

The well-living paradigm: reimagining quality of life in our turbulent world

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Abstract

This article introduces the concept of ‘well-living’ as a transformative framework for reimagining quality of life in the face of current global socio-ecological challenges. Through a reflexive theoretical meta-analysis, it critically examines mainstream and reformist well-being discourses while drawing inspiration from transformative perspectives found in recent post-capitalist and indigenous movements. ‘Well-living’ is portrayed as both a civilizational endeavor and a multifaceted imperative, encompassing dimensions of creativity, liveability, conviviality, and alterity across various scales from individual to international contexts. Central to the ‘well-living’ paradigm are nine key qualities, including harmonious coexistence, aspirational foresight and purposefulness, solidarity, autonomy, authenticity, and integrity, thereby promoting an integrated approach to living in balance with oneself, others, and the natural world. Embracing ‘well-living’ as a goal and process can empower individuals and communities to challenge prevailing global capitalist paradigms, re-establish connections with the interconnected web of life, and strive for a more just, regenerative, and diverse world, accommodating multiple perspectives. Lastly, employing a ‘commonist’ perspective, the article outlines essential institutional and legislative-policy changes required to actualize the vision of ‘well-living.’

Keywords Well-living paradigm · Well-being · Quality of life · Good life · Commonism · Value

1 Introduction

1.1 Research background, aims, and questions

In recent years, a consensus has been growing among officials, activist organizations, think tanks, policymakers, and (center-left) politicians. They recognize the limitations of relying solely on monetary measures, such as GDP, to address the complex web of social and ecological challenges facing our world today. This recognition has given rise to what is commonly referred to as the ‘beyond-GDP movement.’ As a pivotal step towards a more holistic approach, novel indicators have been developed to assess social progress beyond the limited scope of wealth generated within nation-states [1]. These indicators take into account non-monetary aspects, reflecting people’s access to essential services, the state of public health, individual happiness and life satisfaction, economic resource distribution, citizen engagement in politics, and the population’s ability to fulfill their needs and foster their talents through quality public education, secure employment, standard housing, accessible public transportation, sustainable energy, and more.

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Various countries have taken significant strides in adopting such indicators at the national level. For instance, the UK's *Measuring National Well-being Programme*, Canada's *Index of Well-being*, Bhutan's *Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index*, *Measures of Australia's Progress*, and the more recent *Australian National Development Index (ANDI)* are just a few among a growing number of prime examples. Additionally, at the international level, initiatives like the *OECD Better Life Index*, the *World Happiness Index*, the *UN Human Development Index*, and the EU's *GDP and Beyond* initiative have gained prominence. Furthermore, the United Nations' adoption of the *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* in 2015 aligns with the broader effort to shift focus toward comprehensive well-being and sustainable development [2, 3]. These developments collectively exemplify the growing commitment to move beyond GDP-centric or even economic approaches and embrace a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of societal progress and quality of life.

The 'beyond-GDP movement' has a significant history, but its momentum has intensified notably since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC).¹ Furthermore, the movement has garnered even more attention in the post-COVID era due to evident reasons. The concept of 'well-being' has regained popularity, serving as a catchphrase for many individuals and groups expressing discontent with reducing progress solely to economic growth. Instead, they demand a more comprehensive approach to assessing 'quality of life.' At the civil society and grassroots activism level, the idea of a 'well-being economy' as an alternative to the prevailing growth-oriented mentality has gained widespread traction and sparked debates [4, 5]. Additionally, the concept of degrowth has been steadily gaining momentum among circles of progressive intellectuals and activists in the global North. This growing movement challenges the dogma of unending growth and advocates for a more holistic and sustainable approach to societal well-being, fostering a broader discourse on the reimagining of prosperity and the values that underpin it [6, 7].

The degrowth perspective contends that the contemporary crises we face are deeply intertwined with the prevailing economic growth mentality that has shaped mainstream notions of development and progress. This growth-centric ideology has become so ingrained that it is almost inconceivable for a politician or political party to win elections without promising economic expansion as the ultimate path to prosperity. However, the glaring reality is that this relentless pursuit of economic growth has contributed to severe ecological degradation and social inequalities. Attempts to disentangle this ecological unraveling from the growth trajectory have proven to be pointless, underscoring the urgent need for a paradigm shift [8]. The degrowth argument stresses that clinging to the dogma of limitless growth not only exacerbates ecological collapse but also perpetuates inequalities and social injustices. By challenging the entrenched link between economic growth and well-being, the voices advocating for degrowth emphasize the imperative for a fundamental re-evaluation of what constitutes 'prosperity' [9]. The call for qualitative improvements in life, well-being, and societal harmony over blind quantitative expansion aligns with the urgency to address the interconnected crises of our time.

While this surge of re-energized perspectives represents a potential step forward, this paper argues that merely adopting this ideological change will not translate into meaningful transformations in reality [10]. *To effect substantive change and achieve a more inclusive quality of life, it is imperative to critically examine the inherent or structural barriers that prevent its enhancement.* This entails delving into the underlying systems, power dynamics, and institutions that may hinder progress. Such critical reflections on the politics of 'good (quality of) life' will enable us to identify the institutional changes necessary for a more equitable and flourishing society. However, the identification of these structural impediments should not be seen as an end in itself; rather, it should serve as the starting point for democratically well-planned changes aimed at ensuring a just and equitable transition.² Therefore, the pursuit of a more balanced and sustainable future necessitates not only recognizing the need for change but also diligently strategizing and orchestrating the transition to avoid unintended repercussions (see Sect. 5).

Addressing all inherent and structural barriers to achieve a more inclusive quality of life lies beyond the confines of this paper (for further insights, refer to [11–16]). The focus here is to diligently advance toward instigating the imperative critical examination that paves the way for transformative change.

The demand for a fresh conceptual framework stems from the appropriation, dilution, and co-optation of the notion of 'good quality of life' and related terms (like 'well-being') by the reformist faction of the establishment and its affiliated civil society organizations. As a result, the reformist approaches have mostly led to only incremental policy changes with many setbacks. From historical lessons, it becomes evident that when the elite appropriates the language of opposition

¹ Back in 1968, Robert F. Kennedy, in his famous speech, poignantly stated, "Gross National Product measures everything except that which makes life worthwhile."

² A chorus of critics underscores this notion, emphasizing that unplanned reduction of economic activity within a capitalist framework can lead to detrimental consequences for vulnerable segments of society, perpetuating unemployment, financial distress, and cyclical crises [11–14].

to bolster their public image, it presents a pivotal opportunity for the opposition to redefine their discourse. Through this strategic shift, they can underscore the profound divergence between their steadfast values and those of the ruling class. This approach has the potential to illuminate public debates, dispel ambiguity, and foster a transformative mindset that liberates our imaginations from conventional norms. A new conceptual platform allows for a bold and distinct articulation of transformative values, emphasizing the necessity for meaningful change and not settling for incremental shifts. It revitalizes the debate and calls for a more radical approach to address the complex challenges we face. By embracing such a framework, we pave the way for imaginative solutions that challenge the status quo and offer truly transformative possibilities for our societies.

This article, thus, seeks to address the following fundamental inquiries:

1. What intrinsic limitations are associated with reformist well-being discourses, and how do these constraints impact the pursuit of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to advancing societal progress?
2. How can the incorporation of insights from transformative post-capitalist and Indigenous movements contribute to the development of a more progressive paradigm? Furthermore, what distinctive attributes define this paradigm, enhancing a harmonious and integrated way of living that aligns with oneself, others, and the natural world?
3. To what extent can a 'commonist' perspective serve as a guiding framework for instituting essential institutional and legislative-policy changes? How might these changes facilitate the actualization of the 'well-living' vision and effectively propel a just, equitable transition towards a more balanced and sustainable future?

1.2 Methodology

The methodology employed in this work involves a reflexive meta-theoretical analysis, conducted through a critical examination of various key approaches to 'good life' in a range of disciplines, such as sociological, political economic, and philosophical studies of quality of life. This approach synthesizes and critically analyzes existing knowledge to reveal the interconnectedness of social quality, ecological (dis)harmony, and social (in)justice. Drawing inspiration from transformative discourses found in recent post-capitalist and Indigenous movements, the paper develops a comprehensive approach to well-living that embraces the complexities of our modern global society.³

The methodological framework employed in the project that underpins this paper encompasses the following key components:

1. *Critical examination*: A critical analysis is undertaken to meticulously scrutinize the limitations inherent in reformist well-being discourses. This involves an exploration of the foundational ideological constructs that impede the realization of transformative change toward a more encompassing and equitable quality of life.
2. *Conceptual exploration*: Central to this work is the introduction of the innovative concept of 'well-living' as a dynamic and transformative framework. This exploration delves into the intricate dimensions and far-reaching implications of 'well-living,' while concurrently challenging prevailing narratives within mainstream well-being discourses.
3. *Integration of transformative movements*: Drawing insights from diverse post-capitalist and Indigenous movements, the paper seamlessly weaves transformative ideologies into its fabric. This integrative process culminates in the development of a holistic 'well-living paradigm' and a discussion of the required institutional changes.

