Social Reporting Activities in Switzerland:
The Hidden Roots and the Present State of the Art

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1. Introduction

Five years ago, in 1994, the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics published a report on the future of social reporting in Switzerland. The authors - Roland Habich (WZB, Berlin), Heinz-Herbert Noll (ZUMA) and Wolfgang Zapf (WZB) - represented the leading researchers in the field of social reporting in Germany. Wolfgang Zapf is well known as doyen of the German social reporting activities. The report ends with the recommendation to set up a comprehensive structure for social reporting in Switzerland. According to the responsible vice director of the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics, such an effort would enable Switzerland to catch up with the other European countries.

The report mentioned above was not the only one demanding regular social reporting activities in Switzerland at the beginning of the 1990s. Thus, not only at the nation-wide federal level, but also at the regional and communal levels, similar attempts took place. In the city of Zurich, for example, two – not co-ordinated – proposals were made:

First, the Planning Office of the City of Zurich proposed a system of city indicators for Zurich. The aim of this indicator system was to support an „active planning of the city“. On the level of statistical zones, the system of social indicators should deliver information about social trends and spatial distributions of population, economy, traffic/transportation, housing, recreational areas and parks (Stadtplanungsamt 1994). In this proposal social indicators were considered means for planning and steering.

A second simultaneous but not related proposal (end of 1993) was initiated by the Department of Social Affairs which was charged by the municipal council of Zurich to set up a data basis for communal social reporting activities (Sozialdepartement 1995). Three functions were implemented:

A. Planning function: The planned communal social reporting activities was to support the development of welfare measures.

B. Controlling function: The planned communal social reporting activities was to describe cost and benefit of welfare measures and programs.

C. Communication function: The planned communal social reporting activities was to allow the implementation of an active information policy of the Department of Social Affairs.

Six years have passed since these efforts have been undertaken. There are several questions that now need to be considered:

- What is the state of Swiss social reporting today?
- How far and in what respect could the nation-wide, regional and local activities be put into effect?

We shall, however, not only describe the current state of the art, but we also intend to recall the hidden roots of this research field. In what follows, we deal with four aspects:
First, we shortly point to the principal aims and functions of social indicators and social reporting research. Second, we discuss the early social reporting activities in Switzerland (1970s and 1980s). Third, we present the current situation of social reporting in Switzerland both at the national and regional level. Finally, we conclude by summarising and explaining the current state of social reporting in Switzerland.

2. Principal Aims and Functions of Social Indicators and Social Reporting

The terms „social indicators“ and „social reporting“ first appeared in the 1960s. They were first mentioned by Raymond A. Bauer (1966), who was charged by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to analyse the societal side effects of the space program of the United States. Investigating this, Bauer emphasised the lack of a data base allowing the analysis of social trends and social developments.

As a consequence, Bauer’s (1966:1) classical definition of social indicators was closely related to the availability of data. He defines social indicators as “statistics, statistical series, and all other forms of evidence that enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals”.

A similar data-based concept was suggested by Wolfgang Zapf (1977: 236) who defines social indicators as „all these data which help us to clarify structures and processes, aims and performances, values and opinions“ [of the society].

These definitions contain normative elements as well as steering aspects. Social indicators should make it possible to collect information on whether or not and to what degree a particular society is moving into the "right" direction thus helping to steer society into the „right“ direction.

Social indicator research aims at quantifying and judging quality of life, individual welfare as well as living conditions of society in a comprehensive kind of way. The multi-dimensional approaches of „welfare“ and of „living quality“ are deliberately contrasted with the concepts of „economic growth and prosperity“. Therefore, social indicators should also allow us to overcome the limited view of solely economy-based concepts. During the 1990s, welfare concepts, have changed, too. As reviewed by Noll and Zapf (1994) and Zapf (1999) the issue of transformation of former socialist societies and their welfare developments, the problem of social exclusion within the European Union, the concepts of personal development and liveability, and the notion of welfare pluralism are amongst the new topics and concepts that have recently become prominent.

