



EXPLORING THE OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF URBAN LIFE QUALITY ON REGIE BOULEVARD AND SURROUNDING STREETS

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Exploring the objective and subjective dimensions of urban life quality on Regie Boulevard and surrounding streets.

Silvia Gabriela Ghioca

L'étude des dimensions objectives et subjectives de la qualité de vie urbaine sur le boulevard Régie et les rues avoisinantes. Cette étude analyse la qualité des logements sur Regie avenue et les rues environnantes. L'analyse se concentre principalement sur le campus. Situé dans le district 6, le campus est l'un des plus anciens de Bucarest, mais aussi l'un des plus populaires en raison de facilités offertes. Pour une meilleure perception de la qualité du logement, il y a été appliqué un questionnaire qui a révélé des aspects positifs et négatifs de cet environnement, dans l'opinion d'habitants. Ainsi, le campus d'étudiants Regie est un repère pour Bucarest, en raison de sa bonne accessibilité et les caractéristiques de l'intérieur qui attire des étudiants.

Mots-clés: qualité de vie, urbain, paysage urbain, de l'Administration Avenue.

Explorarea dimensiunilor calității vieții urbane obiective și subiective pe Bulevardul Regiei și străzile înconjurătoare. Acest studiu analizează calitatea locuirii de pe Bulevardul Regiei precum și de pe străzile înconjurătoare. Analiza se concentrează mai ales asupra campusului studențesc Regie. Situat în sectorul 6, campusul este unul din cele mai vechi din București, dar și unul dintre cele mai apreciate ca urmare a facilităților oferite. Pentru o mai bună percepere a calității locuirii, a fost aplicat un chestionar ce a scos în evidență aspectele pozitive și negative ale acestui mediu, din punctul de vedere al locatarilor. Astfel, campusul studențesc Regie devine unul de referință pentru studenții bucureșteni, prin facilitățile date de buna accesibilitate, precum și de dotările interioare ce atrag studenții.

Cuvinte cheie: calitatea vieții, mediu urban, peisaj urban, Bulevardul Regiei.

1. THEORIES ON THE CONCEPT OF THE LIFE QUALITY

The concept of the life quality has evolved in conjunction with increased number of cities and urban population. Urbanization has created problems of the organization of life, trying to balance this process and the environment.

Thus, quality of life is defined as all conditions that offer the possibility of a harmonious life and also the all needs of life [1].

General elements in the study are based on the quality of life welfare, standard of living, income, poverty, social inequality, housing, neighbourhood relations, lifestyle, social and economic costs [2: 41].

General areas concerning the quality of life are the healthy status of the population, culture, quality building and social cohesion [3].

An important indicator of quality of life is given by the health and the determinants of health (health care, lifestyle, level of life) [4].

Another aspect regards the quality housing. Living means all recovery activities and capacity of building work and social relationships [5]. Quality of housing facilities is depending on its own facilities.

This should be functionally integrated in the fields of technology, economics and social life [6].

In Romania, the transition has led to a decline in living standards, reduced the purchasing power and raised the unemployment.

These phenomena are accentuated by the lack of education and professional qualification, low aspirations that limited the activities and the income, emphasized the social instability [7]. It is observed, the concern to maintain what exists, rather than to create something new [8].

Thus, one of the life quality indicators, incomes - have become variable or non-periodic, leading to demoralization of the population [9]. Also, mortality and morbidity has increased. Therefore, life quality in Romania is facing to a decline, being necessary measures that concern socio-economic revival.

2. METHODOLOGY

In preparing the study, were used methods such as observation and analysis of life quality in the space investigated, with notes from the analysed places field and the method of synthesis of obtained information. The method of the questionnaire has revealed quantitative aspects of the obtained information, which are translated into graphics that have been interpreted.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

At the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Bucharest was like a large village. This was called pre-modern landscape, which present a mixed pattern of land use. Vineyards have occupied large areas in Bucharest. Those vineyards were more numerous and more larger than orchards, vegetable gardens or spaces for other cultures, all taken together [10].