³ Distinguished from a 'review article,' this paper's primary purpose is to propose a new conceptual framework rather than providing a broad survey of current topics. Unlike a 'case study,' it does not report specific instances of a phenomenon; instead, it synthesizes transformative ideologies to create a comprehensive perspective on well-living, emphasizing interconnectedness and social harmony. Moreover, the paper is not a 'perspective article' mostly advocating for a controversial position from a specific field of view. Rather, it presents a balanced analysis of existing knowledge to stimulate discussions about fresh approaches to understanding 'good life' in our troubled global society. While the article does not rely on traditional empirical research methodologies, it offers theoretical insights and novel perspectives that significantly contribute to the scholarly discourse. The introduction of the 'well-living paradigm' challenges prevailing norms, paving the way for further exploration and empirical applications. By elucidating the novel 'well-living paradigm' through theoretical insights and conceptual analysis, the paper aims to provide a critical contribution to the field. *Although it does not follow conventional empirical research methods, its forward-looking perspective encourages further exploration and empirical investigations into the proposed paradigm.*

1.3 Results

The first part of this article (Sects. 2–3) critically analyzes the limitations of reformist well-being discourses, advocating for a radical shift in the perception of a fulfilling life. The value of existing well-intended efforts made by various civil society actors, independent practitioners, and critical academics who operate under popular notions of well-being to address the concerns of marginalized groups is acknowledged and appreciated. However, as argued, the concept of well-being as a political reformist project faces legitimacy challenges for several reasons, which will be briefly described.

In the second part (Sects. 4–5), the idea of the ‘well-living paradigm’ is presented as a broad conceptual platform, not conceived in isolation but deeply rooted in the transformative discourses of numerous anti-systemic, post-capitalist, and Indigenous movements. These movements have discursively exposed and practically challenged the structural impediments inherent in the current dominant systems that hinder or contradict reformist wellbeing efforts. Drawing inspiration from these rich ideologies, the idea of ‘well-living’ emerges as a multifaceted imperative, woven with threads of creativity, liveability, conviviality, and alterity [17]. Its scope extends from the individual to the international level, inviting open and innovative practices that challenge the status quo. By reflecting on and integrating the insights of these transformative movements, the well-living paradigm becomes a powerful catalyst for reimagining and reshaping our understanding of the good life.

As discussed in those sections, emphasizing nine qualities like harmony, purpose, solidarity, integrity, and autonomy fosters an integrated approach to living in accord with oneself, others, and (the rest of) nature. Embracing ‘well-living’ as not only a goal but also a process can help challenge the dominant global capitalist mindset, reclaim the relationship with the web of life, and strive for a more just, regenerative, and pluriversal world inclusive of many worlds. The need to avoid reifying well-living and to promote ‘contextually’ defined values that respect diverse socio-ecological systems is acknowledged. Lastly, using a ‘commonist’ lens, the required institutional and legal transformations necessary for realizing well-living are outlined.

2 The appeal of the good life: a brief historical background

The pursuit of the ‘good life’ is deeply entrenched in the human psyche and historical development. As societies transitioned from hunter-gatherer to agrarian economies, hierarchical power structures solidified, intensifying competitive behaviors for control over arable lands and resources. This marked the emergence of the political economy of well-being, where the concept of the ‘good life’ became a utopian ideology employed to legitimize ruling powers and elicit consent from the masses, while also catalyzing resistance against oppressive forces. As a result, the notion of the ‘good life’ became a contested terrain, representing conflicting visions of society’s ultimate goal between the oppressed and the oppressor.

The question of how to realize a good life as a ‘state of being’ and/or to evaluate what a good life ‘achieves’ (either subjectively or objectively) is an ancient one. So are the disagreements. Throughout history, eminent thinkers across diverse cultures, including Eastern sages, Middle Eastern prophets, and Western philosophers of antiquity, grappled with the fundamental question of what constitutes a life of true worth. Does it lie in the pursuit of achievements and pleasures while avoiding pain, as posited by the Epicureans and the rest of the ancient hedonists? Conversely, does it involve the realization of human capabilities, flourishing of faculties, and the attainment of a more meaningful life, even amidst adversity, as argued by the Eudaemonists?⁴ This age-old inquiry has persisted over time and continues to engage our reflections in contemporary contexts.

⁴ Several ancient Greek philosophies or schools of thought promoted the concept of eudaimonia/eudaemonia (cf. [18], on the philosophical approaches to well-being). They equated ‘good life’ with the actualization of human potentials and positive functioning within the community. According to them, the good life cannot be reduced to mere pleasure or Epicurean happiness. In fact, such happiness might not always be present in situations associated with well-being, given that self-fulfillment is often linked to hard work, growth through challenges, and even pain. The Platonic school saw fulfillment as an intellectual ascent to understanding the ultimate truths of the universe, leading to the realization of one’s true nature and the good. Aristotelians argued that eudaimonia was attained through the cultivation of virtues and living in accordance with reason, balancing intellectual, moral, and social aspects of life. Stoics aimed to cultivate inner tranquility by accepting the natural course of events and recognizing what is within their control. Cynicists believed that eudaimonia could be attained through living in accordance with one’s nature and rejecting the desires and conventions of society. They promoted self-sufficiency, simplicity, and freedom from material possessions. The eudaimonic philosophies, while promoting a fulfilled life through virtues and self-mastery, face several critical arguments that challenge their applicability and inclusivity [18]. Critics argue that these philosophies may undermine the legitimacy of genuine emotional responses to challenging circumstances, potentially prioritizing individual self-improvement over collective concerns and social justice. The emphasis on self-mastery and detachment could diminish the importance of compas-

In response to this query, pre-capitalist dominant discourses recommended the eudaimonic way of life for the masses while suggesting a relatively self-contained hedonic approach for the rulers, aimed at preventing them from depleting their popular legitimacy. Virtual notions of well-being, propagated by communitarian cultures and religious authorities, posited that true flourishing and life's purpose could only be achieved through individuals' unwavering adherence to pre-established rules, norms, traditions, and values rooted in some sort of divinity. According to this view, good faith equates to good fate, suggesting a fixed notion of 'flourishing' for all time.

As humans developed sophisticated systems to manage limited resources and elevate their quality of life, more pronounced disparities in power emerged, leading to the association of a better life with imperial conquest, control, and dominance. European colonialism stands as a prominent example of this trend, where racism, slavery, assimilation, and exploitation of the Other were justified under the premise of pursuing a better life for both the colonizers and the colonized, albeit defined solely by the colonizers' terms.

The arrival of the European Enlightenment marked a significant shift, coinciding with the decline of religious authorities' power. This era saw the establishment of numerous secular and rationalist ideologies that aimed to redefine 'happiness' and 'well-being' by revisiting and revitalizing the ancient Western schools of thought predating the medieval period.⁵ New perspectives emerged, providing modern secular politics with a moral framework to define human success.

Contractualists like Hobbes and Rousseau constructed their moral framework on principles that individuals would ideally agree to, with the pursuit of happiness at the core within the context of social contracts. The concept of natural rights gained prominence during the European Enlightenment, providing a philosophical foundation for a rights-based approach to the good life. Influential thinkers like John Locke and Thomas Paine put forth the idea that all individuals inherently possess certain rights, such as the right to life, liberty, and property, simply by virtue of their humanity.⁶ These natural rights were seen as fundamental and inalienable, serving as a basis for the formation of just societies and the limitation of state power. The approach also found expression in the political and legal developments of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries, from the United States *Declaration of Independence* (1776) and the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789) to the United Nation's *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948).

Despite being viewed as a historical advancement, the rights-based approach to the good life has undoubtedly displayed limitations stemming from its anthropocentrism, reductionism, and emphasis on individual needs. These shortcomings have potentially resulted in overlooking the interconnectedness between human communities and the natural world, perpetuating individualism, enabling institutionalized human and ecological exploitation through the unregulated free market mechanism, free competition, and consumerism, and disregarding concerns for environmental and intergenerational justice. Furthermore, the rights-based liberal approach has proven inadequate in addressing global crises and inequalities, primarily because it overlooks the underlying structural problems deeply entrenched in the dominant extractivist system of exploiting both productive and reproductive labor, as well as natural resources. Neutralism, as advocated by liberals, suggests that the political community should remain neutral and not intervene in how people define good life or choose to live their lives [21]. As Sypnowich argues, this stance obscures the underlying issues of inequality and can limit the scope of progressive policies aimed at addressing social injustices. Moreover, heavy reliance on legal mechanisms to protect and enforce rights falls short of capturing the complexities and nuances of (more than) human well-being.

Liberal psychology, in contrast, emphasized individual responsibility for finding the balance between reality and expectations, encapsulated by the equation: $happiness = reality - expectation$. Individuals were encouraged to adjust their expectations if they did not align with reality. Going beyond this, utilitarianists made well-being a moral criterion and the ultimate goal of life. Utilitarian hedonistic well-being gained popularity, stressing a strong social dimension

Footnote 4 (continued)

sionate action and collective care, discouraging individuals from seeking to change oppressive or unjust situations. Moreover, the perception of elitism arises, as some believe that fulfillment is attainable only by (or through the guidance of) those possessing specific virtues or intellectual capacities. Additionally, the rejection of desires and pleasures as components of fulfillment may deny essential aspects of human nature. The vagueness of valued concepts like virtue, inner human nature, and wisdom further complicates their practical application, while the lack of consideration for individual differences and cultural diversity challenges their universal applicability. These criticisms collectively raise questions about the comprehensiveness and adaptability of eudaimonic philosophies in addressing the complexities of human well-being.

⁵ Concepts of well-being and happiness are often used interchangeably in various parts of the literature. Nonetheless, most philosophers assert that while happiness (a positive psychological status) is a crucial component of well-being, it should not be equated with it [19].

⁶ According to this perspective, "A decent society is one that is committed to social justice; it ensures that all of its people and communities are able to exercise their human (social, economic and political) rights and take advantage of economic and other opportunities" [20].

that sought to maximize pleasure for the greatest number of people. However, challenges arose in defining pain and pleasure subjectively, and later attempts to quantify them through universal indexes faced serious criticisms for being impractical and excessively demanding.

