Provision of Programme Leadership, Fund and Project Management for the Implementation of a Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing

Request for Proposals (RFP)

Fondation Botnar is a Swiss philanthropic foundation working to improve the health and wellbeing of young people living in cities around the world. Advocating for the inclusion of youth voices and the equitable use of AI and digital technology, the foundation invests in and supports innovative programmes and research, and brings together actors from across sectors to create dialogue and partnerships

Fondation Botnar is inviting proposals for the provision of programme leadership, project management and communications activities to guide, administer and advance the objectives of a five year international research programme on young people and relational wellbeing. The partner organisation which will provide these services will be referred to as the "intermediary".

The research programme is expected to run for five years, providing a total of CHF 10 million (c. USD 10.8 million) research funding (subject to Fondation Botnar Board approval).   The collaboration will have two phases, a programme preparation phase of July 2022- January 2023 (8 months) and the main phase subject to a bilateral agreement (if approved by the Board) of March 2023-End 2028.

Timetable

20 March 2022	Request for Proposals issued
5 May 2022, 5 pm CET	Deadline for submissions
31 May 2022	Video interview for shortlisted candidates
3 June 2022	Selection of intermediary
June 2022	Onboarding intermediary
July 2022	Preparation Phase Start

The Research Programme

Foundation invests in and supports implementation programmes and research, and brings together actors from across sectors to create dialogue and partnerships.

The Foundation has adopted a relational approach to wellbeing (see Annex 3: RWB Brief 1) and wishes to test and develop this through a major programme of research into the key contemporary challenges facing young people (the "Programme"). The Programme has two major objectives:

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 2 of 8

- Test and further develop relational approaches to wellbeing in conceptual, methodological and operational terms
- Generate insights into key contemporary challenges to young people's wellbeing in urban environments and how young people are addressing these

The Programme will involve an open call inviting proposals for research projects that address its objectives. Applications from organisations based in LMICs will be especially welcome, and all applications should include at least one leading role that is LMIC based. There is a preference for research in Fondation Botnar's focus countries (Romania, Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Morocco, Egypt, India [Odisha or Rajasthan], Indonesia and Vietnam), but the call will also be open to research in other locations.

The responsibilities of the intermediary will fall into two phases. Programme preparation (July-October 2022) will involve consultation with young people and other stakeholders to shape a final version of the programme to be submitted to Fondation Botnar Management Office in early November. The Management Office will then guide the programme through the official grant review process in preparation for the funding decision by the Fondation Botnar Board which is targeted in February 2023. The main phase will start after Board approval (March 2023-End 2028). This will involve establishing and working with an advisory group, issuing the research call, peer reviewed selection of research projects, undertaking due diligence on the project applicant organisations, establishing the contracts between the intermediary and project organisations, management of the grants, supporting capacity strengthening, fostering internal and external communications and programme level engagement with wider stakeholders, and reporting on progress. The intermediary will support and contribute to an external evaluation which will be mandated and paid for by Fondation Botnar in the course of the programme. It will close with a final report for Fondation Botnar, detailing the main achievements of the Programme, any challenges encountered and the lessons learnt.

Programme Timetable

July-October 2022	Preparation Phase: Consultation with young people and other stakeholders to shape final version of programme to be submitted to Fondation Botnar Board
November 2022	Submission of Programme to Fondation Botnar Management Office
December 2022-January 2023	Management Office preparation of documents for submission to Board including external expert review and external due diligence
February 2023	Programme approval by Fondation Botnar Board
March 2023	Main phase: Issue of research call
October 2023	First research projects begin
September 2028	Research projects close
End 2028	Final report on the programme submitted to Fondation Botnar

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 3 of 8

Responsibilities and deliverables

The intermediary will be required to deliver the following:

- **Programme leadership**
  - Provide an overall vision and direction for the programme, including re-working the outline programme into a final programme call and responding appropriately to critical unforeseen events
  - Oversee the peer review of project applications and participate in the final selection of projects to be funded
  - Guide and support as required individual research projects within the programme
  - Engender a strong internal culture of communication and mutual support
  - Ensure provision of capacity strengthening, to advance equity across the Programme
  - Ensure the appropriate participation of young people within programme processes and outcomes
  - Establish and engage with programme advisory group(s).
  - Represent the programme with external audiences to build broader alliances
  - Pursue an effective and diverse communications and impact strategy for the programme, including support to individual projects with their communications and impact activities
  - Co-ordinate as required with Fondation Botnar research grant-making team and the Relational Wellbeing Collaborative
  - Monitor progress and provide annual progress reports to the Foundation

