

Preface

This book is dedicated to the study of indicators of quality of life in Latin America and it introduces the work of different colleagues of this region. It also includes the best papers of the Latin American conference on quality of life organized by UNICOM, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora, Argentina, September 2013.

The book is organized in three parts: Methodology, Urban Quality of Life: A Geographical View, and Quality of Life of Different Groups.

Part I comprises three chapters.

Chapter 1 by Graciela Tonon and Lía Rodríguez de la Vega discusses the development of a model to measure the quality of life and different forms of inequality in South America – taking into account social, cultural, political, religious, and economic dimensions. It is the result of a project conducted by the Research Program on Quality of Life, created in 2004 in the Faculty of Social Sciences, UNICOM, and LOMAScYT of Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora, Argentina, which has focused on research into the quality of life of young people. The core outputs are innovative, nontraditional quality-of-life indicators which can be applied to other populations and other geographical areas, particularly in Latin America.

Chapter 2 by Noelia Somarriba Arechavala and Pilar Zarzosa Espina provides an approach to the measurement of quality of life in Latin America from a territorial perspective by creating a synthetic quality of life indicator (SQLI) and adopting the social indicator approach. Among other objectives, the chapter seeks to obtain a robust synthetic measure of quality of life levels by using the P_2 distance method while analyzing intercountry disparities. The index comprises information on different social indicators from various life domains and enables a classification of Latin American countries, as well as a study of the impact of each individual indicator in order to determine disparities in quality-of-life levels. As a result, it is possible to draw conclusions concerning the aspects which emerge as the most relevant when explaining spatial disparities in the quality of life in Latin American countries.

Chapter 3 by Guillermo Velázquez proposes – from a brief theoretical and methodological discussion – the development of a quality-of-life index for Argentinean population. This index has been obtained from the weighted combination of

socioeconomic and environmental indicators. The units of analysis are 510 departments (corresponding to 23 provinces) and 15 communes of Buenos Aires City (CABA). The results reveal clear progress in socio-economic indicators during the first decade of the century; however, the level of regional inequality remains high.

Part II comprises six chapters.

Chapter 4 by Patricia Lucero, Sofia Ares, and Claudia Mikkelsen attempts to analyze the well-being of Argentine households, over the past 10 years. For that purpose, an index of quality of life requiring particular implementation has been arranged and subsequently applied to cities under the Permanent Household Survey (EPH-INDEC), whose databases correspond to 32 urban areas. The weighted index of the quality of urban life includes the education, health care, work and housing dimensions. The geographic information system (GIS), a tool which facilitates the creation of thematic cartography and synthesis maps, has been used for the purposes of spatial treatment. The period proposed for the analysis coincides with the stage called post-convertibility in Argentina, characterized by a unique model of accumulation with discrepant peculiarities as compared to the previous model of “convertibility” (1991–2001), both in the wider framework of the neoliberal accumulation regime.

Chapter 5 by Néstor Javier Gómez analyzes the changes in urban quality of life that took place in the province of Sta. Fe between the years 1991 and 2010, adopting as an interpretive framework the so-called developing stages or developing strategies which have been used in order to distinguish certain periods of the different political and economic stages in Argentina. The results reveal an improvement in the quality-of-life index (QLX). During those 19 years, the highest level of improvement has taken place in the last decade – each of the dimensions considered having experienced different degrees of progress. From the territorial standpoint, the municipal areas in the central and southern regions of the province are the ones that have met the highest quality-of-life rates. On the other hand, the greatest leap in progress was detected in the municipal areas corresponding to middle categories of life quality (within quartiles 2 and 3). In terms of QLX and demographic dynamics, the results show that, in the last decade, the municipal areas showing the highest QLX have shown a trend of higher population growth.

Chapter 6 by Javier Martinez is dedicated to the study of spatial inequalities in several cities of the Global South and in Latin America in particular, where there is concern about the gaps between low and high quality-of-life conditions in different areas. This concern is usually related to an intention to reduce those spatial inequalities by targeting and improving areas of low quality-of-life conditions. This chapter presents a methodological approach intended to map, analyze, and monitor intra-urban quality-of-life variations. It stems from a case study in the city of Rosario, Argentina, where this approach has been empirically applied by combining several data sources, including census data from 1991, 2001, and 2010 as well as administrative data. The combination of both objective and subjective quality-of-life condition indicators proved to be useful in identifying locations where some cartographic representations were underrepresenting people in low quality-of-life conditions. Critical and reflective selections of indicators and data sources have an influence on

the way variations in quality-of-life conditions are represented. Moreover, the results reveal the importance of recognizing the different scales at which quality-of-life inequalities are mapped, thus allowing gaps to become visible.