In the twentieth Century, European fascism avidly pursued the concept of creating an 'idealized human,' going to the extent of even measuring mothers' milk as part of their racial obsession [22]. The practice of 'eugenics,' meaning 'good creation,' initially introduced by British social Darwinists, gained wide acceptance in the United States, promising to breed out diseases, disabilities, and undesirable traits from the human population to reduce suffering. President Truman's inaugural address in 1949 signaled the beginning of the developmentalism era, which sought to counter communism by prioritizing assistance to underdeveloped countries in elevating their standards of living. In the post-colonial, post-World War II era, the internationalization of the so-called Western way of living aimed to homogenize the world. President Johnson, who initiated the Vietnam War in 1965, described the 'great society' as "a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods" [23]. However, the standards of such a society were predefined based on anthropocentric values rooted in a growth-centric mode of progress.

Despite the presence of ongoing disputes and diverse perspectives, many of the competing Western approaches, whether orthodox or heterodox, share common underlying assumptions and are predominantly based on dominant rationalist Western/Eurocentric viewpoints. Erich Fromm, a prominent figure in critical political psychology, argues that the concept of Utopia—a vision of a significantly improved future achieved through humanistic planning—is predominantly a product of the Western mind [24].

With the decline of the 'welfare state' following the free market revolution in the 1980s, the concept of improving individual 'well-being' was embraced as the ultimate goal of the so-called 'caring corporate capitalism.' This sentiment persists today, with 'social welfare' increasingly viewed as a burden too heavy for the state to bear alone, especially in an era of reduced taxes for the wealthy. In a clever twist, a new image of 'wellbeing' has emerged, placing the responsibility for an individual's wellbeing solely on the individual while fostering a newfound belief in the magic of the market and capital [25, 26]. This independent consumer model of well-being further diminishes the state's role to that of a mere provider of institutional support for the so-called self-regulated market's mission to maximize well-being for all. Both the liberal and conservative political forces in the West show considerable interest in this neoliberal approach.

Neoliberalism promoted the belief that passive submission to the market's workings would lead everyone to the promised land of capitalism, an illusionary utopianism that has turned into a nightmare for the majority of the planet's inhabitants, human and non-human alike [27–30]. Neoliberalism instilled the idea that individuals are solely responsible for their well-being, while the burgeoning well-being industry flooded us with gadgets and self-help guides, replacing political awareness with mental numbness and equating political apathy with happiness [31].

Interestingly, the eruption of the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2008 did not delegitimize the neoliberal well-being discourse among the ruling state and financial elites and institutions. While economics has traditionally focused on managing scarce resources, post-GFC liberal revisionists are now shifting towards embracing quality of life as the ultimate objective, claiming that "the goal of economics is to enhance our well-being" [32]. This shift allows the well-being discourse to incorporate elements of the eudaemonic tradition, such as advocating shared suffering for the communal good. By presenting well-being as more than mere happiness, but as something that requires sacrifice and pain for self-flourishing and the greater pleasure of the majority, economic austerity measures can be morally justified.

However, as people become increasingly detached from state protection under austerity regimes, they become more reliant on non-state forces to pursue happiness. This includes turning to positive psychologists, the fitness industry, alternative medicine, and the debt industry, all of which encourage some sort of eudaemonic approaches to building self-resilience in times of economic stagnation and reduced state safety nets [33]. Moreover, this depoliticization of personal well-being and health conveniently serves the interests of the ruling classes and policymakers, as it shifts both the blame and pressure onto individuals for their supposed 'bad choices.' In the global North, especially in the virtual world, Stoicism and its particular eudaemonic perspective on 'good life' has recently attained significant attention among the youth [34]. The eudaimonic approach to the good life, with its emphasis on individual self-improvement and detachment, could have adverse political implications in the face of current global injustices, socio-ecological insecurities, and the rise of plutocracy. By prioritizing personal well-being and self-mastery, these philosophies divert attention from collective concerns and social justice issues that demand urgent action. This focus on individual fulfillment can perpetuate a culture of self-centeredness, potentially undermining efforts to address systemic injustices and promote solidarity among communities. The pursuit of virtue and self-control, while valuable, could inadvertently lead to a depoliticized citizenry, disengaged from challenging exploitative systems that perpetuate global inequalities.

Given the current global challenges, such as socio-ecological insecurities and the concentration of wealth and power, a philosophical approach that prioritizes individual well-being and detachment without addressing systemic issues may be ill-suited to tackle these complex problems. The rise of plutocracy and the perpetuation of global injustices demand more comprehensive and politically engaged approaches that place collective well-being, social justice, and ecological health above narrow individualistic pursuits.

However, in response to the commodification of well-being, societies have exhibited agency by actively engaging in efforts to reclaim the commons, the state, and public spaces as crucial arenas for defining and shaping the 'good life.' Progressive movements have played a leading role in sparking this paradigm shift, prompting critical reflections and re-evaluation of conventional perspectives on well-being. These endeavors have increasingly encouraged individuals and communities to question and challenge the prevailing notions that have been influenced by market-driven ideologies.

Centering social progress solely on GDP represents a perspective primarily confined to a powerful yet exclusive group of intellectual and political elites. At present, a growing segment of the elite, comprising more radical fractions of the center-left reformist politicians and policy advisors, national and transnational civil society organizations in Western contexts, well-resourced community organizations, and progressive academic think tanks, has contributed to what is known as the 'beyond-GDP' or 'post-economist' movement. While these actors may not wholly align with the establishment's neoliberal, neo-colonial, and anti-democratic values, their endeavors to bring about structural change are constrained by their failure to critically interrogate the underlying system responsible for the ongoing crises and the deteriorating state of planetary life—that is, capitalism. Consequently, their reformist agenda appears paradoxical, as it leaves the foundation of capitalist rule unchallenged.

The so-called progressive well-being discourses merely assess how closely the real capitalist society adheres to the principles of their idealized humane or progressive capitalism [35]. These reformist discourses of well-being are influenced by several legacies of the capitalist well-being mindset and are aligned with the modern myth of progress as defined within the Western modernist framework. Their reliance on quantification often leads to obscured insights, as they tend to practically assess '*well-having*,' rather than authentic '*well-being*,' through the measurement of the quantity of goods and services available or consumed. While they may incorporate notions of social equality into their analyses, it is often only a precondition for pursuing '*sustainable growth*,' thereby *ultimately* prioritizing economic interests over social and environmental well-being [36].

Moreover, their narrow perception of ecological sustainability primarily caters to the concerns of economically dominant factions, neglecting the broader implications for the environment and marginalized communities. By reducing the well-being of communities to a mere statistical sum of individuals' needs and resources, these discourses overlook the intricacies of collective well-being, interdependence, and diverse lived experiences within communities. Inadvertently, they perpetuate the colonial mentality of standardization, classification, and ranking, reinforcing existing power imbalances and marginalization.

These discourses may consider individuals' 'capabilities' to flourish, but only within the confines of a moderately regulated capitalist market [37–39].⁷ People's satisfaction is often regarded as an indicator of progress, reinforcing acceptance of the status quo. Engagement in alternative forms of politics, outside or against the realm of liberal/social democracy, is not accounted for, neglecting important aspects of citizen agency and participatory democracy. Furthermore, most of these approaches tend to disregard anything that cannot be easily quantified or assessed within a standardized framework, such as the substantial amount of care work performed by women within their households. This exclusion reflects a limited understanding of well-being and fails to acknowledge the importance of care labor in sustaining communities and societies.

In the evolving landscape of contemporary times, the exploration of the 'good life' has taken on new dimensions in the face of escalating global socio-ecological challenges. Emerging questions compel us to re-evaluate whether the

⁷ This paper's approach to quality of life critically diverges from the capabilities framework advocated by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, as discussed in works like [40]. While acknowledging the framework's contribution to understanding individual capacities within a capitalist market context, the well-living paradigm posits a more radical critique. This critique extends to the framework's tendency to overlook forms of political engagement beyond liberal/social democracy and its inadequate consideration of non-quantifiable aspects of well-being, such as the substantial care work predominantly undertaken by women in household settings. These aspects are crucial for a comprehensive understanding of well-being, as they encompass citizen agency, participatory democracy, and the recognition of care labor's role in sustaining communities. For a critical perspective that aligns more closely with this approach, Paul James's critique [41] provides an alternative framework that focuses on a coherent development of categories and their interrelations. It is important to note, however, that a deep theoretical criticism of the capabilities approach and a detailed discussion of parallels and differences with Paul James's proposals are beyond the scope of this paper. The well-living paradigm originates from a distinct perspective grounded in the commonist view, and this paper focuses on elaborating this perspective and its implications for understanding and achieving quality of life.

concept of the 'good life' should be limited solely to human experiences, overlooking the existence and significance of non-human living beings that exist beyond the boundaries of human consciousness. Is it possible to expand the notion of the 'good life' to encompass the well-being and flourishing of more-than-human beings, recognizing their intrinsic interconnectedness within the intricate web of life? These profound inquiries prompt a re-examination of our ethical and philosophical foundations as we seek to navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world.