- **Programme management**
  - Provide administrative and other support to the Programme leadership team and advisory group as necessary
  - Issue the research call, including identifying and communicating proactively with potential grantees, especially in LMICs
  - Establish and administer a peer review and decision process for the independent assessment of applications at EOI and final application submission stages
  - Ensure effective governance of the research programme
  - Manage and deliver all technical aspects of grant administration
  - Develop a M&E strategic learning framework and generate monitoring information to inform Fondation Botnar provided learning questions

- **Fund management**
  - Develop eligibility and funding criteria, operating policies and financial reporting guidelines in line with but not limited to Fondation Botnar's Requirements and Conditions
  - Open and maintain a dedicated bank account for the programme
  - Ensure secure and timely disbursement of funds
  - Manage grants for project funding
  - Ensure due diligence and measures to safeguard against fraud, corruption and abuse of funds
  - Manage contracts and/or grant agreements
  - Financial monitoring of funded projects

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 4 of 8

Criteria

Organisations should meet the following criteria:
- Strong track record of efficient fund management and project management of international research programmes, including in the global South, and with inter- and transdisciplinary teams. Please share a 1-page executive summary of each of the 3 programmes that you have managed in the past that you see as most similar to this one.
- Strong project and financial management skills and experience
- Strong track-record in conducting due diligence assessments
- Strong presence and networks in LMICs/Global South research communities
- Preferably non-profit organisation
- Subject to annual external audits

Programme leader(s) should meet the following criteria:
- Excellent academic profile in social science research with young people in LMIC contexts
- Demonstrated understanding of relational social science theory and methodologies
- Clear grasp of the field of interdisciplinary wellbeing research, especially in the Global South
- Strong experience in participatory approaches and research, especially with young people
- (Desirable) research experience in urban contexts in the Global South
- Excellent track record of managing international, inter- and transdisciplinary research programmes involving young people
- Demonstrated capacity to lead and inspire research teams and to communicate research outcomes to multiple audiences and in engaging formats
- (Desirable) Strong academic networks across countries, sectors and disciplines

Notes
- It is expected that programme leader(s) will need to be recruited specifically for this role, given the specific areas of academic expertise required and the time commitment that this role is expected to demand. However, it is ultimately up to applicant organisations to propose how they believe the responsibilities identified can best be delivered.
- It may be that an organisation might wish to work with other partners, for example to ensure reach beyond their own geographical region. The Foundation is happy to consider such proposals. However, the agreement with Fondation Botnar will be made only with the main organisation, who will then be responsible for all the sub-partners.

The intermediary will be able to draw on the following sources of support

Fondation Botnar
- The Foundation is responsible for funding all components of the call. The team responsible will oversee the process to the RFP stage and commission the intermediary. They will participate in the advisory group as observers. They will help to publicise the final call for proposals. They will assist with high level connections and communications where required.

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 5 of 8

The Foundation will also monitor and evaluate the programme on a milestone basis to ensure that it achieves the envisioned impact and a yearly steering discussion shall take place including the intermediary programme team and Fondation Botnar on the basis of the yearly project report.

The Relational Wellbeing Collaborative (RWB-C)
- RWB-C will assist the Foundation's team as required. They will also provide a 'helpdesk' for RWB related enquiries if needed. It is envisaged that this will be particularly relevant for the action/applied research component. They will participate in the advisory group.

Advisory Group(s)
- Advisory groups will be responsible for advising on the programme content and structure, advice on the programme's progress and direction, and facilitation of its wider impact. We envisage that there might be two groups, one of adults and one of young people. The adult advisory group should include a variety of stake-holders, including academics, research users, practitioners, funders etc. The young people advisory group should involve urban young people from LMICs, across a range of social identities and backgrounds. Co-ordination between these groups might involve representatives from the young people's advisory group participating in the adult one.

Principal Investigators:
- Principal investigators (research grant holders) will be responsible for the intellectual direction, day to day management, and overall performance of their projects. In addition to the research itself, this will include project level data management, financial management, communications and impact activities. PIs will also be required to participate, with others of their staff, in programme level workshops and exchange. Strategic intellectual input will be available from other grantees and the programme leadership team, with back up from RWB-C if required.

Application Process

Applications must be submitted to **rfp@fondationbotnar.org** by 5pm CET on Mai 5 2022.

The proposal should include the following:

- A (maximum) five page summary stating the proposed leadership team[1] and how you would plan to deliver the programme and its various components. This should involve precise details of the activities and funds required in the preparation phase, and an outline of activities and indicative figures for the funds required in the main phase, assuming pass-through funds of CHF 10 million over five years. A detailed plan of activities and budget for the main phase will be required only when the final version of the Programme is submitted at the end of the inception phase.
- A completed application form (Annex 1). Please keep this to a maximum of 10 pages.

