

The Quality of Life and relevant Approaches based on Capabilities and Functionalities

M. Şimandan

Matei Şimandan

Faculty of Economics

"Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, Romania

Abstract

Recent research regarding the quality of life developed different approaches concerning the use of objective and subjective indicators, as well as the relevance of hypotheses, propositions and methods of analysis or of evaluation. Starting from the conceptual difficulties regarding the term of ‘quality of life’, this article focuses upon the contributions of Amartya Sen on the relationships between resources, liberties, capabilities, functionalities and human development. A separate section attempts to capture the shift of accent from the approaches of a quantitative type towards those of a qualitative type, founded on capabilities, functionalities, and the factors of conversion of resources into elements of quality of subjective life. The following sections are consecrated to the contributions to the development of the model proposed by Amartya Sen and to the reception of this model by a few specialists in the field, as well as to its relevance within scientific research and the foundation of public policies.

Keywords: quality of life, capabilities, functionalities, objective indicators, subjective indicators.

The quality of life and its determining factors

Within the language of social sciences, the quality of life refers to the aspects of welfare of the individuals in society, and the research

of the quality of life regards the resources and opportunities which exist in the society, as well as the conditions of life needed in order to have access to resources and opportunities. The explanations of the factors which contribute to the research of the quality of life reveal multiple perspectives of analysis. Firstly, there is the type of approach, where we can distinguish between: the psychological tradition, which underlines the importance of personality traits; sociological research, which focuses on the influence of social factors in the evaluation of living conditions; economic research, which focuses on comparative analyses of the relationship between the relative and absolute levels of material welfare.

Secondly, one should highlight the set of indicators used in the analyses regarding the quality of life. While the subjective indicators regard personal attitudes, preferences, opinions, values etc., the objective indicators refer to aspects which are easier to observe and measure, especially focusing on the aspects of the social and economical performance of a society.

Thirdly, we should mention the diversity of explicative theories upon the quality of life, from among which the most well-known are: the theory of social comparison (a report with a reference group, with an actual or anticipated situation, as opposed to relative standards or multiple discrepancies); the theories connected to adaptation or adjustment (developed as a model of the relationships between the subjective and objective dimensions of the quality of life); the theory of the macro-social conditions upon subjective welfare; the theory founded on capabilities and functionalities, highlights the importance of life conditions offered to the people by society and the way in which they capitalize them to their own interest.

Another set of problems concern the difficulties of defining the concept of quality of life, such as: the distinction between subjective and objective indicators, the means of using the concepts, the use of indicators and the means of application in empirical research, the different options of measuring the quality of life, the analysis of the relationship between the objective and subjective indicators, the use of research data in the formulation of public policies etc. In discussing these aspects, I. Precupeţu discovers that “the theory which guides the quality of life is fragmented and one cannot talk about a unitary theory of the field, but about a series of theoretical contributions and interferences of sociologists, psychologists, economists or specialists in

The quality of life and relevant approaches based on capabilities

the field. However, within the partial approaches, on different fields of the quality of life, as well as within the approach of the quality of life as a whole, we recently notice a theoretical accumulation, either as a consequence of extended empirical research, or as a consequence of interferences or borrowings appeared between different sciences and approaches” (2011, p.40).

In the same context, A. Sen and M. Nussbaum draw attention upon the fact according to which “the search of an approach of the quality of life which can be applied universally stands under the sign of the promise of bigger power, capable of fighting for their life, which have been traditionally oppressed or marginalized. However, this research is confronted with the epistemological difficulty of adequately defining this approach, of indentifying the resources of norms and the way in which can be proved as being the best. This approach is also confronted with the ethical danger of paternalism, because it is obvious that, much too often, these approaches have been insensible to what is valuable in the life of people from different parts of the world, and have thus served as an excuse for not researching sufficiently these lives” (1993, p.4).