Additionally, the issue of communal solidarity and conviviality comes into focus [42–44]. Does the 'good life' entail fostering a sense of shared purpose and collective well-being, where social relationships are characterized by mutual support and cooperation? Should the idea of the 'good life' encompass not only individual fulfillment but also the health and thriving of communities and societies as a whole? What if the pursuit of individual dimensions of 'the good life' contrasts and potentially contradicts collective ones? This scenario is particularly evident in liberal capitalist societies that emphasize atomistic approaches to well-being and in communitarian political systems where the interests of the community as defined by authorities undermine individual aspirations.

These complex questions challenge us to reconsider and broaden our perspectives on the 'good life' beyond conventional anthropocentric frameworks. In doing so, we confront the ethical and philosophical dimensions of our relationship with the larger ecological community and contemplate the principles that guide our collective pursuit of a more meaningful and inclusive existence. Contemplating the redefinition of the 'good life' leads us to revisit the historical perspectives of Indigenous societies, where the inclusion of non-human living beings and even non-living elements was intrinsic and taken for granted. These societies recognized the interconnectedness of all life forms and the profound interdependence between humans and their natural environment.

However, as modern capitalism and colonialism gained momentum, compartmentalization became prevalent, leading to the emergence of dualistic notions such as nature versus culture, ecology versus economy, and society versus nature [45]. This fragmentation of the 'life-domain'⁸ has had profound consequences, contributing to what Marxian theorists refer to as "metabolic rift" or "metabolic shift" where the harmonious relationship between humans and nature is disrupted or deeply transformed, leading to ecological imbalances and detrimental impacts on the well-being of both humans and the environment [48, 49].

Against this backdrop, reimagining our relationship with the rest of nature assumes paramount importance in the endeavor to redefine the 'good life.' It necessitates a profound reintegration of human societies with the larger ecological community, acknowledging that our well-being is deeply intertwined with the well-being of the entire natural world. By (re)embracing a more holistic understanding of the 'good life,' we engage in a profound transformation that not only benefits human society but also fosters ecological harmony and recognizes the intrinsic value of all living beings and non-living elements.

In our pursuit of a redefined 'good life,' we must grapple with the legacy of 'compartmentalization' and dualisms, and endeavor to bridge the gaps between economy, ecology, culture, and politics [45]. This calls for a paradigm shift that recognizes the interconnectedness of all life forms and envisions a meaningfully inclusive and organic coexistence between humans and the rest of nature. By embracing this *decompartmentalizing* vision or what I have called 'commonist tendency' [50, 51]—i.e., an overarching mindset that goes beyond dividing life into estranged categories—we have the potential to nurture a world where the well-being of all beings, human and non-human alike, is upheld and upgraded.⁹ This vision is an overarching mindset that goes beyond dividing life into estranged categories like economy, ecology, politics, and society.

⁸ See Hosseini [46] and Hosseini and Gills [47] for the definition of 'life-domain.'

⁹ Elsewhere [51], I have defined 'compartmentality' as "a cognitive and practical state characterized by the tendency to compartmentalize the deeply entangled dimensions of "life-domain," typically into the ecological, political, economic, and social spheres, without adequately recognizing their interconnectedness and interdependencies. It arises from a reductionist mindset that separates and isolates these aspects, potentially hindering a comprehensive understanding of their complex relationships". In contrast, I have introduced [50] the 'commonist tendency' which according to him is "a meta-ideological inclination shared among actors within the pluriverse of progressive transformative forces. This tendency transcends the compartmentalization of more-than-human life into distinct categories such as the economic, ecological, political, and social spheres. Instead, it emphasizes the radical interdependence and interconnectedness of these domains, aiming to translate this decompartmentalized understanding into synergistic practical priorities in the process of (re)commonizing (more than) human life."

3 From analytical scrutiny to radical re-imagination

In light of the paradoxes and shortcomings of mainstream and reformist well-being discourses, as discussed earlier, and taking inspiration from various historical and current emancipatory movements in the global South and global North, that envision post-capitalist futures, I present the alternative notion of ‘well-living’ in this section.¹⁰ ‘Well-living’ presents a transformative normative paradigm that goes beyond mere discourse and dialogue, extending to analysis and imagination. It envisions novel social structures, critiques the existing status quo, and represents a profound shift in our perception of ‘quality of life,’ transcending the inherent contradictions of the capitalist system. It invites us to develop a holistic and harmonious approach to living that is not confined by the limitations of traditional well-being paradigms.

Throughout history, various global grassroots movements, along with Indigenous cultures, have centered their world-views on embodying the essence of a ‘good life.’ Their perception of ‘good life’ is grounded in their ontological understanding of life itself, often diverging from Eurocentric perspectives. Scholars of comparative interfaith and meta-faith studies, such as Raimon Pannikar, highlight the interrelation and symbolic entwinement of these ontologies with each other, our world, and an ultimate divine reality. This interconnectedness emphasizes a profound understanding of reality, where every aspect is inextricably linked to others, forming a harmonious and dynamic whole. Such perspectives inspire an integrated view of life, where the good life is perceived as partaking in this interconnected tapestry of existence. Crucially, understanding and embracing these diverse global insights is key to transcending Eurocentric epistemologies and enriching the new paradigm [55, 56].¹¹

According to such ontologies, ‘reality’ is fundamentally harmonious, neither a monolithic unity nor a sheer diversity. Instead, it is a dynamic, interconnected web where each aspect is intrinsically linked to all others.¹² This organic unity and interdependence create a symbiotic relationship, where every part of the whole participates in or reflects the entirety. Moreover, reality is seen as symbolic, signifying and actively engaging with something beyond its immediate existence [see 61]. *Indeed, the principles of interconnectedness and harmony found in various ontological understandings are observable in ecological commons. Life itself can be perceived as a Commons. Embracing a ‘good life’ within this framework involves engaging in a functional way of commoning, where individuals and communities actively participate in the co-creation and sustenance of well-being for all beings* [see 47, 62].

In recent decades, there has been a discernible increase in interest in alternative perspectives on the good life, coinciding with a departure from the analytical approach that primarily focused on uncovering and exploiting the structural contradictions of capitalism [63, 64]. This shift in focus has attracted a diverse array of individuals and groups, each challenging the prevalent consumerist and commodifying culture. Among them are proponents of post-growth reform, advocating for more sustainable and equitable economic systems. Moreover, there has been a surge of more radical movements, their ideologies often intersecting significantly. Indigenous groups, liberation theologians, convivialists,

¹⁰ In the early 2000s, a pertinent exemplar emerged in the context of post-neoliberal Latin America, specifically in Ecuador and Bolivia, wherein Indigenous movements, driven by their pre-capitalist living epistemes and post/colonial experiences, introduced the concept of “*buen vivir*,” “*sumak kawsay*,” or “*suma qamaña*”—which translates to “living well together.” These movements grappled with the practical implementation of this notion through concrete government policies and legislative reforms, notwithstanding the inherent tensions within the discourse and the complexities that ensued in the political arena. At its core, the concept is grounded in the belief that nature, community, and individuals share a profound metaphysical or spiritual dimension. Throughout this paper and its preceding ones, I have introduced and developed the term ‘well-living,’ drawing inspiration from the notion of “living well together” that originated from this movement [52–54]. Indeed, as expounded in this paper, *while the idea of ‘well-living’ draws inspiration from the notion of “living well together,” it evolves into a broader and more comprehensive framework that encompasses stronger and wider transformative agenda.*

¹¹ In re-imagining good life, it is crucial to engage in trans-civilizational dialogues that transcend Eurocentric epistemologies. Traditions such as Advaita from India and Ubuntu from Africa offer profound insights into a more inclusive and diverse conceptualization of well-living. Advaita, emphasizing non-dualism, aligns with the well-living paradigm, proposed in this paper, by advocating a holistic understanding of life, where individual and collective consciousness are seen as interconnected. Ubuntu, with its core idea of “I am because we are,” resonates with ‘well-living’ by promoting community-centric values of mutual respect and compassion. Islamic and Middle Eastern traditions enrich the well-living paradigm with concepts such as *Tawhid*, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all creation, *Ummah*, advocating for a global community bound by solidarity, *Ihsan*, reflecting excellence and balance in life, and *Adl* and *Ihsaan*, underscoring the importance of justice and benevolence, all of which collectively contribute to a holistic, communal, and dynamic understanding of well-living. Furthermore, engaging with scholars like Fred Dallmayr and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, who advocate for inter-civilizational dialogues and challenge Eurocentric epistemology, can further enrich this paradigm [57–60].

¹² As Saeb Tabrizi (1592–1676), the renowned Persian poet, beautifully expressed:

“The universe’s warp and weft interwoven tight.”

“One heart made happy brings the entire world delight.”

(The word ‘universe’ is used to translate the Persian/Arabic word “*Aalam-e-Emkaan*,” which literally means “the world of contingencies”).

green localists, agro-ecologists, post-developmentalists, circular economists, and the like have emerged as prominent actors, challenging conventional paradigms.

Alongside these currents, the commons movement activists have arisen, advocating for collective ownership and management of shared resources, aiming to thwart the encroachment of privatization and enclosure [65, 66]. Their emphasis is on sustainable resource use and equitable distribution. In parallel, solidarity economies and economic democracies offer compelling alternative systems, grounded in democratic decision-making, shared ownership, and worker self-management, with the intent to dismantle hierarchical power structures and exploitative practices. Guided by their shared vision, these activists and intellectuals remain steadfast in their mission to redefine societal values and practices, striving for an all-encompassing, ecologically harmonious, and socially equitable conception of the good life.