Subsequently, Bucharest's urban landscape has evolved as an European capital and upgraded the architecture and urban functions, and has extended the buildings as a result of population increase. Now, the city is divided into six sectors. Sector 6 is located in the western city is crossed by the Dâmbovița River. In the interwar period, the current shape corresponded to the administrative district 6 was called green capital sector.

The area described by Regie Boulevard and the nearby streets (str. Vizitiu S., Teodorescu, Popov) is in sector 6 (Figure 1) of Bucharest, near the district Crângași and the railway station.

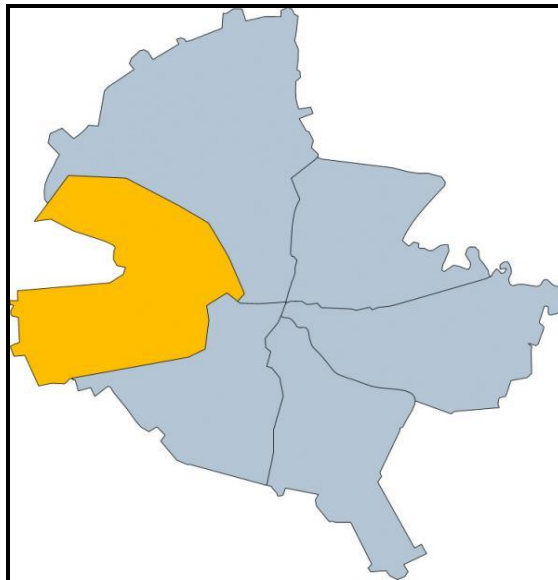


Figure 1. Bucharest 6 district
(after www.wikipedia.ro)

This area is marked by the presence of Regie camp (Figure 2). These homes started being built around 1955.

