

MONIKA MULARSKA-KUCHAREK

University of Lodz

**HOW TO LIVE IN A SMALL TOWN?
ABOUT THE QUALITY OF LIFE
AND QUALITY OF LIVING**

Abstract: The small towns have great development potential in the economic, demographic and social dimension, primarily due to the fact that there are many more of them compared with big cities. However, if small towns are to meet the expectations they are faced, improvement of the quality of life, both at the local and national level, should be taken of first. Integrated actions aimed at improving the living conditions in these cities, as well as improving the quality of life of its inhabitants, are vital. Nevertheless, this is impossible without a comprehensive diagnosis of the needs and expectations, prosperity and well-being of small towns residents. Knowing this information may enable effective actions and plans for development strategies, so that small cities become an attractive place to live, not only for the existing residents but also for potential ones.

The research results presented here are an attempt to answer these demands. Their goal was to diagnose the quality of life of small town inhabitants. The article describes the availability of various services, vital in the context of satisfying the needs of small town residents and subjective quality of life. The basis of empirical analyses presented here are quantitative and qualitative studies conducted among the residents of five small cities in the Lodz Region.

Keywords: Quality of life, quality of living, small towns.

Introduction

Cities form the primary link of socio-economic development. The effective functioning of the whole settlement system depends on their potential, mainly due to the fact that they are the key hubs of entrepreneurship and growth centres of various areas of production [Michalski 1997]. They focus human economic activity, which is why they frequently determine the functions of their respective regions and represent their position in the national economic system [Witczak 1995]. Urban settlement network is not homogeneous; its various elements perform specific functions and are arranged a hierarchical manner. A vital link in the hierarchy of the settlement sys-

tem are small towns, which ensure the cohesiveness of the settlement system and act as an intermediate stage on the urban-rural axis. It is difficult to overestimate their importance to the development processes of the region and the whole country, “because they are once again becoming particularly important for the improvement and maintenance of quality of life in Poland and Europe” [Skalski, *Perspektywy rozwoju małych miast*].

An overview of the literature of the subject leads to the conclusion that while large cities receive a great deal of attention in the context of their development, living conditions and quality of life, the same issues are much more rarely discussed with respect to small towns, both in the scientific and practical area. This disparity has been largely deepened by, recently very popular, nationwide, regional and local studies on quality of life in big cities, to mention just the third edition of the Report on the Polish metropolises prepared by PwC Poland¹. The aim of the research project is to analyse the development potential of Polish metropolises, *i.e.* the 12 largest cities in the country. The measurement of their potential, or the assessment of the developmental opportunities and challenges of the surveyed cities is based on the methodology developed by PwC and used to evaluate the situation of the metropolis. It is based on the belief that harmonious development requires to hold a variety of assets at the same time, conventionally called city capitals, including the so-called quality of life capital, including the environment, security, traffic, healthcare, education. As the authors of the report claim, this capital largely determines the assessment of the extent to which the city is a good place to live and work.

It is obvious that the so-called quality of life capital, and more specifically investment in it, should not apply solely to big cities, as prosperous and dynamic small and medium-sized cities may play an important role in the pursuit of prosperity not only for their own residents but also those of the neighbouring rural communities. They are crucial for the prevention of depopulation of rural areas and the influx of people to urban areas, as well as the promotion of balanced territorial development [*Miasta przyszłości...* 2011]. Improving the quality of life in this type of cities is therefore particularly important for the development processes of the region and the whole country. Nevertheless, special attention should be paid to small cities, whose role in this context is difficult to overestimate. They have great development potential in the economic, demographic and social dimension, primarily due to the fact that there are many more of them compared with big cities. However, if small towns are to meet the expectations they are faced, improvement of the quality of life, both at the local and national level, should be taken care of first. Integrated actions aimed at improving the living conditions in these cities, as well as improving the quality of life of its inhabitants, are vital. Nevertheless, this is impossible without a comprehensive diagnosis of the needs and expectations, prosperity and well-being of small towns residents.

¹ [*Raport o polskich metropoliach* 2015; <http://www.pwc.pl/miasta2015>, accessed 11.01.2016].

Knowing this information may enable effective actions and plans for development strategies, so that small cities become an attractive place to live, not only for the existing residents but also for potential ones.

The research results presented here are an attempt to answer these demands. Their goal was to diagnose the quality of life of small town inhabitants. The article describes the availability of various services, vital in the context of satisfying the needs of small town residents and subjective quality of life. The basis of empirical analyses presented here are quantitative and qualitative studies conducted among the residents of five small cities in the Lodz Region.