These ontological and normative perspectives, while valuable for critiquing the status quo, *do not prioritize a critical analysis of the concrete mechanisms* through which modern, colonial, and patriarchal capitalist relations extract and exploit value from nature, community, and (productive and reproductive) labor of more-than-human beings. Instead, their criticism of the status quo is often based on the contrasts they observe between their envisioned ideals and the existing reality. While they offer important insights into the injustices within the capitalist system, their focus is not primarily on fully grasping and politically challenging the intricate workings of the value extraction and exploitation processes. Thus, an integrative approach that combines normative perspectives with anti-systemic analytical (value) theories becomes essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics of capitalism and its effects on the pursuit of a just and free good life.

To satisfy the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the concrete mechanisms through which capitalism extracts and exploits value, *anti-systemic* movements, and perspectives have long been at the forefront, delving deep into the inner workings of the capitalist system. *The well-living paradigm cannot be considered whole without embracing these anti-systemic approaches and their analytical insights regarding the contradictions and flaws of the prevailing value regimes in its conceptualization of the good life.* Without such integration, the paradigm risks becoming utopian, leaving it vulnerable to perpetuating inequalities and inconsistencies while striving to achieve its ambitions [67]. Thus, the incorporation of these analytical insights becomes imperative for a more grounded and robust vision of well-living.

Some of these radical analytical approaches include the following: (1) Marxist theories and praxes, which are based on extensive analysis of the capitalist mode of production, emphasizing the role of exploitation and surplus value extraction from labor. They highlight the inherent contradictions of capitalism and how it perpetuates inequalities and alienation [68]. (2) Eco-centric (intellectual) movements such as eco-socialism, eco-feminism, and eco-anarchism shed light on the ways capitalism commodifies nature and leads to environmental degradation. They emphasize the need to address ecological crises and advocate for self-sufficiency and regenerative practices [69, 70]. (3) Anti-colonial perspectives that examine how capitalism has historically exploited and extracted value from colonized regions, leading to ongoing global inequalities. They bring attention to the impact of imperialism and colonial legacies on contemporary socio-economic relations [71]. (4) Feminist and intersectional political economies that analyze the gendered dimensions of value extraction within capitalism. They highlight how unpaid domestic labor and care work are undervalued and explore the intersections of gender, race, and class in capitalist economies [72, 73]. (5) The degrowth movement that challenges the prevailing paradigm of perpetual economic growth and criticize the contradictions of sustainable development within a consumption-driven capitalist system [6, 7, 74]. For deeper insights into these anti-systemic movements and ideologies, refer to [75–82].¹³

An integrative approach that combines both the anti-systemic and utopian-normative approaches to the good life is essential. Such an approach to theorizing the nature and dynamics of capital and its associated social formations, seen as the most prominent cause of ongoing global shifts and uncertainties, has significant implications for understanding current socio-ecological changes and challenges as well as effective responses. In the subsequent section, I draw upon my knowledge of these movements, acquired through over a decade of dedicated reading, writing, and teaching about post-capitalist alternatives. Through this lens, I aim to outline the fundamental principles of the well-living paradigm.

¹³ These sources and many more have played a crucial role in shaping the ideas and principles of well-living paradigm presented in the rest of the article.

4 Well-living under the commonist state of being

The well-living paradigm introduces a novel perception of 'good life' that centers on the belief that life itself is a commons of utmost value. In this view, the 'true value' of every activity is evaluated based on its positive impact on the sustainable regeneration of organized planetary life, encompassing all living beings, human and non-human alike. This 'lookout' is termed the 'commonist state of being' by this author here and elsewhere.¹⁴ I thus wish to emphasize from the outset that the concept of 'well-living' must not be concretized into yet another rigid or fixed notion, even in its dissenting nature. It is crucial that 'well-living' does not become another term imposing a singular vision of the 'good life' as a universal standard, regardless of its progressive intentions. Rather, it aims to foster a diverse array of perspectives and ideas to coexist and thrive, creating a space for a multitude of possibilities to emerge and be embraced.

It is essential to recognize that this flexibility and embrace of diversity should not be misconstrued as an endorsement of relativism. 'Well-living' is firmly rooted in the acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the intrinsic value of the Earth and its beings. While it encourages multiple viewpoints, it does not imply an uncritical acceptance of any and all values. Instead, the 'well-living' idea holds certain foundational principles and qualities (as outlined in the rest of this article), such as ecological harmony, social justice, and the well-being of all, as non-negotiable. It serves as a guiding compass, steering us away from harmful practices and promoting collective action for the greater good. Thus, while 'well-living' allows for dynamic interpretations, it remains firmly rooted in a transformative and interconnected worldview that calls for responsible stewardship of the planet and its inhabitants.¹⁵

At the societal level, the question goes beyond merely assessing how well ecological and social conditions cater to the individual's pursuit of personal pleasure, avoidance of pain, or even the fulfillment of their true selves. 'Well-living' as a state of being/becoming goes beyond being a mere sum or average of consumerist individuals' satisfaction with their material possessions, as this approach neglects the reality of those who are underprivileged and may be living in challenging circumstances. The 'well-living' perspective calls for a more inclusive and comprehensive evaluation of societal quality of life, embracing diversity in perspectives and experiences while seeking to address the root causes of social and ecological crises. By challenging the dominant capitalist paradigm and revisiting our relationship with nature, the idea of 'well-living' becomes a key avenue to explore transformative possibilities for a more just and regenerative world.

'Well-living,' as a concept, encourages actors to contemplate the most effective ways of achieving inner harmony within themselves, fostering harmonious relationships between individuals and their communities, and nurturing a balanced coexistence between culture and nature. However, this state of harmony cannot be attained when powerful forces of disharmony, such as patriarchal racial capitalism and plutocracy, continue to exert their influence. Consequently, 'well-living' naturally transforms into a grassroots political project, entailing the pursuit of *non-reformist reforms* in the state, civil society, communities, and economy from the ground up [83, 84]. This involves engaging in collective practices such as non-violent direct action, civil disobedience and constructing transversal alliances and community-building efforts wherever possible [85–87].

It is of utmost importance to acknowledge that 'well-living' cannot be universally applied as a rigid, one-size-fits-all blueprint across all circumstances. Rather, it demands '*contextual characterization*,' considering the *unique cultural and ecological systems that give life meaning and purpose and foster social bonds within each distinct community or constellation of communities*. 'Contextual characterization' involves recognizing and taking into account the unique values, norms, traditions, and ecological relationships that shape people's social and personal lives and social relations within each specific context.

¹⁴ For further elaboration on this concept, please refer to Hosseini and Gills [47].

¹⁵ *To safeguard against the potential for centralization in the pursuit of 'well-living,' it is essential to maintain a commitment to participatory decision-making, inclusivity, and transparency.* Embracing diverse perspectives requires the inclusion of the voices of marginalized or vulnerable groups; in fact, their inclusion is paramount to ensuring that the well-being paradigm remains just and equitable. An open and democratic process that allows for dialogue, debate, and the input of all stakeholders is crucial to prevent any concentration of power or imposition of values by a select few. Moreover, we must also acknowledge that we are not living in an already equal and free society; otherwise, there would be no need for deep transformation. To address the structural barriers to participation and empower the marginalized, a transitional stage should prioritize social justice and equity as fundamental principles. It is crucial to acknowledge historical injustices and actively work towards dismantling the systems that perpetuate inequality. This involves redistributing power and resources, providing access to education, healthcare, and essential services, and ensuring representation and inclusion of marginalized communities in decision-making processes. To avoid the seeds of centralization (and thereby authoritarianism) from growing during this transitional phase, it is essential to learn from history (of especially post-colonial societies) and be vigilant against the reproduction of oppressive structures. Decolonization, transparency, accountability, and checks and balances should be integral parts of the new institutional framework. Promoting a culture of respect for human rights, diversity, and democratic values can also serve as a safeguard against the concentration of power.

Contextual characterization, however, does not imply uncritically accepting or endorsing all existing values, norms, traditions, and ecological relationships within a community. It is not about simply adjusting ‘well-living’ to fit within the existing norms without question. Instead, it involves a *dialectical process* that critically examines these unique elements of a community’s context. Through this dialectical approach, which involves inter- and inter-communal dialogues and mutual learning, we can identify and challenge any subjugation, discrimination, or harmful practices that may be embedded in those norms and traditions. It allows for critical reflection and the possibility of reforming or transforming aspects that do not align with principles of justice, equality, and ecological regenerativity. This way, ‘well-living’ as a prefigurative praxis becomes an avenue to challenge harmful practices, promote positive change, and work towards more inclusive and just societies, while still taking into account the unique cultural and ecological context of each community. As a broad non-capitalist framework for reimagining ‘quality of life,’ ‘well-living’ should take center stage in our transformative grassroots projects. It should be at the heart of our imagination and planning for alternative modes of livelihood and sociability that transcend the constraints of carbon, capital, coloniality, corruptive politics, and compulsive growth.

