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COGNITIVE ADVANTAGES OF THE LIVELIHOOD CONCEPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH INTO THE QUALITY OF LIFE

WALORY POZNAWCZE KONCEPCJI ZABEZPIECZENIA EGZYSTENCJI W KONTEKŚCIE BADAŃ NAD JAKOŚCIĄ ŻYCIA

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Abstract

The article aims to present cognitive advantages of theoretical conceptions of the quality of life in the context of life quality research. The literature review indicates theoretical foundations of both approaches and problems with the parametrisation of the quality of life. The thematic scope of this notion is deeply embedded in a discourse on welfare and development as it was accepted as a measure of a reasonable economy and the implementation of development processes on a social level. The lack of one, commonly adopted definition produces many research approaches and various ways of measuring. What may prove useful in research into the quality of life is the livelihood conception. It was formed in a scientific milieu at the end of the 1980s and developed both analytically and in operational terms, making it possible to be used in practice, primarily in aid measures for developing countries. It was naturally linked to endogenous development theory, emphasising the importance of a local context. The conception takes account of a broad context of links between living conditions and socio-institutional factors. It also combines them with the results obtained and their evaluation. The livelihood conception is useful in research into occurrences determined by a large dynamic of changes in the form of sudden crises and long-term processes. The framework of this conception allows maintaining a synthetic picture of the quality of life and makes it possible to analyse developments both

Kałamucka W. (2024). Cognitive advantages of the livelihood conception in the context of research into the quality of life. *Czasopismo Geograficzne*, 95(3): 389–405. <https://doi.org/10.12657/czageo-95-17>



Otrzymano/Received: 19.03.2023
Zaakceptowano/Accepted: 4.06.2024

in the context of opportunities and threats. The conception is a useful tool for identifying possibilities for improvement in the present situation. It combines descriptive and evaluative dimensions of the quality of life being particularly helpful in local-scale research in which geographical factors significantly affect the quality of life. When applying this approach in research, geographers have a chance to be more fully engaged in studying current processes either in the realm of their own discipline or in interdisciplinary teams.

Keywords: quality of life, sustainable livelihood, rural areas, human geography, Poland.

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest prezentacja walorów poznawczych koncepcji teoretycznych jakości życia w kontekście badań nad jakością życia. W oparciu o przegląd literatury wskazano podstawy teoretyczne obu podejść i problemy parametryzacji jakości życia. Zakres tematyczny tego pojęcia jest silnie zakorzeniony w rozważaniach dotyczących dobrobytu i rozwoju, bowiem sformułowanie to w wymiarze społecznym przyjęto za miernik sensowności gospodarowania i wdrażania procesów rozwojowych. Brak jednoznacznej, powszechnie przyjętej definicji jest przyczyną wielu podejść badawczych i różnorodnych sposobów pomiaru. W badaniach jakości życia przydatna może okazać się koncepcja zabezpieczenia egzystencji. Powstała ona w środowisku naukowym pod koniec lat 80. ubiegłego wieku i była rozwijana zarówno pod względem analitycznym, jak i operacyjnym, pozwalającym na wykorzystanie jej w praktyce – głównie w działaniach pomocowych dla ludności krajów rozwijających się. W naturalny sposób powiązana była z teorią rozwoju endogenicznego, akcentującą znaczenie kontekstu lokalnego. Koncepcja uwzględnia szeroki kontekst powiązań warunków życia z czynnikami o charakterze społeczno-instytucjonalnym. Łączy je też z uzyskiwanymi efektami oraz ich oceną. Pomocna jest w badaniu zjawisk uwarunkowanych dużą dynamiką zmian zarówno o charakterze nagłych kryzysów, jak i procesów długotrwałych. Jej ramy pozwalają na otrzymanie syntetycznego obrazu jakości życia i analizę zachodzących zjawisk w kontekście szans i zagrożeń. Koncepcja ta stanowi użyteczne narzędzie służące do wskazania sposobów poprawy obecnej sytuacji. Jej wykorzystanie umożliwia połączenie wymiaru deskryptywnego i wartościującego jakości życia. Jest przydatna w szczególności w badaniach w skali lokalnej, w której czynniki geograficzne w znaczącym stopniu decydują o jakości życia. Podejmując badania z wykorzystaniem proponowanego podejścia, geografowie mają szansę szerzej włączyć się w badanie aktualnych procesów na gruncie własnej dyscypliny oraz w zespołach interdyscyplinarnych.