A significant moment in the analysis of the difficulties mentioned and the redefinition of founding concepts is represented by the Report of the Commission for Measuring Economical Performance and Social Progress (2009), elaborated under the coordination of J. Stiglitz, A. Sen and J.P. Fitoussi. This highlights the importance of the quality of life and people’s welfare in the measurement of social progress, as well as the legitimation of the shift from measures based on economical production to measures focusing on people’s welfare.

The report includes three conceptual approaches of the quality of life: the traditional approach of objective and subjective indicators, the approach based on capabilities and the approach of the economy of welfare and equitable allocations. Starting from the idea that both, the objective and the subjective dimensions are important in the evaluation of the quality of life, the authors of the report recommend the improvement and the development of indicators in the fields of health, education, personal activities and conditions of environment, social relations, public participation and the factors of individual and collective insecurity. Special attention is given to “subjective welfare”, a distinguished recommendation being that statistics institutions should include within their systems of indicators measures meant to capture

“people’s evaluations of their own lives, their positive experiences and their priorities” (Stiglitz and collab., 2009, p.58-59).

By synthesizing the theoretical accumulations of the studies consecrated to the quality of life, the report recommends a separate approach of social inequalities, highlighting the importance of understanding and measuring them in an integrated way. In this context, the measurement of inequalities in the different fields of the quality of life among individuals, social groups, generations or of those fields which affect marginalized people and of the disadvantages which manifest themselves sometimes cumulatively constitute a part of the recommendations regarding the quality of life.

Taking into consideration the purpose of this article, I will mention that the report systematizes a set of fields of the quality of life, dimensions which are defined in their economical, sociological, psychological and political implications, as well as regarding the individual, group, social and relational levels. In essence, we are talking about: the standard of life (income, fortune, the structure of consumption); health; education; personal activities, including those connected to work; political participation and the governing system; the functioning of social relationships or relationships of association; the present and future conditions of the natural environment; aspects concerning the insecurity of an economical and personal nature (Stiglitz and collab., 2009, p.45-54).

Following this overview, we will now focus upon the contributions of Amartya Sen to the thoroughness of aspects concerning capabilities, functionalities and the factors of conversion of individual welfare, as well as upon the theoretical and practical significances which derive from this approach.

Liberties, capabilities and human development

In the analyses that he initiated, Amartya Sen considers the approach founded on capabilities as a normative framework for the evaluation of the inequality and welfare of the individual in the context of public policies of the quality of life and social progress. His preoccupation lies in going beneath the theory regarding social justice and the transcendence which characterized the theories of social justice in favor of the idea concerning the way in which social injustice can be reduced or the ways by which once can progress in the accomplishment of social justice. His starting idea is that “the value of the standard of

The quality of life and relevant approaches based on capabilities

“life is determined by the very way of life and not by the possession of goods, whose relevance is derived and variable” (Sen, 2004, p.25).

As opposed to the utilitarian approaches which limit the quality of life to the distribution of resources and the monetary calculus of incomes and expenses, he proposes shifting the accent from “primary goods” to the “effective evaluation of liberties”, while simultaneously going beneath the conception that identifies the real behavior with the rational one, where rationality is defined by much too restrictive terms (Sen, 2004). Sen thus introduces qualitative criteria along the quantitative ones regarding economic growth and welfare, as well as highlighting the fact that development is tightly connected to an extension of liberties on all levels, a liberty being the essential tool for human development.

In his paper *Development as Freedom* (2004) in particular, the author argues the need for an integrated analysis of economic, social and political activities, involving a variety of institutions and interactive representations. He highlights the relationships between certain instrumental liberties (economic opportunities, political liberties, transparency guarantee, ensuring a system of social protection etc.) and the mechanisms of organization and functioning of the institutions (the state, the market, the judicial system, the political parties, mass-media, the opposition groups), as well as the role of individual liberties which he considers both a primary purpose and a means of supporting economical life.

