



ESRC Research Group on  
Wellbeing in Developing Countries

**WeD Working Paper 04**

**DISCURSIVE REPERTOIRES AND THE NEGOTIATION OF  
WELL-BEING: REFLECTIONS ON THE WED FRAMEWORKS**

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## SUMMARY

This paper:

- Links the three main WeD frameworks - the resource profiles, human needs and quality of life approaches - by focusing on the 'discursive repertoires' through which the different meanings of human well-being are commonly talked about and understood.
- Defines such repertoires in relation to the overlap between two kinds of everyday conceptual distinction: that between local and universal perspectives on the world; and that between 'solidaristic' and 'contractarian' understandings of the relationship between the human individual and society (the former assumes humankind to be fundamentally co-operative, the latter assumes it to be competitive).
- Explores the competing repertoires through which people negotiate with each other and come to understand their practical survival strategies, the naming and claiming of their needs, and their personal identity as embodied beings.
- Discusses the methodological implications and the theoretical relevance for the understanding of welfare regimes in developing countries.

## KEYWORDS

Discourse, discursive repertoire, discursive negotiation, well-being, welfare

## RELATED READINGS

- Dean, H. and Melrose, M. (1999), *Poverty, Riches and Social Citizenship*, Basingstoke: Macmillan (especially Chapters 1 and 7).
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- Gough, I., Wood, G., Barrientos, A., Bevan, P., Davis, P. and Room, G. (forthcoming 2003), *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America: Social Policy in Development Contexts*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
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## NOTE

Earlier versions of this paper were presented informally at a meeting of the WeD group and formally at WeD's inaugural workshop in January 2003. The author is grateful to all those members of the group who commented on the paper and, in particular, to Geof Wood for the detailed commentary he provided as discussant at the inaugural workshop. The defects and omissions that remain, however, are the sole responsibility of the author.

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This working paper considers ways of linking the three approaches that inform the ESRC's Well-being in Developing Countries (WeD) project – namely, the resource profiles (McGregor and Kebede 2003), human needs (Gough and Clark 2003), and quality of life (Skevington and Camfield 2003) approaches – through the notion of competing and overlapping discursive repertoires. It draws upon and reapplies previous work by the author (Dean 1999; 2000; 2001; 2002) and is presented in six parts. The first develops the conceptual distinctions underpinning the heuristic framework that informs the paper as a whole. The second, third and fourth parts discuss the relevance of discourse to the resource profiles, human needs and quality of life approaches respectively. The fifth part considers the methodological applications of the framework and the sixth its wider theoretical significance.

## 1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DISCOURSE

By the term 'discourse' I refer to the language and communicative practices by which inter-subjective meanings are represented, apprehended or established. Understood as a discursive construct, 'poverty', for example, has several culturally pervasive meanings. Competing discourses of poverty – and, indeed, discourses about inequality and social exclusion – are on the one hand objects of hegemonic struggle, and on the other they are resources *in* struggle. It is through ideological but, more usually, popular discourse that people come to justify or to challenge, to fear or simply 'make sense' of, the social injustices that they are implicated in perpetuating, that they witness around them, and/or that they themselves experience.

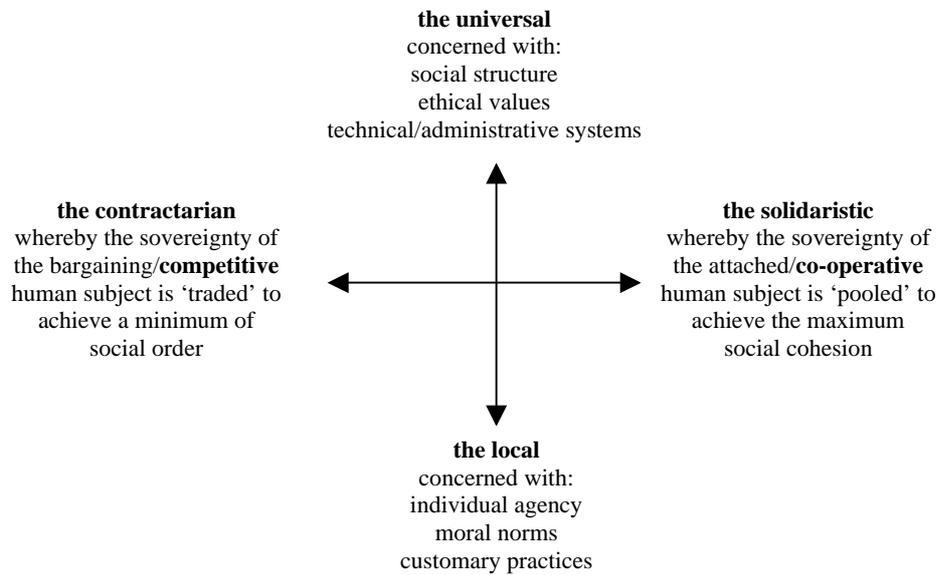
Although discourse analysis has previously been applied in critiques of development policy (see Aphorpe and Gasper 1996) the approach to be adopted here is concerned with the ways in which 'immanent logics' of oppression and resistance may be disclosed through the competing discourses through which they are constituted (cf. Foucault 1981: 92-101) and through which the 'reality' of everyday survival in unequal societies is discursively negotiated (cf. Rosen 1984). My argument would be that it is possible to construct heuristic models for the analysis of the various discursive repertoires – or moral and political accounts – through which people in different social and cultural contexts might understand and contend with 'poverty' and threats to well-being. These models are premised on the intersection of two dimensions or axes, which are illustrated in Figure 1 (overleaf).

