What matters in housing architecture – a survey of dwellers’ opinions

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Abstract. This paper presents results of a questionnaire survey designed to study the most valued features of the housing environment in dwellers’ opinion. The subjects were inhabitants (aged 13 to 81, \(N = 470\)) of various housing environments in Poland (including blockhouses in the largest cities of the country, comfortable suburban villas, as well as small rural houses). Concluding the results, the most important physical elements of housing environment seem to be: location, plan and area of the flat, specific features of home spaces such as natural light, stylish arrangement and technical quality. Most valued elements of immediate surroundings depend primarily on type of the building; one-family house inhabitants value the most private area elements – such as garden, while city tenement house and multi-family block inhabitants value rather functional elements in public zone – such as shops and basic services. Location (understood primarily in relation to the city centre) is very important for residents of big cities and students. The apartment plan and its correspondence with functionality is especially valued by more educated people (specifically those professionally dealing with architecture); the size of the flat and the immediate surroundings are in turn more valued by less educated people employed in basic services. Impact of architectural features that are important in appraisal of the housing environment (also attractive views and appearance of the building) are balanced by social and psychological aspects of home space, such as home atmosphere, privacy and social relations inside the home (relations with other residents within the perceived home space) and in the immediate neighbourhood (good neighbours). Together with architectural and technical quality of the house, they constitute the home environment that may be source of satisfaction to their inhabitants.

1. Introduction

This study was concerned with identifying the most important elements of housing environments in opinion of its inhabitants by using a questionnaire survey. The research was strongly influenced by positive theory which generally attempts to discover predictable relationships between variables. The searched variables concern architecture quality evaluation criteria; whereby architecture is seen primarily as the space shaped for human beings. In the theory of architecture, positive theory is usually contradistinguished to normative theory, which is based upon value-laden descriptions and explanations (in particular design manifestos). In fact, both approaches seem to influence each other. Presented research is fixed on analysing actual significance of well-known factors of good architecture such as the ones inspired by Vitruvian theory (commodity, firmness and delight) for lay people who inhabit and use
architecture in their daily routines. This approach is supported by the conviction that architecture, and in particular residential architecture, should respond to particular needs of its users; and so its quality should be assessed by “the degree of <fit> between user needs and preferences and the design features of a given setting” [1, p. 370]. The relationship between form and function seems particularly important. Architectural form expressed by specific spatial structure actually affects users' functioning; inevitably restricting their behavioural options as well as the way they think about architecture and how they perceive their immediate surroundings.

The inspiration to this research was a series of works in the field of architectural theory, psychology of architecture and environmental psychology. The theoretical works in the field of architecture that present the object of the design as a living environment of people (place) rather than an object of symbolic or visual meaning (object) had a significant influence on the body of this study. This approach was typical for the works of Christopher Alexander [2-4]; according to this author, only “the presence or absence of [<living structure>]” (which makes degree of life an observable characteristic of buildings) “distinguishes valuable buildings from less valuable [and] good architecture from bad [4]. In turn, some other influential reading in architecture were fixed on specific sides of making good, user-focused architecture – such as works by Oscar Newman [5] on sense of security in architectural space or considerations and projects made by Herman Hertzberger [6] that demonstrate adaptability of architecture to users’ needs. In regard to psychology of architecture, the most influential works were done by David Canter [7-8]; these were dedicated to studying interactions between people and buildings by using various scales for evaluating buildings. David Canter also initiated studies of the theory of place with his 3-component model of place composed of physical attributes, human activities and concepts [8]. Studies in the field of environmental psychology, in particular studies on housing environment (such as: Cooper Marcus & Sarkissian [9]; Tognoli [10] Horelli [11]), indicate that homes are important not only for technical and functional reasons of providing shelter but that they primarily provide meaning and identity in our lives. The research presented here was notably inspired by home residents’ preferences and needs research by Nigel Oseland & Ian Donald [12] in form of questionnaire mapping the sense of individual home spaces (conducted in Great Britain) and by Sandy Smith [13] who carried out her research in the form of a series of in-depth interviews with residents (in Australia) that indicated the important areas of home significance. The inspiration for this study was also research by Maria Lewicka [14] on the subject of place attachment of inhabitants of different cities (in Poland and Ukraine) which among other things proved the importance of housing building types for place attachment and human-environment relationship.

