

INTRODUCTION

In the last several years urban-related issues have regained interest among the representatives of the broadly understood social sciences. Cities are increasingly treated as the object of scientific reflection and an element of media discourse. Polish scientists are also more interested in urban-related problems due to the major changes that take place in Polish cities. On one hand, we witness attempts of authorities and urban societies to cope with transformative processes; on the other hand, we see the increasingly influential globalization processes. Moreover, the phenomenon of increasing depopulation is also significant.

The fact that cities are innovative and creative areas that drive the economy is quite important in the context of these changes. The ideas of urban renaissance, revival, creative class and other concepts, recently considered *trendy*, confirm that cities are the main force that drives development. Numerous actions are taken on European, national and local levels in order to assure the right direction of urban development. On one hand, they aim to diagnose the most important issues, on the other hand to find an efficient solution to numerous negative phenomena. All these initiatives aim to help cities fulfill their roles and not lose their development potential.

Considering the challenges faced by contemporary cities, the problem of quality of life, treated as one of the superior development objectives, becomes particularly significant. The quality of life in a city could be decisive for its success. As suggested by the authors of the report *Miasta Przyszłości (Cities of the Future)*, cities should be characterized by a high quality of life and wealth in all its districts and communities¹. However, in order for it to be possible, knowledge of the inhabitants' quality of life, needs, expectations and opinions is necessary. A systematic diagnosis and reflection on the quality of life can play an important role in accomplishing plans and objectives that city authorities are facing. Moreover, knowledge of factors that condition the quality of life and of the mechanisms that help to achieve better life can be highly useful.

Taking into consideration the increasing interest in urban-related problems and the quality of life, we decided to prepare this volume entitled "The Socio-Spatial Dimension of Quality of Life in the City" which is an attempt to combine these two aspects. The aim of this publication is to present the results of scientific research and reflection on the quality of life in the socio-spatial context. The volume contains articles written by sociologists and geographers that present problems related to the qual-

¹ [*Miasta przyszłości. Wyzwania, wizje, perspektywy*, 2011, Komisja Europejska].

ity of life from different perspectives, which confirms the topic's popularity and the importance of the investigated problem. Among the presented text there are articles on the perception of specific city areas by the citizens of Łódź, social integration in the context of public space and the attachment of the inhabitants to the post-industrial city. Moreover, results of the studies on the quality of life in large housing estates and small towns have been presented and social and spatial mechanisms of shaping high quality public space in urban areas have been identified.

We hope that we managed to prepare a volume that presents the problem of the quality of life in relation to various perspectives anchored in broadly understood socio-spatial aspect. We also hope that the presented texts will have a practical character, inspire further investigation that will deepen the analyzed problems and that the presented conclusions will serve as a base of future urban policies and actions.

*Monika Mularska-Kucharek
Kamil Brzeziński*