The first of these dimensions relates, broadly, to the distinction between the local and the universal. This may be regarded as rather more than a spatial or administrative distinction, since it relates to a sociological distinction between 'life-world' and 'system' (cf. Habermas 1987): between on the one hand the sphere of individual agency, moral norms and customary practices that give meaning to human life and in which the well-springs of behaviour and feeling are located, and on the other hand the sphere of social structure, ethical values and the technical

and administrative systems through which social, economic and political resources are co-ordinated.

The second dimension relates to a distinction I would draw between 'contractarian' and 'solidaristic' traditions. It is a distinction closely related to that made between the liberal and the civic-republican traditions of citizenship (e.g. Oldfield 1990), albeit that it is capable of application beyond the sphere of Western political orthodoxies of 'left' and 'right'. Contractarian repertoires are premised on an essentially individualistic view of the social order in which an explicit trade-off or metaphorical contract or covenant is required between competitive and self-interested individuals: aspects of individual sovereignty or freedom must be surrendered in return for a measure of protection against the predations of others. Solidaristic repertoires are premised on a collectivist view of the social order in which the priority is to sustain co-operative solidarity: sovereignty must be pooled or shared within a social group or society in order to achieve internal social cohesion and security against external threats. The repertoires themselves are highly fluid and ambiguous and the terms I use to categorise them entail an element of compromise. The intention is that this dimension should capture not only an ideological continuum, but the dialectic process by which individual identities are established in relation to others in society – by human *bargaining* on the one hand and by human *attachments* on the other. There is also, perhaps, a potential connection that might be explored with the distinction made by social psychologists between hedonic and eudaimonic notions of well-being (Ryan and Deci 2001). The hedonic equates with contractarian repertoires in the sense that well-being is conceptualised with reference to a utilitarian calculus of pain or pleasure; a trade-off between punishment and reward. The eudaimonic equates with solidaristic repertoires in the sense that well-being is conceptualised with reference to socially contextualised self-actualisation and 'relatedness'; a quest for identity and security.

**Figure 1 Analytical dimensions**



Anthropologists will detect a similarity between the local/universal and contractarian/solidaristic dimensions respectively described above and Mary Douglas' (1970) concepts of grid and group. However, whereas Douglas' ground-breaking taxonomies were concerned with the cultural characterisation of individuals and/or peoples, we are here concerned with the discursive repertoires upon which individuals or peoples may draw: repertoires that evolve and are remoulded within specific historical cultural contexts; that exist in relation as much as in opposition to each other.

For example, discourses that span the local/universal dimension may exist in dialectical relationship with each other. Universal repertoires founded in ideological or religious doctrine and imposed upon people from the 'top down' may pervade local repertoires and take on a customary character. Conversely local repertoires generated in struggle from the 'bottom up' may over time colonise elements of universal repertoires and take on an established doctrinal character. Alternatively, local repertoires may strategically borrow from universal repertoires (and, in the realm of populist politics, *vice versa*) in order to subvert them. Similarly, contractarian and solidaristic repertoires are seldom entirely discrete. The defence of market freedoms and individual autonomy demanded by contractarian repertoires may, paradoxically, have recourse to a celebration of the kinds of stable collaborative institutions that are defended by solidaristic repertoires. Discourses relating, for example, to principles of equality and social justice may draw as much on formal or procedural contractarian repertoires as upon substantively situated solidaristic repertoires.

I use the term 'repertoire' – rather than, for example, 'frame' or 'paradigm' – to denote related sets of discursive accounts, which may be coherently or promiscuously combined in actual 'discourses'. The discourses of everyday life – just as much as vernacular political demands or formal political programmes – are invariably hybrid in nature. Discursive repertoires provide the building blocks through which a huge variety of different meanings may be created or contested. The dimensions I have identified in order to capture such processes, some might argue, are quite arbitrary. Certainly – as I make clear in the final section of the paper – there is a range of radical and alternative discourses that these dimensions do not accommodate. However, the framework I seek to present is partly grounded in previous empirical studies of popular discourse and is concerned with the alternative ways in which people in different circumstances and, potentially, from different cultures may react to, or contend with, two problems. The first, I have already indicated, is how do they accommodate the realities of living within human societies that are unequal, socially exclusive and/or unjust? But secondly, what is the basis – if any – of their 'citizenship': that is, quite simply, of the relationship they expect between the human individual and the social collectivity (or between the citizen and 'the state', if and when the state has a legitimate presence)?

