

Paweł Swianiewicz

**VARIED ATTRACTIVENESS OF URBAN TERRAINS.
THE CASE OF WARSAW**

Attractiveness of a given region of a town will be understood in this article in two ways: "subjective" (places where people live willingly are attractive) and "objective" (attractiveness results from a few measurable factors). It is necessary to stress now that only some of the factors will be dealt with. Those of **emotional-historical** character will be disregarded and attention will be focused on those connected with the **level of development of town's individual parts**, which in this situation will mainly mean reference to the **level of standard of living**, understood in the sense of meeting **individual groups of needs** that make up the standard of living. Thus regions where all components¹ of the standard of living are on a high level are attractive. Probably, however, there are no such areas in many towns at all. Then there are two paths to follow. The first one is to decide which of the elements are most important (if the choice is left to the inhabitants, then the sources of the "subjective" approach are reached). The other approach contains an assumption that particularly arduous are such conditions under which satisfying of need falls below a critical value (most often the most arduous situation is when a need is not satisfied at all, even if other needs are satisfied well above the average satisfaction of all needs). Then the most attractive regions can be those in which the number of such drastic shortcomings is the lowest and the areas on the other pole are called problem areas.

This article will make use of division of Warsaw into 81 urban regions (Fig. 1), but only 62 will be taken into account as industrial regions, while railways as well as forests will be disregarded.

An analysis of "subjective" attractiveness concerns the first half of the 1980s and is based on observation of free-market turnover in apartments, particularly on an analysis of contents of the respective advertisements published in the daily *Zycie Warszawy*.

¹ This paper is not concerned with elements whose spatial distribution is redundant (e.g. income) and does not depend directly on spatial development of regions. These components do not influence directly attractiveness.

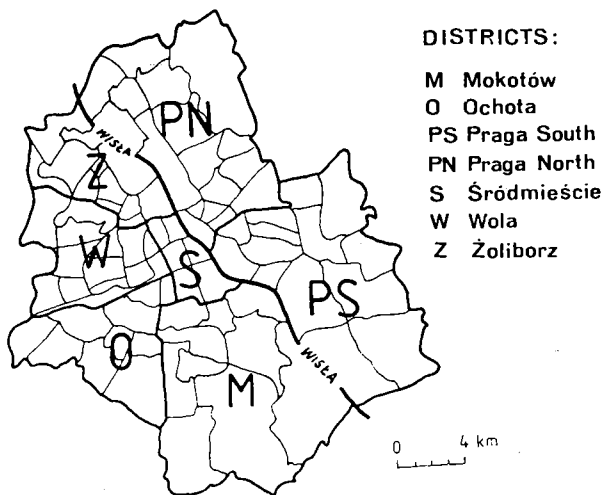


Fig. 1. Districts of Warsaw and their division into urban regions

"Objective" attractiveness is analysed on the basis of data of the National Census of 1978. A list of 22 variables, which were taken into consideration, is at the end of the article. We shall be interested in an analysis of recurrence of indications below critical values.

PREFERENCES OF INHABITANTS

Choice of the place of living is very much restricted, for instance, by the long (particularly severe for the past few years) housing crisis, the system of distributing apartments by large housing cooperatives etc. However, this does not mean that the inhabitants of Warsaw do not distinguish between less and more attractive districts and that they do not care where they live. What is more, the areas are not permanent or the same for all social groups. After the Second World War, „the people were brought to the Centre”, e.g. due to the MDM quarters completed in 1952. A substantial number of workers after a short time moved to the suburbs, closer to their place of work and their former social surrounding. Their place was filled in by various kinds of intelligentsia. On the other hand, Mariensztat, when completed in 1949, was practically the only one, and thus a very attractive district. Afterwards, when new, better equipped blocks of flats were completed, it lost its value, some people (those placed higher in the social hierarchy) moved out and Mariensztat assumed a very poor character and for many years seemed to be a deserted district.

Spatial differentiation of prices for apartments is currently, very high and reaches 50%. The ones in the Centre are most expensive, but the prices are increased by a large number of people willing to locate offices or service shops there. Almost equally high prices are in Mokotów, near Żoliborz and Saska Kępa (the only attractive region on the right bank of the Vistula River).