Słowa kluczowe: jakość życia, zabezpieczenie egzystencji, obszary wiejskie, geografia człowieka, Polska.

INTRODUCTION

In today's science, including geography, the role of qualitative studies grows in importance. The methods used in this approach allow in-depth analyses making it possible to understand subjective experience, social relations, interpretation

of a cultural context and other factors which add up to the real picture of geographical space and provide a holistic perspective on the investigated phenomena. Therefore, in the realm of social geography which strives to reconstruct the existing reality with all its facts, allowing for interdependency of occurring processes and explores this space also in terms of human needs, objectives of activities, emotions and values (Suliborski, Wójcik, 2014), it is worthwhile to make an attempt to show the possibilities provided by the conceptions used in life quality studies, relatively little-known in Polish geography, which use local-scale qualitative research as its basis. The article aims to determine cognitive advantages of the livelihood conception in the context of research into the quality of life, which is an increasingly attractive subject for researchers of many scientific disciplines as well as for ordinary individuals. What should be mentioned at this point is a historical context for interest in the issue of the quality of life, which sheds light on the evolution of the term and how it has impacted the diversity of research approaches. The emergence of this term was related to escalating civilisational changes and their negative consequences increasingly experienced since as early as the mid-20th century. It concerned both the sphere of the natural environment which was degrading on an unprecedented scale, also in cities which became a place of residence for more and more people, and the social sphere. The achievements in technology and labour organisation made it possible to enjoy more free time, have higher income, a higher level of healthcare, numerous social benefits; they have not, however, heightened a sense of life satisfaction. Conversely, what was observed was an increase in negative changes, such as the weakening of traditional cultural paradigms, excessive bureaucracy and centralisation, resulting in social pathologies, loneliness and alienation.

As a result, the area of interest of the public and researchers of widely understood social sciences has shifted beyond the realms of basic material goods. The quality of life became a notion which was focused on expectations related to more harmonious development that would recognise human needs outside the material world.

It should be emphasised that the term first emerged as a journalistic expression of an unspecified, intuitive character, and only since the 1970s it has become the subject of interest of researchers from various scientific backgrounds. The life-quality-related topics in geographical research appeared relatively late. Geographers interested in the human environment have studied and still do different aspects of the quality of life, the most prevalent being the trend referring to a spatial dimension and representing a quantitative approach (e.g. Śleszyński, 2021). Later on, there also appeared qualitative studies, but no separate, generally approved research conception was developed in the field of geography (e.g. Liszewski, 2004; Masik, 2004; Zborowski, 2004; Kulawiak, Smełkiewicz, 2021; Sądowska et al., 2022; Brosz et al., 2023).

The article proposes the expansion of the context of life quality research by applying the livelihood conception.

What is analysed in this approach is a broad context of determinants and the current state of individuals and social groups. Various human needs and the degree and way of their satisfaction are the common denominator of both conceptions (Kałamucka, 2017a, b, 2021). This is particularly useful in research into the quality of life at local level, especially rural areas lacking statistical data that would make it possible to analyse the phenomenon in more detail, and for which the importance of the environment is not limited to pollution-level parameters or aesthetics of the surroundings but embraces a very broad set of its resources determining the inhabitants' way of living.

The work uses a critical analysis of Polish and foreign literature.

TERMINOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Quality of life: Problems with definitions

The term 'quality of life' is present in many strands of social debates and scholar deliberations of various scientific disciplines. The thematic scope of this notion is deeply embedded in a discourse on welfare and development as it was accepted as a measure of a reasonable economy and the implementation of development processes on a social level. In terms of science, the issue of life quality emerged first in discussions led by economists who, up to the mid-1950s, were focused primarily on analysing economic growth and related issues. In the situation of scarcity of goods, economic growth was perceived as a process strongly correlated to increased welfare (Briggs, 1961; Wilensky, Lebaux, 1965). In highly developed countries, the daily social comfort of living was growing fast, embracing better housing equipment, easier access to basic services and means of individual and collective transport, allowing more distant travel, etc. The above-mentioned developments, however, were counterbalanced by increasingly often observed adverse effects of economic growth: undesirable changes in the natural environment in the form of pollution of its components, a decrease in resources and biodiversity, the weakening of self-regulatory capacity, and space fragmentation. Moreover, what also transpired were negative consequences borne by society experiencing the results of those changes, related to the adaptation barrier of people to rapid civilisational changes, to crisis of values, glorification of mass culture, subjugation of art and entertainment to the mass media and their transformation into a manipulation tool. The dissonance observed led to the distinction between the notion of welfare referring to material and economic needs and the concept of well-being related to a subjective perception of one's own situation in a physical and social dimension (Wiench, 1987). To determine well-being, the sets of dis-