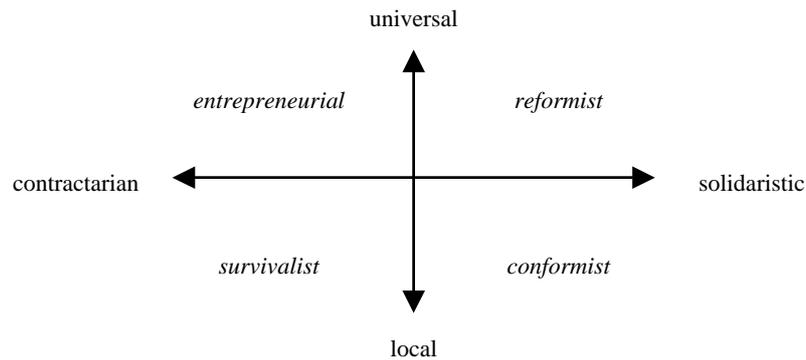
## **2 DISCOURSE AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE**

The resource profiles approach is premised on the idea that household survival strategies in developing countries will strategise the use of available resources, including cultural resources. While accepting entirely the dangers of translating insights drawn from developed countries to a developing country context (e.g. Mamdani 1996) it is difficult to escape the wealth of recent empirical evidence and theoretical argument – not least from the ESRC's recent Economic Beliefs and Behaviour Programme (see Taylor-Gooby 1998; 2000) – that human decision-making is not necessarily driven by economic rationality, but also by culturally informed moral assumptions. Human well-being will not necessarily flow from the maximisation of material resources when moral imperatives or, for example, aversion to risk outweigh the premises of economic rationality. If cultural resources were to be too crudely interpreted as 'human capital' (cf. Bourdieu 1977) there is a danger of substituting essentially economic or managerialist understandings of the way in which cultural conformity is achieved for a critical analysis of the competing discursive repertoires through which cultural resources are negotiated.

The resource profiles approach is seeking, clearly, to avoid such dangers and may be assisted in so doing by the heuristic framework outlined above, which provides a way of thinking about the repertoires through which people in poverty negotiate their compliance or resistance. In the local/universal dimension vernacular customs and practices may vie with religious, legal or managerial prescription; mythology and traditional prejudices may vie with reflexivity, resistance and innovation. In the contractarian/solidaristic dimension shifts in the extent to which economic and social relations are embedded each in the other (cf. Polanyi 1944) may be reflected

in shifts in political loyalties and ideological awareness; in demands for individual freedom or in demands for collective security. It is possible to conceive of four ideal-type cultural repertoires: the conformist, the survivalist, the reformist and the entrepreneurial (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2 Cultural repertoires**



The conformist and survivalist repertoires are local in the sense that they take local circumstances as given. They draw upon established customs and practices. The conformist repertoire, however, is solidaristic in that its claims are founded upon loyalty to and/or acquiescence within the existing social order. It is a repertoire that accepts that, though the poor deserve help, poverty is an inevitable if not a natural occurrence. The survivalist repertoire on the other hand is contractarian in that its claims establish the self-seeking priorities of individuals and/or their households as against other individuals and households. It is a repertoire that regards poverty as one of life's misfortunes, and survival as an individual struggle.

The reformist and entrepreneurial repertoires are universal in that they admit universal premises. The reformist repertoire, however, is solidaristic in that its claims stem from collective demands on behalf of social groups or communities. It is a repertoire that regards poverty as a social injustice and the solution as a matter of public policy and substantive intervention. The entrepreneurial repertoire on the other hand is contractarian in that its claims relate to demands for the recognition of individual achievement or potential. It is a repertoire that attributes poverty to personal failure or lack of opportunity and the solution as a matter of individual enterprise and procedural fairness.

It is important to emphasise first, that this is not intended as a taxonomy of personal characteristics, but of the discursive repertoires upon which it is possible for people to draw. Secondly, such repertoires will seldom, if ever, be isolated in their ideal form, but are capable of co-existing and overlapping in a variety of historically and culturally specific patterns – as much in popular as in political discourse – and in a

variety of complex and contradictory ways that are susceptible to empirical investigation.