1. Quality of life: its nature

The emergence of the term “quality of life” is related to the economic growth in the United States in the 1960s. Originally, research on quality of life focused mainly on objective indicators of need satisfaction. And so, quality of life was equated with standard of life, material prosperity, needs which are important for individuals and communities and allow normal existence. Both quality of life and standard of life may be defined in a very interdisciplinary and complex way. Nevertheless, the literature of the subject assumes that standard of life is “the quality of living conditions in terms of the satisfaction of the most important needs, obtaining material possessions, comfortable and pleasant life. In this approach, it is a synonym of the most broadly understood living conditions. In this sense, standard of life depends not only on the extent to which one’s needs are satisfied, but also the costs incurred in the pursuit of their satisfaction, *i.e.* the amount of time spent working, the arduousness of the work, type of leisure activities, *etc.* In this socio-economic approach, standard of life encompasses all circumstances characterizing the material, cultural, and social conditions of society’s existence. They include working conditions (...), wage level or income, consumption, housing situation, ownership of durable consumer goods by the population, state of healthcare and social care, state of education and culture, availability of running water, gas, electricity, sewage system in households, *etc.*” [Piasny 1993]. In a more general context, quality of life perceived in terms of standard of life and prosperity may be viewed as “all objective conditions of infrastructural nature in which society lives (social groups, households and individuals). They are related mainly to financial standing, existential and environmental protection of individuals’ lives” [Słaby 2007, p. 104].

The second trend in defining quality of life very much emphasized in the literature of the subject equals it with well-being, happiness, satisfaction with life and its aspects. This perspective links it to a subjective perception of one’s own life within a certain system of values and under certain social, economic and political conditions. The scope of the subjective quality of life discussed here concerns primarily “the result of internal processes of evaluating various spheres of life and life as a whole. This

is a cognitive-experiential (emotional) category, and the subject is the most important, if not the sole source of data which form the basis for assessing the level of quality of life” [Sęk 1993].

Recognizing the subjective sphere of quality of life was associated with a holistic perception of humans and their lives, particularly popular in the humanities and highlighting the fact that quality of life should not apply only to objective determinants, *i.e.* to the satisfaction of human needs through material conditions. Such an approach reduces the perception of human existence to the possession of goods (high standard of life, wealth), and consumption, which although it dominates today’s reality, it nevertheless has a certain limit to its possibilities [Rapley 2003]. According to Flanagan [after: Brzezińska *et al.* 2001] the same level of consumption and number of possessions may satisfy one person but not another.

In view of the reflections above, it is very much justified to approach quality of life in a global manner, *i.e.* considering both objective and subjective factors. On the one hand, it is an attempt to find a compromise between the analysed dimensions of quality of life, and on the other hand, an opportunity for a more detailed exploration of the factors that may lead to improving the well-being of individuals and communities. The more so that improving the quality of life is doubtlessly the goal of all human beings and their activities. It should not come as a surprise then that interest in the quality of life has gone beyond the academic realm and is rapidly entering the world of the creators of social life, representatives of various institutions and the general public. An interest in the quality of life has been reflected not only in the constantly growing number of publications on the subject, but also in intensified efforts to diagnose the quality of life of individuals and communities.

Doubtlessly, the issue of quality of life takes on special significance in the context of cities, and more specifically the challenges faced by contemporary cities in Poland and Europe. According to the guidelines contained in the “Cities of Tomorrow” study, prepared by the European Commission for Regional Policy on visions and ways forward for cities, municipal policymakers are obliged to undertake a series of measures aimed at ensuring adequate living conditions for their inhabitants. Cities should be attractive, a place of advanced social progress, a platform for democracy, cultural dialogue, cultural diversity, a place of natural, ecological and environmental redevelopment. Above all, according to the authors of the report, cities of the future should be places characterized by a high quality of life and prosperity [*Miasta przyszłości...* 2011].

It is worth noting that the European assumptions are shared by the national documents on urban policy and visions of Polish cities in the coming decades. The National Municipal Policy also highlights the need to ensure a high quality of life for residents.

Guidelines for the development of cities, both of international and national character, contribute to a large extent to the fact that high quality of life is increasingly more often considered the main goal at many levels of governance, including the lo-

cal one. Municipal policy-makers initiate a range of actions aimed at promoting the city as a good and friendly place. Naturally, not without reason. The main objective is to encourage existing residents to stay in the city and to attract new ones, especially now, when many Polish cities face depopulation. "The outflow of residents to other cities or to suburbs located outside the city's administrative borders negatively impacts the cities' budgets" [Czepakiewicz, Jankowski 2015, p.104].