Since Mansur Olsen’s (1969) classical work “Toward a Social Report” social reporting has become the most important field for applying social indicators. Social reporting aims at describing material and immaterial living conditions of the population over time as well as explaining and interpreting social trends. Social reports are directed at the public at large, which means, also at persons not educated in methods of social science research (Habich et al. 1994: 8f).
Similar to the 1960s, there is a strong emphasis today on linking the quality of social reporting to its data base. The expert’s report on Swiss social reporting refers to the high standard of a data base to meet all requirements of social reporting. According to the authors, a comprehensive social reporting system needs a corresponding program of data collection. Two aspects have been emphasised:

First, the data base should have the form of the so-called „comprehensive surveys“ meaning a form of survey research design systematically covering the living conditions in all important life domains, such as:

- education and professional qualifications
- work and occupational activities
- income and financial situation
- health and well-being
- social security
- social network and social integration
- social origin and family
- political participation
- public security and crime
- leisure and time budget
- environment

Second, beside regular cross-sectional surveys, a longitudinal survey instrument should be installed – that is: a household panel interviewing several household members at the same time and interviewing the same persons periodically at different times. This should allow us to trace changes over time on an individual as well as on the household level.

The two proposals of communal social reporting in the city of Zurich insisted on the issue of data collection, too. It is interesting, that at the beginning, no additional and specialised data collection was planned at the beginning. Rather, already existing administrative data produced by daily routine were intended to be used. Two sorts of such data were mentioned: 1) structural data comprising information on the general population such as sociodemographic data, data on population movement, tax related income data, ownership registers as well as traffic statistics; 2) data on different kinds of social programs, institutions and state interventions (e.g. social assistance, unemployment insurance).

It is somewhat astonishing that research on social indicator was restricted on the „objective“ side (in the sense of structural and performance indicators), because several German cities had already carried out local surveys on objective and subjective aspects of living conditions at the beginning of the 1980s (e.g. Duisburg since 1981, Nuremberg since 1985, Cologne since 1986, see Habich et al. 1994). Only in 1999 a similar social survey has been carried out in the city of Zurich for the first time (Fachstelle für Stadtentwicklung der Stadt Zürich 1999).
The importance of the combination of "objective" and "subjective" indicators can be demonstrated by the city indicator system of Zurich. One of the indicators covers the degree of food supply (measured by the number of food shops per capita and the sales area per capita). However, does an increased sales area result in an improvement of quality of life and is the increase of the sales area and the number of shops considered to be important by the population?


We shall now turn to discuss the backwardness and the deficits of Switzerland considering social indicators research and social reporting. Critics argue that we know much more about the number of cattle and the state of fruit trees (there are special federal statistics about these agricultural issues) than about living conditions and the quality of life of the citizens in Switzerland. Is Switzerland a blind spot in the world of social reporting?

According to Heinz-Herbert Noll’s (1997) report about the state of the art of social reporting in different European countries, these impressions seem to be confirmed. The author concludes, that only very few European countries do not have a continuously updated social reporting system. One of these countries is Switzerland (cf. also Rothenbacher 1993, 1999).

Before we analyse the present situation of social reporting in Switzerland, we would like to recall some forgotten roots correcting the impression of lacking social reporting activities, at least as regards the 1970s.

We group the Swiss activities of social reporting according to the scheme suggested by Noll and Zapf (1994):

- First, considering the coverage of social reporting, e.g. comprehensive reporting vs. non-comprehensive reporting (single domains, subgroups or specific social problems).

- Second, considering those carrying out social reporting. There are two main producers of social reporting: Official bodies on the one hand (statistical offices, ministries, state agencies) and non official institutions and organisations on the other hand (scientific research institutions, associations, private companies).

