurs the open, indeterminate (and hence disputable, *contestable*) character of their object of passion. *De gustibus EST disputandum* [in matters of taste, there can be dispute].

Amateurism is the worship of what makes a difference. It is the opposite of indifference, in the two timely meanings of the word. That is why I treat amateurs as teachers of pragmatism. They know better

than anyone (by truly living it) that there is no opposition between the need to 'construct' an object—having permanently relied, to that end, on a body trained by past experience and the techniques and tastes of others—and the fact that from the entanglement of criss-crossing experiences out of which the object arises it is just as capable of surprising, escaping or doing something else entirely. If the smallest brick is missing from this fragile construction, it all collapses. But they also know, like the sculptor considered in Étienne Souriau's philosophy of the work of art in the making (Souriau 1956; Hennion and Monnin 2015), that, far from implying a reduction of the object to 'only being' a reflection of those that make it, this is the very condition for it to emerge in all its alterity, and that in return it alters its 'constructors'. The passion of the amateur is not a state or an accomplishment: it is a self-dislocating movement that starts with the self, via a deliberate abandonment to the object. The word passion expresses it beautifully, even if one has to be careful of its grandiloquence. If it is the right word, it is not because it adds a supplement of soul to our relations with things, but because it is the exactly autochthonous expression of our specific relations to those things that *seize us*.

No one thinks of 'passion' as passivity. If something is to seize you, then you have to 'make yourself love' it. But we are no longer talking about mastery, action, or a theory of action. Passion is not this kind of calculation; it is being transported, transformed or taken, and despite all these passive turns of phrase, it is anything but passive. For things to appear, something has to be made of them! One has to actively abandon oneself, as it were, to do everything so things can take their course (Gomart and Hennion 1999). A strange grammatical construction, no doubt, but the very one that lays out the rules, and that the word passion refers to: to be taken/to allow oneself to be taken by whatever arises in the midst of experiencing things. This uncovers another, less expected aspect of the activity of amateurs: the ethical dimension of an obligation, of a sustained engagement with the things one loves, with oneself, with the quality of the ongoing experience. There is clearly a dimension of obligation in taste; an obligation to run the course, to respond to the object holding out its hand, to rise to the demand that its very qualities call forth. Étienne Souriau puts this beautifully when he talks about creators being obliged to do what their own work *demands* of them: he even speaks of 'exploitation' of the artist by the artwork (1956: 210)! This also implies that this obligation in relation to oneself and to things is an ethical task that certainly extends to the *social scientist* as well, when he/she values and makes more widely known the experience of amateurs. For my own part, I find that this spurs my interest in pursuing a sociology of taste. It is not just the amateur that the object puts under an obligation, but also the philosopher or the sociologist.

Pragmatism Rather than Pragmatics?

To reinstall common objects into social analysis, one way of getting some support is to look at how pragmatism, before being buried by analytical philosophy, had radically enlarged the definition of objects, by seeing them as open, ongoing and relational. There are only 'not things made, but things in the making' (James 1909b: 263). Such things are 'matters of concern' (Dewey 1927) that can only be caught up by being debated, put to the test and changed into public problems. Such a definite refusal of any dualism between facts and values was one of the founding pragmatist stances. This said, there is no way to apply this only to sociology. Analogous approaches first have to be translated into another world (Hennion 2015c). Since then, social matters have been thoroughly investigated. One result is that dualisms shifted from philosophical oppositions such as object/subject, or matter/mind, to new ones such as nature/culture or, for sociologists, essentialism/constructivism. However defined, 'the social' has taken the place of the subject.

But dualisms are still there. I insist on this point because it requires moving from a *pragmatist* sociology—not only a '*pragmatic sociology*' (Boltanski, Thévenot 2006)—to go beyond the simple notion that objects are 'made' or 'constructed' (Hennion 2016), which is still a way of explaining them by the social. What about the other way round? If things are 'for' something, and if they make us as much as we make them, then and only then are we rid of dualisms separating facts and values, what things are and what they are for. This is a necessary condition to recover the ethical dimension (what do we want?) and the political dimension (how to make it happen?) of any social activity, inseparably defined through its objects and concerns. Those 'things that matter' are not labels stuck on actors, but constitutive of our collectives. For sure, this makes the necessity of valuing them of utmost importance. How can sociology become an art of participating with concerned people to the valuation of things that count and make us count?