A key aspect of these initiatives is obviously a thorough diagnosis of residents' expectations. Listening to the public opinion makes governance more effective when it comes to meeting broadly understood needs of the residents, and allows the residents' standard of life to gradually grow.

2. Methodological assumptions

The aim of this article is to diagnose the quality of life of small town residents on the example of five cities in the Lodz Region: Uniejów, Ozorków, Tuszyn, Stryków, Koluszki. The study takes into account the multi-dimensional context of quality of life. It evaluates the attractiveness of the nearest residential space, accessibility to basic services, the functioning of key institutions in the city, aesthetics and feeling of security. The research project also focuses on the diagnosis of the subjective dimension of quality of life for residents of the examined cities, *i.e.* the general satisfaction with life and its various dimensions. In general, the author's intention was to draw attention to the quality of life of small town residents and living conditions in territorial units of this type, which, compared with big cities, relatively rarely appear as the subject of discussions and studies.

The empirical basis for the analyses presented here are four quantitative studies carried out using a survey interview employing the PAPI method (Paper and Pencil Interview) as well as qualitative studies, which include individual in-depth interviews with residents of the researched cities (70 IDI). Thus, the project uses triangulation of research methods, which provides a more accurate measurement of the discussed phenomena and allows for a detailed description and interpretation in the situational and social context.

The main basis of the presented results was quantitative research. Prior to the actual survey, a pilot survey was performed, which aimed to confirm the correct functioning of the research tool prepared in the conceptual stage. The pilot survey was carried out on a non-probability sample. The selection of respondents was governed by two criteria: age and education. Evidence gathered through preliminary tests served to verify the prepared tool. As a result, some of the questions were modified and detailed instructions for interviewers were prepared.

Quantitative research was conducted in the years 2012-2014, while qualitative research was performed in 2013-2014. In the case of four cities, the sample was selected

using the random-route method. The interviewers began the survey from a randomly selected starting point, carrying out subsequent interviews in every fifth house/apartment, beginning from the starting point. Only one person could be interviewed in each household. For the fifth city, the sample was drawn from the TERYT registry database, and the study was conducted by a research company as part of a grant for young scientists.

In order to guarantee a high quality of the collected data, the empirical data was verified using two types of control: field and non-field. And so, the actual completion of the interviews was checked, as well as the survey records in light of their logic and completeness. The final sample, after rejecting incomplete surveys, was as follows: Ozorków $n = 251$, Uniejów $n = 281$, Tuszyń $n = 336$, Stryków $n = 222$, Koluszki $n = 426$.

The SPSS package was used for the analysis of quantitative data.

Qualitative research was carried out both by the research firm (40 interviews), and the author of the study (30 interviews). All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The material obtained as a result of qualitative studies was then analysed using qualitative methods in stages detailed below. Firstly, the interviews were partially structured to obtain basic information about the units in question. Secondly, a preliminary ordering analysis was performed, which assessed the reliability of the basic methodological elements of the study and verified them. Finally, a reduction and categorization was performed, consisting of mapping out the problem areas, identifying particular issues and concepts and a cause-and-effect analysis.

3. Assessment of the availability of selected services in the researched towns

According to Borowik [2002], “the basic elements of quality of life relativized to the man – space relationship include housing, contained in the housing environment – human habitat category, which covers house (flat), along with the close and distant material and social surroundings”. It is an important element of quality of life, often regarded as one of its indicators and subjected to evaluation in social research studies diagnosing the quality of life of individuals and communities. The research shows that quality of life is closely correlated with housing standard and housing quality [Mularska-Kucharek 2015]. Naturally, a better quality of life requires better housing standards, creating an environment which is comfortable, friendly and conducive to self-fulfilment. The quality of this environment is expressed in an assessment of the degree of its saturation with the desired characteristics, especially from the user’s point of view. Therefore, in the context of quality of life, important elements are the quality of the residential environment, a sense of security, the degree of saturation with social, trade and services infrastructure, places of leisure and recreation, *etc.*

In the case of the surveyed population, the study evaluated the availability of several services designed to meet specific needs of the residents. It examined the

availability of grocery, clothing and electronics shops, cultural facilities, swimming pools, GPs, medical specialists, restaurants, recreation and entertainment facilities, household appliances repair, beauty and hairdressing services. The questionnaire used a 4-point Likert scale with no middle option. Respondents were asked to assess the availability of specific services within the following categories: very good, quite good, rather bad, very bad.

