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The Quality of Everyday Life in the Opinions of the Inhabitants of Upper Silesian Towns

1. Introductory Remarks

The Upper Silesian Industrial Area (GOP) constitutes a drastic example of the aggregation of errors in the industrial policy of the Polish People's Republic. This region, exhibiting the highest indices of urbanisation in Poland, has a population of many millions exposed to serious health hazards as a consequence of the catastrophic state of the natural environment, of the multiple frustrations and stresses due to the overloaded communications system and the splitting up of the spatial structure of ten towns of the Katowice agglomeration following the construction of gigantic, peripherally located dormitory towns and settlements, etc. The dramatic and frequently alarmist tone of publications dealing with the present day situation in the GOP is usually justified by pointing to the statistics depicting the scale of the degradation of the natural environment, state of health of the inhabitants of the most ecologically endangered towns of the region, the woefully inadequate investment in the domains of services and social infrastructure facilities, etc.¹ In the present article an answer is sought to the question: do the average GOP residents share the fears of the specialists,

¹ Cf. e.g. *Warunki życia i bytu mieszkańców aglomeracji górnośląskiej* [Conditions of Life and Work of the Inhabitants of the Upper Silesian Agglomeration], ed. L. Frąckiewicz, Katowice 1988, or "Podstawowe problemy rozwoju województwa katowickiego" ["Basic Development Problems of the Katowice Province"], ed. T. Kramer, in *Studia nad Ekonomiką Regionu*, Vol. 17, 1988 [Katowice].

and if so to what degree; is there to be discerned in their attitudes an awareness of the dangers and disfunctions described so vividly in the numerous recent studies devoted to the conditions of life in the towns of this conurbation?

This is no merely an academic issue, if we take into account the fact that the escalating problems of GOP cannot be resolved without the active participation, and certainly not against the will of the persons concerned. Genuine knowledge of the ecological (and not only ecological) hazards involved, of their true dimensions and causes, is a necessary condition for stimulating the regional community to action, though of course it would be simply naive to suppose that this is a sufficient condition.

The object of the investigations undertaken, a small fragment of which is presented below, was to form a subjective picture of today's Upper Silesian reality, expressed in the individual feelings, opinions and evaluations of the residents relating to the varied aspects of life in the urban space, considered in its widest context.²

2. Theoretical Principles, Aims and Methods

The principle formulated many years ago by Florian Znaniecki of the "humanist coefficient" has found a complete application in research studies on the town considered as a spatial-symbolic complex which may be described and understood only by analysis of the experiences of the individual.³

For the humanist urban sociology, which draws its inspiration from the writings of Znaniecki and Weber, the fundamental research objective is to penetrate to the subjective meanings and images of the town, the experiences and emotions which the town, either as a whole or of its certain parts, evokes among its permanent or its transient residents.⁴ P.-H. Chombart de Lauwe, one of the most eminent representatives of the humanist orientation in French urban sociology (and ethnology), draws attention to the fact that the "urban experience" (the town space) is an element of a peculiarly complex

² Research implemented in the period 1987—1991 under the programme RPBP III — 38, co-ordinated by the Jagiellonian University.

³ See B. Jałowiecki, "Stan socjologii miasta w Polsce" ["State of Urban Sociology in Poland"], in *Stan i perspektywy socjologii polskiej* [State and Prospects of Polish Sociology], eds. A. Kwilecki, K. Doktor, Warszawa—Poznań 1988, pp. 117—119.

⁴ See F. Znaniecki, *Miasto w świadomości jego obywateli* [The Town in the Awareness of Its Citizens], Poznań 1931, and F. Znaniecki, J. Ziółkowski, *Czym jest dla ciebie miasto Poznań?* [What is the Town of Poznań for You?], Warszawa—Poznań 1984.

process of spatial appropriation understood as “free moving around, recreation, possession, acting, feeling, admiring, dreaming, learning, forming of the space in line with one’s aims, aspirations, plans”.⁵ Appropriation of the urban space is subject to wide-ranging social and cultural regulation.⁶ The possibility and the limits of free moving around in the space and making use of the specific places and facilities are usually dependent on strict social control: customary, habitual, legal, religious, etc., reflecting the social relations and ideologies currently accepted the normative systems and hierarchy of values of the various communities or social groups “ruling the given territory”.⁷ Appropriation of the urban space is an indication of social regulation of the processes of creating (and reproduction) of space, in it are focused, as in a lens, all the contradictions and conflicts arising out of the unequal distribution in the population of power, wealth and prestige. Those who occupy higher positions in one of these spheres have, on the whole, greater freedom to shape this space in accordance with their own requirements and tastes, determining its values and symbols reflecting their attitude to the world, beliefs, opinions, etc. They also enjoy certain privileges in the matter of access to various “spatial values” (e.g. the more architecturally, ecologically, socially attractive districts of the town). In contemporary times, belonging to this privileged group are architects and city planners. For it is they who have particular rights in the creation of the urban space, forming the residential environment in accordance with the accepted canons of town planning and its ideological justification, accepted, i.e. in the given time and place. The problem, however, lies in this that these canons, although founded on the most admirable ideological principles, can turn against man, when the town planners create shapeless and disfunctional urban spaces far from the expectations and aspirations of those for whom they were created. The people crowded into gigantic, monotonous “housing machines” feel in them neither free nor safe, they are the victims of a specific manipulation whose roots are buried in the egalitarian utopia of modern urbanism.⁸ The conflicts inherent in the nature of the mutual relations between the created space

⁵ P. H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Fin de villes*, Paris 1982, p. 54 [free translation].