### 3 DISCOURSE AND NEED

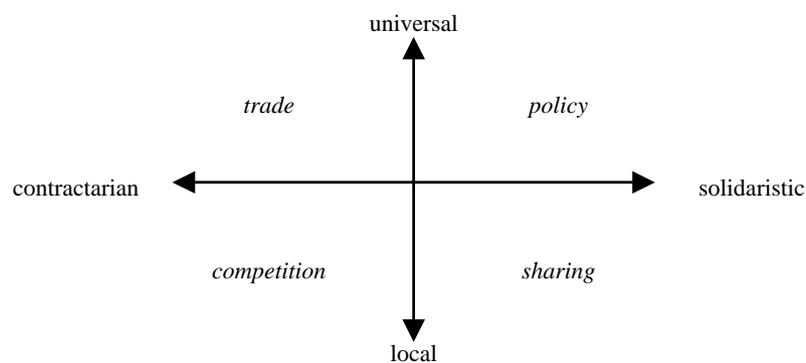
The human needs approach is premised on the idea that it is possible to establish universal criteria for the satisfaction of human beings' most fundamental needs for health and autonomy. It is an approach that draws, *inter alia*, upon Sen's (1984; 1985) important distinction between **capabilities** - that is, the range of possibilities that are substantively open within the lived experience of the situated human subject - and:

- On the one hand, **commodities** (that is, the goods, services or other resources to which people have access) and the essential **characteristics** of those commodities (that is the properties that define their purpose or utility).
- And on the other hand, **functionings** (that is, the full range of activities – including productive, re-productive, caring, expressive and deliberative kinds of functioning that human beings may achieve) and subjective **end states** (that is, the happiness or sense of well-being that are the final outcome).

Capabilities, therefore, represent the essential fulcrum between primary resources and human achievements; or between welfare inputs and welfare outputs. The human needs approach, while identifying autonomy as a basic human need, tends none the less to conflate the space of capabilities – in which it is an axiomatic requirement that human subjects should exercise substantive choice – with the space of substantive human functionings. But it is in the space of functionings that choices may in practice be constrained and needs will be contested. The space of capabilities, I would argue, may be equated with the need for recognition (e.g. Honneth 1995) and the space of functionings with the discursive processes through which need is socially negotiated (e.g. Fraser 1989). In fairness, the human needs approach is less individualistic in its orientation than Sen's capabilities approach. It is very much concerned with emancipation and the 'societal preconditions' for optimising need-satisfaction (Doyal and Gough (1991), as Nussbaum (2000) is with 'combined capabilities' (where individual capabilities are facilitated by suitable institutional conditions). But for me this does not quite capture the sense in which basic human needs or capabilities must themselves incorporate the capacity for voice, deliberation and the negotiation of need itself. Capabilities are constituted through discursive practice. A slave may be able on command to perform a range of socially valuable and ostensibly satisfying functions, but her ability is not a capability: her basic need for autonomous self-actualisation – that is the right to *name* her needs – is denied. On the other hand, a disabled person may be prevented by impairment from engaging in a range of functions, but if she is able to *claim* services (from family, community or the state) that will enable her to live a satisfying life, her ability does represent a capability.

An analysis of discursive repertoires can also be applied to differing modes of needs negotiation. In the local/universal dimension a distinction is sometimes drawn between the 'thick' locally definable needs that must be satisfied if people are truly to flourish and the 'thin' universally definable needs that must be satisfied if they are merely to survive (e.g. Drover and Kerans 1993). In practice, the relationship between the local and the universal is rather more dynamic than this would imply. If we interpret needs as claims upon resources and as rights to certain kinds of functioning then needs may be understood both in relation to the cultural context in which people name them and in relation to the formal sphere in which needs are translated into rights. In the contractarian/ solidaristic dimension a distinction may be drawn between a 'distributional' emphasis upon the processes that ensure that people obtain access to necessary goods and services and a 'relational' emphasis upon the processes necessary to preserve the social order and guard against social exclusion (cf. Room 1995). Needs may be interpreted in relation to resource distribution or to the relations through which social functioning is secured. It is possible, therefore, to conceive of four ideal-type repertoires for, or modes of, need negotiation: collective signification and sharing; individual struggle and competition, democratic debate and administrative policy making; and private trade and enterprise (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3 Modes of need negotiation**



The 'sharing' and 'competition' modes are local in the sense in that they are preoccupied with 'thick' needs and quotidian struggles. The sharing mode, however, is solidaristic (albeit paternalistic rather than egalitarian) in so far that it is concerned with the collective signification of need and issues of social cohesion, belonging and inclusion. The competition mode on the other hand is contractarian in so far that it is concerned with the struggles of individuals and their households and competition over the distribution of resources. The 'policy' and 'trade' modes are universal in that they are preoccupied with 'thin' needs and universal principles. The policy mode, however, is solidaristic in so far that it is concerned with collective decision making and organisation of provision for people's basic needs: it constructs a system of defensive rights premised on frailty of the human subject and his/her

need for protection. The trade mode on the other hand is contractarian in so far that it envisages legally regulated contracting for goods and services between enterprising individuals as a primary distributive mechanism: it constructs a system of rights that will protect the interests of property owning subjects.

