

18. Bes and UrBes projects: uniform and sustainable well-being at the national and metropolitan level

The Bes project

There is an awareness that the Gross National Product figures do not represent the real situation as regards general well-being and, in the broadest sense, a nation's wealth, and this, over the last decades, has induced not only researchers but many national Statistical Institutes to seek alternative ways of assessing social and environmental, as well economic, progress. Finding quantitative evaluations that might thus consent an assessment of inequality and sustainability of development presents a very complex challenge for which mere statistical data has not yet been able to provide complete answers.

With the Bes project, (acronym for Benessere Equo e Sostenibile, i.e. uniform and sustainable well-being), Istat and the Cnel identified 12 dimensions for well-being that would be relevant to Italy. A scientific committee formed to measure well-being then selected 134 indicators of a high statistical quality appropriate for the evaluation.

The 12 dimensions are: Health, Education and training, Work and organization of daily life, Economic well-being, Social relations, Politics and institutions, Subjective well-being, Countryside and cultural heritage, Environment, Research and innovation, Quality of services.

The choice of these sectors, though decided by a committee of experts, has passed close scrutiny by the general public. In fact, via its own Internet site, Istat presented citizens with a questionnaire under the heading "What is your opinion regarding well-being?" Without presuming to consider the totality of answers as a representative statistical sample, it seems useful to report the main percentages of opinion with regard to the importance of the dimensions of well-being. Considered most important were health (98%), the environment (95.1%), education and training (92.4%) and quality of services (91.2%). The least "popular" dimensions turned out to be politics and faith in institutions (37.2%) and security (30.3%).

The Bes report

The first report on Bes synthesizes the work carried out and organizes it into 12 chapters, each of which is devoted to one of the dimensions of well-being,

with clear language and numerous graphs and charts. Every chapter ends with a clarification of all the indicators used and two insets/boxes: one titled “further knowledge” in which there is a brief bibliography and sitography, and the other titled “notes for the future” in which there is a delineation of the paths of development for improving the statistical evaluation in the sector in question.

The project presents many indicators calculated at the Regional level, whereas others, though relevant (e.g. poverty index), have not acquired a consistent statistical estimate and have therefore remained anchored to broader territorial levels.

Furthermore, the sectors for well-being include (placing them on the same level) objective indicators (e.g. as regards the dimension of economic well-being - average net per capita wealth) and subjective indicators (e.g. for the same dimension - the index of subjective assessment of economic difficulty). The sound concept supporting this choice derives from the actual idea of well-being, which changes in accordance with time, place and culture, and therefore requires, for one single “evaluation”, a process of legitimization that has, as its reference-point, well-being as it is perceived, and not detached from the diaphanous concept of happiness.

With the First Report, down-loadable in its entirety from the site <http://www.misuredelwell-being.it/>, Istat places at the disposal of the general public all the indicators used, in historic series, and in electronic format. Apart from the possibility of downloading, it is possible to visualize the values and trends of the indicators in three modes: graphs, maps and tables, via an informatics platform (eXplorer). Via these three modes the user can effect comparisons between territorial areas by interlinking several indicators.

Several sectors for Sicily

In this chapter reference will be made to only three dimensions: Education, Politics and institutions and Environment, because it is not possible to display the articulated and varied dimensions through which Bes is subdivided. The choice is subjective, but is deemed significant for highlighting several differences between the Region of Sicily and the rest of Italy, whilst directing those interested to the Istat-Cnel report for a complete report on the dimensions measured.

Education represents an element of considerable relevance for defining well-being, both because of the greater probabilities that it offers to whoever is at an active age for finding work and because of the increased capacity for understanding the complex reality of today, as well as for greater opportunities for social mobility.

The data in Tab.18.1 shows a Regional situation in sicily with inferior levels

in all the selected indicators. The first two in particular standardize the skills determined by the Invalsi tests for students in the 2nd year of Upper Secondary Schools: the gap is one of over 10 points for numerical skills and almost 15 for literacy.

The Region overall also presents a lower level of common computer skills (18.1% compared to 21.7% nationally) whereas a lower percentage of persons of working age have participated in training activity (4.3% v 5.7%). This latter figure can be interpreted as a consequence of inferior general skills, but also as a cause of the difficult economic (shortage of employment determining the processes of personal training) and social conditions (the poor average level does not stimulate increased training activity). The latter element may be connected with the lower interest in cultural activity, measured by the fifth indicator; only about a quarter of residents in Sicily have been to the cinema, theatre or museum, when compared to almost a third at the national level.

