Which Future?
Challenges and Choices for the 21st Century

Research program 2015–2020
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Introduction

The Institute for Futures Studies (IFFS) conducts interdisciplinary research with a future-oriented perspective and contributes to public debate. According to its statutes, IFFS is tasked with "conducting futures studies, long-term analysis and associated activities in order to stimulate an open and wide-ranging discussion of risks and opportunities associated with the development of future society." IF is an independent organisation but strives to engage in a broad dialogue with a range of different social actors. IF collaborates with public sector agencies, organisations, institutions, businesses and individuals both in Sweden and internationally, and seeks to ensure that relevant research has an impact on the formulation of policy.

IFFS's activities are guided by a research programme which is approved by the board. The research programme described here, *Which Future? Challenges and Choices for the 21st Century*, is the eighth in the series and covers the period 2015–2020. As a research organisation, IFFS aims to be flexible and to respond to changing circumstances and opportunities, so the contents of the programme likely will be further developed as required over the course of the programme period. The research programme is meant to encourage and facilitate first-rate multidisciplinary research, bringing together researchers from various disciplines for long-term collaborations. This multidisciplinary profile enables IFFS to produce original, theoretically informed, policy-relevant empirical research.

The programme can be divided into a number of principal themes, partially overlapping, with substantial opportunities for synergy effects.

I. Our responsibility to future generations

One of the most important insights to emerge slowly over the past hundred years is that the actions of the current generation – that is, what we do – could have profound and far-reaching effects for future generations. Perhaps it was during the 1970s, with the debate on nuclear power, that this insight took firm root in public consciousness. The problem of nuclear waste brought with it a much longer time perspective than any previous generation had to consider. For example, it is expected that high-level waste needs to be isolated from people and nature for 100,000 years – a mind-bogglingly long time. More recently, – at least in this time perspective – climate change has emerged as the cardinal challenge with respect to issues that may have consequences for living conditions far into the distant future.

According to the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), global warming of between 2° C and 10° C is not unlikely. A temperature increase on this scale involves a risk of substantial damage to many ecosystems. An increase of only 2° C would threaten 20–30% of all the world's species with extinction, and a more substantial increase in temperature would threaten an even greater number. Even a minimal increase in global temperature would produce a major deterioration in the conditions for agricultural production in the tropics, and a somewhat higher increase in temperature would produce a similar deterioration in the rest of the world. These conditions will in turn make it increasingly difficult to produce food sufficient to feed the world's population. In addition, precipitation will become more intensive and will come to be characterised by a greater degree of variance. We are likely to see drastic increases both in floods and in droughts.

Given this scenario, it is hardly controversial to claim that the current generation consumes resources at the expense of future generations. This raises urgent questions about our obligations to future generations, questions about how we should evaluate different alternatives that will have consequences far into the future, and questions about intergenerational justice.

Climate justice is one such question: how should the costs of reducing emissions and adapting to future climates be distributed in a fair and equitable way? How should we determine where the moral responsibility lies for historical emissions? Should emissions be counted per nation or perhaps by the level of emissions per capita? Should historical reductions in emission levels as a result of family planning (as in the case of e.g. China) be counted? Should countries responsible for higher levels of past emissions bear greater responsibility for reducing emissions, or should reductions be proportional to current emission levels? How should future generations be compensated for the possible harms caused to them and who should pay this compensation?

One might think that these questions can be answered simply by utilising the theories of ethics and justice that have been developed to regulate relations among contemporaries, perhaps in analogy with the way they are used today with regard to our responsibilities in relation to people who live in other parts of the world. Unfortunately, the question is not this simple, since the issue of our responsibility for future generations raises new and very thorny problems. It has proven to be surprisingly difficult to formulate a theory regarding our duties to future generations that satisfies even the most minimal adequacy condition for such a theory, because the people of the future differ from those of the present in two important respects.

When philosophers, economists, political scientists and others have considered the question of fair distribution of economic resources, for example, they have usually taken the number of individuals and who these individuals are for granted. The focus has been on the distribution of benefits and burdens among an already given group of people. When we consider future generations, however, we cannot take the affected group as a given, since our actions affect not only the living conditions of future people, but also the number of people and who these people will be. This is quite obvious with respect to policies such as China's one-child rule, but there are many other political and individual decisions that have major effects in this area. Climate change, and the way we deal with this issue, for example, will inevitably have a substantial effect on the size of the future population.