Chapter 7 by Claudia Mikkelsen provides information on the quality of life of the population residing in smaller towns within territorial segments undergoing a combination of various processes: repopulation, depopulation, and multi-activity, among others. Its approach requires the use of a quantitative and qualitative methodology, so that the data obtained from primary and secondary sources may account for the phenomena under study. The period proposed for the analysis comprises the last decades of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century in Argentina. Broadly speaking, it may be asserted that, at this stage, the stimulation of production policies of the 1990s was complemented by the consideration of the social dimension, i.e., a greater involvement of the state through the generation of social policies for local governments. In this context, minor towns may attest to the various impacts of different policies through a variety of socio-territorial expressions, such as depopulation, productive diversification, and repopulation.

Chapter 8 by Santiago Linares, Claudia Mikkelsen, Guillermo Velázquez, and Juan Pablo Celemín analyzes the spatial segregation and quality of life at intra-urban scales and the existing association between the two categories. Neighborhood spatial configuration influences human behavior because the population is not segregated randomly, but in a systematic pattern. This research measures spatial segregation and quality of life in two midsized cities by evaluating, from a statistical and geographical point of view, the way variations in spatial segregation make an impact on the quality-of-life index. Thematic mapping and scattered plots have allowed us to visualize the spatial arrangement of residential areas, according to both categories. While in both cities there is an associated pattern of distribution between the two categories, the smaller city showed a better performance.

Chapter 9 by Laura Zulaica and Rosana Ferraro presents the concept of “habitability,” referring to the social sphere of sustainability within the sustainable urban development paradigm in association with that of quality of life. This study aims at making a comparative analysis habitability conditions in peri-urban Mar del Plata in 1991, 2001, and 2011. A synthetic indicator that assesses habitability conditions (HCI) in those years was developed on the basis of previous studies, the selection of objective indicators, and the Omega Score technique. The distribution of the results obtained was subsequently analyzed (spatial autocorrelation). The best conditions were achieved in 2011, mainly because of the extension of basic sanitation services. Furthermore, the procedure enabled us to detect contrasts, within the peri-urban zone, in order to predict the behavior of the chosen variables and to synthesize its spatial distribution in each spatial unit, proving extremely useful in the management of critical areas.

Part III comprises three chapters.

Chapter 10 by Aquiles Pérez-Delgado presents the first analysis of a study developed in Caracas, Venezuela, about the quality of life of high school students, by using the PWI (Cummins, 2001) translated and adapted to Argentina’s version (Tonon and Aguirre 2009) and the ESCVP (Satisfaction with Life in the Country

scale, Tonon 2009–2011). For this purpose, a sample was compiled of 801 high school students from five educational institutions (three private and two state), 425 boys and 376 girls aged between 12 and 18. Satisfaction indicators of personal well-being showed differences between the students attending state schools and those attending private schools – revealing higher levels of satisfaction in the former, in all indicators except for the one marking economic status. As to the scale indicators of Satisfaction with Life in the Country, in all cases the rates were higher for high school students attending state institutions than for those attending private schools.

Chapter 11 by Daniel Holgado, Isidro Maya-Jariego, Jorge Palacio, and Óscar Oviedo-Trespalacios analyzes the educational, economic, and labor-related causes of child labor by carrying out a hierarchical segmentation analysis on a sample of 3,259 families enrolled in an educational prevention program concerned with child labor in the Colombian Caribbean Coast. The resulting model identified two child labor profiles. In families situated in a rural or suburban context, child labor has been related to forced displacement, during the last 5 years. On the other hand, in families living in the urban center, child labor is mainly associated to family income and maternal variables such as current employment status and educational level, as well as labor activity during her childhood.

Chapter 12 by Fermina Rojo-Perez and Gloria Fernández-Mayoralas presents the conceptual framework of the quality of later life in a study aimed at exploring whether there have been changes in the personal well-being of older adults, in 2008 and 2011, while seeking for associated factors among the most important quality-of-life domains. Two comparable data sources collected in 2008 and 2011 were used: the Quality of Life of Older Adults in Spain survey and the Ageing in Spain Longitudinal Study, Pilot Survey. The Personal Well-Being Index, as a multidimensional measure of quality of life, was employed to evaluate subjective well-being – personal, social, and residential characteristics being considered as independent variables. Descriptive statistical analysis, analysis of variance with Bonferroni post hoc comparison, and correlation statistical techniques were applied. It has been shown that improved personal and contextual conditions affect the quality of life. It would be desirable, though, to pursue this line from a longitudinal prospective in order to determine the causal factors that are exerting an influence on the changes in personal well-being in the course of the life of older adults.

The authors of this book have made valuable contributions to show different quality-of-life realities of Latin American countries.

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