The study showed that in case of most services, positive assessment dominated over negative evaluation (see Table 1 and Table 2). Several aspects should be noted. The availability of groceries received a very positive evaluation, which is a vital issue from the point of view of everyday life. The availability of clothing stores was rated similarly well, although some differences of opinion can be noted here, with Tuszyn, where clothes markets are located, receiving much better notes. Nearly 90% of the respondents are satisfied with the availability of these two services. From the point of view of the quality of life, both these types of service are important. Satisfying consumer needs, especially alimentary ones, is one of the basic human needs, as Maslow's theory claims [1990].

The data in Table 1 shows that small town residents assessed positively the availability of GPs in their places of residence. It is worth noting that in this case the "very good" answer dominated. Considering the fact that, according to the CBOS research (2013), health is one of the most important values for Poles, the availability of adequate medical services is undoubtedly an important determinant of the quality of life in a given town. Residents of the examined cities are also satisfied with the availability of hairdressing and beauty services. In the case of three cities (Uniejów, Tuszyn, Ozorków) a swimming pool also received good notes in terms of availability. It should be stressed that in particular Uniejów stands out in this respect. The level of availability in this case reaches almost 100%, which is of course justified by the existence of thermal waters and the functioning of thermal spas there. It is worth noting that the availability of a swimming pool at the place of residence is still seen as an indicator of a higher quality of life, which is effectively used by representatives of the territorial units in marketing strategies.

However, a very good accessibility of the swimming pool is not Uniejów's only exceptional feature. A positive assessment of availability applies to the vast majority of services there. Of course there is no way to link that to the direction of development adopted by the authorities of Uniejów, which led to changes in the functions of the city. The dynamic metamorphosis of the city has contributed to the increase in standard and quality of life of its residents. Its development has had positive implications for many aspects of social life, as evidenced by the decidedly prevailing positive reviews, especially when compared with the other towns. It may be concluded that the test community is in a good position when it comes to satisfying their needs, and not just the basic ones. This is likely to be reflected in quality of life. Therefore, the results confirm the increasingly frequently expressed opinions that Uniejów is becoming an

Table 1

Availability of selected services as viewed by small town residents
– positive evaluation

Type of service	Availability									
	Uniejów		Stryków		Tuszyn		Ozorków		Koluszki	
	very good	quite good	very good	quite good	very good	quite good	very good	quite good	very good	quite good
	%									
Shops (groceries)	43.2	50.0	78.7	20.4	74.1	22.6	35.2	64.0	67.1	29.9
Shops (clothes)	12.1	63.6	12.7	53.4	37.2	33.9	17.6	80.4	27.7	45.1
Shops (electronic appliances)	6.8	55.4	5.4	18.1	7.7	16.4	5.6	86.0	45.1	22.3
Entertainment (cinema/theatre/disco, etc.)	3.2	44.3	0.9	0.5	0.9	6.0	0.4	16.4	4.6	33.8
Cultural facilities (museums, concerts, exhibitions, etc.)	7.5	53.9	1.4	7.2	3.9	17.6	0.8	14.8	1.9	12.5
Swimming pool	54.3	40.4	0.9	1.8	78.0	18.5	1.2	76.4	15.1	42.4
Doctor (GP)	31.8	57.9	60.2	34.4	56.5	31.3	3.6	86.0	50.2	43.3
Doctor (specialist)	2.9	17.9	33.0	38.9	22.6	31.3	1.2	74.4	2.8	35.0
Restaurants, bars, etc.	39.1	52.3	5.4	26.2	31.3	46.7	0.4	48.8	3.4	28.2
Sport and recreation facilities (gym, track, aerobics, etc.)	25.7	57.9	5.4	40.3	25.0	43.5	2.0	73.6	18.2	43.0
Repair of household appliances	5.4	28.9	3.2	19.5	4.2	19.9	7.6	85.6	7.3	33.2
Hairdressing/beauty services	42.9	43.6	55.7	37.6	78.9	18.8	11.6	86.0	75.3	22.4

* The table does not take into account the answer: "difficult to say"

Source: Own work (Tabs. 1-4).

attractive city to live. This is important both from the point of view of the present and incoming residents. Both groups appreciate the continual development of the town as well as the fact that having been granted a spa status in 2012 [*Journal of Laws*, 2012, item 782] opened up further opportunities for Uniejów.

