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QUALITY OF LIFE AS A GOAL OF DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN TERRITORIAL SYSTEMS – THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL ASPECTS

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to examine the role of quality of life among development policy objectives in territorial systems by analyzing its theoretical and empirical aspects and evaluation of its place in the territorial development strategy papers. In theoretical considerations an attempt was made to identify the origin and essence of the discussed phenomenon, with emphasis on its interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach and territorial aspect. In the following part were discussed methodological aspects concerning the issue of its measurement, using a variety of indicators and measures and an overview of the most important researches. An important part of the article is analysis of the projection part of national, regional and local development strategies, to investigate the issue of improving the quality of life and its individual aspects among the priorities, interventions and undertakings defined and undertaken by the territorial authorities.

Keywords: Development policy, development policy objectives, local development, programming of territorial development, quality of life, regional development, territorial systems.

JEL codes: I31, R58

1. Purpose and scope of the study

The concept of quality of life is an increasingly important issue in contemporary science and the practice of socio-economic life. There is no doubt that in territorial crossings, units such as countries, regions or cities wishing to achieve long-term economic success must be able to create favorable conditions for their inhabitants,

security and development opportunities. A decent standard of existence and diversified offer of a region or city make people choose to live and work in it, reject migration offers to other national and foreign centers and investors are more willing to invest in capital and investment.

The main aim of this article is to examine and assess the role of quality of life among development policy objectives in territorial systems and thus the awareness of local authorities in this regard. To achieve the main purpose of the study, several specific objectives have been identified that have served and indicated the way to achieve it, *i.e.*: 1) presenting the genesis of research and the concept of quality of life in an interdisciplinary perspective; 2) recognition of the essence of quality of life in territorial systems; 3) presentation of methods of measuring the quality of life of the given territorial units and review of current research and 4) analysis of the projection part of national, regional and local strategic documents to assess the quality of life of the inhabitants among their priorities and actions.

The research hypothesis that was raised at the initial stage of reflection and analysis is as follows: quality of life of territorial communities as a complex and multidimensional category is the overriding priority of any development strategy in territorial systems and a starting point for any actions, undertakings and interventions undertaken by self-governmental authorities.

2. Origin of research on quality of life, definition problems and the essence of the phenomenon

The issues related to the broadly understood quality of life and various aspects associated with it, were at the center of interest of already ancient thinkers who tried in particular to deepen their knowledge and to identify the determinants of the happy and satisfied existence of the people living in the area. For many centuries, the interest in this issue was merely a form of utopian reflection on the vision of an ideal society, or on the sources of wealth in the individual and social dimensions (Ostasiewicz 2004: 11-19).

Some researchers dealing with quality of life argue that the genesis of contemporary research on some of its aspects dates back to the nineteenth century, but it should be emphasized that the concept was not used yet. The term “quality of life” first appeared in literature only in the second half of the twentieth century, after the Second World War, in the USA (Marcinkowski & Wnuk 2012: 23). It was then identified only with the material sphere and economic prosperity, which was to a certain extent related to the socio-economic and political situation of many countries at that time. It was investigated, among others, how industrial development and the rise in economic performance of states, and consequently the delivery and high consumption of goods and the satisfaction of material needs, affect the quality of life in society. The high level of quality of life was then matched only to the satisfaction of the relevant material needs and to the achievement of a suitable income by each resident, generally accepted as the subsistence minimum. It should

be noted here that this approach can only now be equated with the level of life that concerns the satisfaction of material needs and is linked to the economic capacity of the inhabitants of the territory, which is reflected in the acquisition and consumption of various goods and services (Sompolska-Rzechuła 2013: 127-138).

It was only at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s that the quality of life on the ground of various social sciences began to be analyzed on a wider scale, pushing economic factors into the background a bit. They began to realize that the economic growth and the high consumption of material goods alone are not sufficient for individuals and individual societies to feel full of satisfaction and happiness from their existence. Moreover, attention has been drawn to the fact that in addition to positive effects, economic growth itself may also be conducive to the emergence of such negative issues as the degradation and pollution of the environment, the intensification of various social pathologies and disintegration and polarization of societies, which have a significant impact on the quality of human life and should be taken into account when researching discussed phenomenon. The reflection of this was the fact that in the considerations on the essence of quality of life began to take into account also its subjective dimension and qualitative indicators related to the humanistic components, *i.e.* social, psychological and environmental aspects of human functioning. So it was also perceived in the context of the possibility of self-realization, mental state, sense of security or broadly understood participation in its immediate environment (Sztumski 2014: 21-25).

It should be emphasized that the great contribution both to the dissemination of research into total quality of life and to the attention to its intangible determinants was provided by Campbell (1976: 117-124), who in his research project of the 1970s introduced indicators of human existence concerning the sociological and psychological sphere of human functioning, with an emphasis on investigating the subjective level of satisfaction of the inhabitants of their lives. In his research he showed that it is impossible to identify only the growth and improvement of objective living conditions such as material prosperity with feeling of happiness or life satisfaction. According to him, the determinants of the sense of fulfillment and satisfaction of life are also aspects such as successful family and work life, education, good interpersonal relationships and contacts with the local community, health, leisure, or general standards affecting the quality of life within a given local community.

It is extremely important that since then the quality of life has become the focus of interest and analysis of many disciplines and scientific fields. These disciplines often differ in purpose or method of research, but their common feature is that they extend to human existence and take into account various aspects of the conditions and standard of living of the population. Among them should be listed, first of all, sociology, psychology, economics, philosophy, medicine, pedagogy, social policy or spatial economy.