Table 1 covers the state of the art of social reporting in Switzerland in circa 1980, just after the international activities within this research field reached their peak. The high level of activities carried out by scientific researchers is worth mentioning. In comparison, private institutions and official agencies were active only to a rather limited degree.
Table 1: Examples of Swiss Social Reporting Activities circa 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Official statistics</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Priv. Institution</th>
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</table>
| Comprehensive: broad coverage, supra domain orientated | • Series Social indicators for Switzerland, 8 domain specific volumes (BFS 1981-82) | • Swiss Almanac (Department of Sociology, University of Zurich; Soziologisches Institut 1978)  
• Mapping of Regional Statistics (Strukturatlas, NFP-5; Schuler 1985) |                   |
| Non comprehensive: for single domains and/or subgroups | | • Mapping of youth statistics in the city of Zurich (Youth Report; University of Zurich and IPSO: Zeugin and Schmid 1984) |                   |

Note: For more detailed information see references.
Swiss Almanac (Almanach der Schweiz) 1978

The most important product of the 1970s was certainly the Almanac of Switzerland, edited by Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny at the Sociological Institute of the University of Zurich (Soziologisches Institut 1978). It deserves to be mentioned here in particular, because it was the very first report of that kind in all of Switzerland. The handy report contains 93 social indicators grouped into 14 thematic domains. Each indicator, for example „social consequences of traffic“ or „concentration of press“ is dealt with on a double page, with statistics, tables and charts on one page, and explications and interpretations on the other.


In the early 1980s, the Federal Office of Statistics introduced a system of 186 social indicators based on the OECD social indicator system of that time. The 186 indicators were divided up into 12 domains, with on volume planned to be published for each one of them (health, education, occupational activities, working conditions, leisure and household, income and social security, dwelling, transportation and traffic, ecological environment, family and social contacts, citizen and administration, energy). The publication of this series began in 1981 but was already suspended after the first eight volumes (BFS 1981-82).

Mapping of youth statistics in the city of Zurich (Youth Report) 1984

The main purpose of the youth statistics in the city of Zurich was to investigate „actual social problems“ of young people using social indicators. The atlas – mandated by the Department of Social Affairs of the City of Zurich – was written by collaborators of the Institute of Pedagogic of the University of Zurich and the private company IPSO, which had been founded by former research assistants of the Sociological Institute. The youth indicators were processed graphically and at the level of city neighbourhoods (Zeugin and Schmid 1984).

Mapping of regional statistics in Switzerland (Strukturalatlas Schweiz) 1985

Mapping of regional statistics was carried out by the Swiss National Science Foundation program „Regional problems“ (NFP-5). It was written by collaborators of the University of Zurich (Institute of Geography) and of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology of Lausanne (EPFL-IREC). The aim was to investigate spatial differences and regional diversity in Switzerland. The social indicators are reported on the level of 106 spatial units. The atlas covers a broad range of topics, such as nature and agriculture, population, economy, working, dwelling, elections (Schuler et al. 1985). In comparison with the Swiss Almanac it is more geographically and economically oriented.

Summing up the situation of the early 1980s, social reporting in Switzerland was mainly based on scientific institutions and participants. From today’s perspective, we may conclude that many activities later taken up by official statistics originated from scientific research.
4. Present State of Social Reporting in Switzerland

Next, we would like to discuss the present state of social reporting in Switzerland. To
categorise the social reporting activities, we use the already mentioned two dimensions:

- coverage (comprehensive vs. non-comprehensive) and
- “producers” (official statistics, science, private institutions).

To these two categories, we add as a third criteria the spatial dimension of social reporting.
Here, we distinguish between national and regional levels of social reporting. In doing that,
we point to an important change compared to former activities in social reports, namely,
the stronger emphasis on the regional and local level of social reporting.