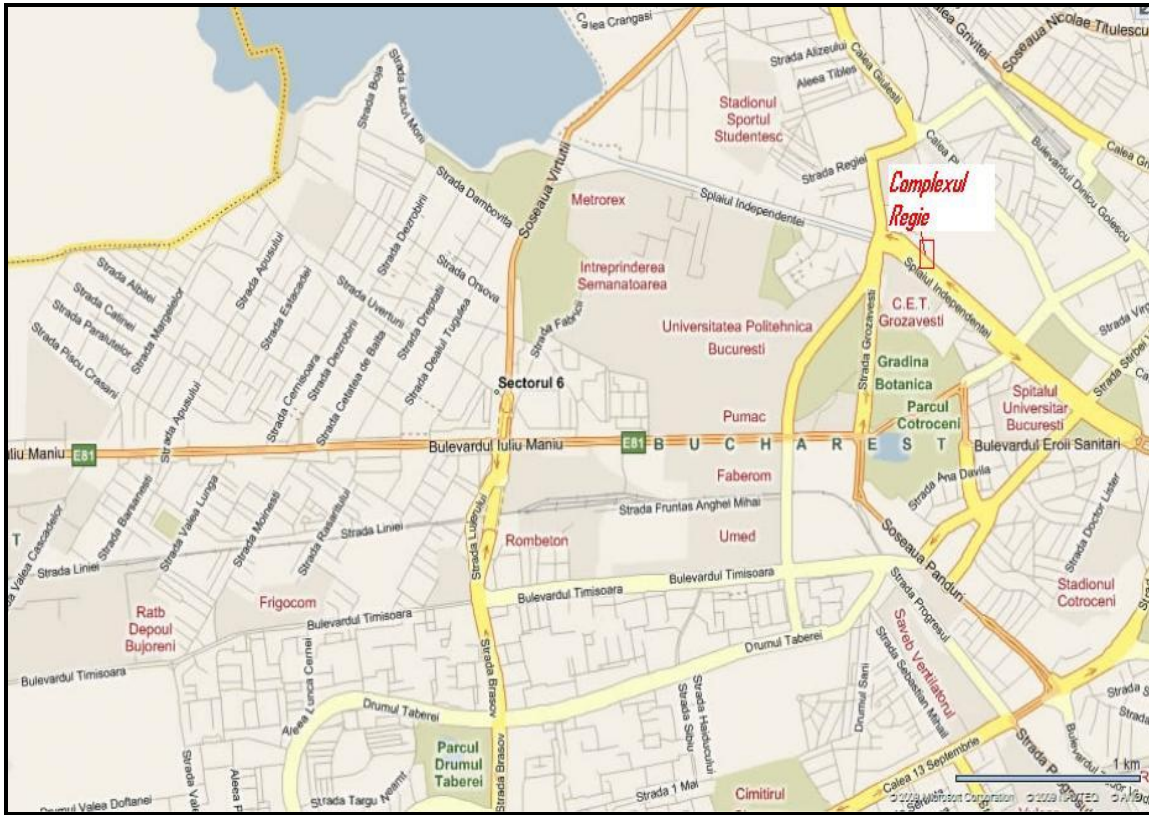


Figure 2. The 6 district map streets
(after www.hartabucuresti.romaniaexplorer.com)

In 1960 the accommodation for students of the Polytechnics Institute of Bucharest grew by commissioning of five dormitories with a capacity of 2070 seats and a dental office, which were built on land located on Splaiul Independentei 290, known as Regie student campus.

Between 1960-1968 were given homes in the camp (Photo 1), with rooms that had 2 and 3 beds, currently located behind the front consisting of the 12 homes with rooms with four beds (two sets consisting of P01-P06 with six blocks and P07-P12). Initially, homes were named using letters of the alphabet, from A (P27) to U (P13). In 1980 and 1981 the mayor increased the accommodation by adding all of 12 homes located on the front of Splaiul Independentei Street (P01-P12).



Photo 1. The Regie student camp (satellite image)
(after *www.googleearth.com*)

The camp (Photo 2) shows a true respect for the Law streets systematization, which have generally resulted in Bucharest thickening blocks, particularly in areas built in the 60s.



Photo 2. Regie camp at the beginning of 1960

(after *www.armuysen.blogspot.com*)

The most important mean of investigation was the observation. This is an act of observation and description of the facts found on the ground. Observation is combined with the analysis that lead to conclusions and emphasised the studied problem main aspects. Therefore, urban quality investigation of life depends on the analysis of urban physical facilities and equipment for urban security.

It is observed the prevalence of student hostels all over the boulevard. They are refurbished, either indoors or outdoors and up to 5 floors. In the camp front there are small green spaces, like little gardens (Photo 3).



Photo 3. The green space in front of the blocks
(Ghioca, October 2010)

Another feature is the presence of Basarab passage (Photo 4), of firms, or cultural institutions (academic institution of biology and chemistry, Environment Fund Administration, Teachers House, Highschool M. Eliade).



Photo 4. Bassarab passage
(Ghioca, June 2011)

The nearby streets are short and narrow, almost uninhabited being used most often to link the boulevard and other roads. On these streets the few houses that appear are poor, damaged, with an anaesthetic image (Photo 5).



Photo 5. Abandoned house on V. Popovăț Street
(Ghioca, October 2010)

However, on the V. Popovăț street stands a striking contrast between these houses very unsightly and a three stars pension (Photo 6).

