Social Quality

Also by Laurent J. G. van der Maesen

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Social Quality

From Theory to Indicators

Edited by

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For Wolf and in memory of Annelies

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This is the third book produced by the European Foundation on Social Quality (EFSQ) and includes contributions from a number of researchers who have worked on the topic of social quality over the past decade. The foundations for this book were laid primarily by the European Network on Indicators of Social Quality (ENIQ), funded by the European Union's Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development, which gave considerable impetus to social quality thinking: theoretically, empirically and in policy terms. We are grateful for this important work. The authors of the national reports prepared by ENIQ are acknowledged in this volume in the references (ENIQ a–p). All contributors to this book were members of ENIQ. Inputs from the European Network on Employment and Social Quality, funded by the European Commission's Employment Directorate, were important and are also listed in the references (ENEQ a–h). Finally, this book has been inspired by the investigations into and applications of social quality in the Asia–Pacific region which began in the mid-2000s and which were led initially by Tetsuo Ogawa. Since 2010 this work has been organised efficiently by the Asian Consortium for Social Quality. Our thanks go to all our colleagues in the Asian Consortium and, especially, to Ka Lin for his tireless efforts on behalf of the social quality project.

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This book and the social quality project began with a European focus that reflected our strong belief in the necessity of European integration as the basis for responding to and preventing the worst excesses of the huge global transformations taking place. This integration requires a new societal theory to facilitate progress, address discrimination and exploitation, and promote social justice, solidarity, the equal value of all the human beings and human dignity. As a result of the Asia–Pacific collaboration we are also convinced that a key function of this new theory must be to further sustainability. Social quality cannot be a purely European manifestation; it must have relevance for all continents.

Thus one important test of the usefulness and relevance of this concept is its capacity to facilitate comparative research. The current collaboration with the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague was a logical step and, since 2007, the ISS has housed the office of the EFSQ. This has stimulated many fruitful exchanges concerning human security and sustainability, and we are grateful to ISS colleagues for their collaboration, especially Rachel Kurian, Thandam Truong and Des Gasper.

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