

PRODUCTIVITY BETWEEN APPEARANCE AND EFFECTS. A RELEVANT DISTINCTION

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Abstract

The present paper aims to find again the original liberalism approach regarding productivity. Therefore, it explains the essence of the effects of usual calculus used for determining productivity, from the perspective of the service provided by the economic entity considered in such calculus. Thus, the distinction between the usual approaches and the intrinsic meanings of the productive character of human economic activity is made, and the development and highlighting of this distinction is the core purpose of the research. The debate is purely theoretical, and no empirical applications or numerical simulations are made. But, in the purpose of going deeper into the above-mentioned distinction, we offer an expression of the ideas, through symbols and formulas, underlying the qualitative aspects that are not captured in the normal approaches that are focused on growth (of the productivity and of the economy in general). This way, we better separate what seems to be productive from what really generates positive effects on different levels (the present paper shows different dimensions and levels that should be considered in the productivity analysis, according to the wished scientific horizon).

Key words: *productivity, rendered service*

INTRODUCTION

The evolution from the *production* approach to the *sales* approach and then to the *marketing* approach (with all the steps needed for such an evolution) describes, in the last analysis, the increases of productivity and the society's answer to these changes. We can observe that, starting with the sales approach, entrepreneurs became concerned with going over the real needs and demand on the market, arriving at stimulating and even forcing consumption. Promoting the economic development, based on the generous idea of productivity, lead humanity (after a few centuries of increased industrialisation) to become a consumption society, proven to be destructive for the natural resources of the planet (“le capitalisme financier et actionnarial encore dominant [...] nous a efforcés dans une crise d'autant plus durable que rien de sérieux n'a été fait pour réduire la pouvoir de la nuisance de la finance libéralisée”, says Jean Gadrey, în Gadrey, 2010, p. 18, mentioning among other things that “Le culte de la croissance est fondé sur l'oubli des principaux enjeux sociétaux: toujours plus de quoi, pour qui et avec quelles conséquences?”). In those last words of Gadery we find certain essential qualitative aspects that are missing from the race for growth. Also, Thorstein Veblen criticized the abnormal consumption and waste, so common in developed societies (Veblen, 2009).

From the economic, social or planet's point of view, such evolutions became problems, taking into account the overproduction and supra-production crises, the exacerbated tendencies towards the throwing away of goods, towards the short-term

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replacement of goods (see the changing fashions and the redecoration fashion, for example), towards the planned obsolescence of goods and of course, towards a more intense and even sometimes annoying puffery and advertising meant to renew consumption, acquisition of goods and orders. The propaganda of the consumption society has altered even the initial meanings of consumerism, changing its definitions to a so called “consumers’ interests”.

This means that the increase of productivity – which should normally be a wanted and positive thing –, through ever-increasing amounts of goods and services risks developing perverse qualitative effects. Our aim in this paper is to highlight the need of an increased productivity, but exactly by telling the usual mainly quantitative approach of the economy from the genuine essence of the productivity concept. Therefore, we try to make clear, point out and underline this distinction. Such approach makes necessary highlighting the difference between the way productivity is most commonly computed (see details in the next section), on one side, and the core meaning of “being productive”, on the other side. (In the section “By opposition: intrinsic productivity” we define what productive essentially means, *i.e.* creative, or useful, or serviceable; the concept of servicity, as we’ve called it, was proposed in Jivan, 1993 and developed in other papers, like certain cited later in this paper).

Therefore, our debate distinguishes between the essence of the productivity concept – the quality of creating value, through rendered service – and the way the productivity ratio is computed. To begin with, in the next section of our research, we’ll bring our criticism to the actual manner of calculating productivity. The inadequacy of the ratios applied in the economic practice was brought to light by Bossel (1999), as well as by Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi (2009a, b). We’ll continue by exposing the genuine principle of productivity – associated to the initial concept of intrinsic productivity (in the second section). The approach used is that of servicity, as defined by Jivan (1993, 2000 and 2014). In the third part of our research, we’ll highlight the opposition between productivity (calculated according to the usual formulas) and servicity, which opposition is revealed in expressions that are based on relevant formulas. Other developments and operationalizing can be found in Jivan 2000 and 2014, and in Jivan (coordinated) 2016, that are not going to be presented in the present paper. Criticism of the opposite effects generated by the computed productivity is present all through the debate.