Indeed, comprehending ‘well-living’ as an ongoing project and process is crucial. It transcends the idea of a final destination or a static state of being. Instead, it involves continuous engagement, evolution, and self-directed growth, encompassing aspects of dreaming, becoming, making, and remaking, as autonomously and aspiringly as possible within an ongoing journey. Well-living, a dynamic and adaptable framework rather than a fixed concept, offers a fresh perspective to envision alternative paths beyond the current detrimental status quo. It centers around *four fundamental interdependent principles (or dimensions)* (see [47], for an extensive discussion of these four principles, [82])¹⁶:

1. *Liveability (in Being and Living)*: Embracing profound harmony with the entire life-domain, recognizing our interconnectedness and interdependence with all living beings and ecosystems, and respecting planetary boundaries that must not be exceeded. Liveability draws from material and immaterial resources, components, and inputs needed to create genuine value. These sources naturally evolve through self-sustaining, restorative, and regenerative practices under shared stewardship and collective decision-making within socio-ecological networks of communal life.
2. *Creativity (in Becoming and Begetting)*: Cultivating sufficiency through collective and community-oriented methods of fulfilling our needs and the needs of others, fostering a culture of commoning and cooperation. This principle embraces the boundless creative capacities of not just humans but also the broader ecosystem, conscientiously striving to achieve, maintain, and sustain self-fulfilling levels of collective living in harmonious coexistence with the entire life-domain.
3. *Conviviality (in Liaising and Learning)*: Fostering solidarity, equity, and peaceful coexistence while embracing diversity and promoting the sharing of experiences and knowledge among individuals and communities. This principle recognizes the profound interdependence among not just human populations but also the rich diversity of their ways of living and caring, as well as their communal solidarity that extends to non-human entities. Conviviality embodies the art of “living well together” (well-living, *buen vivir*) through, and despite, the inevitable frictions, tensions, disputes, and diversities that arise.
4. *Alterity (in Willing and Enabling)*: Empowering both the Self and the Other to author their own destinies, recognizing and respecting individual and collective agency and autonomy. This principle involves the implementation of organized prefigurative practices and subjectivities (imaginative, symbolic, and proactivist) that are crucial for transcending the prevailing hierarchical structures. Through these practices, rightful ideals, moralities, dreams, and more-than-human liberation can be actualized, enabling a purposeful ‘well-living’ and the pursuit of a ‘free life.’

Within this multidimensional perspective, well-living, *as a state of being*, encompasses four essential components:

¹⁶ The selection of *Creativity*, *Liveability*, *Conviviality*, and *Alterity* as foundational principles for the well-living paradigm is deeply rooted in the “commonist value theory,” as detailed in my prior work *Capital Redefined* [47]. This theory adapts Aristotle’s doctrine of four causes to understand the sources and manifestations of value in societal contexts. *Liveability* corresponds to the ‘material cause,’ underscoring the tangible and ecological aspects essential for sustainable and harmonious living. *Creativity*, linked to the ‘formal cause,’ revolves around human and ecological capacities for innovation and sufficiency. *Conviviality*, associated with the ‘efficient cause,’ emphasizes interaction and cooperation, fostering solidarity and equity. *Alterity*, aligning with the ‘final cause,’ focuses on empowering individuals and communities to author their own destinies and transcend existing structural limitations. This theoretical grounding ensures that these principles are not arbitrary but are part of a comprehensive framework aimed at redefining societal well-being. Delving into the detailed theoretical underpinnings of these principles as presented in *Capital Redefined* [47] is beyond the scope of this paper.

1. *Objective*: The objective dimension of 'well-living' focuses on the physical and material aspects of well-being. It encompasses various elements such as psycho-biological health, ensuring individuals' mental and physical health. Additionally, it addresses nutritional well-being, emphasizing access to adequate and nourishing food to support a healthy lifestyle. This dimension also considers access to public welfare provisions and opportunities aimed at addressing social insecurities, ensuring that basic needs are met, and essential services are available to all members of society. It aims to tackle issues related to crime, violence, and corruption, promoting a safe and secure living environment. Furthermore, the objective dimension considers the health of the geo-ecological ecosystems, acknowledging the crucial interdependence between human well-being and the health of the natural world. It underscores the importance of sustainable environmental practices and the preservation of ecosystems for the common good of both humans and the planet.
2. *Subjective*: The subjective dimension of 'well-living' revolves around the individual's subjective perceptions and cognitive aspects of existence. It delves into the attitudes towards oneself, encompassing a self-perceived sense of balance and vitality. This dimension also addresses matters of spiritual well-being, acknowledging the importance of one's connection to their inner self and higher purpose. Additionally, it emphasizes the development of a keen sense of identity, recognizing the significance of self-awareness and self-understanding in the pursuit of a fulfilling life.
3. *Inter-subjective*: The inter-subjective component of 'well-living' centers on the relational and socio-psychological dimensions, emphasizing the interconnectedness of individuals within the broader social fabric. This dimension highlights the importance of societal cohesion and the cultivation of social capital, fostering inclusive attitudes toward others, and promoting moral well-being. At its core, the inter-subjective aspect encourages the development of trust and confidence in fellow community members, fostering an environment of mutual support and cooperation that contributes to the overall well-being of the collective.
4. *Trans-subjective*: The trans-subjective component pertains to the relationships and interactions between individuals and society, encompassing various factors that shape the interplay between them. It includes considerations such as work-life balance, the quality of relationships with the natural world and non-human entities, the level of trust placed in social institutions, and the harmonious integration of the private and public spheres of life. Within this dimension, 'well-living' aims to foster a balanced and symbiotic relationship between individuals and the broader social fabric, recognizing the significance of sustainable coexistence and harmonious cohabitation with the larger ecological community.¹⁷

This comprehensive framework of well-living provides an integrative 'commonist approach' to understanding and evaluating the quality of life from the individual to societal levels, encompassing the diverse facets of human existence and the environment in which we live. The well-living approach to quality of life can be referred to as 'commonist' due to its alignment with the principles and qualities commonly associated with commons and commoning. The recognition of the objective interdependence between human well-being and the health of ecosystems reflects the commonist ethos of responsible and sustainable resource management for the benefit of both humans and the environment. Similar to how commoning empowers individuals to actively participate in decision-making and shaping their ecosystems, the subjective dimension acknowledges the significance of self-awareness, spirituality, and a sense of identity in shaping one's well-being. Just as in social commons where shared responsibility fosters community bonds and cooperation, the inter-subjective dimension underscores the importance of inclusive attitudes, trust, and mutual support among individuals for the overall well-being of the collective. And finally, similar to how socio-ecological commons emphasize sustainable coexistence with the natural world, this dimension underscores the harmonious integration of private and public life, work-life balance, and harmonious relationships with non-human entities. Thus, the realization of the well-living paradigm necessitates a fundamental restructuring and institutionalization of societal relationships and institutions based on the principles of how commons function (see Sect. 5).

Well-living also operates at multiple levels, expanding across seven different domains:

1. *Personal-Household level*
2. *Micro-communal*: Local, neighborhood, and workplace community level
3. *Meso-communal*: Town/city level (if larger than the local community)

¹⁷ In this context, one may refer to the concept of "transpositional subject-objectivity," as articulated by Ananta Kumar Giri in his work *Social Healing* [88], as an insightful perspective. Giri's approach invites a deeper exploration of the dynamic interplay between the self and the other, emphasizing the fluidity of roles and perspectives that constitute the social fabric.

4. *Macro-communal*: Provincial/state/regional level
5. *National-societal level*
6. *International-societal level*
7. *Identity- or ideology-based communities or communal networks*: Ethnic, religious, ethno-religious, cultural, and ideological communities.

The nine inter-dependent qualities of well-living can be identified as follows:

1. *Harmonious coexistence*: Central to the concept of 'well-living' is the pursuit of harmony and holism in all aspects of existence. This encompasses fostering a sense of harmony within oneself, seeking balance and integration between various dimensions of one's life. It extends to cultivating harmonious relationships within the family, the community (from local to global), and with the rest of nature, recognizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life forms. An integral, holistic, and balanced approach is emphasized, rejecting rigid dualistic frameworks, and embracing a more inclusive and interconnected worldview. This entails moving away from reified or reductionist perspectives that dichotomize communal vs. individual interests, material vs. spiritual considerations, wealth vs. health priorities, and economy vs. ecology concerns. Moreover, 'well-living' encourages reconciling the rational and emotional aspects of human experience, recognizing their complementary roles in shaping a fulfilling life. It advocates for recognizing both rights and responsibilities, understanding that individual interests are intertwined with collective interests. Similarly, it promotes a nuanced approach to work and life, transcending simplistic dichotomies, and striving for a more harmonious integration of these dimensions.
2. *Constructive habituality*: An integral aspect of 'well-living' involves cultivating constructive habits both at the personal and collective levels. This entails actively seeking a life that is free from addictive, self-destructive, undignified, and socio-ecologically unsustainable behaviors. It calls for a conscious effort to break away from harmful patterns and embrace practices that contribute positively to the well-being of oneself, others, and the broader planetary community. The emphasis lies on 'institutionalizing' behaviors that promote societal welfare and enhance the health of communities and the Earth as a shared commons. This entails going beyond individual changes and integrating these constructive habits into the fabric of social and cultural norms. It involves creating supportive environments and structures that encourage and reinforce positive behaviors, empowering individuals to lead more fulfilling lives that are in harmony with the needs of the collective and the planet.¹⁸
3. *Aspirational foresight and purposefulness*: Central to the 'well-living' paradigm this quality involves finding and creating meaning in life while maintaining a balance between short-term and long-term perspectives. This quality encourages individuals and collectives to have a sense of direction and purpose, guiding their actions and decisions toward a more fulfilling and purposeful existence. Being aspirational in this context means being creative, originative, proactive, and future-oriented.
4. *Social integrity and agency*: In the 'well-living' paradigm, social integrity and agency play a crucial role in fostering a thriving and inclusive social environment. Being agential means having the capacity and willingness to take active steps towards creating and sustaining a society that upholds individual and collective integrity and dignity in moral actions. This quality of well-living emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility and active participation in contributing to the common good of the community. Through social agency, individuals are empowered to challenge social injustices and work towards a more equitable and compassionate society. It is about recognizing one's ability to effect positive change and taking concrete actions to promote social harmony, equality, and justice.
5. *Conviviality and solidarity*: Within the framework of 'well-living,' conviviality and solidarity play vital roles in shaping a harmonious and compassionate society. Conviviality entails embracing the Other, whether human or non-human, as an essential part of the Self, fostering a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence. This quality of well-living emphasizes the importance of cultivating a deep sense of solidarity, inclusivity, respect, and appreciation for diversity. It acknowledges that true prosperity cannot be achieved at the expense of others' suffering or the degradation of

¹⁸ The concept of 'constructive habituality' can be related to Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on "experiments with truth," where personal and societal transformation is achieved through a continuous process of experimentation and self-improvement [89]. Moreover, Roberto M. Unger's notion of "experimentality," as discussed in *False Necessity* [90], advocates for a societal framework that encourages innovation and experimentation. Unger suggests that societies should be structured in a way that allows for continuous reformation and adaptation, resonating with the well-living paradigm's emphasis on institutionalizing behaviors that promote societal welfare, equity, and ecological sustainability.

the natural environment. Instead, conviviality encourages a shared sense of community and coexistence, where the dignity and worth of all beings are upheld.