⁶ Stressed already by F. Znaniecki in “Socjologiczne podstawy ekologii ludzkiej z 1938 roku” [“Sociological Foundations of Human Ecology from 1938”], *Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny*, z. 1, 1938, p. 91, see also F. Paul-Levy, M. Segaud, *L’anthropologie de l’espace*, Paris 1983, *passim*.

⁷ F. Znaniecki, “Socjologiczne...” [“Sociological...”]; P. H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Fin de villes*, ...

⁸ More in this subject see W. Misiak, “Wielkie zespoły mieszkaniowe jako przestrzeń społeczna” [“Large Housing Complexes as a Social Space”], in *Procesy urbanizacji i przekształcenia miast w Polsce* [Processes of Urbanisation and Transformation of Towns in Poland], eds. B. Jałowiecki, E. Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska, Wrocław—Warszawa 1988, pp. 123—138.

and the experienced space are particularly noticeable in the everyday practical routes by which the people of the town move around, it is well known that the paths and roads demarcated in the plan are not always respected, one shopping centre may be neglected and another finds favour, the same for services facilities, etc. The experienced space (unlike the created space) is immensely plastic, undergoes continual modification, which is expressed above all in the differentiation of the subjective pictures of the spaces and places, in ascribing to them individual or group significance (positive — negative, everyday — special occasion, utilitarian — symbolic etc.⁹ The experienced space is a component of everyday, routine activities associated with the satisfaction of the elementary needs of individuals and groups, and is also indisputable a topographical space, having a defined degree of ordering, resulting from the repetition of the everyday routes and paths.

This particular understanding of the town as a subjectively experienced existential space was taken as a basis for the investigations carried out in four towns of the GOP, i.e. Dąbrowa Górnicza, Tychy, Ruda Śląska and Siemianowice.¹⁰ Within this accepted research context, the chosen towns of the GOP were treated as a kind of spatial framework (or scene) of the everyday life of the inhabitants, while the purpose of the studies conducted was to reach a more profound insight into this particular domain of life, to discover its internal dynamics and the differentiations arising from the broad diversity of the situations and events in which the inhabitants of the agglomeration are involved in daily life. It is obvious that even the most broadly planned sociological studies are not capable of grasping all the aspects of the situation considered. The everyday life of the inhabitants of larger towns of Poland has not until now, with the exception¹¹ of certain papers dealing with specific issues, been subjected to detailed analysis. In our investigations we have endeavoured to take into account all the everyday life situations which can be classified as typical, routine and ordered in time and space behaviour sequences (behavioural aspect) together with the cognitive-affective pro-

⁹ P. H. Chombart de Lauwe, *Fin de villes, ...*, p. 46.

¹⁰ On other questions involved in the research see *Problemy metodologiczne badań procesów planowych i żywiołowych w mieście* [Methodological Problems of Studies on Planned and Spontaneous Processes in the Town], ed. K. Wódz, Katowice 1990, and *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta w perspektywie badań nad planowaniem i żywiołowością* [The Space of a Large Town in the Perspective of Research on Planning and Spontaneous Growth], ed. K. Wódz, Katowice 1991, and *Przestrzeń — środowisko społeczne — środowisko kulturowe* [Space — Social Environment — Cultural Environment], ed. K. Wódz, Katowice 1992.

¹¹ Cf. particularly J. Wódz, *Patologia społeczna w życiu codziennym miasta* [Social Pathology in the Everyday Life of the Town], Katowice 1988, and *Normy społeczne, ład społeczny, patologia społeczna* [Social Norms, Social Order, Social Pathology], ed. J. Wódz, Katowice 1985; see also M. Szczepański, "Miasto socjalistyczne" i świat społeczny jego mieszkańców ["The Socialist Town" and the Social World of Its Inhabitants], Warszawa 1991.

cesses accompanying these behavioural actions (pictures, judgements, feelings, imaginations). The choice of the research problem matter was governed by the desire to gain answers to the questions posed in the introduction, dealing with the agreement between the subjective image of the GOP space and the diagnoses and assessments formulated by groups of experts. Hence in the ultimate choice four groups of problems were qualified as research topics: studying the rhythm of life in the urban space, meaning here analysis of the daily time-table for basic types of activities together with the associated spatial situations;¹² study of the perception and evaluation of the GOP urban space considered in five problem sections: discerning differentiations in the urban space and the evolution of stereotypes of “good” and “bad” districts; assessment of one own ecological position and feeling of relative handicapped or privileged status in relation to other social units and groups; identification with the place of residence, perception and evaluation of the nearer and farther residential environment; housing and architectural town planning preferences¹³ — perceiving the GOP conditions of life and ecological hazards (including here knowledge of the factual sources of these hazards and assessment of their influence on the health and well-being of the tested GOP inhabitants¹⁴); deep-rooted feeling of belonging to the place of residence, understood as involvement in the non-formal networks of personal, social, family-neighbourly, friendship relations, etc.¹⁵

Each of these mentioned groups of problems was touched on in the set of detailed research questions which then became the foundation for preparing the main research instrument, i.e. a broadly developed interview questionnaire of more than a dozen pages. This questionnaire comprised three principal parts. The first, and basic, part contained questions dealing with the assessments and opinions of residents of GOP towns as to conditions of life in their settlement, housing estate, town or region, the quality of the housing, natural and social environment, and also as to perceptions of

¹² More widely see K. Faliszek, “Rytm życia w przestrzeni miasta” [“The Rhythm of Life in the Town Space”], in *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta... [The Space of a Large Town...]*, pp. 132—141.