New housing districts located on the outskirts of the town are very low noted. The arguments are difficult commuting to the centre, shortage of services and low quality of apartments made of prefabricated elements. On their own initiative to those districts move only those who want to live close to their family or friends, or had been given apartments in those districts earlier.

Motives of people moving from the centre to the suburbs are interesting. Only those who buy small houses do it out of their own free will, but the majority of them, if they only could, would buy a house in the centre (!). Thus the escape to small houses, which concerns the richest people, is not an escape to clean environment. People buying apartments in block of flats in the suburbs or even outside Warsaw are mostly motivated by prices.

Results obtained from an analysis of advertisements in the press confirm the above regularities. The most attractive districts are the Centre, near Mokotów, and near Żoliborz. Out of the right-bank parts

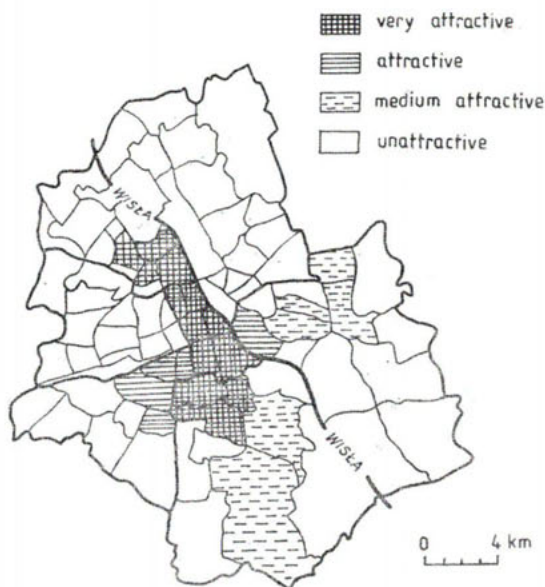


Fig. 2. Attractive regions according to Warsaw inhabitants

of Warsaw, only Saskia Kępa is interesting. Differences in demand for apartment in various districts are illustrated by Fig. 2.

Among the features that are required, most often are mentioned features concerning the apartment or building itself (e.g. in an old building, brick, with parquet floor), then good accessibility and more seldom features concerning the surrounding (e.g. garden, peace, greenery). However, it is a fact that environmental features occur more often in advertisements than it would have resulted from the earlier observations. However, very often a closer analysis shows that the features are of secondary character for a prospective buyer and in the best case on the same level with others (e.g. majority of ads after the word "peaceful" had: "peaceful apartment in Warsaw's centre" etc.). It should also be mentioned that those qualifications concern only the most superficial features of the surrounding that can be seen most easily.

Summing up, a statistical citizen of Warsaw, if he has a possibility to choose a place of living, is motivated first of all by quality of the apartment (this is obvious not only under the conditions of the present housing crisis), then transportation accessibility and availability of services, and only afterwards by environmental conditions. Among those features one would have to place traditional-emotional features, however they were not subject of this article. Explanation for this hierarchy can be done in two ways. Firstly, the state of social and technical infrastructure in the town is so poor that people put off other needs. Secondly, poor availability of shops, offices etc. is felt immediately. High air pollution, impact of noise to some extent, can pass unnoticed. A man who has a cold more often will go to see a doctor (he may also demand that the doctor be better available), and he will not think about the nearby factory and its harmful emissions influencing his air passages.

ANALYSIS OF RECURRENCE OF INDICATIONS WITH VALUES BELOW THE ACCEPTED CRITICAL VALUES

For every variable j I have accepted as its critical value: $x_{jk} = \bar{x}_j - s_j$, where \bar{x}_j — mean value of variable j , s_j — standard deviation of variable j . Obviously, such description of a critical value is subjective.

Groups of regions with frequently recurring variables with very low values occur in the centre and suburbs of Warsaw. Areas between them only sporadically have a very high value of any indication, but examples of drastic negligence are much rarer there.

It is characteristic that regions neglected with some respect (e.g. housing conditions) are usually regions outstanding with respect to

something else (e.g. environmental conditions). This testifies to quite spontaneous development of the town in which there are no successful interventions serving "development" of suburbs and decreasing natural "ardousness" of the centre.

As problem areas of Warsaw are considered those territorially compact groups of regions in which there are at least 5 (out of 22) variables with values below critical. In this way I have distinguished 4 such areas: 2 in the centre and 2 in the suburbs (see Fig. 3.)