2. Method
The study was planned as pilot and descriptive research using an original questionnaire that had been designed for this purpose. Items included in the questionnaire concerned inter alia most frequently sojourned and favourite places in home (flat), descriptions of activity patterns in one’s favourite places there and his or her opinion on the quality of flat (including description of its advantages and weaknesses) and its surroundings, as well as general diagnosis regarding evaluating criteria of the quality of housing environment. These questionnaires were distributed among participants in 2018; the procedure of propagating them was supported by voluntary help of many people participating in the research. In this way, starting from the home place of the author (Cracow), the questionnaires reached the other end of Poland and almost five hundred respondents from 13 of 16 Polish voivodeships.

2.1. Participants
The participants were almost five hundred; finally, the number of subjects whose answers were analysed was limited to four hundreds and seventy (N=470) excluding children below 13 and people living abroad as well as several questionnaires unfinished or lacking basic information. Participants were living in big cities with over 500.000 inhabitants – (47,7% of all subjects), in this group the biggest number of people were from Cracow, but also from Warsaw and few other big Polish cities; average city size (28,5% of
all subjects) and villages (23.8%). The youngest participants were teenagers (from thirteen-year olds),
the oldest participating person was eighty-one-year-old. All participants were age grouped in five age
brackets: (1) 13-18 years – 39 participants; (2) 19-25 years – 239; (3) 26-35 years – 68; (4) 36-59 years
– 104; (5) 60+ - 20 participants. Among all participants 217 (46%) were university students including
133 (28% of all subjects) students of faculty of architecture (or landscape architecture); besides there
was 23 practising architects (4,8%). Most of participants were women – 322 (68,5%) while participating
men were 148 (31,5%). All participants were also grouped on the grounds of their profession, place of
residence (size of the town measured in number of its inhabitans) and housing building type. The last
factor divided subjects into five groups living in: (1) one-family house – 192 respondents; (2) row house
- 21; (3) city tenement house - 54; (4) multi-family block - 196; (5) other type of housing (such as loft,
exclusive apartment and so on) - 7. Two biggest groups of inhabitants were living in one-family house
(most of them living in villages) and in multi-family blocks (most of them living in big cities).

2.2. Procedure

2.3. The research was using the original questionnaire composed of four parts. These were including:
(A) – general information (demographic data); (B) – questions about type of building and important
places; (C) – questions about flat functional assessment, its advantages and weaknesses, surrounding
description and assessment as well as general opinion on the quality of housing environment evaluating
criteria; (D) – drawing of flat plan, indicating user’s important places in the flat. In Part B, when
describing the behavioural potential of home space (answers to questions about typical behaviours in a
given space and the type of interaction with other people), the answer model proposed in Oseland &
Donald’s research (1993) was used [12]. Most of the items in the questionnaire were structured, closed-end questions (however in some of them there was possibility to choose answer – ‘other’ and add
individual content); some of the items enabled respondents to choose more than one options to better
adjust answers to described situations (as in the case of significant features of favourite places or
important sides of the flat that matter when evaluating it). Some of the questions (in part B, C and the
whole part D) were open; the thing was to encourage participants to articulate freely using their own
words their opinions and feelings about own home and its surroundings. The questionnaire was designed
so that its filling would be a relatively easy and quick task; in total, it contained 27 items; the whole
questionnaire was fit in two A4 pages (including an empty space to fit respondent’s drawing of the plan
of his or her flat).

2.4. Analysis

Collected data formed material for a multistage analysis. Firstly, the numerical data (answers to close-end questions) were analysed using an open source software (SOFA Statistics), then content analysis of open statements (including also analysis of drawings content) were done and finally the information from open statements was organized, encoded and analysed again as numerical data.

3. Results

This analysis focuses on important architectural elements of housing environment. Therefore, results
presentation centres around part C of the questionnaire that relates directly to these issues. However,
some results from part B and D (concerning important places) are also presented here. The questions
asked in part C formed four problem groups: (1) description and evaluation of home immediate
surroundings; (2) functional assessment of the flat; (3) emotional attachment to the dwelling (place); (4)
general opinion on the subject of important evaluating criteria of flat quality judgement. First three of
these questions are related to the present home; the fourth questions was intended as projection. The
analysis of the results revealed that general questions from this part (C) – such as a general assessment
of immediate surroundings attractiveness (expressed as: “very attractive”; “fulfills my expectations”;

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“devoid of uniqueness”; “not attractive at all/ I would like to live somewhere else”) and a general assessment of functional quality of the flat (expressed as: “very functional”; “fulfills my basic needs”; “requires improvement”; “not functional at all”) are both correlated with emotional attachment to the dwelling (p value: <0.001). Summaries of qualitative findings are grouped thematically; in turn they relate to important places, important features of the housing environment and important elements of home surroundings. These findings are presented here in order of their elicitation from the participants in the study. Results of quantitative findings are given when relevant.