In order to evaluate policy decisions that may influence the population size and life conditions of future generations, we have to be able to assess the value of future populations of varying size and to determine how we should value future lives. How this might be done in an acceptable way has constituted one of the major problems faced by the IPCC, since all of the classical moral, political, and economic theories yield very counterintuitive results and prescriptions in this context.

Classical utilitarianism, which often figures as a more or less explicit assumption

in economic and political thought, is one example. According to utilitarianism, we should try to maximise the overall welfare in the world. The overall welfare may be increased in two different ways, however, when the size of the population is no longer given: by keeping the population at a constant size and making people's lives better or by increasing the number of people with lives worth living. It follows, then, from utilitarianism that a future with an enormous population with lives barely worth living may be better than a future with a smaller population, where everybody's quality of life is very high, since the overall welfare may be higher in the larger population. In other words, according to utilitarianism, we should strive to achieve the larger population scenario.[1] But the idea that we have a moral obligation to radically increase the world's population at the expense of the individual welfare of future people seems repugnant and this seems to be a powerful reason to reject utilitarianism.

The classical theories of ethics and justice are unfortunately unable to provide any clear guidance in cases of this kind, and in those instances where they provide any direction at all, it is often both counterintuitive and paradoxical.[2] We thus need to extend and adapt our theories of ethics and justice in order to consider the living conditions and population changes of future generations in an acceptable way. Extending and adapting these theories may also be useful for confronting the question of which institutional changes would be optimal for managing our responsibilities in relation to future generations.

The objective of this research is to find reasonable answers to questions about our obligations toward future generations and about what value we might ascribe to future lives and living conditions in the context of our policy decisions. The work within this theme will primarily involve researchers from the fields of philosophy and economics (including researchers affiliated with the IPCC), but will also include researchers from the disciplines of political science, demography and business studies.

1. See Parfit, D., *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, 1984, och Arrhenius, G. et al "The Repugnant Conclusion", in Edward N. Zalta (ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2010 Edition).
2. See, e.g.., Arrhenius, G., "An Impossibility Theorem for Welfarist Axiologies", *Economics and Philosophy* 16, 2000; P*opulation Ethics: The Challenge of Future Generations*, Oxford University Press, in press, 2015; Parfit, D., *Reasons and Persons*, Oxford University Press, 1984.

II. Democracy for the 21st Century

Political developments over the last three decades, along with the global environmental problems we are facing, have made it increasingly important and urgent to reflect on the nature and value of democracy. On the one hand, a number of countries have switched political systems, from one-party systems (Eastern Europe), dictatorships (South America) or systems of minority rule (South Africa) to democracy in some form. This seems to be a victory for democracy. On the other hand, the power of multi-national corporations and supranational organisations (such as the EU and the WTO) appears to be increasing at the cost of that of national governments. In several established democracies, there is a trend towards increased voter dissatisfaction with political parties and the democratic process and declining rates of electoral participation. At the same time, a number of non-democratic countries are achieving higher ratings than many democracies in measurements of citizen well-being and levels of satisfaction with the way their countries are governed.[3] Furthermore, the democratic system of governance has, both in theory and practice, a form of "present day bias" since it reflects the preferences only of people alive today (since they are naturally the only ones able to vote in elections). Yet it is the people of the future who will live with the consequences of many of the decisions being made today. Climate change, and how we choose to deal with it, for example, will primarily affect future generations.

Against this backdrop, we need once again to pose fundamental questions about the extent and limits of democratic governance and its value base. What decisions should be arrived at democratically? What is the appropriate domain for democratic governance? Is its domain restricted to nation-states or should it also be employed in supranational states of significant size or perhaps even globally? Can democra-

3. Rothstein, B., *The Quality of Government: Corruption, Social Trust and Inequality in a Comparative Perspective*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011; "Quality of Government and Epistemic Democracy", *Revista Latinoamericana de Política Comparada*, Vol. 6, December, 2012; "Human Well-being and the Lost Relevance of Political Science", Max Weber Lecture Series, no. 3, 2014.

tic governance be applied to non-geographical entities such as international institutions or corporations? What is the nature of the relationship between individual human rights and democracy: do the two constitute competing ideals or different sides of the same coin? Could the interests of future generations be represented in a different, better way than is the case in the existing democratic order? Should we, for example, establish a kind of ombudsperson for future generations, and if so, what mandate should such an ombudsman be given? Would this type of representation be compatible with a democratic system? The central issue that permeates all these questions is: Who should have the right to participate in which decision-making processes?