¹³ Total methodological problem matter referring to this part of the studies together with results was given in the article by M. Szczepański, “Wartości ekologiczne przestrzeni i miejsc. Wyniki badań empirycznych” [“Ecological Values of Spaces and Places. Results of Empirical Studies”], in *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta... [Space of a Large Town...]*, pp. 72—113.

¹⁴ More widely see K. Łęcki, P. Wróblewski, “Warunki życia i zagrożenia ekologiczne w świadomości mieszkańców Górnośląskiego Okręgu Przemysłowego” [“Conditions of Life and Ecological Hazards in the Awareness of the Inhabitants of the Upper Silesia Industrial Area”], in *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta... [Space of a Large Town...]*, pp. 142—160.

¹⁵ More widely see K. Wódcz, “Zakorzenie w miejscu zamieszkania” [“Rooted in the Place of Residence”], in *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta... [Space of a Large Town...]*, pp. 114—131.

urban space differentiations and evaluation of their own ecological position (see above). Of the 37 questions, included in this part of the questionnaire, there were seven of open type while the remainder were mostly closed questions furnished with a developed list of choices, in many cases the persons questioned had the opportunity of making multiple choices together with ranking of their replies or indicating their strength (on a 5-degree Likert type scale). The second part of the questionnaire, designed to discover architectural-planning preferences, comprised six photographs presenting architectural forms (residential buildings), actually existing in the GOP towns, also ten diagrammatic schemes showing town buildings of various kinds. These photos and drawings were accompanied by a series of questions relating to the research objectives.¹⁶ Questions posed in the third and last part of the questionnaire concerned the typical daily time-table of the inhabitants, their spatial mobility, distances covered in carrying out their everyday business, etc., questions here dealing both with facts (e.g. time to travel work) and with assessments and opinions relating to these facts (e.g. opinion of conditions of travel to and from work).

In the research investigations carried out in four GOP towns, i.e. Tychy, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Siemianowice Śląskie and Ruda Śląska, a total of 1,603 adult persons took part, including 877 women (54.7%) and 689 men (45.3%). Age and education structure and also length of residence in the given town of this group of respondents is shown in Tables 1, 2, 3. A detailed interview

Table 1

**Age structure of respondents
against the background of the whole tested population**

| Age (years) | No. of respondents | % of tested population |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Up to 20 | 35 | 2.2 |
| 21—30 | 305 | 19.0 |
| 31—40 | 575 | 35.9 |
| 41—50 | 297 | 18.5 |
| 51—60 | 216 | 13.5 |
| 61—65 | 88 | 5.5 |
| Over 66 | 77 | 4.8 |
| No data | 10 | 0.6 |
| N | 1,603 | 100.0 |

¹⁶ M. Szczepański, "Wartości ekologiczne..." ["Ecological Values..."], pp. 75—76.

Table 2

**Education structure of respondents
against the background of the whole tested population**

| Education | No. of respondents | % of population |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Elementary | 313 | 19.5 |
| Basic vocational | 467 | 29.1 |
| Secondary technical | 400 | 25.0 |
| Secondary grammar | 243 | 15.2 |
| Higher arts | 79 | 4.9 |
| Higher technical | 94 | 5.9 |
| No data | 7 | 0.4 |
| N | 1,603 | 100.0 |

Table 3

**Residence structure of respondents
against the background of the whole tested population**

| Lenght of residence | No. of respondents | % of population |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| From birth | 159 | 9.9 |
| 20 and more | 346 | 21.6 |
| 10—19 years | 474 | 29.6 |
| 5—9 years | 428 | 26.7 |
| 1—4 years | 168 | 10.5 |
| Less than 1 year | 25 | 1.6 |
| No data | 3 | 0.1 |
| N | 1,603 | 100.1 |

was conducted with each respondent basing on the multi-page questionnaire, containing a set of questions designed to elicit assessments and opinions associated with everyday functioning in the urban space. The interviews were conducted by suitable trained II- and III-year sociology students from the Silesian University. Empirical material gained from test results represents the most complete sociological record obtained during recent years of the opinions, judgements and observations of the GOP inhabitants on their living environment. Presentation of research results is preceded by a few words of commentary on the subject of choice of test sample. Prior to choosing respondents by drawing lots from among population registration cards, exhaustive typological investigations were made to find residential districts