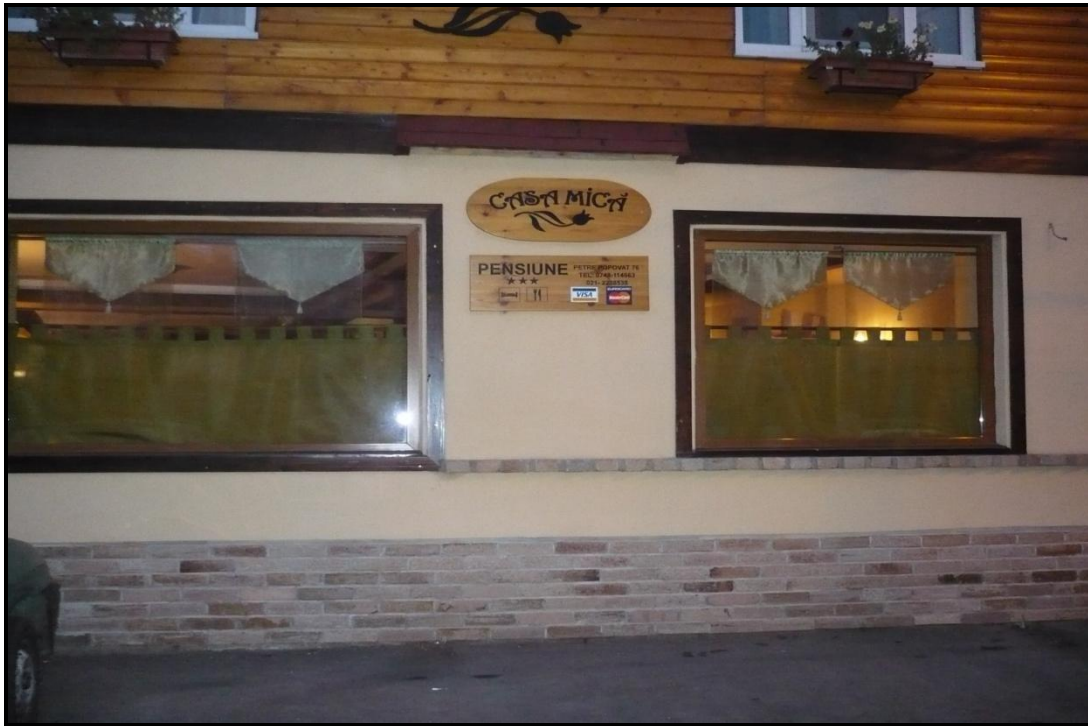


Photo 6. Touristic pension on V. Popovăț Street
(Ghioca, October 2010)

Also, the landscape is marked by graffiti that appear only at the metro area (Photo 7). It can be seen they belong to only a group which does not involve a possible tension between several street gangs.



Photo 7. Graffiti nearby P. Poenaru subway station
(Ghioca, October 2010)

A serious problem is the lack of parking, and that is way many cars (often with the owners from the camp) are parked on the boulevard or on the nearby narrow streets (Photo 8).

