

**EWA SZAFRAŃSKA**  
**MONIKA MULARSKA-KUCHAREK**

University of Lodz

**SELECTED ASPECTS OF THE QUALITY  
OF LIFE OF THE INHABITANTS  
OF LARGE HOUSING ESTATES IN LODZ.  
SOCIO-SPATIAL CONTEXT**

**Abstract:** The current study is focused on selected aspects of the quality of life of the inhabitants of spatial entities that are part of large housing estates built in Lodz in the times of the past political system (between 1960 and 1990). These housing estates, also known as “large-panel prefabricated housing estates” are a peculiar housing environment present in many European cities. The main purpose of this study was to examine the perception of the quality of life among inhabitants of these estates now, almost a quarter of a century after the beginning of the political transformation. Therefore, the studies confirm the relatively good evaluation of the selected aspects of the quality of life in the housing estates in Lodz and high level of satisfaction with the housing situation they offer.

**Keywords:** Large housing estates, Lodz, quality of life, quality of living.

### **Introduction**

High quality of life has been increasingly seen as the main objective of development on the levels of territorial entities and local policies. The authorities employ numerous strategies aimed at the improvement of the inhabitants' quality of life. Nevertheless, it would not be possible without the knowledge of their needs and expectations. Taking the public opinion into consideration is a key element of the actions taken to improve the quality of life, since it makes the management more efficient from the point of view of satisfying wider needs of the inhabitants.

The current study is focused on selected aspects of the quality of life of the inhabitants of spatial entities that are part of large housing estates built in Lodz in the times of the past political system (between 1960 and 1990). These housing estates,

also known as “large-panel prefabricated housing estates” are a peculiar housing environment present in many European cities. They are mainly located in Eastern and Central Europe, where due to the system and ideological factors they were built on the biggest scale. Their development was an attempt to satisfy the housing shortage in rapidly developing cities of the Eastern Bloc submitted to the processes of forced industrialization [Jałowiecki 1995; Sagan 2000]. Moreover, during the period of socialism, they were an expression of the proclaimed idea of egalitarianism that was related to the equalization of living conditions of all social categories in the city. Some of the main features of these estates were their large scale (that involved tens of thousands or even 100,000 inhabitants), monotonous architecture composed of identical buildings that lack architectural details, made with prefabricated elements, low useful floor surface, low functionality of apartments, insufficient social infrastructure and services and low quality of public space [see Gaczek, Rykiel 1999; Rykiel 2000; Węclawowicz 2007]. However, living in such an estate was the only way to improve the bad housing situation in the real socialist countries [Węclawowicz 2007]. This made the social structure of these estates heterogeneous and the prestige associated with living there was relatively high [Szelenyi 1996]. Unlike in most Western European countries, they were home for not only lower social classes [Musterd, van Kempen 2005], but also for the *socialist middle class* and even for representatives of socialist elites [Éróss 2013].

The change of the political system that took place in Poland in the late 80s and beginning of the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century initiated intensive social and spatial changes of the large prefabricated housing estates and of other urban areas. Their appearance and social perception are also changing [Szafrńska 2014]. The emergence of more attractive housing areas in the city (suburbs, gated communities, new apartment buildings) lowered the prestige of these housing estates [Kovacs, Herfert 2012]. The main purpose of this study was to examine the perception of the quality of life among inhabitants of these estates now, almost a quarter of a century after the beginning of the political transformation.

## 1. Quality of life as a subject of research

The term *quality of life* appeared in American literature for the first time after the Second World War. In the 1970s it started to appear in the context of numerous remedial programs (social assistance and systematic social change ideas) that were aimed at helping people to overcome poverty, scarcity and helplessness [Ratajczak 1993]. Even though the history of research on the quality of life is rather short, the range of problems related to this term is the subject of research of representatives of various scientific disciplines (psychology, sociology, economy, pedagogy and geography) and state institutions. This interest is caused by numerous reasons. Undoubtedly,

quality of life analysis is significant and necessary, since it not only diagnoses the phenomenon, but it also has an applicative dimension.

The review of subject literature shows that contemporary problems related to the quality of life, which combine cognitive and applicative aspects, are an important and dynamically developing subject of research and analysis. Even though there are still many uncertainties regarding the definitions and quality of life research methods, which is common for many social phenomena, one can ascertain that the category of quality of life is an expression of the spirit of the time or an idea, the time of which has come. It is also confirmed by a growing interest in this topic by both scientists and practitioners of social life.

It is worth emphasizing that both groups lean towards acknowledging the multidimensional and multifaceted character of the quality of life and they perceive its objective and subjective indicators. It is important, since the holistic approach towards the quality of life provides knowledge on the material side of human life measured using indicators that usually originate from public statistics, *e.g.* wealth, possessions, housing situation, work conditions, *etc.* [see Bywalec, Rudnicki 2002; Zborowski 2004] and it also analyzes its subjective perception related to the level of satisfaction of human needs.

Therefore, progressing from a narrow understanding of the quality of life, focused on the territorial attributes and commonly used as a territorial marketing tool [Rogerson 1999], towards the inclusion of the level of human needs satisfaction is justified and desired. Even though securing inhabitants' high quality of life is an obligation of the authorities on all management levels, the abovementioned premises are particularly important in the context of cities. Their role in the economic sphere, the size of urban population and their importance for sustainable development make the reflection on the quality of life and the research on urban citizens' needs and expectations advisable and necessary. As suggested by the authors of the report *Miasta przyszłości...* [2011] (*Cities of the Future*), cities should be characterized by high quality of life and wealth. It cannot be achieved without knowledge of the quality of life of the inhabitants, their needs, expectations and opinions.