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[1] Programme leader(s) should be named. For other roles, such as communications officers, only the post needs to be stated.

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 6 of 8

- Attachments such as financial/audit reports, CVs, references, executive summaries of previous programmes conducted etc

Questions and inquiries can be sent to the email address above between **24 March and 25 April 2022**. Questions and responses will be posted on our website to ensure that all applicants have equal access to information.

Annex 1: Application Form

Annex 2: Draft Concept of the Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing

Annex 3: RWB Brief 1

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 7 of 8

Annex 1: Application Form

1. **Organisational Structure and approach**
    1.1. Please state the name, legal structure, registration number, headquarter, and year of foundation of your organisation.
    1.2. Please describe how your organisation fits the following criteria:
    -   Excellent track record of managing international research, including in the global South, and with inter- and transdisciplinary teams
    -   Excellent project and financial management skills
    -   Strong presence and networks in LMICs/Global South research communities
    -   Excellent record of collaborating with external stakeholders, including research funders and users
    -   Excellent academic networks on which you can draw for peer reviewers, including across the global South
    1.3. Please state the regulatory authorities by which your organisation is regulated.
    1.4. Please describe your organisation's governing bodies and their roles and members
    1.5. Please state who from your team would have overall responsibility for this programme and co-ordinate with Fondation Botnar's Management Office.

2. **Financial and Fund Management**
    2.1. Please give evidence of your excellent track record of efficient fund management of programme with multi-research projects
    2.2. Is your organisation subject to annual external audits? Please provide audited annual financial reports for the past two years.
    2.3. Does your organisation have a Financial Procedures Manual or a similar document that describes the financial and administrative policies and procedures?
    2.4. Are you a for-profit or not-for-profit organisation? Please state the types of funding you receive and the types or organisations (national government, local government, private sources, corporations, international organisations, donations, memberships, charity contributions, other) you receive funds from.
    2.5. Can your organisation accept a grant from a Swiss foundation in one of our currencies (CHF, EUR, GBP, USD)?
    2.6. Can your organisation award grants internationally?
    2.7. Can your organisation refund any unspent funds?
    2.8. Please give evidence of your capacity and experience to monitor compliance with funding conditions and contractual requirements at the level of the individual grants awarded

3. **Programme Leader(s)**
    3.1. Please describe how the proposed leader(s) meet the following criteria:
    -   Excellent academic profile in social science research with young people in LMIC contexts
    -   Demonstrated understanding of relational social science theory and methodologies
    -   Clear grasp of the field of interdisciplinary wellbeing research, especially in the Global South
    -   Strong experience in participatory approaches and research, especially with young people
    -   (Desirable) research experience in urban contexts in the Global South

Fondation Botnar
Provision of Project Leadership, Fund Management, Coordination and Technical Services for the Implementation of a
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing
Page 8 of 8

- Excellent track record of managing international, inter- and transdisciplinary research programmes involving young people
- Demonstrated capacity to lead and inspire research teams and to communicate research outcomes to multiple audiences and in engaging formats
- (Desirable) Strong academic networks across countries, sectors and disciplines

3.2. Curriculum Vitae(s)
3.3. References: Provide two names and contact information. Ideally one would be from young people or youth-led organizations/networks/coalitions with whom you have worked

Annex 2. Young People and Relational Wellbeing Research Call

NB: This is a draft of the research call, the final version will be produced after further consultation by the Programme Leader

Fondation Botnar is an independent Swiss philanthropic foundation committed to improving the wellbeing of young people in urban environments in Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMICs). The Foundation has adopted a relational approach to wellbeing (see Annex 3: RWB Brief 1), and wishes to test and develop this through a major programme of research into the key contemporary challenges facing young people. The programme is expected to run for five years, with a total of CHF10 million funding (subject to Fondation Botnar Board approval).

Purpose

The research programme aims to achieve significant empirical, conceptual and methodological advances. It has two major objectives:
- Test and develop relational approaches to wellbeing, in both conceptual and methodological terms
- Generate insights into how urban young people are addressing key contemporary challenges to their wellbeing

The programme is envisaged as a shared process, with significant communication and interaction across individual project teams. In addition to deepening mutual support and reflection amongst grantees, this will help advance three further objectives:
- Build a critical and creative community of scholars and activists engaged in and with relational approaches to young people's wellbeing
- Support reflection and alignment of approaches to young people's wellbeing at a regional level, to generate common initiatives across conventional divides
- Influence global discourse and practice on young people's wellbeing to include more relational perspectives, that recognise what is common and what is distinct at global, regional and local scales

Who is this for?