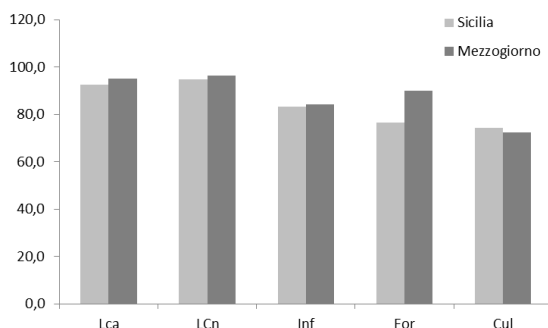
Tab. 18.1 – Indicators for extent of education

Label	Indicator	Sicily	Mezzogiorno	Italy
Lca	Lev. of literacy of students	185.2	190.6	200.0
LCn	Lev. of numeracy of students	189,9	192,6	200,0
Inf	Persons aged 16+ with high level of computer skills	18,1	18,3	21,7
	Persons aged 25-64 who have participated in educational or training activity			
For		4,3	5,1	5,7
Cul	Persons aged 6+ who have participated in cultural activity in the last year	24,4	23,8	32,8

Source: processing from Istat data, Bes report

Figure 18.1 reports almost the same information as Tab.18.1, placing the national value at 100, thus consenting appreciation of the relative gap between this compared with Sicily and the Mezzogiorno.

Fig. 18.1 – Indicators for extent of education (index Italy = 100)



Source: processing from Istat data, Bes report

The second dimension developed is that of Politics and institutions. The first two indicators in Tab. 18.2 show a lesser propensity for politics, both at the level of participation (42.9%) and being well-informed (58.3%). This lower figure seems to be linked to other indicators (e.g. the previously-mentioned cultural preparation) rather than a particular distrust for politics. In fact, as regards this topic, Sicilians find themselves in line with the average national value (2.1 compared to 2.3). On the other hand, there is a substantial difference in levels of trust for local government. The national figure is 4 (on a scale from 0 to 10) whereas Sicilians are a whole point away, with males at 2.9 and females at 3.1.

Tab.18.2 – Indicators for political dimension

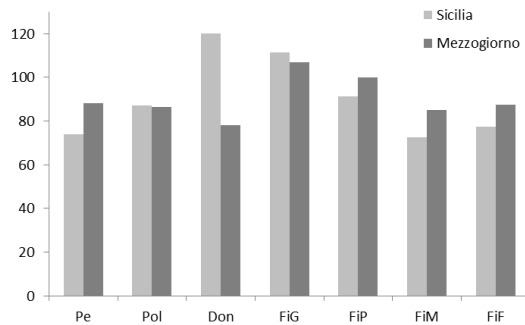
Label	Indicator	Sicily	Mezzo-giorno	Italy
Pe	Electoral participation	49,2	58,6	66,5
Pol	Civic and political participation	58,3	58,0	67,0
Don	Percentage of women in Regional councils	15,6	10,1	12,9
FiG	Faith in the judicial system	4,9	4,7	4,4
FiP	Faith in the parties	2,1	2,3	2,3
FiM	Faith in the Regional government: Males	2,9	3,4	4,0
FiF	Faith in the Regional government: Females	3,1	3,5	4,0

Source: processing from Istat data, Bes report

Two values present a higher level for the Region as compared to both the national figure and the division of appurtenance: the vote of confidence in the judicial system (4.9) and the percentage of women elected to the Regional council (15.6% for the Sicilian Region) against a national average of 12.9% and

a scanty 10.1% in the Mezzogiorno. Also in this case, by standardizing the national value at 100, Figure 18.2 enables one to evaluate the “distances” between this item and the local indicators.

Fig. 18. 2 – Indicators for political dimension (index Italy=100)



Source: processing from Istat data, Bes report

The third and final dimension considered refers to measurement of the environment. Of these the most important (because of the value taken on by a natural resource such as water) is the survey regarding the availability of quantities of drinking water, where Sicily presents a gap of over 33 litres per capita per day. On the contrary the lesser rainfall in Sicily limits the surface area that is subject to hydro-geological problems, the percentage being kept down to 2.1% of the surface area compared to 6.8% of the national figure. Air pollution, in spite of the lower number of manufacturing industries in Sicily, is at the same level as the national one; 9.8 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent/inhabitant.