6. *Valuing life as commons*: Embracing life as a 'commons of highest value' stands at the core of the well-living paradigm, both in theory and practice. This quality highlights the imperative of recognizing and appreciating the intrinsic worth and interconnectedness of all living beings and the natural world, transcending the exploitative and extractive mentality prevalent in capitalist systems. Life is revered as a shared heritage, not subject to confiscation or relentless exploitation. It emphasizes the importance of nurturing a profound sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the planet and its diverse inhabitants. This shift in perspective challenges the prevailing mindset that views nature and life as mere resources to be extracted and consumed without regard for the consequences. By valuing life as commons, social actors are called upon to adopt practices that prioritize sustainability, regeneration, and equity.
7. *Authenticity and un-alienation*: Authenticity and un-alienation lie at the core of the well-living paradigm, urging individuals and communities to embrace an honest, self-sustaining, and unalienating manner of existence. Authenticity entails staying true to one's inner values, aspirations, and identity, free from the pressures of external influences that may lead to self-alienation. Un-alienation, inspired by a profound reconnection with nature and the broader ecosystem, also extends to liberation from alienation as understood in the Marxian tradition. It encourages us to acknowledge the deep interdependence between human existence and the vast web of life to bridge the gap that has emerged due to modernity's estrangement from nature and the capitalist mode of production. In this sense, un-alienation is more than an individualistic pursuit of self-discovery; it also involves dismantling oppressive structures that perpetuate alienation within society. This includes challenging the exploitative mechanisms of capitalism, which alienate workers from the products of their labor and foster disconnection between human beings themselves and the natural world.
8. *Liberation and autonomy*: Another central quality of well-living encompasses the aspiration for personal and collective freedom. Individuals and communities have the right and opportunity to strive to break free from various forms of subjugation, whether they be economic, social, or political, in order to cultivate a sense of self-determination and empowerment. Liberation involves challenging and dismantling power structures that perpetuate inequality, marginalization, and ecological instability, aiming for a more just and equitable society. Individuals would be able to resist oppressive systems and transform their lives and communities positively. This pursuit encompasses a range of efforts, from advocating for the rights of marginalized groups to challenging the exploitative nature of capitalist systems. The goal is to enhance personal and social resilience, enabling individuals and communities to withstand challenges and resist adversities while actively working towards a more inclusive and balanced future. In the context of the well-living paradigm, liberation is not just an individual endeavor; it also involves collective action and solidarity.
9. *Self-consciousness and critical open-mindedness*: In the pursuit of well-living, self-consciousness, and critical open-mindedness play a crucial role in fostering an informed and responsible approach to socio-ecological challenges. Individuals and communities would be able to cultivate a deep understanding of the complex issues affecting their lives and the broader world. By critically evaluating the socio-historical roots of these challenges, they can gain insights into the systemic factors contributing to current dilemmas. An essential aspect of self-consciousness within the well-living paradigm is the ability to discern factual information from misinformation and propaganda. Individuals and communities are empowered to seek out independent and authentic sources of information, enabling them to make informed decisions and participate in constructive dialogues based on evidence and data. Critical open-mindedness is intertwined with self-consciousness, as it entails approaching issues with the least bias possible. Developing awareness of past and present actions and decisions is an integral part of self-consciousness and 'critical open-mindedness'.¹⁹ This level of open-mindedness necessitates the establishment of social and political structures that dismantle oppressive hierarchies and diminish the sway of power-driven influences.

In the well-living paradigm, the four foundational principles of *Liveability*, *Creativity*, *Conviviality*, and *Alterity* serve as the (logical and ontological) bedrock from which the above nine interdependent qualities naturally emerge.

¹⁹ Critical open-mindedness, as defined by this author, Hosseini [91] and Hosseini and Saha [92], encompasses various attributes of well-living, including social inclusivity, tolerance of diverse identities, critical evaluation of outgroup perceptions, mindfulness of socio-ecological challenges, sensitivity to economic injustice, advocacy for a just society, commitment to democratic rights, and prioritizing people's interests over powerful institutions.

Liveability, emphasizing harmony within and between life domains, interdependence, and respect for planetary boundaries, naturally gives rise to qualities such as *Harmonious coexistence*. These qualities encapsulate a harmonious and balanced approach to life, advocating for peace within oneself and with nature, and a holistic view that integrates various aspects of life. Additionally, *Valuing Life as Commons* extends from *Liveability's* focus on shared stewardship, viewing life as a precious common source of value to be nurtured collectively.

Creativity, with its emphasis on fulfilling needs through collective methods and fostering a culture of cooperation, leads to qualities like *Constructive Habituality*. These habits embody the creative and cooperative approaches to establishing healthy and sustainable life practices. Furthermore, *Aspirational foresight and purposefulness* are intrinsically linked to *Creativity*, involving finding and creating meaning in life in a proactive and future-oriented manner. *Authenticity* and *Un-alienation*, reflecting the creative, self-fulfilling aspects of life, encourage genuine self-expression and liberation from alienating societal forces.

Conviviality, highlighting solidarity, equity, and peaceful coexistence, naturally progresses to qualities such as *Conviviality* (as quality) and *Solidarity*. These qualities are born from the principle's focus on "living well together," fostering a sense of interconnectedness and mutual support. Building on this, *Social Integrity* and *Agency* emerge as critical aspects, involving active participation in creating a just and equitable society, with an emphasis on integrity and individual/collective agency.

Lastly, *Alterity*, which is about empowering both the Self and the Other to author their own destinies, logically leads to qualities like *Liberation* and *Autonomy*. These qualities are centered on breaking free from various forms of subjugation, embodying *Alterity's* emphasis on self-determination and empowerment. Moreover, *Self-consciousness* and *Critical Open-mindedness*, stemming from *Alterity's* focus on proactive and imaginative subjectivities, involve a heightened awareness and a critically open-minded approach to socio-ecological challenges.

In summary, the well-living paradigm's nine qualities are a direct and logical extension of its four principles. Each quality reflects the core attributes of its respective principle, together forming a comprehensive framework that encapsulates the diverse aspects of well-living. To embody these qualities (which can extend beyond nine), a radical transformation of institutions towards ecological consciousness, social justice, and genuine well-being is required. These qualities provide a framework for evaluation, normative assessment, and goal-setting that is essential for guiding post-capitalist transformations. The next section briefly addresses the required institutional shifts and innovations.

5 Characteristics of institutions in the well-living paradigm

The central objective of the institutional and legislative-policy shift under the well-living paradigm should be to reconcile humanity with the rest of nature and foster a collective sense of responsibility for the flourishing of all life on Earth. Thus, the characteristics of institutions in a society that embraces well-living can be outlined as follows:

1. **Economic institutions:** The economy is organized around principles of solidarity, cooperation, care, and justice. Central to the commonist principle of 'economic justice' is the notion of non-exploitation, meaning from each according to their capacities, to each according to their basic needs as humans, plus remunerations according to their contributions to the well-living of their more-than-human communities, taking into account their mental and physical capabilities. To ensure the realization of these principles, commons-based ownership models prevail, where essential resources and means of production are collectively owned and managed for the benefit of all. Solidarity economy practices, such as worker cooperatives and community-led initiatives, flourish. The focus shifts from endless growth to meeting genuine needs, promoting degrowth and resource regeneration. Decision-making in production processes should be participatory, involving workers, communities, and stakeholders in shaping the goals and practices of production.

The economic system should prioritize ethical and responsible value chains that uphold labor rights, environmental standards, and social justice principles. Wherever possible, production should be decentralized and localized, promoting community-based enterprises and reducing the carbon footprint associated with long-distance transportation of goods. Indigenous and traditional knowledge about sustainable production and resource management should be respected and integrated into the economic system. All production processes should undergo rigorous ecological impact assessments to evaluate their environmental consequences. Technological advancements should be directed toward serving the common good and ecological well-being. Exchange mechanisms should be designed to prioritize the commons rather than profit maximization. This could involve the development of alternative exchange

systems, such as time banks, local currencies, or sharing platforms, that promote the sharing and mutual utilization of resources.