3.1. Important places

Places important for residents in home environment appeared few times in their responses. Once, as - (1) an answer to the question about the room in which the participant most often resides (there was a possibility of choosing more than one option from: kitchen, living room, bedroom, own room, bathroom, other room); second time as (2) an answer to question about the location of the most favourite place (these two questions were fit in part B of the questionnaire) and finally - (3) in open statements, while discussing the advantages or disadvantages of the flat (part C) or indicated on the plan (part D) as additional (other than listed in the answers to previous closed-end questions) whereabouts or favorite places (Table 1).

| Table 1. Important places (response rate). |
|-----------------------------------------|
|                                          |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | Total |
|-----------------------------------------|
| kitchen | 0.40 | 0.10 | 0.60 | 1.10 |
| living room | 0.58 | 0.42 | 0.32 | 1.32 |
| bedroom | 0.21 | 0.17 | 0.21 | 0.59 |
| own room | 0.31 | 0.25 | 0.20 | 0.76 |
| bathroom | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.36 | 0.41 |
| other rooms | 0.09 | 0.05 | 0.77 | 0.91 |

Regarding analysis of closed-end questions, places at home most often sojourned are as following: living room – 274; kitchen – 190; own room – 146; bedroom – 101 (these two are usually the same room); other room (for example: studio, workshop) – 40; bathroom – 17. In turn, favourite places are: living room – 196; own room – 119; bedroom – 78; kitchen – 47; other room – 23; bathroom – 7. A slightly different sequence of rooms follows from the content analysis of open statements. Here the rooms of the background come definitely to the forehead; the most frequently mentioned rooms are here: hallway, corridors, balcony, terrace, garage, workshop, office, utility room, wardrobe, etc. These rooms were especially often mentioned as disliked places marked on the plan or round discussing weaknesses of the flat. What surprises in this context, is mentioning quite often dining room as disliked place, but always when it appears as a separate room in large houses. On the contrary, the place quite often indicated as favourite room is "sister's room"; there was no similar reaction in the study sample about ‘brother’s room’ (this may be partly explained by the fact that young women prevailed among the respondents). To sum up, the rooms most often appearing in the statements are: living room and kitchen - it is mentioned more than once by every person. These are rooms belonging to the common (social) zone of the flat. The second most important group is a private zone including bedroom or own room, and less frequently mentioned other rooms such as workshops and offices. Other rooms defined as 'other' such as utility rooms, balconies and wardrobe to name just a few are almost never one’s favourite places but they seem to constitute important background of everyday home life.
3.2. Important features
A preliminary analysis of answers to the question about advantages and weaknesses of the housing environment was necessary to propose thematic groups summarizing this material. The topics discussed here were generally similar in both groups (advantages and weaknesses); variations in opinions consisted of a different frequency of their appearance depending on whether discussing negative or positive features of the present home. In addition, the number of all specific topics of weaknesses mentioned in the whole study sample was bigger than the number of topics of advantages (100 disadvantage topics, 81 topics of advantages). However, the average number of defects listed by the respondent (1.36) was usually lower than the number of advantages mentioned (1.79). Round talking about advantages, the most frequently mentioned features of the flat were those related to apartment plan and its functionality, generally referred to as ‘architecture’ - 41% of subjects referred to these topics when discussing advantages of the flat; almost the same number of statements - 40% is related to technical quality of housing environment (including: housing size, installations, environmental impact); another important topic is location and the closest surroundings of the flat (near the center, close to public transport, surrounded by greenery, on the ground floor) - 28%; exactly the same number of utterances refer to topics related to 'home atmosphere' (personal and psychological aspects, special home properties important for the respondent) - 28%; the next place is occupied by topics related to 'aesthetics' (stylish interior, nice view, modernity) - 17% and social issues (family home, friendly neighbors) – 7%. Among most frequently mentioned topics while discussing disadvantages of the flat, were: technical quality - 63% of the statements; significantly fewer defects were associated with 'architecture' (design mistakes or poor arrangement of rooms in the plan) - 27%; subsequent topics appeared less often: location - 17%; psychological and social aspects (together) - 10%; aesthetics - 7%. The list of the most frequently appearing topics in the description of advantages and weaknesses of the flat is shown in the table (Table 2).