Tab. 18.3 – Indicators for environmental dimension

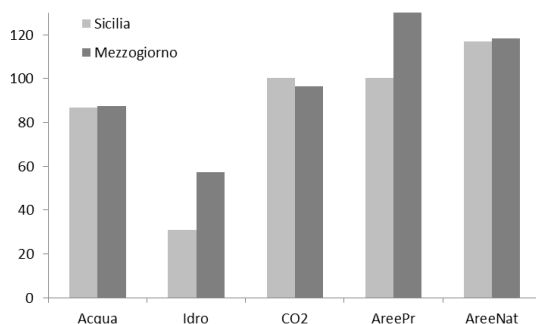
Label	Indicator	Sicily	Mezzo-giorno	Italy
Acqua	Drinking water supplied	219,6	221,0	253,0
Idro	Areas with hydrogeological problems	2,1	3,9	6,8
CO ₂	CO ₂ and other gas emissions	9,8	9,4	9,8
AreePr	Protected land	10,5	14,2	10,5
AreeNat	Nature areas	24,8	25,1	21,2

Source: processing from Istat data, Bes report

The percentage of protected areas has the same relative value as the Italian average (10.5%), although it is lower than that of its own division (14.2%).

With regard to the overall surface area in Sicily, the nature areas are larger (24.8%) than the comparable national figure (21.2%), although, in this case too, they are inferior to those for the Mezzogiorno (25.1%). The indicators in Tab.18.3 are reported as indices of the national value of 100, in Fig.18.3.

Fig. 18. 3 – Indicators for environmental dimension (index Italy=100)



Source: processing from Istat data, Bes report

The UrBes project

The ways that research and diffusion have been tackled highlight the effective opening to the publication of statistical information that may be useful at all levels. The shift from the Regional sphere to the urban is certainly natural, right and proper, especially with a long-term view to the creation of a territorial environment for metropolitan cities. The structure of the UrBes project reflects that of the Bes project, actively involving various subjects, such as Anci, ForumPA, and many municipal administrations, not to mention resident communities (several municipalities have also carried out a process of consultation of its citizens and heeding their opinions regarding dimensions of well-being). For Sicily the municipality of Palermo participated in the report along with that of Messina. One of the expectations of the project is that from the mass of administrative sources still not valorized there may emerge significant new indicators.

The UrBes report

The first UrBes report is composed of 15 chapters, one for each municipality taking part in the study; each was produced by the statistical office of the town or city in question, following a definite plan proposed by Istat and starting from the conceptual outline and the indicators individuated by Bes. In particular, 25 immediately available indicators (out of the 129 of Bes) were utilized; these covered 10 of the 12 Bes sectors. The indicators are principally at the mu-

nicipal level and only for certain specific dimensions, where the indicators were lacking, was there recourse to *proxi* at the Provincial level. All the indicators, furthermore, were presented in historic series from 2004, in order to be able to understand the impact of the economic and social crises beginning in 2008. The report can be downloaded entirely from the site: <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/92375>.

Palermo and Messina

In the following synthesis reference will be made to the same items examined at the Regional level, utilizing only those indicators that arrive at the municipality level; as in the previous analysis, further details regarding whatever is not highlighted here are available in the afore-mentioned UrBes report.

Education. According to estimates by the Statistical Offices of Palermo and Messina, with reference to the school year 2011/2012, the skills of Sicilian schoolchildren are classified on a level that is slightly lower than the Italian average. Especially the scores achieved in the skills tests of schoolchildren in Class II of the upper secondary school (worked out by the Invalsi national evaluation Service) indicate, with regard to literacy, a variance of 9 points from the national average for the municipality of Messina (191 compared to 200 points) and a variance of over 11 points for schoolchildren in Palermo (188.6). Only a little less serious are the gaps for numeracy, calculated at 194.4 for the city of Messina and 189.9 for Palermo, again when compared to a national point of reference of 200.