aggregated social indicators were proposed; they showed the level of satisfaction of objective needs while not embracing the sphere of subjective perception of occurring changes. The notion of life quality that surfaced from the criticism of the approach to development processes in the 1960s created a completely new perspective of research. It was a separate category encompassing positive aspects of economic growth, a return to lost values, which means the possibility of living in a clean natural environment and a friendly social milieu, and also a real possibility of meeting various needs in the future. When combining both approaches and referring to a broad set of human needs, the quality of life is perceived as an interdisciplinary conception, opening up an opportunity to study this phenomenon comprehensively. The possibility of its application to monitoring current development changes in various spatial scales and at different levels of social organisation was its most important advantage (Michalska-Żyła, Marks-Krzyszowska, 2018; Sompolska-Rzechuła, Kurdyś-Kujawska, 2020; Wiesli, Hammer, 2022).

The multitude of research approaches was not conducive to creating a commonly approved definition of the quality of life. One of the first definitions provided by Strober (1973) in which the author specifies that “the quality of life is what people consider the quality of life”¹ may be recognised as the most general. Subjective aspects of the quality of life which reflect the appearance of this term in opposition to the notion level of life are also emphasised by Mitchel (1973), who states that is “an individual feeling of satisfaction resulting from meeting needs in a certain area”, and Dalkey and Rurke (1973), who contend that “the quality of life is a feeling of satisfaction or lack of satisfaction with life, happiness or unhappiness” (Kałamucka, 2017b). Many explanations focus on the comparative aspect with respect to some more or less specified benchmark levels. This can be illustrated by a definition provided by Encyclopedia of the Polish Scientific Publishers (*Encyklopedia PWN*): “a degree to which material or immaterial needs are met – to which standards or values are achieved: biological, psychological, spiritual, social and political, cultural, economic and ecological of individuals, families and communities”. Other definitions used in scientific research show not only the degree, but also the way of fulfilling needs and the level of contention attained from activities performed (Rutkowski, 1991), or they highlight its character, integrated and useful at the same time, as provided by Wojciechowski (1994): “the quality of life is an integrated measurement of the level and the way needs are met and objectives are pursued, related to a specific person or a social group”. The above definitions show that the structure of the quality of life is complex but also open, thus flexible and provides an opportunity to be combined with other research conceptions, which makes it possible to gain a fuller picture of how people function in today’s world. This was emphatically expressed by Dziurowicz-Kozłowska (2002):

¹ The quotations in this section have been translated from Polish.

“the notion of the quality of life owes its considerable success to its ambiguity, indetermination of theoretical and definitional assumptions, and, what follows, almost unlimited freedom of interpretation”. However, the gist of the notion of quality as a scientific category generates two main research trends referring to an evaluative understanding of life quality (low, high) or its descriptive interpretation (which assumes the existence of various qualities). The first one, both in theoretical deliberations and empirical research occurs much more often; however, because of large subjectivism in the selection of the reference level, it is burdened with a risk of oversimplification. The second, commonly applied in humanities, is an important part of the structure that is hard to omit while discussing a comprehensive recognition of the category of life quality.

Problems with measuring the quality of life

A large public interest in the issue of the quality of life has prompted attempts to determine its changes. The review of an extensive literature on the subject shows that it was a two-fold work. The first involved the modification of the existing indicators of welfare and development of a synthetic character, and the second, the creation of extensive systems of indicators pointing to various areas of life in terms of social life quality. The creation of both types of measures meant acquisition of knowledge from new sources, including the development of a separate reporting. Among the indicators of a synthetic character what has been clearly distinguished is a group of indicators based on monetary evaluation, modelled on a country's Gross Domestic Product, adjusted by societal costs of attaining welfare. The best-known indicator in this group is the Measure of Economic Welfare, applied since 1973. It allows for consumption and investment spending embracing, e.g., expenditure on education, healthcare and administration, maintenance and improvement of the quality of the natural and human environment (e.g. keeping cities clean), travel-to-work-related costs and those independent of consumers' preferences, so-called unavoidable losses (maintenance of diplomatic services, outer space research). The final calculation of the indicator value also allowed for the evaluation of leisure time. Its variations – Net National Welfare and the Index of the Economic Aspects of Welfare (EAW) – considered environmental expenditure to a greater extent, similar to Green Productivity Index (GPI). In domestic calculations use is also made of the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW) (Daly, Cobb, 1989).