The conclusions refer to the requirement that the commonly calculated indicator of productivity will not be any more employed as central for the quantitative increase myth; we also offer suggestions and references regarding corrected and completed indicators of productivity that should be suitable to diverse employments (according to the analyses purposes) and, thus, could better express the alternative rather qualitative ideas (in that what concerns the rendered service, the serviceability and the servicity concept, see also Jivan, Năchescu, Iași/ 2018).

1. ABOUT THE OPTIMISM OF THE CALCULATED PRODUCTIVITY’S OPTICS. SOME CRITICAL REMARKS

The basic principle of productivity is to generate some results by using certain factors, namely by making certain efforts. The results are reflected at the numerator and certain resources, factors, efforts or costs are considered as corresponding to them (are allocated to them), being presented at the denominator. In other words, the idea is: theory considers that the final recorded results or achievements are obtained thanks

to that what was consumed (was employed to generate a certain effect or future result).

This approach gives an optimistic character to the central idea of productivity: even if negative productivities are not excluded (meaning that the value of the *output* can be smaller than the *input*), one doesn't talk about this possibility but about the positive results; in reality, talking only about the positive effects means basically ignoring the possibility of a negative productivity (or of mainly negative effects). Therefore, the approach is limited to specific situations: a certain economic entity, a certain time frame, a certain place or certain conditions. The industrial approach became dominant, along with the development of industry, and it still remains. Until then, such concerns were not explicitly, but since, the interest in productivity has put the economic thought under the dominance of industrial specificities. This kind of approach is still used, even over the non-material also (in despite of being not suited for it), and also in the knowledge-based economy, where the analysis should be adequate to the present complexity.

What counts are the net revenues of the entrepreneurs and quantitative factors are dominant, in despite of the various qualitative aspects of the concerned realities. So, the so much debated economic growth refers to the increase in the quantity of food, for example, despite the fact that it's quality has decreased: instead of thin skin, tasty Romanian tomatoes (that we do no longer have for a few decades now), we have tomatoes that are resistant to handling, that are full of fibre inside; instead of biologically healthy fruits and vegetables, we have biologic material that can be very good looking but treated by positive ionization (treatment that kills the principles of life in order to make the product more resistant to storing, handling etc); the taste of food is chemically influenced, different sweeteners, artificial colours and flavours and other "improvers" are added.

Quality took shelter behind the "luxury" label – for the privileged ones that can afford to pay much more. But here we talk about the planet population and not about the small groups of financially powerful people.

In any case, the productivity is measured after the events take place, using the registered data. The denominator represents the cost of the system's inputs that are considered as causally connected to the results: it is as if the effects are due to these costs or inputs; the nominator is represented by the revenues registered by the economic entity, or the income obtained through the offers it made to the market: that output is considered to be the "creation" of the economic entity or action, the "added value" generated through the efforts mentioned above. The registered incomes obtained by the economic entity through market negotiation are considered to be the counter-value of the company's contribution, as if the market were the perfect evaluator of what the entity gives to the environment, its role being considered to be just giving a monetary expression, ensuring this way the undeniable rewarding of the participants. Therefore, it is considered that the market can recognise completely and correctly the contribution and effects of each action or that what a player on a market gets from the market is exactly what the player was supposed to get. It means that if the player got it, it deserved to get it. This is the applied economic logic. Problems as the ones suggested by the Romanian proverb "an uncaught thief is a fair seller" are no longer considered.

From such ratios results the calculated productivity (as it is called in the servicity theory, according to Jivan, 1993, 2014). Apart from usage, the term of *calculated productivity* ads the fact that the ratio commonly called "productivity" is just the result of a simple calculus, but it is not always capturing the intrinsic meaning

of *productivity or fruitfulness* of human activity, in the most appropriated way. Thus, we make the distinction between that what is usually calculated (as productivity) on one hand, and the true quality (which is an internal characteristic) of an economic entity or activity, of generating (creating, producing) value.