Sen talks about capabilities which he considers “basic capabilities which allow a person to function” (Sen, 2006), with the following coordinates: the social and economical environment to which he or she belongs, living functionalities (long life, adequate nutrition, state of health, self esteem, public participation, access to education etc.) and that person’s capabilities, or what he or she can do to be the given person.

For Sen, resources are not the only defining factors of the standard of life; one should also include the capabilities, which guarantee the satisfaction of needs, “capabilities being the closest to the notion of standard of life”. He thus proposes establishing the standard of living according to the satisfied needs, because they solve the absolute-relative dispute in defining poverty. This aspect clearly transpires from the evaluation of the real income and the difficulties which arise as a

consequence of the diversity of human needs, as well as of the social surroundings which intervene in this process.

Among the sources of variation which intervene between real incomes and the welfare which one can obtain, the author identifies the following aspects:

- The heterogeneity of the physical characteristics of people connected to age, sex, risk factors, illness or certain disabilities which determine different individual needs. Even if by the different mechanisms of social redistribution one ensures a certain compensation of these disadvantages, they cannot be fully corrected by means of redistribution or transfer of such incomes.

- The variety of environmental conditions (from climatic surroundings, to geographical location), which directly influence what a person can obtain from a given level of income, just as pollution and the risk of certain illnesses in one region or the other obviously alter the quality of life which the inhabitants of that given area can benefit from.

- The great diversity of social conditions which intervene directly or indirectly in the practice of conversion of incomes and personal resources in the constitutive elements of the quality of life. In this regard, one can include both aspects connected to the educational system, at the level of public and individual safety, of medical assistance and pollution, as well as those referring to the nature of community relationships or of certain social facilities.

- The differences from the system of interpersonal relationships and the models of social behavior which determine an accentuated variety of systems of values and of the evaluation standards of certain social conventions and practices. These aspects find themselves in the possibility of the individual to use his personal resources in order to obtain self esteem in relation to the other members of the society.

- The distribution within the family, namely the way in which the obtained income is shared among those who earn the incomes and those who don't. "The welfare and liberty of individuals in a family, writes Sen, will depend upon the way in which the family income is used to promote the interests and objectives of different family members (...). The distribution rules followed within the family (for instance rules according to sex, age or perceived needs) can constitute a major difference in the accomplishments and non-accomplishments of individual members" (2004, p.100).

The quality of life and relevant approaches based on capabilities

— A. Sen brings a series of arguments referring to social equity and the phenomenon of poverty, a phenomenon which cannot be simply regarded as an insufficiency of income, but especially as a privation of capacities that a person must possess. In his opinion, the arguments in favor of approaching poverty from the perspective of individual capacities are: as opposed to the low income which has an instrumental value, focusing upon the privations generated by the lack of income has an intrinsic importance upon capacities; the income is not the only tool of generating capacities, there being an array of factors and influences in this field; the instrumental relationship between a low income and reduced capacities is different not only among individuals, but also among families and communities as a whole.

The third aspect bears a special importance for the evaluation of political action focused on the reduction of inequality and poverty, for at least the following reasons: the relationship between income and capacity will be strongly affected by the age of the person, the sex, the social roles which one individual or the other has, by geographical location, state of health and other variations over which the person has no control; the disadvantages encountered in the process of conversion of income into capacities can be more intense than what appears in the space of the income, especially when we are talking about elderly people or people with certain disabilities; in the conditions where the income obtained by the family is used disproportionately among the members of the family, it is possible that the extent of privation applied to the neglected members cannot be reflected accordingly through the prism of family income; there are economical and social surroundings where the relative privation regarding incomes can determine an absolute privation at the level of capacities and of participation to the life of the community, just like the case of the countries where, in order to obtain the same social functions, a higher level of incomes is necessary.

The idea supported by the American economist and sociologist is that of a distinction between the inequality of income and economical inequality, the relationship between the inequality of income and the inequality existing in other relevant spaces being owed to different economical influences “others than the income which affects inequalities at the level of individuals’ advantages and fundamental liberties” (2004, p.145).