Indicators drawing from information expressed also in nonmonetary units allowed showing to a larger degree costs of economic growth in real terms. The best-known is the Human Development Index (HDI), created as part of an UN social development programme and published since 1990, applying the GDP value but also other indicators pointing to life expectancy and the education level. A rec-

ognised leader in monitoring social development on a global scale, the HDI was modified in Poland also to the level of lower administrative units (Hozer-Koćmiel, 2018). The indices of the quality of life such as: The Economist Intelligence Unit 's quality-of-life (QOL EIU), referring to objective and subjective determinants of life quality, or the Well-Being Index (WB), formed out of the Human Well-Being Index, have also a larger share of output social data. In the late 20th century, indices measuring selected aspects of life quality such as the Human Poverty Index (HPI), Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) were increasingly common (Cieřlik, 2008; Laskowska, Dańska-Borsiak, 2018). A new category of indicators consists of indices evaluating a subjective state of satisfaction and happiness at domestic level such as the Happy Planet Index (HPI) or Social Progress Index (SPI) (Leńniewska, 2014).

By various modifications, including those incorporating nonmonetary data and also subjective evaluations, synthetic indicators were intended to make the measure of development which was GDP more realistic. They have many disadvantages, however, resulting from the very character of synthetic measures and their construction methodology, and often lack data allowing up-to-date publication.

What should be added to the shortcomings of synthetic indicators is that they do not include a complex structure of the quality of life, in which objective and subjective evaluations may be incompatible (Zapf, 1984) (Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of the quality of life by Zapf

Objective conditions	Subjective sense	
	Good	Bad
Good	Justified satisfaction	Dissatisfaction dilemma
Bad	Satisfaction paradox	Dissatisfaction justified

Source: Sęk (1993).

The new possibilities of evaluation offered indicators that use information systems expressed in nonmonetary units, which started to be used on an international scale still in the 1960s (Bauer, 1966; Drewnowski, Scott, 1966). Such systems embraced the description of various phenomena, significant from a life-quality standpoint, constituting a set of output information to build synthetic indicators on the one hand, but at the same time, a further specification of the information therein. The expanded systems of the indicators pointing to the quality of life are made up of three main groups:

1. System of social indicators, serving the multidimensional and statistical description of changes in the level and quality of life,
2. System of indicators of sustainable development, in which the quality of life is recognised as a measure of its effective implementation,

3. Systems of indicators of the quality of life, adapted to specific tasks, e.g., used in architecture and spatial planning (Kałamucka, 2007; Kałamucka, 2023).

International organisations and institutions, e.g., UN, OECD, UE as well as individual countries are involved in extensive work on gathering data and their analysis as part of official reporting and research programmes (Czapiński, Panek, 2015; Szukiejłóć-Bieńkuńska, 2015). In all the groups of indicators mentioned, and the most apparently in the system of social indicators, what can be seen is evolution towards including people's subjective assessments and also those allowing the identification of phenomena related to a low quality of life such as poverty and social exclusion. While evaluating these changes as very positive, one should notice however that a range of interesting data is obtained at national level from irregular research, usually on a relatively small group of respondents. This does not allow for a spatial diversification of the phenomenon on a smaller scale, especially at local level, for rural areas and communities. Local-level data, primarily of an objective nature, are used in creating very popular quality-of-life rankings. They provide, as may be expected from the abovementioned drawbacks of synthetic indicators, different, sometimes contradictory results, often producing the level rather than the quality of life. Hence the need to expand research in which the description of a current situation and the complex system of factors determining it makes it possible to obtain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon and not only its selected aspects. What provides such an opportunity is incorporating elements of the livelihood conception already used in research by Latin American geographers into studies on the quality of life. The conception also refers to satisfying people's needs, but it conceptualises them in a more comprehensive way and in a greater connection with the surrounding environment.