in the urban area of GOP, exhibiting more or less similar types of residential buildings. Choice both of towns and of the actual research site was governed by the desire to take into account in these tests the most typical GOP spatial-planning forms and the social systems pertaining in them.¹⁷ Local surveys conducted in each of these four towns together with analysis of town structure and planning documents provided a basis for a full and reasonably objective picture of the habitat forms occurring in the towns considered. Housing complexes eventually qualified for investigations were those exhibiting characteristics most closely coinciding with the model features of one of four types of habitat, i.e. social settlements: (estates "A" and "B" in Tychy, complex Karolina, the old Zawadzki estate in Dąbrowa Górnicza, the Halemba II estate in Ruda Śląska), large housing complexes (high-rise block complexes) with predominantly multi-apartment high-rise housing (the Urszula complex in Tychy, Upper Estate in Ruda Śląska, the old Krasicki housing estate in Siemianowice, the Mydlice complex in Dąbrowa Górnicza); old housing complexes (pre-1939), (town centre complexes and workers estates including the *familoki* — early 20th-century plant-built workers blocks) in Stare Tychy, Nowy Bytom, Ruda Śląska, Siemianowice town centre, Stara Bajba in Dąbrowa Górnicza; one-family housing complexes (of varied standard), e.g. in Tychy the Ewa complex of terrace houses and individual houses Czułów, Kąty Jankowskie in Ruda Śląska, Stara Szosa complex in Siemianowice Śląskie and the complex of older houses Dziewiąty in Dąbrowa Górnicza.¹⁸ Carrying out these typological qualification investigations prior to drawing lots of the sample was considered to be a necessary condition for correct research procedure, since the subject of studies are assessments of urban space, it would be injudicious to ignore the objective differences in the housing environment of the respondents tested.

3. Discussion of the Research Results

Presentation of the research results is preceded by several observations on the domain which we have designated somewhat metaphorically as "the rhythm of life in the urban space". A detailed analysis of this sub-

¹⁷ More widely see M. Szczepański, "Procesy planowe i żywiołowe w czterech miastach Górnośląskiego Okręgu Przemysłowego — charakterystyka obszarów badawczych" ["Planned and Spontaneous Processes in Four Towns of the Upper Silesian Industrial Area — Characteristics of the Research Sites"], in *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta... [Space of a Large Town...]*, pp. 51—71.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 56—70.

ject matter has been given by K. Faliszek in another paper,¹⁹ hence here we limit ourselves by setting out some of this autor's final conclusions. "Basing on analyses made... [answers given to questions posed on this sphere of respondents activities — K. W.], it is possible to reconstruct the average everyday time-table of respondents activities... Their day usually begins rather early between 5,00 and 7,00 since most of them start work at this time. They mostly travel to work by bus, quite often on foot. In general this journey takes more than half an hour which is due to the fact that the majority work in the town where they live. For this reason their opinions on conditions of travel to work are in general positive. They usually finish work between 14,00 and 15,00 after which respondents go straight home, perhaps doing minor shopping on the way. For this reason the average time of journey from work is a little longer than time to work, although for the majority of respondents this does not last longer than 30 minutes... Here again, in general they express themselves as satisfied with travelling conditions." It is noteworthy that of the total tested population barely 3% make use of more than one kind of transport (e.g. bus plus train) for the journey to and from work, this is found relatively more frequently by the residents of Tychy travelling to work in Katowice (4%). For the greater number of persons questioned — continues K. Faliszek — the day finishes between 22,00 and 24,00 hours.²⁰ The daily breakdown of activities is naturally modified by sociodemographic factors, in particular sex, age, education and type of post held. For example, women get up later than men and start work later while their return journey home after work is prolonged due to the necessity of shopping. As could be anticipated, greater spatial mobility significantly correlated with younger age, higher educational level and higher position held at work.²¹ From this analysis, made of the answers given by the inhabitants of the four tested towns of GOP to questions dealing with their daily routine of activities and spatial mobility, we were able to ascertain that these two domains are linked in a characteristic manner with the specific nature of the region, firstly due to the dominating rhythm of work in the industrial plants — mines, metallurgical works, and secondly due to the spatial proximity of the working place and dwelling place. This latter characteristic of the GOP appears to hold good not only for older workers settlements but also, as may be judged from results of studies conducted, in new housing estates only recently sited in regions of direct ecological danger.²² The paradox

¹⁹ *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta...* [*Space of a Large Town...*], pp. 132—141.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

²² For example, in Dąbrowa Górnicza. More widely see W. Błasiak, "Planowanie i żywiołowość procesów konsumpcji miejskiej w miastach Górnośląskiego Okręgu Przemysłowego" ["Planning and Spontaneity, in the Processes of Urban Consumption in the Towns of Upper Silesian Industrial Area], in *Przestrzeń wielkiego miasta...* [*Space of a Large Town...*], pp. 32—36.

here lies in the fact that the policy behind the location of industry in the towns of the GOP, although pernicious from the health and ecological aspects, permits at least some groups of inhabitants of this region to avoid the stress and inconvenience of many hours long commuting, which is a plague afflicting many agglomerations. It would appear to be rather unlikely that the ultimate balance of profits and losses turned out in favour of the persons concerned. Let us focus then on the presentation of the results relating to the broadly understood processes of perception and evaluating of the GOP urban space. Beginning with the pioneer researches of Bohdan Jałowicki, dating from the nineteen seventies,²³ the towns of the GOP have many times provided the subject of studies on evaluation of the urban space.²⁴ It may, however, be claimed with no exaggeration that none of the empirical investigations conducted up to now in this research area has attempted such a broad scope as that described here.