A continuous interest in the quality of life on the level of almost all aspects of social life is the reason why nowadays, apart from studies on the quality of life and attempts to create an appropriate methodology, there are also numerous initiatives aimed at identifying the mechanisms that condition *a good life*. Scientists' and practitioners' aspirations refer to the search of determinants that could lead to the well-being of individuals and societies.

Evaluation of the inhabited environment is an important element of the quality of life. According to Schneider-Skalska [2004, p. 10], "housing environment quality is the second most important determinant of the quality of life, right after family happiness, and presence of nature elements and the spatial structure accordant with the expectations can significantly improve the quality of life by improving the inhabitants' health status and frame of being". In other words, the quality of life in the city is

strictly correlated with the quality of urban housing environment shaped by material and social elements that contain own qualitative factors. Some of them are: natural environment (spatial, ecological and landscape factors), the habitat's location within the city and the level of its connection with the urban system, urbanistic composition and architecture, apartments' technical, functional and esthetic values, level of saturation with social, commercial infrastructure, greenery, rest and recreation facilities, population density, social makeup, households' socio-professional structure and the level of community expressed in local and neighborhood bonds [Borowik 2003]. The availability of basic and high level services, urban space esthetic and road infrastructure are other important aspects of the quality of life.

## 2. Methodological premises

The objective of this article is to describe selected aspects of the quality of life of people who live in large housing estates in Lodz. In order to precisely illustrate the studied phenomenon, the respondents were asked to evaluate the quality of their closest living environment, and also other aspects related to the quality of living in the city that are important from the point of view of the quality of life. The intention of the authors was firstly, to identify the opinion of the inhabitants of large housing estates regarding the estate they live in and secondly, to gather knowledge on the level of satisfaction with the key institutions that function in the city of Lodz, access to basic and high level services, urban space esthetic, road infrastructure, level of safety and of social trust.

The investigation was based on the results of survey studies carried out in 2012 in the nine largest housing estates in Lodz. The research was realized using standardized direct interviews with a representative sample of 1,014 inhabitants of housing estates. Having verified the accumulated material, 1,002 questionnaires were included in the final analysis. The sample was selected using the random route sampling method. The first block of flats and apartment at the randomly selected street in each studied area was the starting point; subsequently, interviews were carried out in every 5<sup>th</sup> apartment. The researchers interviewed one individual per household.

Five groups of criteria of the attractiveness of housing space were distinguished [see Mysłek 2007]: utilitarian, which include the location of the studied area within the city, the amount of greenery, the availability of services of all kinds, accessibility to social infrastructure facilities and transportation accessibility; aesthetic – the appearance of the surroundings, cleanliness, maintenance and architecture quality; safety – the sense of security in the area; social, which involve neighborhood bonds and finally, emotional criteria, which include the level of attachment to the area and satisfaction with it.

The sample's structure is the following: the biggest age groups are between 20 and 29 years old – 22.7%, between 60 and 69 years old – 19.1% and between 30 and 39 years old – 15.1%. Women constitute 56.6% of the studied group. In terms of education, the big-

gest group are people with completed secondary school (47.4%), followed by people with tertiary education (17.4%) and those with professional education and training (15.8%). Most people are professionally active (37.1%) or retired (33.0%), which is due to the age structure of the demographically aging housing estates built in the late 50s and 60s. Students make up over 1/5 of the sample, which is caused by the relatively large group of students who rent apartments in the studied housing estates. Over 1/3 of the studied group evaluate their financial situation as average (with 4 out of 7 rating, where 1 is very bad and 7 – very good) and 28% think their situation is slightly above average (5 points out of 7).

### 3. Characterization of the investigated housing estates

The survey study was carried out in the nine largest housing estates in Lodz, ordered from the biggest to the smallest, according to the 2010 census: Retkinia (70,600 inhabitants), which houses almost 10% of the total population of Lodz, Radogoszcz (44,000), Widzew-Wschód (42,900), Teofilów (39,400), Dąbrowa (35,600), Chojny Zatorze (31,000), Żubardź (27,200), Zarzew (22,900) and the newest housing estate, which is still expanding, Olechów (19,600). These housing estates are mainly located in the outskirts (Figure 1).

