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**Mariusz PALAK<sup>1</sup>**

## **ABOUT THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE: THE CASE OF RZESZÓW**

The phenomenon called “return to the city” has intensified in Rzeszów. After a clear decline in the number of inhabitants at the beginning of the present century, for several years there has been a steady increase in population, which is not related to incorporating more towns into the city. The paper presents the analysis of data collected during the study carried out in the city. Residents of the city declared satisfaction with their place of residence. The main reasons for satisfaction were the cleanliness of the city, aesthetics, work, noticeable city development, developed infrastructure, and a high level of security and peace.

**Keywords:** Rzeszów, development, attractiveness, place of residence, urban sociology, city.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The development and recession of cities depend on the processes of urbanization. Urbanization has many terms in the literature on the subject. However, several basic meanings of this term can be distinguished, which appear in most works devoted to theoretical issues of urbanization. The concept of urbanization is defined as three types of processes:

1. diffusion – the spread of urban values to rural areas,
2. movement of people from rural areas to cities,
3. changes in behavior patterns in such a way that they are consistent with the patterns characteristic of city dwellers (Węgleński, 1983).

Changes in space as a result of the impact and changes in society as a result of the space it has processed are the most general processes that can be described as urbanization. These transformations are simultaneously progressing towards an ever greater complexity of relations between society and space and an ever greater degree of organization. In other words, urbanized areas are densely populated, densely built-up areas, in which there is both an intense impact of society on space and the reverse impact of this space on society. M. Malikowski defines urbanization as a set of processes of spatial concentration of people and centralization of activities as well as the accompanying processes of intensive transformation of space, as a result of which spatial units (systems) of extended reproduction of social life arise or develop (Malikowski, 1992).

It is assumed that the processes of urbanization take place in the following order: 1st phase of urbanization, 2nd phase of suburbanization and 3rd phase of deurbanization. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Mariusz Palak, University of Rzeszów, Poland; e mail: mpalak@ur.edu.pl. ORCID: 0000-0002-8890-9328.

authors add one more phase-re-urbanization. According to L. Klassen 's concept of the urban life cycle, the development of cities consists of the following phases: urbanization, suburbanization, deurbanization and relative re-urbanization (Jałowicki, Szczepański, 2006). The urbanization phase is the concentration of the population in cities. It is the result of the industrial revolution. Its characteristic feature is population growth in the center and surrounding neighborhoods, and a rapid decline in population on the outskirts of the city. The spatial development of the city takes place at the stage of suburbanization. There is a decrease in the population in the city center and an increase in the suburban area. At the stage of deurbanization, the spatial structure of the population reaches a state in which the number of inhabitants of central districts decreases to such an extent that the total population of the entire urban region decreases. The central city and its suburbs are declining, while the number of inhabitants continues to increase in the areas around the functional urban region. The activities of the authorities aimed at reviving and reconstructing the central areas of the city are defined as the reurbanization phase (Słodczyk, 2003). The reasons for re-urbanization are sought in:

1. Economic changes leading to industrial restructuring. Production is replaced by services.
2. Household demographic changes. One-person households, childless married couples and households of older people constitute an increasing percentage.
3. Changing assumptions of urban spatial policy aimed at saving space and planning local economic development (Lever, 1993).

The presented concepts assume that the last phase of urban development is characterized by a re-flourishing of the central city. At the turn of the century, a change in development trends was observed in the areas of most metropolises. Despite the constant predominance of urban decentralization processes, it has been noticed that the number of inhabitants of the centers is gradually increasing. In the 1990s, 75% of US metropolises experienced population growth in city centers. The reasons for this were two reasons: demographic trends (an increase in the number of small households, whose representatives prefer living in the city center) and the objective advantages of city centers (proximity to work, culture, entertainment). These processes were explained by the reversal of the previous trends. There has been an intensification of the phenomenon known as "return to the city" (Lee, Leigh, 2005).