It is clear that the policy mode assumes or requires a legitimate state apparatus and the trade mode a functioning market system (see Wood 2001). Once again, however, this is not a taxonomy of welfare regimes, but of the discursive modes or repertoires through which human needs are socially constructed. Nor is this emphasis on discursive construction an attempt to relativise human need. It is an attempt to define the discursive parameters within which struggles over needs may be conducted: it provides, perhaps, a tentative starting point for reconciling 'codified and experiential knowledges' of need (cf. Gough 2002: 18).

#### **4 DISCOURSE AND QUALITY OF LIFE**

The quality of life approach is premised on the idea that it is possible objectively to measure subjective perceptions of well-being; in particular that consensually developed cross-national and cross-cultural research instruments can achieve holistic yet comparable assessments of people's quality of life across a number of 'domains'. The six domains constructed for the World Health Organisation's quality of life indicator relate to a person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, relationship to her material environment, and spirituality/religion. This implies, I would argue, two broad kinds of conceptual distinction – between body and mind; and between individual and society.

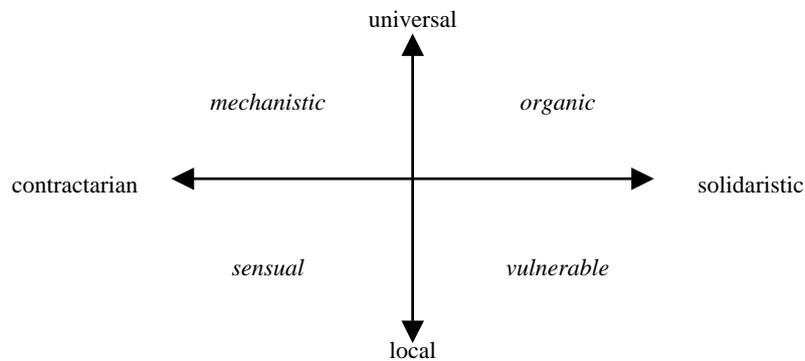
It has been acknowledged that the quality of life approach is underpinned by the first of these distinctions, namely by Cartesian dualism (Skevington 1999: 451). There is a sense, of course, in which classical liberal dualism represents a distinctively Western understanding of well-being (e.g. Assiter 2000). The essence of Cartesian dualism lies not only in the idea that body and mind are distinct and separable entities, but that it is the mind that is the active ingredient of the self. The mind constitutes the active subject, while the body – as a product of nature – is the passive object. It has been a distinction with profound ideological significance with regard not only to the Christian Reformation and Western Enlightenment thinking, but the concept of labour power as an alienable good and the premises that inform the processes of capitalist development.

The second distinction – between individual and society – has quite different consequences for the understanding of the body and the well-being of the embodied subject. The notion of the 'body politic' may be traced back to Plato, whose legacy remains not only within republicanism and certain conservative strands of Christian theology, but also – given the link through Hellenism and mysticism – in Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism). The related but more inclusive metaphor of the '*social* body', can be associated with

humanist, socialist or social democratic thinking, but also, for example, with elements of Islamic thought (see Dean and Khan 1997). The point about the social body is that it vouchsafes the well-being of the individual body.

My argument is that feelings of well-being and subjective perceptions of quality of life must depend upon how we conceptualise the body and the way in which our understandings of the body are socially contextualised and discursively constructed. An analysis of discursive repertoires, therefore, may also be applied to differing notions of embodied life: notions that may find their expression in everyday assumptions, secular knowledge claims or spiritual beliefs. In the local/universal dimension a distinction may be drawn between the body as the metaphorical vessel of life and human experience and the body as a metaphorical component of the systems through which human life is ordered. It is in the contractarian/solidaristic dimension that the distinction to which I allude above may be drawn: between a dualist view in which the body accommodates or is accommodated to the objectives of the mind and a holistic view in which the body is apprehended through our social humanity and the relations of dependency and/or dominance that exist between embodied subjects. It is possible, therefore, to identify four discursive repertoires constituting four quite different ideal-type notions of embodied life: the vulnerable body; the sensual body; the organic body and the mechanistic body (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4** Notions of embodied life



Notions of the vulnerable and the sensual body are local in that they are directly concerned with situated bodily experiences. The notion of the vulnerable body, however, is solidaristic in that the body – though it may be a miracle of nature or of God’s creation – is a frail vessel that depends upon social co-operation if it is to be nurtured. Well-being, therefore, means protection against harm, contamination and corruption. The notion of the sensual body on the other hand is contractarian in that the body is a seat of both pleasure and pain, which must be traded off one against the other. Well-being, therefore, may be construed in very different ways: as hedonistic satisfaction that has no regard for such destructive consequences as might follow for the body; or as puritanical subjection that reviles the base

requirements of the body in favour of the comforts of some spiritual certainty. Notions of the organic and the mechanistic body are universal in that they are concerned with the ways in which bodies work. The notion of the organic body, however, is solidaristic in that the body is an organism that is interconnected with other human organisms. Well-being, therefore, may be construed as a state of homeostatic equilibrium in which bodily deficits may be compensated by co-ordinated social intervention. The notion of the mechanistic body on the other hand is contractarian in that the body is both a potential asset and as a potential liability; it is a perfectible, yet fallible instrument in the service of one's individual objectives. Well-being, therefore, may be construed as achieving the body's optimum performance.