Livelihood conception

The livelihood conception was formed in a scientific milieu at the end of the 1980s and developed both analytically and in operational terms, making it possible to be used in practice, primarily in aid measures for developing countries. It was naturally linked to endogenous development theory, highlighting a local context. The importance of the natural environment issue, emphasised by the Rio de Janeiro Conference on the Earth Summit organised in 1992 and included in the debate, helped to expand the conception and rest it on sustainable development principles. The livelihood conception in this form started to be termed sustainable livelihood (SL) and the research incorporating this approach – the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA).

The foundation of the livelihood conception tenets is the claim that available material and nonmaterial resources are utilised in the way of living of individuals, families and communities. They include physical and financial means, lo-

cal knowledge, social capital, cultural capital, and also aspirations and creativity. Individuals and communities as social actors may, but do not have to, use them. The choice depends on social and individual factors. Measures intended to secure needs, defined as strategies, are modified by local and institutional conditions. The alternativity of choices makes them highly complex. These strategies result from adjusting to the set of resources that can be used today and that can be available in the future (Lisocka-Jaegermann, 2011; Nikolov, et al. 2011; Lu, Lora-Wainwright, 2014). Hence, their explanation by simple correlations is an oversimplification (Renaud, Jansky, 2008; Iorio, Corsale, 2010).

The study by Chambers and Conway (1991) has been recognised as one of the first scientific works showing SL tenets. It determines livelihood basics as “the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.” The context of the analysed environmental resources and conditions governing access to them, and also sustainability and responsibility to future generations, referred to the assumptions of Agenda 21 determining the way of implementing sustainable development tenets at local level. This resulted in this approach being used by numerous international organisations such as FAO, UNDP, World Bank, and also development agencies and research institutes, e.g., Oxfam CARE, Khanaya, British Department for International Development (DFID), Institute of Development Studies in Sussex. As is emphasised by Czerny (2014), the basics of the SL approach are people and their needs, which is strongly related to empowering of individuals. Such a depiction results from discerning top-down shortcomings, bureaucratic market-oriented approaches to development thinking in which this issue was neglected. An important element in SL research is also the analysis of cultural factors (such as the sex, position in a social hierarchy, position in a family internal structure) which determine activities for livelihood (Lisocka-Jaegermann, 2011).

This approach is valuable in cognitive terms, allowing the identification of social behaviour patterns and their variability that significantly affect sustainable development processes, becoming in this way attractive for geographers allowing them to join studies into development. Owing to an interdisciplinary nature of the research into livelihood, the role of geographers is not always exposed, but the geographical approach has been recognised as useful because of its ability to conduct research on a local scale and comprehensiveness of analyses, typical of the discipline.

Comparison of the approaches

The discussed approaches are focused on human needs, capabilities and ways of satisfying them. Both conceptions are linked by clear reference to conditions of the geographical environment (Talmage et al., 2019; Quintas-Soriano et al., 2022; Kogachi, Shaw, 2023). When the basics of the quality-of-life conception were created, unfavourable changes in the environment were perceived as a price for achieving welfare and around these very changes the main trend of activities was focused, resulting in the adoption of sustainable development principles. In the livelihood conception, implemented in poor rural areas, lack of access to and degradation of resources were not a price for welfare but a threat to fundamental life needs. The availability of a high-quality environment and its resources in both conceptions is an element conducive to securing needs and further development (Shackleton, Shackleton, 2004; Naruie et al., 2021). In the light of the research conducted by the author, the livelihood conception is a research method, useful in describing living conditions reflecting objective aspects of people's quality of life. This is an alternative to a traditional sectoral approach to research into conditions and ways of living.

Both conceptions in many spheres, such as the scope or area of research, complement each other. What is noticeable is a dynamic development of research on the quality of life that has been driven from a rapidly growing trend related to the quality of the environment and research in urbanised areas. Better reporting and the availability of a series of indicators make its development possible (Wolniak, Jonek-Kowalska, 2021; Patil, Sharma, 2022; Teixeira et al., 2022). In the subject literature, thematic overview studies are still published, collating issues of selected aspects of life quality (Melo-Mensah et al., 2016; Buse et al., 2020; Oliveira, 2021; Kalvar et al., 2023). The livelihood conception is usually employed in rural areas, those lagging behind and in underdeveloped countries, although a number of studies also refer to cities and suburbs (Sati, Vangchhia, 2016; Su et al., 2021; Ara, Nasreen, 2023). Its distinctive feature is striving for a synthesis and a practical aspect – showing the possibility of improving living conditions and achieving one's life goals. This requires laborious research and is used less frequently in studies on development.