Scientists name three reasons for "going back to the city":

1. Improvement of housing conditions in cities.
2. The intensification of negative factors accompanying the phenomenon of urban sprawl. These include the increase in car traffic and air pollution in suburban settlements.
3. Demographic changes (change in the structure of households) and cultural changes in society (perception of the city center as a more attractive place to live) (Lee, Leigh, 2005).

"Return to the city" was to a large extent caused by the actions of municipal authorities aimed at revitalizing city centers and by the intensification of gentrification processes. The term "gentrification" is derived from American sociology and partially corresponds to the term revitalization. It involves people with a higher material and social status settling in poorer neighborhoods, usually located in city centers, which in turn leads to people with lower status leaving these places (Majer, 2010).

There are three types of gentrification: economic, social and symbolic (cultural). Economic gentrification consists in increasing the attractiveness of a given place, e.g. by

placing an important investment in it or introducing greenery. Social gentrification is sometimes a derivative of economic gentrification and consists in changing the social composition of a given area. Symbolic gentrification consists in increasing the symbolic value of the estate (Karwińska, 2008).

Table 1. The change in the number of inhabitants of voivodship capital cities in 2016-2030, forecast by the Central Statistical Office

City	2016	2030	Change	Percent
Warsaw	1,753,977	1 843 946	+89 969	105.1
Cracow	765,320	779 104	+13 784	101.8
Łódź	696 503	620 704	-75 799	89.1
Wroclaw	637 683	649 093	+11 410	101.8
Poznan	540 372	503 768	-36 604	93.2
Gdansk	463 754	472 415	+8 661	101.9
Szczecin	404 878	386 720	-18 158	95.5
Bydgoszcz	353 938	324 648	-29 290	91.7
Lublin	340 466	322 618	-17 848	94.7
Katowice	298 111	263 423	-34 688	88.4
Białystok	296 628	293 079	-3 549	98.8
Toruń	202 521	193 028	-9 493	95.3
Kielce	197 704	181 239	-16 465	91.7
Rzeszów	187 422	200 815	+13 393	107.1
Olsztyn	172 993	169 063	-3 930	97.7
Zielona Góra	139 330	140 331	+1 001	100.7
Gorzów Wielkopolski	123 995	118 269	-5 726	95.4
Opole	118 722	111 232	-7,490	93.7

Source: Own calculations based on data from the Central Statistical Office (<http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/prognoza-ludnosci/prognoza-ludnosci-gminna-lata-2017-2030-opracowanie-eksperymentalne,10,1.html>).

The authorities of many Polish cities are taking actions aimed at revitalizing dilapidated housing estates. Despite these efforts, in most cases, instead of “returning to the city”, there is a further decline in the population of the central cities. The processes of suburbanization and deurbanization still dominate in the areas of the largest Polish cities. According to the forecast of the Central Statistical Office. By 2030, the number of inhabitants in most provincial cities will decline. The highest percentage of depopulation awaits Katowice (decrease by 11.6%), Łódź (10.9%) and Kielce (8.3%). Population growth is forecast only in the case of Warsaw, Cracow, Wroclaw, Gdansk, Zielona Góra and Rzeszów. It is worth noting that analysts predict a significant increase in population only in the case of Warsaw (5.1%) and Rzeszów (7.1%). The projected development of the largest Polish metropolis should come as no surprise. The largest percentage increase in the number of inhabitants of Rzeszów in the country is a big surprise.

In Rzeszów, after a significant loss of inhabitants at the beginning of the present century, a steady increase in the number of people has been observed for several years, which is not related to the incorporation of other towns into the city. The text presents an analysis of the data collected during the study “Rzeszowska Diagnoza Społeczna 2015”.

The survey was carried out in 2015 on a randomly selected sample of 800 inhabitants of Rzeszów. Among other things, the following issues were investigated: the quality of life of the city's inhabitants, satisfaction with living, time of living, the origin of the inhabitants, noticing changes in the city, and happiness. The aim of the article is to: determine where the real and forecast increase in the number of inhabitants of the city comes from and what factors influence the attractiveness of Rzeszów as a place of residence. It is also important to determine whether in this case it is really possible to talk about the phenomenon of returning to the city?