It is important to emphasize the fact that despite numerous attempts to arrive at a clear and precise definition, in the literature of the subject there is no only, universal conception of the discussed notion for all branches of science. Depending on the discipline of science, on which we consider it, emphasis is placed on the chosen

aspects and factors. The variety of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches to the attempt to explain and examine it undoubtedly demonstrates the extraordinary multidimensionality and interdisciplinarity of the term (Marcinkowski & Wnuk 2012: 21-26). In addition, very often when attempting to conceptualize the concept is also determined by the cultural, ethnic, historical, environmental or political context.

Kolman (2002: 91-95) considers quality of life in the context of the degree of satisfaction of both the material and spiritual needs of man. Torrance (1987: 593-603) claims that the quality of life as an extremely complex and broad concept should take into account in its scope all aspects of human existence. Rapley (2003: 28) perceives it as a synonym and at the same time the resultant of aspects of physical, mental and social wellbeing, happy existence, satisfaction of one's living situation, self-fulfillment, not just the absence of illness, to what a considerable extent, according to him, contribute to it objectively good functioning, the issue of unemployment and income levels and freedom from coercion. Gillingham & Reece (1980: 91-101) argue that the quality of life is the degree of satisfaction of a person as a result of the consumption of goods and services of both those purchased on the market and those of a public nature, using both the material and social determinants of the environment in which the individual functions as well as forms of spending free time. Czapiński (2002: 9-34) claims that quality of life is inextricably linked to a sense of well-being and happiness. Waills (1976: 135-150) understands it by satisfying all kinds of human needs over long periods of time and attaining the values in the professional, family, personal, material and spiritual dimension. These values, according to him, are primarily physical and mental security, stabilization, choice, cognitive and self-expression, as well as broadly understood conditions related to time, space and having prospects for the future. Bell *et al.* (2006: 102-111) perceive quality of life as general prosperity, material and social status, physical and mental well-being and personal development of the individual. In a very interesting way defines the quality of life also Tomaszewski (1984: 207), who claims that it is the most appropriate measure of both world quality and human quality.

It is worth emphasizing that the above definitions of this concept are holistic, *i.e.* they perceive both objective and subjective aspects of the quality of human being. This broad perspective in literature is often referred to as global quality of life, which presents a comprehensive field of observation of all spheres and aspects of human functioning and existence. In literature, we also often find the perception of the conception of quality of life only in a narrow perspective, through the prism of only its subjective aspects. In this context, the quality of life is usually perceived as a separate category from the living standard of the population. This difference is very well illustrated by the Finnish sociologist Allardt (1993: 88-94), whose aspect of standard of living is related to the possession of all kinds of material goods, *i.e.* broadly understood prosperity, but the quality of life is perceived by him only by the prism of sense of existence and the emotional states that reflect the sphere of human intangible needs, with emphasis on social needs, personal development needs and well-being.

It is also very important that, according to Rokicka (2013: 161) there are five key streams of interest in the subject of quality of life in the literature, *i.e.*: 1) a trend which is related the natural environment and sustainable development, emphasizing the environmental consequences of civilization and socio-economic progress and their impact on the health and quality of life of the population; 2) a trend associated with medical science and quality of life conditional on health; 3) a trend that is related to social and psychological motives, especially in the context of civilization development and the impact of its various aspects on the lives of individuals and social groups; 4) a trend that relates to the broadly understood urbanization processes and the quality of life of urban and metropolitan residents and 5) a trend that focuses on the social and economic dimensions of the quality of life of the inhabitants of a given territorial unit, including local, regional, national, *etc.*

3. Quality of life in territorial systems – theoretical conceptions

Quality of life is not only a scientific category or an abstract being, which in various ways attempts to undergo conceptualization but, above all, it has a practical dimension. With this aspect we are dealing primarily when trying to examine the essence and image of the quality of life of the inhabitants of given territory, *i.e.* country, region, county, town or municipality.

It is extremely important that the quality of life of the population living in a given territorial unit is very often understood in two ways – from a narrow and wide perspective. In narrow terms, there are essentially three distinct categories for the discussed issue, *i.e.* living conditions, standard of living and quality of life. Living conditions can be defined most broadly as a whole of the objective environmental, socio-economic, infrastructural and institutional conditions in which a given individual or society lives within a particular territorial unit (Masik 2010: 37-42). The standard of living according to the most frequently cited definitions is the degree to which material, housing, education, health, cultural and leisure needs are met by the consumption of goods and services and the material and living standards (Panek 2014: 120-121). The quality of life, however, is considered from this point of view solely as subjective perception by the inhabitants of their own living situation, the degree of satisfaction of their needs, the self-fulfillment and their level of satisfaction and happiness (Kusterka-Jefmańska 2014: 170-173). On the broader side, which seems to be much closer to the multidimensional and holistic perception of the discussed concept, the quality of life is perceived as the widest category, which extends both to the conditions and standard of living of the people (*i.e.* objective aspects) and to the subjective aspect which is the perception of satisfaction of their existence. The concept of quality of life in territorial systems, *i.e.* in relation to inhabitants of a given country, region, city or other units, and its individual dimensions and aspects, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Quality of life in territorial systems and its components in broad term

