Graciela Tonon   *Editor*

Indicators of Quality of Life in Latin America

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Editor

Indicators of Quality of Life in Latin America

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*To my loving children Pedro and Erica
and to my dear husband Walter who are my
support in my life and in my work.*

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 UNI-COM, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universidad Nacional of 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 Rodriguez 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.

Buenos Aires, Argentina   Graciela H. Tonon

Acknowledgments

Contents

Part I
Methodology

Chapter 1
Measuring Quality of Life and Inequalities in South America

Graciela Tonon and Lía Rodriguez de la Vega

1.1 Constructing Indicators

This chapter provides an overview of a project[1] that develops a model to measure quality of life and different forms of inequalities (social, cultural, political, religious, economic), through the incorporation of new indicators (non-traditional) with a regional perspective.

Traditionally, when working with indicators, the interest has been focused on obtaining generalizations and, in most cases, the latter have been presented as isolated from their socio-historical context of development. Nevertheless, in the last decades, there has been a tendency towards the construction of indicators, by region, generating an outlook that may integrate economic-political-cultural-social aspects. In this sense, it is important to consider that the construction of a new measuring instrument requires an approach that may integrate quantitative and qualitative views and, in order to do so it calls for a clear definition of both perspectives, a clear conceptualization of the relationship among the components, and a solid structure (Maggino 2009, p. 5). In this case, the instrument is organized in specific dimensions and contains socio-demographic variables to measure quality of life and inequalities.

According to Estes (2005, p. 3), social indicators are direct measures of phenomena which they purport to measure and indirectly measure other, ever more complex, phenomena that cannot be measured directly, or at least cannot easily be measured directly.

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[1] Research Project: *Quality of life and Inequalities: an alternative proposal for the study and measurement.* LOMASCyT. Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora.

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Estes (2005, pp. 4–5) characterized indicators as requiring a prior clear and mutually agreed upon operational definition, to validly measure what they purport to measure; to be reliable; to be representative of the population; to be timely; to have the capacity to be aggregated and disaggregated at various levels of analysis; to be easily interpreted; to be available for purposes of analysis; to reflect changes over time; to have policy relevance, and the capacity to reflect changes.

1.1.1 Important References on Quality of Life and Inequalities for the Understanding of Our Model

The origin of the term quality of life goes back to 1932 when economist Pigou referred to the quantification of the social services or costs of government decisions, as a means of calculating a net social product, applying the concept of quality of life for the first time. In the same decade, various Scandinavian authors proposed establishing a relation of the standards of living and the satisfaction of social needs – a question related to the accelerated development of the welfare state in Nordic countries.

Several decades elapsed before any progress was made, and it was not until the 1970s that significant work was done in the thematic field. In 1974, Easterlin's proposition related economy to personal welfare, and happiness, by expressing that the economic prosperity of a country does not necessarily affect the assessment of each subject's quality of life. In 1976, a text by Campbell, Converse and Rodgers, *The Quality of American life: Perceptions, Evaluation and Satisfactions*, became an outstanding topic, considering that the relationship between the so-called objective conditions and the psychological states was imperfect; thus, in order to be acquainted with a person's quality of life, it was necessary to ask for a description of the way he/she felt. In 1977, Estes constructed what was known as "index of social national vulnerability" which later, in 1985, became the "index of social progress". The ISP measured the adequacy of social services, i.e. the point at which the basic social needs are satisfied in a nation (Estes 1999, p. 140). As many as 107 countries were studied by using this proposition in the 1969/1970 and 1979/1980 periods, and one of the author's conclusions was that there were powerful economic and political forces which systematically served the purpose of promoting or delaying the patterns of social development in the world. These forces worked in favor of the economically advanced nations and functioned as determiners of global social stratification which pushed nations towards specific social vulnerability zones. In this sense, vulnerability zones continued to be relatively stable, with the passing of time, and reflected the nations' different capacities to reach the objects of development (Estes 1999, p. 141).

The International Society for Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS- www.isqols.org) was founded in 1995, with the general aim of promoting the development of quality of life studies at a world level and stimulating interdisciplinary research in the fields

of politics, social issues, behavior, medicine, and other disciplines devoted to development and to the environment. ISQOLS has become an international forum for researchers from different parts of the planet who are dedicated to that theme, with the aim of coordinating efforts of cooperation in order to develop theory, measuring methods, and intervention programs to improve quality of life.