The most important aspect that is ignored by such computing manner is that the incomes result in conditions of market fight, and, therefore, they are not necessarily the results of the quality values, but of the confrontation between market values, which we are going to just consider “amoral” (in order to use a neutral, accepted and used term). These include primarily the negotiating force. Using the income of the entity as measure of the “production” is a very individualist and selfish approach (see all the differences highlighted in Jivan, 2014, between the productivity–namely the calculated productivity – and servicity). Also, the formulas use the registered efforts in terms of their market prices: they are the results of market negotiations too, done on the principles of market confrontations more than based on fundamental values. The genuine value is exploited on the market by anyone that can, not being rewarded for (to) the one that creates it. This stands true to John Kay and other big inventors of the industrial revolution, that died in poverty, their inestimable contribution being exploited by opportunists; the same stands in the case of nature exploiting, where nature (the one giving value) doesn’t get anything in exchange (the effort of those that act upon nature is not a price paid to nature, but to other economic agents, as sums transferred to suppliers of inputs used in the actions upon nature).

In our opinion, the direct correlation between the results recorded by an entity and the factors considered (as determinants) can also be put under question.

Not always the productivity ratios (regarding the companies’ interests) are according to the interests of clients and suppliers (an empiric analysis regarding partial aspects on this matter was done by Jivan, Curea-Pitorac, Tînjeală, 2018).

Such aspects, and others, that we do not develop in this study, generate the need for some conceptual and methodological delimitations, and therefore of calculus, ensured by the servicity concept (see the next section).

2. BY OPPOSITION: INTRINSIC PRODUCTIVITY (SERVICITY OR SERVICEABILITY)

From what was shown in the previous section, some should not infer that we criticise productivity itself. On the contrary: we support the idea of productivity. We criticise the manner of calculating it, which doesn’t always express the whole and correct meaning of the *quality or characteristic of producing or creating*. As opposed to what productivity got sometimes to mean (e.g. purely quantitative aspects of values absorbed or collected from the environment), by this paper we support the idea of the intrinsic productivity (*i.e.* of the quality of generating useful effects). And we do such support not by the commonly calculated productivity, but by promoting the theory of servicity, theory that we consider more appropriated for the principle of creating useful effects (service, serviceability).

The concern of the scientific world in the economic field focuses mainly on *business* (the excellence in business, management improvement and so on), even though improvements at this level can only lead to the redistribution between the economic actors and not to increasing the general wellbeing. If a company enterprise or economic activity becomes more efficient, it only surpasses others, taking away some of their market (clients), through diverse methods that increase the *relative* competitiveness. But such results do not necessary mean *absolute* optimisations. The

analyses are usually done at individual level, locally, and not on the level of human society as a whole; thus, the desired *specific* improvements are not constantly and with priority analysed at the general scale, from a *general* point of view (above the specific, local, instant, individual one).

The common principle of calculating productivity is, in our opinion, an abusive one, as it has inculcated in certain practical directions (individualism, hedonism, saving of self-effort and excessive use of external values, translated into exploiting of the environment by any individual entity that considers its activity on the basis of such calculated productivity). From the individual point of view – namely according to self-interest which is legitimate – this cannot be condemned; but this becomes a problem when the economic science appreciates economic entities, activities and even the economy as a whole by the same criteria. Such common use (and we repeat: not only in individual analyses, but also in systemic ones) led to the consumption society and to the destruction of the planet, in the name of wellbeing, productivity and economic growth.

Counting on the improvements suggested by the invisible hand principle, would firstly need going back to the conditions of the pure and perfect market; or such theoretic perfect conditions, if they ever existed in economic reality, are no longer existent for more than one and a half century. So, talking about wellbeing stays just a theoretic point of view, as in reality, everything has as purpose the individual profit of those interested in keeping this system of economic evaluation (of activities, entities and economy in general). And the matter of growth and productivity became a real ideology: it is highly promoted, through all means, as the calculation of productivity has given it the power to dominate the consciences at a large scale.

At least, *through its effects*, the manner of evaluating quality by constantly increasing quantities has proven to be inadequate at systemic level: if in the case of individual/punctual analyses (on short term, short-sighted), such appreciation can lead to positive results for the concerned entities (beneficial specific local results on short term), from the systemic point of view, they have proven to be destructive (on long and very long term, see Jivan, 2011).

