



PhD Thesis Summary – Roșu Lucian Ionuț

Evaluating quality of urban life using a multiscale approach. Case Study: Iași Municipality

The concept of Quality of Urban Life (QoUL) is one of the most important issues of the present policies, being highly researched and present in many of the public speeches involving urban life. As quality of life is a multi-faceted construct, objective and subjective, as well as integrated approaches have tackled this concept from multiple perspectives and at different scales, showing the importance of the results both for scholars and policy makers. While objective measurements are preferred due to the availability of different statistic data and the ease of comparing different components of quality of life at different scales during distinct time periods, subjective approaches have the ability to investigate quality of life through perceptions and evaluation of people's lives. Understanding the spatial context at different geographical scales and its role in modelling the perception upon QoUL, identifying the optimal methodology and highlighting the inequalities produced by QoUL represent some of the challenges which are frequently tackled by the specialists involved in this academic area. In any case, the scientific progress in this field of study is considered confined, due to the fact that the lack of integrative approaches, the criticizable character of the methods used and the shortage of relevant data are constantly a subject of debate. Using GIS for analyzing this concept and explaining the role of geographical location has in this context becomes an essential part due to the integrative capabilities which facilitate the scientific approach.

Therefore, the aim of this research is to provide an overview upon the concept of QoUL by using the appropriate methodologies applied upon the urban limits of the city of Iași, detecting and explaining through this the spatial differences of QoUL, strongly related to the features of the urban area at different scales.

Analyzing the components of QoUL and visualizing the results at different scales (from continental to local) defines the framework of the study and highlights the role and complex relations which are inherited by the geographical location, as well as its characteristics at different scales.

The marginal position of Iași, the lack of centrality at all analyzed scales and the low values for accessibility and connectivity are all responsible for the issues outlined in this research. The European context emphasis a lower position for the perceived QoUL, the explanation being provided by the city's peripheral geographical position at the European scale. On the other hand, the national background highlights the importance of Iași (as a regional city), being a hub between the area it polarizes and the global urban networks. The size and importance of the city, the standards of living, the high values for the components of urban attractiveness or the historical background favors the quality of the perceived livability and determine the recording of higher values than most of the cities from the urban network.

Exploring the relation between objective and subjective approaches of QoUL, the research highlights a contrast at national scale which emphasis that the expectations of the inhabitants are more important than the score of urban competitiveness or than the facilities offered by the city. The local scale emphasis the specific features of the city, the most important determinant in outlining the local differences of QoUL being a result between the processes of (1) systematized planning of the communist years and (2) the post-socialist transition which led the city towards a market economy.

The analysis of the urban space of Iași at different scales, reveals complex relations and provides explanations for the existent differences in overall perceived QoUL, these being a product of interaction between lived and perceived space. The relation between objective and subjective dimensions of QoUL highlights a strong connections between these approaches, the inhabitants of Iași interacting with the objective, lived and perceived urban environment.