The great wealth of material collated from these empirical studies has been elaborated and presented in a series of publications by Marek Szczepański.²⁵ From the total of analyses carried out by the author it is clearly to appear that the inhabitants of GOP's towns very critically assess their surrounding planning-architectural space (the respondents described their area of residence by means of pairs of opposing categories, e.g. pretty — ugly, dirty — clean, cheerful — depressing, colourful — grey toned, of style — without style, safe — dangerous, etc, being given the option of free choice of category of description, of which there were 15, and also indicate degree of acceptance of the suggested assessments from very positive to very negative). 1/5 of the tested persons considered that the area where they live is completely without style (20.6%), a negligible percentage expressed an exactly opposite opinion (1.3%). Of the 1,603 persons questioned, only 43 (i.e. 2.7%) assessed their settlement as "pretty", while the great majority (75.5%) described their settlement as ugly or very ugly.²⁶ Analyses of break-down of answers given to questions posed on the aesthetic appearance of a town or urban district where the respondents lived showed up many interesting correlations.²⁷ Firstly — a positive assessment of the aesthetic appearance of their district was expressed relatively more frequently by the residents of one family houses (apart from the residents of substandard houses in Dąbrowa

²³ In particular see B. Jałowicki, *Człowiek w przestrzeni miasta [Man in the Urban Space]*, Warszawa 1980; Idem, "Waloryzacja obszarów miasta" ["Evaluation of Urban Areas"], *Górnośląskie Studia Socjologiczne*, Vol. 14, 1980 (Katowice).

²⁴ See H. Libura, *Percepcja przestrzeni miejskiej [Perception of an Urban Space]*, Warszawa 1990 (The author conducted tests, inter alia, in Tychy, Katowice and Sosnowiec).

²⁵ M. Szczepański, "Wartości ekologiczne..." ["Ecological Values..."].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁷ Relations were tested using chi square values, $p \leq 0.05$.

Górnica). People living in estates, constructed by cooperative building societies, and in the old quarters of the inner cities most often state that their surrounding architectural-town planning reality is "featureless" neither pretty nor ugly.

The residents of block complexes of high-rise towers have a very critical assessment of their surroundings. 1/4 of the respondents consider the estate where they live to be "dreary", while in Dąbrowa Górnica the percentage of such opinions was notably higher than in the remaining towns (i.e. 33.8% as against 28.3% in Ruda Śląska, 24.5% in Tychy and 18.7% in Siemianowice Śląskie). This critical attitude also dominates in the assessments relating to other aspects of the spatial order — e.g. functional efficiency of the communications organisation or the management of the urban space.²⁸ This opinion is the same both when assessing the district in which the respondents live and also the whole town — a marked majority of respondents (60.4%) discerns no essential difference between the various districts of the given town, while the percentage of opinions distinguishing the existence of good and bad districts in their home town was relatively low.²⁹

The whole picture is filled in when reading the freely expressed opinions of inhabitants of the tested towns who were asked to describe in their own words what they associate with "the town" and "urban life". It was found that what is most strongly linked, in the views of the respondents, with the idea of "urban life", is: nervous life style (25.4% of persons tested), street traffic and noise (22.8%), ecological hazards (21.6%). A positive accent in this rather negative image is provided by selection of characteristics, pointing up the advantages due to the accessibility of cultural institutions and services of various kinds (22.6%), and additionally — proximity to the place of work (11.4%). The overall picture of the town and urban life emerging from the replies of the GOP inhabitants is disquieting in the meagreness of its associations, uninspired feelings, lack of symbolic references; from this point of view our research results fully corroborated the earlier observations of Bohdan Jałowiecki and also Hanna Libura basing on recently conducted studies in Katowice, Tychy and Sosnowiec.³⁰ "The picture of the town, particularly of Katowice and Sosnowiec — writes Hanna Libura — as a grey, anonymous, endlessly horrying crowd... frequently appears in the replies given by the questioned residents."³¹ In summing up her observations on the subject of

²⁸ M. Szczepański, "Wartości ekologiczne..." ["Ecological Values..."].

²⁹ From interesting studies by H. Libura, carried out among other places, in Warsaw, Cracow and Katowice, this index had a value from 60 to 70%; see H. Libura, *Percepcja... [Perception...]*, pp. 87—168

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 142—168.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Silesian towns, Hanna Libura states: “The symbolic image of Katowice, and probably of the other Silesian towns, was and remains impoverished. The principal cause of this state of affairs is, above all, the lack of important historic buildings which would bear witness to the traditions and continuity of the town.”³² These observations set out here prompt serious misgivings as to the psychophysical condition of the GOP inhabitants, forced to lead their lives in surroundings depleted in symbolic and aesthetic values. Without giving way to the illusions of environmental determinism, it is not possible to ignore the considerable body of knowledge in the area of spatial psychosociology already accumulated, which indicates the destructive effects, for both emotional balance and personality development, of prolonged existence in a monotonous, degraded, urbanised space, deprived of aesthetic stimulus.³³ Also it is not possible to rule out the feasibility that the critical opinion, voiced by the majority of the respondents as regards their residential environment, is an indicator of the general dissatisfaction of the GOP inhabitants with their systematically worsening living conditions — in particular the tragic state of the natural environment. We endeavoured in our research to discover if, and to what extent, awareness of the ecological hazards affects the feelings of safety and well-being of the GOP inhabitants and their attitude to the region where they live and assessment of its attractions. The very great majority of the respondents (88.3%) are convinced that the catastrophic condition of the natural environment of the GOP has a detrimental influence on: the younger the respondents the greater is the agreement on this point (among the tested persons over 65 years of age may be found the majority of undecided, undetermined views in the matter — 31.2%, as against 15.5% in the age group 31—40 years). Awareness of health hazards appears obviously to correlate with the fact of having children and also length and place of residence, while the lowest index of affirmative replies was received from among those respondents who had lived in GOP from birth (75.5%) or less than one year (76.6%) and also from among the residents of the older workers settlements (66.7%), while the highest was found among the residents of one-family houses (90.0%).³⁴ From these established results it appears to be highly probable that the actual knowledge of the environmental health hazards is lower among the long-time residents of GOP than among the remaining categories of respondents (with the exception of recently arrived residents who are, quite reasonably, not fully aware of the circumstances). In answer

