



Book Review:

**TERRITORIAL PROFILES OF QUALITY
OF LIFE IN ROMANIA**

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The book “Territorial profiles of quality of life in Romania” (Romanian Academy Press, Bucharest, 2013), coordinated by Professor Doctor Ioan Mărginean, deputy director of the Institute for Quality of Life Research is the result of the endeavour of a team of researchers which undertook to make a complex analysis of the territorial profiles of quality of life. This work capitalised on the high and sustainable expertise of the team coordinated by Professor Ioan Mărginean (Raluca Popescu, Ana Maria Preoteasa, Flavius Mihalache, Gabriela Neagu, Laura Tufă), each of the authors having a wealth of experience in the specific topic approached in this book.

The analysis reveals specific aspects of the quality of life within the different regions of development, in different residential areas and according to the large regions/provinces of Romania. The limited presentation of some county profiles is justified by the low representativeness of the data collected in the field, which prompted a particular level of the territorial analysis.

This book was drawn up within the context of the recent debates on regionalisation in Romania; it is certainly desirable to develop multifunctional entities, as argued by complex criteria. Another coordinate is revealed by the intention to join the

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international process of accomplishing the developmental goals of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2000.

Within the concept of quality of life diagnosis (DVC), the operationalization using 25 primary dimensions (p. 14) may suggest an optimal pattern organised according to three levels of generality: individual (health state, family relations, incomes, dwelling and work); community (local administration, community services and relations between people within the society) and societal (governance of the country, political life, general social services, conditions of life in Romania) (p. 14). It is important to highlight that “due to the strong independency of DCV indicators, they do not make up for each other” (p. 14).

The book consists of 7 chapters, two of them providing general and comparative data on the quality of life and performance of Romania in the field of human development (Ioan Mărginean, Chapters 1 and 7); the other chapters reflect subjects related to the family (Raluca Popescu, Chapter 2), level of socio-economic development of the rural areas from Romania (Flavius Mihalache, Chapter 3), relation between the educational offer and the demand from the labour market from Romania (Gabriela Neagu, Chapter 4), atypical occupation (Ana Maria Preoteasa, Chapter 5) and the benefits of the daily use of the Internet (Laura Tufă, Chapter 6).

Chapter 1, “Territorial profiles of the quality of life at national and regional level” presents analyses that use data available up to June 2010, making comparisons with November 1999 (the last year of the first decade of transition), concluding that a new survey is necessary which to reveal the changes in the quality of life of the population during the period of crisis (p. 22). The applied methodology refers to 53 indicators which form a special category regarding the perceived quality of life (evaluations, perceptions and subjective health state) (p. 24), for two years, 1999 and 2000. The conclusion is that the quality of life definitely improved in 2000-2008 due to the economic circumstances, while the difficulties which started in 2009 influenced adversely the conditions of life of the population (p. 47). The analysis brings additional information on the territorial profiles, but the quality of life topic remains open (p. 49).

Chapter 2, “Family in the life of Romanians” analyses comparatively the quality of the family life in Romania using data from the “Quality of Life Diagnosis” and from the “European Quality of Life Survey”. The analysis reveals specific aspects: demographic characteristics, family members contacts, evaluation of the family relations, time spent within the family and domestic chores, support from the family, evaluation of the family quality of life. The data support a profile of the Romanian family with a high quality of life (p. 73), valued by all socio-demographic categories; the pattern of the united family is dominant; the family from Romania has a low standard of living, which may justify the high solidarity (p. 74).

Chapter 3, “Differences in the socio-economic development of the rural areas from Romania”, identifies three analytical levels of the gaps for the urban places (demographic situation, regional context and economic inheritance from the communist period) (pp. 77-79), as well as several major socio-economic processes which affected the changes in the rural environment (p. 79). The territorial analysis

brings relevant information on the differences existing in Romania: public utilities networks; dwellings and access to the public services in the rural areas; local budgets. The conclusion of this section is that “the differences between the rural localities in terms of demographic evolution and socio-economic development increased” lately (p. 106).

Chapter 4, “Analysis of the relation between the educational offer and the demand from the labour market”, discusses the difficult socio-economic situation confronting most countries and its consequences on education and employment. This section presents the relation between education and the labour market in economic perspective (p. 112), making use of recent productions – articles, studies, surveys, databases. The conclusions of this section show that there is a deficit of communication and collaboration between the main actors involved in the relation between education and the labour market, although it is clear that in the Romanian society, the improvement of the educational level and of the employment rate are solutions of development, of improving the conditions of life and the standard of living (p. 137). Chapter 5 “The atypical occupation between conjuncture and flexibility” continues somehow the topic on the labour market by making an analysis of “any kind of non-standard economic activity (except the classical pattern of permanent labour contract with full working hours)” (p. 139). The chapter describes the situation from Romania in terms of self-employment in the rural areas, the low use of non-standard labour contracts and the precarious situation shown by the poverty of the working people.

Chapter 6, “Use of the Internet in the everyday life. Qualitative analysis of the benefits” provides an innovative framework of exploring the presence of the virtual space in the life of the people, in exploring the mechanisms by which the use of the internet in the quotidian practice plays a specific role in the production and support of the individual subjective welfare (p. 154). The results of the microsocial analysis show that the quotidian activities benefit of this opportunity, which allows the full reorganisation of these activities (p. 165).

The last chapter “Performance of Romania in the field of human development” relies mainly on the data of the 2011 Human Development Report, also providing the evolution of these reports and of the used indicators. It is important to note that “while human development stagnated lately, both in countries close to Romania (in terms of IHD size), and in the countries from the top, there is a rising dynamics” (p. 192).

The book brings valuable contributions by the clarifications it makes regarding the operational dimensions of the quality of life, and by using mixed methodologies to make sectorial comparative analyses. The territorial location of the aspects presented in the book provides many arguments in favour of using this complex perspective for the design of more efficient interventions during the next financing framework, 2014-2020. An essential aspect of the book published in 2013 by the Romanian Academy Press, refers to the provided framework of reflexion which has associated different solutions and recommendations that would require a more pragmatic and applied approach through the future social-economic interventions in the territory in the endeavour to improve the quality of life in Romania.