An evaluation of the current state of social reporting has to be based on the criteria of
adequate social reporting as recently summarised by Heinz-Herbert Noll (1999). This list
of these criteria comprises:

- the combination of „objective“ and „subjective“ indicators of living conditions
- the multidimensional coverage and the consideration of all relevant life domains
  („comprehensive surveys“)
- the continuous reporting over longer periods or time
- the availability of representative samples for the whole population and the option for
  regional differentiation (regions, cantons, cities)
- the observation of policy measures
- the up-to-date reporting, i.e. short time lags between data collection and social reporting
- the priority of the interpretative function for the public at large (in contrast to the
  prognostic, planning or steering function)

First, we shall consider in more detail the national level. Table 2 elucidates the numerous
participants and activities of Swiss social reporting at present. This is the case not only for
the scientific institutions, but also for official agencies and private institutions. Therefore,
the thesis formulated at the beginning of this paper claiming a deficit of Swiss social
reporting has to be qualified.

Nevertheless, the publication years indicate that a good part of the current social reporting
products are rather new and have only recently been published. The Social Almanac,
published by Caritas, is just a few months old. This almanac is planned to be published
annually. According to Caritas (1999: 9), the aim is to contribute to a „qualitative social
reporting“ in Switzerland. According to Caritas, the term „qualitative“ means focussing on
the interpretative function of social reporting and abstaining from one’s own data
collections. Thematically, the focus lies on the development of unemployment, poverty and
social exclusion. To make social processes and problems understandable is not the only
aim of the report. Caritas also intends to influence the political agenda by discussing and
conveying political solutions and strategies to overcome the identified social problems.
### Table 2: Selected Examples of Swiss Social Reporting Activities 1999: National level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Official statistics</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Private Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comprehensive:</strong> broad coverage, supra domain orientated</td>
<td>• Statistical Yearbook of Switzerland, annually (BFS)</td>
<td>• Social Report 2000 (Program “Switzerland towards the Future”; Suter 2000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-comprehensive:</strong> for single domains and/or subgroups</td>
<td>• Environment in Switzerland 1997 (BFS, BUWAL)</td>
<td>• Health in Switzerland (Weiss 1993, BAG)</td>
<td>• Social Almanac 1999 (on poverty, unemployment, social exclusion; Caritas 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Indicators of Education Switzerland 1993 ff. (BFS)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Swiss Labor Force Survey SAKE 1991 ff. (BFS)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Swiss Health Survey (1992/93, 1997 (BFS)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Series “Social Reporting in Switzerland” (BFS)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* For more detailed information see references.
The almanac is divided into three parts: The first part (18 pages) summarises events and developments of the last year which the editors consider to be crucial for the social situation in Switzerland. In the second and most important part (150 pages), the specific topic of the report is dealt with in detail (1999: poverty and social assistance). Several authors from inside and outside Caritas discuss aspects of poverty and social assistance from their different points of view. The third part consists of an annex containing tables (40 pages) covering indicators about unemployment, occupation, salaries and wages, poverty and social security programs. Unfortunately, the statistical indicators are presented without any explanations or interpretations.

The Social Report of Switzerland published in June 2000 has been worked out within the framework of the program „Switzerland towards the Future“ of the Swiss National Science Foundation. This report is the only one on a national level, explicitly following a comprehensive and supra domain concept and combining „objective“ and „subjective“ indicators. In taking up many of the ideas formulated in the Almanac of Switzerland of the 1970s the social report carries on the scientific tradition of social reporting.

The social report combines two aspects or perspectives: First, a descriptive and indicator based view, second, an analytical and explanatory perspective. In doing so, two important functions of social reporting are accomplished: On the one hand, to produce an „objective“ and continuously updated data handbook („Datenhandbuch“), and on the other, to provide a problem orientated interpretation of data, clarifying relationships and explaining social problems and processes of social change (Höpflinger and Wyss 1997).

The social report of Switzerland describes, interprets and explains the current living conditions and living forms of the population and the most important changes over the past 30 years. It treats basic societal questions, problems and developments in five thematic sections: 1) distribution and inequality, 2) cultural diversity, 3) social integration, 4) political participation and 5) ecological integration. As already mentioned there are two complementary perspectives: First, an indicator based view: For each of the five domains, 15 selected indicators are treated on a double page. On one page, there are charts and tables, on the other, there are explanations, interpretations, and a critical examination of the indicators. This interpreting and explanatory perspective is deepened in the second part of the book: For each of the five domains the most important trends are dealt with by five different authors (Suter 2000).

