

Community Quality-of-Life and Well-Being

Graciela Tonon *Editor*

# Quality of Life in Communities of Latin Countries

 Springer

# **Community Quality-of-Life and Well-Being**

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Rhonda Phillips, Phoenix, USA

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Graciela Tonon  
Editor

# Quality of Life in Communities of Latin Countries

 Springer

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*To my dearest husband Walter and my  
dearest children Pedro and Erica for their  
love and support and their understanding of  
my work*

# Preface

The general aim of this book is to rethink the concept of community in Latin countries and their quality of life and well-being, presenting unique experiences written by authors from Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, Portugal and Spain.

It is organized in two parts and contains 14 chapters.

Part I is organized in seven chapters and dedicated to the study of theory and practice of community quality of life.

The aim of Chap. 1, written by me, is to rethink the concepts of community and community quality of life in Latin American countries, reflected by the voices of actual persons; considering the importance of conversation in the inter-subjective relations among people in the community and the construction of a collective scenario for the building of a common ground. Recognizing that the advent of the digital era makes the construction of virtual communities; thus, we should nowadays make reference to *communities* rather than *community*.

In Chap. 2, Helena Marujo and Luis Neto explore a collaborative action-research project whose aim was to generate new knowledge about well-being and happiness in higher education, which might result in improved outcomes for the school communities. The discussion draws upon data from a study conducted across ten schools of Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal, using focus group interviews, and the World Café methodology to engage and connect participants in conversation, and appreciative inquiry to construct meaningful and transformative questions.

Denise Benatuil and Walter Toscano present, in Chap. 3, the relationship between sports and community well-being, taking into account factors such as social bonds, social and cultural integration, health, improved quality of life, and the enhancement of personal and community well-being, providing a theoretical assessment based on the concepts of well-being, community well-being, and sports, distinguishing the latter from mere physical activity.

In Chap. 4, Claudia Mikkelsen and Sofia Ares study the quality of life and commuting in rururban communities of Argentina considering that the processes of urban growth, which spread population encourage the intensification of everyday commuting and the demands for new services, public passenger transport system

and the educational and health infrastructure. The results of the study illustrate the inequality of opportunities in commuting and the generation and consolidation of situations of vulnerability in the analyzed communities, in relation to their quality of life.

Mariano Rojas in Chap. 5 studies the negative impact of crime and safety concerns on satisfaction with community life in Mexico using a representative data set from 100 Mexican urban municipalities which show that satisfaction with safety in the neighbourhood is crucial for community satisfaction and that victimization has a very large impact on satisfaction with safety in the neighbourhood.

In Chap. 6, Karla Valverde Viesca and Enrique Gutiérrez Márquez provides a general overview on a successful citizen participation experience that emerged with the implementation of the Programa Comunitario de Mejoramiento Barrial (PCMB) *Community Program of Neighborhood Improvement in Mexico City*, which has a direct impact on the quality of life of its beneficiaries.

Cecilia Cadena-Inostroza and María Esther Morales Fajardo present, in Chap. 7, water governance as a topic linked to changes in the quality of community life due to the impact of water shortages and the decline in water quality in the locality, in terms of conflict. The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the difficulties of operating governance networks in independent potable water committees in Mexico.

The second part of the book comprises seven chapters and it is dedicated to the community quality of life of different groups: indigenous people, displaced persons, migrants, children, young people and older adults.

In Chap. 8, Lía Rodríguez de la Vega and Héctor Rodríguez presented the quality of life of one of the indigenous groups of South America, the guarani community.

Jorge Palacio, Isidro Maya-Jariego, Amalio Blanco, José Amar and Colette Sabatier examine in Chap. 9 the factors that affect the quality of life of displaced people in Colombia, presenting the results of three studies carried out in Northern Colombia, with quantitative and qualitative data on the process of restoration and adaptation of displaced communities.

In Chap. 10 Jaime Alfaro, Javier Guzmán, David Sirlopú, Denise Oyarzún, Fernando Reyes, María Victoria Benavente, Jorge Varela and José Fernández de Rota examine the association between life satisfaction with social-communitarian dimensions, and specifically the role that the sense of community plays in Chilean adolescents.