It seems clear that the answer to this question should constitute an important part of a theory of democracy. This is particularly so given that one factor common to all conceptions of democracy is that they involve a reference to a group of individuals, a society or a "people", that is self-governing in some sense. It is therefore surprising that so little has been written about this problem in the classic works on democracy. As one of the world's most prominent democracy scholars, Robert Dahl, has put it, ""how to decide who legitimately make up 'the people' ... and hence are entitled to govern themselves ... is a problem almost totally neglected by all the great political philosophers who write about democracy."[4]

It should be clear that this boundary problem is not only a theoretical issue but also a pressing practical, political problem. What would constitute the correct electoral constituency for a democratic solution to the Northern Ireland conflict, for example? Would it be sufficient for a treaty to be approved by the inhabitants of Northern Ireland (or their representatives), or should the peoples of Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland also be taken into consideration? What should be done about the millions of inhabitants who have migrated from Ireland as a result of (or partly as a result of) the conflict in the north?

The most recent treaty – the Good Friday Agreement – was voted on by the citizens of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in a referendum, while the citizens of Great Britain were represented by their government. This is not a solution that would have appealed to an old-fashioned unionist. He or she would instead have preferred a referendum including the entire United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, or perhaps one restricted to Northern Ireland alone. An Irish nationalist could argue, however, that the specification of either of these electoral con-

4. Dahl, R., *After the Revolution? Authority in a Good Society*, New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 60. Dahl wrote this in the 1970s, but it remains largely true to this day. There has, however, been a significant and welcome change in connection with renewed interest in the possibility and desirability of global democracy. Cf. Dahl, R., *Democracy and Its Critics*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1989, p. 119ff.

stituencies would constitute a case of international gerrymandering. Despite their differences on this issue, the unionist and the Irish nationalist could, nevertheless, both be committed democrats.

It is easy to provide further examples of practical boundary problems. A more current British example is the recent referendum on Scottish independence. A Swedish example is the local referendum on the introduction of a congestion charge in Stockholm. Was it right that only people living in Stockholm City were able to vote on this issue? It could be argued, as many did indeed argue, that the residents of the surrounding municipalities who regularly commute into central Stockholm should also have been given the opportunity to vote. A current Swedish example can be found in the decisions taken by the Swedish government and parliament to receive refugees while the municipalities are able to refuse to accept them - should municipal self-government be restricted in this context? The principle of municipal self-government raises the general issue of determining which issues should fall under the remit of central and local government respectively. This is an example of the boundary problem. A similar and recurrent problem is the question regarding which issues should be dealt with at the national rather than the supranational level in EU.

Another current issue (in France for example) has to do with the votes in local elections of non-citizens who have been resident in a given country for a long period of time. Should migrants have the right to vote in the country in which they live? If so, should they have the right to vote in all elections, or only in certain types, such as municipal elections? Similar questions arise in relation to the migrants' countries of origin. Should immigrants in Europe, who have lived outside their country of origin for a long period of time, such as Turkish immigrants in Germany, retain the right to participate in the decision-making process in their countries of origin?

How should decisions on these questions be arrived at? Perhaps there should be a referendum on who should be given a voice on these issues. But who should be given the opportunity to participate in such a referendum? And so on, ad infinitum. We appear to be caught in an infinite regress. This has led some to draw fairly gloomy conclusions both about the ability of democratic theory to resolve the boundary problem in a satisfactory way and about the legitimacy of democratic decision making. Frederick G. Whelan argues in a pioneering essay on the boundary problem that "... democratic theory cannot itself provide any solution to disputes that may ... arise concerning boundaries. --- The boundary problem does ... reveal one of the limits of the applicability of democracy...".[5] Similarly, Dahl emphasises that "we

5. Whelan, F. G., "Democratic Theory and the Boundary Problem", in *Liberal Democracy*, Pennock, J. R., and Chapman, J. W. (ed.), New York and London, New York UP, 1983, pp. 40, 42.

cannot solve the problem of the proper scope and domain of democratic units from within democratic theory".[6]

Even if Whelan's and Dahl's rather dismal conclusions are not entirely justified, it is clear that the boundary problem points to a difficulty at the heart of the democratic ideal. The fact that a decision is made on the basis of a democratic method by a certain group of people (or by an elected assembly that represents the group in question) is not sufficient to make the decision satisfactory from a democratic perspective. The group must also be the right group. But what makes a group the right group?