QUALITY OF LIFE		
living conditions	objective dimension	subjective dimension
	standard of living	satisfaction with life
Geo-natural conditions and climate	Housing conditions	State of health and well-being
Level of socio-economic and civilization development	Technical condition and equipment of households in basic material goods and goods of higher order	Degree of achievement of goals and meet needs
Environmental standing (quality of drinking water, air quality, noise intensity, etc.)	Income level	A sense of self-fulfillment, personal development
Location and size of settlement unit	Expenditure level, including expenditure on:	Feeling of happiness
Quality and access to the elements of social infrastructure, i.e.:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food • clothing • education and training • health care • culture and participation in cultural events • sport, recreation and leisure 	Satisfaction with individual aspects of life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • education • health care • culture and cultural heritage • sport and recreation • social assistance • housing 	Consumption of goods and services	Mental, physical and social wellbeing
Quality and access to technical and communication infrastructure, i.e.:	Savings level	Evaluation of quality and access to public services and local and regional infrastructure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sewage network • water supply network • gas network • district heating network • waste management system • telecommunications technology • roads and highways • public transport • sidewalks, car parks, lighting, bike paths 	Financial situation	Sense of security in the economic and health dimensions and before losing property and crime
	Participation in the labor market and employment	Sense of political stability
	Financial security	Perception of their own material situation and housing conditions
	Material prosperity	How to spend free time
	Financial abilities	Individual lifestyle
	The use of social assistance	Value system
	Threat of poverty	A sense of bond and integration with the local community or exclusion and marginalization
		Social contacts and interpersonal relationships
		Participation and involvement in the territorial community
		A sense of local and regional identity

QUALITY OF LIFE	
objective dimension	subjective dimension
living conditions Public safety Situation on the local labor market and employment opportunities Access to information and knowledge Access to modern technology and innovation Quality of public space, development of space and green areas Level of social capital/social inequality/ social cohesion Equal opportunities and social justice Development of democracy and civil society Political freedom and civil rights Socio-economic policy of the state, region, municipality Functioning of government and self-government administration and institutions Quality of governance	standard of living satisfaction with life

Source: Own elaboration.

It should be noted that factors influencing the quality of life of the inhabitants of a given territorial unit, influenced by regional and local self-governments, are primarily the sphere of living conditions of the population and, to a lesser extent, the standard of living. Almost all of the aspects of living conditions of given territorial community, listed in the table above, belong to the basic and fundamental areas of activity of self-governments of different levels. Of course, governmental authorities are also influential in shaping and influencing them, thanks to the numerous financial and coordination instruments. It is also worth emphasizing the fact that objective indicators concerning the sphere of living conditions and living standards also serve to reflect the level of development and socio-economic situation of a given territorial unit.

As objective factors determining the quality of life in territorial systems can therefore be considered quality and access to all types of public services and socio-economic infrastructure and environmental, social, economic and political conditions in which the inhabitants of a given territorial unit live and which constitute the conditions of their lives and material prosperity, closely related to the aspect of living standard. The subjective factors, however, being the necessary complement of the image of the quality of life of the inhabitants in broad, holistic terms, reach the opinion and behavior of the citizens themselves.

The conditions and standard of living in the area of a given territorial unit determine in a significant way the subjective assessment of the inhabitants, but one should also note that there is also a paradox in the literature that the relationship between the objective conditions and the level of life of the inhabitants and their subjective sense of satisfaction and happiness are not always clear. There may be a situation to which Campbell (1976: 117-124) already refers, namely when improving the objective aspects and areas of life of the inhabitants related to the conditions and level of existence in the area of a given territorial unit is not accompanied by the simultaneous improvement of their satisfaction, happiness and better perception of their living situation in a given territory.

There is also a reverse situation, often referred to as the “paradox of contentment,” which is closely linked to the gap between the level of aspirations and life expectancies of the individual and the real objective aspects – the smaller the gap is, the greater is the individual satisfaction of life and a sense of happiness, even in spite of unfavorable objective factors, *i.e.* low level and bad living conditions (Karwowski 2003: 11-25). It is often stressed, however, that this is only a transitional situation, and in the long term, this state is transformed into frustration and depression and, in extreme cases, into various forms of deprivation and dissatisfaction as a result of the inability to improve one’s situation. Both of these cases are socially very unfavorable and can lead to a variety of social pathologies, tensions and social conflicts, which undoubtedly undermines the sense of bond and integration of a given territorial community and does not contribute to the building of social cohesion and the broadly defined development of a given territorial unit.

Nevertheless, the subjective quality of life is tied closely to the sense of satisfaction of the inhabitants of a given territorial unit from the various aspects and dimensions of one’s life. Significant role in the process of its shaping undoubtedly plays a degree

of satisfying the needs and desires of the citizens – which may be influenced by self-government authorities, especially in the case of delivering public services widely understood and taking care of the improvement of living conditions in the city and the region – and evaluation of the inhabitants' own existence through the prism of individual or collective values, their own aspirations or life goals. Very often this assessment is also made by comparing the conditions and the level of one's life and the possibility of development and self-realization with inhabitants of other settlements – for example, inhabitants of rural areas and smaller towns with inhabitants living in large cities or metropolises, inhabitants of regions of Eastern Poland, with inhabitants of better developed regions of Central Poland or Southern Poland. The negative assessment and perception of their living situation and development opportunities, which are related even to the lack of possibility to find a job, low access to social and technical infrastructure or low quality of the environment, are very often the determinants of migration both domestically – to regions and cities with greater development potential, better meet the needs – as well as foreign migration.

It is also worth emphasizing that the mere shaping of needs and desires of citizens is also determined by various environmental, cultural or socio-economic conditions, and moreover, these needs may be subject to change, along with changes in these determinants. In addition, under certain circumstances, some individual needs can become widespread and become social needs. It is therefore necessary to be able to reasonably anticipate, predict and plan actions and intentions, bearing in mind also this aspect.