Without developing it in this paper, we should consider Bastiat's remarks regarding the value-service in a harmonious systemic context (Bastiat, 1982). The initial senses of the productive-creative qualities of an economic entity were *systemic and functional at the whole level*, by definition: their core is the idea of effective creation, in order of performing services. The rendered-service means a beneficial effect brought to the whole system, e.g. to certain customers. This is the idea coming from the well-known references of Adam Smith regarding the gains obtained by the suppliers for themselves, exactly through the service performed (benefit generated) by them for the client; the meanings at the scale of the systemic whole come better out from his main opus, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* – see, for instance, Smith, 2017; this first book was considered by Smith as his principal, despite the later economists' preferences). This approach, *at the general level* – even though it is done through the logic action *at the individual level* – contains even the later idea of the optimum described by Pareto (see the references to the specific optimum and the general optimum done by Jivan, 2014).

Unfortunately, the “invisible hand” was interpreted exclusively in the private interest and, thus, it is still supposed as well functioning despite of no longer having the conditions of a market with a pure and perfect competition. Productivity was reduced, from its profound genuine meaning, to what the usual calculus formula can still express by dividing the income to the factor considered. As in so many cases, the

concept was changed by the way of being represented. The general use of such formulas (concretized in a simple ratio) changed the initial physiocrat and classic meanings of productivity, which is an abuse. But this abuse – even if it is a common one- shouldn't eliminate the use of the genuine correct concepts. These genuine ones are for us the fundamental ones. So, they should be brought back, quicken anew, and the ones that resulted from an insufficient rigour in constructing the calculus formulas, should be corrected and brought to “the right path”, the path of real concepts regarding value and its creation.

An economist in a company is mainly preoccupied by the company's business interests that he must follow. His interest is focused on the viability of the own actions of that (particular) economic entity, at a specific moment and place, or of a strictly individualist interest. But a researcher should adopt a larger horizon than the specific one: he should test the validity of actions or entities beyond their specific interests, namely at a general level, from the Pareto optimum point of view and, moreover, according to a multi-criteria system (according to Jivan, 2014).

To the manner of judging the economic life that we presented above (in the precious section), it is opposed the concept of genuine productivity, as it was conceived in the context of genuine liberalism (Physiocrat and Smithian) and as it is regarded in the servicity concept. This approach involves considering, beside the individual implications, the “external” ones, in a distinctive manner – what is considered by servicity in its narrow sense. The resultant at the assembly level is captured in the idea of servicity in a broad sense (for important detailing, see Jivan, 2014, and also other researches, starting with Jivan, 1993, and continuing with numerous further developments, including Jivan coord., 2016.) This suggestion is for multi-criteria approaches and as broad as possible, in the purpose of ensuring the scientific character for the economic analyses, in a manner consistent with the knowledge-based society).

More than the differences between productivity and servicity shown in Jivan 2014, we can also highlight the opposition between the mainly optimist character of productivity (as presented in the previous section) and the more complex character of servicity. We consider that the productivity concept is *limited*, in a selfish way, to the interest horizon of the analysed entity (the entity is not preoccupied by the effects – positive or negative ones – on the environment). So, besides the fact that the costs (inputs) and the wanted advantages (the output) are judged exclusively for the entity (from its point of view), they are considered in an optimistic manner, as effort (spending) now, for future gains, after the development of the process. There is always a risk, but the approach (in a probabilistic sense) goes on the line of revenues that are “worth” the initial costs, efforts to which those revenues are associated. This optimistic approach is also connected to the strictly specific focus (punctual, selfish even) that we were talking about (with reference to Jivan, 2014). The *input* efforts, after the entity criteria, concern just a certain action or entity, and after the moment criteria, are past efforts, done before the activity. The results are of *output* type, meaning that according to the entity criteria they concern just that action or entity, and according to the moment criteria, they are future results, that appear after that activity takes place.