The boundary problem and its related, practical political problems illustrate the importance of reconsidering fundamental ideas about the principles of democracy and how these principles should be understood and applied. This opens the way for new and better ramified understandings of democracy, with consequences for how real-world democracy may be developed. One such promising - but as yet insufficiently developed - approach that IF will be studying in more detail involves viewing democracy as a normative theory regarding fair distribution of influence or power.[7] This in turn raises challenging but exciting questions about how influence and power should be analysed and defined in relation to the democratic ideal.

One important group in modern society is comprised of the so-called policy professionals: individuals who, without having been elected, are employed to influence policy and politicians. They include groups such as political advisors, political secretaries, representatives of interest groups, lobbyists and think-tank participants. Studying these policy professionals is necessary for understanding which voter groups and interest groups exert influence over political decision-making and which groups fail to do so (or do so to a far lesser extent). From a democratic perspective, there may be reason to be critical of the role of policy professionals, and it could be argued that they produce an imbalance between the influence of certain interest groups and that of the electorate – an influence dependent upon, among other things, the level of resources available to them. But policy professionals might of course also facilitate the work of both politicians and members of the electorate, e.g. by making it easier for them to communicate with one another.

The research group working on these and related issues will be comprised of philosophers, political scientists, legal scholars, macroeconomists and scholars in the field of business studies.

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6. Dahl, R., *Democracy and Its Critics*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1989, p. 207.
7. See e.g. Brighouse H., and Fleurbaey M., "On the Fair Allocation of Power", mimeo, 2005, and "Democracy and Proportionality", The Journal of Political Philosophy, 2008; Danielsson, S., *Two Papers on Rationality and Group Preferences*, Filosofiska Studier no. 21, Uppsala: Filosofiska föreningen och filosofiska institutionen, 1974; Christiano, T., The Rule of the Many, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

II. New technologies and the future of humanity

During the 20th century, technologies developed at a rate never previously witnessed, and today's living conditions are in many ways very different from those of 1900. It is likely that the 21st century will witness even more radical change. Examples of areas where future technologies may have a major influence include the biological conditions affecting human physical, cognitive and affective capacities (so-called human enhancement technologies), synthetic biology, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI), nanotechnology, advanced surveillance techniques and geotechnologies (i.e. intentional global change of the earth's environment in order to deal with the issue of climate change).

Many of these technologies may produce substantial benefits for humanity in terms of wealth, but they are also associated with a number of potential risks. In a questionnaire survey conducted in 2008, experts on global catastrophes estimated the likelihood of the human race not surviving this century to be as high as 19 percent, and the greatest risks were linked to new technologies.[8] To take just two examples, advances in synthetic biology might (intentionally or unintentionally) produce global epidemics, while similar catastrophes might be produced by the mega-projects currently being discussed as means of reducing the effects of climate change (such as partially blocking the sunlight reaching the earth by releasing sulphur particles into the atmosphere).

How can we estimate the loss of value in an existential catastrophe (such as the extinction of humanity) in comparison to ongoing but limited global catastrophes (such as the HIV pandemic and poverty-related mortality)? One view is that human extinction would correspond to the loss of value associated with a single death, multiplied by the number of people living at the time of the catastrophe's occurrence.

8. *Global Catastrophic Risks Survey*, Technical Report, 2008, Future of Humanity Institute, http://www.global-catastrophic-risks.com/docs/2008-1.pdf

But, it could be argued, such a view underestimates the loss of value in an existential catastrophe, since it does not take into consideration the number of future individuals who would have existed if the catastrophe had been avoided. The underlying assumption in this argument is that we should at least assign some weight to possible future lives when we assess the value of different possible outcomes. However, even if this is the common view held by today's economists and philosophers, it is not beyond being questioned, and the issue of what would constitute the most reasonable approach here is a crucial one in connection with the first theme described above, i.e. that of our responsibility to future generations.

Given that humanity, in the absence of an existential catastrophe, could continue to exist for many thousands of years, the number of possible individuals in the future is quite staggering. Even if we were to ascribe future lives a lesser value than our own (employing what is termed discounting, as economists often do, although the practice is somewhat contentious), the fact that the existence of billions of possible individuals lies in the balance suggests that existential risks may be one of the great, neglected questions of our time.