It is worth mentioning here that depending on the adoption of different classification criteria we can consider the quality of life of a given territory from several perspectives. For example, the division into direct and indirect quality of life can be distinguished. The first one is identified with the subjective quality of life dimension and is a picture from direct survey research, *i.e.* surveys and interviews with residents, while the other is related to indirect observations, most often with the help of objective data and indicators of public statistics.

Equally important is the division of individual and collective quality of life in territorial systems. The first aspect concerns the perception of the quality of life from the perspective of a single person and of the various spheres of her life and therefore, according to some, is of fundamental character. As a research tool, the individual questionnaire is often used in this case. The other type is considered by some researchers to be in some way abstract, because its essence is the generalization of the individual quality of life of selected individuals residing in a given area by means of various quantitative and qualitative tools. Nevertheless, in spite of this – especially in the practice of socio-economic life and for statistical purposes – numerous studies are being conducted that are important for determining the level of the phenomenon in question from the point of view of the entire territorial community (as a rule, cities or individual municipalities, but also sometimes regions, the whole country or other categories of territorial units) (Raport z badań ... 2012: 8-12). In this case it is possible to talk about the quality of life of a given family, household, local, regional, national and border communities, etc. It should be emphasized here that both categories take into account both objective and subjective dimensions.

4. Quality of life in the territorial systems – empirical conceptions

Taking into account the issue of measuring the quality of life of the inhabitants of a given territorial unit, it should be stressed that, as with the problems of constructing the only precise definition that would convey the essence of the term in a precise manner, there is no single and universal measure for its precise examination. Despite this, a number of indicators and methods, both objective and subjective, detailed and synthetic, quantitative and qualitative, have been developed in the literature on the subject and practice of socio-economic life, which allow for the examination and analysis of its various aspects and factors. It is extremely important that when trying to measure the quality of life in a given territory, it should not be limited to strictly economic aspects and indicators, but rather to look at the problem in a holistic and interdisciplinary way.

As far as the methodology of measuring quality of life is concerned, it is important to point out that the basic division of indicators in the case of quality of life seems to be a distinction between objective and subjective indicators. Objective indicators on the living conditions and standard of living of the population measure the aspect of circumstances in which an individual or community lives, the quality and accessibility of all types of public services, and the level of satisfaction of needs, regardless of individual or social values. Subjective indicators, on the other hand, constitute an assessment of the degree of satisfaction of these needs by the inhabitants themselves. The sources of information for the first of these are various types of statistical data and databases, while the source of the other are all kinds of qualitative research, surveys, based on various surveys and interviews conducted within a given territorial community, which actually allow to capture elements and subjective aspects. It is extremely significant that both types of indicators should be treated in a complementary way in the quality of life research, mutually correct and complement each other. Only then is it possible to comprehensively illustrate the quality of existence of the inhabitants of a given territory.

From the point of view of the quality of life in a given territorial unit, it is also important to divide the indicators on account of their desired level of values. From this point of view it should be noted that stimulants are indicators whose high level is considered desirable and beneficial for the phenomenon, *e.g.* indicator of the number of volumes per public library or the ratio of new dwellings completed per 1000 inhabitants. In the case of destimulant, their high values prove negative for the development of a given territorial unit and the quality of life of its inhabitants, which is very well illustrated even by the infant mortality rate or the long-term unemployment rate. Quite often are also mentioned about the third type of indicators associated with this type of division, namely nominants, where values deviating to some extent from the most favorable nominal value or a certain range of values are considered as undesirable, *e.g.* calorie intake *per capita* per day (both too small and too large is not desirable for its proper development and health). Another example of nominant may be the issue of certain social benefits, which, after exceeding

certain levels and intensifying them, can generate passivity among citizens, claiming attitudes or, in extreme cases, choosing voluntary unemployment and taking benefits as a way of life. In this case, it is therefore necessary to determine their proper level and structure so that, on the one hand, they provide decent living and development opportunities for the disadvantaged but, on the other hand, do not deprive them of their active personal and socio-economic attitudes (Panek 2014: 125-127).

It is also worth mentioning the important distinction between the specific indicators that measure the level of satisfaction of partial needs within particular aspects of life (examples of specific indicators related to health care are presented in Table 2), group indicators obtained by aggregating specific indicators in a given field *e.g.* health care and synthetic indicators, aggregating all calculated specific or group indicators.

Table 2. Selected indicators for measuring the quality of life in territorial systems regarding the aspect of health care

Objective indicators		Subjective indicators
living conditions	standard of living	satisfaction with life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average life expectancy • Infant deaths per 1000 inhabitants • Deaths of residents according to selected age groups • Deaths from civilization diseases / infectious diseases/occupational diseases • Number of medical practices per 1000 inhabitants • Number of medical and dental advice <i>per capita</i> • Number of inhabitants per 1 clinic /1 specialist physician/1 pharmacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total health expenditure <i>per capita</i> • Social outlays for health and social care • Personal expenses for health and hygiene • Occurrence of financial difficulties of households related to the realization and satisfaction of health needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem of your health and well-being • Quality assessment of health care • Evaluation of access to medical services • Satisfaction with your state of health • Physical and mental wellbeing

Source: Own elaboration.

Extremely useful for assessing the quality of life of inhabitants of a given territorial unit is also used on an increasingly large scale measures of social development, which cover various aspects and components of the broadly understood quality of life of the population and allow to comprehensively examine the level and diversity of social development in a given territory and the quality of life of its inhabitants.