The worst of the twelve analysed services in Uniejów is the availability of medical specialists, but this problem also exists in the other small towns included in the study (see Table 2). At the same time, all the other towns are characterised by a poor availability of several other services. These include entertainment and leisure facilities, *i.e.* cinemas, theatres, concerts, exhibitions, discos, *etc.*

The availability of dining services, such as bars, restaurants, pubs, *etc.*, was also rated as low. In light of the functionality of the inhabited space, such objects form an important part of quality of life. The more so since, as the performed studies indicate, the residents go to other cities, mainly to Lodz, to access this type of objects. This, however, entails economic consequences, as well as the additional time spent

Table 2

Availability of selected services as viewed by small town residents
– negative evaluation

Type of service	Availability									
	Uniejów		Stryków		Tuszyn		Ozorków		Koluszki	
	rather bad	very bad	rather bad	very bad	rather bad	very bad	rather bad	very bad	rather bad	very bad
	%									
Shops (groceries)	5.4	1.4	0.8	0.1	2.4	0.6	0.4	0.4	2.3	0.5
Shops (clothes)	18.9	3.6	33.9	10.9	17.9	6.5	1.6	0.4	20.7	4.5
Shops (electronic appliances)	30.0	3.9	36.2	30.3	31.3	18.2	7.6	0.8	12.6	19.8
Entertainment (cinema/theatre/disco, etc.)	37.1	8.6	8.1	59.3	19.9	23.5	52.0	30.4	38.8	15.9
Cultural facilities (museums, concerts, exhibitions, etc.)	26.1	5.4	15.4	52.1	27.7	21.4	51.2	33.2	30.2	25.1
Swimming pool	3.2	2.1	1.8	54.3	1.8	0.6	18.0	3.6	10.1	18.
Doctor (GP)	7.1	1.4	4.1	1.4	5.7	3.3	9.6	0.8	4.9	1.6
Doctor (specialist)	36.1	16.4	16.7	6.8	23.8	11.0	22.4	1.6	40.2	20.0
Restaurants, bars, etc.	6.1	0.7	36.7	23.9	15.2	2.7	45.6	5.2	18.0	13.6
Sports and recreation facilities (gym, track, aerobics, etc.)	10.4	3.2	23.1	24.0	16.4	6.0	20.0	4.4	39.2	22
Repair of household appliances	41.8	13.9	29.4	33.0	19.0	14.6	5.6	0.8	15.3	25.2
Hairdresser/beauty services	5.4	5.2	4.5	1.0	0.6	0.3	2.0	0.4	1.4	0.2

* The table does not take into account the answer: "difficult to say".

on commuting, which was often reported by the residents in qualitative research. It is worth noting that the lack of such objects was mentioned by respondents as the main downside of living in a small town. As one of the female residents of Ozorków said, "we miss a cinema, a theatre, but you won't find these things in small towns, will you? And even if you will, they won't be like in big cities. Sometimes we'd like to go somewhere but it means arranging the whole trip. For me, it's a big deal. The young can do it quicker. They should enjoy it, here they won't find nice things like these" (IDI² 15). Such comments were also expressed by respondents from the other towns. One of Stryków female inhabitants put it differently. "You know... It's a good thing we live so close to Lodz because we can go to the shopping centre, eat out in a nice restaurant, go to the cinema, sometimes to the theatre. Although we very rarely go to the theatre. There's not much of that in Stryków. I think I wouldn't want to move, I've been living here for so many years, but I tell my children to move away to a big city, they'll have a better chance to find work and enjoy life" (IDI 10).

² In-Depth Interview.

The data in Table 2 shows that the residents negatively rated the availability of cultural facilities, electronics shops and household appliance repair services. In order to meet their needs for those services, the inhabitants of the examined towns use the commercial and socio-cultural infrastructure in neighbouring cities, mainly in Lodz. This is also where they travel to see a medical specialist. Unfortunately, as the qualitative research shows, the lack of such facilities and services significantly reduces the quality of life in the towns. As one of Stryków female residents said, "I like this town because it's safer here than in a big city. All my family are here but there aren't enough shops and it's hard to find a good doctor, and when you find one, he charges much more than in Lodz because he has to commute. Well, and the queues are longer, and the choice's limited" (IDI 22).

The in-depth interviews conducted with residents of the researched towns revealed much more negative than positive information about life in their places of residence. The respondents pointed to other restrictions, not just those associated with the low availability of services discussed above. Among other issues, they stressed that the place in which they live does not provide adequate opportunities and perspectives for their children. As one of the residents put it, "I'm not moving out anymore. I've made a life for myself here, I have a house, a job, friends, but I keep telling my children to move out, so they can have a better life than I do. They can come back here when they're old, because life here is calmer. The downside, though, is that everybody knows you. You can be more anonymous in a big city and here everybody knows each other, but it's calm and peaceful. Well, life here isn't that bad, I can't complain" (IDI 34).