Thus, even if modern societies have consecrated certain principles and norms regarding the access to public facilities, they are deformed due to the asymmetry of information, limited economical resources, the incorrect adjustment of the economical behavior with the principles which are largely accepted by society, the negative effects of self esteem, the emergence of phenomena of marginalization and social stigmatization, the insufficient capacity to negotiate for the maintenance of programs of social assistance and the services they provide, the emergence and extension of corruption and state bureaucracy (Sen, 2005, 2006, 2009).

Recent developments of the capacity-functionality model

Although Sen has not elaborated a list of liberties and capabilities, he states that liberty is a means and an engine of individual and social development. In this respect, he talks about: political freedom; the individuals' chance of using economic resources with the purpose of consumption, production and exchange; social chances, which also include the necessary framework for health and education; guarantees for transparency, which support trust, fighting corruption and limiting the abuses in the system; social security, including emergency situations (unemployment, incapacity to work, restructuring of the workforce market etc.).

The thesis that he supports is that each of these liberties extends the chances of self accomplishment of individuals and the fact that neither of them constitutes a "luxury" of modern societies, but foundation stones for a normal development of individuals and the society. Hence the additions that he brings regarding the distinction between functionalities, capabilities, functionality of an "n" type and set of capabilities.

Generally, these could be structured around the following fundamental ideas:

- The first idea refers to taking into consideration the economical and social conditions in which the individuals transform goods into functionalities, which leads to the conclusion according to which "defining capabilities depends on the way in which their transformation into functionalities takes place. While capability reflects the person's ability to attain a certain functionality, the realization of a functionality depends on a series of social factors (the alteration of the possibilities of transformation or conversion of goods into

The quality of life and relevant approaches based on capabilities

~~functionalities according to social development) and of the person (age, sex, state of health, access to medical services, education level etc.).~~

- The second idea refers to the fact that the distinction between the actual accomplishments and the freedom of accomplishment involves focusing one's attention upon people's functionalities and their capacity to attain valuable functionalities. If a type "n" functionality describes the combination of actions and activities which constitute a state in a person's life, the set of capabilities describes a set of accessible functionalities and vectors that a person can attain. Consequently, one can talk about the fact that the set of capabilities is obtained by the application of freezable uses to all goods which are accessible to individuals, the notion of capability being used as a synonym for the set of capabilities (Clark, 2006; Huzum, 2011; Kamm, 2011).

The conclusion suggested by Sen consists in the fact that the evaluation of a person's welfare refers not only to his liberties and rights, but also to his capacities of valuing them. For this reason, welfare regards the functionalities attained or accomplished in the individual's activity, as well as the economical and social situations in which the individual finds himself. Moreover, functionalities are seen within a dynamics, which start from basic functionalities (such as the individual's state of health) all the way to more complex ones (such as one's membership to a form of community).

By developing these ideas from the point of view of social sciences, Martha Nussbaum offers a more adequate perspective upon capabilities, including the possibility of processing them in the Human Development Index (HDI) model, or within empirical research. Thus, she proposes a list of ten capabilities, respectively opportunities based on personal and social circumstances, which transcend the geographical, national, cultural and religious spaces.

The personal capabilities which ought to be supported by all democratic societies are connected to the following fundamental aspects (Nussbaum, 2003, 2006, 2011):

- Life – being capable to live decently until the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely or before someone's life was so reduced that it was not worth living.
- Physical health – being capable of having good health, including nutrition and an adequate shelter.

- Physical integrity – being capable of free travel from one place to the other and being protected against physical, sexual, moral and familial violence.

- Senses, imagination, thinking – being capable to use your senses and to develop human activities in an informed and cultivated way by means of an adequate education. Being capable to use your imagination and your thinking regarding your own events and activities (literary, musical, religious etc.). Being capable to use your thinking in ways which can guarantee freedom of speech and of expressing certain civil rights.