It is thus important to estimate the likelihood of such events and to understand how they can be avoided. But it is also important to understand that we cannot in any simple way predict either the ways in which technologies will develop or their consequences. The same technological programme may be necessary in order to avert a great threat but nonetheless be highly risky in itself. Geotechnology may be one example. What the literature refers to as "great uncertainty" means in this context that we lack an exhaustive list of possible threats and thus also the opportunity to apply traditional probabilistic risk analysis, which proceeds on the basis of relatively well-known and precise quantities and possible outcomes.

Given the nature of the risks at issue, and of the stakes involved, it is important to put any preconceived ideas to one side and attempt to bring greater clarity to the problems associated with this field. In this context, two central questions that will be addressed are (1) Which areas of research in the natural sciences, technology and medicine should be prioritised in order to avoid the worst outcomes? Which areas are less urgent and which areas (if any) should not be developed? and (2) How can we best understand and analyse technological risk, and how can we apply existing tools from other research areas, such as risk management and scenario planning, to increase our understanding of how we should weigh potential risks against potential opportunities?

These questions can in turn be broken down into a number of empirical, normative and philosophy of science problems. These include: What is the nature and appli-

cability of the probability concept with regard to events that can occur only once, such as the extinction of humanity? What type of information can we deduce from the fact that we actually exist? What weight should we ascribe to the possibility that the people of the future might be as alien to us as we would perhaps have been to the ancient Greeks with regard to values and conceptions of the good life? How should the occurrence of a very large number of lives in the future influence our consideration of ethical issues in the present, and how can we understand, model and prevent the risks associated with technologies that do not as yet exist?

For the purposes of this theme, a collaboration is being planned with - among others - the Future of Humanity Institute at the University of Oxford. The highly interdisciplinary research group will include, for example, mathematicians, philosophers, computer scientists, environmental systems analysts and AI-scholars.

IV. Discrimination, sexism and racism

In the fields of post-colonial theory, gender studies and some strands of philosophy, much of the discussion of discrimination, sexism and racism has been conducted on the basis of an historical, literary and discursive perspective. In recent years, these perspectives have been supplemented by various approaches in the fields of, inter alia, economics, sociology and psychology. In what is known as analytical feminism and analytical race studies these problems are approached using methods and tools primarily drawn from the field of analytical philosophy (moral philosophy, political philosophy, philosophy of mind) but also from macroeconomics and analytical sociology.

Typical problems that are investigated by analytical feminism are how to understand concepts such as "sex" and "gender", whether this distinction is tenable and useful in policy work, and whether these concepts can be understood in isolation from concepts such as "ethnicity" and "class".[9] Analytical feminists have also developed new and important theories of how, for example, oppression should be analysed and when and why discrimination is wrong.[10] These theories and conceptual tools are not only relevant for analysing gender discrimination but also to the analysis of racism and concepts such as "race" and "ethnicity", both to how these concepts are presently construed and their relevance in a possible discrimination-free world.

Two theoretical perspectives on the concepts of 'race' and 'ethnicity' have crystallised in the current discussions. On the basis of what may be deemed the "colour-blind" position, concepts such as race and ethnicity should not be used in official documents or to formulate policy.[11] One expression of this view is found in the former

9. Mikkola, M. 2012. "Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/feminism-gender/

10. Cudd, A. E. 2006. *Analyzing Oppression*, New York: Oxford University Press. Hellman, D. 2008. *When is Discrimination Wrong?* Harvard University Press

11. This view is advocated by, among others, John Roberts, Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court:

Swedish centre-right government's proposal to completely remove the race concept from legislation. According to the arguments that have been presented, the state should be 'colour blind' in relation to its citizens because (1) the race concept has no scientific basis and (2) anti-racist benefits may be realised by removing the concept from legislative texts, since its presence involves a risk of "fomenting prejudice".[12]

Contrasting with this view, there is a research perspective that has become increasingly popular among social scientists and scholars in the arts and humanities over recent decades. On this view, although the concept of biological race belongs in the rubbish bin of the history of science, 'race' remains an important social category that provides knowledge about life opportunities in a range of concrete, measurable and sometimes dramatic ways. According to this view (sometimes referred to as "racial constructivism") race is a social construction in the same way as money, nations and days of the week are social constructions. People may not belong to a 'race', as a matter of science, but still they/we are 'racialised' in some socially determined way or other. And socially constructed race can play a decisive role in people's lives in just the same way as e.g. money. According to the racial constructivist view, we consciously or unconsciously ascribe to the people whom we meet in our everyday lives a "racial identity". This racial identity may be based on certain distinctive physical or other phenomena, but in addition to this, different "races" are also ascribed different values and qualities. What is important, on this view, is not to turn away from 'race' as a category, but to see how this socially generated 'racialisation' works in different contexts, and what impact it has on people's lives and identities.