The usual approach on productivity, concerning the analysed reality, is therefore limited (selfish) and, by being limited, it is optimistic. On the other hand, the servicity approach takes into account the whole reality, namely the whole impact of the activity (with the limitation of the scientific knowledge at the moment of the analysis). The complete optics of servicity aims to take into account the complete

effects and efforts. At the *input* efforts (considered for the calculated productivity), other efforts that are connected to that entity's activity are added: the efforts of other entities, the future efforts (beside the past ones). Regarding the result effects, besides the *output* ones, we also have complex effects of outcome type (mediated), effects that appear both at the analysed economic entity, as well as at other entities, possible effects during the activity but also before the activity. In this complex, systemic approach (with an exhaustive touch), the effects can be both positive and negative, so not only the side-taking approach is extended to a complex, systemic, generalised one, but also the optimistic touch is replaced with a neutral one that has a larger conceptual horizon, of the global effect type. These effects can be of a general effort type, of costs (negative results); and if they are positive, they are the advantages, winnings type. In both cases one should establish which are the entities (*i.e.* the payers that bear the efforts, and, respectively, the beneficiaries of the gains), and, as well what is the moment each positive or negative effect appears, the moments of paying the costs or of getting the positive effects.

All these aspects should be considered when designing indicators (ratios). For further developments of such more complex approaches, including new ideas of correcting the productivity ratio and other improvements besides the already cited papers, one should also see Jivan (2000), as well as other more recent papers like Jivan, Năchescu (2018), for instance.

3. SOME PRINCIPLES FOR REVISING THE PRODUCTIVITY TOPIC

If we take into account the broad and narrow meaning of servicity (Jivan, 2000 and 2014) and noting with σ the narrow meaning of servicity, then we can write:

$$\sigma + w = 1. \quad (1)$$

The servicity in the narrow sense essentially expresses the aspects of qualitative contribution (service rendered to other entities than the analysed one). Such contribution (service) is not limited to the "produced" quantity, but primarily concerns the contribution made by the activity or the entity considered as a quality created. If we take into account these latter achievements (the *qualitative* plus realized), in short, the quality of the achievements (k) means that any activity can be expressed by such positive results (taken into account from a qualitative point of view, considering their qualitative importance), reported against some negative effects (of the kind of efforts, destruction, also in terms of quality, above all). This reasoning leads to an expression (writing) of the servicity in the following form:

$$\sigma = k/(1 - k) = 1/[(1 - k)/k] = 1/(1/k - 1). \quad (2)$$

From the already written (1) and (2), it follows that:

$$w = 1 - \sigma = 1 - k/(1 - k) = (1 - k - k)/(1 - k) = (1 - 2k)/(1 - k) \quad (3)$$

We can read this relation as follows: the higher the quality (*i.e.* the service brought to customers by the activities performed), the lower the productivity for the enterpriser. Indeed, as business receipts, income, generally the effects for a particular economic entity are desired to be bigger if compared with the consumption of the factors that this entity bears, the more the effort it makes (the costs incurred by it) for

the achievements concerned are lower (and, as is normal in any negotiation, it wants them as small as possible) Any economic entity seeks to achieve as high a productivity as possible (advantageous to itself); this is because, by the effect of increasing its productivity faster than the increase of the denominator in the usual formula for calculating productivity, the entity will be in an advantageous position if compared to the entities with which it engages business relations (including negotiations). But individualistic concerns of this nature can have negative effects at the general scale (at the level of a larger system, that is not reduced to the single individual), if there is no Pareto optimal situation (Jivan, 2014). The overall contribution for the environment (σ) and for the whole system ($\sigma + w$) is even lower as the Pareto optimality is not achieved.

Suppliers do not especially aim bringing quality for the customer (creating a quality image may be just a way, a means for selling at advantageous prices for the enterpriser); but business target obtaining revenues, best selling price (in the enterpriser's direct or indirect favour, therefore it may be to the detriment of customers). But, on the contrary, from a servicity point of view, the selling price should be as small as possible to the advantage of the customer:

$$\sigma = k/p, \text{ from which follows } p = k/\sigma \quad (4)$$

As already suggested, the purchase price of the entrepreneur's offers can be increased by increasing the quality. But if it increases, it means lowering the servicity: the higher the price, the lower the rendered service (for more accuracy, we make the explanatory note that servicity decreases if the price increases faster than the quality offered at that price.).