Politics and institutions. The electoral participation rate is one of the indicators proposed in the UrBes project; this is calculated as the percentage of persons (out of all those being eligible) who voted in the last elections for the European Parliament in 2009. The indicator also assumes a relevant connotation being used as a *proxi* for the level of social capital in Sicily. The percentages of both Sicilian cities show figures below the national figure (66.5%). Palermo has a percentage of 44.2%, whilst that of Messina is even lower, 43.5%. Again with regard to participation in political life, on the one hand one can observe the relatively scarce presence of female components in municipal councils (especially evident in the composition of the town council of Faro – 7%) and the higher average age of the members of these same councils; in this case the peak arriving in the Regional capital of Palermo (over 49 years).

Tab. 18.4 – Several indicators at municipal level

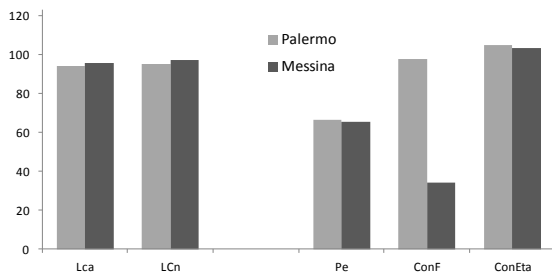
Label	Indicator	Palermo	Messina	Italy
Lca	Schoolchildren's level of literacy	188,6	191,0	200,0
LCn	Schoolchildren's level of numeracy	189,9	194,4	200,0
Pe	Electoral participation	44,2	43,5	66,5
ConF	Women in municipal councils	20,0	7,0	20,5
ConEta	Average age in municipal council	49,4	48,7	47,1
Parchi	Density of historical greenery and urban parks	1,1	2,2	5,1
Pre19	Extent of historic urban fabric	29,2	43,4	61,8
Acqua	Drinking water	192,0	295,0	253,0
VerdeU	Availability of urban green spaces	77,8	8,8	106,4

Source: processing from Istat data, First UrBes report

Environment. The state of the environment represents an essential element for our quality of life. The two Sicilian cities have a low density of both historic greenery and urban parks of notable public interest, with Palermo being especially lacking (1.1 sqm per 100 sqm of the surface of inhabited areas). The index for availability of urban green spaces is also very low, and is almost non-existent as a ratio for the city of Messina (8.8 sqm per inhab.).

This lower capacity for provision for the environment in urban life (when compared to the average of other large Italian cities) in the two Sicilian cities, is also highlighted by the inferior state of upkeep of historical buildings. Most of these are to be found in the old quarters of cities and better conservation of these edifices would bring about an improved life-style in these areas. The make-up of the historic urban fabric was evaluated via the percentage of urban dwellings (in a state considered good or excellent) built before 1919. Compared to a national figure of three fifths of the historical heritage built up before the First World War, Messina is classified well below halfway (43.4%) and Palermo is actually below 30%.

Fig. 18.4 – Indicators for education and extent of political involvement (index Italy=100)

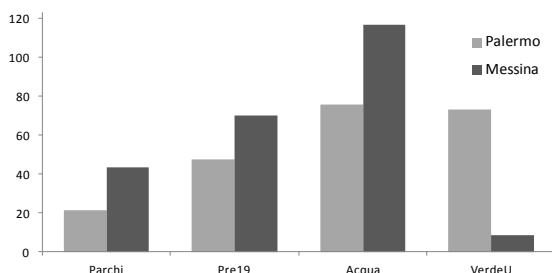


Source: processing from Istat data, First UrBes report

A final indicator regarding the environment refers to the availability of drinking water for residents. The situation in the two metropolitan cities is clearly different; whereas Messina reports a more than positive value (295 litres per inhab, per day), compared to the national figure of 253 litres, Palermo only reaches 192 litres per inhab. per day.

Figures 18.4 and 18.5 show the selected indicators correlated with the average national value.

Fig. 18.5 – Environmental indicators (index Italy=100)



Source: processing from Istat data, First UrBes report

Istat and the Cnel made specific choices in putting together a picture representing uniform and sustainable well-being in Italy; the aim was to build up an overall picture via a number of indicators, rather than create a single indicator of synthesis providing a synthetic overview. This same logic is re-proposed in the UrBes report, through which importance is given to the dynamics of development rather than the construction of a classification of various Regions. The reality in the two Sicilian cities participating in the UrBes project shows itself, from the indicators described and with reference to the averages in large Italian cities, to be, generally speaking, insufficient and with many critical areas to tackle.