The aim of Chap. 11, written by Javier Martínez, Michael McCall and Isabel Preto, is to present an analytical framework that includes the concepts of community well-being/quality-of-life/risk together with the application of participatory mapping methodology. Studying cases in Portugal, the authors learned that participatory approaches stimulate children and young people to critically and actively involve with their community in the identification of problems as well as in the co-design of solutions.

Vicente Rodríguez-Rodríguez, Fermina Rojo-Perez and Gloria Fernández-Mayoralas, present in Chap. 12 that family and social networks are changing at all



ages and these networks are among the most important dimensions of domain-specific quality of life among older adults. Using the Ageing in Spain Longitudinal Study, Pilot Survey (ELES-PS), representative of people aged 50 years old or more in community dwelling in Spain, the survey pointed to the residential independence of older adults from their family network, and the further relatives lived from older adults' home, the more contact was kept by phone, letter or other not in-person forms.

In Chap. 13, Cristiano Codagnone, Pilar Cruz and Isidro Maya-Jariego present a case study of the digital practices of Ecuadorians residing in a small city of Spain. The ethnographic fieldwork showed that Ecuadorian immigrants use digital media to maintain ties to the homeland and also as a tool for inclusion in the host society. Compared to mobile phones and online communities, *locutorios* are behaviour settings for recent immigrants, where digital media usage and appropriation take place in the context of local interaction among individuals in an active process of acculturation and adaptation to the receiving country.

Finally, Chap. 14, by Carmen Rodríguez-Blázquez, Gloria Fernández-Mayoralas, Fermina Rojo-Pérez, Pablo Martínez-Martín and Maria João Forjaz, present a cross-sectional study to assess the quality of life of community-dwelling older people and to identify its associated factors. Working with a representative sample of 1106 people aged 60 years or older in Spain, and using EQ-5D and PWI, the results indicated that quality of life of community-dwelling older adults was influenced by age, health status, loneliness, social support and disability.

I want to thank all the authors that participated in this book with original chapters that study the quality of life of different Latin communities.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Graciela Tonon

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My profound gratitude to Rhonda Phillips, President of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies and Editor of the Series *Community Quality of Life and Well-Being* for giving me the possibility of editing this book.

My gratitude to Joe Sirgy, who wrote the prologue of this book, and his generous comments always make me continue learning.

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My gratitude to Esther Otten and Hendrikje Tuerlings associated with Springer.

At Universidad de Palermo, Argentina, my gratitude to the Dean Elsa Zingman and the Academic Secretary, Luis Brajterman, who always supported my work.

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# Prologue

It is with great pleasure to write this forward for Prof. Graciela Tonon's book on *Quality of Life in Communities of Latin Countries*. Dr. Tonon's book is an edited book involving 14 authored chapters about issues of community well-being in various Latin American (and European) communities. The chapters are divided into two major parts. The first part focuses on issues of theory and practice. Some chapters are more general than others. For example, Dr. Tonon has a chapter that addresses how community quality of life is conceptualized in Latin American cultures. This is a more general topic compared to a chapter authored by Professor Mariano Rojas who focused on a specific quality-of-life issue, namely safety and crime in Mexico. The second part of the book involves research on specific groups: indigenous people, displaced people, migrants, children, youth, and elderly. Thus the book contributes significantly to the science of community well-being with specifically emphasizing Latin cultures.

The book is part of a new book series of Springer called *The Community Quality of Life and Well-being*. The series is a collection of volumes related to community quality-of-life and well-being research. The series provides community planners and quality-of-life researchers involved in community and regional well-being a conduit for innovative research and application. The research published in the series involves a variety of research and practice topics related to community well-being, whether relating to policy, application, research, and/or practice. Example topics include societal happiness, quality-of-life domains in the policy construct, measuring and gauging progress, dimensions of planning and community development, and related topics.

This book series was formerly entitled *Community Quality of Life Indicators: Best Practices*. This was a series involving a collection of books, each containing a set of chapters related to best practices of community indicators projects. Many communities (cities, towns, counties, provinces, cantons, state regions, etc.), guided

by their local planning community councils and local government and other local organizations, develop community indicator projects. These projects gauge community well-being. The indicator projects involve the conceptualization of community well-being that is unique and fitting to the local culture. Community is typically articulated in terms of a set of well-being dimensions: economic, social, environmental, etc. The data involved primary and/or secondary data. Primary data is collected through survey research. The focus is typically on subjective indicators of quality of life such as community residents' satisfaction with overall life, satisfaction with various life domains (e.g., life domains related to social, leisure, work, community, family, spiritual, financial, etc.), as well as satisfaction with varied community services (government, nonprofit, and business services operating within the community). With respect to data collection from secondary sources, this is typically based on objective indicators capturing varied dimensions of economic, social, and environmental well-being of the focal community. The book series is intended to provide community planners and researchers involved with community indicator projects with prototypic examples of how to plan and execute community indicator projects in the most effective way possible.