Those who advocate colour blindness argue that using the race concept would increase levels of prejudice against minority groups that are already disadvantaged. In France, which may be viewed as the heartland of the colour-blindness perspective, it is argued that only a colour-blind state is capable of treating its citizens as equals. These issues cannot simply be dismissed, but must be seriously examined. To what extent are citizens and citizenship affected by the state using categorisations of this kind (which is what happens in e.g. the USA, where people are required to state their 'racial' background in population censuses)? What signals are sent by non-colour-blind policies, and with what consequences? What benefits are obtained by replacing the race concept with other socially constructed concepts such as ethnicity? How can information on skin colour, ethnic identification and confessional status be collected in a way that ensures equality before the law and is respectful and trans-

"The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race, is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." Supreme Court of the United States 551 U.S. 701 PARENTS INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS v. SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1 Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit No. 05-908 Argued: December 4, 2006 --- Decided: June 28, 2007.

12 . Dir. 2014:115: www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/24/41/47/1e11bfbe.pdf

parent? How can information of this kind be used to combat discrimination and promote a just form of integration? There has been plenty of feminist discussion and experience that may be relevant in this context: for example, on the question whether political struggles against gender discrimination can or should dispense with contested concepts such as "woman" or distinctions such as "sex-gender".

A related issue has to do with so-called 'positive' discrimination. Is positive discrimination in favour of groups that have been harmed by sexism and racism compatible with liberal ideas of equal opportunity? In the USA, positive discrimination and the use of quota systems in relation to historically disadvantaged minorities have been criticised because they can sometimes themselves lead to unfair discrimination, both against other minorities and economically deprived individuals from the majority population. Can a system of this kind be defended in terms of fairness or justice? Can it be defended in terms of effectiveness and social cohesion? This represents a challenge that liberal and rights-based societies must face, but a challenge that does not necessarily have a universal solution. Conditions in the USA and Sweden are so different that certain normative conclusions that may be reasonable in an American context, where much of the contemporary research in this area has been conducted, would not necessarily be similarly reasonable in a Swedish context, even if one were to proceed on the basis of the same arguments and principles. One important difference between Sweden and the USA is that those in Sweden lack generally accepted terms for describing certain socially important categories, which makes the work of identifying discrimination more difficult. Not many Swedes use the term "race", for example, whereas it constitutes a generally accepted part of everyday speech in the USA. (It is not a simple question what the field of "race studies" might be labelled in Swedish.)

Analytical sociology has begun to provide important insights into how we should understand the mechanisms of discrimination. One example can be found in the results of field experiments that have been employed to examine the occurrence of labour market discrimination against individuals with origins in the Middle East and Africa, research which has been conducted at the IF.[13] The occurrence of ethnic discrimination was tested by sending applications from fictitious individuals for vacant positions that had been advertised on the open access database of the Public Employment Service. The applications were sent in pairs, one using a typical Swedish name, the other a typical Arabic or African name. The applications were identical in all other respects, i.e. the fictitious applicants had the same qualifications. The study then registered whether or not the employer replied to the application. Since

13. Bursell, M., 2014. "The Multiple Burdens of Foreign-Named Men—Evidence from a Field Experiment on Gendered Ethnic Hiring Discrimination in Sweden". *European Sociological Review* 30:399-409.

the study was conducted in the form of a randomised experiment, it was possible to verify the occurrence of discrimination with a very high degree of certainty. The IF will continue to conduct research of this kind that attempts to reveal the mechanisms underlying discrimination, and it will be integrated with the other research areas within this theme.

In parallel with research conducted in sociology and gender studies into how ethnicity, race and religious affiliation are constructed and interact with other markers of social identity, research in the fields of cognitive science, neuroscience and philosophy of mind has generated an increasing number of studies focused on how implicit perceptions both influence and are influenced by our behaviour. The types of thoughts, emotions, perceptions and reactions which influence behaviour at an unconscious level are referred to in the literature as "implicit cognition". In recent years, an explosion of experimental studies have improved our understanding of how these types of mechanism influence us and also how they interact with one another. The results of these experiments give rise to new questions that are of substantial philosophical interest, and relevant to social-scientific work on social constructions. Given that the behaviour of individuals is susceptible to external influence, how stable are these implicit cognitive processes? How do explicit prejudices and stereotypes arise and become reproduced in interaction with their implicit counterparts? What responsibility do individuals have for implicit cognitive processes?