This is no more than a heuristic device. Real people think about their bodies in a variety of ways and will call upon a mixture of competing discursive repertoires and metaphors to express the satisfactions and fears that are associated with the physical achievements and frailties of daily experience. Coming to terms with our bodies is part of the process by which we self-negotiate our own ontological identities (cf. Taylor 1998). The interpretation of any quality of life indicator needs to take account of the potentially contradictory terms in which well-being may be recognised or described.

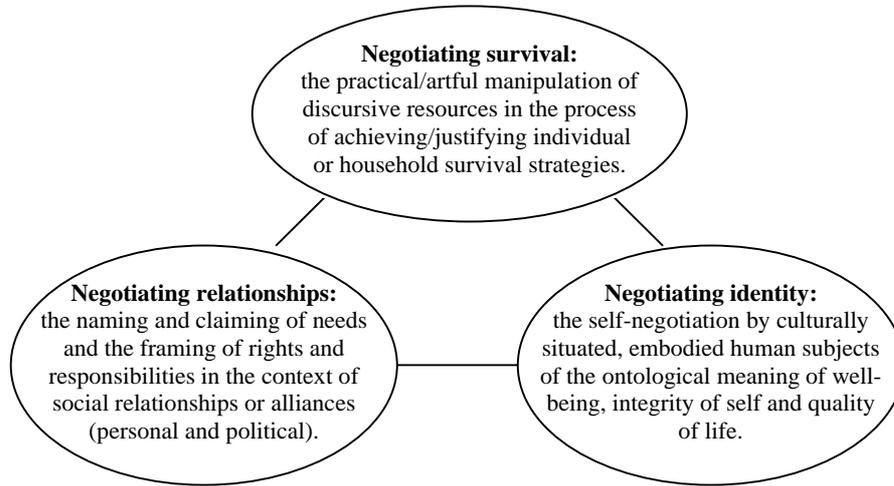
## 5 METHODOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS

The discursive repertoires approach outlined above is intended to offer not a meta-framework, but a particular epistemological overview. It represents an overarching heuristic device that links the three WeD frameworks through the concept of discursive negotiation.

Social policy academics (e.g. Finch and Mason 1993) and anthropologists (e.g. Rosen 1984) have in different ways already explored some of the cultural contexts in which obligations and networks can be socially and discursively negotiated. WeD's community fieldwork will present an opportunity for an interdisciplinary exploration in a developing country context of: the ways in which discursive resources are tactically manipulated; the manner in which human needs are discursively named and claimed; the terms upon which the meaning of well-being is discursively constituted. The contention is that well-being is defined by discursive negotiation – in day to day economic practices, within social and political relationships, by embodied human persons. It is the parsimony of the heuristic framework presented in this paper that allows it to cross boundaries between academic disciplines. Whether, in spite of its abstract nature and the 'thinness' of its conceptual underpinning, it can be applied to the realities of everyday life in developing countries remains an empirical question. My argument, however, is that the framework may be used to interpolate three closely connected discursive processes of negotiation: the negotiation of **survival**, which is explicitly addressed by the resource profiles approach; the negotiation of **relationships**, which is at

least implicitly addressed by the human needs approach; the negotiation of **identity** which must necessarily be addressed by the quality of life approach (see Figure 5). The framework is not intended as a monolithic model, but, potentially, a flexible tool through which to make sense of the contradictoriness, the messiness, the 'thickness' of a world in which scientific rationality may not be valid (cf. Beck 1992), strategies may not be consistent, and the lives that people live may be subject to continual, sometimes daily, change. The object is not to impose coherence from above, but to unravel from below the anatomy of the discourses of survival, relationships and identity; to identify the different constituents or repertoires that compose those discourses; to see how those repertoires refract or combine, and which emerge as dominant, subordinate or subversive; to observe how, if at all, the different processes of negotiation are related.

**Figure 5 Processes of discursive negotiation**



This paper is not the place for a detailed or specific discussion of methods and will confine itself to identifying certain key issues. The first relates to the factors that should be borne in mind during the application of participative research methods. While the development of such methods (see Chambers 1997) represents a major advance, there is a risk none the less that they may reveal only dominant or approved discursive repertoires. For example, the dynamics of group interaction in a focus group or community forum may permit only certain repertoires to find expression. Discussion may be dominated by the most influential, assertive or vocal participants. This may inhibit contributions by the more submissive members of a community and suppress minority, unpopular or dissenting modes of discourse. Similarly, if they are insensitively conducted, the use of such techniques as 'wealth ranking' exercises in the course of participatory poverty assessments could – in the intimacy of small village settings, for example – be intimidating for the weakest members of a community.