In the case of Argentina, in 2004, the Faculty of Social Sciences of Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora organized the Research Program on Quality of Life, which was included in UNI-COM in 2011. Up till the present, the program has developed and concluded nine researches, both through quantitative and qualitative means.[2] In September 2013, the Second Latin-American UNI-COM Conference devoted to the study of quality of life in Latin America and the Caribbean, took place, considered as a Regional Conference of ISQOLS.

As regards the study of inequalities, an important antecedent in the theoretical definition of this concept is provided by the work of Fitoussi and Rosanvallón who in the early 1990s pointed out that, traditionally, the measurement of the evolution of inequalities had privileged the consideration of the income and, especially, the salaries (2003, p. 82). They made progress in the identification of two types of inequalities: those known as inter-categorial, traditionally studied and basically associated to the economic dimension; and the new inequalities, of an intra-categorial type, which elicit other dimensions of analysis.

Sen also referred to inequality by expressing that *the feeling of inequality may erode social cohesion* (2000, p. 120). According to Sen (2000, p. 66), the improvement of the standards of living of a population responds to two plausible models: economic growth, which implies a broadening of the general economic basis, and in which general social services are expanded; and the social policies generated by the government, which revolve around health, education, and social assistance. Hence, quality of life must not only be assessed in terms of achievements to reach vital satisfaction but also in its pursuit of the necessary freedom to achieve it.

The focus on *human capabilities* proposed by Sen (1990, p. 3) differs from the traditionally utilitarian assessment applied to the study of welfare, since it considers a variety of actions and human states, insofar as they are important themselves and not only in relation to utility. This focus considers the relevance of the differences in the way people satisfy their needs, centering all attention in the fact that the same persons may require different resources to achieve the development of the same liberties. Thus, a person acts and elicits changes leading to achievements which can be assessed according to their own values and aims, independent from external assessment criteria, therefore introducing the concept of human agency (Sen 2000, p.34).

Some *capabilities* are more difficult to measure than others, and the attempts to include them in an indicator may conceal, rather than reveal, information (Sen 2000, p. 107). Further, there arises a need for reflection on the concept of "operationalization", defined by Lazarsfeld (1973, p. 1) as the process of passing from one

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[2] See www.sociales.unlz.edu.ar/unicom/

concept (variable) to the indicators (observable), as a means of transforming theoretical notions into defined research operations.

In 2004 was established the Human Development and Capability Association, a global community of academics and practitioners that seeks to build an intellectual community around the ideas of human development and the capability approach, and relate these ideas to the policy arena (https://hd-ca.org/). Actually this association's members belong to over 70 different countries.

Several authors have studied inequalities from the theoretical proposition of human capabilities and have made great progress in their operationalization; we can mention the works of Anand and Hunter 2005; Anand et al. 2010, Vizard and Buchardt 2007, Roche 2008, Tonon 2008, Alkire and Foster 2010, among others.

Anand et al. proposed an instrument (OCAP-survey) involving the following domains of analysis: health, liberties, emotional capabilities, security, environment, social relations, habitation, and work which, in their application, allow information on the impact of human capabilities on people's satisfaction with life. In order to put it into practice in different geographical zones of Argentina,[3] Tonon (2008) has added to the instrument originally constructed by Anand, the following dimensions: access to work and type of work, access to health service at a satisfactory level, national and local government plans of assistance, and the citizens' attitude.

On the other hand, Vizard and Buchardt (2007) posed the following dimensions of analysis: enjoyment of family and social life, decent working conditions, access to education, physical and mental health, secure and comfortable living conditions, respect for one's choices, the possibility of being oneself, independence of expression, freedom from discrimination, personal security and security in the neighborhood, participation in decisions, having a say in matters. Roche (2008) worked on the selection of indicators used for official measurements in national census and in home surveys in Venezuela, with the aim of developing indexes for social groups. Alkire and Foster 2010 proposed a method of adjustment of the human development index which may show the distribution of human development throughout the population, considering different domains.

In 2006, a group of academics and professionals in Latin America began to organize regional meetings devoted to the study of human capabilities, thus forming (ALCADECA) Latin American and Caribbean Association for Human Development and the Study of Human Capabilities. In May 2012, the Faculty of Social Sciences of Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora organized the first Latin American Conference of UNI-COM, which became the seat of the fourth Latin American Congress of ALCADECA, *Human Development and The Study of Human Capabilities: Education and Employment as Dimensions of Development*, in which one of the topics for discussion was, precisely, the relation between inequalities and quality of life.

