

The heterogeneous level of life quality across Chilean regions

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HABITAT INTERNATIONAL

Volume: 68

Pages: 84-98

Special Issue: SI

DOI: 10.1016/j.habitatint.2017.06.010

Published: OCT 2017

Document Type: Article

[View Journal Impact](#)

Abstract

This paper integrates the empirical literature attempting to measure quality of life with different philosophical, economic and psychological approaches that shed some light on the contours of the concept. On this basis, we suggest quality of life is composed of multiple dimensions of value that are not reducible to a single teleological measure as proposed by utilitarianism and modern economics. A quality of life index must integrate subjective and objective indicators, measures of environmental quality and inequality, individual and collective wellbeing and material and non-materials aspects. We applied this framework to the regions of a rapidly growing economy, Chile, and despite the data limitations, the paper adds dimensions that have not been explicitly considered in previous work. Using a large set of indicators based mostly on micro-data, ten factors characterizing different dimensions of life are built from 27 indicators that represent: material and subjective individual wellbeing, collective good and subjective social welfare, environmental quality and resource inequality across the Chilean regions. The behavior of the factors is very heterogeneous across regions and the correlation between factors is positive for the one representing material and subjective individual welfare, but negative with the factors representing collective good and social wellbeing. Given these results, the methods used weighting and aggregation for calculating the index becomes critical in defining the final ranking of regions. For instance, the assumption about substitution between factors is a key issue. Three methods of aggregation are used to calculate the index: the arithmetic and geometric mean that allow perfect and imperfect substitution respectively and the min-function that does not allow substitution. The results show a great deal of variation in the Quality of Life Ranking among Chilean regions, suggesting policy makers that pursuing one or two dimensions is not enough for promoting quality of life due to the multidimensional character of the concept. (C) 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords

Author Keywords:[Regional quality of life](#); [Chile](#); [Regional development](#); [Quality of live index](#); [Subjective index](#); [Subjective quality of life](#); [Regional subjective index](#)

KeyWords Plus:[OF-LIFE](#); [PUBLIC-POLICY](#); [SATISFACTION](#); [INDICATORS](#); [HAPPINESS](#); [MODEL](#)

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Funding

Funding Agency	Grant Number
FONDAP -CONICYT - Chile	15130009
FONDECYT	1171025 CIE160009

[View funding text](#)

Publisher

PERGAMON-ELSEVIER SCIENCE LTD, THE BOULEVARD, LANGFORD LANE, KIDLINGTON, OXFORD OX5 1GB, ENGLAND

Journal Information

- **Impact Factor:** [Journal Citation Reports](#)

Categories / Classification

Research Areas:Environmental Sciences & Ecology; Public Administration; Urban Studies

Web of Science Categories:Environmental Studies; Planning & Development; Urban Studies

Document Information

Language:English

Accession Number: [WOS:000412962200010](#)

ISSN: 0197-3975

eISSN: 1873-5428