The series contained the following titles:

*Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases VI*, edited by M. Joseph Sirgy, Rhonda Phillips, and Don Rahtz (2013)

*Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases V*, edited by M. Joseph Sirgy, Rhonda Phillips, and Don Rahtz (2011)

*Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases IV*, edited by M. Joseph Sirgy, Rhonda Phillips, and Don Rahtz (2009)

*Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases III*, edited by M. Joseph Sirgy, Rhonda Phillips, and Don Rahtz (2009)

*Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases II*, edited by M. Joseph Sirgy, Don Rahtz, and Davide Swain (2006)

*Community Quality-of-Life Indicators: Best Cases*, edited by M. Joseph Sirgy, Don Rahtz, and Dong-Jin Lee (2004)

This series is published by Springer in partnership with the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS). ISQOLS is an academic and professional association whose mission is to promote and encourage research and collaboration in quality of life and well-being theory and applications.

For those who have a specific interest in community well-being research in a Latin cultural context, I am certain that you will find this book inspiring and highly informative.

Happy reading. Joe Sirgy

M. Joseph Sirgy  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University

**Part I**  
**Communities' Quality of Life:**  
**Theory and Practice**

# Chapter 1

## Rethinking Community Quality of Life in Latin American Countries

Graciela Tonon

**Abstract** The community is a totality which is meaningful to the people that form part of it. In this sense community is more than a geographic concentration; it is a concept that implies the inclusion of diversities and their being allowed to share within it. It is related to social support, intersubjective, participation, consensus, common beliefs, and a joint effort which aims at a major objective: intense and extensive relationships. Quality of life is a multidimensional concept (Bramston 2002) and comprises objective and subjective components (Cummins and Cahill 2000). Quality of life in the community is a specificity of quality of life in general, and community well-being is also a predictor of general well-being (Sirgy et al. 2008). Community implies the existence of social cohabitation which is constructed by society in itself as a foundation of democracy and, in this sense, according to Lechner (2002) politics should also take care of people's subjective experiences. Collective space in communities has become essential to citizens' rights, as it should guarantee, in terms of equality, the appropriation of neighborhood space by different social and cultural collectives, genders, and age groups; it is the space of representation in which a society becomes visible and at the same time constitutes a physical, symbolic, and political space. The beginning of this century presents us with new models of community which imply that the traditional concept has changed, together with the way people participate in community spaces. Today, the place of residence is not necessarily the space people identify themselves with, and where they participate. The present social transformations have affected the community's distinctive traditional characteristic as contained within space limits, to the idea of being formed by a few members that daily meet each other face to face. On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge the advent of the digital era and the construction of virtual communities; thus, we should nowadays make reference to

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*communities* rather than *community*. The aim of this chapter is to rethink the concepts of community and community quality of life in Latin American countries, reflected by the voices of actual persons; considering the importance of conversation in the intersubjective relations among people in the community and the construction of a collective scenario for the building of a common ground.

**Keywords** Community · Quality of life · Well-being · Intersubjective · Collective scenario · Common ground

## 1.1 Understanding the Multiple Definitions of Community in the Latin American Context

The beginning of this century presents us with new models of community which imply that the traditional concept is changing, together with the way people participate in community spaces.

The present social transformations have affected the community's distinctive traditional characteristic as contained within space limits, to the idea of being formed by a few members that daily meet each other face to face. In fact, today, place of residence is not necessarily the space people identify themselves with, and where they participate.

On the other hand, it is necessary to acknowledge the advent of the digital era and the construction of virtual communities. In this respect, Maya Jariego (2004, p. 190) points out that it is possible to define a community on the basis of interpersonal relationships which, in turn, derive in a sense of belonging that goes beyond geographical boundaries. Quoting Cruz and García Ruiz (2013, p. 373) the term community, as many other terms, "is nowadays being put to scrutiny, or even deconstruction." Thus, we should nowadays make reference to *communities* rather than *community*.

