

Inequities and Quality of Life in Argentina. Geography and Quality of Life in Argentina

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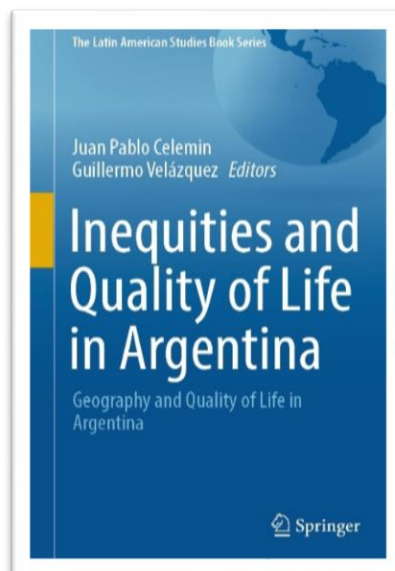
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Abstract: This book explores the inequalities in the quality of life in Argentina from an interdisciplinary perspective. The text consists of nine chapters presenting contributions from disciplines in the social sciences (geography, economics, demography, history) and social medicine (mainly focused on non-communicable diseases). Each chapter covers the entire territory of Argentina, using two geographic scales (departments and provinces) and multiple time periods, from 1980 to 2013. A variety of data sources were used, from national censuses, vital statistics, and population surveys. The book can be divided into two parts. The first consists of the first three chapters, focused on the geography of living conditions (poverty, and

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human development index and its variants in Argentina). A second part is focused on the health geography of two demographic groups (women and adolescents) and on the risk factors and morbidity and mortality of non-communicable diseases. These health outcomes were related to indicators of the socioeconomic level of the provinces. This book constitutes an excellent opportunity for those who, not familiar with the Spanish language, are interested in the study of inequities in quality of life and, in particular, a current overview of the Geography of Health in Argentina.

Inequities and Quality of Life in Argentina is co-edited by Juan Pablo Celemín and Guillermo Velázquez, who bring decades of experience in the geographic study of quality of life, specially involved in the creation of indices that measure this phenomenon from different data sources. This book explores the inequalities in the quality of life in Argentina from an interdisciplinary perspective. The text consists of nine chapters presenting contributions from disciplines in the social sciences (geography, economics, demography, history) and social medicine (mainly focused on non-communicable diseases). This diversity of views on quality of life is always analyzed through the spatial dimension of analysis and covering all the Argentinean territory. Although all chapters are stand-alone, the book can be divided into two parts. The first consists of the first three chapters, focused on the geography of living conditions (poverty, and human development index and its variants in Argentina). A second part is focused on the health geography of two demographic groups (women and adolescents) and risk factors, morbidity and mortality of non-communicable diseases.

In the first chapter, Manzano makes a historical review of the different views of poverty, highlighting three positions that have linked it to economic development: pessimists, optimists, and reformists. Manzano then discusses the differences between absolute and relative poverty approaches, and different implications of the limitations of both approaches between developed and developing countries. Finally, the author maintains that, given the multidimensionality of poverty, there is no theoretical framework that satisfactorily explains this phenomenon. Therefore, a brief review is made of the different definitions that coexist today in Social Sciences.

The second chapter is dedicated to the measurement of poverty in Argentina. Before making a detailed analysis of poverty in this country, Manzano makes a comparative analysis of this phenomenon among the majority of Latin American countries during the 1980s. Then the author describes different methods used to quantify poverty, such as the indicator of Unsatisfied Basic Needs (NBI for the acronym of *necesidades básicas insatisfechas*), Poverty Line and Line of Indigence. Subsequently, Manzano carries out a review of studies on poverty

in Argentina, to finally analyze in detail the geographical variations of the NBI, both at the provincial and departmental levels, between the national censuses of 1980 and 2010.

