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The Good Life: A comparative analysis of the evolution of Good Life´s basic goods between the Scandinavian Countries and Southern European Countries

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Master in Political Economy

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Resumo

Este trabalho é uma análise comparativa e investigação da evolução dos chamados bens básicos, que correspondem aos seguintes elementos: Saúde, Segurança, Respeito, Personalidade, Amizade, Harmonia com a Natureza e Lazer, entre os países escandinavos e os países do sul da Europa . Esses sete elementos são identificados pelos Skidelskys como sendo as bases da boa vida. Este estudo faz uma reflexão sobre o conceito de boa vida e a forma como procuramos enquadrá-la, assim como a felicidade, nas análises de qualidade de vida e desenvolvimento humano. Este trabalho surge como uma crítica à utilização de estudos baseados no uso da felicidade para medir o desenvolvimento humano devido ao seu caráter subjetivo. Assim, esta tese propõe a metodologia utilizada pelos Skidelskys´ no seu livro *How Much Is Enough* (2012) para medir, comparar e analisar a evolução dos bens básicos entre estes dois grupos de países entre os anos de 2008, quando surge a crise financeira, e 2020, o ano da pandemia, como forma de analisar o desenvolvimento humano. Cada elemento é analisado com base em indicadores sociais e socioeconómicos através de uma análise descritiva. A premissa seguida por esta tese é que quanto maior a evolução positiva dos bens básicos, mais perto um país está de alcançar a boa vida ou de atingir os meios para alcançar a boa vida.

Código JEL: D63 - Equidade, Justiça, Desigualdade e Outros Critérios e Medidas Normativas

Palavras-chave: Felicidade, Boa Vida, Desenvolvimento Humano, Crescimento Económico

Abstract:

This work is a comparative analysis and investigation of the evolution of the so-called basic goods, which correspond to the following elements: Health, Security, Respect, Personality, Friendship, Harmony with Nature and Leisure, between the Scandinavian countries and Southern European countries. These seven elements are identified by the Skidelskys' as being the foundations of the good life. This study does a reflection on the concept of good life and the way in which we try to fit it, as well as happiness, in analyzes of quality of life and human development. This work appears as a criticism of the use of studies based on the use of happiness to measure human development due to its subjective character. Thus, this thesis proposes the methodology used by Skidelsky's in their book *How Much Is Enough* (2012) to measure, compare and analyze the evolution of the basic goods between these two groups of countries between the years of 2008, when the financial crisis arise, and 2020, the year of the pandemic, as a way of analyzing human development. Each element is analyzed based on social and socio-economic indicators through a descriptive analysis. The premise followed by this thesis is that the greater the positive evolution of basic goods, the closer a country is to achieving the good life or the means to achieve the good life.

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Introduction

James Maynard Keynes, in his essay from 1930, *Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren,* predicted that in 100 years, Western nations will have a massive expansion of material production capacity that no one would need to work more than 3 hours each day in. In fact, the advancement of technology throughout history has made work more efficient. Keynes' (1930) projection of a rise in GDP per capita, or the average yearly income per household, was correct, but his prognosis of a 15-hour workweek failed miserably. The reason the 15-hour workweek hasn't taken off is that wealth has accumulated and been distributed in an unequal manner over the past few decades. As a result, a small number of people hold a disproportionate amount of wealth, while the majority still needs to work 40 hours or more per week to make ends meet. (Raiklin and Uyar, 1996).

Keynes' forecasts failed to materialize on the one hand because this would have several effects both social and personal. Workers would acquire skills more slowly, which would result in decreased productivity. Nations would be helpless with soldiers who worked only 20 hours a week on duty and had few weapons as munitions companies' employees likewise had a 20-hour workweek. And consider how a society would maintain order if police, firefighters, and paramedics only put in 20 hours a week of work. (Neary, 1997) On the other hand, the answer to this question exposes the demise of the 15-hour work week: we are forced to work longer hours in an effort to acquire more items. The insatiability of wants is the term used to describe this propensity to always purchase new items. The relativity of desires might be the cause. According to relativity of wants, people always desire things that they do not already own that others do, or, in an effort to stand out from the crowd, something that no one else possesses. (Neary, 1997).

Additionally, capitalism feeds this fundamental insatiability. Indeed, the competitive nature of the market in a capitalist system forces business to create new goods and create demand through marketing. As a result, in a capitalist society you can never have "enough" money. All commodities and services are now exchangeable for money as a result of the monetization of the economy. The concern with money that has evolved in capitalist cultures has in turn made wants more relative. As a result, we place more value on price than on quality, worrying only about how much something is worth in comparison to other people's possessions. (Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., 2012).

As we've seen, acquiring riches and following self-interest were originally primarily thought of as means of surviving. But once we accepted it as the reason of our existence, it was impossible to avoid seeing riches as a goal in and of itself. It has become difficult to stop pursuing wealth because all of our aspirations can be compared to what others have or have achieved. Because someone always has more, there is always more to be had. (Raiklin and Uyar, 1996).

Political and economic ideologies have made it increasingly difficult for us to imagine a scenario in which we might ever have enough of anything. Authors like John Rawls (2005), for instance, built their theories on the autonomy of the individual, or our fundamental capacity to control the consequences of our lives. While placing a higher priority on individual autonomy has brought us closer to establishing a just and equal society, it has also given us the freedom to define what we believe to be right and wrong, frequently abhorrently twisting what we believe to be intrinsically good in order to further our own pursuit of what we may consider wealth. The ethics of seeking riches have been reduced to nothing more than a person's right to self-determination, with no other higher goal in mind. (Rawls, 2005).

In the Skidelskys´ book of 2012, *How Much Is Enough?,* the authors argue that the modern world is characterized by insatiability, an inability to say enough is enough, and the desire for more and more money. Although capitalism has made it possible to develop Western societies by facilitating access to many of our basic needs, leisure, and productivity, the meaning of the good life has been lost (Skidelsky, R., & Skidelsky, E., 2012). More wealth and profits are not the main factors that contribute to happiness and there are several other aspects that must be considered when measuring human progress (Miñarro, Reyes-García, Aswani, Selim, Barrington-Leigh and Galbraith, 2021).

The book argues that progress should be measured not by the traditional yardsticks of growth or per capita incomes but by the basic goods, the seven elements of the good life: health, security, respect, personality, harmony with nature, friendship, and leisure. However, to understand the choice of these seven elements, it is necessary to reflect on the very concept of good life. The concept of a good life first arises with Aristotle (1905). According to Aristotle (1905) the goal of a good life is to have a happy life. To achieve this good life, it is necessary to present a series of conditions necessary for the human being that provide for physical health, a certain level of wealth, health, satisfaction, good family and friendship bonds. He said that every man and every species have a *telos,* which is a state of fulfilment, and to achieve this state you need to live the good life. The concept itself is closely linked to happiness. It is from this line of reasoning that the authors present the basic goods which are good in themselves and

needed to achieve happiness and quality of life. Without all seven no human being can have a fulfilled life. Thus, this work reflects on how GDP and Human Development Index have been used to measure human progress and it´s limitations. In the next chapter the concept of happiness in analysed as well as the existing problems in measuring it, due to its subjective nature and measurement inconsistencies. Next, the concept of basic goods is explored and explained. Finally, the results are presented and discussed.

"The overall picture is not encouraging for the advocates of growth at all cost. Despite the doubling of UK per capita income, we possess no more of the basic goods than we did in 1974; in certain respects, we possess less of them." (Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) p. 178). This affirmation from the authors leads us to the objective of this work. This is a comparative analysis, on the evolution of basic goods that constitute the good life, between the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway) and Southern European countries (Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain). The objective of this work is to reflect and understand to what extent Scandinavian and Southern European countries have evolved within the analysed dimensions between the years of two crisis, 2008 (the year of the financial crisis) and 2020 (when the pandemic started). First it will be analyzed if there was a positive evolution of the basic goods during the time period between 2008 and 2020. Secondly, it will be checked assessed if Scandinavian countries had a better evolution than the Southern countries. Thirdly, it will be investigated if every country had a decrease of the basic goods in the years of the financial crisis (2008-2012) with the Scandinavian countries still maintaining better values than the Southern countries.

According to the World Happiness Report, (Helliwell, Layard, Sachs, De Neve, Aknin, and Wang, 2022), the Scandinavian countries are considered to have a better quality of life and higher levels of happiness, as opposed to Southern European countries which tend to have lower levels. For this reason, is expected that the Scandinavian countries have a better evolution in relation to basic goods than in Southern European countries, although during the years of the financial crisis and the pandemic we might see a decrease in both groups.