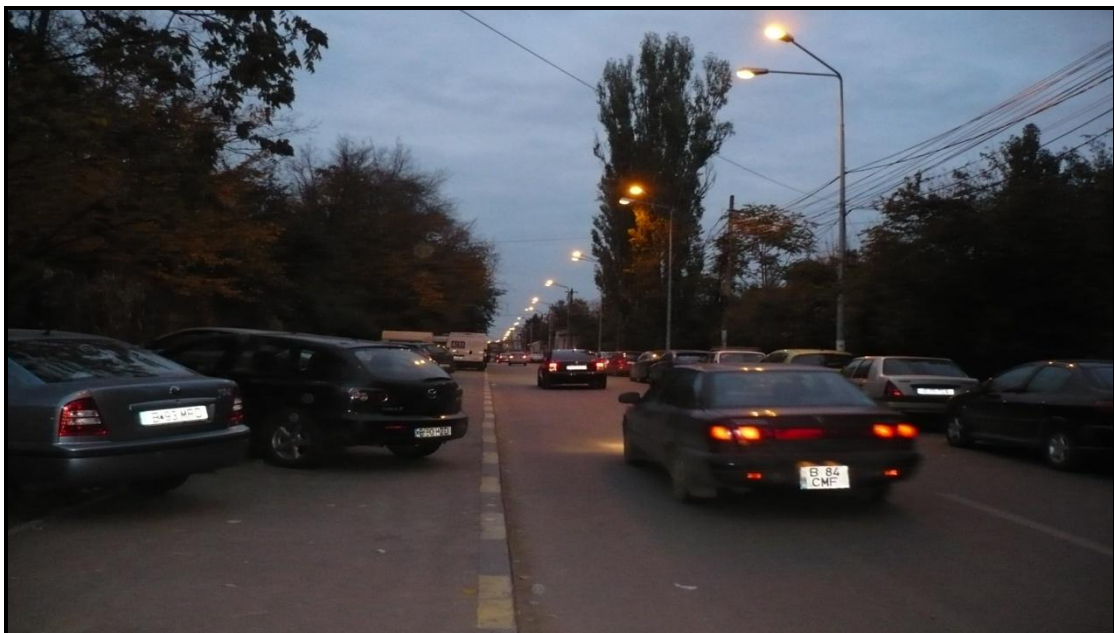


Photo 8. Lack of parking areas (V. Popovăț Street)
(Ghioca, October 2010)

Concerning the green space, it is important to mention the Polytechnic Park, with many relaxing areas. It can be added, however, that green space is consisting also of obsolete ruderal plants growing near the end of the boulevard (Photo 9).



↑ Photo 9. Unorganised space nearby Regie campus
(Ghioca, October 2010)

Concerning the food supply, the residents can reach Crângași market, Carrefour, or can go to the little stores on the ground floor blocks, or from the street ambulant vendors (Photo 10).



Photo 10. Ambulant boutique nearby Regie campus
(Ghioca, October 2010)

Also, all over the camp area is full of terraces. Thus, one obvious characteristics of this space is given by this trade, supported by the many terraces, clubs and places of entertainment. This is a good thing, but at the same time negative because these units are generating waste, giving a background noise and for some can be disturbing. However these facilities for recreation and entertainment attract not only students, and create a specific atmosphere. In addition, there few offices buildings and it is to mention the Unirea Medical Center – on Regie Boulevard, in contrast with the deserted nearby streets. On this area, there are some informal and unplanned street activities, nearly every pole or wall is covered with posters of various themes (rental offers various services, concerts, Photo 11). It is also remarkable the presence of peddling antique outdoor (Photo 12).



Photo 11. Informal activities (Regie Bdv.)

(Ghioca, October 2010)



Photo 12. Street trade (antiques store) on Regiei Bdv.
(Ghioca, October 2010)

An obvious problem is the waste, so often placed in spaces in construction (Photo 13), which can be source of infection, but also contributes to deterioration of the urban landscape. Also, another problem is that of stray dogs that can be sometimes aggressive.



Photo 13. Poor wastes storage (Regiei Bdv.)
(Ghioca, October 2010)

In the same time, there is a lack of a good waste sorting. Air quality is poor, and that is why you can feel the gas emanation from the nearby Grozavesti thermocentral; also Dâmbovița poor quality water often has an unpleasant odour, being clearly observed its pollution. A positive aspect of life quality in this area is given by the good accessibility given by the transport means. Thus, Regie Bdv. is crossed by 601 bus line and has access to the subway from Petrache Poenaru and Grozăvești station. About the urban security, this area is considered a safe one from this point of view, because it is an area which houses many students, therefore there is no question of street gangs, or the scandals; each block has its own security guard. The nearest police station is in Crângași. Also, a living advantage is given by the nearby University Hospital location which can be reached in 10 minutes by car. These issues affect the quality of housing in this area, therefore the degree of urban comfort.

For a better perception of urban life quality, there was applied a questionnaire with issues about student life quality from Regie campus. Questions capture aspects of housing age, the satisfaction of state buildings or on green space, places of amusement, or surprise the advantages of living in these homes and reveals the perception about the missing campus facilities.

All the students polled are provincial, some master or PhD from the University of Bucharest or Bucharest Polytechnic Institute. Interpretation of the two sexes responses reveal no differences, the perception is one about the same. Thus, it appears that 56% of respondents living in these homes more than a year (18% are women, 22% men), 30% live one year and 14% - from the beginning of this academic year (Figure 3).