The aim of this section is to revise the different enunciations of the concept of community that are found in everyday life and which lead to the conclusion that there is not a single definition of the aforementioned term; moreover, the latter has undergone changes and variations which go hand in hand with the subsequent changes in the lives of persons in our region.

Our challenge is thus to understand the multiple components of those definitions, and our starting point is the idea expressed by Arendt (2005, p. 32) regarding the fact that understanding is different from information and knowledge though they are related, since understanding is based on previous knowledge—yet it both precedes and prolongs it.

This leads to a revision of the words expressed by the persons regarding their conception of community which, followed by a process of interpretation, derives in a possibly new outlook on community which comprises elements detected in their discourse, thus allowing us to define community as a social construction. During the last semester of 2015 and the first semester of 2016, we asked university

students who are taking courses related to the theory and methodology of community and field work in communities to write their own definition of community. From the examination and revision of the different definitions (over 100), we can surmise that there is a unanimous conception of community as a group/set of people who cohabit and share different elements, namely: a territory, geographical space and/or place, life styles, daily events, customs, identity, language, culture, activities, social norms, history, social bonds, network of relationships; people who dissent with each other, who help each other when problems arise, who seek/share a common aim/the greater good.

The following are some significant testimonies:

To my mind, a community is the scenario where people's daily lives unfold—it has geographical boundaries—where people have things in common, such as habits and customs, as well as integrated institutions (Female, 49 years old).

The community is a group of people who live and cohabit in a territory whose members interact, play different roles, and make the social structure work, each person being an active member of the community and part of the institutions. (Male, 28 years old).

Community is the name given to the set of social relations established among people in a certain place and time, sharing realities, customs, traditions, norms—either consensual or in conflict among its various social actors (Male, 22 years old).

Community is a group of persons who act and work together, pursuing a common aim or the greater good. In this context there are norms which regulate the daily actions. (Female, 31 years old).

It is interesting to point out that, in Latin America, there is a strong tendency to associate the word community with the idea of sharing a certain geographical space. Moreover, though phrases such as “educational community” and “virtual community” have become popular, according to our interpretation there is an underlying idea of sharing some kind of territory: in the former case, the school and, in the latter, the virtual network.

We should, then, attempt at defining the concept Latin America—though it would be far beyond our expectations for this chapter to carry out such a difficult task. We will, however, attempt to recognize the elements present in the communities of the region in question and their characteristics, such as the importance of interpersonal relations—these daily face-to-face encounters which often turn into friendships, though not always—and spontaneous solidarity which arises when a neighbor is in need, that spontaneous need to become involved in other people's problems, according to White and Ramirez (2016, p. 134), the need to have something to share with the community.

Those principles which make a community of citizens legitimate should be rooted in people's daily cohabitation (Lechner 2003, p. 45). Thus, contemporary concepts of community are identified either as a mode of existence, a social bond, a mobilizing project, or a political space (Carrillo 2002, pp. 51–52).

The political character of social coexistence is related to the subjective experience of community and to our capacity to organize the manner in which we wish to coexist (Lechner 2003, p. 46); it must be added, however, that the notion of

community in Latin America is an outstanding feature of its political culture—which does not necessarily mean that it has always given way to democracy (Carrillo 2002, p. 56). Community implies the existence of social cohabitation, which is constructed by society itself as a foundation of democracy and, in this sense, failing to recognize ourselves as co-citizens sets limitations to the establishment of a firmly rooted democracy (Lechner 2003, p. 44).

The community is a totality that is meaningful to the people that form part of it. In this sense, community is more than a geographic concentration; it is a concept that implies the inclusion of diversities and their being allowed to share within it. It is related to social support, intersubjectivity, participation, consensus, common beliefs, joint effort aiming at a major objective, and intense and extensive relationships. It thus becomes necessary to “vindicate the community as an analytical category capable of describing, understanding, and channeling social bonds, life schemes, referent identities, and social alternatives” (Carrillo 2002, p. 43).

## 1.2 Community Well-Being and Community Quality of Life

In the past decades, different authors have reflected upon the definition of the concept of community well-being.