Finally, it is worth noting that residents were also asked about their satisfaction with the fact of living in a small town. Unfortunately, they expressed a lot of doubts and hesitation. Of course, young people were more reserved in their positive opinions than the older ones. It could be noted, however, that despite many negative aspects of living in a given place, there were also upsides, although mostly related to social aspects. Respondents indicated that their satisfaction is largely due to the fact that they had family, friends and acquaintances there.

In this context, it is worth examining the subjective quality of life of small towns residents, that is their level of their satisfaction with life and its dimensions.

4. The subjective quality of life of small town residents

This study uses questions about general satisfaction with life and each of its fields as empirical determinants of subjective quality of life. "This measurement provides information about the degree of satisfaction of individual needs and expectations. It may be assumed that, when assessing the level of satisfaction with their own lives, individuals take into account all aspects that make up the overall quality of life which they consider relevant" [GUS 2013]. This type of methodology has been

used for years in nation-wide research, such as Social Diagnosis or projects carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS), the Central Statistical Office (GUS), TNS Poland. These studies provide information about Polish people's mental health, which appears to be quite optimistic. It turns out that Poles increasingly more often think about their lives in positive terms, and the number of people who define their lives as successful has been steadily increasing [*Diagnoza Społeczna* 2013, 2015, *GUS 2013 CBOS 2015*]. The study shows that residents of the small towns of the Łódzkie Voivodeship examined here exhibit similar assessment in this respect.

The general level of life satisfaction in small towns is similar to the data collected in national surveys. As can be seen from the results presented here (see Table 3), the surveyed population is dominated by people who are more or less satisfied with their lives. There is a similar number of people who assess their lives as "quite good" and "successful" and in total they account for the vast majority of the respondents. The percentage of respondents who experience a lack of satisfaction is insignificant and amounts to a total of a few percent. It is worth noting that the positive assessment in this regard apply mainly to the residents of Stryków and Koluszki, while the inhabitants of Ozorków gave the highest number of the "neither good nor bad" type of answer (27.8%).

Table 3

Small town residents' general satisfaction with life (%)

	Ozorków	Stryków	Koluszki	Tuszyn
Wonderful	2.4	9.0	10.4	8.0
Happy	30.4	34.9	39.3	36
Quite good	30.8	33.5	30.4	31.8
Neither good nor bad	27.8	12.2	14.9	11.0
Not very happy	5.1	4.5	3.0	4.9
Unhappy	0.4	0.5	1.2	0.9
Terrible	0.1	0.9	0.8	1.1

The table does not take into account the answer: "difficult to say".

Another empirical determinant of quality of life, used in many studies, is the question of satisfaction with individual areas and aspects of life. The use of this index, "allows to additionally analyse the issue and to provide at least a partial answer to the question of which areas bring the most satisfaction, and which included aspects may be a source of frustration, as well as whether and in what manner the level of satisfaction with individual areas affects the overall satisfaction" [*GUS 2013*, p. 11]. The index has been used for the first time by Campbell [1976] in the 1970s. These works were of significant importance for the development of research methodology for studies on quality of life and concerned mainly US population's satisfaction with the most

important areas of its life. As Derbis states [2007, p. 13], Campbell was “interested in the community, not the individual. He wanted to replace economic concepts (national income, rate of profit, gross domestic product) with psychological concepts (satisfaction with various aspects of life, satisfaction)”. Consequently, the following areas of life were evaluated: health, marriage, family life, government, friendship, housing, employment, place of residence, religion, unpaid work, financial standing, organizations [Campbell 1976]. Undoubtedly, the methodology used by Campbell became an inspiration to undertake this type of research in other countries and research centres diagnosing the quality of life.

Similar data were also obtained during the study analysed here. In the case of diagnosing partial satisfaction of residents of small towns in the Łódzkie Voivodeship, nineteen areas and aspects of life were analysed. Information on the level of satisfaction experienced in this regard are presented in Table 4.