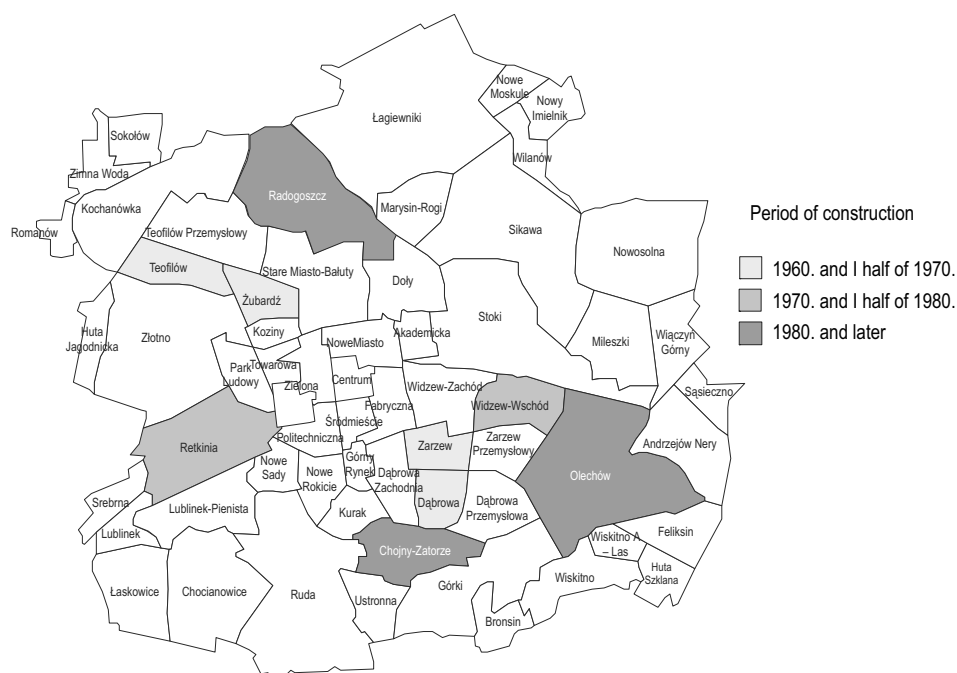


Figure 1. Housing areas in Lodz, which include large housing estates

Source: [Szafrńska 2013].

Among the abovementioned housing estates, we can distinguish three groups depending on the period in which they were built. Consequently, due to the housing norms of that time [see Basista 2001], the size of apartments and the social-demographic structure of their inhabitants also varies depending on the building period [Szafrńska 2013].

The first group includes the oldest estates built in the 60s and the first half of the 70s. They are characterized by high proportion of small apartments, significant percentage of the oldest people and one-person households and low number of professionally active people. Dąbrowa, Koziny, Teofilów, Zarzew and Żubardź are part of this group.

The second group consists of estates built in the second half of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s. It is characterized by larger apartments, lower age structure and higher percentage of professionally active people. It includes Retkinia and Widzew-Wschód.

The third group comprises the newest estates in Lodz built in the late 80s and 90s, which are characterized by the biggest apartments, the lowest age structure, the highest proportion of employed people and the lowest percentage of one-person households. This group includes Chojny Zatorze, Olechów (Olechów – Janów) and Radogoszcz.

## **4. Selected aspects of the quality of life of the inhabitants of large housing estates in Lodz**

### **4.1. Evaluation of selected aspects of the quality of life in the housing estate**

The study results showed that most of the respondents admit that the housing estates in Lodz provide enough sales outlets, greenery and playgrounds. They lack, however, places where one could spend free time, such as culture, gastronomy and sports facilities and parking places (Figure 2).

The evaluation of various aspects of housing estate facilities was quite homogeneous. Grocery stores (in every housing estate over 90% of respondents consider their number as definitely or rather sufficient) and greenery (between 80% and 90% positive opinions) were among highest rated facilities. The availability of basic services, other shopping facilities and playgrounds also received relatively high evaluations. On the other hand, the inhabitants find the availability of parking places and gastronomy, sports and particularly cultural facilities insufficient. Among the housing estates, Widzew-Wschód received the highest ratings across all studied aspects, whereas Olechów and Zarzew are placed on the other end of scale.

The appearance of the surroundings, cleanliness, maintenance and attractiveness evaluated on a six-level scale of semantic differential received relatively high ratings, especially taking into consideration the stereotype of large housing estates as

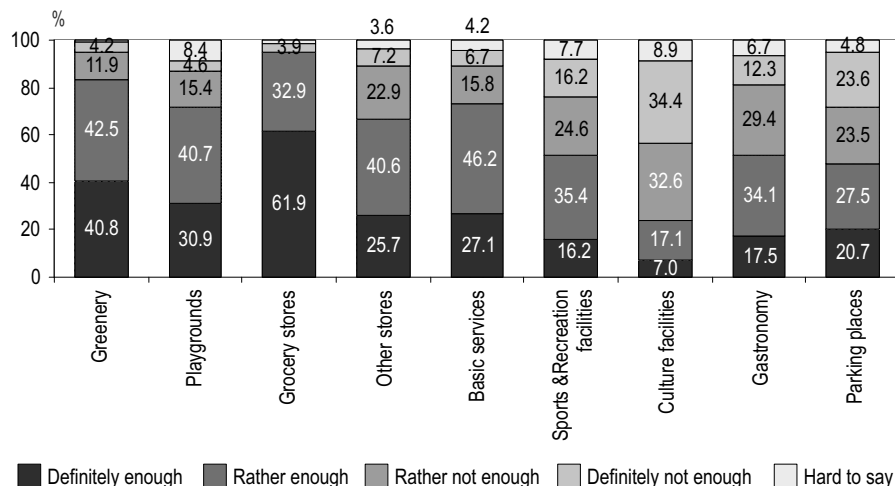


Figure 2. Evaluation of various aspects of housing estate facilities

Source: Own elaboration (Figs. 2-15).

a form of development with low to none esthetic qualities [see Szafrńska 2010]. The scale included the following feature pairs: dirty – clean, neglected – well cared-for, ugly – pretty and attractive – unattractive. The answers were treated as components of the general image of the housing estates. The results show that the vast majority of the interviewees chose neutral values (4) and those on the right side of the scale (5-7) that indicate a positive evaluation of the tested features. The average values for each pair of features range from 4.73 for cleanliness to 4.96 for esthetic qualities (Table 1).