For Wiseman and Brasher (2008, p. 358) the community well-being is the combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political conditions identified to flourish and fulfill their potential. For La Placa et al. (2013) the concept generally refers to the social, cultural, and psychological needs of individuals, their families, and communities. These authors (2013, p. 119) noticed that there is no universal definition of community well-being but it extends beyond solely subjective well-being, recognizing the influence of health, poverty, transportation and economic activity, and of environmental and ecological considerations. The importance of these definitions is that they acknowledge the multidimensional view of the concept and the relevant role of sociocultural contexts.

For White (2009, p. 14) well-being must be sought collectively and be identified at a community level rather than at an individual one; it is “produced through social and cultural (including political, economic and environmental) practice” (White 2016, p. 2) The author states that there are three possible interpretations of community well-being; namely, as the sum average of the levels of well-being of its members; as something inherent to the community, collectively considered; or as a social process in which there is a relationship between the collective and the individual aspects (White 2009, p. 15).

If we consider that well-being is the result of a social and cultural practice we agree with Atkinson et al. (2012) quoted in White (2016, p. 29) in the sense that relational well-being is socially and culturally constructed, rooted in a particular time and place. In this sense:

Well-being should not be regarded as a “thing” that people may “have”; constructions of well-being are intrinsically connected to the places in which they are produced, people’s personal accounts, and the methods of data generation and analysis. (White 2016, p. 38)

At this point it is worth considering the notion of well-being, not only from a personal perspective but also in social terms of collective groups, since the opportunities of a group are as important as those of each individual person (Royuela et al. 2003, p. 52). An initial conclusion may, thus, pose the central idea that any definition of well-being needs to be contextualized within communities of population and interest, as well as of place (Wiseman and Brasher 2008, p. 357) and that well-being analysis ought to be contextual (White 2009, p. 18). Taking this into consideration, it is not possible to assume the universality of well-being.

Since the edition of the pioneering book on quality of life by Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) in which the authors considered quality of life as an equivalent of well-being, further studies on the person have demonstrated various theoretical positions, as in the case of Ryff (1989) who considered well-being as an aspect of quality of life, Vitterso et al. (2002, p. 82) who stated that “everywhere in the world the quality of people’s lives depends on their ability to have a positive outlook on their lives”.

Now, let us observe the evolution of the conception of quality of life—considering that advanced studies on this process show a coincidence among different authors regarding the fact that the latter comprises both an objective and a subjective dimension of people’s lives, rendering it equally important to be acquainted with what people “have” as with what people “feel and perceive.” Quality of life is a multidimensional concept “that comprises a number of domains which people evaluate differently according to the importance they have in their lives” (Bramston 2002, p. 47).

Satisfaction with life in a community implies satisfaction with a number of situations; namely, security in streets and public places, social service, interaction among neighbors, infrastructure and equipment, public transport, capacity to work as well as enjoy leisure time in public spaces together with other members of the community, exchange views and discuss mutual worries and problems (Tonon 2012). Likewise, according to Bramston et al. (2002), quality of life in the community requires two major elements: community cohesion and people’s sense of belonging in the community.

In relation with community quality of life, we agree with the study developed by Sirgy et al. (2008, p. 102) which revealed that satisfaction with many community services tends to have a direct impact on community well-being through satisfaction with various life domains. The authors concluded that community quality of life is a specificity of quality of life in general and is also a predictor of general well-being.

In a research study developed between 2013 and 2014, we constructed an instrument for the measurement of quality of life and social inequalities among young people<sup>1</sup> that included a dimension devoted to socio-community relationships

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<sup>1</sup>See Tonon and Rodriguez de la Vega 2016, pp. 3–17.

which makes reference to community well-being, regarded from the point of view of the characteristics directly observed in our communities. For this purpose we constructed six indicators:

#### Indicators

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Satisfaction with life in the community

---

Satisfaction with neighbors

---

Participation in community organizations

---

Mutual help among neighbors in dealing with problems

---

The organization of the neighbors for the solving of community problems

---

Existence of public spaces for encounters among the members of the community

---

Satisfaction with life in the community consists of self-reports on the way people individually consider their lives in the communities they live in.

Satisfaction with neighbors implies that having friends or acquaintances among the members of the community is a source of social support (Laireter and Bauman 1992).

Participation in community organizations indicates the persons' levels of interest and commitment regarding community issues.

Mutual help among neighbors in the face of problems is different from the organization of the neighbors for the solving of community problems; in the former case, mutual aid is centered in face to face relationships, while the latter option is focused on community organizations aimed at solving shared problems.