Finally, it is worth mentioning, that the program „Switzerland towards the future“ has implemented a comprehensive data collection program. This was already demanded by the authors of the experts report on social reporting mentioned at the beginning of this paper. The design of the recently established „Swiss Household Panel“ is comprehensive, thus, the often lamented problem of lacking adequate data for social reporting purposes is going to be eliminated in the future (cf. Joye and Scherpenzeel 1997 and Budowski and Wernli 1999).

Nevertheless, it were the official statistical offices rather than science which were the principal promoters of social reporting activities in Switzerland in the 1990s. Since 1989, the Statistical Yearbook, published by the Swiss Federal Office for Statistics, appears in a changed manner (BFS 1989ff). The aim of that face lifting procedure was to reach a
broader public. Beside the usual tables, more explanatory short texts and coloured charts were included. Nevertheless, the yearbook still contains too many complicated tables, has a big format and is quite clumsy with its 500 pages. The structure of the statistical yearbook follows the multi domain concept, a broad spectrum of 19 domains is covered. They include topics such as population, occupation, macro-economical statistics, agriculture and forestry, social security, health, education, culture, politics and administration of justice. Yet, the statistical yearbook does not fulfil all the criteria of modern social reporting. In particular, there is a lack of subjective indicators as well as of mutual relationships between the different life domains. Furthermore, despite its multi domain structure, no comprehensive survey data is used – a first comprehensive survey on living conditions has been carried out only very recently (1998). Finally, the interpreting, explanatory and reflexive functions have not enough been elaborated on.

A variety of single domain social reporting activities was set up by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics. The best known are the reports on environment (BFS/BUWAL 1997), education and science (BFS 1993ff, BFS 1998), health and the labour force (BFS 1991ff) as mentioned in table 2. These single domain activities are partially based on own data collections such as the Swiss Health Survey (1992/93, 1997) or the Swiss Labor Force Survey which has been annually repeated since 1991. From 1996 onwards, the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics started to publish single domain reports under the subtitle “Social Reporting in Switzerland”. Up to now, these reports dealt with gender inequality, social mobility, youth and educational mobility (e.g. BFS 1999). It is particularly worth mentioning that these new reports are easy to read and to understand (cf. Röthlisberger 1999).

At the regional level, official statistics are even more important than at the national level – this demonstrated by Table 3. Several cantons (19) and cities (9) publish their own yearbooks in addition to the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics. This is true both for the comprehensive and for the non-comprehensive type of social reports. In the single domain reporting, efforts were concentrated on reports on social assistance and welfare programs. The canton of Zurich, for example, has published a social assistance report three times already (Rüst 1995, 1996, 1998) as did the city of Zurich (Salzgeber and Suter 1997). Similarly, the canton and the city of Geneva have been publishing a yearly report on social assistance and welfare since the early 1990s (OCSTAT/HG/DASS 1998). Not all of these cantonal and communal reports, however, meet the basic criteria of social reporting. Thus the social assistance report of the canton of Zurich is basically a collection of tables and, therefore, cannot accomplish any reflexive function.

The health report, also published by the canton of Zurich, is worth mentioning, too. It is edited by the Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine of the University of Zurich and mandated by the Department of Health of the canton of Zurich (ISPMZ 1994, 1999). Obviously, a form of collaboration between administration and science has been institutionalised, which could not be established at the national level and in other domains.
### Table 3: Selected Examples of Swiss Social Reporting Activities 1999: Regional level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Official statistics</th>
<th>Sciences</th>
<th>Priv. Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Comprehensive:** broad coverage, supra domain orientated | • Mapping of Regional Statistics (NFP-5, BFS; Schuler et al. 1985, 1997)  
• Cantons and Cities 1991ff (BFS)  
• Cantonal statistical Yearbooks (19)  
• Communal statistical Yearbooks (9)  
• Social Assistance, City of Zurich, 1993-1995 (Salzgeber and Suter 1997)  
• L’Année sociale en chiffres, Genève 1991 ff. (OCSTAT/HG/DASS 1998) | | • Private Company Social Report (e.g. Sulzer 1997)  
• Union Social Report (e.g. SEV 1997). |