Table 2. Important features of the present home (frequency).

| General category | Theme                                      | Positive features | Negative features | Total |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Physical         | Architecture: space/light/function          | Good plan         | Bad room layout   | 417   |
|                  |                                            | Functionality     | Lack of auxiliary rooms | 60    |
|                  |                                            | Natural light     | Insufficient lighting | 34    |
|                  |                                            | Well-designed kitchen | Poorly designed kitchen | 24    |
|                  |                                            | Other architectural features | Poorly designed bathroom | 42    |
|                  | Location                                   | Attractive location | Bad location | 221   |
|                  |                                            | Natural surroundings | Natural surroundings | 12    |
| Technical quality| Satisfying size (of house, of rooms)        | 169               | Unsatisfying size | 593   |
|                  | Type of building                           | 40                | Type of building | 16    |
|                  | Technical infrastructure                    | 32                | Poor thermal or acoustic insulation, faulty installations | 107   |
|                  | Home maintenance and service                | 18                | Home maintenance and service | 55    |
| Aesthetics       | Stylish arrangement                         | 66                | Dissatisfaction with home and its surroundings' aesthetics | 36    |
|                  | Landscape, attractive views                 | 54                |                   | 156   |
| Social           | Social relationships                        | Neighbours, other inhabitants, animals | Neighbours, family | 46    |
|                  | Atmosphere of home                          | Cosiness, warmth, friendliness | Lack of cosiness | 176   |
|                  | Privacy                                    | Personal space, private stories | Lack of privacy | 11    |
|                  | Comfort                                    | Comfort, safety, ownership | Lack of comfort | 4     |

The frequency of some topics coming up in the results is correlated with other variables included in the study. And thus, the perceived advantages in the field of architectural solutions are positively correlated
with the overall functional assessment of the flat. Specifically, the advantages of plan (layout of rooms and their interrelationships) are particularly appreciated by better educated people, especially those studying architecture or practicing architects. In turn, satisfying size and the immediate surroundings of the home are valued more often by less educated people, employed in basic services. The significance of location and psychological aspects of dwelling are correlated with the type of development. When it comes to location, it is valued more by city tenement house residents; 50% respondents from this group values location; inhabitants of row houses and other types of city housing (apartments, lofts) - over 40%; in case of inhabitants of multi-family blocks (in housing estate) – the response rate for location is 29%; and only 18% for single-family house dwellers. The appreciation of location is also related to the size of the town; in this regard, it is most valued by inhabitants of large cities. An additional factor is type of profession of participant; location as an important factor was most often indicated by students (due to the necessity of daily commuting to school or university). Quite clear conclusion here seems to be the distance from the city center; this seems to be more important than the size of the town itself. An interesting relationship of variables was noticed in regard to psychological aspects of home and the type of building. The topics such as home atmosphere, privacy, comfort, safety and belonging were more frequently observed in statements of single-family house dwellers; these sides were praised by 38% of inhabitants of single-family house; 22% of block residents; 18.5% of the city tenement house residents and less than 15% of residents of other types of buildings. Similarly, in the case of social aspects (such as good neighbours, family members living in the house and in the area), the biggest percentage of positive relationships concerns dwellers of single-family houses (11%); although this aspect was rarely mentioned at all in the study sample. The percentage of respondents paying more attention to aesthetics (attractive views, beauty of landscape and stylish arrangement) was much bigger in younger groups of respondents; this topic has a strong relationship with the age of respondents. And thus, in the group of the youngest respondents (13-18) - 23% of the notice this problem; in 'student' group (19-25) - 18%; in the group of young adults (26-35) - 15%; in the middle-aged group (36-59) - 14%; and in the senior group (60+) only two persons of twenty mentioned this issue. In regard to all these features there were no significant differences observed between men and women.

The projective question 'what is important in assessing the quality of residential architecture?' was asked at the end of the list of questions, after the part when respondents described the advantages and disadvantages of their present home. The answer to this question required choosing from 8 proposals (whereby more than one answer was possible). All given options except for the open answer 'other' concerned the physical environment of the house, and in principle its architectural and urban characteristics. The sequence of the answers here was as following: (1) location - 79% of responses; (2) plan - 70%; (3) the immediate surroundings - 59%; (4) usable area (size of the flat) - 52%; (5) interior design - 48%; (6) views from windows - 41%; (7) architectural style and building appearance - 24%; (8) other - 9%. People who marked the 'other' option most often indicated the importance of social relations (such as neighbors, cohabitants, distance from the family), the technical quality of the home environment and its personal aspects (such as memories or good associations).