Existence of public spaces for encounters among the members of the community makes allusion to the third places defined by Oldenburg (1989), i.e., the spaces which allow communication among people and constitute a public scenario of social interaction which provides persons with a context of sociability, spontaneity, community bonding, and emotional expression (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982, p. 280 quoted by Jeffres et al. 2009 p. 335).

To conclude, and in coincidence with Torres Carrillo (2002, pp. 44–47), we consider that the sense of community is a type of social relationship based on strong subjective bonds such as feelings, territorial proximity, beliefs and shared traditions, neighborhood, and friendship, all of which generate feelings of collective belonging.

### 1.3 Conversations and Interpersonal Relationships

In general one of the elements that come across as significant in Latin American communities is conversation between persons, which fulfills an outstanding role in interpersonal relationships.

However, as several authors point out, the world today is more concerned with images than with words (Bauman 2015, p. 116) and, the leading role of imagery, nowadays, is progressively restraining the former preeminence of the spoken word, thus altering the types of social conversations as well as individual arguments and those derived from citizens' participation in decision-making (Lechner 2003, p. 41).

It thus becomes instrumental to define conversation as playing the role of a kind of jargon, as well as a "social space which creates habits of public association through the coalescence of informative sequences" (Joseph 2002, p. 41). In other words, and coinciding with the aforementioned author, we believe conversation to be a typical social situation of interaction between persons (Joseph 2002, p. 71).

In everyday conversations, persons use the so-called common language, learnt during childhood, generally referred to as the mother tongue. This type of language does not generate concern about defining the words we use—which may give way to misunderstandings, since we take for granted that the meaning of the words we use are shared by our listeners. Sartori (2006, p. 20) defines everyday conversation as "an argument in which phrases are wielded, and which each part defends." It is the simplest and most vivid form of a language, though it is characterized by a reduced vocabulary in which the words remain undefined and the phrase links may be disorderly and arbitrary, and in which the conclusions to the arguments are prior to the attention focused on a demonstrative procedure (Sartori 2006, p. 20).

According to Schutz (1974, p. 41) the world we live in is intersubjective because the lives we lead in it are related to others. Interpersonal bonding presupposes shared understandings common significances, not a mere private communication between parties—moreover the social bond is inserted in a certain language and makes use of certain codes which are produced and reproduced in a public context (Lechner 2002, p. 57). Social bonds represent a heritage of knowledge and habits, of practical experiences and mental dispositions accumulated, reproduced, and transformed by a society for generations (Lechner 2002, p. 49); its development requires bonds of trust and reciprocity between citizens, as well as conversations related to common interests.

Yet, in each social space there is a subjective process called social subjectivation which is not merely constructed on the basis of the sum total of individual subjectivities, and which is defined by González Rey (2006) as:

The subjective process charged with subjective senses and symbolic processes which unfold in a set of social figures that inhabit those spaces: public speeches, representations, codes, norms, morality, which are instituted in social spaces and define their subjective charge (González Rey in Díaz Gómez 2006 p. 244).

And when referring to social subject we mean

a collective nucleus that shares a collective experience, and displays agglutinative practices (whether organized or not), around a project, thus becoming a force strong enough to exert an influence on personal decisions as well as on the society it belongs to (Carrillo 2006, p. 97).

Furthermore, in terms of communication and conversation, a public space also constitutes a space for communicative solidarity and a scenario where interactional

agreement and coproduced discursive conformation are not only possible but also necessary (Delgado and Malet 2007, p. 3).

In other words, the community allows individuals to be visualized as persons, with their individual subjectivities; moreover, “the act of transcending the inter-subjective frame of reference derives in access to the political scenario where viable future options are defined and confronted” (Martinez Pineda 2006, p. 97).

#### **1.4 Public Space, Collective Scenario and the Building of Common Ground**

Public space has been traditionally associated with the role of the State, though the present reality of our region calls for the citizens’ participation in community issues as well as in decision-making and in putting these decisions into practice—thus, public space has become a scenario of the citizens’ communal participation. Quoting Borja and Muxi (2000, p. 7) “public space is the space of representation in which society becomes visible”.