We invite applications from people who think and work relationally in their research or practice for and/or with young people, and are interested in engaging in a shared process of investigation and reflection. We welcome applications from inter- or transdisciplinary teams which include activists, practitioners and/or social entrepreneurs alongside researchers. All applications, however, must include at least one academic partner. We recognise that relatively few people work explicitly with a relational wellbeing approach. What is more important is that you understand the value of relational thinking and working, and are interested in exploring this further (see below).

We particularly welcome applications from people and organisations based in LMICs, and all applications should include at least one leading role that is LMIC based. Applications led by people in Fondation Botnar's focus countries (Romania, Tanzania, Colombia, Ecuador, Ghana, Senegal, India [Odisha or Rajasthan], Morocco, Egypt, Indonesia and Vietnam) are especially welcome. Applications must be linked to an institution that is equipped to receive international finance and administer research funding. This might be a university, but equally might be a think tank, research institute, NGO or social enterprise.

Themes

The call is open to any application that addresses contemporary challenges to young people's wellbeing from a relational perspective. However, it highlights in particular three themes:

1. How do young people construct themselves as relational subjects in a digital age?
2. How can young people's wellbeing be sustained and advanced in responses to the climate emergency?
3. In a global context where regular employment is increasingly unavailable, how are young people assembling their livelihoods, and what new markers of purpose, meaning and identity are emerging?

Applications may select one of these or locate themselves at an intersection between them. The themes are intended for guidance, excellent proposals that address young people's wellbeing outside these themes will also be considered. The themes and the broader rationale behind the call are set out in more detail below.

All of the research themes reflect global transformations, which troubles any notion of strict geographical boundaries. However, the research call expects the *primary* subjects of research to be young people in LMICs, even if older people and young people elsewhere may also be affected. As the Foundation works mainly in cities, there is also a strong preference for research in urban environments. However, the call is open to studies based in other locations, recognising the fluidity of rural-urban transitions. It is expected that all applications will engage with some empirical context, rather than being simply theoretical.

All applications must show how they will employ and develop relational concepts and methods through their research. Applications taking a 'complexity-consistent' approach (e.g. Byrne and Callaghan 2014) are particularly welcome. The call is open to research drawing on any discipline, philosophical approach and method. This includes quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, spatial analysis, citizen science and big data, and those involving making and the creative arts. This diversity will strengthen the programme and further its intention to foster engagement and debate across differing philosophical and methodological approaches. Proposals that involve methodological innovations are particularly welcome, and the programme accepts that this may involve some risk.

Programme Structure

The programme will be led by (an) internationally recognised research scholar(s), who will be supported by communications and administrative support in a small leadership team. As relationality is at the heart of the research programme, it will model a relational process, with regular meetings and conversations across the different research projects. These will institute a common process to help tackle challenges that arise and share insights as these emerge, with the intention that the programme as a whole should be more than the sum of its parts. This will be funded at programme level, in addition to project-level communications and impact activities. The programme leadership team will be given communications and administrative support by an intermediary organisation which will undertake the project and fund management aspects of the programme.

Phases

Funding will be given for five years in total. There will be four phases of the research call:

1. Expressions of Interest (EoI). The research call will begin with Expressions of Interest, from which an initial selection will be made. A minimum of three months will be allowed between the publication of the call and the deadline for the EoI.

2. Inception phase. Those selected will be given funding for a four to six month inception phase, during which they can develop a full proposal. A key aim of this inception phase is to enable full participation from those based in LMICs. This phase will involve:

    a. Finalising the team partners
    b. Defining the critical research questions for the particular contexts of study
    c. Identifying key stakeholders and planning for engagement and communications activities
    d. Detailed planning of the main research phase

    The final selection of projects will be made after this phase.

3. Main phase: This will be the period in which the main research and communications and engagement activities take place.

4. Top up: Particularly successful projects will be eligible to bid for some additional funding in years 3 to 4, to explore new areas of interest that have come to light in the course of their research or engage with research fellows. Up to 1/4 of the total programme funds will be available for this.

Modes of Research

Applications may include one or all of the following elements.

- **'Basic' research**

    Proposals should involve new empirical research. The preference is for inter/transdisciplinary research, grounded in the social sciences, but engaging with other disciplines as required. However, single discipline studies will also be eligible, if they can contribute to inter/transdisciplinary findings at the programme level. The basic research projects may include practitioners alongside researchers.

- **Action 'applied' research**

    Proposals should specify a practical wellbeing project which will be undertaken using the Relational Approach to Wellbeing developed by the RWB Collaborative and adopted by Fondation Botnar (see RWB Briefs). Guidance on this approach will be provided through an RWB Helpdesk, but there will be freedom to customise and develop from the original version both conceptually and methodologically as the context demands.