3.3. Immediate surroundings
The number of all mentioned elements (themes) of the environment (in response to question: 'the most important things for me in the immediate surroundings of my home') was slightly lower than the number of topics of home advantages and weaknesses. The most frequently mentioned themes were: greenery/park (135), shops/shopping malls (125) and garden (101). These three themes also corresponded with the three groups of topics coming up in the results. They were defined as: (1) nature and aesthetics; (2) functional elements; and (3) private area. A list of all elements describing home surroundings that appeared in the study is shown in the table (Tab.3). Topics included in the 'private area' and 'functional' groups were strongly related to the type of housing and the place of residence (size of town or village) of the respondents. People living in big cities indicated less frequently elements of the environment belonging to the 'private area' group than people living in the countryside, and this dependence was
directly proportional to the size of the town where they lived. Elements belonging to this group (such as garden or calm neighbourhood) were indicated by: 68% of rural residents (1); 48% of small town residents (2); 39.5% of medium-size cities residents (3, 4); and 20% of big cities residents (5). The opposite results came up as relationship between the size of the place and indicating 'functional' elements (such as shops or basic services) in the environment. These elements were noticed by: 73% of the largest cities inhabitants (5); 43% of medium cities inhabitants; 41% of smaller cities residents (4); 40% of small towns residents, and 19% of the villagers (1). Similarly, there is correlation between perceiving 'functional' elements in the environment and those associated with the 'private area' and the type of housing buildings. The biggest number of functional elements in public zone are indicated by the inhabitants of blocks of flats and city tenement houses, in turn, the biggest number of elements belonging to private area are indicated by single-family and row house dwellers. In regard to the type of building, elements belonging to nature or aesthetics are always located in second position behind 'private area' elements (in the case of one-family houses) or behind group of functional elements (in the case of all other types of housing) (Fig. 1).

Table 3. Important elements of the present home immediate surroundings (frequency).

| Aesthetics/Nature       | Natural elements | Architecture/Landscape | Functional   | Private area |
|-------------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Forrest                 | 55               | Greenery/Park          | Shops, shopping mall | Garden | 101 |
| Meadow                  | 25               | Landscape/views       | City centre | Public transportation | 64 |
| River                   | 12               | Main Market Square-Cracow | Basic services | Bus stop | 43 |
| Trees                   | 10               | XIX-century town houses | Recreation area | Tramway stop | 17 |
| Lake                    | 6                | XIX-century town houses | Sports centre | Railway station | 6 |
| Mountains               | 2                | Attractive (pretty) district | School | Bicycle route | 4 |
| Animals                 | 2                |                        | University | Metropolitan railway | 2 |
|                         |                  |                        | Clinic | Underground | 2 |
|                         |                  |                        | Street | Petrol station | 1 |
|                         |                  |                        | Church | Place of work | 6 |
|                         |                  |                        | Pharmacy | Church | 4 |
|                         |                  |                        | Bakery | Pharmacy | 4 |
|                         |                  |                        | Market place | Bakery | 4 |
|                         |                  |                        | Cinema | Market place | 3 |
|                         |                  |                        | Playground | Cinema | 3 |
|                         |                  |                        | Kindergarten | Playground | 2 |
|                         |                  |                        | Beauty centre | Kindergarten | 1 |
|                         |                  |                        | Post office | Beauty centre | 1 |
|                         |                  |                        | Cemetery | Post office | 1 |
|                         |                  |                        | ATM | Cemetery | 1 |
|                         |                  |                        |                  | ATM | 1 |
| Total                   | 112              | 162                    | 277          | 96           | 250 |

4. Discussion
The results of quantitative research and - above all - the results of the content analysis revealed several important aspects of description and assessment of the quality of housing environment. These contents have been summarized as: (1) important places, (2) important features of home space, and (3) important elements around the home. The analysis of important places revealed dichotomy of their meanings - as social and private places, which similarly to results of Oseland & Donald (1993) [12] research, turned out to be separable spaces: private (bedroom, own room) and social (kitchen, living room). The results of the study have also demonstrated that privacy - especially in home environment architecture - is a priority of good design. In participants’ statements there is a lot of expressions that use exactly the same or similar terms that have been described by other researchers including the ones described by Altman
(1975) that concern "ability to control information about ourselves" [1], such as: "a space that allows me to get away from it all", or "a private oasis" (statements of respondents). Analysis of the results also testified that rooms of the second plan - various auxiliary and utility rooms, are important elements of home structure, that ensure fulfilling basic human necessities (such as water delivery, food, waste removal, or clothes keeping [15]) often determining whether the functional (and overall) assessment of the flat is positive or negative.

