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QUALITY OF LIFE

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Abstract. *This analyzes quality of life from a sociological aspect. Quality of life is one of the dimensions of social stratification on which degree of (dis)satisfaction the hierarchical disposition of social groups depends. Certain authors emphasize the consumption of goods, as the essential element of the quality of life, while others in the foreground put distribution and the distribution of essential needs. This work considers the importance of the quality of life for social development. It also discusses the influence of new technologies on this dimension of social stratification. The connection between quality of life and socialgroup membership is pointed out through several instances (living conditions, division of labour, etc.).*

Key words: quality of life, welfare, material needs, society needs, personal needs.

Discussions about the quality of life and interest in this sociological dimension of life are of recent origin. The beginning of a more organised approach to the examination of the quality of life, based on scientific groundwork, is attached to the formation of the welfare state category in the early fifties. A number of authors define welfare as a state towards which every society should aspire in satisfying the needs of individuals and social groups which represent the entire social existence of man. Comprehension of the quality of life is very broad, from an economically – statistic determination (R. Titmus is the first to use the term quality of life in 1958. In his "Essays on the Welfare State" and he equalises it with welfare), over the interdisciplinary determination of the economical-sociological character (H. Kristensen, Allard, Partanen, Erikson). Certain authors (Agnes Heller, Henry Lefebvre, Paul Lafarg, Georg Lukacs) analyze "everyday life" from the philosophical aspect. Our authors who were engaged in studying living conditions and the standard of living as economic categories are Kosta Mihailović, Zoran Pjanić, Branko Horvat, etc. The sociological approach to the satisfaction of existential needs through

the analysis of style and way of life can be found in authors like Zagorka Golubović, Vesna Pešić, Zdravko Mlinar, Veljko Rus, Mladen Lazić, Vladimir Lay, Marija Bogdanović, Vojin Milić, Dušica Seferagić, Slobodan Vuković, etc.

The approach to the examination of the quality of life includes a complexed interdisciplinary procedure with different dimensions for determining the content of this phenomenon. Certain authors will as an essential component emphasize the consumption of goods, while others will emphasize distribution and the distribution of essential needs.

Quality of life, on one hand, is determined by the social position of groups and on the other it is itself the aim of social development. The (un)satisfaction of certain quality of life elements living condition are good, as well as into these who live in unsatisfactory living conditions.

The aim of social development is the realisation of as many interests as possible and the satisfaction of individual and social group needs. The connection between development and social status is directly conditioned. In conditions of intensive development the status of most of the members of a certain social community is such that they may qualitatively satisfy their needs and reach a certain degree of quality of life. Poor social conditions and crisis of economical-political relations in a community lead to a standstill in development, its limitation, and with this, to unacceptable conditions for satisfying one's needs. The quality of life in slower/reduced development is differentiated and is characterized by a lower degree of realisation of essential needs in which the "minority, leading a good qualitative life, and the majority, living below the poverty line differ.¹ Differences in the quality of life in a reduced range of social development more expressively emphasizes contradictions among certain social groups, as well as among regions, cities, villages or smaller settlements.

Groups in power and their members in conditions of a reduced range of development, satisfy the quality of life elements on a higher level than other groups. In this way, members of the governing elite comprise the social group which conditions the way of life of the other social groups. Inequality in the quality of life in conditions of a social crisis and reduced social development accumulate great differences which produce more profound differentiation among the various groups. Coming out of a crisis does not solve the question of the quality of life for all the people in a certain social area. Disintegration processes may continue in certain social circles and regions, which diminishes the quality of life. Members of the governing class control production and development resources, and "simultaneity of economic – political organising" of this grouping "is predetermined by its very functioning, or – more profoundly – by the structure of the dominating social relations itself".²

One's place in the division of labour is determined by one's social position in the social classes, so the quality of life is differently distributed among certain groups. Different social groups realize their essential needs in different ways. They meet them differently, use them differently and some of them have a different significance in

¹ Dušica Seferagić i Vesna Popovski: *Kvaliteta života kao cilj društvenog razvoja*, "Revija za sociologiju", Zagreb, 1989, 1-2, p.73.

² Mladen Lazić, *U susret zatvorenom društvu*, "Naprijed", Zagreb, 1987, p. 22.

satisfying their quality of life. Social circles which have different positions in the social hierarchy satisfy their quality of life needs in a different way. Quality of life is that dimension of a human being's existence which consists of (un)satisfying personal needs of individuals collective needs of social circles.

