

Producing Quality of Life A Theory of Resource Utilisation und Analysis of Power in the Welfare State

Abstract of the Dissertation from Alban Knecht

The concept of quality of life was developed in the US during the midst of the '60s to describe welfare in a more comprehensive way as by the gross national product (GDP). It arrived in Germany beginning in the '70s. This concept, which originally was used to describe society on a macro level, fell into oblivion when the oil crisis threatened the growth of the economies.

In the '80s Amartya Sen took on the concept of quality of life. He related it to socio-epidemiological research by using longevity and mortality as indicators for quality of life. He was able to show that per capita income does not correlate highly with the average life expectancy when applying international macro data. He infers from this the importance of socio-political interventions; however, he forgets to consider the underlying proceedings in detail.

Considering this the question arises how state interventions produce its citizens' quality of life. I have inquired the question of the *production of quality of life by the welfare state* in three steps:

1.) In the first step I deal with the question of how quality of life can be adequately described. It appears that expectancy of life is a sensible outcome measurement for quality of life. Empirical surveys show that when quality of life is defined that way its extension depends on the endowment with resources and the capability to use these resources (*Sens functionings*). Thus quality of life can be described by the endowment with resources and functionings/capabilities.

2.) The second step concerns the role of the political and cultural frame of the production of quality of life. Against the background of a cultural shaped understanding of what politics should aim at (quality of life, well-being, welfare or economic growth), the factual extension of quality of life policy is determined by political conflicts. From this point of view, welfare regimes can be understood as typical approaches to the question of welfare production, meaning certain styles of quality-of-life policies which broadly influence the lives of the a nation' citizens.

3.) The question of which consequences political measures have exactly on individuals is the focus of the third step. A micro-macro model was developed for the depiction of the mode of effectiveness that describes the state production of quality of life by the distribution of resources and capabilities/functionings to the individuals. How the distribution of resources (like education, income, good health, social capital or psychic capital) works empirically, is shown through concrete examples. The state influences their quality of life and their life opportunities as the extension of poverty in a society by the unequal distribution of resources and capabilities to certain population groups.

Eventually, the model enables the effects to be depicted comprehensively. The consideration of all relevant resources and the inclusion of the capabilities/functionings allows for the analysis of the structure and (re)production of social inequality, of quality of life, and even of distinction (Bourdieu) in one model. Particularly, dynamic aspects of poverty, its genesis, consolidation, and constancy can better be understood. Hence, not only can questions of distribution and justice be discussed in a broader manner—with the resource theory the connection between educational and psychic resources in an educational system, which is made for 'selection' and stratification, can be formulated as a social problem. The importance of the development of these resources from early childhood on will be shown in the dissertation in the frame of the *early intervention state model*.

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