In order to test this theory, the methodology used is a descriptive analysis with different economic and social indicators as proposed by the Skidelsky's (2012). This project is of relevant interest insofar as it has never been done. This is an exploratory study that aims, on the one hand, to contribute to the work already carried out by the Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) and on the other to rethink the way we analyze the quality of life, which is in itself is a very complex topic.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

1.1- Human Development Measures

For a long time, GDP was the sole means to gauge a country's prosperity and distinguish between developed and developing nations. The usage of GDP was quickly met with controversy. The difficulty with using GDP per capita to measure the quality of life is that it is based on monetary values and prices. The ease with which GDP per capita is computed, producing a single objective and straightforward figure that indicates the ability of the average individual in a society to acquire goods and services, is one of the aspects that is frequently claimed as a benefit over alternative measures. Many economic transactions, on the other hand, have a defined price and amount, although most people's daily activities, such as domestic work production or services, do not. Domestic production, which accounts for a sizable portion of overall output, takes place outside of markets. Many people commit a large amount of time and effort to home tasks, reducing leisure time dramatically, yet none of this is represented in GPD per capita. According to GDP, what is not priced is useless, leading to policies that, while expanding markets and hence GDP per capita, usually disregard the value of domestic labour and care services, which are unquestionably important aspects in quality of life (Smith, 2016).

Another key issue with using GDP per capita as a metric of life quality is the apparent disconnect between rising GDPs per capita and improving the quality of life for most people. The main reason for this mismatch is that GDP per capita is estimated using population means. In many countries, inequality is rapidly increasing, resulting in an increase in the average individual's wealth as measured by GDP per capita, while many individuals in these countries see little to no increase in wealth (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, J. P., 2010). Although the United States' GDP rose from 1999 to 2008, many people's incomes fell over that time period when adjusted for inflation. (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, J. P., 2010). Tax haven nations like Bermuda, on the other hand, have the highest GDP per capita in the world, even though most of the population works in a small fishing industry for low wages (Smith, 2008). As the population's standard of living declines, their GDP per capita rises.

1.2 - Alternatives to the GDP as a human development metric

Nowadays there is a debate that economic development and income are not necessary for well-being to be attained. Income has been considered one of the major factors contributing to a happy life. There is contrary evidence that incomes do not cease to have an impact on happiness levels over time. As Luis Angeles (2011) tells us, there is no paradox, but that happiness levels are impacted by other socioeconomic variables such as marriage or divorce.

The table below, developed by Belgian economists Koen Decancq and Erik Schokkaert (2015), illustrates how a higher income doesn´t necessarily translate in higher happiness. It places 18 European countries in order of their average income, life satisfaction, and average "equivalent income" in the year 2010 (shortly after the financial crisis).

	Income	Subjective life satisfaction	Equivalent income
1	Norway	Denmark	Norway
2	Switzerland	Switzerland	Switzerland
3	Netherlands	Finland	Sweden
4	Sweden	Norway	Denmark
5	Great Britain	Sweden	Great Britain
6	Germany	Netherlands	Belgium
7	Denmark	Belgium	Netherlands
8	Belgium	Spain	Finland
9	Finland	Germany	France
10	France	Great Britain	Germany
11	Spain	Poland	Spain
12	Slovenia	Slovenia	Greece
13	Greece	Estonia	Slovenia
14	Czech Republic	Czech Republic	Czech Republic
15	Poland	France	Poland
16	Hungary	Hungary	Estonia
17	Russia	Greece	Russia
18	Estonia	Russia	Hungary

Some of the outcomes are eye-catching. The Danes are far more content than they are affluent, but the French are the opposite. However, when comparing equal wages, these big variations are not visible, implying that cultural differences play a significant role in happiness in these two nations. Germany and the Netherlands are likewise lower on satisfaction than they are on

income, but their comparable income rankings show that they are worse on non-income aspects. Greece has an extremely low level of happiness. Cultural influences may have a role, but Greece also has a significant level of economic disparity, which is not reflected in the table's averages. (Koen Decancq and Erik Schokkaert, 2015).

Studies conducted in poorly monetized communities show that these communities have elevated levels of well-being. The explanatory reasons for this are the provision of basic needs, access to healthy natural environments, social cohesion and contact with the community. (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2002). However, it must be considered that these communities have never lived in a more monetized and economically developed society, so it is natural that they are happy with their way of life, since they have never met another alternative. On the other hand, measuring happiness has its difficulties, since happiness is not watertight and changes depending on several aspects. Yet these studies show something important. Having a full life with which we feel satisfied depends on much more than our income. (Kenny 2005).

At an early stage in a country's development, economic growth and incomes make a strong contribution to increasing levels of happiness and well-being. As there is an increase in economic growth and incomes also happiness and well-being increase. As Easterling (1995) proved, the countries with the highest incomes are also the countries with the highest levels of happiness and well-being, in turn countries with lower incomes also have lower levels of happiness. However, Easterling also tells us that although at some point happiness levels vary directly with income over time this direct relationship ceases to take place over time and happiness levels cease to increase despite increased incomes (Easterling, 1995). These have found consistent patterns, showing that economic development has a lesser influence on satisfaction than predicted, and that other factors such as health and unemployment are significant. For these reasons and because of all the limitations in GDP as human development metric, other solutions were explored.

1.2.1 - The capability approach

Understanding well-being by feelings of satisfaction, pleasure, or happiness, according to Amartya Sen (1983), has two flaws. The first is "physical-condition neglect," as he calls it. Human beings can adapt to hardship, which implies that the poor and sick may nevertheless be content. "Valuation neglect" is the second concern. Putting a value on one's life is a reflective process that should not be boiled down to whether one is happy. We should not ignore the

importance of feeling well, but we must also recognize that it is not the only thing that people care about.

Sen and Martha Nussbaum (1993) suggested a different method: the capability approach, which asserts that human characteristics and social contexts determine what people can achieve with a given set of resources. It is worthless, for example, to give a book to someone who cannot read. According to Sen, what matters for well-being is what a person can do or be, such as being well-nourished. These accomplishments are referred to as a person's "functionings" by Sen (1988). Following this line of reasoning, it is critical to consider value goods that cannot be truly expressed in monetary terms, such as health care, social services, transportation, environmental policies, government action (Diener and Ryan, 2006), culture, equality policies, and others, when measuring well-being.

Although the capabilities approach is multidimensional by nature, individuals wanting to lead policy frequently believe that dealing with trade-offs sensibly necessitates having a single final measure. Individual preferences are mistrusted by adherents of the capacity approach who fall to this thinking. Instead, they use a set of indications that are universal to all people. This type of thinking frequently results in so-called "composite indicators," such as the United Nations' Human Development Index, which combines consumption, life expectancy, and educational attainment at the nation level. They have gained a lot of traction in policy circles, but they are prone to just sum up scores on several categories that are all thought equally essential.

1.2.2 - Economic growth and human development

As a result, the Human Development Approach is introduced, and its fundamental beliefs are "that human well-being is important to the purpose of development and that human beings comprise the largest economic resource." (Bagolin, 2004). The capacities approach and fundamental needs approach are more closely tied to human development (Steward, 1996). The idea that the purpose of development is to improve human lives by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do, such as being healthy and well-nourished, knowledgeable, and participating in community life, is the starting point for Sen's theory of development as an expansion of capabilities. From this perspective, development is about reducing barriers to a person's ability to achieve their goals in life, such as illiteracy, illness, a lack of finances, or a lack of civil and political liberties. (Sen, 1983). "Human progress is the broadening of people's options." The most important of these many options is to live a long and healthy life, to be

educated, and to have access to the resources needed to live comfortably. Political freedom, protected human rights, and personal self-respect are other options. (Sen, 1983).

The Human Development Index (HDI) is derived from this method. The HDI is designed to be a multidimensional indicator that can also be used to assess capacity achievements. (Bagolin, 2004). This index serves as a replacement for the GDP and a way to include the unique concepts that arrived with the Human Development concept. The HDI has also received a lot of criticism, both positive and negative. On the one hand, it is an indicator that, when compared to others such as GDP, has shown progress. When attempting to assess, for example, lifespan, the GDP's multidimensional nature makes it far more consistent and comprehensive, capturing several hitherto unconsidered characteristics of human existence. (Bagolin,2004). It does, however, have certain restrictions. The HDI was created in 1990 and is based on the following factors: The health component, as measured by birth life expectancy; GNI (gross national income) per capita is used to measure the level of life; The education component is measured by the average number of years spent in school for adults and the projected number of years spent in school for school-aged children.