Using (4), it follows:

$$w = k \cdot p = k \cdot k / \sigma \quad (5)$$

and vice versa, from, of formula (5), it follows:

$$p = w/ k, \quad (6)$$

i.e. the price increases productivity (in the advantage of the producer), but not (necessarily) the quality for the customer. So in formula (4) above, if we replace p in formula (5), it follows:

$$\sigma = k/(w/ k) = k^2/w. \quad (9)$$

It expresses that serviceability is increased by the increase of quality in customer's advantage, but is affected by (inversely proportional with) the productivity growth.

Productivity can grow by increasing the quality but also by market means (like, for instance, imposing the negotiating force, using formal ways of "enchanted" clientele and psychological prices or cunning), which means, in fact, the reduction of the actual contribution, the diminution of the rendered service.

Servicity, on the other hand, increases the smaller the difference between the higher price paid to suppliers and the market price. It also depends on the difference between the normal market price (the one under fair conditions of competition, *i.e.* for

pure and perfect competition) and the lower purchase price for the trader in the monopsonic position (the difference between the market price and the price paid by the monopson to its suppliers); here are also included the salaries paid to employees in poor countries by the multinational company (coming to such countries just to take advantage of the lower price of local labour: employees living in conditions of higher poverty, of lower incomes and under higher unemployment conditions, must bear the same level of work as Western employees, but on lower pay for their labour). We also may take into account the difference between the lower prices claimed from buyers and the market price, the difference between the monopoly price (the higher price claimed, by the company in monopolist position, to the buyers) and the market price under fair conditions of competition.

On the logic of the "buyer's gain" principle, the difference between the price the buyer would have offered and the lower price required by the company (although it might require more to that customer segment) is another aspect to be considered in this matter. We can also consider the difference between better quality and average market quality offered to buyers *at the same price*, as well as the spending on quality investments that are not recovered by increased prices.

From the lines here, it could result that most companies have negative servicity! We mention in particular the practical cases of monopoly and monopsony (*i.e.* companies recording the highest productivity ...).

Servicity (serviceability) would increase if companies would pay higher wages and better prices to other suppliers, higher than market prices, if a firm would bear higher costs to ensure customers a higher quality than customer-paid, with special concern for more security and sustainability than the common market level, *at the same price* (more advantageous to upstream and downstream of the concerned company, than usual in the consumer society). We highlight such aspects because in today's economy, production is not precisely in the quality purpose, nor for the protection of the planet's resources, but rather especially for selling as much as possible, that is to say even with calculated perishability, and for often replacing goods (by change of fashion, "redecorations", etc., which do not really represent necessities, but only respond to the purpose of buying other goods, renouncing the previously acquired ones).

Serviceability would be greater if companies would be content with a lower income (for themselves), in the purpose of paying better pricing to their suppliers (including higher employee wages), if they would provide customers with outputs at lower prices, if some of their profits were left unrealized for reasons of preserving nature, the forests of the planet, the ozone layer, and the conditions for the future generations of the nation (Manoilescu, 2012 was talking about income for the country too, not exclusively for a particular private entrepreneur) and of mankind (the Kyoto phenomenon). But, of course, such ideas will not benefit from a good image, maybe even a negative image, or, more simply, they will be silenced, because most of research and publications are based on sponsorships just from economic entities that, many of them, practice exploiting ways in relation to their environment, benefiting from their dominant positions. However, their situation is different from that of many small economic entities which, in order to obtain certain market positions, are forced to apply market action closer to the models of pure and perfect competition: namely, the ways of quality and of reduction prices. The latter are beneficial ways for the environment of the enterprisers, rather than for themselves, that is to say, in the light of the principle of Adam Smith's invisible hand. (We do not insist here on the question of the distinction to be made between operating under dominant conditions

on the market and, respectively, in conditions close to pure and perfect competition; we intend to develop it in future approaches on the topic.)