Market mechanisms should be democratically regulated and guided based on ethical considerations and societal well-being rather than unrestricted competition and profit-seeking. The economic system should recognize and value multiple forms of value beyond monetary metrics. It should embrace alternative indicators of quality of life, such as social and ecological indicators, and ensure that non-market values, such as care work and ecological stewardship, are properly recognized and rewarded. The allocation of resources and distribution of value should be done through participatory processes to ensure that resources are allocated in ways that prioritize the social and ecological needs of those affected and involved. Progressive redistribution mechanisms such as progressive taxation and universal basic income (and/or services) should be adopted to ensure a fair distribution of resources and address systemic inequities. As community-led initiatives can better understand and address the specific needs of different communities, community-based welfare programs should be emphasized to foster local ownership and shared responsibility.

2. **Political institutions:** Political power is decentralized and participatory. The emphasis is on grassroots democracy, where people actively participate in shaping policies and governance through community assemblies and councils. Decision-making must be primarily based on direct democracy as far as possible, where communities and individuals have a say in shaping policies that affect them. Political structures are organized in a non-hierarchical manner, fostering cooperation and collective decision-making. Power dynamics are based on mutual respect and collaboration rather than top-down control. Local councils and assemblies play a crucial role in governance, with transparency and accountability as core principles. Political institutions prioritize ecological well-living and the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable. Direct democracy mechanisms, such as citizen assemblies, participatory budgeting, and consensus-based decision-making, are encouraged.

Robust checks and balances are in place to prevent any one group or institution from becoming too powerful. Measures are taken to ensure that political participation is inclusive and representative of the diversity of the population, including gender balance, representation of marginalized groups, and recognition of Indigenous rights. Policies and regulations are designed to protect and regenerate natural ecosystems, recognizing the intrinsic value of nature beyond its utilitarian function. Post-growth principles guide policies to move away from the endless pursuit of growth and consumption, emphasizing the need for a steady-state economy that respects ecological limits.

3. **Cultural, educational, and communicative institutions:** Education centers on ecological awareness, interdependence, and critical thinking. The curriculum integrates Indigenous knowledge and ethics of care to foster empathy and respect for all living beings. The curriculum would incorporate ecological education from an early age, fostering a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the importance of ecological balance. Emphasis would be placed on critical thinking and contextual learning, encouraging students to question dominant narratives and systems. This would involve analyzing the root causes of social and environmental issues and exploring diverse perspectives. The educational system would be designed to encourage participatory learning, involving students, teachers, and community members in decision-making processes. Cultural institutions promote diversity and traditional practices, recognizing their significance in sustainable living. Art and media promote messages of harmony, social justice, and ecological balance. The system would strive to empower students and communities, providing education for liberation from oppressive systems and structures.

Media outlets would move away from centralized ownership and control by powerful corporations. Instead, there would be an emphasis on community-based and locally-owned media outlets, allowing for diverse perspectives and empowering communities to shape their narratives. Some media outlets might be designated as media commons, collectively owned and managed by the public to ensure impartiality and independence from commercial interests. This community ownership model ensures that media serve the interests of the public rather than profit-driven motives. Likewise, publicly owned media would prioritize the public interest over profit motives and state-centric incentives. Media organizations would be governed and regulated democratically, with input from journalists, employees, and community members. They would represent a wide range of perspectives and avoid the concentration of media ownership, which can lead to monopolization and limited viewpoints.

The focus would be on supporting local and independent journalism, as it plays a crucial role in informing communities and holding power accountable. Funding and resources would be directed toward sustaining local media outlets. Media literacy education would be integrated into the educational system to empower individuals to critically evaluate media content and discern reliable sources from misinformation. Information and knowledge would be seen as common goods, and efforts would be made to promote open access and sharing of information for the benefit of society as a whole. And last but not least, media outlets would actively engage with environmental and

social issues, raising awareness, and promoting collective action for positive change. They would prioritize environmental journalism and eco-literacy, promoting accurate and informative reporting on ecological issues and their social implications.

4. **Social and communal institutions:** These institutions prioritize the qualities of well-living for both individuals and communities. Decision-making within social institutions would be decentralized and participatory. Communities would have a significant say in shaping policies and practices that directly affect their lives. Social institutions would adopt cooperative and mutual aid models, emphasizing collaboration and collective problem-solving. They would foster a culture of care and support, promoting community cohesion and interests. Taking environmental stewardship seriously, they would ensure that human activities are in harmony with nature, safeguarding ecological balance.

Access to safe and affordable housing would be guaranteed for all individuals, addressing homelessness and housing insecurity. Social institutions would support regenerative and sustainable agriculture practices and prioritize local food systems to ensure food sovereignty and reduce ecological impact. Care work within households and communities is valued and shared, reducing gender disparities. Healthcare is holistic and context-specific, promoting preventive practices and mental well-being. The justice system would prioritize restorative and transformative justice approaches, focusing on healing and reconciliation rather than punitive measures. Community centers and spaces facilitate conviviality, encouraging mutual support and functioning based on life's interconnectedness. Social solidarity networks ensure support for the vulnerable.

Faith-based institutions would play a crucial role in promoting social justice and ecological stewardship. They would develop eco-spiritual perspectives that emphasize the sacredness of nature and the interconnectedness of all life. Advocating for environmental stewardship, they would support sustainable practices, conservation efforts, and fair resource distribution. These institutions would address social justice issues, engage in climate action and advocacy, and lead by example with eco-conscious practices. Through interfaith dialogue and environmental education, they would inspire individuals to embrace eco-spiritual practices and work together for a more sustainable and just world.

Kinship and household structures would serve as the foundation for building a resilient and caring eco-community. Gender equality and non-hierarchical relationships would be encouraged, ensuring everyone's voice is heard and valued. Kinship would extend beyond biological ties to encompass chosen families and wider community networks. Sustainable and regenerative practices would be integrated into daily life, such as shared resources, renewable energy use, recycling, and waste reduction. Child-rearing would focus on ecological awareness, empathy, and critical thinking.

The importance of establishing legislative frameworks under the well-living paradigm cannot be overstated, as it presents a transformative opportunity to confront urgent contemporary challenges like ecological degradation, social injustice, and economic exploitation. Rooted in the principles outlined above, the legislation must offer a cohesive framework to build a society that embraces justice, equity, and regenerativity while centering the quality of life of all living beings and the environment. The process of new legislation establishment under the well-living paradigm is characterized by inclusivity, grassroots democracy, and ecological stewardship, i.e., a profound departure from the capitalist system's profit-driven agenda.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper—after critically examining the limitations of mainstream well-being discourses and the co-option of such ideas by the reformist establishment and its associated civil society organizations—presented the idea of 'well-living' as a dynamic and inclusive platform that encourages a radical shift in our understanding of the good life. The concept of well-living not only goes beyond the restricted emphasis on economic growth and individual contentment, but also surpasses the limitations of the *conventional well-being paradigm* characterized by *anthropocentrism, Eurocentrism, individualism, developmentalism, neo-colonialism, non-dialecticism, neutralism, apoliticality, reductionism, compartmentality, short-sightedness, and a quantitative focus*, all of which fail to engender effective collective action against injustices. In contrast, well-living embraces a broader scope, incorporating four vital dimensions (inspired by the commonist value theory): *creativity, liveability, conviviality, and alterity*. It operates at multiple levels, from the personal and communal to the national, international, and identity-based communities. Moreover, well-living is not a fixed notion but rather a continuous process of dreaming, becoming, and producing meaning autonomously and aspiringly.

By embracing well-living, we strive to overcome the dualisms and contradictions of the current capitalist system, paving the way for a more just, balanced, and diverse world. This is because the paradigm is built upon critical analyses of such contradictions [47, 68] and not just utopian thinking. Moreover, it is crucial to avoid turning well-living into another reified notion, as its strength lies in its adaptability and ability to accommodate diverse ideas and values. Instead of a universal blueprint, the well-living paradigm encourages contextually defined values that respect cultural systems and allow for open critique and reform.

In the quest for well-living, it is imperative to confront and address the disruptive forces of disharmony, such as patriarchal racial capitalism and plutocracy, through concerted efforts in grassroots political endeavors. Reconnecting with the natural world, akin to the endeavors of Indigenous societies, gains paramount importance as we challenge the destructive compartmentalization of life perpetuated by modern capitalism and (neo-)colonialism. By collectively engaging in these endeavors, we can aspire to reclaim a harmonious relationship with the broader ecological web, echoing the struggles and aspirations of Indigenous communities in their ongoing efforts to preserve and harmonize with the natural world.

The urgency of the climate crisis may seem overwhelming, and the influence of capital is undoubtedly significant. But the ideas that underpin the well-living paradigm can inspire us to engage in individual actions, collective efforts, and grassroots movements. Recognizing the current realities of global power imbalances and environmental degradation, the well-living paradigm offers a critical perspective to address these pressing issues from a comprehensive and holistic standpoint. *Rather than dismissing well-living as idealism, we should view it as a call to action, a vision that encourages us to challenge the dominant paradigms and strive for meaningful change.*²⁰ The pursuit of 'good life' is a prefigurative process. *It is in the quest for well-living that a transformative path unfolds, ignited by the interconnectedness of all life and inspiring a revolutionary spirit that propels greater collective actions towards justice and harmony.*

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Declarations

Competing interests The author declares no competing interests.

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²⁰ There are many important actions that are already being taken all across the world. Among the most popular ones are: (1) Building awareness and mobilization; (2) community organizing; (3) advocacy and policy reform; (4) challenging capitalist narratives through counter-narratives that emphasize the importance of ecological balance, social justice, and well-being for all living beings over profit maximization; (5) intersectional solidarity; (6) developing alternative models; (7) engaging with cultural and spiritual values; (8) fostering media and artistic expression; (9) engaging in non-violent direct action and civil disobedience; (10) legitimate armed resistance; and last but not least, (11) building and/or joining global alliances.

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