- Emotions – being capable to form attachments for people or objects, to love and to pity, to feel longing, thankfulness and justified anger. Being capable of avoiding emotional states dominated by fear, manipulation, persuasion and anxiety.

- Practical motivation – being capable of forming a conception regarding “good” and of engaging in a critical reflection regarding the planning your life (which involves protecting your freedom of conscience and your freedom of motion).

- Affiliation – being capable of living next to others, of manifesting interest for other human beings, of getting involved in different forms of human interaction and of being able to imagine yourself in someone else’s situation. Being capable of treating your peers equally and with dignity, avoiding discriminations of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnical membership, religion, national origin etc.

- Relationship with other species – being capable to live with a preoccupation and real interest regarding animals, plants and nature in general.

- Recreational activities – being capable of enjoying leisure time and the availability to practice entertaining activities.

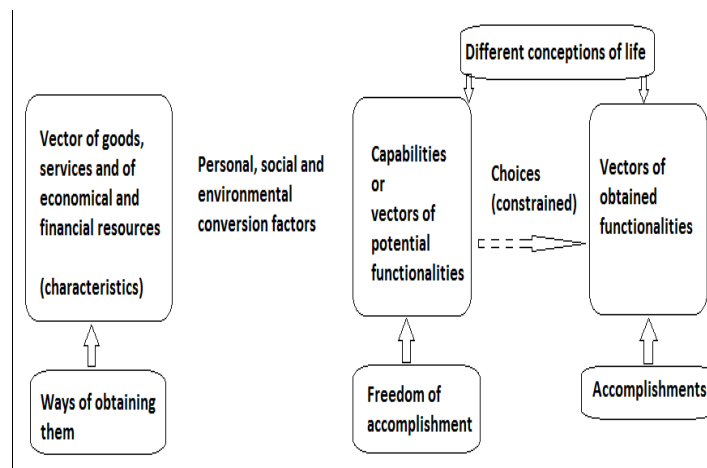
- The control of the social, political and material environment – being capable to participate in the political processes which govern the life of a person or a community based on the rights and freedom of speech and association. Being capable of owning mobile or immobile goods, of having equal rights with others and the right to obtain a working position in conditions which are equal to those of others. In terms of employment, being capable of working as a human being, following your personal interests and interacting in conditions of mutual recognition with other workers.

The reception of the model founded upon capabilities

From the aspects presented before, an essential aspect results: both, Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum consider capabilities as an array of possibilities which allow people to exist and to develop certain activities. The capability refers to the set of instruments, to their characteristics and functionalities, as well as to the individuals' capacity to highlight them in order to satisfy their material and spiritual needs.

From the perspective of both authors, material goods serve individuals as instruments which satisfy specific needs in the conditions where the given goods are highlighted by the capabilities of the individual. In other words, supplying certain material or financial resources to the individuals is sufficient to guarantee to them equitable chances for welfare, perhaps also due to the fact that some people have more reduced capabilities of converting resources into elements of welfare.

Fig. no.1. The structure of the resources-capabilities-functionalities relation



Source: Adapted from Robeyns, 2011, p.12

In order to clarify the aspects mentioned above, Ingrid Robeyns (2011) proposes a scheme where one can notice the conversion between

goods and functionalities, a conversion influenced by two factors: personal characteristics (physical condition, intelligence, state of health, age, level of education etc.), social characteristics (public policies, social norms, discriminatory practices, gender roles, social status, power relations etc.) and environmental characteristics (climate, infrastructure, public institutions, public goods etc.).

Starting from the scheme in fig. no.1, we will draw certain conclusions which result from the comments regarding the capability-functionality relationship and their influence in building quantitative and qualitative indicators for the empirical research of the problems discussed.