## 2. RZESZÓW AS A PLACE OF RESIDENCE

A strong indicator of the attractiveness of a place of residence is satisfaction with it. When asked about satisfaction, the vast majority of respondents answered “definitely satisfied” (46.3%) and “rather satisfied” (36%). When summed up, a very high (over 80%) level of satisfaction is obtained. There was no correlation between the level of satisfaction and the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Only in the case of the variable age, there was a weak positive correlation ( $r = 0.13$ ).

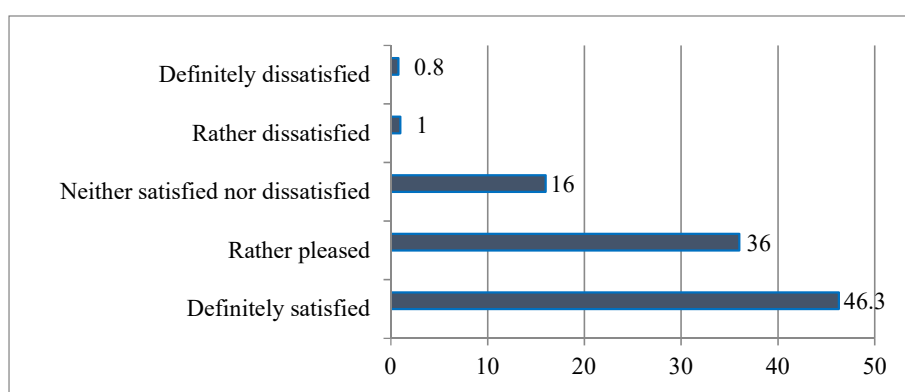


Chart 1. Please tell me if you are generally satisfied with the fact that you live in Rzeszów (in %)?

Source: Own calculations.

The reasons for the satisfaction of the inhabitants of Rzeszów indicated in the answer to the open question are very diverse. They have been categorized into several dozen categories (Kotarski, Malicki, Palak, Piróg, 2016). The most common reasons for satisfaction were the city's cleanliness and aesthetics. Another group of indications was related to the family, inhabitants and neighbors. An important reason for satisfaction was having a job, being close to the workplace and being easy to find. The development of the city as well as good infrastructure and security were also noticed. The actions of municipal authorities certainly contributed to the reasons for satisfaction. For many years, the priority of the authorities have been the issues mentioned in the first place by the respondents.

The inhabitants of Rzeszów noticed the changes taking place in the city. To the question: Has anything changed in the last five years in Rzeszów, the vast majority of respondents (68.9%) answered: “yes, there have been very big changes”. 20.6% of the respondents noticed slight changes and only less than 3% said that nothing had changed.

7.7% could not make an assessment. The assessment of the changes that took place depended on the declared financial situation of the respondents. People declaring a good and average situation more often indicated large and certain changes. On the other hand, the worse off did not notice any changes or claimed that nothing had changed. The age of the respondents also influenced the perception of changes. Older residents of the city noticed changes in Rzeszów more often than younger residents. Respondents aged up to 35 more often stated that nothing had changed and were not able to notice these changes (answer “I don't know” “hard to say”).