*Note: For more detailed information see references.*
A last point which is worth considering are the activities of private institutions. Their frequency might be surprising at a first glance, but the listed social reports of the transnational company Sulzer (1997) as well as the report of the Swiss railway worker union (SEV 1997) do not at all fulfill the criteria of social reporting. There is not much difference between Sulzer’s „Social report Switzerland“ and any of the traditional company reports. Also, the „Social report“ of the Swiss railway worker union resembles much more a union’s annual report than a social report on living conditions and the quality of life.

Another actor in social reporting is the Economic trend research institute Basle (Konjunkturforschung Basel - BAK), one of the three top institutes for economic forecasting in Switzerland (economic growth, inflation etc.). This private institution intends to install a regional sustainability-monitoring system (BAK 1998). The monitoring system is going to provide information on the economic, ecological and social situation in the eight most important regions of the German speaking part of Switzerland (Zurich, Bern, Basle, Grison, Zug, Lucerne, Solothurn, Aargau). The first report is planned to be published in 2000. With respect to the social situation, indicators on social sustainability, household income, and quality of life shall be collected. Comparative analyses including other countries (U.S., Germany, France) are planned in addition to regional comparisons within Switzerland.

5. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, we shall elaborate on four points:

- Explanations for the rising activities in the field of social reporting
- The deficits and backwardness of Swiss social reporting
- The possibilities to institutionalise current social reporting activities and
- The change from the planning and prognostic function underlying former concepts of social reporting to the interpretative or reflexive functions of current and future social reporting.

Explaining rising social reporting activities

Our stocktaking of the Swiss activities in the field of social reporting has shown a broad variety at the national as well as the regional and the communal level. The past few years in particular have witnessed many efforts to improve social reporting. Thus, Switzerland is currently improving its precarious status concerning social reporting and is closing the gap between itself and the other European countries.

Scientific institutions and researchers, that had played an important role in the 1970s, are active again thanks to the research program „Switzerland towards the future“. At the same time, some private institutions have appeared. It is likely, that these private producers are going to play a more important role in the future. According to the logic of private sector
activities, these social indicator systems focus on the wealthier groups and the wealthier regions in society.

There are several reasons explaining the sharp rise in social reporting activities in Switzerland. First of all one has to point to the "underdeveloped" state of social reporting in Switzerland in comparison with the rest of Europe. The expert's report by Habich et al. (1994) has clearly shown that there is a great need to catch up in this regard. That the (national) official statistics wanted to attach more importance to social reporting activities becomes clear from the fact that the expert's report was commissioned and published by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics. But the report by Habich et al. (1994) also triggered activities on the part of science and private institutions.

A second factor which was particularly important in regard to poverty (and possibly health as well) on the regional and local level were the rising costs of public supply services as a result of economic stagnation from 1991 onwards. The social reports of the canton of Zurich for example primarily present the costs of financial aid and social programs. These social aid reports may be interpreted as legitimising the risen costs (education, awareness raising) or else as a means of reducing these costs.

The third aspect to be mentioned here is the scientific program called "Switzerland towards the future". The explicit aim of this first social scientific program which was extensively paid for and planned on a fairly long-term basis was to "continuously observe social change". At the same time the household panel built-up through this program serves as the data base required by Habich et al. (1994) in their expert's report.

Furthermore, we would like to point to the private sector's rising demand for information about local living conditions and quality of life. Economic globalisation has helped to make these aspects increasingly important for the choice of a site or a place of work, in particular within the segment of highly qualified work and production.