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[3] The translation of the instrument was made by Tonon and Rodriguez de la Vega (2007). Four national universities worked on the development of this project: UNLAM, UNLZ, UNMdP and UNSA (2008).

1.1.2 The Conceptual Model

Our conceptual model includes socio-demographic variables to measure quality of life and inequalities. Also it includes the ESCVP (scale of satisfaction with life in the country, Tonon, 2009–2011). This scale measures the level of satisfaction with quality of life in the country – a scale with 5 points with 1 corresponding to "totally dissatisfied" and 5 to "totally satisfied." The scale was developed with the national situation in mind. The survey instrument contains different items related to satisfaction with the quality of life in the country, street safety, the preservation of the environment, the state health system, the state educational system, job opportunities, the possibility of home ownership, the national economic situation, social security, government policies in relation to citizen needs, the transparency of government decisions, government social welfare programs, government assistance in emergency situations, tax system, political freedom, care of public places, respect of cultural diversity, and respect of religious diversity.

The domains to be measured are the following:

1. Education
2. Health
3. Employment
4. Personal security
5. Dwelling
6. Spiritual/religious beliefs
7. Cultural diversity
8. Participation in cultural activities
9. Gender
10. Discrimination
11. Environment
12. Community relations
13. Social support
14. Subjective wellbeing
15. Values
16. Satisfaction with life
17. Economic welfare
18. Politics and institutions

1.1.2.1 Education

Education is a cultural and social process that brings people together in collective of schools, subject chances and friendship groups (Vaughan and Walker 2012, p. 508). Education boosts people's quality of life and human capabilities by providing a source of social support and constituting a space for the construction of citizenship. Likewise, it is conformed as one of the propositions established in the *Well-being Manifesto for a Flourishing Society* (Shah & Marks 2004), which points out the

need to create an educational system that promotes quality of life. Quoting Nussbaun (2012, p. 181) education is in itself valuable and is also a source of satisfaction for life.

1.1.2.2 Health

Health is one of the vital components of quality of life; and, regarding health inequalities, Schneider et al. (2002) point out that there are two types: inequality of a health situation and inequality regarding health service. Traditionally, the indicators used to measure health people's situations have been those of death and morbidity, whereas the measurement of health services has been mostly made by applying concepts such as need, access, proficiency, and effectiveness. Equity regarding health is a multidimensional concept which cannot be solely understood in terms of distribution of sanitary attention. Thus according to Sen (2002, p. 7), a health policy requires the distinction between equality in health achievements and equality in the distribution of resources for sanitation.

1.1.2.3 Employment

This area has been developed following Castel (1995), who considers the individuals' relation with their work to be vital, for he conceives work as a privileged support for inclusion in the social structure, not as a mere technical relation to production. He sustains that the existence or a profound correlation between the place occupied by individuals in the social division of labor – as well as their participation in social networks – and the protection systems which ensure them against eventualities, offer a strong inclusion in the labor force, reflected in a certain security regarding salary and health services, while the insertion in a weak labor force will result in social vulnerability. Subjects need to occupy a certain space in society in order to develop their capacities as individuals (Castel and Haroche 2003), and this is directly related to the processes of social cohesion and vulnerability as well as to the social instances which enable the construction of spaces of support for the individual.

1.1.2.4 Personal Security

Rothchild (1995) indicates that, since the 1990s, the notion of security has experienced different changes: regarding its aims, there has been a transference of the nations' security to that of the individuals and of State security to the international system; and regarding content, new types of security have been contemplated (political, economic, social, and environmental) while there is now a multiplicity of responsible actors in this regard (the State, international institutions, non-governmental organizations, local and regional governments, etc.). As

aforementioned, in the new international context of the 1990s, there has been a growth not only of the use but also the legitimacy of the expression "human security", which considers the individual, in the first place, though there is no consensus regarding the sources of insecurity from which that individual should be protected. A more restricted view on human security (freedom from fear) alludes to the elimination of the threat with or actual abuse of power and violence in the subjects' daily lives; while a broader view (freedom from want) also takes into account the individuals' basic needs from the point of view of economy, food, social status, environment, and health. Thus, this new concept implies that security must be centered in the people and that their security is threatened by multiple hazards, all of which is closely related to the concept of "human development", i.e. the expansion of people's liberties. In this respect, our questionnaire embraces the more restricted conception, focusing on the threat or actual abuse of power, and violence in the subjects' daily lives.