The HDI is not a full-fledged assessment of human development. Although it tracks crucial aspects of human progress, it is not enough to determine if we are having a good life. It should also be a life filled with leisure, time spent with loved ones, security and many others. Is also crucial to understand that the HDI is an average that hides a slew of inequities and inequalities within countries. As a result, the Index has a limited scope.

1.3- Happiness Definition and the Measurements Problems

Nowadays, though, it's common to believe that happiness is the end result of all our efforts. But how well-versed are we in the definition of "happiness"? Eudaimonia, which is often translated as "happiness" in ancient Greek, was thought to mean living admirably and honourably in accordance with those standards. But throughout time, the definition of happiness has shrunk from a socially acceptable way of living to a personal evaluation of how we feel. (Annas and Wang, 1989) This change has made avarice into a virtue: happiness is now seen as the outcome of behaviours that advance one's own self-interest or at all costs ensure one has a "surplus of pleasure over suffering," (Mayerfeld, 1996, p.317) even at the price of the happiness of others. Regarding life satisfaction, economists Marc Fleurbaey and Didier Blanchet (2013) noted, a good life brings satisfaction rather than satisfaction providing a good life. Although people's

opinions and insights on life are quite valuable, drawing comparisons based on a subjective phrase that might change depending on our feelings is extremely challenging.

In her work on the Economics of Happiness (2005), Carol Graham writes of "happy peasants and frustrated achievers." As she explains, peasants may report tremendous happiness despite meager circumstances, either because they have adapted to them or because they cannot imagine any better "possible life." Similarly, the achievers may report low happiness despite great material and emotional success because they have acclimated to their fortune and constantly focus on the next level; their "best possible life" is unbounded. Another issue is when a numerical scale used to describe qualitative events is applied with too much precision. The numerical scale implies an absence of regularity by converting the qualitative categories of "more" and "less" happiness. Let us say that, on a given scale, three represents "mildly happy," four represents "moderately happy," and five represents "very happy." Translating these categories into a numerical scale and performing almost any operation with them, even simply averaging them, assumes that the units are equal: just as the difference between three and four is equal to the difference between four and five, we are to believe that the difference between "mildly happy" and "moderately happy" is equivalent to the difference between "moderately happy" and "very happy." Because of this, merely rating your level of happiness on a scale of 0 to 10 without providing any more details leads to subjective results. For instance, a person who is severely sad will view a 0 or a 10 very differently from someone who is steadfastly optimistic.

Maximizing happiness may have unfavourable effects. For instance, a duty to be cheerful could lead to unhappiness due to unattainable expectations or stigmatize unhappy people (Bruckner 2000, Dalingwater, Costantini, and Champroux, 2019). Data on happiness may also be utilized selectively to advance a political purpose, for as by demonstrating that freedom is a key component of happiness to advance a liberal cause (Dalingwater, Costantini, and Champroux, 2019). Therefore, it would appear that there are two major issues with including happiness in public policy. First off, if promoting happiness aligns with their goals and increases their chances of being elected, policymakers will frequently do so. Second, if respondents are aware that their responses will be used to inform happiness policies, they may underreport their responses in an effort to protect themselves from policymakers' manipulation or to offer a supporting response because expressing one's emotions is taboo in some cultures.

The fact that subjective wellbeing assessments focus more on individual pleasure than social context is another disadvantage. It does not measure advancements in human progress or quality of life (Eckersley, 2013). The pioneers in the field of measuring subjective well-being,

Diener and his co-researchers are still quite circumspect about how these measurements may be actively employed to guide practice and policy. In addition, the authors demonstrate how other measurements offer helpful extra data and individuals' perspectives on how well or poorly they see societal changes (Diener et al., 2013). It's crucial to keep in mind the issue of data dependability. For instance, Diener et al. (2013) found that when political questions were posed after people were asked to rate their level of life satisfaction, people tended to see the issues from the standpoint of their own personal satisfaction rather than in relation to the broader context of societal and political affairs. This could indicate that people are content with their own lives but unhappy with the state of society as a whole.

Happiness is a vague term that implies different things to different individuals. However, there are in fact several universal needs that must be fulfilled so that we can achieve well-being and happiness. The Skidelsky's' look at the good life by going beyond income and measures of well-being and happiness, to universal measures that focus on the good life of the general of the population in an objective way, and which conclusions can also be used for public policies.

Chapter 2- The Good Life

2.1 – Defining a Good Life and How to Measure it

Humans have thought about what happiness means for as long as we have had the capacity to do so. Aristotle was one such thinker who considered living well to be a goal in and of itself. According to him, every species has its own telos, or ultimate goal, toward which it evolves over its whole existence. The excellent life, or *euzen,* is the telos for humanity. But how does Euzen appear in reality? For Aristotle, the good life is one that is thoroughly public, where politics and philosophy are considered leisure activities to be conducted just for their own sake (Annas and Wang, 1989). According to Aristotle, this was the best kind of social interaction. Aristotle defined the term "economy," or "oikonomika," as nothing more than the material support of familial houses, which gives the family the possessions they need to live a pleasant life. This is how wealth comes into play in the good life. He was aware of the practice of exchanging items for cash, which he referred to as the "natural skill of wealth-getting," though. (Annas and Wang, 1989).

This natural art stands in contrast to the unnatural art of usury, where the exchange of things for money becomes an end in itself rather than a means to the production of the good life. As a result, goods are reduced to their "exchange-value," which is the profit they make when sold, and lose what Marx (1859) called their use-value, or worth based on utility.

Aristotle believed that usury corrupts society by causing people to fight primarily for money, care more about fees than patients, and engage in other unethical behaviours. Aristotle also expressed prophetic concern about the insatiable desire for money for its own sake. For a life focused on accumulating wealth, there is no telos, no ultimate goal; there is only ever more money to be obtained.

Nowadays we still don´t have a definition of what a good life is, but we still search for it. However, the notion of a having a good life means have a happy life is at the centre of the matter, so much that it became a part of economics. The idea of well-being has been increasingly defined in economics in recent years. Even if capitalism failed to avoid conflicts and abolish poverty from all aspects of society, it enabled and facilitated the development of Western societies by enabling and facilitating many of our fundamental necessities, leisure, and productivity. Through the establishment of diverse welfare systems, the European nations have gone through a process of creating nation-states, which has led to widespread democracy, and

started to create the notion that well-being should be a major issue of the economy and politics (Glatzer and Kohl, 2017).

Nevertheless, a lot has changed since Aristotle's day. He has established the foundation for what the good life entails, but the search for a theory that comprehends, explains, measures, and supports a happy existence continues.

2.2 – The Basic Goods

After this contemplation it is necessary to understand what should be considered when pursuing the good life. It is in this sense that the Skidelsky´s presents the basic goods that constitute the seven elements for the good life, exactly as a way of measuring human progress.

In Chapter 6 of *How Much is Enough? (2012)*, the authors describe the "basic goods" as the basis to start achieving the good life. We must recognize that the fundamental necessities for a good life—both material and immaterial—have four features. First, they are universal, which means that they have persisted across numerous cultures for millennia and are not specific to any one region of the world.

Secondly, they are also final, meaning that they cannot be used to purchase other items. You can consider how a community is more than the sum of selfish individuals and is something worth aiming towards. (This sets apart Rawls' primary goods and Nussbaum and Sen's capabilities from basic goods.)

Thirdly, they are self-sufficient; they are ends in and of themselves rather than mere means to an end. For instance, true friendships transcend ordinary social relationships like those in work groups. And finally, they are necessary. If anyone lost any of these basic goods it would cause severe damage, as much as losing physical health would.

In light of these qualities, certain fundamental necessities must be ensured in order to guarantee a good existence. We must first prioritize our health and safety. Not to be overlooked are respect and acknowledgement of our values and interests. Additionally, important are autonomy and self-determination. We must also consider friendship. In fact, the Greeks valued friendship so highly that they kept a list of all solid loving connections, including romantic ties as well as platonic ones. Harmony with nature, or the responsible and sustainable use of nature's resources as opposed to its heedless destruction, is also crucial. And finally, a happy existence allows for downtime. For the ancient Greeks, leisure was more than just time for rest and pleasure; it was also a time for purposeful, unpaid effort that allowed us to learn about the humanities, philosophies, and morals.