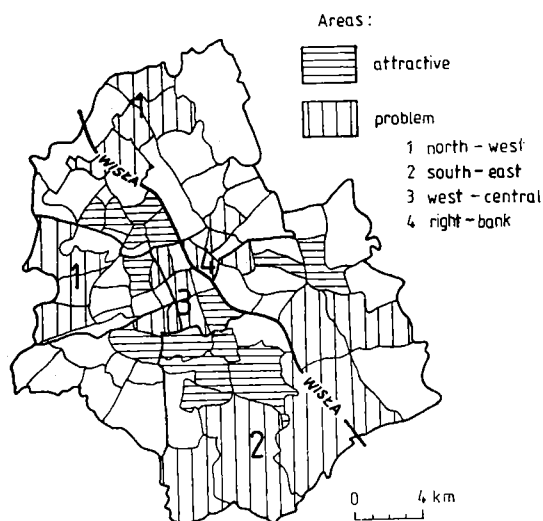


Fig. 3. Problem and „objectively” attractive areas

- 1) North-western. Most conspicuous from among all the areas distinguished here. A particular weak point of this fragment of Warsaw is accessibility to services and transportation and in the majority of its regions also poor housing conditions. Locally there are also problems with the natural environment.
- 2) South-eastern. Covers quite a differentiated group of regions. Their common problem is availability of services and in some also housing conditions.
- 3) West centre, with very poor environmental conditions and very high congestion.
- 4) Right-bank. This area has been distinguished because of the occurrence of very low values of variables representing all elements of the standard of living.

As attractive areas I have recognized in this chapter territorially

compact groups of regions in which there are no more than 2 variables with values below critical.

RECAPITULATION

Comparison of the most attractive regions in "subjective" and "objective" sense shows some similarities (in both lists there are: close regions of Mokotów and Żoliborz, one of the regions of Ochota and the Old Town). It seems, however, that the most important point is to show differences. Particularly drastically they occur in regions considered among the most attractive by inhabitants, and among the "problem" areas in the "objective" method (3 from among 6 regions of the Centre and 2 regions of close Ochota). The difference results from the above-mentioned hierarchy of factors of attractiveness of place of residence in evaluation by the inhabitants of Warsaw. The hierarchy can be formulated as follows: for an average inhabitant a region is the more attractive, the more "central" it is (that is better housing conditions, accessibility to transportation and services, and congestion and environmental conditions are of lesser importance). The preferences are not fully realized. Most people, when asked an abstract question in which district they would like to live, answer for instance that in a beautiful, clean etc. one, and only actually taken decisions show the real hierarchy of values.

The above differences show that various important problems of Warsaw's development are perceived differently. In view of the above it is to be expected that strong social pressure on development of housing projects and functioning of transportation and services will not be accompanied by an equally strong trend to preserve nature in the town. This puts a specific duty on those who plan development of the town. When realizing demands they should prevent irreversible damage in the sphere that influences more and more the health of the inhabitants.

It is possible to expect that the situation is similar in other agglomerations of Poland, excluding those where the problems of the natural environment have become subject of exceptionally heated social discussions (Cracow, Silesia, Gdańsk):

ENCLOSURE: List of variables used in analysis of recurrence of values below critical.

A. Housing conditions

1. m² of usable floor area/one household
2. number of apartments/one household

3. % of population in apartments with central heating
4. % of population in apartments with gas from gas pipelines

B. Environmental conditions

1. gas and dust pollution
2. % of population living in sanitary zones of industrial plants
3. transportation pollution
4. aeroplanes noise
5. noise of traffic
6. climate
7. area of sports grounds and recreation grounds available to everybody/one inhabitant

C. Functioning of transportation

1. accessibility to services of III and IV rank
2. number of regions accessible without changing means of transportation
3. density of roads in km/km²
4. satisfaction of needs for parking space
5. filling of means of transportation
6. freedom of traffic on the road network

D. Accessibility to services

1. number of places in primary schools/1000 students
2. number of students/one school classroom
3. % of participation (children aged 3—5) in kindergartens
4. m² of usable floor area in local clinic/1000 people
5. number of drug stores/1000 inhabitants
6. private telephones/1000 inhabitants
7. number of inhabitants/one post-office stand
8. m² of usable floor area/1000 inhabitants
9. m² of usable floor area of service shops/1000 inhabitants