A closer analysis reveals that the newer housing estates received a higher evaluation than the older ones. Dąbrowa received the lowest average ratings (4.2). Zarzew, Teofilów and Żubardź (4.5 and 4.6) received slightly higher evaluations that, however, are just above average. Widzew-Wschód, Retkinia, Chojny Zatorze and Olechów (4.5 and 4.6) received almost the same score. One of the newest housing estates among the

Table 1

Evaluation of the esthetic qualities of large housing estates

Feature pairs	Average rating (min =1, max = 7)
Dirty – clean	4.73
Neglected – well cared-for	4.84
Ugly – pretty	4.96
Attractive – unattractive	4.75

Source: Own elaboration.

studied group, Radogoszcz-Wschód, is an unchallenged leader with the average score of 5.6 out of 7.

Moreover, the respondents evaluated the transportation links to the city center and other districts. The transport to and from the center of Lodz was described as *good* or *very good* by almost 90% of respondents, and the score of transport to and from other districts reached 95%. However, in the latter, the proportion of people who claimed the connection is *very good* is lower (Figure 3).

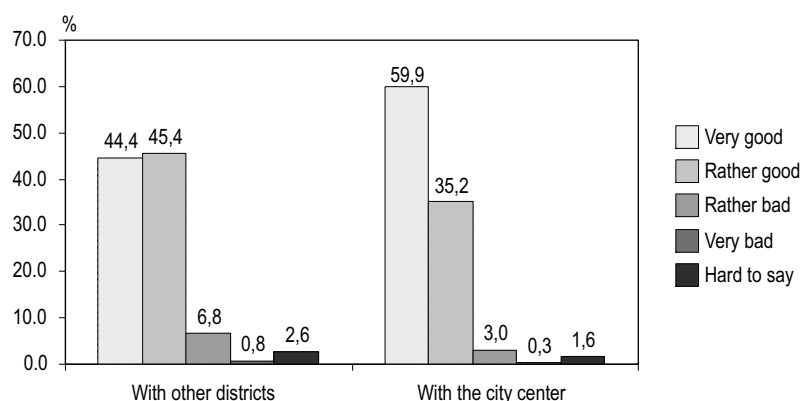


Figure 3. Evaluation of transportation links of housing estates

The transportation links received the highest score among the inhabitants of the housing estates located closer to the city center (*i.e.* Zarzew and Dąbrowa) and those located further, but close to the main transport arteries (*i.e.* Teofilów, Widzew-Wschód and Olechów).

#### 4.2. Local satisfaction and the attachment to the estate

Analysis of psychosocial bonds of the inhabitants with the place they live in or so-called local satisfaction is significant for the evaluation of the quality of life in large housing estates. According to Starosta [1995, p. 130], it is defined as a “psychological comfort resulting from the strengthening of the individual by his living environment. It is a factor that strengthens the inclination to perpetuate the *esprit de corps*, and its deficit can lead to alienation”. In other words, one can assume that local satisfaction is an effect of satisfying an individual’s needs by local environment. Consequently, the more an individual’s needs are satisfied by the local environment, the higher the level of satisfaction with living in a given area. Therefore it is not surprising that local satisfaction is one of the elements of an individual’s connection with his living environment that is most often investigated by sociologists (*ibidem*, p. 129).



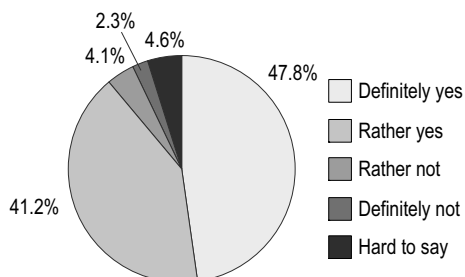


Figure 4. Satisfaction with living in a given housing estate

interviewees declared to be very content or rather content. On the other hand, the contentment of the inhabitants of the oldest housing estates (Dąbrowa, Teofilów, Żubardź and Zarzew) was the lowest (but still rather high). The level of contentment with living at the housing estates built in the 70s (Widzew Wschód and Retkinia) is on an average level. Therefore, the newer the housing estate is, the higher the satisfaction of its inhabitants.

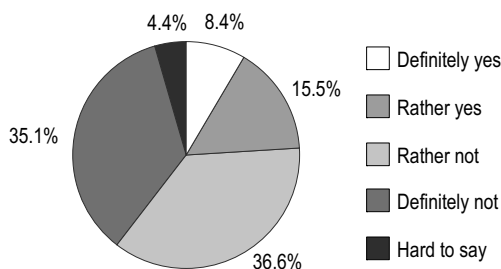


Figure 5. The will to move out from the housing estate

they would want to move out (Figure 5).

The will to move out reached the highest levels among the inhabitants of Teofilów and Dąbrowa (housing estates built in the 60s and the first half of the 70s), which also received the lowest ratings regarding their esthetic values and satisfaction with housing conditions. The lowest number of respondents would want to move out from Żubardź (which is the oldest housing estate among the investigated ones), Zarzew (built in the 70s) and one of the newest housing estates, Radogoszcz Wschód (built in the 80s). The responses among the inhabitants of the older housing estates can be explained by their age structure and the fact that most people lived there for a long period of time. On the other hand, the result of Radogoszcz Wschód housing estate is related to the high evaluation of its features and the highest satisfaction with living there.

The analyzed studies take into consideration three indicators of local satisfaction: the contentment with living in a given housing estate, the will to move out from there and the emotional attachment to the area. 90% of respondents admitted to be content with living in the analyzed area and almost half of them declared to be very content (Figure 4).