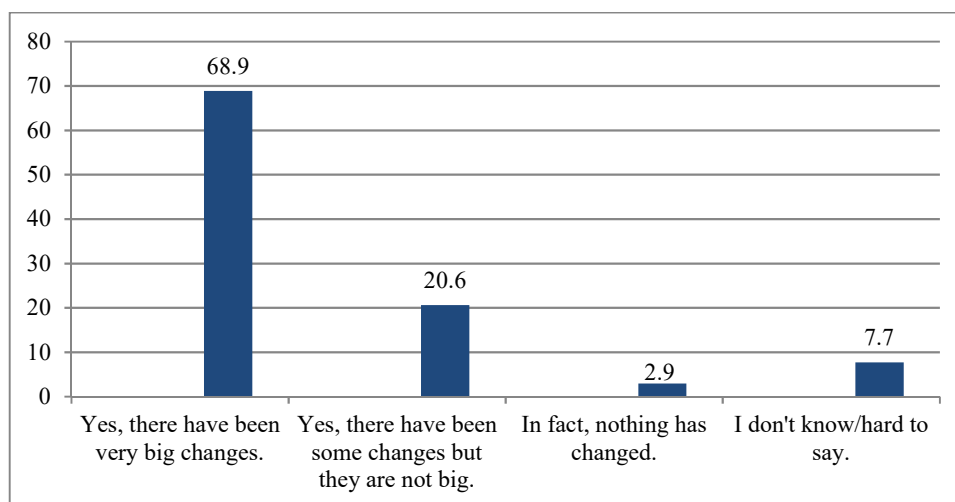


Chart 2. Has anything changed in Rzeszów in the last five years (in %)?

Source: Own calculations.

Opinions on the direction of the observed changes were definitely positive. Over 88% of residents claimed that the changes in the city were “definitely for the better” and “rather for the better”. Only about 10% of the respondents had a neutral opinion on this subject. People who assessed the changes negatively accounted for a negligible percentage. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents did not affect their responses.

The changes taking place in Rzeszów were noticed and well assessed by most of the respondents. First of all, the increase in the quality of life and the possibility of satisfying needs was appreciated. The inhabitants also had a positive attitude to the quality of communal services, city management and the functioning of offices. Most of the negative opinions were related to material matters.

The quality of life in the city affects the attractiveness of the place of residence. The quality of life was measured using 7 features. The respondents had the opportunity to assess the aesthetics, greenery, quality of streets and sidewalks, safety, functioning of offices, wealth and the possibility of finding a job. All features measured on the scale from -2 to 2 obtained values higher than 0. This indicates a positive assessment of the quality of life in Rzeszów.

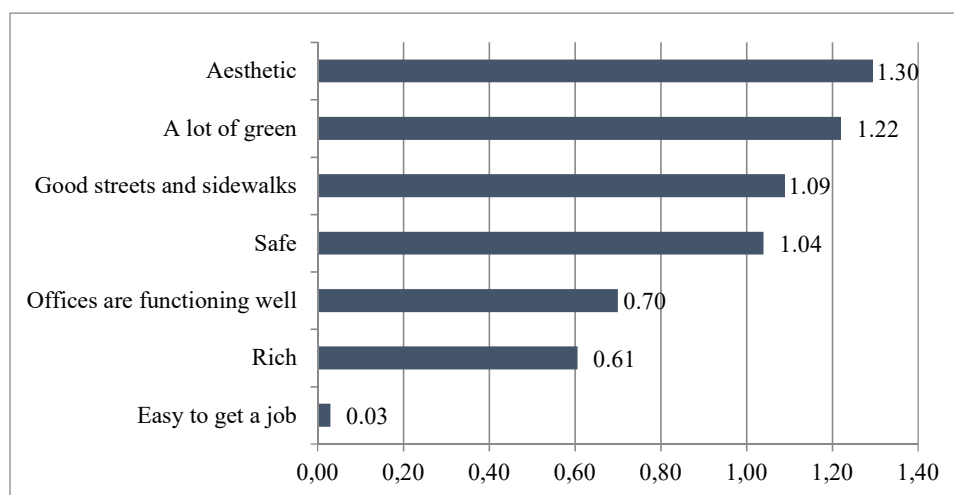


Chart 3. Assessment of the features that make up the quality of life (mean - range -2 to 2)

Source: Own calculations.

Aesthetics (1.30) and greenery in the city (1.22) were rated the highest. The quality of streets and pavements was next (1.09). Safety received a good score (1.04). The functioning of offices has a lower average (0.7). Wealth (0.61) and the possibility of finding a job (0.03) were definitely the lowest. The quality of the city consists of two groups of features. The first, better assessed, is related to the broadly understood aesthetics, quality of infrastructure and safety. The second, less rated, concerns material issues.