Every human being requires these common things in order to live a better life. A country, nation, or population that can have access to these basic goods has all the conditions to start living a good life. The seven elements that constitute and measure the basic goods are listed below. The definitions presented are the ones used by R. Skidelsky, and E. Skidelsky, (2012):

- Health

 Health means that the body is functioning well enough for us to feel healthy and able to carry out our daily activities. It means feeling vitality, energy, and alertness. Health means that the body is functioning well enough for us to feel healthy and able to carry out our daily activities. It means feeling vitality, energy, and alertness. Life expectancy tells us how many years we live, but does not nothing about the quality of the years we live. In order to understand this the indicator used is healthy life years.

- Security

Security means that the lives of individuals will follow their natural course without interference from war, crime, or social and economic instability or turmoil. In this case I will investigate the unemployment level to show economic security and crime or vandalism rate to analyse physical security.

- Respect

Respecting someone means showing consideration and respect for the views, opinions, and interests of others, which should not be ignored. Having respect does not mean agreeing with the other individual but acknowledging their point of view. According to the authors, "civil rights" and "personal achievement" are the two main sources of respect in "contemporary bourgeois cultures." In the latter situation, "a person must contribute to his life" and "earn an honest crust." (p.159). The author affirms that a wealth and income distribution that is more equitable is essential. To measure this element, I will use the indicator suggested by the R. Skidelsky, and E. Skidelsky, (2012), the level of income inequality. The increase in inequality translates into the destruction of respect between the lower and upper classes.

- Personality

Personality is "the ability to frame and execute a plan of life reflective of one's tastes, temperament and conception of the good" (p.160) in conjunction with spontaneity,

individuality, and your spirit. It is to lead a life that fits with the identity of the individual. To continue life, wealth is needed that gives freedom to follow an autonomous life plan. For this reason, I will use the wealth distribution.

- Harmony with nature

It means maintaining and preserving affinity with animals, plants, and landscapes. (R. Skidelsky, and E. Skidelsky, 2012) For this element it will be analysed air pollution, however nature connectedness is also included as it measures the emotional connectedness between humans and nature.

- Friendship

Friendship means that each party involved sees the good of the other as its own good, becoming a common good. (R. Skidelsky, and E. Skidelsky, 2012) It is a relationship that can only be obtained between people who like each other not for what they can offer but for who they are. It is different from a community, in that a community can be held together only by the usefulness and need of the different members, rather than by the love they have for one another.

- Leisure

Leisure often tends to be associated with relaxation and rest, but it is more than that. Leisure is not just time away from work, but the activities we do for their own sake because they make us feel good, not to achieve a goal. The Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) hold a lofty view of leisure. According to them, the definition of "activity in its own right. Leisure in this sense is that which we do for its own sake, not as a means to something else" (p. 165). In this case it makes sense to understand the time devoted to leisure activities.

Measures of happiness, because they are subjective, they can be misleading. A country can give all the opportunities and access to health services, jobs, leisure activities, security, and many others, but some people will still be unhappy. This is also related to the choices people make for themselves. If someone has bad health habits and a difficult personality that pushes people away, this will not be very happy, but it doesn´t mean they do not have the means to be happy.

Any government and society should do everything possible to provide its citizens with all the means to live a good life and this is what the measurements should focus on. Whether people decide to be happy and take advantage of opportunities is another matter. Therefore, I use these

seven elements as proposed by the Skidelsky´s as a way of assessing whether each country provides the conditions for each person to live a good life.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and application

To carry out the investigation I will use a descriptive method through the seven elements presented by R. Skidelsky, and E. Skidelsky, (2012), (health, security, harmony with nature, personality, friendship, leisure, and respect). I analyse several indicators that will correspond to one element. To measure each element, I will use a series of economic and social indicators presented for each element by the authors. In the cases where it turned out that there was little data available to measure the indicators proposed by the authors, they were replaced.

The data I will use to analyse each indicator is from Eurostat quality of life statistics, economic statistics from World Development Indicators, and data from the OECD Better life Index statistics, to see the development between the year of 2008 (the year of the financial crisis) and 2020 (the year the pandemic started) in these countries. I present below the description of each indicator that will be used to measure each element:

3.1 – Health

3.1.1 - Healthy Life Years

It is known that people are living longer, however, it is important to understand if we are living better or just gaining years of poor health. In relation to this element, Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) proposed indicators such as Obesity and Alcohol-related deaths. However, due to the complexity of the health issue and a range of health-related indicators, all of which are relevant, Eurostat created the Healthy Life Years indicator in order to facilitate the analysis of the health level of a given population. This indicator was created to measure if we live longer and better or do we gain years of life in bad health?

According to Eurostat metadata, the indicator of healthy life years (HLY) measures the number of remaining years that a person of specific age is expected to live without any severe or moderate health problems. The concept of a health problem for Eurostat's HLY reflects a disability component and is based on a self-perceived question that seeks to gauge the severity of any restrictions relating to a health problem that may have influenced respondents regarding activities they typically engage in. Healthy Life Years is a composite indicator that combines mortality data with health status data.

Healthy Life Years also keeps track of health as an economic or productive aspect. One of the key objectives of European health policy is to enhance the number of healthy life years. Additionally, it would lead to lower levels of spending on public health care while also

improving the status of individuals. People are living longer and in greater health if healthy life years are growing faster than life expectancy.

3.2 – Security

3.2.1 - Unemployment rate

The percentage of workers in the labour force who do not currently have a job but are actively looking for one is known as the unemployment rate. It's possible that unemployment will result in larger payments of unemployment benefits from the state and federal governments. Many aspects of the economy are impacted by a high unemployment rate. Unemployment may result in larger payments from state and federal governments for things like food stamps because unemployed people often spend less and may accumulate more debt. Although they are challenging to quantify, unemployment has actual social costs. Increased protectionist sentiment and strong immigration controls are frequently demanded when unemployment becomes a widespread issue. (Niyimbanira and Madzivhandila, 2016). Trade reductions brought on by protectionism hurt all trading partners' economies.

Unemployment also leads the people to incur additional expenses. According to studies, lengthy periods of unemployment are bad for people's physical and mental health, shorten their lives, and affect their mental well-being. (Linn, Sandifer, and Stein, 1985). The way people connect with one another is one of the other social costs. Studies have revealed that greater crime rates and periods of high unemployment may both be related. (Nichols, Mitchell, and Lindner, 2013)

3.2.2 - Crime or Vandalism (physical security)

Personal and physical security is a core element for the well-being of individuals and includes the risks of people being physically assaulted or falling victim to other types of crime. Crime may lead to loss of life and property, as well as physical pain, post-traumatic stress and anxiety. The sense of vulnerability that crime creates appears to be one of the ways in which it has the strongest effects on people's wellbeing. (OECD, 2020).

It is important to note that the Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) proposed for this element only the unemployment rate as an indicator. However, there is a lot of different types of security. In the description made by the authors of this element is mentioned physical security

in the form of crime level. For this reason, Crime and Vandalism was also included to evaluate if the lives of the people in the different countries have interferences from crime.

3.3 – Respect

3.3.1 - Income Inequality level

This is indicator is proposed by R. Skidelsky, and E. Skidelsky, (2012). According to the authors, the greater the inequality, the greater the division between society, for example through social classes, which leads to rivalries between citizens of the same country because they feel that some are benefited more than others, either at the level financial or material, leading to a loss of respect.

Income is defined as the amount of money available to a household in a given year. It comprises of earnings, income from self-employment and capital gains, as well as public cash transfers; income taxes and social security contributions made by households are subtracted. Each household member receives a portion of the household's income, with an adjustment made to account for the differing requirements of households of various sizes. (Brooks, J. R., 2017) The Gini coefficient, which ranges from 0 in the event of perfect equality to 1, is based on the comparison of cumulative population proportions against cumulative income proportions that individuals receive.

3.4 – Personality

3.4.1 - Distribution of wealth

A comparison of the wealth of various individuals or groups within a society is known as the wealth distribution. It demonstrates a particular facet of economic inequality or heterogeneity. The distribution of wealth is different from the distribution of income in that it considers the economic ownership of the assets in a community rather than the members' current levels of income. The International Association for Research in Income and Wealth claims that "the wealth distribution is far more unequal than that of income" around the world.

The personalist defence of private property differs from the conventional defence of the free market and has various ramifications. Property is merely a component of capitalism's legal framework in the eyes of conventional economics. In general, its distribution is not a problem, unless it results in monopoly pricing. However, from a personalist perspective, the

concentration of property in a small number of hands undermines its fundamental purpose, which is to enable individuals and families to live independently. Property must be widely distributed in order to fulfil its moral obligation. (Skidelsky, R., & Skidelsky, E., 2012)

3.5 - Harmony with nature

In the case of Harmony with nature, Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) proposed self-sufficiency ratio. This indicator depicts the output volume in relation to domestic consumption. It demonstrates how much a nation depends on its own resources for manufacturing, with a higher ratio indicating greater self-sufficiency (Fathelrahman, 2021). However, this has no expression of maintaining and preserving affinity with animals, plants, and landscapes.