The public sphere is also characterized by differentiating itself from the domestic sphere and, in this sense it comes across as a scenario where citizens can exercise their rights and debate common issues. Public spaces have undertaken the strategic task of being the place in which nominally democratic systems confirm their egalitarian nature; it is the place which allows the citizens to exercise their freedom of speech and reunion to exert control over political powers, as well as a space in which those powers may be questioned regarding issues of general concern (Delgado and Malet 2007, p. 6).

Collective space is also reconfigured as a political concept, constituting a sphere of peaceful and harmonious coexistence of the heterogeneous community, thus confirming the fact that their members can be together (Delgado and Malet 2007, p. 2). In this context, politics may be regarded as the activity which unites people, in the sense that it makes their own world experiences meaningful, allowing them a space of construction of common senses and collective actions (Rabello de Castro 2007, p. 22).

The collective scenario is an active space for deliberation and construction. The collective space is one in which people mingle, and thus requires dealing with the differences between persons and the plural nature of human actions (Rabello de Castro 2007, p. 20). For Martinez Pineda (2006) it is.

an active space for imagination, deliberation, and construction; a place in which persons may express themselves without being afraid of making mistakes, a place of simultaneous consensus and disagreement, where they may create, criticize, deconstruct, reconstruct, and risk expressing their points of view (Martinez Pineda 2006, p. 138).

At this point, we consider it necessary to mark the difference between collective space and public space and, to that end, we quote Borja (2004, p. 114) when he states that “a broader conception of collective space is a more accurate way to

define the landscape, open or closed spaces in which collective life develops, independent from the patterns of its construction and management”. Following this idea, the aforementioned author comments about a dialogue on collective spaces, organized into five round tables and directed by Jean Louis Cohen, in which they discussed collective space analyzing it from different dimensions; namely, as a space of interaction of public and corporative strategies; as a scenario of urban mobility; as a space related to security; as a context of identity; and as a context of art within art itself (Borja 2004, p. 115).

Collective space in communities has become essential to citizens’ rights, as it should guarantee, in terms of equality, the appropriation of neighbourhood space by different social and cultural collectives, genders and age groups; it is the space of representation in which a society becomes visible and at the same time constitutes a physical, symbolic and political space. The building of common ground has become the concern of many—or we daresay, of all citizens.

## 1.5 Conclusion: The Way Forward

The title of this text refers to the possibility of rethinking community quality of life in Latin American countries and, on this point we coincide with Kohan (2003) who defines thought as an encounter, and also with Bauman (2015, p. 134) who has referred to thought in principle—coinciding with Arendt—by defining it as the loneliest of all activities, yet later acknowledging it as a dialogic instance.

Our decision to study and define quality of life in the communities of this region aims, among other things, at recovering and combining the specificities/peculiarities of the various scientific disciplines, thus proposing interdisciplinary work; quoting Dogan and Pahre (1993) by crossing the boundaries of each discipline, and generating exchange of methods, concepts, and theory.

Furthermore, our work is centered round the major role of the individuals in terms of person (person being researched and researcher person) in their space–time contexts. This implies taking an interest in the variety of relationships generated and developed—precisely between persons and the place and time in which their lives unfold, for it is through those relationships that they may recover their personal and life experiences, and their opinions.

In the pages above, we have revised and attempted to understand the multiple elements that present definitions of community are composed of—making special reference to Latin American communities—highlighting the concepts of: interpersonal relations, conversation, and the construction of collective spaces.

We have, further, pointed out the differences between collective space and public space, to conclude for the need of the construction of a common ground, a place in which the community members may interact and cohabit—a physical or even virtual space.



To sum up:

- The first requirement to work with communities is to understand its members' statements regarding their own communities, the constructions generated by each social group;
- any definition of well-being needs to be contextualized within communities of population and interest, well-being analysis ought to be contextual and, in this sense, it is not possible to consider the universality of well-being;
- “constructions of well-being are intrinsically connected to the context in which they are articulated and the research methods used to capture them” (Lorea-Gonzalez 2016, p. 243);
- the concept of community well-being varies with each culture;
- community well-being is also a predictor of general well-being (Sirgy et al. 2008);
- quality of life is a multidimensional concept that comprises objective and subjective components, and quality of life in community is a specific dimension specificity of quality of life in general;

The different definitions of community which emerge from the Latin American scenario are consistent with the idea that a community is a group of people who cohabit and share various elements; namely, a territory, a geographical space and/or place, lifestyles, everyday situations, customs, identity, language, culture, activities, norms, history, social bonds; people who construct a network of relationships, disagree and accept each other's peculiarities, people who are committed and help each other when in need, who seek/share a common aim/the greater good.