Research shows that over 45% of respondents have not lived in the city since birth. Therefore, Rzeszów is a city where people willingly settle. The most common reason for moving was work (30.8%). Over 21% of respondents moved with their parents as a child. A common reason for migrating to Rzeszów was also a wedding (17.2%). For almost 17% of the respondents, the reason for the move was to study at school or university. Reasons such as moving with a partner and others received a lower percentage of responses. The declared motives for the move bring a lot of information about the city. It seems that there are good chances of finding a job or taking up studies in Rzeszów. For years, Rzeszów has had one of the lowest unemployment rate in the region. Universities operating in the city are an important factor attracting people to the city.

If we analyze the previous place of residence, Rzeszów mainly attracts people from the Podkarpackie Province (59.2%). The city is also an attractive place for people from other voivodships (27.2%). 12.2% of the respondents came to the city from its vicinity and only 1.5% from abroad. The development of the city, combined with stagnation in many localities of the voivodeship, may result in increased migration to Rzeszów in the future. It is worth noting that the region has the lowest urbanization rate in Poland. Therefore, for many potential migrants, Rzeszów will be the first choice.

The willingness to change the place of residence is an indicator of the city's attractiveness. The situation of Rzeszów is well evidenced by the low percentage of people declaring plans to move out of the city. Only 5.6% of the respondents said they wanted to move to another place. 73.3% of the inhabitants do not plan to change their place of residence. The answer "it's hard to say" was chosen by 21.1% of the respondents. It can

therefore be concluded that the city attracts more than repels. This is confirmed by the steady growth in the number of inhabitants which has been sustained for several years.

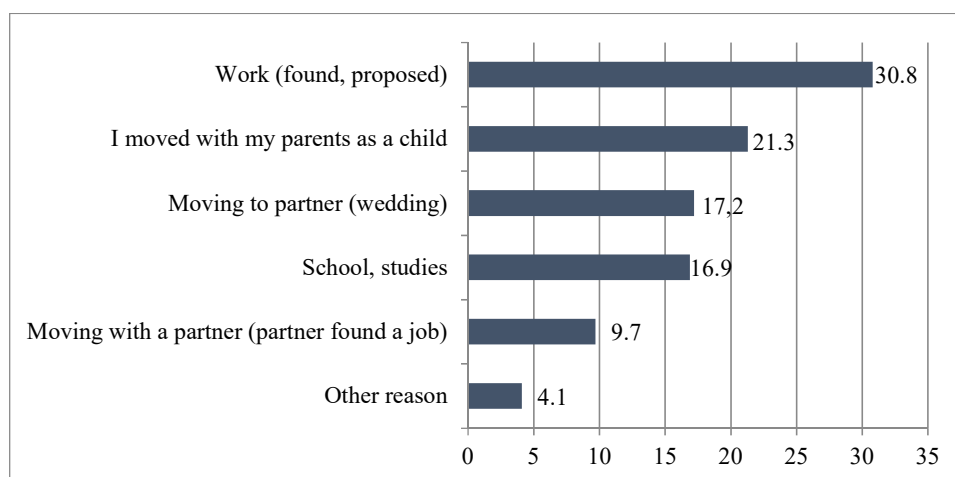


Chart 4. Reasons for moving to the city (in %)

Source: Own calculations.

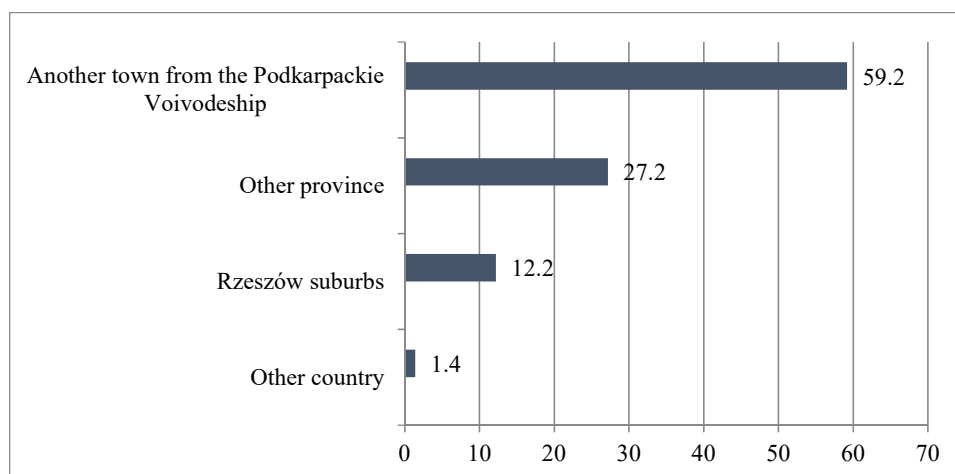


Chart 5. Earlier place of residence

Source: Own calculations.