For these reasons, nature connectedness is proposed by analyzing the preservation of affinity and relationship with nature as explained by the authors in their definition of this element. However, this indicator is recent and there are only data for the year 2018. Thus, air pollution is also used because there is a lot of data on this indicator, and at a time when industrialization causes more and more pollution, precaution with air quality demonstrates the care that each country takes to preserve the environment and its population.

3.5.1 - Air Pollution

Air Pollution is one indicator used by European union to analyse air quality as it is explained in Euro-SDMX Metadata Structure in the theme of Income and Living Conditions. This indicator is used to monitor progress towards making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and on good health and well-being which is embedded in the European Commission's Priorities under the 'European Green Deal'.

The EU addresses the issue of air pollution through its specific air quality and industrial emissions legislation, such as the Clean Air Package and the ambient air quality directives adopted by the Council and the European Parliament, as well as through side benefits resulting from the implementation of specific climate policies.

The Scandinavian countries have shown to be better at preserving their environment and nature. The quality of people's life is directly impacted by outdoor air pollution, one of the major environmental problems. According to OECD (2020), despite national and international interventions and decreases in major pollutant emissions, globally the health impacts of urban

air pollution continue to worsen, with air pollution set to become the top environmental cause of premature mortality by 2050. Air pollution in urban areas, which is frequently brought on by transportation and the use of small-scale wood or coal burning, is connected to a number of health issues, including minor eye irritation and upper respiratory symptoms in the short term and chronic respiratory diseases like asthma, cardiovascular diseases, and lung cancer in the long term. (OECD, 2020).

3.5.2 - Nature Connectedness

Nature connectedness is a psychological concept that measures the closeness of an individual's relationship with nature and other species. Studies have found that people with a high level of nature connectedness enjoy better mental health and are more likely to act in environmentally friendly ways (Hamlin, Elliott, & White, 2022).

The study published by Hamlin, Elliott, & White (2022) examines which countrywide factors influence the degree of individual closeness to nature, finding the strongest association between biodiversity and nature connectedness, with individuals living in countries where wild species and landscapes are still intact enjoying a closer relationship with nature. The data collected for the purpose of this thesis is from this study.

3.6 - Friendship

In this case the Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) proposed the number of marriages and divorces. However, the friendship element encompasses much more relationships than just marriages (friendships, dating, close family relationships) so it is not very representative of reality. People are social beings. Therefore, important factors affecting our well-being include how often we interact with people and the caliber of our interpersonal relationships. Studies have shown that compared to other types of time spent, time spent with friends is connected with a higher average level of happy sentiments and a lower average level of negative feelings.

In addition to understanding whether there is a support network around each person, it is also important to understand how much time people have to live with those they love the most. We know that social relationships are stronger, but if we have little time for each other, this will negatively influence our well-being. Unfortunately, the only data available is from the OECD's *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* report (2020), in which we have data referring to the countries of the European Union, however the data collected in each country refers only to 2018.

3.6.1 - Social support network

A strong social network or community can provide emotional support in both good and sad times, in addition to providing access to jobs, services, and other material opportunities. In the OECD (2020), 91% of people believe they could turn to a friend or member of their family in an emergency. According to the OECD's *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* report statistics, in this regard, there is little difference between men and women as 92% of women and 90% of men, respectively, report receiving this kind of social support.

A weak social network may result in few economic possibilities, a lack of social engagement, and ultimately loneliness. Social isolation may result from family divorce, job loss, illness, or financial difficulties. Once socially isolated, individuals may struggle more to achieve their personal objectives in terms of job, family, and friends as well as reintegrating into society as an active participant.

3.7. – Leisure

3.7.1 - Leisure and Personal Care and Time Use in Personal Care and Leisure in Hours

In the case of Leisure, the Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) propose for this element the indicator of Attendance at Cultural Events. However, there is very little data available, so it was not possible to use this indicator. People have less time for other activities like leisure or self-care the more they work. The ideal amount of leisure time should be between two hours and five hours (Sharif, M., Mogilner, C., & Hershfield, H., 2018). Less than two hours and people start getting stressed. Due to the impact the amount of leisure has in our well-being, the indicators used are the amount of time spent in leisure and personal care combined - that was also retrieved from OECD's *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* report - with data from the year 2018, and it is also used the OECD Time Use Survey statistics - with data collected between the years of 2009 and 2016 - that allows to asses Personal Care and Leisure separately. Due to the fact that the first indicator only has data for the year of 2018, using the second indicator, it is possible to observe whether or not there has been a change in the time used.

Chapter 4 - Results

4.1 – Health

4.1.1-Healthy Life Years

Table. 1 Healthy Life Years

Country/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean
Denmark	61,6	61,1	62,0	61,8	61,4	60,5	60,9	59,1	60,3	59,7	60,9	58,9	58,0	**60,5**
Finland	59,1	58,4	58,2	58,0	56,7	:	58,2	57,8	58,1	57,4	57,4	56,4	56,9	**57,7**
Sweden	64,7	65,8	66,1	65,5	:	65,8	72,9	72,7	73,2	72,6	72,8	73,3	72,7	**69,8**
Norway	69,5	68,4	69,9	75,1	71,3	70,0	71,1	70,4	69,9	70,9	70,4	69,8	68,6	**70,4**
Greece	65,9	66,4	66,9	66,6	64,9	64,9	64,5	64,0	64,3	64,8	65,4	66,0	65,9	**65,4**
Spain	63,8	62,7	64,2	65,5	65,3	64,3	65,0	64,0	66,2	69,4	68,0	69,9	66,3	**65,7**
Italy	62,4	62,9	:	63,0	61,8	61,6	62,4	62,6	67,4	66,3	66,8	68,3	68,0	**64,5**
Portugal	58,4	57,3	58,0	59,6	63,6	63,0	56,9	56,5	58,6	58,5	58,6	59,2	59,7	**59,1**
Mean	**63,2**	**62,9**	**63,6**	**64,4**	**63,6**	**64,3**	**64,0**	**63,4**	**64,8**	**65,0**	**65,0**	**65,2**	**64,5**	

Source: Eurostat

We can see that healthy life years have improved almost every country. We can conclude that there is indeed an improvement in terms of health care and healthy living. Unlike the average life expectancy indicator, which only tells us the average number of years we live and not the number of healthy and quality years we live, through this indicator we obtain a more realistic notion of the increase in quality of life in terms of health. As can be seen, the number of healthy life years is between 59 and 73 years old. This is considerably lower than the average life expectancy, which is between 79 and 86 years old. In all countries, except Norway and Finland, the trend has been towards an increase in healthy life years. Finland and Portugal have been the countries with the lowest values (always under 60 years old). In 2020 Finland had lower values than Portugal with the values being 56,9 and 59,7 respectively. In the overall the Southern countries showed more healthy life years. Only Sweden and Norway have an average of healthy life years above southern European countries.

4.2 – Security

4.2.1 - Unemployment rate

Table 3. Unemployment Rate

Country/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean
Denmark	3,68	6,41	7,75	7,77	7,80	7,38	6,93	6,28	5,99	5,83	5,13	5,02	5,64	**6,28**
Finland	6,37	8,25	8,39	7,78	7,69	8,19	8,66	9,38	8,82	8,64	7,36	6,69	7,76	**8,00**
Sweden	6,23	8,35	8,61	7,80	7,98	8,05	7,95	7,43	6,99	6,72	6,36	6,83	8,29	**7,51**
Norway	2,55	3,10	3,52	3,21	3,12	3,42	3,48	4,30	4,68	4,16	3,80	3,69	4,42	**3,65**
Greece	7,76	9,62	12,71	17,86	24,44	27,47	26,49	24,90	23,54	21,49	19,29	17,31	16,31	**19,17**
Spain	11,25	17,86	19,86	21,39	24,79	26,09	24,44	22,06	19,64	17,22	15,25	14,10	15,53	**19,19**
Italy	6,72	7,75	8,36	8,36	10,65	12,15	12,68	11,90	11,69	11,21	10,61	9,95	9,16	**10,09**
Portugal	7,55	9,43	10,77	12,68	15,53	16,19	13,90	12,45	11,07	8,87	6,99	6,46	6,80	**10,67**
Mean	**6,51**	**8,85**	**10,00**	**10,86**	**12,75**	**13,62**	**13,07**	**12,34**	**11,55**	**10,52**	**9,35**	**8,76**	**9,24**	

Source: World Development Indicators

The unemployment rate increased in the years following the financial crisis, as expected but has been on a downward trend since then. Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland all had a higher the unemployment rate in 2020 in comparison to their rate in 2008. Denmark in 2008 had a 3,68% of unemployment rate and in the next years of financial crisis this percentage increased until 2012. From 2013 started decreasing until 2019. In 2020 increased to 5,64%.