In view of the abovementioned, we may conclude that the study of community quality of life constitutes a theoretical possibility to recognize people's potentialities besides including a sociopolitical analysis of the context, which establishes a social and political reality based on respect of human rights, which allows for integrated work (Tonon 2012).

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## Chapter 2

# Exploring the Concept and Practices of *Felicitas Publica* at Lisbon University: A Community-Based Relational Approach to Well-being

Helena Águeda Marujo and Luis Miguel Neto

**Abstract** This chapter explores a collaborative action-research project, whose aim was to generate new knowledge about well-being and happiness in higher education, which might result in improved outcomes for the school communities. The discussion draws upon data from a study conducted across 10 Schools of the biggest Portuguese University—Universidade de Lisboa. The views and perspectives of 109 participants (students, teachers, chancellors and staff) have been sought through Focus-Group interviews, using the World Café methodology to engage and connect participants in conversation, and Appreciative Inquiry to construct meaningful and transformative questions. The study had multiple aims: to generate a genuine, collaborative and positive dialogic environment; to promote a sense of community through relational goods; to co-create a novel consciousness on the past and future of the collective and relational happiness processes inside these communities; to investigate the topic, in contributing with action-research methods; and to provide a framework for the science and application of well-being at the university level. Conversations addressed how each school and domain of science enrolled (Law, Humanities, Medicine, Social and Political Sciences, Physical Exercise and Human Movement, Dental Medicine, Agronomy, Architecture, Design and Arts, and Biology), defined Public Happiness, how the school members consider that they are promoting Public Happiness in everyday life, and how it can be developed and put into practice in the near future inside and outside every school community. Five major themes emerged in the images and written accounts across all school cohorts, associated with well-being, specifically concerning (1) quality of relationships; (2) school identity; (3) presence of virtuousness of the individuals and the community; (4) the vocation to learn and teach; and (5) contributions to the common good. Proposals for the enhancement of well-being in higher education

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through a community-based approach are discussed, in particular since such findings highlight the potential of more relational, democratic, reciprocate, virtuous and participatory approaches, beyond and besides academic learning.

**Keywords** *Felicitas Publica* · Community well-being · Appreciative inquiry · Relational goods · World Café · Well-being University · Action-research

## 2.1 Why Is There a Need to Address Happiness and Quality of Life from a Collective, Relational and Agentic Perspective?

The topics of happiness, well-being and quality of life have received amplified attention in the past decades and are emerging as a pulsating field of study across disciplines. Together with the drive coming from the burgeoning domain of positive psychology (for example, Biswas-Diener 2011; Huppert 2013; Rojas and Veenhoven 2013), the discipline of economics has also renewed its interest on these issues, even if only from peripheral groups of European scholars from Latin countries.

Both the concept of quality of life and that of happiness/well-being have evolved in recent years, and there is a current consensus on their multidimensional character (for example, Haworth and Hart 2007; Huppert 2013). In particular, in what concerns quality of life, since the time of its basically materialist origin, in which precedence was given to objective aspects of life, this concept moved to a perspective in which subjective aspects are considered essential. Even this group of academics from the economic sector consider that standard economic indicators and objective measures need to be reconciled with subjective components to track over time well-being and quality of life of communities and societies at large, in order to improve our lives and that of the planet (Bruni 2016).

Much of what emerged from the current and expanding well-being and happiness studies, either from psychology, sociology, philosophy, political sciences or economics, have helped subsidizing to the subjective components of quality of life.

In this paper, we contemplate quality of life as the general well-being of individuals and societies, therefore meaning that it points to different components/conditions for happiness. Well-being—or wellness—is a dynamic and active state of flourishing. It can be described as “both a positive and desirable state of affairs with life as a whole and with specific domains of life, such as health, economic situation, and relationships” (Prilleltensky 2013, p. 148). This author proposes six key domains, which include Interpersonal, Community, Occupational, Psychological, Physical, and Economical well-being. They all can and must be assessed with conjoint subjective and objective indicators. Alongside, it should be stressed that well-being actually involves a subtle, dialectical interplay between positive and negative phenomena (for example, Lomas 2016; Won and Tomer 2011).