There is already a small but growing literature in analytical feminism, whereas the field of analytical race studies might be said to be embryonic. The objective of this research theme is to strengthen this new but important research field and to contribute to the current intensive debate around these questions in Sweden. The research group will include among others philosophers, cognitive scientists, psychologists, historians, sociologists and scholars from the fields of gender studies, discrimination studies and law.

V. Equality

The value ascribed to social and economic equality is emphasised in many political contexts. At the same time, however, there is considerable disagreement regarding the importance that should be assigned to equality in relation to other societal goals, such as liberty and efficiency, and also regarding the reasons for prioritising equality and which type of equality is relevant. In order to improve our understanding of the role of equality in assessments of societal developments, we must consider possible answers to a series of different questions regarding both the concept of equality itself and other related concepts. This will be the objective of this research theme.

As regards the equality concept itself, one important point of departure is that the concept allows for differences in degree. A society may be more or less equal, and we need some way of registering and labelling these differences. As has been shown by among others Larry Temkin, the equality concept is quite complex and different ways of defining and measuring equality capture different intuitions and sometimes have contradictory implications.[14] Moreover, it is unclear what might constitute the correct "currency" for measures of inequality. Should it be income, wealth, well-being, preference satisfaction, rights, or something else?[15]

A further problem is that the usual measures of inequality do not adequately take changes in population size into consideration. As was noted above (see Section I), the size of the population is affected by decisions made across a range of different areas, which means that we cannot take the size of the future population as a given. If, for example, we want to measure the trend in global inequality over the past thirty years, we need to take the large population increases in countries such as India and China into account. This constitutes a problem for traditional measures of inequality, such as the often-used Gini coefficient, for example. If the population of a given society increases, but this increase occurs among the most disadvantaged groups, it may be argued that inequality is increased, since the numbers of the most disadvantaged have increased, and that the society has not improved with regard to

14. Temkin, L., *Inequality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
15. See e.g. Sen, A., *Inequality Reexamined*, Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

equality. The use of the Gini coefficient would lead to the opposite conclusion, however, since according to this measure, inequality decreases as the numbers of the most disadvantaged rise as a result of population increases.[16]

Another relevant concept in this context is that of competition. One of the arguments that is often made for accepting inequalities is that differences in levels of power and resources are a result of mechanisms that involve competition between groups and individuals and that are in turn regarded as contributing to beneficial outcomes in the form of economic growth and scientific, artistic and technological progress etc. In many situations, competition is viewed as providing an important incentive, from children competing for a place in the local football team, to the way we organise geriatric care, and as a means of governing complex organisations. It is widely believed that competition has many positive consequences, for example, its effects on efficiency and the capacity for innovation. Experiences from the introduction of competition into the healthcare sector or the compulsory school system are not entirely positive, however, and competition may produce unexpected consequences.[17]

There are a number of uncertainties and unanswered questions in the research on competition. Despite the fact that the competition concept is frequently used, both in everyday life and in many scientific disciplines, we lack a deeper understanding of what it is and what it means. Which social situations lead to competition? When does competition have primarily positive effects, and when does it have negative effects (and what is to be regarded as positive and negative in this context)? How does competition change those who are competing with one another? In order to answer questions of this kind we must expand and improve existing theories of competition so that they cover both competition within and outside markets and competition over things other than resources, such as status for example.

In Sweden and many other countries, the school system is ascribed a key role in the creation of an equal society. The policy documents state that schools should promote the development and learning of all students and that this is to be realised by means of education based on scientific foundations. Our knowledge of what this actually means in practice is very limited, however; new research is needed in this area to confront theoretical and practical questions relating to a research-based school system and the possibilities for such a system to contribute to the creation of a more equal society.

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16. Arrhenius, G., "Egalitarian Concerns and Population Change," in Ole Frithjof Norheim (ed.) *Measurement and Ethical Evaluation of Health Inequalities*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
17. Hartman, L. 2011. Konkurrensens konsekvenser. SNS Förlag. Propper, C., Burgess, S., & Green, K. 2004. "Does competition between hospitals improve the quality of care? Hospital death rates and the NHS internal market." *Journal of Public Economics*, 88(7): 1247–1272.