In the opinion of the respondents, Rzeszów is not a poor city. Most of the inhabitants considered the capital of Podkarpacie to be a commune with an average level of wealth (47.3%). According to almost 36%, Rzeszów is a “rather rich” city and 2.1% considered the city to be a very rich commune. The answers “rather poor” and “very poor” obtained together only 5.1% of responses. A good assessment of the commune's affluence probably contributes to the low proportion of people planning to leave the city.

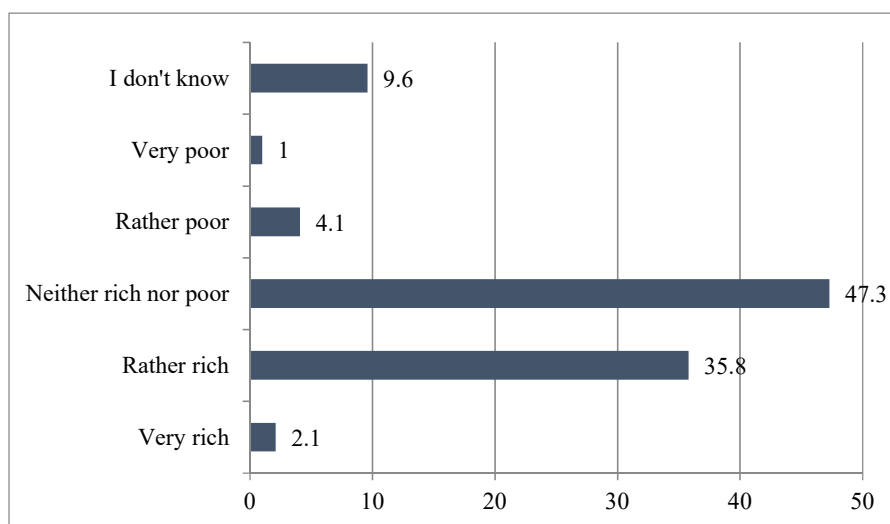


Chart 6. Some communes are poor and others are rich. What is the municipality of Rzeszów?

Source: Own calculations.

According to the respondents, Rzeszów is well perceived in Poland. Over 56% of the respondents believed that residents of other cities in the country assessed the city positively. Only 2.4% had the opposite opinion. Some residents agreed with the opinion that in other cities of Rzeszów they “praise a little, criticize a little” (21.4%). It can therefore be concluded that the inhabitants of the capital of Podkarpacie have a positive and uncompromised opinion on the perception of the city in Poland.