The level of contentment is higher in the newest housing estates, Radogoszcz-Wschód and Olechów, where over 90% in-

Migration preferences of the inhabitants of the investigated housing estates lead to slightly different conclusions, as the proportion of people who would like to move out is higher than the proportion of people who are not content with their housing estate. Even though over 70% of respondents declare that they would not want to move out of their housing estate (35.1% said *definitely not*, 36.6% answered *I would rather not*), 25% of them admitted that

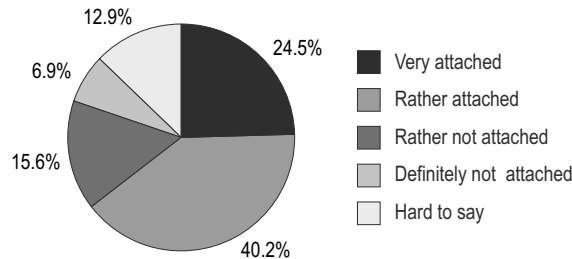


Figure 6. Emotional attachment to the housing estate

The emotional attachment to the living area is an important aspect of the quality of life. The analysis of the surveys leads to believe that the declared level of inhabitants' attachment to their housing estate is relatively high. However, it is lower than the level of local satisfaction. Almost 2/3 of the respondents (64.7%) declare some level of attachment to their housing estate. Nevertheless, a significant group (22.5%) declared that they do not feel any emotional bond with the area (Figure 6).

The inhabitants of Radogoszcz Wschód and Widzew Wschód, characterized by high level of housing satisfaction and good evaluation of esthetic feature, present the strongest emotional bond with their housing estates. The inhabitants of the oldest housing estates – Dąbrowa, Teofilów, Żubardź and Zarzew – declared a slightly smaller emotional attachment. Nevertheless, the lowest level of emotional attachment was expressed by the inhabitants of Olechów, the newest investigated housing estates (most inhabitants have lived there for a relatively short period of time) and Retkinia. The latter is the biggest housing estate in Lodz and one of the biggest in Poland, which negatively influences the sense of attachment to the territory and other people who live there.

### 4.3. The sense of security and relations with the neighbors

The sense of security understood as lack of crime threat is one of the most important aspects of the quality of life in a given housing environment. The investigation reveals that the housing estates in Lodz are perceived as rather safe, since 3/4 of respondents describe their neighborhood as safe. However, only 1 in 4 respondents declared to feel *very safe* and over half of the interviewees said they feel *rather safe*. A significant group of 15.2% respondents rated the security in their area as poor (10.6% feel *rather insecure*, whereas 4.6% feel *definitely insecure*) and 10% do not have an opinion (Figure 7).

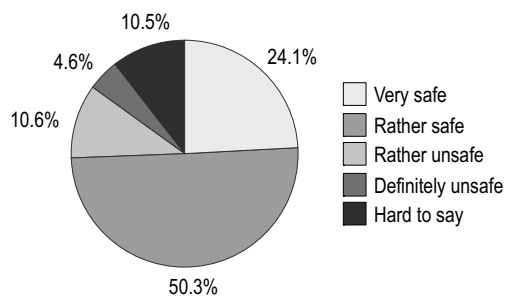


Figure 7. The sense of security at the housing estates

The sense of security is related to the time of the real estate construction. It received highest ratings in the newest housing estates of Radogoszcz Wschód and Olechów, where over 1/3 of respondents feel *very safe* and more than half feel *safe*. The criminal threat is perceived as much higher by the inhabitants of the older housing estates of Zarzew, Dąbrowa and Teofilów. The highest sense of insecurity was noted among the inhabitants of the oldest investigated housing estate – Żubardź.

Social relations and particularly relationships with the neighbors are another important aspect of the quality of life. The analysis of contacts with the neighbors was carried out based on the subjective evaluation of these contacts (using Likert-type scale of 1-5), description of their form (their character and frequency) and their range, *i.e.* the number of neighbors that they include. Following Turowski [1976], the study distinguishes four forms of contacts with neighbors: social-beneficial neighborhood that consists of frequent and close contacts that intertwines with the private life, acquaintance-occasional contacts based on occasional social interactions caused by a short-term need for help, polite-conventional neighborhood limited to conventional gestures and greetings, and finally, distancing oneself from the neighboring environment that implies social isolation.

The studies show that the most common form of contacts with the neighborhood, which includes the highest number of neighbors, is polite-conventional neighborhood that is limited to greeting the other person. Acquaintance-occasional neighborhood is the second most common form that is associated with closer, incidental contacts. A significantly smaller group of respondents described their contacts with neighbors as *intimate*, *i.e.* consisting of frequent social interactions. Finally, the smallest group distance themselves from their neighbors by adopting an isolationist approach (Figure 8).