³² Ibid., p. 167.

³³ Cf. A. Bańka, *Psychologiczna struktura projektowa środowiska [Psychological Design Structure of the Environment]*, Poznań 1985, p. 105; see also J. Wódz, *Patologia społeczna... [Social Pathology...]*, passim.

³⁴ More widely see K. Łęcki, P. Wróblewski, “Warunki...” [“Conditions...”], pp. 142—160.

to questions on the causes of these serious health hazards the most frequently mentioned was atmospheric pollution (69.5%), considerably more rarely — contamination of the soil and foodstuffs (6.2%) or water (3.2%), while merely 2.7% indicated contamination and devastation of crops and vegetation. A certain group of persons (7.1%) specified causes other than the ones given above, e.g. lack of town cleaning, incompetence of communal services, sanitary services, etc. It is a disturbing fact that as many as 1/10 of the respondents (10.5%) were unable to offer any replies to the questions posed, excusing themselves by lack of knowledge or interest in the subject. This fact is peculiarly disturbing in view of the situation where some understanding of the true extent and nature of the health hazards associated with the pollution of the natural environment of GOP could, in many cases, protect the population living here against at least some of the effects of this state of affairs (recalling here, e.g., the still commonly practised cultivation of vegetable in home gardens and allotments and also unsuitable eating habits). In answer to the question of whether, given the present ecological situation in GOP, they wished to live somewhere else, almost 40% (39.9%) of the tested persons gave an affirmation pointing out at the same time that they did not envisage such a possibility, 11.3% expressed a wish that their children could live away from GOP, 10% plan to move away from the region in the nearest future, and 4.1% intend to do so on retirement. A desire to quit the GOP immediately was declared, as could be expected, relatively most frequently by young people (14.3% in age group up to 20 years, as against 2.6% among the over 65 years) and also by persons with higher educational qualifications (20.2% as against 4.5% in the group with elementary school education). A similar break-down in replies given was found in the groups differing in length of time of living this region — a wish to leave GOP was declared more often by persons living here for a shorter period (up to 5 years), i.e. 35.5% as against 8.5% to those living here from birth.³⁵ The virtually universal feeling of danger, associated with the ecological degradation of GOP, does not exclude simultaneously certain attractions of this region — for at least 1/5 of the respondents GOP is still a desirable place to live and work, more than 1/3 of those questioned (37.2%) are aware, alongside the negative factors, also of the positive side of living in this region (as well as good jobs most often mentioned were — family ties, neighbourly relations, attachment for regional traditions, habit, having an apartment). Opinions stripping the region of any positive characteristics were expressed in only 15.0% of all the answers given, such replies were usually given by persons with a very short (up to 1 year) period of residence in the region of the tested towns.³⁶

³⁵ *Ibid.*, passim.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Today, when four years have elapsed since these studies were conducted, we would almost certainly find a different percentage breakdown in the answers to this latter question (e.g. due to the progressive social-economic impoverishment of the occupational groups enjoying privileged positions in the proceeding system, in particular workers in the power-fuel and metallurgical sector, who are now most threatened by unemployment), nevertheless the state of ecological awareness of the GOP residents, recorded at the end of the 1980s, has most probably not undergone any fundamental change. Hence, returning to the main theme, the hypothesis may be formulated that the GOP inhabitants are to a high degree sensitive to the possible effects on health of living in a region of ecological devastation, many of them, if they had the chance, would willingly change their place of residence, but nevertheless a significantly large proportion admit to strong links with their home region which, irrespective of its architectural and planning and aesthetic-functional shortcomings, is discerned by these inhabitants, above all in terms of personal relations and social contacts. In these studies, carried out in four towns of the GOP, the subject of analysis were the everyday, informal (family, neighbourly-friendly, acquaintance) social contacts of the GOP inhabitants of a relatively stable and repeatable nature (and thus, in a certain sense, of a routine nature). We worked on the assumption that the existence of such a network of informal connections in the compass of the residential environment could be a useful indicator of the psychosocial rooted habituation of the respondents.³⁷ It is clear that to discover these deep connections by means of standard sociological investigations presents many difficulties. Procedural requirements usually make it necessary to restrict the study areas to a few groups of questions considered by the researcher to be the most indicative. This mode of procedure was adopted here, limiting the scope of analyses to three detailed problems: the spatial concentration of informal circles, the depth and content of neighbourly-acquaintance relations (in this area the source of inspiration were the broad research experiences collated by Lublin sociologists under the leadership of Jan Turowski³⁸), and also — feelings of loneliness.³⁹ The data we collected is very far removed from the stereotype conception of social alienation and isolation of the big city inhabitants. Of the 1,603 random drawn respondents a considerable proportion (43.8%) have some close family relations within the region of the place of residence (an area delineated by

³⁷ More widely see, K. Wódz, "Zakorzenie w miejscu..." ["Rooted in the Place..."], pp. 114—131.