Future work has already been clearly programmed in the Bes and UrBes projects; greater details will be provided along with (as underlined by the aspi-

rations stated in the introduction to the Bes report) a solid reference basis «to become a sort of *statistical constitution*, i.e. a constant and shared reference for all Italians, which is able to point in the direction of the progress that it would like to achieve”.

Indicators utilized

Dimensions of Education and Training

- Schoolchildren’s level of literacy (Lca): this score is obtained in tests of literacy of schoolchildren in the II year of upper secondary school.
- Schoolchildren’s level of numeracy (Lcn): this score is obtained in tests of numeracy of schoolchildren in the II year of upper secondary school.
- Persons with high level of computer skills (Inf): percentage of persons (16 years and over) who can carry out at least five of the six operations listed, out of the total population of persons aged 16+. The operations involved are: copying and moving a file or folder; using “copy and paste” to move information inside a document; using basic arithmetical formulae in an electronic page (Excel, etc.); compressing (or zipping) files; connecting or installing peripheral devices (printers, modems etc.); writing a computer programme using the language of programming.
- Participation in continuous training (For): percentage of persons aged 25-64 who have taken part in educational or training activity during the 4 weeks prior to the interview, out of the total of people aged 25-64.
- Cultural participation (Cul): percentage of persons aged 6 years and over who, in the 12 months prior to the interview, have been involved in three or more activities (out of a total of all persons aged 6 and over). The activities involved are: they have been to the cinema at least 4 times; at least once with regard to theatre, museums and/or exhibitions, archaeological sites, historical monuments, classical music concerts, opera, other music concerts; have read the newspaper at least three times a week; have read at least four books; have seen a DVD at home at least once a month.

Dimension for politics and institutions

- Electoral participation (Pe): percentage of persons who voted in the last elections for the European Parliament (out of the total eligible to vote).

- Civic and political participation (Pol): percentage of persons aged 14 years and over who carry out at least one activity of civic and political participation (out of the total of persons aged 14+). The activities involved: talking politics at least once a week; finding out facts about Italian politics at least once a week; taking part in online consultations and polls regarding social (civic) or political problems (e.g. town-planning, signing petitions) at least once in the three months prior to the interview; reading about, and posting on the web, opinions about social or political problems at least once in the three months prior to the interview.
- Women and political representation at the local level (Don): percentage of women elected to the Regional council (out of all those elected).
- Faith in the judicial system (FiG): average score of faith in the judicial system (on a scale of 0 to 10), expressed by persons aged 14 and over.
- Faith in the parties (FiP): average score of faith in the parties on a scale of 0 to 10), expressed by persons aged 14 and over.

Faith in local institutions (FiM e FiF): average score of faith in Regional, Provincial and Municipal governments (on a scale of 0 to 10), expressed by persons aged 14 and over and separated by gender.

Women in municipal councils (ConF): percentage of women elected to the Municipal council (out of all those elected).

Average age of municipal councillors (ConEta): - average age of municipal councillors

Dimension of Environment

Drinking water (Acqua): per capita volume of water distributed daily (litres per inhab. per day). By water distributed we intend the quantity of water for drinking actually consumed by the various consumers.

Areas with hydrogeological problems (Idro): percentage of subsidence-prone areas out of the total Regional surface area.

CO2 emissions and other gases affecting the climate (CO2): CO2 equivalent per inhab. in tonnes.

- Protected land (AreePr): percentage of protected land out of total surface area.

- Areas of particular naturalistic interest (AreeNat): percentage of areas included in the network Natura 2000 out of total surface area.
- Density of historic green spaces and urban parks of notable public interest (parks): value in sqm of historic green spaces and urban parks of notable public interest (art. 10 and 136 D. Lgs. 42/2004) per 100 sqm of surface area in the inhabited parts of major cities.
- Lay-out of historic urban fabric (Pre19): percentage of inhabited buildings constructed before 1919 and in excellent or good state of conservation, out of a total of all buildings constructed before 1919.
- Availability of urban green spaces (VerdeU): square metres of urban green per inhabitant.