As one of the oldest and most widespread of this type of measure, the Geneva method, often called the distance method, should be mentioned. It was developed at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s as part of research by one of the United Nations institutions, namely the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, and then in some way modified by the Institute of Social Economy, in order to adapt it and the possibility of efficient use also in Poland. Despite the fact that

while measuring the broadly understood social development and quality of life of the population using this method only objective indicators are used, it yet comes to understanding the quality of life in a relatively broad sense taking into account such areas and dimensions as health, food, housing, education and training, social security, leisure and recreation and material management, which correspond to a number of specific indicators designed to construct a synthetic indicator. The quality of life is thus perceived as the level of realization and satisfaction of seven different types of household needs of a material, social and cultural nature. All of them are treated in this method as endogenous variables, alongside exogenous variables that may be random or non-random and serve to describe the causes of variation in levels and the fulfillment of the needs met, *i.e.* variability in the quality of life of the population in selected social, temporal and spatial structures (Panek 2014: 131).

An equally important measure considering some of the dimensions of the broadly defined quality of life of a given territorial unit is Human Development Index HDI which is very often used in practice by the United Nations Development Program. This measure, in its original form, allows to examine the level of social development at national level, taking into account three key dimensions of the quality of life of the population, *i.e.* life expectancy and health status, knowledge and education, and living and income levels. These aspects are measured by specific indicators, from which the synthetic indicator is then constructed. In addition, we also distinguish numerous HDI variants and modifications, including Local Human Development Index (used in poviats section), Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index IHDI (taking into account in its structure the issue of delamination and differences in the quality of life of the inhabitants of the surveyed areas) and Gender Inequality Index GII (its main objective is to identify differences and disparities between men and women in aspects of quality of life such as health, education, social and political involvement and access to the labor market and income) (Antczak 2012: 9-22).

When considering how to measure the quality of life with synthetic measures, it is impossible not to mention also about the Quality of Life Index, which was developed by the popular British weekly magazine *The Economics*. Its main purpose is to illustrate the quality of life of inhabitants of a given territorial unit as a result of the combination of both objective indicators and the results of research on its subjective dimension, *i.e.* the degree of satisfaction of the inhabitants from particular aspects of their existence. Among the numerous components of the discussed measure are such quality life spheres as the material situation, the environment (climate and geographical location), health, security, stability and political freedom, employment stability, gender equality and family and community life (Krajowy raport... 2012: 23-26).

An equally important measure of the quality of life within a given territorial unit – as a rule a country, that deals with this phenomenon from a holistic perspective is the OECD Better Life Index, developed by international Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This index insists on eleven spheres related to the widely understood quality of life, *i.e.* health, education, living conditions, material situation, occupational activity, society, participation and social commitment, the state of the environment, security, the balance between private and professional

life and the sense of satisfaction of one's own being. In order to examine each of them, the OECD uses a total of twenty-four specific indicators that characterize the different spheres of life.

There are also measures to measure only the subjective quality of life and happiness of a given territorial community. For example, the quality of life survey using the Satisfaction with Life Index SLI, developed by a UK social psychologist, is based on conducting surveys and interviews with the inhabitants of a given territorial unit – usually a country – to diagnose their sense of happiness and satisfaction of their own lives. Citizens are asked, among others about aspects such as satisfaction with their financial situation, health status, access to education and development opportunities. The subjective quality of life dimension is also clearly highlighted using the Subjective Well-Being SWB indicator. The basis of the information used and analyzed within it is data derived from surveys conducted among the population of a given territorial unit, on the assessment of their own well-being, happiness and satisfaction from their own existence (Polak 2014: 11-13).

Interesting measures developed to try to measure the level of happiness levels within a given community are also The World Index of Happiness, also known as the Happy Planet Index HPI and the Gross National Happiness Index GNH. The first was developed in 2006 by the British New Economics Foundation, whose main goal is to promote justice and equality in both social, economic and environmental dimensions. This measure is used to measure the welfare of individual communities, taking into account aspects of the state of the environment and sustainability. It is based on three basic elements, *i.e.* expected life expectancy, subjective sense of happiness and satisfaction from life and the ecological footprint. So it illustrates how long the citizens of a given country live happily in relation to their environmental costs.

The second of these happiness measures was developed for a comprehensive measure of the quality of life of the relatively small South Asian state – Bhutan, with emphasis not only on economic but also on social and psychological issues. This is a multidimensional indicator, consisting of nine aspects of the broadly defined quality of life, *i.e.* conditions and standard of living, health status, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction, education, culture, effective use of time, relationships, environment and ecology and good governance. Each of the nine spheres is measured using a number of detailed indicators, and the data is derived from periodic surveys carried out among the inhabitants of the country, taking into account the region, age, sex, residence in town or in the countryside, *etc.* It is important to emphasize that this measure is still used today in the process of planning the socio-economic development of the country concerned (Krajowy raport ... 2012: 23-26).

Taking into account the research on the quality of life in territorial systems, it is important to emphasize that one of the first holistic and comprehensive studies in Poland was conducted by the Institute of Social Economy, founded in 1920 and still exists today in the SGH's organizational structure. Currently, this type of research is conducted regularly by Central Statistical Office. Also numerous universities and non-governmental organizations are involved in such research topics. The EU and its institutions, including the European Commission and Eurostat, also deal with issues

related to the quality of life of people and its improvement. Taking into account international organizations should also mention United Nations (and especially one of its agencies UNDP), the OECD and World Bank (Panek 2016: 29-33).

First and foremost, the research conducted by the local governments of the regions, poviats, cities and municipalities, which have become increasingly popular in recent years, is of paramount importance in terms of improving the quality of life of inhabitants at the level of individual territorial units. However, it may be worrying that, based on the analysis and review of numerous local government research on the quality of life, it can be concluded that they are most popular at the level of regions and large cities, while for small and medium-sized towns and rural communities is still a certain deficit in them.

