THE IMAGE OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT OF ŁÓDŹ BY WOMEN AND MEN

The opinion about the existence of the difference between the real – objective world and its subjective image created in the human mind has a long lasting tradition. It is commonly believed that the image of the environment has a strong influence on the people’s spatial behaviour. Setting about to design a city’s space it might be worth to know in what way the city’s particular fragments are reflected in the inhabitants’ conscious. Research in this field may considerably facilitate the formation of the environment in the way to make the inhabitants satisfied to the highest degree.

The article presents the image of the city of Łódź by women and men obtained from the research conducted between the year 2004 and 2006. The image of the city is understood as a subjective picture of urban environment which may be recalled to mind by our imagination (Walmsley, Lewis, 1997) however the image’s significance is wider as it highlights the whole knowledge, experience, feelings and spatial preferences of an individual that relates to the inhabited environment. In the article, the presented image of Łódź obtained within the study carried with a group of 100 women and 100 men is treated as a dependent variable. The sex of the respondents acknowledged as the independent variable is to explain the assumed differences in the city’s image recalled by the mind of both women and men.

Presented research included all stages of urban environment perception that is: the image of the city’s physical structure, its valorization and the spatial preferences. The structure of cognitive maps received from respondents was analyzed with the use of the elements outlined by Lynch (1960). Valorization of the urban environment of the city of Łódź was carried out in virtue of Ślodczyk’s method (1984) and the spatial preferences of the city’s inhabitants were investigated with the use of the method proposed by Gould (1974).

The analysis of particular images of the urban environment of the city of Łódź by women and men made it possible to put forward two conclusions. First of all the sex has a considerable influence on the subjective reflection of a city. Second of all, the city center – the best remembered as appealing to the richest language of symbols is at the same time the least preferred fragment of the city’s space considering the housing factor.

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