It turns out that the aspect with which the residents of the researched towns are satisfied the most is their relationships with close family members. In this case, the level of satisfaction exceeds 90%. A similar tendency was observed in nation-wide studies [GUS 2013; CBOS 2015]. The greatest satisfaction is related to interpersonal and family

Table 4

Satisfaction with selected areas of life (%)

	Ozorków	Stryków	Tuszyn	Koluszki
1. Relationships with close family members	94.0	95.0	91.4	95.1
2. Own family's financial standing	39.2	72.4	69.7	69.0
3. Relationships with friends (friend group)	86.0	86.9	90.5	91.6
4. Present family income	40.4	66.5	61.6	62.5
5. Possibility of satisfying alimentary needs	64.0	83.7	89.9	91.6
6. Own health	78.4	67.4	74.7	73.3
7. Own life achievements	49.6	80.5	76.5	81.2
8. Situation in the country	23.6	17.2	17.6	9.4
9. Housing conditions	71.2	89.6	89.9	93.9
10. Level of available goods and services	68.4	78.3	84.2	82.4
11. Perspectives for the future	37.2	42.1	44.3	47.9
12. Own education	42.8	81.9	80.3	80.1
13. Leisure time activities	56.4	76.9	80.7	76.1
14. Work	42.4	57.0	57.7	55.4
15. Children	74.4	76.5	70.5	73.7
16. Marriage	65.6	68.8	62.8	68.8
17. Safety in place of residence	81.2	87.3	87.5	83.8
18. Healthcare near place of residence	65.6	81.9	73.8	83.8
19. Own participation in culture	41.2	49.8	48.2	41.1

* The table takes into account the following answers: “very much satisfied” and “quite satisfied”.

relationships. As the recent studies show, with the ability to satisfy alimentary needs, as well as satisfaction with housing and safety with the place of residence are also at a high level. At least the residents of small towns province. the Lodz are satisfied with the current job, as well as leisure activities. Low also assess satisfaction with financial situation and what is happening in the country. The relatively low assess the prospects for the future, which may be important in the context of overall satisfaction with life. The research shows that this aspect of quality of life is most strongly associated with the level of satisfaction with prospects for the future [CBOS 2015].

Clearly reflects the statement of one respondent, "and I'm happy with life? I think I am, I have a family, kids in college, I have health. The house was built. Jobs also any. You could make more money, but as per our conditions, it's still not bad. I hope it was not only worse, because this future might look differently" (IDI 6).

Conclusions

The research project presented here focused on selected aspects of quality of life in small towns in the Łódzkie Voivodeship. With respect to the analyzed dimensions of quality of life, it was found, that the residents of the researched towns are characterized by a relatively high level of subjective quality of life. This means that the vast majority feel satisfied both with their whole lives up to the moment of the study and various aspects of their lives. Unfortunately, results related to the availability of the services included in the study are much worse, which is undoubtedly important in the context of the quality of life in the city.

The obtained results are of cognitive and diagnostic dimension. Due to the range of the examined phenomena, the results may have implications both for individuals and for social life creators, including representatives of territorial administrative units, because "the most modern way of thinking is the one which rediscovers an individual human being". A town which desires to develop must be able to create good living conditions for its residents. The study shows quite clearly that Uniejów stands a very good chance to achieve this goal. It may therefore become an example for the other towns. It may therefore be an example for other cities, who use their local capacities may contribute to the development of the city and improve the quality of life of its residents.

References

- Andre P., Bitondo D., 2001, *Development of a Conceptual and Methodological Framework for the Integrated Assessment of the Impacts of Linear Infrastructure Projects on Quality of Life*. C. E. A. Agency, CEAA.