- **Fellowships**

    These fellowships will allow LMIC-based academics or activists some critical time out of their usual context in order to reflect on and write about their work. They will typically be associated with one of the funded projects, but independent proposals that reflect the overall themes and concerns of the call will also be considered. The fellowships should be located in an institution which can provide appropriate library etc. resources, with a named mentor/interlocutor who will accompany and support their process. These are intended to bring in additional perspectives to the funded projects and/or the programme as a whole. They will support people at different stages of their career, with junior (post-doc or with activist experience), mid-career and senior fellowships available.

Process and Communications

All applications should include plans for communications and pathways to impact, including at the EoI stage. The programme leadership team will also include a Communications/ Impact officer to facilitate exchange of learning amongst grantees and to ensure effective communications and impact-engagement occurs at all points in the programme cycle.

Modalities

RWB Support

An RWB helpdesk will be available as part of the programme to respond to questions that arise as grantees operationalise a relational approach in their research. This is likely to be particularly useful for applied research projects.

Ethics and partnership

Research involves developing relationships between those involved in conducting the research, with those who are subjects of the research, and with those who will learn from or seek to apply the research. All of these relationships involve power and have potential to cause harm. All applications will be expected to set out how they will nurture such relationships and ensure that they respect the rights and dignity of all parties.

All the research should be conducted in line with best practice for international research, as set out for example in the [Research Fairness Initiative](#), KFPE's [11 Principles](#), the DSA's [5 Key Messages and Gertschen's (2021) Transdisciplinary research partnerships](#). All applications should state explicitly how international partnerships are expected to work, with evidence of earlier collaborations, if possible.

Young people's participation
Young people's participation will be an important feature of the research programme, including as co-researchers. While there is no requirement for every proposal to include young people in such roles, applicants will be required to explain the forms in which young people will participate in their projects, and if there is to be no participation, explain the reason for this. Applications for projects that do involve young people should make clear how they will observe best practice with respect to young people's participation in research, as set out for example in Global Kids Online's [Participatory Methods and Ethical Research involving Children.](#)

Publicity
Publicity regarding this research call will be made available through a diverse range of channels, to ensure that activists and those working in lesser known universities, think tanks and research institutes in LMICs become aware of it in good time and see it as something for which they can apply.

Themes expanded

What does it mean to take a relational approach to wellbeing?

At its simplest, a relational approach puts relationships at the centre of analysis (Emirbayer 1997; Burkitt 2016; Gergen 2009, Powell and Dépelteau 2013**)**. This contrasts with approaches that begin from an individual or structural perspective. Relationships are understood not as inert or fixed, but as active, mobile and constitutive. Rather than simply bringing together elements that are already fully formed, the interaction re-moulds those who are party to it, and generates new possibilities as well as potential constraints.

The key characteristic of a wellbeing approach is that it is person-centred, meaning that people figure as subjects, not objects. This means aiming to look at things from people's own point of view, as if from the inside out, rather than selecting aspects of their lives as distinct targets for intervention. A wellbeing approach is also positive, oriented towards people's strengths and hopes, rather than what they lack. For example, development goals of 'ending child marriage' or 'promoting sexual and reproductive health' might be re-envisioned as 'being able to express and enjoy your sexuality' and 'being able to have children safely at a time that you choose' when framed from a wellbeing perspective.

Taking a relational approach to wellbeing directs our attention beyond individual attitudes or behaviour to the broader context or ecosystem in which these arise. It encourages us to investigate underlying structures and processes, and to see how these interact to undermine or promote wellbeing (Atkinson 2013, White 2017). Rather than seeking to

separate out different aspects of wellbeing into distinct domains, it aims to understand the interplay between different parts of life, people or groups, and how these are shaped by, and in turn help shape, societal and environmental endowments. Attention is paid to both the subjective (how people are thinking and feeling) and objective (what people can in practice be and do) and how these inter-connect. The relational approach thus accepts the importance of young people's response to their situation, but recognises that the situation is not of their making. This means that critical responsibilities for bringing about change (also) require action at government and eco-system level.

Relational thinking is closely allied with systems thinking and complexity approaches. If a distinction needs to be made, it may lie in the perspective that is taken. While both systems and complexity thinking tend to take an overview, looking down from above, relational thinking in the context of wellbeing seeks to explore an actor's perspective. Rather than mapping the territory, it seeks to explore the path through walking. It is important, however, not to over-state this distinction. Relational approaches to wellbeing do seek to discern the underlying conjunctures which promote or undermine wellbeing. Systems and complexity approaches may also adopt an actor's point of view.

