
Mapping the dimensions of quality of life in the local area

Hans Dubois*¹

¹European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) –
Wyattville Road Loughlinstown D18 KP65, Ireland

Abstract

The EU's Agenda on GDP and beyond acknowledges the importance of multi-dimensional measures of progress, along with income. Several of these dimensions have a 'spatial' component, where the physical and social aspects of the local area someone lives matter for that person's quality of life.

The paper first analyses the scope the spatial component and the definition of the 'local area'. It then critically discusses the complexities surrounding a key distinguishing characteristic of the local area: whether it is rural or urban. It does so mainly by comparing Eurostat/OECD's population density based measures with the self-reported measure used in the European Quality of Life Survey. Next, the paper maps these aspects of the local area which matter for quality of life, building a conceptual framework around these aspects. It does so by making an inventory of questions asked in major international surveys, which relate to aspects of the local area, complemented by a literature review.

Finally, conclusions a synthesised framework is presented, mapping the social and physical aspects of the local area, which matter for quality of life. It is discussed how local, regional and national measures can contribute to this. Research gaps are identified, and Eurofound's contribution to partially filling some gaps in its on-going research are presented.

Keywords: Quality of life, rural, urban, survey

*Speaker