- Making the distinction between the means and purposes of attaining welfare and human development, from this point of view, only the purposes have an intrinsic value, while the means are tools for attaining the purpose of human development and welfare. Both, welfare and development must be discussed in terms of people's capabilities in order to function, namely to develop actions and activities (attained functionalities) which give significance and value to personal life. At the same time, it is necessary to differentiate between accomplished functionalities and liberties or capabilities of people to lead the way of life which they desire and to become what they want to be. Regarding these aspects, we poses questions such as the following: if the people are healthy, if they have resources for their capabilities, if they have access to medical assistance, if they own information and knowledge, if they have access to different levels of education, if society possesses the necessary institutions, if the people are protected by the law, if they respect the rules of social cohabitation or if they have access to real political participation (Clark, 2006, p.3).

- Taking into consideration the idea according to which the capabilities mentioned above have, as a foundation, economical production and financial resources, as well as political practices, the functioning of social institutions, the existence of public goods, of social norms, traditions and customs. This means that development and welfare must be considered in an integrated form, with a particular focus upon the relationship between the material, mental, spiritual and social coordinate, or on an economical, social, political and cultural dimension, as stated by Robeyns (2011). On the other hand, one must underline the idea that life represents a combination of "actions and states", and the quality of life can be evaluated in terms of capabilities

The quality of life and relevant approaches based on capabilities

~~of obtaining valuable functionalities (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993, p.30).~~
The capability-functionality relationship is also established by defining capabilities as “different combinations of functionalities (actions and states) that a person obtains. Capacity is thus a set of vectors (or n types) of functionalities which reflect the individual’s freedom to follow a certain way of life (Sen, 1992, p.40).

- The fundamental approach upon capabilities and functionalities focuses upon the individual personality thus extending the area of evaluation of the quality of life “far beyond the possession or accumulation of resources” (Şerban-Oprescu, 2011, p.181). This extension of the significance of the term of quality of life poses problems regarding the evaluation and comparison at an interpersonal level of elements which give value to the quality of life, as well as the aspects concerning the level of value attributed to these elements. Hence the idea that the approach founded upon capabilities can be applied differently, according to the purpose of the measurement, the level of analysis, the available data, the institutions which study such situations and the type of analysis at which these evaluations will be used. In other words, the identification of the evaluation space imposes using certain qualitative and quantitative indicators, capabilities being able to be analyzed using qualitative, quantitative, imperative and subjective data supplied by institutions or surveys (Mărginean, 2011).

- Approaching capabilities as a theoretical model for the evaluation of human development and welfare can be applied both at the level of social structure and at an individual and interpersonal level. From this perspective, the social structures signify the public policies for change at the level of society, while capability refers to a person’s chances of living his life taking into consideration the environment in which he lives and his capacities to capitalize these possibilities in his favor. On the other hand, the theoretical model of capabilities allows us to make interpersonal comparisons of welfare, as well as the possibility of measuring welfare, poverty and social inequity (Pogge, 2002, p.169).

One must not forget that the evaluation of capabilities and the use of analysis operators are marked by judgments of value which cannot be forgotten in the field of research of social sciences. As A. Sen admits, “there is no escape from the problem of evaluation when a class of functionalities is selected to describe capabilities (...). The need for selection and discrimination is neither a reason for embarrassment, nor

sole difficulty in the conceptualization of functionalities and capabilities” (2009, p.11).

From the aspects discussed above, at least three main ideas result. The first refers to the fact that A. Sen and his followers proposed to identify an approach of the quality of life more adequate to reality, where terms of resources and welfare, typical to traditional economy, are replaced by other two terms – functionality and capability –, whose meaning goes beyond the area of economical research, thus receiving a strong interdisciplinary character. In this framework, the concept of quality of life is subjected to transformations of meaning through approaches centered on a person’s abilities to perform valuable deeds or to attain states connected to “subjective welfare”.