1.1.2.5 Dwelling

According to the Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Committee, principal organism of the UN in charge of supervising the States' compliance with the right of habitation, this right should not be understood in a limited or restricted sense, equivalent to having "a roof over one's head, or considering it as a luxury. It should be considered as the right to live somewhere safely, in peace and with dignity" (General observation No 4, on the right to an adequate dwelling place – article 11, par.1 –, adopted on December 13, 1991) (United Nations 2004). We thus believe that the question of dwelling and access to a dwelling place is closely related to other social phenomena such as the social fracture derived from the process of economic restructuring, which cannot be separated from the territorial fracture of the present globalized scenario, all of which are plainly seen in the cities. Hence, the city appears as the scene of different uses of the soil, in different forms and contents: residential, commercial, industrial areas, i.e. a fragmentary space, whose fragments are linked by different flows of relationships (circulation of people, goods, information, decision making, etc.) (Lobato Correa 1989). This urban fragmentation primarily acknowledges two lines of analysis: one related to the processes of social inequalities and material and/or immaterial barriers, and another related to discontinuity in the process of urban expansion in the processes of metropolization.

1.1.2.6 Spiritual/Religious Beliefs

Both spirituality and religion possess a consistent nucleus which consists in thoughts, experiences, feelings, and behaviors derived from a search for something sacred, conceived either as reality or the ultimate truth, a divine being, depending on the subjects' perceptions (Koenig et al. 2001; Koenig 2008). Peterson and

Seligman (2004) consider that they both refer to beliefs and practices based on the certainty about the existence of a transcendental dimension of life. Yet spirituality would be universal so long as all cultures possessed conceptions and representations referred to an ultimate force, transcendent and sacred, oriented to the central aspects of life; in fact, it goes beyond religion and cultural boundaries, it exists both outside and inside religious contexts and it adopts its specific form according to each culture (Benjamin and Looby 1998).

1.1.2.7 Cultural Diversity

Diversity is inscribed within the relationship between culture and identity, culture being understood as the symbolic-expressive dimension of social practices (Geertz 1973/2003; Thompson 1993), and identity as a complex inter-subjective and relational social process generated in the subjects' daily social interactions which determine what is inherent in them – in opposition to what is not – as individuals or as members of a group, thus requiring social recognition in order to be acknowledged as such (Giménez 2004; Restrepo 2010). In this context, diversity is regarded as inherent in society, both internally and regarding other different societies. Considering society from the inside, diversity here refers to the different individual identities or to the identities of underlying sub-groups, while diversity between societies makes reference to different groups – considering, in the two latter cases, the notion of collective identity (Giménez 2004). Thus, we point out the existence of different elements (age, sex, religion, nationality, etc.) which determine the specification of the subjects and/or groups in terms of their social identities, clear evidence of the fact that identity is not only the effect of culture, but also what determines its very existence – for the internalization of culture is what enables its reproduction as well as its change. Furthermore, to the difference and distinction of identities, we should add their persistence in time and their value, insofar as they constitute the central value around which people organize their relationships with other people and with the world in general (Lipiansky 1992; Giménez 2004).

1.1.2.8 Participation in Cultural Activities

Heller (1982, quoted in Rodriguez de la Vega and Meza 2009) points out that the subjects participate insofar as they are motivated by their biographical conformation and so long as their socio-structural conditions allow it. Bourdieu (1993) in his analysis of social, economic and cultural stratification points out that the class fractions that share similar educational, professional, income levels and their corresponding attributes and distinctions, each have their unique world view and appropriation mechanism that contributes with positioning, as well as disposition processes, within different fields. Cultural and symbolic capitals often have underlying lives of their own and can manifest themselves via all sorts of positions, perceptions, criteria, which can determine the access of individuals or groups to the

acquisition of cultural capital, etc. Commenting on the results of several approaches on the correlation of such form of participation and a wider participation in community life, O'Toole (2006) points out that participation is something that can be viewed as a whole and cultural participation is very strongly linked to citizenship. The quest for knowledge regarding participation in cultural activities allows an awareness of the actual panorama of cultural activities as well as of the different participant groups (by gender, age, cultural level, etc.), an approximation to the subjects' leisure time – taking into account the distribution, diversity, access, and practice of the aforementioned activities – which account for the appropriation and use of cultural wealth and give way to the consideration of further forms of participation. Considering the importance of the existing relationship between culture and human rights, Baltá and Pascual (2005, quoted in Pascual i Ruiz and Dragojević 2007, p. 13) propose that culture should be reasoned out from the perspective of human rights, understanding that all men are entitled to have access to cultural works, to express themselves creatively, or to be able to generate new creative forms of exchange with other persons, considering the importance of culture in the public field and in the achievement of a complete human development.