³⁸ See J. Turowski, *Środowisko mieszkalne w świadomości ludności miejskiej* [*The Inhabitable Environment in the Awareness of the Urban Population*], Wrocław 1979, and P. Kryczka, *Spoleczność osiedla mieszkaniowego w wielkim mieście* [*The Community of a Housing Estate in a Big Town*], Warszawa 1981.

³⁹ K. Wódz, "Zakorzenie w miejscu..." ["Rooted in the Place..."], p. 116.

the boundaries of the estate or town district). A fair sized group (41.5%) have close family relations in the same or some other GOP town. As would be anticipated from study of the great wealth of documentary material gathered by urban sociologists, both in Poland and in the rest of the world — the rootedness in the place where one lives is significantly (statistically) correlated with age (and hence length of time of living in the given town) education and professional status of the respondents, and also with the phase of the family cycle in which they find themselves at the time of interview. A detailed statistical analysis of this matter is presented elsewhere, here we have limited ourselves to the overall characteristics of the observed regularities. In general we may state that those persons who are strongly rooted in their place of habitation are those of relatively lower level of education and mainly blue collar workers (those with a family in the area of the same estate or district are to 52.1% of persons with vocational level education and 42.7% with elementary level educational, and in this group 26.6% of persons with higher education); in the groups distinguished on the basis of belonging to specific professional categories — the corresponding indices were: 50.6% — unqualified workers, 47.2% — qualified workers, 35.8% — foremen, overseers.⁴⁰ Similarly, as in the case of family colligations, having a circle of close friends and acquaintances in the neighbourhood of the place of residence, the highest corroborative indices being noted among people born here where they now live (60.3%), and the lowest among those who have lived here less than five years (44.4%). It is necessary to add that more than half of the respondents (54.9%) have close friends in the vicinity of the district or housing estate, although there also some persons (almost 1/5 of those questioned) who, apart from their nearest family, do not have any close social contacts within the area where they reside. From analysis it may be seen that these are chiefly middle-aged or older people, living with their children or parents. Thus summing up, it may be said that the arbitrarily chosen representative sample of GOP inhabitants does not appear to be particularly affected by the effects of mass migration and cultural intermingling, which has been a cause for concern for a number of publicists and regional movement activities in recent times.⁴¹ A feeling of isolation and complete lack of support from the helpful goodwill of those living nearest was admitted by only a relatively small group of respondents (5.6%), principally older women. Hence in general it may be concluded that irrespective of the type of residential environment, the social process of putting down roots by the inhabitants of the towns studied understood here as caught up in the structure

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁴¹ Cf. Programme materials of the Silesian Autonomous Movement, *Inf. Bulletin*, No. 1.

of informal family, neighbourly, friendly and social relations, goes ahead without any greater disturbances, although the nature and scope of these relations is fairly differentiated, depending on the phase of the life cycle and the life style of the particular social-demographic categories. The spatial concentration of the informal circles is characteristic, especially for those in the earlier and later life cycle phases and for persons of lower status in the hierarchy of job and education. It is these social-demographic categories that are undoubtedly the most strongly rooted in their place of residence — for them it quite certainly forms an ecological niche, within the bounds of which they live out their daily lives.

4. Conclusions

This sketch portraying the experienced space, taken from conducted on 1,603 inhabitants of GOP, shows a clear majority of critical assessments expressing a decided lack of acceptance by the respondents of their surrounding architectural-urban, planned environment and the conditions of life in these most of ten unfavourable conditions.

Then, in answer to the question posed in the introduction of whether the subjective picture of the GOP urban landscape is in agreement with the image constructed on the basis of objectivised scientific studies, the reply must be in the affirmative. The inhabitants of GOP perceive the town in which they live as ugly, depressing — and it would be difficult not to admit the justice of this assessment. “Urban life” they associate primarily with the arduousness of everyday life, noise, hurry, crowds, pollution of the environment; less often than could have been anticipated were put forward critical comments on the subject of public communications, which result, as has already been mentioned, from the specific spatial layout of working places and residential places. The inhabitants of GOP are vitally disturbed by the condition of their natural environment and the consequent hazards for life and health, many would certainly move to another area if that were feasible. However, in this dark overall portrayal of the space inhabited certain positive elements may be perceived. The majority of the persons questioned express a feeling of attachment to the place where they live and evince a certain tendency even towards its idealising (this may be seen, e.g., in the assessments of relations with the other co-residents and the global approach of their district or estate as opposed to other areas of the town — more than half of the respondents consider that they live in the better part of the town). This conviction expressed by the tested persons, that they live in a friendly and warm-hearted

community, is empirically grounded in their factual rootedness in the area where they live. It appears to be feasible that this factor, sometimes neglected in the studies of urban sociologists (perhaps attributable to the mistrust which certain representatives of this subdiscipline feel towards microsociological analyses), plays the most vital role in the forming of emotional links with the town, and influences the persistence of a positive picture of the region as attractive, despite the deplorable degradation of the natural environment in both the working environment and the home surroundings. Similar conclusions were reached by Hanna Libura, drawing on her studies performed in several Polish towns — in the subjective pictures of their towns offered by the inhabitants of Kraków, Poznań, Warszawa or Sosnowiec, the dominating factor are memories and experiences connected with their closest family and friends, and it is precisely these feelings which, in the opinion of the author, govern the attitude to the town as such.⁴² Hence it may be said that personal life experiences form the nucleus of the experienced space anchored in everyday life.