Servicity means efficiency of the performance (for the client, in its narrow sense, and for the entire system, in the broadest sense). For the provider, it means certain income only to the extent that, through this effectiveness for the client, for the whole environment and the systemic assembly, in a marketing optics, the provider (supplier) advertises, improves his/her image, ensures his/her clientele and market position, under competition. That is, the inherent selfishness of the businessman is satisfied exactly by satisfying the customer and by advantageous conditions offered to suppliers, and not by other means, which moralist Smith has not imagined, in his times (but which Veblen has revealed; see Veblen, 2009, for example).

On the subject of this section, we also mention Jean Gadrey's statement: “[La qualité] ne se verra pas ou se verra peu dans les mesures de la croissance «en volume» ou «à prix constants» sauf si l'on en change radicalement les méthodes pour qu'elles deviennent capables de refléter la «croissance qualitative durable», ce qui est loin d'être évident.” (Gadrey, 2010, p. 86-87). Criticisms on the way productivity is calculated can be found, for instance, in Bossel (1999), then Stiglitz, Joseph, Amartya Sen, Jean-Paul Fitoussi (2009b). Certain attempts to materialize some corrections on productivity calculations can be found in Jivan (2016).

4. CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

Productivity is a key principle of the economy since industrialization. Putting it under question is at least unusual but necessary, given the abuse of quantitative elements and, in this context, the abusing of the planet, especially as the economy has reached the stage of consumer society at all costs (for the sake of obtaining the gains). Economic growth dominates economic theory and practice and is further supported by propaganda interested in gains (gains only or mainly for ones) that are, unfortunately, destructive at the planetary level (for the systemic ensemble that includes both the actors that profit, and other actors, as well as the natural environment/Mother Nature). The bias to increase consumption through false stimuli, exceeding the human needs, cannot be the *natural*; but it is just for the sake of whims that are not justified (the "natural" word here gives the meanings envisaged in the conceptualism of the original liberalism). But the problem that makes necessary putting under question such productivity growth – and our present discussion – is that these individualist economic bias we are talking about are indifferent and insensitive to the environment, so perverse (destructive). As a cause for the negative effects of the quantitative approach, our approach charges the usual way of judging everything in terms appropriate only to the industry.

The issue is simplified when we find out (unveil) that everything is largely due to a routine of calculations (see the section "About the optimism of the calculated productivity's optics: some critical remarks", and that those calculations do not even reflect the true meaning of the genuine concept of productivity, of genuine liberalism): this initial concept is grounded by the idea of creation as rendered service (remarks and developments in the section "By opposition: intrinsic productivity". And the innovations modelled in the section "Some principles for revising the productivity topic" make clearer the distinction we highlight, pointing out the very opposite character of the calculated productivity towards the original and fundamental meaning.

The conclusions of the theoretical debate presented in this paper consist in putting under question and discussion of this indicator itself, with highlighting the necessity of correcting, completing or even replacing it, depending on the specific field on which the economic analyses are carried out. We underlined that any improvement in the economic field gets an importance that is bigger than just punctual (thus being more important than a redistribution, than absorptions from other economic entities) only if it proves to be a *general* optimization, which can be considered beneficial on the Pareto optimum line; in this approach that should be above the individual interests, the optimization should, moreover, be checked on a *multi-criteria* system (*i.e.* from the point of view of a generalised Pareto optimum).

If the manner of calculating productivity is criticized in the first section, it turns out that not the idea of productivity is wrong, but only its transposition into practice and the abuse of an inadequately rigorous calculation formula that cannot be appropriate and beneficial for all possible cases. In the second section, on the contrary, the idea of productivity was supported, but in a manner that better corresponds to the genuine essentials of this concept, as expressed in the original form of servicity. The opposition between (a) the fruitful character of an economic activity – that is to generate value by rendering service (delivering “good”) – and (b) the calculated productivity was underlined in an operationalized form in the third section, resulting in a more eloquent distinction between the issues addressed/discussed in previous sections. It is thus underlined that the current way of calculating productivity does not stimulate the quality of service (of serving the customer or other components of the system), as it should to correspond to the very essence of the concept of productivity; indeed, productivity understood in the usual manner may have adverse effects, conditions in which the legitimate interests of the enterpriser can continue to be realized *on the expenses of the environment*.

The paper refers to some researches that are related from the point of view of the ideas approached, in which certain other developments are being made.

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