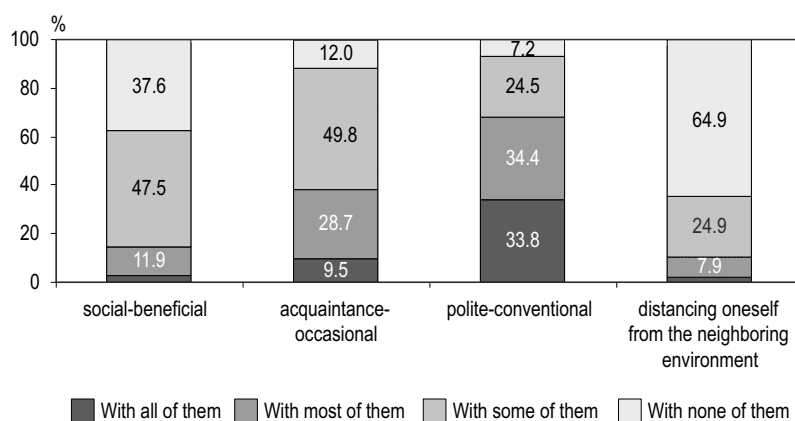


Figure 8. Form and range of interactions with neighbors within housing estates

#### 4.4. Social trust among the inhabitants of the large housing estates in Lodz

Social trust is a significant aspect of the quality of life. Each one of the three types of trust, *i.e.* generalized (overall, towards most of the people), public (towards institutions) and private (towards individuals one knows), is often the subject of analyses of studies that diagnose the problem of the quality of life of individuals and communities [Mularska-Kucharek 2013]. The studies take into consideration each of the social trust dimensions and therefore increase the data on the trust of the inhabitants of large housing estates in Lodz towards other people, those who live in their surroundings and institutions that function in the city of Lodz.

In the presented study, sharing the opinion that *one can trust most people* is an empirical indicator of a generalized trust, whereas the opposite is represented by the opinion that one should be cautious in contacts with other people. This indicator is used in numerous studies on social trust both on a national and international level (CBOS, *Diagnoza Społeczna*, WVS, ESS).

The surveys show that generalized trust levels are very low among the inhabitants of the large housing estates in Lodz.

The vast majority of the inhabitants of the housing estates in Lodz (69.8%) are convinced that one should be cautious towards other people, whereas only 16% of the respondents declare to trust other people (Figure 9).

Trust towards the institutions is also quite low. The survey included questions regarding trust towards the authorities, priests in local parishes, public servants, courts, police, banks, health care institutions, educational institutions and private companies. The studies show that distrust prevails over public trust. Only 19% of the respondents trust the representatives of the City Council, which is the controlling and legislating institution, whereas over 42% declare distrust towards it. The Mayor also received rather poor opinions, with 19% of people who declared to trust him and 42% of respondents who admitted that they distrust him. 38% of the interviewees do not trust the public servants, whereas 21% do. Educational institutions (51% of trust) and banks (40% of trust) are relatively well perceived.

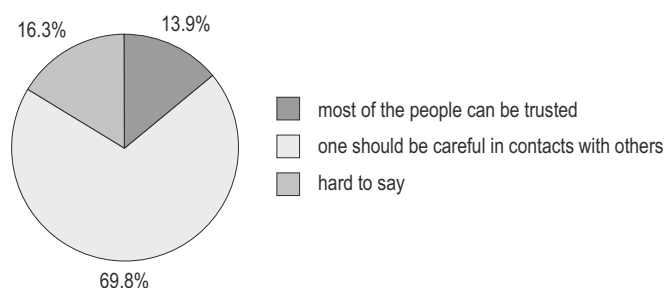


Figure 9. The level of generalized trust among the investigated community

It is worth noting that for each institution there is a high proportion (over 30%) of the option *I do not trust them nor distrust them*. It can mean that many respondents have mixed feelings about the institutions included in the study. It should also be emphasized that for each analyzed aspect of public trust, the answer *I definitely trust them* is chosen only by a small percentage of respondents, whereas *I rather trust them* is chosen much more frequently.

The trust in the private sphere is shaped very differently; in this case, people trust almost all studied groups. One's family is trusted by almost 90% of people, neighbors – by over 50% of people and coworkers – by 45% of the respondents. The only exception is trust towards other inhabitants of the city. People who live in the housing estates rather clearly distrust other inhabitants of Lodz that they do not know. The level of trust towards them only reaches less than 20%, similarly to the levels of generalized trust. It is worth mentioning that the highest level of trust was recorded among the inhabitants of Widzew Wschód and Teofilów, whereas the lowest one was expressed by those that live in Żubardź and Zarzew.

#### 4.5. Selected aspects of the quality of life in Lodz according to the opinions of the inhabitants of the investigated housing estates

In terms of the level of satisfaction with the selected aspects of the quality of life in Lodz, the inhabitants of the housing estates negatively evaluated almost all of them.

According to the presented studies, the inhabitants rated lowest the likelihood of finding a satisfactory job in Lodz. The level of dissatisfaction with this problem reaches almost 50% (Figure 10), whereas only 12% inhabitants are satisfied. Unfortunately, this pessimistic picture of the labor market in Lodz has significant consequences for the overall conditions of living in the city and for the factors that condition human capital migration.

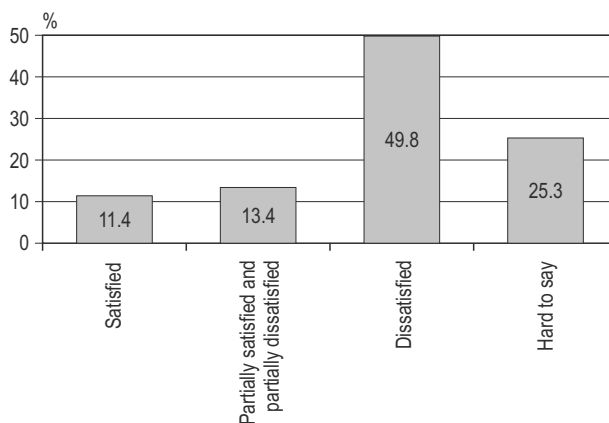


Figure 10. The satisfaction with the likelihood of finding a satisfactory job in Lodz

The cleanliness of streets, squares and buildings in Lodz was also negatively rated by the respondents. According to the data analysis (Figure 11), almost 40% of people are unhappy about the level of cleanliness and only less than 25% of the inhabitants of the large housing estates are satisfied with it. These results confirm a common opinion of the citizens of Lodz regarding the investigated aspects of the quality of life. However, one can assume that the changes taking place in Lodz will contribute to the improvement of the cleanliness of the streets and squares and therefore to the increase of positive opinions of the inhabitants.