In the third chapter, Celemín addresses the origin, dimensions, limitations and variants of the human development index (HDI). Then, the author shows the HDI calculation methodology and its variants in Argentina: Provincial Sustainable Development Index (IDSP for the acronym of *Índice de Desarrollo Sostenible Provincial*), Extended Human Development Index (IDHA for the acronym of *Índice de Desarrollo Humano Ampliado*) and the Gender Inequality Index (IDG for the acronym of *Índice de Desigualdad de Género*). Subsequently, he describes in detail the provincial variations of the HDI and its variants during the period 1996-2016. In addition, a detailed analysis of the provincial variation of each of the components of the HDI (health, education, income) during 1996-2016 is carried out.

The fourth chapter addresses nutritional inequalities in Argentina. Blacha argues that the imposition of the neoliberal model at the end of the 20th century in Argentina marked the beginning of overweight and obesity as growing public health problems. In the same way as the epidemiology of risk, which assumes that the individual is responsible for their health situation, Blacha argues that the idea of the isolated diner hides the connection between malnutrition (food homogenization) and loss of biodiversity (biotic homogenization). Finally, using data from population surveys, the author analyzes the recent changes in undernutrition and malnutrition in Argentina, as well as its regional differences.

In the fifth chapter, Tumas offers a detailed analysis of the socio-spatial distribution of women's health in Argentina, using the 2005, 2009 and 2013 national surveys of risk factors as data sources. Taking the provinces as spatial units, the author not only explores geographic differences in women's self-reported health and preventive practices (mammography and Pap smears), but also analyzes these prevalences along different socioeconomic and urbanization gradients. In addition, the author spatially relates, at the provincial level and during the period 2009-2013, the selected indicators of women's health with the level of structural poverty, the educational level of women over 25 years of age, and the level of urbanization.

In the sixth chapter, Pou, Aballay and Huergo carry out a sociodemographic analysis of obesity, showing the spatio-temporal patterns of this phenomenon in Argentine provinces during the period 2005-2013. More specifically, the authors analyze geographic changes in obesity prevalence by age and sex, income level, education, and poverty level, using the 2005, 2009, and 2013 national risk factor surveys. Finally, public policies on overweight and obesity carried out at the national level are discussed, as well as the importance of the role of contextual factors as key inputs for the improvement of these policies.

The seventh chapter is dedicated to the geographic analysis of risk factors for chronic diseases in Argentina. Taking the prevalence of arterial hypertension, diabetes, obesity,

tobacco and alcohol consumption, and sedentary lifestyle, Niclis, Aballay and Coquet describe the geography of these indicators between Argentine provinces during the period 2005-2013. These geographic distributions were spatially related to a socioeconomic level index, the percentage of households with at least one NBI (structural poverty indicator) and the percentage of the population without completing primary education.

In the eighth chapter, dedicated to the comprehensive health of adolescents, Román and Niclis analyze a series of indicators at the provincial level that revealed the heterogeneity of the health conditions of this population. The authors used data collected in 2012 in Argentina from the Global School-based Student Health Survey. Specifically, the prevalence of obesity, physical activity level, food consumption, tobacco and alcohol consumption, condom use, and a mental health indicator were analyzed. These indicators were related to two socioeconomic indicators: a socioeconomic level index and the percentage of households with at least one NBI (structural poverty indicator).

Finally, Pou, Niclis and Díaz show the geographic variations in mortality from non-communicable diseases, both at the provincial and departmental levels, during the period 1996-2015. Quantitative techniques were used both to analyze temporal trends and to detect spatial clusters of high and low mortality rates. These distributions were geographically related to a Quality of Life Index. In this way, the authors give importance to the contextual factors that shape the geographic patterns of mortality from these diseases, broadening the view beyond the dominant view of individual risk factors in Epidemiology.

This book is of paramount importance in the context of a growing burden of chronic diseases in the Global South, allowing a comparative view with other countries of this vast and heterogeneous part of the world. It is also remarkable that this text shows a complete and detailed geography of living conditions in Argentina during the last decades. In conclusion, this text constitutes an excellent opportunity for those who, not familiar with the Spanish language, are interested in the study of inequities in quality of life in Latin America and, in particular, a current overview of the Geography of Health in Argentina.