Pluralism, mode 1

This is where, in my opinion, we should have no scruples in borrowing and reformulating for our own purposes existing formulations, regarding the sort of ontology we must shift to in order to deal with worlds 'still in process of making', in William James's words (1909a: 226). Among other pragmatists, he was stressing the fact that beyond a method, pragmatism was an ontology—a pluralist and relational understanding of objects themselves, not only a way of seizing them after their effects. I quote James, because it was he among the founding fathers of pragmatism who took the notion of *pragmata* most seriously in the battle against dualism. It was he who formulated the symmetry

principle *avant la lettre* in the most radical way. The symmetry between the knowing subject and the world to be known was his problem as a philosopher, but he also defended this symmetry in relation to beings and things. It is *pragmata*—things–relations, plural and extended, things as they are not given but 'in the making', 'in their plurality' (1909a: 210)—that are at the heart of pragmatism, not practice, which does not require anyone to challenge the grand divide between human actions and the things they act upon. Let me just sum up what James sketches as a 'pluralistic universe': James describes an expanding world that is plural and open, made of layers of realities that can neither be reduced one to the other, nor defined, in the strict sense of the word: they are but the provisional result of relations. This is very similar to ANT's so disputed ontology: an expanding web of realities, with no exteriority, distinct and heterogeneous, but *connected loosely* (1909b: 76). Pluralism, first and foremost, expresses this irreducibility of ongoing realities, each one following the mode of existence that they are producing in the same move as they are developing—but each one nonetheless connected to all the others. There are only relations, and this 'there are only' is not understood in a critical and sociological mode (in fact these are *only* social relations), but in a full and ontological mode. Yes, things are themselves relations. This is the lesson of pragmatism.

Pluralism, mode 2: Instauration of a 'work to be done'

There is something present but still incompletely deployed in this vision. I used the expression 'modes of existence', which is not from James. Latour (2013) borrowed it from Souriau (1956) who wonderfully expresses the idea that we are all confronted not with a passive world, but by with a 'work to be done' [*oeuvre à faire*]. He adds a very inspiring point about pluralism, especially with regard to valuation. Following Souriau, there is no real pluralism if it is not 'double': a pluralism of objects, and a pluralism of their modes of existence. This is a profound way of avoiding both what James called a first-degree empiricism (a multiplicity of objects seen from only one viewpoint); and perspectivism (the same objects seen from a plurality of viewpoints). Things in the making develop both themselves, and their own mode of existence.

This is the reason why Souriau speaks of *instauration* rather than of creation or construction. The word instauration expresses more strongly this idea of incomplete worlds, made of realities that are then 'calling us' because they need to be sustained to get 'more' existence, as he puts it in a radically non-dualistic way. At this point, his philosophy resonates also with that of Dewey, who has stressed in a more political tone this collective process: matters of concern emerge through an active and reciprocal process, defining in the same move what we make and what makes us. It is easy to see the close relation with attachments.

Conclusion

What then to make of valuing, measuring, objectifying, quantifying, rating and ranking? I take the pluralistic, open and demanding ontologies characterized above as a possible basis to conceive valuation not as a measure of inert things made from outside (there is no outside!), as if in an Euclidean space, but as multiple 'additive' relations, experimentations that help sustain those very things. There is no method 'in general' in social science, no all-terrain toolbox or tricks of the trade. We have to pay a minute attention to people's objects, issues and concerns, to fragile or indeterminate beings who demand support. We have to be interested in what it is about, what happens, what is going on here, and each time it is different.

This entails implementing renewed ways of making social investigation, ways that become closer to experiments: more performative than constative, propositional rather than descriptive. This has two main dimensions. First, that far from being 'neutral', the research directly aims at sustaining emergent beings (Kohn 2013; Tsing 2015; Haraway 2008). And, second, that in as much as such issues remain open, unanswered, debated, it also makes them demanding, requiring us to make choices, only graspable through our own engagement. How far that leads us from objectivism!

Descriptions, assessments, figures, charts—the tools sophisticatedly designed to size what we are making while we are making it—then look like scaffolds helping those very objects develop. As a result, such scaffolds are quickly outdated precisely because they have achieved their work, played their part, fulfilled their purpose. I only hope this effort to 'loosely connect' my own work on attachments to valuation studies may add to its instauration!

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Antoine Hennion is Professor at Mines ParisTech and the former Director of the Centre for the Sociology of Innovation (1994-2002). He has written extensively on the sociology of music, media and cultural industries. At the CSI, he developed a problematization of mediation crossing cultural sociology and Science & Technology Studies (STS). His recent books are *Le Vin et l'environnement* (with G. Teil & al., 2011) and *The Passion for Music. A Sociology of Mediation* (2015). He is now developing a pragmatist approach to diverse forms of attachment, from taste and amateurs' practices to issues about care, aging and disability, and migrants and hospitality.