Spain and Greece were the countries with the highest unemployment rate in 2020. Greece, from 2008 to 2014 had been increasing its unemployment rate the next years till 2020 was consecutively lowering the value to 16,3%. However, it was still the highest value of all the countries analyzed. Spain in 2008 was already the country with the highest unemployment rate and continued to increase until 2014. Since then started to decrease and by 2020 had an unemployment rate of 15,53 %. It was the second country with the highest rate. Italy had an increase in the unemployment rate in the years after the financial crisis. However, since 2014 had its rates decreasing. By 2020 it was 9,16% of unemployment, still higher than 2008.

It is also important to highlight Portugal, since not only did the unemployment rate fall, but it is also the country that had the greatest reduction in comparison with its value from 2008. Like all the other Southern countries, the unemployment rate suffered a big increase from the year 2008 until 2014. Only after 2014 we can see a reduction in the next years. In 2020 the unemployment rate in Portugal was 6,79%. It was lower than the 7,55% of 2008.

However, every country started to reduce its unemployment rate after 2013, all countries, except Portugal, had an unemployment rate higher in 2020 than it was in 2008. Nevertheless, the Scandinavian countries still had lower values than Southern ones.

4.2.2 - Crime or Vandalism

Table. 2 Crime or Vandalism

Country/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean
Denmark	16,2	16,5	14,2	15,7	9,9	9,2	9,1	7,7	8,4	7,8	7,4	7,5	7,3	**10,5**
Finland	13,1	13,7	8,7	8,3	8,6	9,0	7,0	7,3	6,5	6,2	7,0	6,4	7,0	**8,4**
Sweden	13,6	13,2	10,4	11,3	10,6	10,1	10,7	10,9	12,7	13,0	14,4	13,0	13,8	**12,1**
Norway	5,2	5,3	5,5	4,9	6,0	4,6	4,0	5,7	4,6	3,8	4,2	4,0	4,1	**4,8**
Greece	12,0	16,3	19,1	20,1	20,1	19,0	16,1	12,8	11,8	13,8	13,5	16,9	18,1	**16,1**
Spain	14,7	16,4	13,0	10,8	10,1	14,2	11,9	10,0	10,3	8,7	10,9	11,6	14,1	**12,1**
Italy	14,2	15,9	12,7	14,5	14,9	16,0	18,0	19,4	14,7	12,5	11,3	9,4	8,4	**14,0**
Portugal	11,7	14,0	11,3	10,1	10,9	13,3	11,6	10,5	7,8	7,9	6,5	6,7	6,6	**9,9**
Mean	**12,6**	**13,9**	**11,9**	**12,0**	**11,4**	**11,9**	**11,1**	**10,5**	**9,6**	**9,2**	**9,4**	**9,4**	**9,9**	

Source: Eurostat

In regards to crime or vandalism indicator, in the overall we can say the countries in analysis are safe. However, Greece and Sweden are the only countries that have increased their values. Regarding the Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Finland and Norway all had an increase in their percentages in 2009, but tended to be lowering their values. In 2020 all the countries had a lower value than they had in 2008. Sweden had a lowering of their percentages from 2008 (13,6%) until 2014 (10,9%). After 2015 until 2020 the values went up. It 2020 was in 13,8%. 0,2% higher than in 2008. Norway had the lowest value in 2020 (4,1%).

Regarding the Southern countries, during the financial crisis Greece had an increase in crime or vandalism. After 2013, when the financial crisis started to have a smaller effect the values began to decrease. In 2017 only began to increase again until reaching 18.1% in 2020. In Spain there was an increase in 2009 from 14.7% to 16.4%. In the following years, the values varied between 10% and 14%. 2017 was the first year in which the value was below 10%, corresponding to 8.7%. However, in the following years it increased again. In 2020 this figure was 14.1%. Considerably close to the value of 2008 but still below it. Italy and Portugal are the Southern countries with the lowest values in 2020 (8,3% and 6,6% respectively). Both countries were able to consistently lower their values from 2008 onwards. Only Norway had lower values than Portugal. Nevertheless, the Scandinavian countries show the tendency to have lower values than the countries of the south.

4.3 – Respect

4.3.1 - Income Inequality

Table. 4 Income Inequality (Gini Index)

Country/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean
Denmark	0,25	0,27	0,27	0,27	0,28	0,29	0,28	0,28	0,28	0,29	0,28	0,28	..	0,28
Finland	0,28	0,28	0,28	0,28	0,27	0,27	0,27	0,27	0,27	0,27	0,27	0,28	..	0,27
Sweden	0,28	0,27	0,28	0,28	0,28	0,29	0,28	0,29	0,30	0,29	0,30	0,29	..	0,29
Norway	0,27	0,26	0,26	0,25	0,26	0,26	0,27	0,28	0,29	0,27	0,28	0,28	..	0,27
Greece	0,34	0,34	0,34	0,35	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,35	0,34	0,33	0,33	..	0,35
Spain	0,34	0,35	0,35	0,36	0,35	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,35	0,35	0,34	..	0,35
Italy	0,34	0,34	0,35	0,35	0,35	0,35	0,35	0,35	0,35	0,36	0,35	..	..	0,35
Portugal	0,37	0,35	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,36	0,35	0,34	0,34	0,33	..	0,35
Mean	0,31	0,31	0,31	0,31	0,31	0,32	0,32	0,32	0,32	0,31	0,31	0,30		

Source: World Development Indicators

In income inequality, during the years following the financial crisis, most countries show greater income inequality. Italy was the only Southern country that increased its income inequality. In Italy the lowest value was in 2010 (3,4). In the following years it also fluctuated between 3,3 and 3,5 (highest value reached in 2017). In 2018 it was at 3,5, higher than the value of 2008 (3,3). Portugal started with an income inequality of 3,6 in 2008. After 2014 started to decrease and by 2019 had a value of 3,2. Portugal was the Southern country that improved the most in this matter. Spain and Greece had an increase in the years after 2008 and 2009, but in 2019 both countries had the same values as 2008.

Denmark and Sweden were the two Scandinavian countries that also increased their income inequality. Denmark went from 2,6 in 2010 to 2,7 in 2019. Sweden went from 2,7 in 2010 to 2,8 in 2017, which dropped to 2,9 in 2019. All the other countries lowered their values. However, every Scandinavian country, including those that increased income inequality, had their values below 2,9. All Southern countries had their values above 2,9.

4.4 – Personality

4.4.1 - Wealth Distribution

Table. 5 Wealth Distribution Top 10%

Country/ Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean
Denmark	49%	51%	51%	50%	49%	50%	50%	50%	50%	51%	50%	50%	50%	50%
Finland	54%	54%	55%	55%	54%	55%	55%	55%	55%	56%	56%	56%	56%	55%
Sweden	60%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	58%	59%
Norway	52%	51%	51%	51%	49%	49%	48%	49%	49%	50%	51%	52%	52%	50%
Greece	49%	48%	51%	52%	54%	58%	59%	59%	58%	60%	60%	60%	60%	56%
Spain	54%	56%	56%	56%	57%	57%	58%	57%	57%	58%	58%	57%	57%	57%
Italy	55%	56%	57%	58%	59%	58%	59%	57%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	57%
Portugal	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%	60%	59%	59%	60%	61%	60%	61%	61%	60%
Mean	54%	54%	55%	55%	55%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	56%	

Source: World Inequality Database

Wealth distribution has some ups and downs. This indicator shows how much wealth is concentrated in only 10% of the population. In the years following the financial crisis, Denmark and Philadelphia increased the concentration of wealth by 10%, by 1%. In the case of Denmark, this value decreased from 50% in 2011 to 49% in 2012, having increased again to 50% in 2013 and stabilized at that value until 2020. In Finland, the value increased from 54% in 2009 to 55% in 2010. It decreased again to 54% in 2012 and then increased to 55% in 2013, where it remained until 2017 when it rose to 56% and stabilized at this value until 2020. The value of Norway in 2008 was 52%. This value gradually decreased until 2014 (48%) and rose again from 2015 onwards until reaching 52% in 2019 and 2020. In the case of Sweden (60% in 2008), decreased the value in 2009 to 59% and in 2020 to 58%.