Finally, increasing pressure due to growing problems may also play a part. As a result of Switzerland's long economic stagnation in the 1990s the repercussions of this crisis have become the centre of attention. It is therefore no accident that Caritas has dedicated is first social Almanac to the topic of social exclusion.

Deficits and backwardness

If we refer to the criteria on social reporting, developed by Noll (1999) – combination of „objective“ and „subjective“ indicators, multi-dimensionality, continuous reporting, representative samples, observation of state activities, priority of reflexive function – there are a lot of deficits in current social reporting activities of scientific, official as well as private institutions. First and foremost there is no continuity – this applies in particular to social reporting carried out by scientific and private institutions. In the case of private activities, the criterion of representative samples is also only rarely met. The main shortcomings of the official statistics are the insufficiently considered reflexive role, their strong orientation towards „objective“ indicators and the lack of comprehensive survey data.

Considering the criteria of continuous reporting activities, it is evident, that, an institutionalisation of social reporting has taken place exclusively in the framework of
official statistics so far. After the experiences of the 1970s and 1980s, the question arises, how the current activities could be institutionalised in the long run.

**Institutionalisation**

Out of the four early examples of social reporting described in this paper only two managed to become institutionalised:

- The domain specific social indicator reports of 1981-82 can be considered as a precursor of the Federal Office of Statistics sector reports of the 1990s. This is also true for the 19 thematic domains nowadays treated in the statistical yearbook.

- Mapping regional statistics (Strukturatlas), initiated by science, is going to be continued by the Swiss Federal Office of Statistics (last edition: 1997).

The two other reports, initiated by science, both the Swiss Almanac of 1978 and the youth report could, however, not be institutionalised.

Moreover, the future of the communal social indicators projects mentioned at the beginning of this paper remains uncertain. This is also true for the other communal and cantonal initiatives, which are not based on professional statistical offices. Rather than the higher competence, the autonomy in relation to the daily political agenda seems to be decisive. One striking example is the Social Report of the canton of Zurich. So far it has been published three times (1995, 1996, 1998), but the necessary funds were always restricted to just one forthcoming edition. It seems likely, that a changing political agenda would quickly lead to an end of this series of reports.

On the other hand, the chance of social reporting to be institutionalised within the scientific system seems to be much higher today than it was in the 1970s or 1980s. One of the reasons is the already mentioned household panel data base which will serve as the principal data source for future social reporting purposes. An institutionalisation of the Swiss Social Report within the science system may also strengthen the social sciences themselves.

**From planning to reflexive function**

Prognostic, planning and steering functions were the principal aims of the early social indicators and social reporting movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The authors of the Youth Report of the city of Zurich, for example, considered the aim of social indicators „to describe the actual state and changes of societies or parts of them with the intention, to steer the change in a positive way“ (Zeugin and Schmid 1984: 19). But precisely these aims, i.e. the prognostic, planning and steering functions, could not be reached by the social indicators research (Habich et al. 1994). This is best illustrated by the youth report itself: This report was initiated prior to the youth movements’ violent protests that broke out in the city of Zurich – and other cities as well – in 1980. One aim of the report was to detect social problems among the youth and areas of social interventions. However, the report was published only in 1984 and that was years after the end of the riots, not settled by social programs but by the use of force and persecution through judicial authorities.
The renaissance of social reporting in Switzerland does not, however, reflect a new „active“ policy as during the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, the profound changes that the welfare state, other institutions of welfare production (labour market, households, associations) and social life in general underwent in the past ten years provoked a rising demand for information and explanation. As argued by Joachim Vogel (1997) social reporting has beside general enlightenment a democratic function, by providing open access to information about living conditions to the citizens and to all the actors in the political arena. To observe social change in the sense of description, interpretation and explanation designed for a broad public and to contribute, thereby, to the formation of public opinion is foremost a discursive and a reflexive function. Social reporting is thus contributing to the generation of a systematic self-knowledge of modern society.
6. References