1.1.2.9   Gender

In our view, gender is a set of beliefs, functions, and prescriptions, socially built taking sexual differences as a basis. Such social construction functions as a kind of cultural filter through which we interpret and experience the world, taking into account that gender attributes "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics to the different spheres of life, as well as to different behaviors and activities (Lamas 2007). The concepts of gender, thus, structure both perception and the concrete and symbolic organization of social life (Bourdieu 1980) and establish the distribution of power (i.e. differential control over the access to, or the actual symbolic and material resources) (Scott 1996).

1.1.2.10   Discrimination

In the relation of culture with identity, it should be noted that a community is not merely identified by objective cultural features, but by the ones that each member selects subjectively, and it is at this point that Pérez Agote (1986) remarks that even some biological attributes (like race) are social. It is in this social context of identities that we consider discrimination and elements related to it, such as stereotypes and prejudice. Dovidio et al. (2010) point out that discrimination implies more than a mere social distinction among social objects and further refers to inappropriate and potentially unfair treatment of other subjects, considering that they are members of some collective. Moreover, they add precisions regarding stereotypes, sustaining that the latter are cognitive schema used by social perceivers in order to process information about others, which not only reflect their beliefs regarding the

characteristic features of typical members of certain groups but also contain information about the qualities of those others, which exert an influence on emotional reactions towards the members of the group in question. As far as prejudice is concerned, they consider it to be an attitude which, like many others, contains cognitive components (beliefs regarding a certain group), affects (disgust), and co-natives (a disposition towards a negative behavior with the group in question).

1.1.2.11 Environment

Cozzani de Palmada (1991) analyzes the word in Spanish "medio ambiente" considering that *medio* is the "function of an element that serves as an instrument for the existence of other elements which it serves, in turn,…as a supporting element" and defines *ambiente* as the circumstances surrounding people or things" (Diccionario de Ciencias Sociales (Dictionary of Social Sciences), 1976, quoted in Cozzani de Palmada 1991, p. 76).[4] From a geographical point of view, he adds that *medio* then denotes the part of space that does not record human actions, while *ambiente* includes the multiplicity of elements that impose certain conditions in human life (from the presence of other living beings in the different dimensions of social relations to the cultural products at their disposal to satisfy their needs). According to the Conference of the United Nations on Environment, in Stockholm (1972), whose ideas would be corroborated by the World Conference on Environment, in Brazil (1992), the environment is considered to be the entirety of physical, chemical, biological, and social components, capable of causing direct or indirect effects over living beings and human activities, in a short or a long term. In that sense, they make allusion to a system liable to degradation, which possesses inter-dependent elements, human beings, among them, and such inter-dependence occurs because the decreasing qualities of the abovementioned elements particularly result from the actions developed by the human kind, and because such decrease, actually or potentially, affects the course of their lives.

1.1.2.12 Values

Values may be meant/considered as a property or set of properties, attributed to an entity – whether concrete or ideal – (Frondizi 1979), which overlap with the culture they emerge from. Thus, the adaptation process of the subjects in the course of their social lives may be regarded in the founding values of the norms that rule their lives and in the justification of their beliefs and knowledge (Goodenough 1975). Giménez (1996) points out that, among the analytical dimensions of the mass of cultural deeds, we may find that of culture as a vision of the world, which makes allusion to all reflections on totalities that imply a system of values, make actions meaningful,

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[4]This Dictionary was made by the Instituto de Estudios Políticos de Madrid, sponsored by UNESCO (Cozzani de Palmada 1991).

and allow the interpretation of the world. Gimenez (2005) further adds that identities are always subject to positive or negative assessment, and that identity is introduced as a source of values.