The second idea, shared by authors like Cohen (2008), Tobler (2009), Veenhoven (2010), Precupeţu (2011), Huzum (2013) and Robeyns (2013) regards the following aspect: personal abilities must be reported to what is called “social quality”, namely the degree to which citizens can participate to the economical and social life of communities, in conditions which can enhance their welfare and individual potential. Among the conditions which lie at the base of social quality, one can enumerate: social and economical security (preserving health, occupation, the safety of the standard of living, food safety, chances of life, environmental problems); social cohesion (public safety, solidarity among generations, economical cohesion and cohesion of social status, social capital etc.); equal inclusion and opportunities in institutions (inclusion on the workforce market, in services of health and education, in the field of living, in community services etc.); skills and capabilities (social, cultural, economical, political, social, psychological, of social mobility etc.).

The third idea regards the necessity of a differentiated approach of the elements which make up the concept of quality of life and the institution of a system of indicators which can permit the processing of the terms used. Among the difficulties mentioned thus by Clark (2006), Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009), Veenhoven (2010), Pukeliene and Starkauskiene (2011), Mărginean (2011) and others, one should keep in mind the following: the complexity of concepts; the diversity of factors which determine the quality of life; the distinction between social and psychological factors, as well as between subjective and objective evaluations; the combination of economical, sociological and psychological indicators, theories and interpretations; the theoretical

The quality of life and relevant approaches based on capabilities

~~generalizations which do not succeed in covering the whole specter of causal conditionings between states, events and situations; the limited possibilities of validating results; the problem of report between the costs of implementing the programs of optimizing the quality of life and the effective results at a practical level; the different perception of the quality of life in relation with the objective living conditions of a society etc.~~

Conclusions

The analysis of the liberties-capabilities-functionalities-human development relationship brings to the attention of theoretical and practical research the following more important aspects:

a) The studies consecrated to the quality of life involve a reevaluation of the relationship between economical and social based on reconsidering human values and needs. Thus, the resources and the opportunities existing in society, as well as the living conditions necessary in order to have access to resources and opportunities are regarded. We are talking about both, the individual and collective resources (education, health preservation, living and social services, social inclusion, living standard, social cohesion, social equity, individual satisfaction etc.), as well as the choices made and the results obtained.

b) The quality of life does not only refer to results which are affected by the different options of people, but also to the capacity of obtaining them, of the existing opportunities. The problem raised in this respect consists in the connection of resources with results and reporting them to indicators such as: welfare, human development, social capital, the quality of society etc. For this reason, the approach based on “functionings” (the things that a person succeeds to do or to obtain) and “capabilities” (the alternative combinations of “functionings”) is considered too abstract and too difficult to operate in empirical research.

c) Having its origin in the field of economical science, the approach founded on capabilities and functionalities is tributary to the contextual aspects by which one reveals both characteristics of individual life and elements of social structures, which favor or restrict individual life strategies. The idea of “capability” especially includes the existing chances for a person to have a better life and the social environment which give him the possibility to make personal choices, but also personal characteristics which can lead to a life lived according

to its purposes and values. The set of capabilities constitutes the configuration resulted from the opportunities of social contexts, personal characteristics and individual choices.

d) Used in an interdisciplinary framework, the approach founded on capabilities and functionalities can lead to the development of public and social policies. Starting from the discovery of people's living conditions, from the reference of people to these conditions, from their subjective experiences, from the evaluation of different fields of social life and from the expectations of the population regarding them, the approach of capabilities contributes to the identification of data of an objective, subjective and evaluative type, meant to offer support to public policies oriented towards the improvement of the quality of life.

e) The approach founded upon capabilities must be put in relation with the conditions that society offers to the people so that they can live a better life. In other words, the conditions offered by society (economic affluence, civil rights, the absence of corruption, economic, political and personal liberties, gender equality, social participation, pluralism, the modernization degree of education and urbanization, information etc.) contribute fundamentally to life satisfaction. Although it is difficult to estimate the contribution of each variable, it is obvious that the experiences which offer the individuals better structural conditions are materialized by higher levels of life satisfaction.

f) Recent developments in the theory of capabilities have permitted researchers to modify the theoretical framework by a different application of the set of objective and subjective indicators of the quality of life. On the other hand, the adjustment of the theoretical framework permitted the formulation of ethical norms of social justice, the flexibility of social programs, reference to the criteria of economic efficiency, the analysis of the motivational structures of individuals on the workforce market, the discrepancy which arises between the people who own a set of identical capabilities and which reach different types of functionalities due to their personal choices etc. The discussion of the advantages and the restraints of this approach remains however an open theme for both, theoretical and practical-applicative research of social sciences.