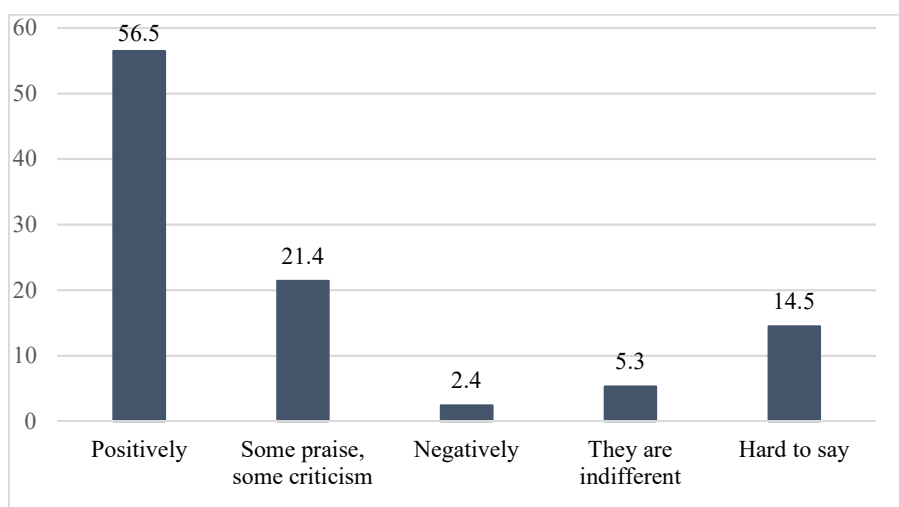


Chart 7. How is Rzeszów perceived by the inhabitants of other cities?

Source: Own calculations.



The inhabitants of Rzeszów considered themselves happy people. This is confirmed by the value of the happiness index constructed by using the following question: Some people in general are very happy regardless of their circumstances, they enjoy life a lot. To what extent does this statement describe you? The value of the index for city residents was 4.88 on a scale from 1 to 7. The feeling of happiness was influenced by the value of the quality of life index ( $r = 0.24$ ). The higher the perceived quality of life, the greater the level of happiness. The index was built using the previously discussed variables: aesthetics, the amount of greenery, the quality of streets and sidewalks, safety, the functioning of offices, wealth and the possibility of finding a job.

City residents declared they were satisfied with their place of residence. The main reasons for satisfaction were: cleanliness of the city, aesthetics, work, noticeable city development, developed infrastructure, high level of security and peace. The respondents noticed the changes that took place in Rzeszów. Most importantly, most of the changes were assessed positively. Moreover, Rzeszów has a good quality of life and the city's inhabitants consider themselves happy.

### 3. SUMMARY

There are objective and subjective indicators of the attractiveness of the place of residence. An objective indicator may be an increase or decrease in the number of inhabitants. Subjective indicators are residents' perceptions and opinions about the city. Rzeszów is an attractive place to live as the number of inhabitants is increasing. Moreover, the inhabitants generally assess most of the city's features very positively. Therefore, the image of the city is positive. The view of Rzeszów in the imaginations of the surveyed residents is based to the greatest extent on the aesthetics and development of the city. The reasons for a good image are effective promotional activities of the city authorities and, most importantly, the actual development of the city (Palak, 2016).

The reasons for modern development can be found even in the communist period. Due to the inefficient central planning economy, there were no funds to expand the city from the deep provinces. People from suburban towns did not move to the city, but only commuted to work. As a result, few housing estates were built in the city, which today could be strongly degraded spatially and socially.

The urbanization processes suppressed before 1989 significantly accelerated at the beginning of the 21st century. Currently, urbanization and suburbanization occur simultaneously in the city space. A lot of new block housing estates and single-family houses are being built in the outer zone. The phenomenon of building blocks of free spaces in the city center is also observed. The decrease in the number of people migrating to other cities or suburbs compensates for the settling of new residents in the city, mainly from the poorly urbanized Podkarpackie Province. In recent years, many Ukrainians have settled in the city. Universities also play an important role in the development of Rzeszów. Graduates from outside Rzeszów often associate their future with the city.

The increase in the attractiveness of Rzeszów as a place of residence is still weakly related to the return to the city of people who previously moved to the suburbs. This is due to the fact that there was no mass escape from the city in Rzeszów. Suburbanization is still being observed. However, the return from the suburbs to the central city is hampered by high housing prices. Returning to the city can also be understood as increasing interest in living in downtown estates. The phenomenon of returning to the city understood in this way is present in the space of Rzeszów, as evidenced by, inter alia, the increase in the

number of inhabitants in the city and the construction of new housing estates. A very important factor influencing the development of Rzeszów was the incorporation of neighboring towns into the city. Thanks to them, many people returned to the city without physically changing their place of residence, and suburbanization changed its character from external to internal. Rzeszów's attractiveness was influenced by the measures taken by the city authorities, mainly to improve the infrastructure and aesthetics of the city. The favorable demographic situation of the region and its peripheral location are also important. The closest thing to potential migrants is to move to Rzeszów.

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