It is extremely important that research into the quality of life in territorial systems brings a number of benefits and allows for better planning of undertakings and initiatives within the framework of their socio-economic and spatial development policy. First of all, they should provide a starting point for developing and updating all kinds of strategic programs for the future development of a given territorial unit, including diagnosing the present situation and identifying development barriers, and, above all, developing the projection part and establishing all kinds of goals and directions. Secondly, these researches should provide a valuable source of information for government and local governments on whether a given country, particularly a region, district, city or municipality, develops in line with the priorities and directions of action, and indirectly also on the effectiveness of their implementation and the pace of expected change. In the case of units of regional level and especially of local level, the aspect of communication through the survey of regional and local authorities with the inhabitants of a given territorial community is also relevant, because this is an opportunity to know their subjective assessment of wellbeing, expectations about investment and development directions, and at the same time provide a way to encourage them to participate in a variety of activities and initiatives to develop a given area and improve living conditions.

In addition, from the perspective of territorial marketing, the rankings of cities and regions which are built on the basis of both quantitative and qualitative research on quality of life, plays a major role, because it may in essence significantly shape the image of a given territory and as a result attract investors and new residents to the area or to maintain those already present. Examples of research on the quality of life conducted in recent years in territorial systems are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of selected cyclic and periodic research on quality of life at different levels of territorial units

EU level	National level	Regional and local level
European Quality of Life Survey	Social Diagnosis. Conditions and Quality of Life of Poles (survey of the Social Monitoring Council)	Surveys of subjective character, carried out among local and regional communities by the voivodeships, poviats and communes self-governments, e.g.:
European Survey of Income and Living Conditions of EU Countries	Quality of life in Poland (survey of the Central Statistical Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the Conditions and Quality of Life of the Pomeranian Residents and Their Perception of the Future
Quality of life research in European cities under the Urban Audit Program	Quality of Life, Social Capital, Poverty and Social Exclusion (survey of the Central Statistical Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of Quality of Life of Residents of Warsaw Districts
	Regional Difference in Quality of Life in Poland (survey of the Central Statistical Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of Quality of Life of Residents of Poznan
	National Social Development Report (survey of UNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Life of Residents and Public Services in Lodz
	Research on quality of life under the National Foresight 2020 Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study of Quality of Life of Residents of Municipalities of Lodz Region in the Light of Institutional Efficiency of Municipalities
	The various surveys of Center for Social Opinion Research	

Source: Own elaboration.

5. Quality of life among development policy objectives, in the light of national, regional and local strategy papers

It is extremely important that in the current Long-term National Development Strategy up to 2030 (Długookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju. Polska 2030, 2013: 24-43), which is a document defining the general trends, challenges and scenarios of the country's socio-economic development, the improvement of the quality of life of our country has been adopted as the overriding goal of development. It should be emphasized that as a measure of achievement of the assumed main objective, on the one hand, a quantitative growth rate of GDP *per capita* was adopted, and on the other hand, as a complement to it, a number of qualitative aspects, with an emphasis on increasing the level of broadly understood social cohesion, as far as possible limiting economic, social and territorial inequalities on the national scale and growth of innovativeness of the domestic economy in relation to other EU countries. In the context of the conditions that have a strong impact on the achievement of the stated objective, the document focuses on stable and high growth and economic development, pro-development spending and investments, and the civilization

leap of society that is predicted during the time perspective analyzed. It is also important that in order to achieve the key objective of development, which is the quality of life of Poles, it is assumed to undertake various activities and undertakings in three strategic areas. Firstly, increasing competitiveness and innovation, thus modernizing the economy, which is primarily related to the growth of intellectual capital, including human, social, relational and structural, as well as technological and digital progress. Secondly – what seems particularly important in terms of equalizing or at least easing differences in the quality of life of the inhabitants of individual regions – balancing the development potential of regions, with emphasis on the use of diffusion and absorption mechanisms in stimulating and exploiting the development potential of individual territorial units, and striving for the as far as possible cohesion in the social, economic and spatial dimension and thus shaping the high quality of life of their inhabitants. The last of the areas for improving the quality of people's lives concerns institutional factors, *i.e.* increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the operation of the state itself and its units and institutions, in the execution and implementation of the abovementioned activities and projects.

Another significant country-wide strategic document, where the quality of life of the population is a matter of even priority, is the Medium-term National Development Strategy up to 2020 (*Średniookresowa Strategia Rozwoju Kraju 2020 2012: 20-31*), which defines medium-term development goals and directions for action and intervention at national level. It should be emphasized in particular that the strategic objective of this strategy is to strengthen and to make the most effective use of socio-economic and institutional potentials, to ensure a high quality of life for the population and at the same time a faster and sustainable development of the country. With the emphasis on improving the quality of life of our citizens, three key areas of intervention have been developed, with a number of specific objectives and directions for intervention and action. These areas are, first of all, related to increasing the competitiveness of the economy by the rise of modern technologies and innovation, promoting a knowledge-based economy, investments in modern transport, energy and IT infrastructure, and developing human capital as far as possible. Secondly, shaping interregional social, economic and territorial cohesion, with an emphasis on equalizing quality and accessibility to public services, creating opportunities for each of the area of the country and each of the individual and social group to develop, the most effective social integration, fight against poverty, unemployment and all manifestations of marginalization and social and occupational exclusion. Thirdly, the institutionally efficient state, which is able to effectively dispose of available public funds, with an emphasis on development expenditure, stimulate the development of social capital and ensure the security of its citizens.