In the case of the Southern European countries, there has always been a gradual increase in general. In Portugal, the distribution of wealth stabilized at 59%, despite having increased to 60% in 2013 and decreased in the following year. From 2016 onwards, it started to rise to 61% in 2019 and 2020. Spain had a similar evolution. In Spain, the figure that was 54% in 2008 increased until 2014 to 58%. In 2015 and 2016 it decreased to 57%, increasing by 1% in the following two years and decreasing to 57% again in 2019 and 2020. In Greece there was always an increase until 2017, when it reached 60% and stabilized until 2020. In Italy there was a gradual increase from 2008 (55%) to 2014 (59%). In 2015 it rose to 57% and in 2016 to 56%, where it remained until 2020.

4.5 - Harmony with nature

4.5.1 - Air Pollution

In terms of the **a**ir pollution, almost all countries have been improving their air quality. Denmark is the only exception, being the country that had worse air quality in 2020 than it had in 2008. However, every Scandinavian country have lower air pollution that the Southern countries. It's interesting to note that although this indicator shows the Scandinavian countries demonstrate a more open culture, in which they are trying to preserve nature and not trying to conquer it. However, although the Scandinavian countries have lower levels of air pollution they also have lower levels of nature connectedness that the Southern countries as it will be analyzed next.

Table. 6 Air Pollution

Country/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean
Denmark	7,7	7,7	8,1	8,9	5,3	5,9	6,8	6,6	6,8	7,9	8,1	8,4	9,4	**7,5**
Finland	12,7	9,7	8,5	8,8	8,8	8,4	8,6	8,4	7,2	7,9	8,7	9,4	9,2	**8,9**
Sweden	9,6	9,1	7,9	7,2	8,0	8,0	8,1	7,6	6,3	6,8	6,4	6,6	5,9	**7,5**
Norway	7,9	7,3	7,7	7,5	9,6	7,6	6,9	9,4	6,8	7,1	8,7	7,7	7,9	**7,9**
Greece	20,3	22,9	25,0	25,3	25,9	26,5	23,2	19,2	19,6	20,3	20,5	20,2	20,2	**22,2**
Spain	13,0	13,6	10,7	8,1	8,0	9,8	10,2	10,3	10,1	8,2	10,1	9,9	11,8	**10,3**
Italy	19,6	20,7	17,1	19,5	17,3	17,2	18,3	17,6	15,1	11,9	11,7	12,4	15,4	**16,4**
Portugal	16,8	18,7	16,3	15,2	14,9	14,8	13,7	14,2	13,1	13,2	12,9	13,5	13,2	**14,7**
Mean	**13,5**	**13,7**	**12,7**	**12,6**	**12,2**	**12,3**	**12,0**	**11,7**	**10,6**	**10,4**	**10,9**	**11,0**	**11,6**	

Source: Eurostat

4.5.2 - Nature Connectedness

Table 7. Nature Connectedness

Country/Year	2018
Finland	4,2
Sweden	4,1
Greece	4,4
Spain	4,3
Italy	4,7
Portugal	4,6

Source: Country-level factors in a failing relationship with nature, Miles Richardson, Iain Hamlin, Lewis R Elliott & Mathew P White, Ambio (2022)

In the case of nature connectedness, every Southern country analysed has higher values than the Scandinavian countries, being Italy and Portugal the two countries with the highest values. Unfortunately, this indicator is very recent and was never included in any studies related to human development. For this reason, the only available data is from the year 2018. These values are presented in a suggestive way for future analyzes that focus more on indicators that relate the appreciation of nature instead of just measuring its quality.

4.6 – Friendship

4.6.1 - Social Support Network

Table 8. Social Support Network

Country	Quality of Social Support Network
Denmark	95
Finland	96
Sweden	94
Norway	96
Greece	78
Spain	93
Italy	89
Portugal	87

Source: OECD Better Life Index Statistics

Every person requires a strong social network, or community, in order to access chances for employment, services, and other tangible goods. This is especially true when it comes to Friendship. There is a lack of data on the time each person spends with family and friends, the quality of that time and whether they have a good support network. The best data available is from the OECD data from *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being* (2020), the Better Life Index Report, whose average percentage of people who know someone they can trust in times of need is 91%. In Denmark (95%), Finland (96%), Norway (96%), Spain (93%) and Sweden (94%) are the countries with rates above the average of the OECD. Spain is the only Southern country with a rate above the OECD average. Greece (78%), Portugal (87%) and Italy (89%). Greece rate is among the lowest ones.

4.7 – Leisure

4.7.1 - Leisure and Personal Care

Table 9. Leisure and Personal Care

Country	Time devoted to leisure and personal care
Denmark	15,7
Finland	15,2
Sweden	15,3
Norway	15,7
Greece	15,0
Spain	15,8
Italy	16,5
Portugal	15,0

Source: OECD Better Life Index Statistics

The OECD (2020) average are 15 hours spent in leisure (socialising with friends and family, hobbies, games, computer and television use, etc.) and personal care (eating, sleeping, etc.). Regarding the Scandinavian countries, Denmark (15,7 hours), Norway (15,7 hours), Sweden (15,3 hours) and Finland (15,2 hours) all spend more than 15 hours in personal care and leisure. In relation to the Southern countries, Italy spends 16,5 hours in personal care and leisure. It is the country that spends the most time in comparison with both the Southern countries and the Scandinavian countries. Spain comes next as it spends 15,7 hours. Portugal and Greece both spend 15 hours, the lowest value of the Southern countries.

Next is presented the number of hours spent only in leisure according to the time use survey of the OECD from between the years of 2009 and 2016 the people between the ages of 15 and 64:

4.7.2 - Time Use in Personal Care and Leisure in Hours

Table 10. Time use in Personal Care and Leisure

Country/Activity	Personal Care	Leisure	Mean
Denmark	10,9	5,4	8,15
Finland	10,6	5,5	8,05
Sweden	10,3	5,3	7,8
Norway	10,4	6,1	8,25
Greece	11,4	5,6	8,5
Spain	11,5	5,2	8,35
Italy	11,8	5,3	8,55
Portugal	11,2	4,0	7,6
Mean	11,0	5,3	

Source: OECD Time Use Statistics

Denmark and Italy (16,5 hours) are the countries that have more time spent in personal care and leisure combined. Although countries like Denmark, Greece and Norway have more time for leisure than Italy they all spend less time in personal care and leisure combined. This means the Italian really take their time to take care of themselves by spending 11,8 hours in personal care. Norway is the country that spends more time in leisure with an average of 6 hours.

Portugal and Spain are the two countries that spend less time in leisure with an average of 4 hours and 5,2 hours respectively. They are the only two countries that spend less time in leisure with Portugal being the only country that spends less than 5 hours. Greece and Norway are the two countries that spend more time in leisure. However, every Scandinavian country spends more than 5 hours in leisure. In the Southern countries only, Greece and Italy have an average above the 5 hours.

Chapter 5 - Discussion of results

The findings of this study have shed light on the disparities between the comparative evolution of the basic goods in the Scandinavian and Southern countries. Nevertheless, the limitations of the current research call for care in the interpretation of the data as well as the main results. The research process is discussed in this chapter. The design's drawbacks and potential ramifications, as well as its implications for how the results should be interpreted, are all examined.

Health is a highly complex element. In this case the choice of indicators is very important, although there will always be many that are left out, every single indicator related to health can tells us a different story. For this reason, looking at the years of healthy life helps to understand within the entire life span how many years are expected to live healthy, without having any type of disease that significantly affects our quality of life. And although this number is lower than the average life expectancy, it is a number that is increasing which means that in all these countries care and access to health, in general, are improving. However, it is worth noting, once again, that with regard to this indicator, the countries of the south have the best values.

Regarding the level of unemployment, we can conclude that the Scandinavian countries have the lowest values, meaning that these populations have greater economic security. Norway proves to be the country with the lowest level of unemployment. Southern European countries show higher levels of unemployment, which means that their populations are not as economically secure compared to Scandinavian countries. Greece and Spain are not only the countries with the highest levels, but in 2020 they continue to have a level of unemployment much higher than in 2008. On the other hand, only Portugal had a lower figure and Italy had a figure 3 percentage points higher than the value of 2008.