One variant of the argument that emphasises a potential conflict between equality and, for example, economic growth or scientific progress, is that inequality is acceptable as long as people are not allowed to sink below a certain poverty line in terms of resources and power. This gives rise to questions regarding how the concept of "poverty" should be defined in more detail, how the minimum acceptable level of power and resources should be determined, and what the consequences of poverty are.

As regards the consequences of poverty, we need to examine what types of poverty are correlated with other negative consequences. Are the consequences of long-term poverty particularly serious? Do the consequences of poverty vary on the basis of other characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or sources of income? On the basis of both a child- and gender perspective, it is also important to compare the effects of poverty defined in terms of the individual's own resources with the effects of poverty defined in terms of household resources. Some of the other central questions to be examined within this theme are: Is child poverty increasing over time? How are the social relations of young people affected by school segregation? And how is their psychological well-being affected? How does the situation of the children of single parents develop over time, viewed from the perspective of their weak economic position? How do segregated schools and childhood environments influence the social and cultural integration of the children of immigrants?

In recent times, new patterns of social and economic inequality in relation to working life, and the debate on the emergence of the so-called 'precariat', have given rise to questions about how a fair system of social protection can be constructed for the labour market of the future. Post-war interpretations of a fair economy and social citizenship have promoted the idea of secure employment contracts in combination with social insurance schemes that provide standard protection, as well as an ambitious labour market policy that facilitates necessary transitions on the labour market. The idea of an employment-based, general welfare state has been closely tied to the ambition to support the personal autonomy of the individual and to minimise stigmatising forms of needs-testing and control.

This model may appear increasingly unrealistic when the normal situation is one in which a significant proportion of the population, and not least many young people, have no prospect of obtaining stable full-time employment and therefore often find themselves outside the employment-based security systems. At the same time, the conception of a general and coherent welfare model is being challenged by a trend towards an increased concentration of wealth and developments in the field of automation that are restructuring working life but whose benefits are not being felt by

everyone. Therefore, an important social question in relation to the future is how the idea of a general welfare state may be understood and developed in this context: a context in which a highly productive and knowledge-intensive economy is developing while, at the same time, the income of substantial groups on the periphery of society is becoming conditional upon the uncertainties of casual labour, insecure employment conditions, the assistance of family and friends and needs-tested forms of support.

These are questions that are urgently in need of conceptual, normative and empirical elucidation in a multidisciplinary environment. How should we view the relationship between principles of social justice, general welfare and social citizenship in this context? How, for example, should we understand the relationships between rights and obligations, employment contracts and social cohesion, rights of inheritance and equal opportunities?

One contribution to this discussion is the idea of a general "basic income", a proposal that has exerted substantial influence in the discussion of the future of the welfare state in the fields of political science and philosophy. [18] This proposal, which has been presented in a variety of forms from both the left and the right, involves establishing distributive mechanisms in order to guarantee every resident a regular, individual basic income with no formal requirement for the individual to do anything in return. Adherents have presented this as constituting an inclusive and non-stigmatising means, in the spirit of general welfare policy, of liberating people from poverty and exploitable vulnerability and at the same time avoiding different forms of poverty trap and other obstacles to active citizenship produced in the context of certain traditional, conditional forms of support.

At the same time, the approach gives rise to a number of important objections and reservations of both a moral and empirical nature. Can, for example, strategies of this kind satisfy conceptions of justice based on reciprocity and be squared with a socially accepted interpretation of the relationship between social rights, active citizenship and demands for self-sufficiency? Past research on basic income and similar proposals is often well-developed in terms of its general analysis of the fundamental principles of justice that are at stake, but there is still a need for more detailed, practical examination of possible conflicts relating to the degree of coverage of social protection systems, the systems' minimum levels and the maintenance of a sustainable system of taxation. Given that a general basic income could only replace certain of the forms of support that are in place today, one key question is whether

18. See e.g. Van Parijs, Philippe (1995) *Real Freedom for All*, Oxford: Oxford University Press and White, Stuart (2003) *The Civic Minimum: On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

it is possible to create a basic income that is economically viable, and that provides a good incentive to work, but which is nevertheless sufficiently high to be socially meaningful. And how would such a system be compatible with the goals of global justice and the free movement of labour? How can we deal with such future challenges and proposals in a way that gives sufficient consideration to the long-term conditions for the maintenance and development of a well-functioning and legitimate welfare state from one generation to the next?

The research group in this theme will comprise among others researchers from the fields of business studies, political science, sociology and philosophy.[19]

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