Additionally, participatory methods – whether they are organised by researchers or community activists – will not necessarily uncover the ‘hidden transcripts’ (Scott 1990) through which poor or marginalized groups may express their resistance to dominant discourse. Those who experience oppression may artfully borrow from dominant or official discourses for the benefit of researchers or those perceived as being in authority. Whole aspects of the life of a community may remain conspiratorially concealed, notwithstanding the skills and good faith of the investigators. For example, where the survival strategies of individuals or communities involve illegal or officially unsanctioned activities, it is unlikely that these will be revealed in any kind of public forum, or at all. Informal economic activities, forbidden trades and collusion with corrupt officialdom may often be more efficacious for households and communities than legitimate formal economic participation (Jordan 1996; Tripp 1997), but the discourses through which these are justified may remain inaccessible. Possibly, what is more, the essential survival strategies adopted by some communities and households – if, for example, they involve systematic theft from neighbouring communities or even individual stealing amongst themselves – may well be regarded as unwholesome by the community’s own standards and the authentic discourses of the perpetrators would not emerge in any participatory forum. It is for these reasons that I would wish to place particular emphasis on the importance – as *part* of a multi-method approach – of one-to-one discursive interviewing (cf. Clark 2002), in which interviewers seek not only to establish rapport, but to provide convincing undertakings as to their own credentials and as to the confidentiality of the data they gather. This is not easy.

Potentially, however, all the discursive data generated by the various elements of a multi-method approach – from fieldwork observation, participatory forums and interviews – provide an opportunity to apply the framework described and to explore the resonance that the generic discursive repertoires outlined above might have within different cultural contexts. There are three considerations that I should like to identify. First, the sampling methods that are employed should be sufficiently purposive to ensure that, so far as possible, in each community that is studied a full range of voices is heard. Pursuing a metaphor I used earlier, studying the ‘anatomy’ of a discourse does not necessarily require a vast number of ‘specimens’, if indeed a few well-chosen ones will suffice. The critical issue is to sample discourses from every constituency within a community. Secondly, the design of research instruments might, wherever possible, accommodate the use of questions informed by the framework I have outlined. Qualitative explorations of daily survival strategies provide opportunities to observe the competing contextual meanings and discursive justifications that attach to such strategies. The iterative translation and testing procedures used for the development of quality of life indicators provide an opportunity to frame statements and prompts that might effectively capture, convey and critique the dimensions of meaning around which the framework revolves. Thirdly, textual outputs – notes from fieldwork observation, records from participatory discussions, transcripts from interviews – are all susceptible to discourse analysis techniques. There is, of course, a wide variety of such

techniques (see, for example, Silverman 2001), but regardless of the particular approach that is adopted the framework offered in this paper provides a set of categories or 'codes' as a point of departure. The aim of the analysis would be to address the complex links between the cultural resources on which households draw, the manner in which they seek to negotiate the recognition and satisfaction of their needs, and the terms upon which they assess their quality of life. The object would be to consider the relevance of prevailing development discourses to the various popular discourses of poor communities in different developing countries.

## 6 THEORETICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The framework outlined in this paper is a heuristic taxonomy of the discursive repertoires through which human well-being may be negotiated. It has not been presented as a theory of human well-being, but this is not to say that it does not have theoretical significance. First, as an epistemological overview it may be used critically to evaluate and to 'place' competing academic discourses relating to poverty, inequality, social exclusion and 'ill-being' and the theories to which differing theoretical approaches give expression. More fundamentally, the discursive practices by which we negotiate the ways human beings define and achieve well-being must – at some point – engage with the discursive practices by which welfare systems, or regimes are constructed: the taxonomy connects with welfare regime theory and, thereby, with competing ideological-discursive meta-narratives and attempts (e.g. Gough et al. forthcoming) to theorise the nature of developing country welfare regimes.