Areas for Investigation and Development

Relational approaches have appeared relatively recently on the wellbeing scene, and so are ripe for further testing and development. The following are some potential areas to explore. There is no requirement for particular applications to address any or all of these, but they are issues that we hope the programme as a whole will be able to engage with. They also provide examples of the more theoretical and methodological questions that we would like the research to engage with, beyond its empirical findings.

- **Scale (space)**: How might we need to think about wellbeing differently at different scales? Might different aspects of wellbeing change in their relative importance at different scales? How might analysis connect different scales together?

- **Scale (time)**: As for space, and interacting with it, what are the different ways to account for time in relational research on wellbeing? Is it possible to chart intergenerational and perhaps collective, even national histories and the transmission of trauma or potential for wellbeing?

- **Systems and complexity approaches**: Recognising the close association between relational and systems and complexity thinking, how might we use scholarship in these areas to develop relational approaches to wellbeing? How should systems and complexity thinking affect research methodology, for example in understanding of boundaries as spaces of connection rather than limits, and in exploring emergence and systemic change over time? How should systems and complexity thinking affect what we understand wellbeing to be, and how it may be tracked or measured?

- **Collective wellbeing:** How might we develop a relational conception of collective wellbeing, which is not the sum of individual wellbeings, but can account for the

distinct properties and dynamics of wellbeing at a community or institutional level, while also recognising internal difference and diversity?

- **Intersectionality:** How might we develop a relational understanding of intersectionality, which can grasp the co-constitution of different aspects of identity, rather than aggregating them through a structural metaphor?

- **Hypothesis:** The RWB approach developed by the RWB Collaborative rests on an underlying hypothesis that personal and interpersonal wellbeing depends on social justice and ecological balance. How might this be tested? How might it be explored in real time? How might it be possible to track empirically the inter-relations between personal, societal and environmental drivers of wellbeing?

- **Power:** How might we bring power into relational analyses, while not losing the sense of fluidity? Gergen (2009) argues that political mobilisation tends to produce oppositional constructions of identity, which deny inter-relationship. How in the light of this might we theorise and operationalise power in action to advance wellbeing, including political action?

- **Fluidity**: How can we study relationality in a way that doesn't fix relationships, doesn't e.g. make 'the network' the new unit of analysis? How in particular can we do this while using quantitative measures or markers (e.g. social network analysis)?

- **Measures:**
  o What are the most effective ways to measure and track young people's wellbeing using a relational approach?
  o How can we trace interaction effects, e.g. between material, relational and subjective dimensions of wellbeing; or between personal, societal and environmental drivers of wellbeing?
  o To what degree can we ascribe causal influence to these interaction effects?

Research Theme 1: What does it mean to be a relational subject in a digital age?

The digital age has brought a profound transformation to young people's ways of relating to themselves and others. Being online opens in a radical way the spatial dimensions of connectedness: young people are able now as never before to engage with real and imaginary distant others, including as consumers and producers of global forms of knowledge, games, music and the arts. While this exposes adolescents to new forms of abuse, loneliness, constraint and addiction, it also offers apparently endless opportunities for new forms of creativity, freedom, connection and pleasure (Jenkins 2006, Moore 2011, OECD 2018, Twenge et al. 2021). Previous divisions between on and offline relationships are breaking down as virtual and physical worlds are increasingly interwoven, leading towards 'a future where "being offline" is increasingly becoming unthinkable' (Finkenauer et al. 2019:132). Access, however, is far from assured for all: connection to the virtual world is still highly structured through the inequities of the material one (Counted and Arawole 2016).

A relational approach to wellbeing views young people as *relational subjects* whose identities are embedded in and forged through their relationships with others. This theme aims to explore the implications for this of a world in which relationships are increasingly mediated by technology. It invites research which explores how experience differs according to *who* and *where* young people are – their social, geographical and institutional locations. What are the implications of online activity for offline relationships, and vice versa? It also opens up questions of time. How do different trajectories evolve? What are the continuities and discontinuities in young people's projections of the self on and offline? Might there be digital ways to track the development of subjectivity and relationality over time?

For urban young people in particular, there is a further dimension of this theme: how do smart city technologies affect young people's relational subjectivity? Recent research in India, while not focused on young people in particular, suggests that smart city visions show continuity with earlier (colonial and onward) ideas of sanitizing and beautifying – to the detriment of poorer actors and neighbourhoods, people's sense of history and connections with green space (Datta et al. 2021). A transformation of relationality is at the centre of smart city visions, recasting associations amongst people, with their everyday environments and between urban dwellers and urban governance, with corporations or urban planners rather than citizens in central focus (Morozov and Bria 2018). What does this mean for the connections between young people, and for intergenerational relationships? How does it affect the experience of growing up in the city? How do young people negotiate their identities in increasingly securitised urban environments, and how does this vary according amongst them: e.g. by gender, class, race or citizenship category? What scope is there for a 'future present' of smart cities that puts social justice at their heart (Kitchin 2018), and how might young people contribute to bringing this about?