Bibliography

- Clark, D. (2006). The Capability Approach: Its Development, Critique and Recent Advances, Global Poverty Research Group. <http://www.gprg.org>, accessed on 10.07.2014.
- Cohen, G.A. (2008). Rescuing Justice and Equality, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Huzum, E. (2011). The Critique of Idea (list) Theories of Social Justice. The Amartya Sen Case. In: *Symposium*, IX, no.11, p.415-428.
- Huzum, E. (2013). Egalitarianism. In: Huzum E. (coord.), *Political Theories and Ideologies*, Iasi, European Institute Publishing House, p.49-88.
- Kamm, I. M. (2011). Sen on Justice and Rights: A Review Essay. In: *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol.39, no.1, p.82-104.
- Mărginean, I. (2011). The Content of the Paradigm of the Quality of Life. In I. Mărginean and I. Precupețu (coord.), *The Paradigm of the Quality of Life*, Bucharest, The Romanian Academy Publishing House, p.15-38.
- Nussbaum, M., Sen, A. (eds.). (1993). The Quality of Life (*Wider Studies in Development Economics*), New York, Oxford University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. (2003). Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice. In: *Feminist Economics*, vol.9, no. 2-3, p.33-59.
- Nussbaum, M. (2006). *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. (2011). *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*, Harvard, Harvard University Press.
- Pogge, T. (2002). Can the Capability Approach be Justified? In: *Philosophical Topics*, vol.30, no.2, p.167-228.
- Precupețu, I. (2011). Recent Approaches of the Quality of Life. In: I. Mărginean and I. Precupețu (coord.), *The Paradigm of the Quality of Life*, Bucharest, The Romanian Academy Publishing House, p.39-64.
- Pukeliene, V., Starkauskiene, V. (2011). Quality of Life: Factors Determining its Measurement Complexity. In: *Engineering Economics*, 22(2), p.147-156.

- Robeyns, I. (2011), The Capability Approach. In: *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/capability-approach/>.
- Robeyns, I. (2013). Capability Ethics. In: F. D'Agostino and G. Gaus (eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, New York, Blackwell, p.412-432.
- Sen, A. (1995). *Inequality Reexamined*, Harvard, Harvard University Press.
- Sen, A. (2004). *Development as Freedom*, Bucharest, Economical Publishing House.
- Sen, A. (2005). Human Rights and Capabilities. In: *Journal of Human Development*, vol.6, no.2, p.151-166.
- Sen, A. (2006). What do we want from a Theory of Justice. In: *Journal of Philosophy*, vol.103, p. 215-238.
- Sen, A. (2009). *The Idea of Justice*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.
- Şerban-Oprescu, G. (2011). An Epistemological Approach of the Concept of Quality of Life. In: *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, vol.XVIII, no.2, p.175-185.
- Stiglitz, J., Sen, A., Fitoussi, J.P. (2009). *Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress*, [www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr /documents/raport_anglais](http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/documents/raport_anglais) (accessed on 20.08.2014).
- Şimandan, M. (2006). *Social Identities and Distinctions*, Timișoara, Mirton Publishing House.
- Tobler, S. (2009). Funf Dimension der Menschenwurde unde ihre Operationalisierung. In: *Ecumenical Magazine*, no.1, p.169-187.
- Veenhoven, R. (2010). Capability and Happiness. Conceptual Difference and Reality Links. In: *Journal of Socio-Economics*, no.39, p.344-360.