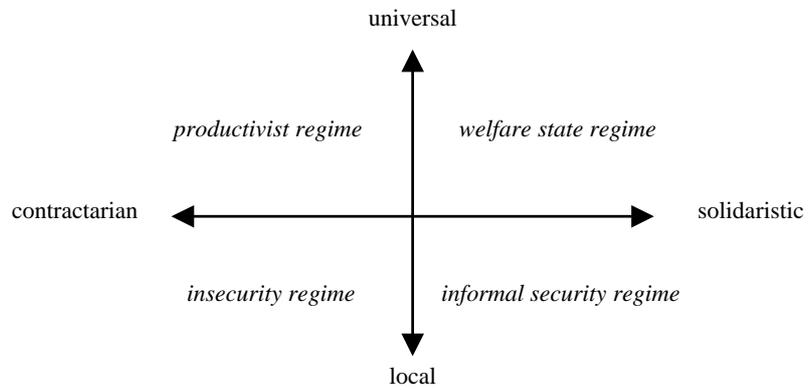
In earlier work (Dean 1999) I have attempted to link a taxonomy of *popular* discursive repertoires (very similar to that presented in Figure 2 above) with a taxonomy of *political* discursive repertoires and thereby to define four, rather than the three regimes that feature in Esping Andersen's (1990) classic typology of capitalist welfare state regimes; a typology that directly associates welfare state regimes with Western ideological-discursive meta-narratives. I would characterise Esping-Andersen's **liberal** regime in terms of a universalistic commitment to equality of *opportunity* alongside a contractarian and therefore conditional notion of rights and duties. His **social democratic** regime I would characterise in terms of a universalistic commitment to substantive equality of *outcome* alongside a solidaristic notion of rights and responsibilities. His **corporatist-conservative** regime I would characterise in terms of a localised commitment to a *corporately* brokered social order alongside a solidaristic republican traditionalism. Additionally, however, I would posit a **neo-conservative** regime in which a local commitment to a *coercively* maintained moral order goes hand in hand with Hobbesian assumptions about the nature of the human condition and the individual/state contract. I do not for my part contend that any particular country exemplifies any one of these ideal types. There is a sense in which the classic post-Second World War Western European welfare states were all hybrids, combining to various degrees elements of the social democratic and corporatist conservative regimes;

whereas the aspirations of the New Right during the Thatcher/Reagan era combined elements of the liberal and the neo-conservative welfare regimes. In the context of developed countries now, we are witnessing ever more complex hybrids.

The immanent logic embodied in the analytical dimensions that have been developed for the purposes of this paper must perforce apply as much within developing countries as within Western welfare states, albeit that they will not necessarily – and in some circumstances simply cannot – connect with the same set of ideological discursive meta-narratives. Gough et al (forthcoming) argue that taxonomies based on the principles that inform developed country welfare state regimes may not be applied in a developing country context, since they are premised on the universal permeation of functioning labour markets and legitimated state apparatuses. Instead, they suggest, several East Asian countries may now be characterised as **productivist regimes** (cf. Holliday 2000); certain Latin American countries may be understood as emergent **welfare state regimes**, albeit of a liberal-informal variety; some South Asian countries may be characterised as **informal security regimes**; and there are countries particularly in sub-Saharan Africa that can only be described as **insecurity regimes** (cf. Bevan 2001). Productivist regimes are characterised by the ascendancy in a global context of a highly competitive form of capitalism that prioritises economic over social policy. Welfare state regimes possess the legacy of unevenly developed social protection systems initiated during the inter-war period, but which have been adapted in response to the neo-liberal doctrines of the international financial institutions (cf. Barrientos 2001). Informal security regimes continue to depend heavily on provision at the family, kinship and local community level. Insecurity regimes are those in which such entitlements as exist in the face of an anarchic competition for survival stem primarily from 'rights of adverse incorporation', under the authority of local elites.

In Figure 6 I map these developing country regime types against the dimensions of my heuristic framework. The connections that are implied are not simple causal connections. This is a theoretical exploration of the immanent logics that inform different responses to and different interpretations of human well-being. The purpose of the taxonomy is to try and capture the basis on which actually existing discursive practices and policy regimes are constructed. They do not, however, exhaust the theoretical possibilities. They do not, for example, accommodate feminist or ecological critiques of the capitalist development process, nor do they address the potential alternatives to capitalist modes of development within the 'developing' world.

**Figure 6** Developing country welfare regimes



Though it is possible to characterise understandings of well-being and the policy responses in both developed and developing country contexts, whether the various taxonomies that emerge have any explanatory or predictive value in terms of the conditions under which different kinds of regime develop and the trajectories they follow is in part an empirical question. But what also emerges at the heart of the analysis is a theoretical proposition that understandings of human well-being are constructed through popular and political discursive practices at the point where local demands meet universal principles and at the point where solidaristic co-operation meets contractarian competitiveness. It is an insight that I would like to think that the resource profiles, human needs and quality of life frameworks could all share.

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WeD is a multidisciplinary research group funded by the ESRC, dedicated to the study of poverty, inequality and the quality of life in poor countries. The research group is based at the University of Bath and draws on the knowledge and expertise from three different departments (Economics and International Development, Social and Policy Sciences and Psychology) as well as an extensive network of overseas contacts and specific partnerships with institutes in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Thailand. The purpose of the research programme is to develop conceptual and methodological tools for investigating and understanding the social and cultural construction of well-being in specific countries.

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