In light of the reflection on the aspect of improving the quality of life in territorial systems through development policy, it is impossible not to refer also to the current National Strategy for Regional Development (*Krajowa Strategia Rozwoju Regionalnego 2010-2020 2010: 81-94*), which is one of nine integrated strategies with the previously discussed Medium-term National Development Strategy. This document sets out the main objectives of regional development policy and the ways in which government and local government actors interact and act in the

development of our regions, cities and rural areas and thus improve the quality of life of population living there. It should be emphasized that in the provisions on the vision of discussed strategy, it was assumed that the Polish regions would have a better place for existence and development by 2020, by raising the level and quality of life of their inhabitants and creating a suitable social, economic and institutional framework. As in previous strategies, emphasis has been placed on such actions and directions of intervention to contribute to the achievement of the main objective as to increase regional competitiveness and innovation, shaping interregional cohesion in all its dimensions, increase in employment, caring for a high level of environmental protection and ecological safety and effective and partnership-based cooperation in the achievement of development objectives, with particular regard to the territorial approach and full use of the characteristic development potentials of each region.

Taking into account the currently applicable regional development strategies, prepared for each of the voivodeships up to 2020, it should be stressed that in most of them the issue of improving the quality of life of inhabitants residing in a given territory is contained directly or in mission, which is the overriding strategic goal of the region's development or accentuated in the vision of development, which is a synthetic description of the future of the region and its target image.

For example, the self-government of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship in its development strategy until 2020, the issue of high quality of life of the inhabitants has directly involved both the vision and mission of the region development. As far as the development vision is concerned, it assumes that the discussed region will become a smart and sustainable territory within the given period, which fully utilizes its endogenous potential and its transnational position and thus ensures a high quality of life for its inhabitants. The development mission, the overriding goal of the strategy, is also about improving the quality of life of the regional community, mainly through the efficient use of internal and external resources and sustainable socio-economic development.

This situation is also very well illustrated by the regional development strategy of the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship. At the top of the hierarchy of privileged areas and objectives of development is exactly the improvement of the quality of life of the inhabitants as well as sustainable development. It is the overriding goal of the adopted strategy, which is to be realized through actions and interventions mainly in aspects such as education, demography, social and technical infrastructure, work, entrepreneurship and innovation, social capital and social inclusion. The relations between the given elements are presented on Figure 1. The implementation of all types of activities and projects in these spheres is to be subordinated to the improvement of the quality of life in the region, under conditions of sustainable development.

The situation is similar in the case of the Łódzkie Voivodeship, which as a vision of development, has adopted striving for a coherent region in terms of territory and image, competitive and creative at national and EU level, with an emphasis on investment attractiveness and high quality of life for its inhabitants, or in the case of the Świętokrzyskie Region, whose overriding goal is to improve the quality of life

of the regional community through the as complete as possible, innovative use of the potential, advantages and opportunities of the region, the reversal of negative demographic trends and the care for the environment.

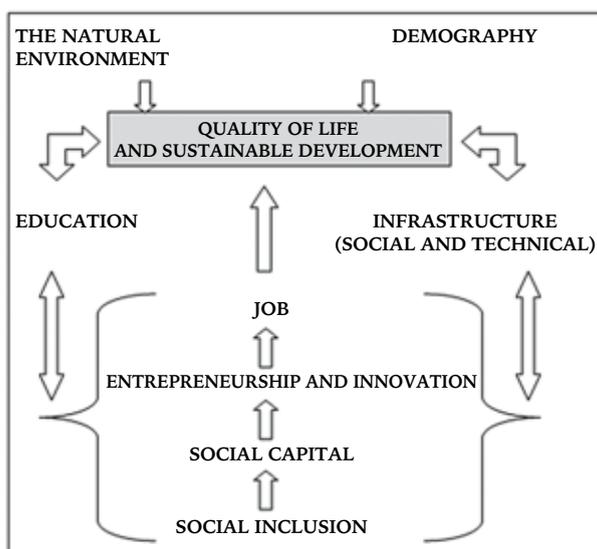


Fig. 1. Quality of life in the hierarchy of priority areas of development of Wielkopolska Region Strategy.

Source: (Strategia Rozwoju Województwa Wielkopolskiego do 2020: 74).

An interesting hierarchy of objectives was also presented in the Podlaskie Voivodeship development strategy, where three main strategic objectives were identified – one of them being the quality of life of the inhabitants – and the corresponding to each of them operational objectives and directions of intervention. According to the assumptions, the high quality of life of the inhabitants is to be achieved by actions in areas such as fight against the negative effects of demographic change, improving social cohesion, improving the health of the population, increase public safety, protection of environment and rational management of its resources.

There are also strategies for the development of regions of particular voivodeships (e.g. Lubelskie and Pomorskie), that have a quality of life as the strategic goal of development do not speak directly but their particular aspects and dimensions are indirectly reflected in the majority of goals, priorities or directions of action and intervention.