The livelihood conception in Polish geographical literature is underused. It emerged in the early 21st century thanks to research by Czerny (e.g., 2005, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014) and Lisocka-Jaegermann (e.g., 2006, 2007, 2011, 2012, 2015). The studies joined the discussion on the theoretical basis of the conception, and at local level, they presented research results from selected areas of Latin America. One of the few Polish cases it was applied to is works by Stenning (2000) on social changes in Nowa Huta. Over the last six years, the author of this paper has published three studies showing the results of the research on the quality of life

of the Lublin region population employing this conception (Kałamucka, 2017a, b, 2021). Its elements were also used by Pantyley in research on Ukraine (Petrovska, Pantyley, 2022).

The possibilities of using the livelihood conception in research into the quality of life at local level

The numerous advantages of the livelihood conception discussed above make it possible to recommend this approach for research into the quality of life at local level.

The key term here is the quality of life. It results from the adopted strategies, determined by the resource complex, defined in the livelihood conception as capitals, and embracing also – except for physical and economic resources – non-material factors, significant for satisfying numerous needs, such as social capital. The vulnerability context, that is a set of factors determined by the natural and social environment which modifies the possessed resources in the form of long-term trends or emergencies, and also the context of access to resources determined by various formal and informal institutional factors are important elements of the conception as well. The satisfaction with the results obtained, which can be recognised as a synthetic measure of life quality, is a significant element to be familiar with because it may influence both positively and negatively the resources possessed and components of the vulnerability context as well as the adopted strategies of activities.

The unquestionable advantage of this approach is the possibility of combining the description of life quality in a comparative dimension prevailing in the quality of life conception and the descriptive dimension, which the livelihood conception allows referring to in an organised way. Not only are objective researchable phenomena significant in this model, but also a subjective perception of one's situation and relationships between particular elements as well.

The approach discussed provides an opportunity for a wider involvement of geographers in research into the quality of life. The issue of development determinants as well as methods and effects of management have always been an important element of geographical studies and this approach is a proposition how to examine the quality of life at local level, especially in rural areas lacking statistical data and the conditions of the geographical environment and their mutual links play a significant role in inhabitants' way of life. The approach refers to key research tasks formulated by anthropogeography as early as the beginning of the 20th century, which is the description of ways of life (*genre de vie*) in a tamed, adapted to one's needs milieu as was perceived by de la Blache (1911). His idea of human geography as a discipline of a socio-natural compromise so appreciated in many sciences, e.g., sociology, history, is worth continuing in a contemporary

geography (Wójcik, 2021; Wójcik, Suliborski, 2021). The research into the quality of life from a geographical perspective perceived as an outcome of the existing environmental conditions and a variety of opportunities and possibilities affecting the ways people live and subjective assessments makes it possible to continue this direction.

SUMMING-UP

The quality of life is a very broad category which may be studied in different ways. When recognised as a measure of the implementation of sustainable development, it becomes an operational category, hence the need for ongoing research and monitoring its condition. Not only is the knowledge of changes in values of the various indicators describing it required to recognise this phenomenon more thoroughly, but also the understanding of the mechanisms triggering them. The livelihood conception opens such possibilities for studies into the quality of life, especially at local level. When considering a broad context of links between living conditions and socio-institutional factors with the results obtained, this approach creates a wide research perspective for geographers. The livelihood conception used in the proposed approach and adopted frequently by Latin America geographers is hardly known in Poland. At the same time, the fast pace of changes in the form of sudden crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or long-term processes like climate change, affects the way people live, their subjective assessment of life satisfaction and also natural resources they use and transformation of geographical space. The framework of the conception allows maintaining a synthetic picture of the quality of life and makes it possible to analyse developments both in the context of opportunities and threats. This is a useful tool for identifying possibilities for improvement in the present situation. When applying this approach in research, geographers have a chance to be more fully engaged in studying current processes either in the realm of their own discipline or in interdisciplinary teams.

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