Regarding crime and vandalism, all countries have low values, meaning that they are safe countries in general. However, Scandinavian countries prove to be safer - compared to Southern Europe. Finland and Norway have the lowest values of crime and vandalism. Sweden is the Scandinavian country that appears to be the least safe, having values similar to those of Spain. In the case of Southern European countries, the safest country is Portugal. It proves to be even safer than Sweden and Denmark. Italy and Greece are the least safe countries under review.

In 2019 every country, except Portugal, had either increased income inequality or maintained. Portugal decreased its income inequality. This means that there has been a positive evolution in these two countries towards a decrease in inequality and consequently an increase

in respect between citizens as it expands the economic opportunities of the poorer people and alleviate social tensions (Higgins and Lustig, 2016).

In every country more than half of the wealth is in the hand of only 10% of the population. Sweden has been lowering its values, meaning there is a little less inequality in its wealth distribution than in 2008. Finland and Denmark are the only two Scandinavian countries that increased their wealth distribution in the top 10% of the population, nevertheless their values are still lower than those of the Southern countries. All the Southern countries have increased their values. Bauman (1999) explains how this divergence creates a cleavage between the citizens themselves that leads to the "Paring public areas down to defensible enclaves with selective access". Citizens of the upper class try to not share the same space with those of the lower class. And we are increasingly witnessing the construction of closed or luxury condominiums. They do their shopping in specific and more expensive stores that are not found on every street in the city. On the other hand, in relation to the lower class, they also tend to close themselves in their own neighborhood to the point of people from outside who cross them, for whatever reason, they are expelled through violence.

This is something that we fail do see when we analyze well-being. Do they identify with each other do they have a constant socio-economic and socio-cultural shock? To conclude, the only country that reduced the distribution of wealth was Sweden. All others have increased. The Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) consider the health distribution indicator to be a good predictor of the personality element, as they need property to live an independent life. In the case of increasing the concentration of wealth in only 10% of the population, it means that there is an increase in inequalities. These values mean that a large majority of the population is forced to live a more constrained life. To fulfill its moral obligation, property must be liberally distributed.

Environment is similar to the health element in the sense that it is also very complex to measure. Regardless of the indicators chosen, there will always be many that were left out and that also reveal important information. For this reason, is important to look not only at the quality of the environment, but at the way people look at nature (Hamlin, Elliott, & White, 2022). This is why Skidelsky, R., and Skidelsky, E., (2012) introduced Harmony with Nature. It matters little to be a country with various environmental protection policies if the population itself has little interest or gives little value to the environment and nature. It increases the probability that many of these policies are not well applied or executed. In the same way, a population that values nature will tend to be unhappy if they live in a country that shows little interest in protecting the environment. In Nature connectedness the Southern countries also

show better results (although the only Scandinavian countries in this analysis is Sweden and Finland, and it is not possible to make time comparisons). Nevertheless, this indicator is very relevant to measure well-being. We need nature to be physically well, for example, polluted air, healthy and chemical-free food, clean water, among others. For this reason, it is important to understand what kind of relationship people have with nature and the value they place on it. This also shows that although the Southern countries value nature, the countries do not take care of it as well as the Scandinavian countries, which might have a negative impact in well-being in the Southern populations.

Regarding Friendship, unfortunately is not possible to evaluate the evolution of the social network support during the years of 2008 and 2020. However, we can assess that all Scandinavian countries have values higher than those of Southern European countries. This means that more people within the Scandinavian population report having trusted people they can rely on in times of need. However, although the values of the Southern European countries are lower, they are also somewhat high, and Spain, Italy and Portugal are not very far from reaching the values of the Scandinavian countries.

In relation to Leisure, finding a suitable balance between work and life is a challenge for all workers, especially working parents. The ability to successfully combine work, family commitments and personal life is important for the well-being of all members in a household. People's total wellbeing is impacted by their leisure time, which can also have a good impact on their physical and mental health. In the OECD, a full-time worker spends 15 hours a day, or 63% of the day, on leisure activities like socializing with friends and family, hobbies, games, watching television and computers, and taking care of oneself (such as eating and sleeping), (OECD, 2020).

Not only every country in the analysis has an amount of leisure higher than three hours as well as, it is interesting to note that in all countries the average hours spent on leisure and personal care increased considerably, from an average of seven to eight hours to an average of fifteen to sixteen. It is interesting to note the differences between the countries. This all could have a cultural explanation. It is always important to have time for leisure and personal care in order to maintain good physical and psychological health. Such an important part of the daily life and experience of each one is completely devalued in the statistical analysis. We know how much of an impact community, leisure, and personal care have in our health and well-being, yet we are still a little far from getting complete data that shows us the reality of countries in this respect.

To conclude, it is possible to carry out this study in other ways, namely applying this methodology to other countries or groups of countries for the purposes of extension and comparability. It could also be applied another methodology for the countries under analysis (e.g. the use of several of indicators for each dimension, with the construction of indexes). Other alternatives could be tested and studied in further analysis. It would also be interesting to collect more data regarding the indicators of the Friendship, Leisure and Harmony with Nature elements in order to be able to analyze the evolution of the indicators. This leads me to re-emphasize the reason for not making indices. Within the indexes there are many real values that are lost. We can even say that, on average, the Scandinavian countries present better results, however there are aspects in which the Southern countries are better, and this information would be lost if read in other type of analysis. In this way, we can understand the strengths and weaknesses of each country.

Conclusion

The current research aimed to make a comparative analysis of the evolution of the basic goods between the Scandinavian countries and Southern European Countries. The central questions for this research were as follows:

1-Was there a positive evolution of the basic goods during the time period between 2008 and 2020?

2- Did the Scandinavian countries had a better evolution than the Southern countries?

3- Every country had a decrease of the basic goods in the years of the financial crisis (2008-2012) with the Scandinavian countries still maintaining better values than the Southern countries?

In general, it can be said that the Scandinavian countries have more basic goods than the Southern countries. This does not mean that the Southern countries are having a negative evolution, quite the contrary, they are just lagging behind the Scandinavian countries. All countries show, in general, in all indicators, a decrease in basic goods during the financial crisis and in the following years, as it was expected. However, between the years 2012 and 2014, improvements are visible, sometimes reaching better results in 2020 than those in 2008. Nevertheless, the Scandinavian countries had already better values in 2008 and throughout the time line continued to be in front of the Southern countries.

The Scandinavian countries show better results, which is consistent with data presented in other studies related to well-being and quality of life. This demonstrates, on the one hand, that the proposed indicators present reliable results, but also allow us to obtain other types of information in relation to the sense of community within that country. It is important to highlight that in terms of inequality and to understand social cleavages, especially in relation to the distribution of wealth, in general the vast majority of wealth is concentrated in a very small percentage of the population and that it has been increasing. The rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Even in Scandinavian countries where the values are lower, they are still above 50%. For the Skidelskys´, the objective for society should not be the search for incessant growth, but rather to use all the wealth produced to guarantee and achieve the seven basic goods. However, it is difficult to understand and define the limit for growth. Furthermore, looking at these results, we cannot say that the growth of these countries is having a negative impact in the basic goods. Nevertheless, social phenomena are very difficult to understand and explain. Society and its

organization are influenced by several factors that are also complex. As already mentioned, initially only economic measures (such as GDP) were considered to explain the evolution and quality of life of populations. Nowadays we know that we need to look at many other factors. But to what extent do we do it right? We talk about the importance of rest and leisure, but there are few available data that demonstrate access to leisure, its quality, and what activities are practiced. We know the importance of conviviality and interpersonal relationships, but it is a challenge to find data on how many people have a support network around them or how much time they have for their family and friends

The Better Life Index has made great strides in this regard, but it does not allow comparisons over the years, which makes it difficult to understand at what points countries are actually evolving or regressing. However, indicators such as wealth distribution and income inequality reflect the social divisions within society itself that lead to certain conflicts between citizens. A lot of the wellbeing measures and policies don´t consider social inequalities or social relations between communities, which are also extremely important for our wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing is also related to the benefit someone gain from social interactions and their identification with their community. Nevertheless, we can see that although there is a positive advance in both groups of countries, in the vast majority inequality continues to be a reality and that it continues to increase.

To conclude, both group of countries until 2020 had been showing a continued improving of the basic goods. Nevertheless, the indicators selected are a proposal. They can be debated and others may be chosen instead. In future analyses, this investigation can be applied to the years after 2020 (2021 and 2022). Since 2021 was still a year of many restrictions due to covid-19 and in 2022 the war between Ukraine and Russia began. Both scenarios had major impacts on the economy and society that affected the quality of life for many. This means that part of the evolution we see in this study may have regressed in some elements in certain countries.

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