Taking into account development strategies at a local level, it should be emphasized that improving the quality of life and its individual aspects also play a central role in most of them. This applies both to poviats, to large cities as well as to small and medium-sized ones, as well as to rural communes as a rule. For example, the capital city of Warsaw, which aspires to the role of a European metropolis, listed the improvement of the quality of life and the security of its citizens as the first of six

key strategic objectives. These issues are to be achieved by improvement of the socio-economic infrastructure and the quality and access to public services. The city of Rzeszów, in its current development strategy, in formulated vision of development, speaks directly about shaping a city that is friendly to its citizens, where one can count on a high quality of life and comprehensive development in the social, economic and cultural spheres. In terms of small and medium-sized cities, it is worth mentioning, for example, the town of Krosno, which places emphasis on the quality of life of the local community through the development of education, culture, innovative economy and improvement of the natural environment, or the city of Tarnów whose main goal is formulated as best satisfying the needs of the inhabitants and improving their quality of life by providing modern services and supporting development. As an example of a rural community and quality of life among its development goals, it is worth mentioning the strategy of the Łódź commune of Czarnocin, which in its vision and mission directly takes into account the improvement of the quality of life of its inhabitants and the opportunities for achieving their development goals and aspirations, in particular through the sustainable development of agriculture, tourism and services and care for a clean environment. In addition, as an example of development strategy at the poviats level, it is worth mentioning, for example, about the Lower Silesian district of Jawor, which in its vision of development emphasizes the high quality of life offered to its inhabitants by guaranteeing good working conditions, active personal development and the development of knowledge and innovation and it also mentions the discussed problem as one of the three main strategic objectives.

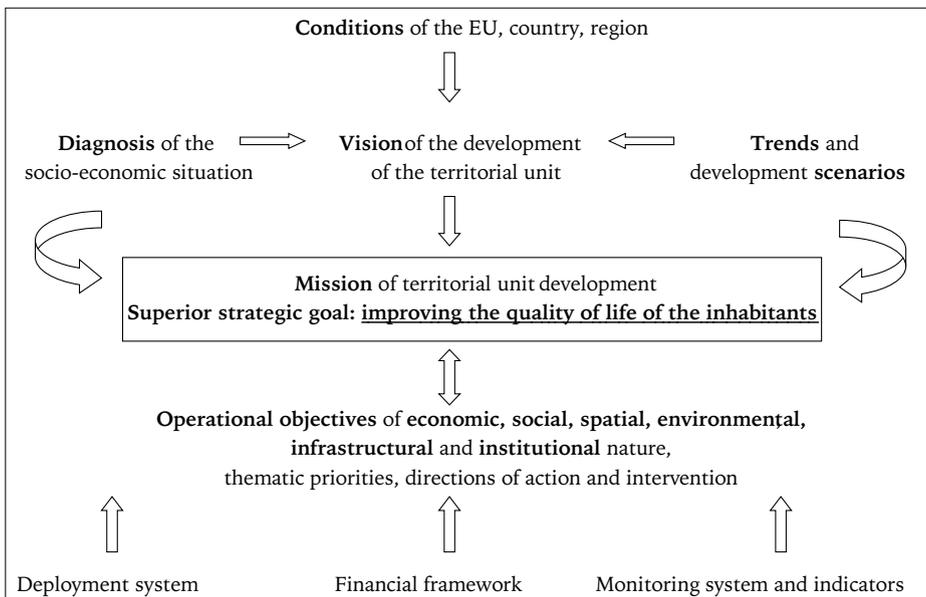


Fig. 2. Quality of life among development policy objectives in territorial systems

Source: Own elaboration.

Summary and conclusions

Quality of life is an extremely dynamic category, variable in time and space. At the present stage of socio-economic development and civilization development of society, its great importance is increasingly emphasized, and that it also provides many open research problems today, both theoretical and empirical. As a multi-faceted and very complex concept, there is no single its interpretation, universal for all branches of science for the time being, and one precise measurement method, nevertheless it plays an important role in the numerous analyzes and research carried out by various disciplines of science and practitioners and decision-makers.

It is also of great importance – or perhaps above all – from the perspective of the development of territorial units. Bearing in mind that the statutory duty of territorial authorities at various levels is to pursue development policy and to meet the collective needs of the territorial community, it is important to be aware in particular of the fact that improving the quality of life of the population, which includes both the improvement of the conditions and the level of their lives, should be treated as the overriding goal and the key priority of all actions and interventions of various kinds, undertaken by both national, regional and local authorities.

Based on the analysis of a number of studies on the quality of life and planning documents of Polish territorial units, two types of conclusions can be drawn. It is extremely positive that the issue of quality of life, both at the level of the country, regions, counties, cities and municipalities, usually occupies a prominent place in the structure and hierarchy of development policy objectives. This undoubtedly underscores the high level of this concept in the light of development policy objectives, and of utmost importance, the awareness of regional and local authorities that striving to improve the conditions, level and broadly understood quality of life of the territorial community and its individual units, should be an overriding priority and a starting point for all strategic undertakings and activities undertaken.

However, the deficit can be seen in the case of holistic and fragmentary research on the quality of life of small and medium-sized towns and rural areas. Such research is most often conducted only in the regions and larger cities. This is a disturbing phenomenon, due to the fact that the results of all kinds of research on the quality of life, especially those of holistic dimension, thus taking into account its various aspects and areas, carried out among inhabitants of a given territorial unit, have not only a cognitive meaning and value, but – more importantly – a practical one as well. It is extremely important that to be used them during the creation of development policies by territorial governments at different levels, including small towns and rural communities.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that the high quality of existence of the territorial community should be, firstly, the point of departure for both the government and the regional and local self-governments of interventions and undertakings, and secondly, what is even more important, the end result of them. Moreover, this issue can and should be considered as a key determinant of development in territorial systems. It can therefore be stated that quality of life is not only a goal but also a determinant of the broadly defined socio-economic

development of a given territorial unit. The high quality of life and the mitigation of differences in this area among the inhabitants are conducive to the construction of human capital, social capital and broadly understood social cohesion.

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