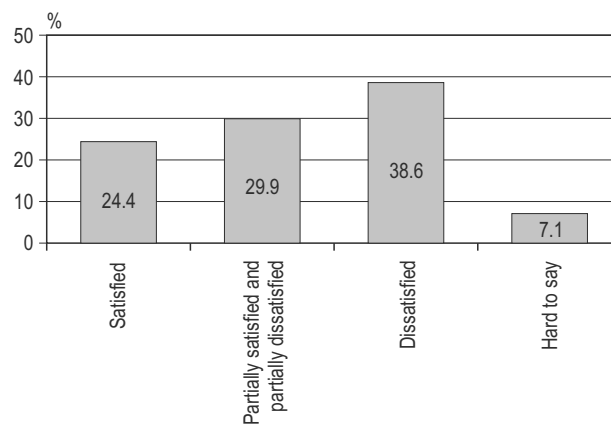


Figure 11. The level of satisfaction with the cleanliness of streets, squares and buildings

The way local policymakers manage the city is another aspect of the quality of life that is negatively evaluated by the studied community. Over 35% of the citizens of Lodz are unhappy with the city management (Figure 12).

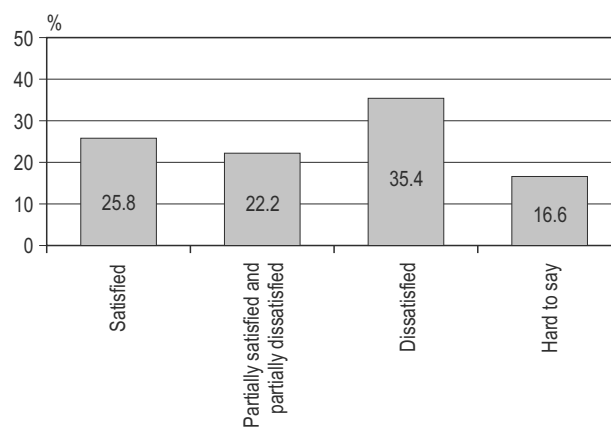


Figure 12. The level of satisfaction with the way the current local authorities manage the city

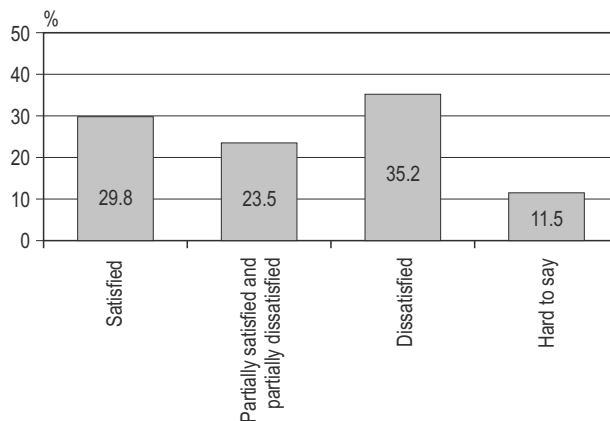


Figure 13. The level of satisfaction with the functioning of the healthcare institutions in Lodz

It is worth mentioning that relatively many people (22.2%) do not have an unambiguous opinion about how the city is managed, as they say that they are *partially satisfied and partially dissatisfied*. Almost 26% of the respondents are satisfied with it.

Moreover, the inhabitants of the housing estates in Lodz negatively evaluate the functioning of the healthcare institutions in the city (Figure 13). Even though the disproportion between the positive and negative opinions is not as significant as in the other cases, the people satisfied with the healthcare institutions are a minority (29.8%).

The respondents who express dissatisfaction with the functioning of the healthcare institutions amount to 35% of the sample. This result can be significant in the context of the quality of living in the city, since according to CBOS studies (2015), Health has been long considered one of the highest rated values among Poles. Therefore, the ability to use adequate medical services is an important aspect of the quality of life.

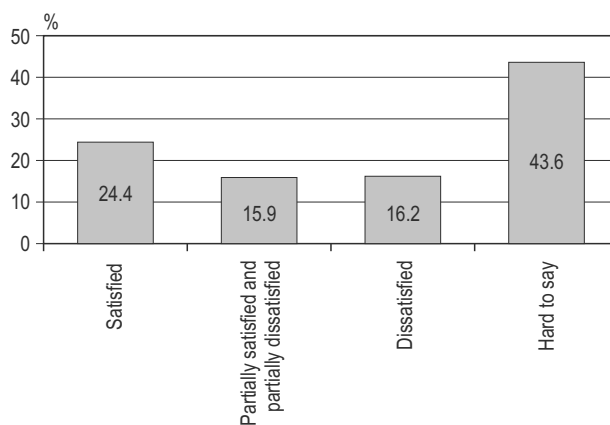


Figure 14. The level of satisfaction with the functioning of courts in Lodz

Compared to the abovementioned aspects of the quality of life, the functioning of courts is evaluated much higher (Figure 14).