We have already pointed out that the inhabitants of the GOP towns considered (particularly of the high-rise blocks housing estates) express a negative opinion as to the aesthetic values of their architectural-urban planning surroundings. On the other hand, in the spontaneously elicited descriptions of towns and town life there is no mention whatsoever of these factors. Why should this be so? It is tempting to offer at least a partial explanation of this puzzle. It has a general dimension since it touches on the question fundamental for humanist urban sociology, of the feasibility of uncovering, during routine survey studies, the basic individual assessments and feelings associated with the urban space, and also calls in question the justification for analysis of processes of perception and evaluation of the town in a context distant from the realities of everyday human life. If we adhere consistently to the principle, then the experienced space is an element of the world of everyday life, dominated by categories of colloquial thinking and expressed in the natural, everyday language — then we should grant priority to the freely expressed thoughts of the tested persons taking precedence over the replies elicited in answer to specific questions posed by the researcher which reflect his (the researcher's) process of thought and attitude to the problems studied in the framework of the scientific discipline represented. Therefore it appears justified to conclude that if in the unconstrained opinions expressed on the town and urban life the aesthetic element does not find a mention, then the reason could be that the town inhabitants, immersed in the daily routine of life, simply do not particularly concern themselves with these problems, which for the urban sociologist, the geographer-humanist or the architect are seen to be of paramount importance. To assess the aesthetic

⁴² H. Libura, *Percepcja...* [*Perception...*], passim.

values of particular urban-architectural forms requires, apart from a certain amount of professional knowledge and a suitable found of experience, also a certain perspective and distance reasonable to expect from a tourist visiting the town or a professional researcher, but not from the ordinary, harassed man in the street.

Hence at the level of everyday reality the town appears in the eyes of the average GOP resident above all as the spatial framework of routine life events and not as a subject for aesthetic emotions, this is the conclusion clearly to be drawn from the study of more than a thousand freely expressed views that we collected. Should this be taken as evidence of blunting aesthetic sensitivity among people obliged to live (often from generation to generation) in surroundings deprived of aesthetic stimulus? This hypothesis would surely be too far-reaching a generalisation, although it cannot be ruled out that in the case of the residents of the tested GOP towns we are confronted with a specific adaptation to aesthetic surroundings designed and created by the architects and town planners. This is a postulation prompting deeper reflection reaching well beyond the ideological argument with the totalitarian system and the doctrine of modern urbanism. Following after the outstanding economic-political analysis of the mechanisms of the social processes of creation of the urban space in Poland under the Polish People's Republic presented by Bohdan Jałowiecki, the time is now ripe for deeper consideration of the socio-cultural conditions governing this process. It is perhaps possible, e.g. on the basis of Pierre Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital, to attempt to elucidate the surprising similarity of aesthetic imagination shown by the designers of the Polish high-rise housing blocks and the nightmarish, box-like individual houses created to satisfy the tastes and needs of average Pole.⁴³

⁴³ Cf. interesting propositions for research topics in this area in B. Jałowiecki, „Znaczenie przestrzeni” [„Valuing of Space”], *Studia Socjologiczne*, Nos. 1—2, 1991, p. 54.

Kazimiera Wódz

**Jakość życia codziennego w opinii mieszkańców
miast Górnego Śląska**

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest szeroką relacją z socjologicznych badań empirycznych prowadzonych w miastach górnośląskiej aglomeracji.

Prowadzono je w Tychach, Dąbrowie Górniczej, Siemianowicach Śląskich i Rudzie Śląskiej. Przebadano łącznie 1603 dorosłych mieszkańców tych miast. Interesowano się takimi zagadnieniami, jak: rytm życia w przestrzeni miasta, ocena urbanistycznych i architektonicznych rozwiązań w mieście czy funkcjonowanie infrastruktury miasta. Wyniki pozwalają na wskazanie głównych elementów krytyki warunków życia w miastach aglomeracji.

Kazimiera Wódz

**Die Alltagslebensqualität in der Meinung
der Einwohner oberschlesischer Städte**

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel ist eine breite Relation über die soziologischen und empirischen Untersuchungen, die in den Städten der oberschlesischen Agglomeration geführt wurden. Sie wurden in Tychy, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Siemianowice Śl. und Ruda Śl. unternommen. Man untersuchte insgesamt 1603 erwachsene Einwohner der Städte und interessierte sich mit solchen Problemen wie: Lebensrhythmus im Stadtraum, Bewertung der Stadtplanung und der architektonischen Lösungen in der Stadt, wie auch das Funktionieren der Infrastruktur der Stadt. Die Ergebnisse erlauben einen Hinweis auf die Hauptelemente der Lebensbedingungskritik in den Städten der Agglomeration.