Quality of life is directly related to life on the whole, which includes the development of new technologies, as well as the essentials of labour, organisation of labour, style of management, work efficiency, etc. However, the development of progress and new technological achievements don't have always to contribute to the improvement of living conditions. Technological innovations advance production of goods and increase productivity. With new technological achievements we get a surplus of manpower and an increase in unemployment. In this way, material opportunities/possibilities for satisfying the essential needs of certain social group members is reduced. Quality of life then for certain groups, is threatened. Certain authors, primarily, representatives of Scandinavian sociological thought (Erik Allardt, Leif Graham) analysed the affect of technology on the quality of life by the entity of technology and resources, through social relationship among individuals and groups, and the effects of individuals and groups on their own position in (un)satisfactory quality of life.³

Technology reduces the purchasing power of an individual as a member of a certain social group, which heads to a reduction in the standard of living. The development of technological achievements leads to differentiation and the reduction of professions, in such a way that members of groups whose professions are routine and hierarchically lower valued become unnecessary and superfluous in this process of automatisation. Because of that certain social groups become peripheral/marginalised, which may lead to moments of conflict in social relationships. The degrees of value in conditions of a reduced quality of life on the stratification scale caused by technological development start out more sharply and more clearly than certain groups, so that those with better living conditions influence the preservation, and then the amelioration of corresponding relationships.

The basic of the quality of life are needs. Satisfying a certain need is conditioned by the social position of an individual and group. Needs that have a recoil effect on a social position are different. We can distinguish: the need for appropriate consumption and the ownership of material means, the need for social power, the need for a social and professional reputation, the need for satisfying one's quality of life. Within quality of life, there is: the need for material incomes, the need for accommodation, the need for food, the need for medical care and services, the need for certain working conditions, the need for education, the need for corresponding ecological distinctions of the environment, the need for rest and recreation, etc. A need by itself does not mean much. It must be observed as a historical, social and individual category. Need as a historical category is the result of social inheritance which is distinguished by special conditions of requirements of life, existence and development. Certain needs and way of satisfying them are characteristic of an individual and they should be observed in an attitude toward a specific individual situation, because an individual may have very small needs in distinction from another. The degree of (un)satisfying need depends on the dominance of one of the extreme

³ Štefan Skledar: *Tehnologija, kvaliteta života i regionalni razvoj*, "Gledišta", Beograd, 1984, p. 75-81

dimensions: welfare or inequality. Many authors have based their research and theoretical explanation of the quality of life on needs as the best indicator.

A great number of sociologists that were working on the quality of life classify needs by different criteria. Systemizing a certain quality of life through a scale of needs (mentioned by authors E. Allardt, 1976; A. Maslow, 1976; A. Alderfer, 1964; Vladimir Lay) constitutes the "triad" of needs which make:⁴

- a) material needs or "missing/lack/shortage" needs (spites) – physical needs – existing needs;
- b) society needs (to hisc) – needs for safety, belonging, approval, love, etc. – relations needs;
- c) personal needs (to be) – needs for knowledge, selfactualization – (personal) development needs.

The totality of these needs determines the quality of life and their durability and, to a greater degree their satisfaction by individuals and social groups represents a tendency which every social community longs for.

The systematic relation of analyzing the quality of life and of analyzing class, i.e. social circle stratification is determined by several moments.

The quality of life is conditioned by impartial conditions in which an individual or social group exists. The quality of life, in a sense of satisfying an individual's needs, "is conditioned by the character of the social division of labour and by membership of individuals to those social groups which directly come from a certain place in the given division of labour".⁵

The quality of life by conditioned by the character of social division of labour points at the moment which determines the character of decomposition in a society contained in the presence of class or social circle differentiation.

The connection between the quality of life and membership of different social groups influences the fact that individuals have importantly different living conditions and they occupy different social positions, with which in a different way satisfy their quality of life and form "different life styles".⁶

The quality of life is a specific dimension of social stratification which depends on living conditions and on the social status of an individual or a social group, the degree of material welfare, taking part in the distribution of social power, social and professional reputation and it consists of to a greater or lesser degree (un)satisfying existential and living needs of different collectivities, which are quantitatively interpreted when certain valuable features are considered.

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⁴ Vladimir Lay, *Kvaliteta života stanovništva Hrvatske*, "Sociologija", Beograd, 1991, 3, p. 298.

⁵ Vesna Pešić, *Društvena slojevitost i stil života*, u: *Društveni slojevi i društvena svest*, Centar za sociološka istraživanja Instituta društvenih nauka, Beograd, 1977, p. 121-122.

⁶ Ibidem.

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KVALITET ŽIVOTA

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U radu se analizira kvalitet života sa sociološkog aspekta. Kvalitet života je jedna od dimenzija stratifikacije društva od čijeg stepena (ne)zadovoljenja zavisi hijerarhijski raspored društvenih grupa. Pojedini autori kao suštinsku odrednicu kvaliteta života ističu potrošnju dobara, dok drugi u prvi plan stavljaju raspodjelu i distribuciju neophodnih dobara. U radu se razmatra značaj kvaliteta života za društveni razvoj. Takođe, govori se i o uticaju novih tehnologija na ovu dimenziju društvene stratifikacije. Na povezanost kvaliteta života i društvene grupne pripadnosti ukazuje se kroz nekoliko momenata (uslovi života, podjela rada, itd.).

Ključne reči: *kvalitet života, blagostanje, materijalne potrebe, socijalne potrebe, personalne potrebe*