The theme invites engagement with young people themselves to reflect on how they understand themselves as relational subjects, and discuss this with others from different places and life experience. To be effective, this may need to happen in the spaces where young people are already are, such as social media, and the use of music, video, drama, blogs, memes and visual arts....

It is important, though, that investigation does not simply involve young people themselves. The theme also invites exploration with corporate, government, social media, charitable, lobby group, political, or other actors whose attention young people are subject *to*. This might consider how such actors – and their technologies - create youth subjects in order to target their products or govern most effectively.

A potential third level of activity, either at the project or programme level, might bring these two lines of enquiry together, so that young people are able to see and hear how their online identities are being, to an extent, curated by others. Conversations with representatives from the corporate and other actors, might become the basis for creative media activities, through which young people could share what they have learnt with a wider public of their peers and other concerned parties, with a view, potentially, to generating action for change.

Research Theme 2: How can young people's wellbeing be sustained and advanced in responses to the climate emergency?

The burden of the climate emergency will fall disproportionately on young people. This raises immediate issues of care and suffering, but also broader concerns with intergenerational justice.

The potential negative effects of climate change on wellbeing are most evident. The climate emergency poses an existential threat: to the material bases of having a good life as these are currently understood; to psycho-social wellbeing, through e.g. displacement, heat-related violence, resource conflicts; and to people's fundamental sense of underlying security. In addition, climate change mitigation measures: involve austerity; may exacerbate inequality; may trigger anxiety, guilt, and a sense of loss. At an individual level effects are evident in climate anxiety (Ojala et al. 2021). The climate emergency is also experienced as a kind of grief (Randall 2009).

There are, however, some who argue for a positive relationship between wellbeing and climate change. Climate change provides the urgency required to re-set economic and political relations so that they centre on wellbeing. They argue that climate change mitigation measures may lead to more healthy, more connected lives and a sense of self centred in meaning and virtue, rather than material accumulation. Examples include Jackson (2005) who claims that consuming less might allow us to live better and become more human; and Kasser (2009) argues that living in an ecologically way satisfies humans' core psychological needs.

This theme invites research that explores young people's experience of these issues now and how these are being addressed through policy and politics. But there is also a more structural aspect that needs to be considered. Older and younger people have differential stakes in the future. Young people will be more affected than older people by environmental degradation and also have more to gain from the wider development of a wellbeing economy and society. This reveals a significant structural generational bias built into economic modelling that routinely discounts the future and valorises the present. Research is therefore needed to take forward a profound rethinking of current economic thought and practices to identify and remove such generational biases, which exist *even where there is no explicit reference to age or to young people*.

Research Theme 3: In a global context where regular employment is increasingly unavailable, how are young people assembling their livelihoods, and what new markers of purpose, meaning and identity are emerging?

For many centuries work and particularly employment has played a central role in understandings of adulthood, particularly for men. Work has supported material dimensions of wellbeing as the means to generate a livelihood; relational dimensions through enabling people to provide for those they care for and achieve status in the community; and subjective dimensions, contributing to a sense of self-worth and purpose in life. Increasingly, however, it is clear that changes in technology and the structure of global

capitalism mean that there is a growing number of people whose labour is simply surplus to requirements: there will never be enough jobs (Ferguson 2015, Li, 2017).

While this affects older workers who cannot find work again after being made redundant, its main effect will be felt by the young. Universities and colleges have responded by re-doubling their efforts towards employability, seeking to ensure that *their* students make it to the top of the ever-narrowing pyramid. While recognising that the 'job for life' is a thing of the past, and therefore students need to develop skills in adaptation and flexibility, they shy away from the more profound truth: that what is needed from them is to educate for life, rather than for work.

This theme invites investigation of a vision and practice of wellbeing where paid employment is not a major part of many people's lives. What alternatives are already being explored? What has worked, and why? How do young people themselves view the prospect of a future with little or no paid work? What kinds of creativity are they already, or might they engage in to experience themselves as able and competent, with a sense of connectedness to others, purpose and fulfilment? How does this differ according to different social, cultural, political and economic endowments of their contexts and personal location? What new forms of enterprise, institution, and policy will serve their interests best?