Regarding the significance of individual features of the home space, topics appearing here, concerning physical, social and psychological space, in general, resemble those described in earlier studies (Smith 1994 [13]). Nonetheless, there are a couple of issues that still need to be discussed. While analyzing this material with particular emphasis on house architecture, some significant elements can be observed. These are the role of natural light, the size of the rooms, or the technical quality of the apartment (here, in particular, the size of the flat and the home infrastructure). All these topics appeared as elements of strengths and weaknesses of the present home. The role of natural light and windows revealed in studies ("large windows" were often described as a positive feature of the interior) as well as other types of environmental stimuli such as warmth, silence and noise, and good or bad air (ventilation) refers strongly to the level of satisfaction with general idea of localisation (land, air, house, light, sound [15]). Elements related to interplay of environmental stimuli - such as efficient heating, ventilation or sound insulation - were more often mentioned as defects; apparently efficient installations or insulations, provide this type of comfort, the advantage of which is that you do not have to think about it. Windows, very often appearing in the descriptions of both advantages and disadvantages of the present home (in the second case, when describing lack of windows, too small windows or windows offering unattractive views), besides their basic function of providing natural light (and possibly fresh air - by enabling room ventilation), also play an important role of connecting with the outside world. Offering attractive views of the surrounding landscape and greenery, necessary to feel well [16], may be one of the reasons why windows are so important in inhabitants’ statements. This side of having (big) windows is, in any case, quite frequently mentioned by the respondents and therefore this topic is also connected with the issue of aesthetic needs and connection with nature. In turn, the size of rooms is primarily related to comfort.
or lack of comfort in the case of too small rooms) of using space which is also affected by such variables as congestion related to the number of users, but also the number of owned items, as mentioned several times by the respondents in this study. Congestion, as well as noise, lack of fresh air, bad odor or ill-fitting lighting increases the level of stimulation of the body, resulting in stress associated with the use of space [17].

In turn, the results of descriptions and assessments of the immediate home surroundings indicated a significant correlation between the emerging content and place of residence (size of the town) and type of building. As the results show, the type of housing building seems to be a stronger predictor of this relationship than the size of the town. In this case, it may be rather a distance from the center than the actual size of the town, measured by the number of its inhabitants. This variable seems to be a nominal value (unrelated to the actual life of the inhabitants) in such a way that quite a lot of participants underestimated the size of their home town (you could see it, because in description of their place of residence, respondents could give geographical name of the place or its size, but they often gave both information). The results of the research indicated a strong relationship between elements of the description of the area (‘private area’ and ‘functional elements’) with type of buildings and with emotional attachment to the place of dwelling (the most strongly attached to the place were dwellers of one-family houses). Essentially, this result confirms previous studies (Lewicka 2012 [14]) on the impact of building type on the relationships with the place.

5. Conclusions
The research presented here was designed to find out what lay-people think of their housing environment. The experimentally designed questionnaire was inevitably biased by architectural understanding of the housing environment and focused on topic that seemed relevant to the author. The form of the questionnaire and its legibility to respondents was initially a big if for the author. Nevertheless, the results understood both as number of returned questionnaire (plus positive reactions from many participants) and the amount of content to analyse, have brought a new and positive experience. The findings were many, including those related to favourite places (not all findings of the research were described here), significance of different home spaces, most important features of home spaces and most important elements of home surroundings. The map of home significance indicates important areas such as architectural and technical quality of home environment but also a meaningful area of social and most of all psychological themes of home descriptions. Some of the findings repeated or sorted with the results of the former research including those realized in other countries, which may suggest that people’s needs and satisfiers related with their homes are similar all over the world.

Certainly, there are some limitations due to this research. Firstly, because of the specific procedure of some kind of self-distributing propagation of questionnaires, the participants were mostly well educated young women. That is, there was no objective equality in sex, age and education distribution among the subjects. Secondly, the research tool – the questionnaire - was not tested previously nor negotiated in a process of professional consulting. However, the findings presented here seem relevant.

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