Data analysis shows that in this case, the level of satisfaction (24.4%) is higher than the level of dissatisfaction (16.2%). It is the only aspect of the quality of living in the city that received relatively good evaluation.

In order to analyze the general level of satisfaction with the selected aspects of the quality of living in the city, a synthetic indicator of the studied phenomenon has been constructed. It was achieved by summing up the values of specific items (partial indicators) that were part of each synthetic variable. The reliability of the constructed scale was checked with the use of Cronbach's alpha indicator. For the scale of the quality of life it reached 0,748, which confirms that the scale is a reliable measuring tool. The obtained values are represented in Figure 15.

Data analysis shows that according to the inhabitants of the housing estates in Lodz, the quality of living in the city is on an average level (arithmetic mean amounts to 22.68 with the scale range between 6 and 22). The highest level of satisfaction with all analyzed aspects of the studied phenomenon was expressed by less than 2% of the respondents. The inhabitants of Widzew-Wschód and Radogoszcz-Wschód evaluate

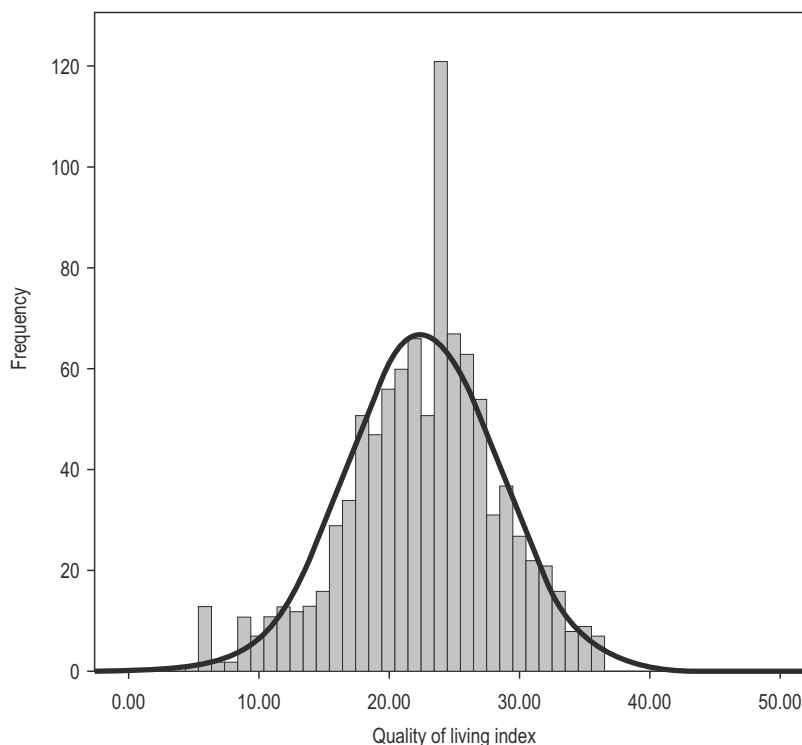


Figure 15. The histogram represents the distribution of the synthetic variable *Quality of living in the city index*



the quality of living in the city as the highest, whereas those who live in Olechów, which is the newest and demographically youngest housing estate in the city, give it the lowest ratings.

In general, however, the vast majority of the respondents evaluate the quality of life in Lodz as relatively low. The obtained results are concordant with the research carried out by PwC Polska, which diagnoses the quality of life in big Polish cities. Unfortunately, in every edition of the ranking, Lodz receives very low scores compared to other cities. In 2015 it was antepenultimate among the 12 cities included in the study. It received the lowest scores for the image of the city, the difficulty in moving around the city and the labor market situation (PwC, 2015).

## Conclusions

Based on the carried out research we can confirm that the housing attractiveness of the large prefabricated housing estates is evaluated as very high by their inhabitants. The analysis of the obtained answers shows that the respondents positively rate the housing estate's utilitarian values and planning with the exception of the availability of cultural facilities. Housing estate's esthetic was evaluated just as well and the respondents consider their surroundings as safe. Relationships with the neighbors also received high scores. Also, the vast majority of the respondents declare to be emotionally attached to the housing estate they live in. The majority was also satisfied with the fact of living in a large housing estate and did not express interest in changing their place of residence. Therefore, the studies confirm the relatively good evaluation of the selected aspects of the quality of life in the housing estates in Lodz and high level of satisfaction with the housing situation they offer.

On the other hand, the respondents negatively evaluated the selected aspects of the quality of life in Lodz. Most of them do not trust the institutions that operate in the city and are not satisfied with their functioning. Most respondents show low levels of generalized social trust, which is quite significant in the context of the quality of life.

The obtained results related to the satisfaction with the housing environment quality in the large housing estates are confirmed by previous studies, which had been carried out in Lodz [see Janiszewska *et al.* 2011; Szafrńska 2010, 2014] and other Polish cities [see Borowik 2003]. Similarly, the results that show the low level of social trust and dissatisfaction with the functioning of institutions are confirmed by previously carried out studies [Mularska-Kucharek 2013, 2015; Rokicka 2013].

In conclusion, the research leads to believe that in Polish conditions, living in a large housing estate will continue to be attractive and socially desirable. The unfavorable image of these housing estates as areas which offer low housing quality should be reevaluated in future studies. However, in comparison with other big cities, the quality of life in Lodz is much lower.

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