1.1.2.13 Community Relations

Satisfaction with the community leads people to become committed with it and to a greater satisfaction with community services, just as the living conditions in the community generate greater satisfaction with community life (Sirgy et al. 2008, p. 84). Thus community welfare becomes a predictor of quality of life. Bramston (2002) identified two vital elements when analyzing quality of life in a community: the neighborhood cohesion and the community sense of belonging. The sense of belonging in a community is a positive attitude towards others, a feeling of commitment towards the community and of collaboration with its development (Shah & Marks 2004). The sense of community is related with the experience of support even though the person may not be able to identify a particular individual or what is done to create this psychological sense (Bramston 2002, p. 263). Likewise, it is important to identify the places where the members of the community gather in order to interact and relate with each other, called "third places" by Oldenburg (1989). These are spaces which allow communication among persons, outside the first two traditionally known primary spheres of communication: the family (first place) and the work-place (second place). They are spaces where people enjoy getting together, thus forming a public scenario of social interaction which provides the subjects with a context of sociability, spontaneity, construction of community bond, and emotional expression (Oldenburg y Brissett 1982, p. 280 quoted by Jeffres et al. 2009 p. 335). Hence, the third places offer people a space to rest from the daily pressures, for they generate a sense of inclusivity and belonging, associated with participation in a social group. Likewise, also for the community, third places empower social interaction among its members, offering a safe meeting place for informal reunions.

1.1.2.14 Social Support

Social support generates health and quality of life. This concept was defined by Lin et al. (1979), as the affable support of a person through social bonds from other persons, groups, and community. Two types of social support have been identified: the one known as natural support system which is informal, basically emotional, generated by the family, friends, and neighbors, and which calls for reciprocal and mutual interaction; and the formal support system organized in associations and groups, as is the case of professional support in health care, education, and social services, which is characterized by being instrumental and informational (Villalba Quesada 1993).

1.1.2.15 Satisfaction with Life

Satisfaction with life represents a report of the kind of life people think they lead. Actually, this is not a domain but more a concept which can be measured in different domains. Diener (2005) considers that the so-called domains of satisfaction are the discernments people make in order to assess the different areas of their lives; though in order to totally understand the level of satisfaction each of them have in each area under study, it is necessary to ask them how important life is to them, how much they enjoy it, and how much they would wish to change it. According to Shah and Marks (2004), satisfaction with life includes satisfaction, pleasure, and enjoyment; differentiating this concept from that of personal development, which implies being committed with life, believing in autonomy, having a sense of life, and an attitude of curiosity.

1.1.2.16 Economic Welfare

As from the 1970s, Easterlin developed studies in which he systematically explored the relation of happiness with the per capita income in each country; his work showed that, as the countries in question underwent economic growth, the levels of happiness did not necessarily increase. The income-happiness ratio is complex, due to the fact that it is mediatized by different variables, such as health, social capital, and the nature of public funds (Graham 2011, p. 221). Besides, this relation is affected by each subject's personality features. Yet, this approach is not unanimous among authors. For the purposes of our work, the most important conclusion to consider in the results of Graham's study is his observation of the significant differences found per group within each of the countries.

1.1.2.17 Politics and Institutions

Lechner (2002, p. 119) considered social cohabitation as an order constructed by society itself as a foundation of democracy and, in this sense, according to this author, politics should also be responsible for people's subjective experiences (Lechner 2002, p. 120). Government interventions have implications in individual's capabilities considering available goods and services and the social contexts in which persons operate (Vaughan and Walker 2012, p. 498). Hence, the achievements of democracy not only depends on rules and procedures but also on the way in which the citizens take advantage of opportunities and this, in turn, depends on diverse factors such as the value of a multiparty system, the dynamics of moral arguments, and the formation of values. (Sen 2000, p. 194).

1.1.3 Final Comments

Our conceptual framework and domains will produce a survey for which a questionnaire will be consistently constructed to measure quality of life and inequalities, by incorporating indicators that respect social, political, economic, religious, and cultural diversities.

The point of this is our acknowledgment of the existence of different elements that influence people's answers which not only belong to an individual plane but also to another type of components such as culture, a definition of the scale, and the development conditions of the research (Maggino 2003, p. 4).

This brief conceptual and genealogical exposition shows a possible way in which a theoretical focus on quality of life can be related to the study of inequalities, taking into consideration the outlook on human capabilities proposed by Sen (2000).

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