- Borowik I., 2002, *Środowisko wielkomiejskich zespołów mieszkaniowych jako element jakości życia ich mieszkańców*. Architectus, No. 2(12).
- Bowling A., Brazier J. E., 2013, *Quality of Life*. "Social Science and Medicine", Vol. 41 (10).
- Brzezińska A., Stolarska M., Zielińska J., 2001, *Poczucie jakości życia w okresie wczesnej, średniej i późnej dorosłości*, [in:] *Zadania i role społeczne w okresie dorosłości*, K. Apelt, J. Wojciechowska (Eds.). Wyd. Fundacji Humaniora, Poznań.
- Campbell A., Converse P., Rodgers W., 1976, *The Quality of American Life: Perceptions, Evaluations, and Satisfaction*. Russel Sage Foundation, New York.
- CBOS, 2015, *Bezpieczeństwo publiczne*, Warsaw.
- Czapiński J., 2002, *Makropsychologia czyli psychologia zmiany społecznej. Szkic osobisty*, [in:] *Jednostka i społeczeństwo*, J. Grzelak. GWP, Gdańsk, pp. 23-48.
- Czapiński J., 2003, *Diagnoza społeczna 2003*, [<http://www.diagnoza.com>].
- Czepkiewicz M., Jankowski P., 2015, *Analizy przestrzenne w badaniach nad jakością życia w miastach*. Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny, 77/1, pp. 101-117.
- Derbis R., 2007, *Poczucie jakości życia a zjawiska afektywne*. Wyd. Uczelniane Wyższej Szkoły Gospodarki, Bydgoszcz.
- Diagnoza społeczna*, 2015; [http://www.diagnoza.com/pliki/raporty/Diagnoza_raport_2015.pdf].
- Eiser C., Morsa R., 2001, *Can Parents Rate Their Child's Health Related Quality of Life? Results of a Systematic Review*. "Quality of Life Research", No. 10.
- Gombrowicz W., 1986, *Dzienniki*. Wyd. Literackie, Vol. 1-3, Cracow.
- GUS, 2013, *Jakość życia. Kapitał społeczny, ubóstwo i wykluczenie społeczne w Polsce*, Warsaw.
- Kotowska L. E. et al., 2010, *Second European Quality of Life Survey, Family Life and Work*. Research project: *Monitoring Quality of Life in Europe*. The Publications Office of the EU, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Luxembourg, p. 2.
- Kowalczyk N., Lamprecht M., Osuch E., 2013, *Wpływ ruchu turystycznego na życie mieszkańców Uniejowa*. Biuletyn Uniejowski, p. 67.
- Lamprecht M., Turoń M., Urbańska K., 2013, *Współczesne przemiany Uniejowa w opinii mieszkańców miasta i regionu*. Biuletyn Uniejowski, p. 84.
- Maslow A., 1990, *Motivation and Personality*. PAX, Warsaw.
- Miasta przyszłości – Wyzwania, wizje, rozwiązania*, 2011, Komisja Europejska.
- Michalski W., 1997, *Potencjał społeczno-gospodarczy, wyposażenie miast Regionu środkowego a ich miejsce w sieci osadniczej*. Rządowe Centrum Studiów Strategicznych, Biuro Rozwoju Regionalnego w Łodzi, Studia Regionalne No. 5, Łódź.
- Misiak W., 1993, *Jakość życia w osiedlach miejskich*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław, pp. 9-14.
- Mularska-Kucharek M., 2015, *O relacjach pomiędzy jakością zamieszkiwania a subiektywną jakością życia. Na przykładzie mieszkańców miast*. Studia Miejskie (19).
- Piasny J., 1993, *Poziom i jakość życia ludności oraz źródła i mierniki ich określania*. "Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny", Vol. 2.
- Rapley M., 2003, *Quality of Life Research*. Sage, London.
- Raport o polskich metropoliach 2015*, <http://www.pwc.pl/miasta2015>; 11.01.2016.
- Ratajczak Z., 1993, *W pogoni za jakością życia. O psychologicznych kosztach radzenia sobie w sytuacjach kryzysu ekonomicznego*. "Kolokwia Psychologiczne", No. 2.

- Schneider-Skalska G., 2004, *Kształtowanie zdrowego środowiska mieszkaniowego. Wybrane zagadnienia*. Politechnika Krakowska, Cracow, p. 10.
- Sęk H., 1993, *Jakość życia a zdrowie*. "Ruch Prawniczy, Ekonomiczny i Socjologiczny", No. 2.
- Skalski S., 2011, *Perspektywy rozwoju małych miast*, [<http://cittaslowpolska.pl>; 04.12.2015 r.].
- Słaby T., 2007, *Poziom i jakość życia*, [in:] *Statystyka społeczna*, T. Panek, A. Szulc (Eds.). SGH, Warsaw.
- Trzebińska E., Łuszczynska A., 2002, *Psychologia jakości życia*. "Psychologia Jakości Życia", No. 1.
- Walden-Gałuszko K., Majkovicz M., 1994, *Jakość życia w chorobie nowotworowej*. Wyd. Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk.
- Witczak E., 1995, *Miasta – główne bieguny wzrostu regionalnego i lokalnego*, [in:] *Potencjał społeczno-gospodarczy, wyposażenie miast Regionu środkowego a ich miejsce w sieci osadniczej*, W. Michalski. Rządowe Centrum Studiów Strategicznych, Biuro Rozwoju Regionalnego w Łodzi, Studia Regionalne, No. 5, Łódź.
- Wnuk M., Marcinkowski J. T., 2012, *Jakość życia jako pojęcie pluralistyczne o charakterze inter-dyscyplinarnym*. "Problemy Higieny i Epidemiologii", Vol. 93 (1).