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Relational Wellbeing (RWB) is an integrative approach to understanding, assessing and advancing wellbeing

RWB Brief 1 gives a basic introduction to the approach and to the RWB Collaborative

RWB: The very basics

RWB builds on 20 years research in the Global South. This shows that relationships are central to wellbeing, giving life meaning and helping people get by and get on. Wellbeing is not just about feeling good (subjective) but also having enough (material) to care for families and share with others (relational). These comprise the three interlinked dimensions of wellbeing.

Assessing Wellbeing Outcomes

We reflect these dimensions of wellbeing in three core questions:
- Do people have enough of what they need? (**material**)
- Are people connected, and are the terms of these connections enabling and fair? (**relational**)
- Are people feeling good about their lives and their futures (**subjective**)

We answer these using both objective and subjective forms of data.
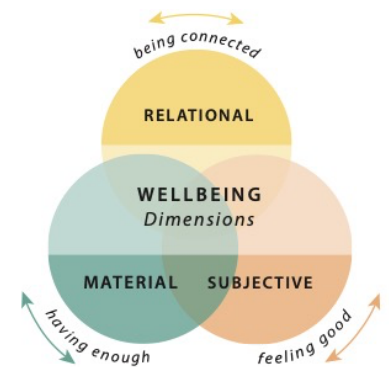
Targeting Wellbeing Drivers

RWB goes beyond the *experience* of wellbeing to address the underlying conditions that promote healthy environments and happy lives. It targets three forms of underlying drivers of wellbeing to achieve systemic change.

- Personal drivers generate variability between individuals. They include factors such as personality, personal history, direct interactions with others and the immediate context

- Societal drivers generate variability between social groups. They include factors such as the organisation of the economy, social difference and inequalities, policy and politics, technologies, social norms and culture

- Environmental drivers recognise the interdependence of all living beings and the earth. They draw attention to issues such as space, place, built environment, climate and biodiversity, pollution and ecological sustainability.
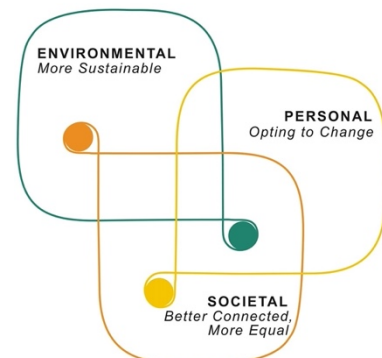
Like the material, relational and subjective dimensions of wellbeing, these drivers are interlinked and interactive. Positive shifts in the drivers of wellbeing will help shape future contexts that will be more likely to sustain or promote, rather than undermine, wellbeing.

RWB sees change as powered by interaction, rather than by individual actors or factors.

Taking a relational approach to wellbeing
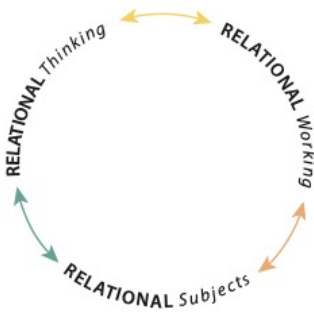
At the core of RWB is relational thinking. This emphasises flow, movement, and the interplay between actors and diverse factors that are conventionally separated into different domains or sectors or disciplines.

Programmatically, this makes us alert to unintended consequences and potential spill-over effects beyond a particular intervention. It also raises awareness of synergies, tensions and trade-offs between outcomes for different aspects of life, different kinds of people, people and the planet, and present and future generations.

Relational working involves engaging co-operatively with the people who are subjects of the change sought and collaborating with other initiatives to build broader coalitions. It means that how we work matters: we aim to promote virtuous circles of impact, through interactions that foster dignity and respect and strengthen local capacity and/or resilience.

Approaching people as relational subjects involves adopting a person-centred approach, seeing people as subjects of their lives, not objects of our interventions. It means recognising how people are embedded in their contexts and understanding how relationships structure the opportunities they face and the decisions they make.

The RWB Collaborative

The Relational Wellbeing Collaborative uses a relational approach to co-design and operationalise sustainable wellbeing strategies. Wellbeing outcomes build on programme outputs and intermediate outcomes, but speak to the broader improvements in quality of life that interventions aim to achieve. Wellbeing drivers constitute the underlying endowments that advance or hinder wellbeing. A successful programme will spark ongoing cycles of interaction between wellbeing outcomes and drivers, with the potential to generate systemic change.

Grounded in twenty years' research on wellbeing in the global South, our creative and collaborative approach emphasises ongoing reflexive learning to enable self-sustaining change. We offer:

- RWB strategy and programme design
- Context-specific, mixed methods wellbeing impact assessment
- Developmental evaluation and applied social research

The RWB Approach

Or contact us:
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