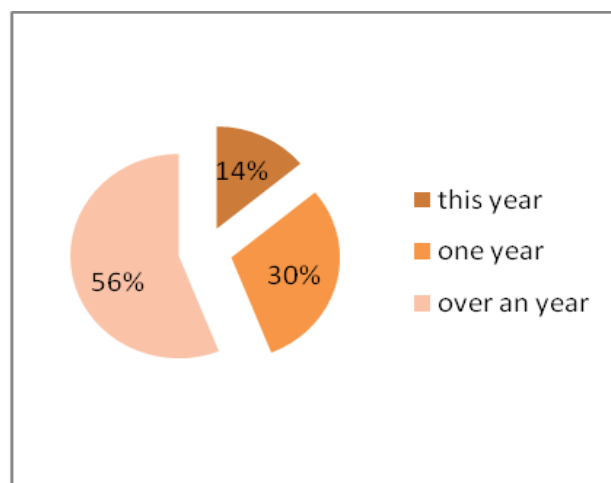


Figure 3. Years leaving in the camp

Therefore there is a consistency of living in here, because most of those interviewed have been living for many years in this camp. This should be correlated with the inhabitants' satisfaction toward the living conditions in these dormitories. Thus, at the question "How satisfied are you concerning the homes condition?", 57% of students declared as unsatisfied, 30% believe that they are satisfied nor dissatisfied (5% being female and 13% male), while 13% are satisfied. (Figure 4).

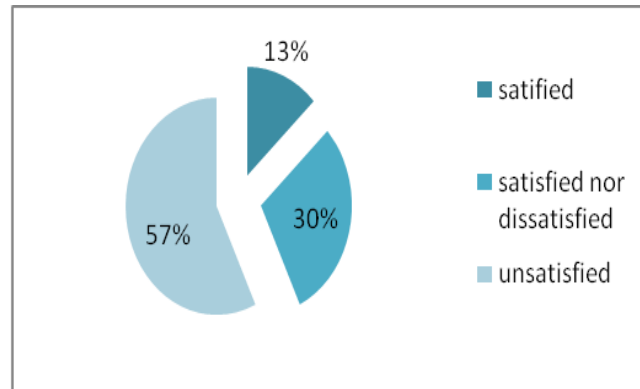


Figure 4. Satisfaction scale towards living conditions

This leads to the idea that the residents enjoy living in these environment conditions, which do not provide a very high degree of comfort, so no state is considered very happy homes. However, 30% of tenants are satisfied with the quality of housing, the share of discontent is not very high, thus it is a balance between those satisfied and those dissatisfied. Analysing this situation, it can be said that these homes have a relatively good potential for the analyse of this assessment on the two sexes (Figure 5) indicates that males are less demanding than women in terms of degree of residence satisfaction. However, it appears as a difference of views and perceptions life quality between the sexes.

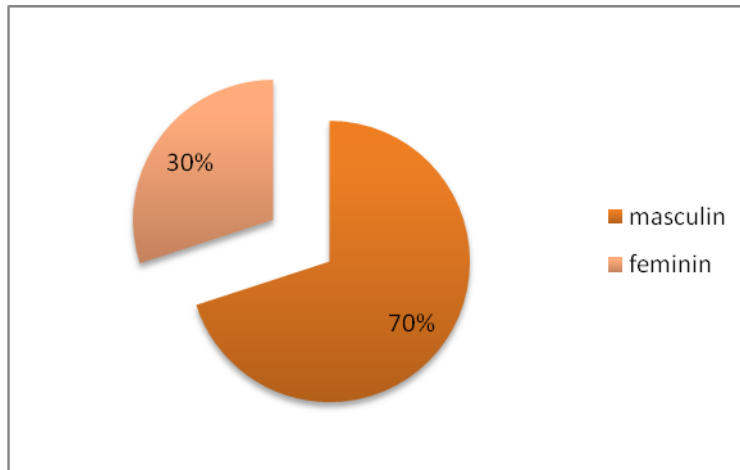


Figure 5. Satisfaction scale towards living conditions on sexes

Thus, only three of the respondents believe that they benefit of all necessary equipment for a proper habitation (Figure 6). This highlights the insufficient equipment and campus planning, considering that area residents would need additional utility.

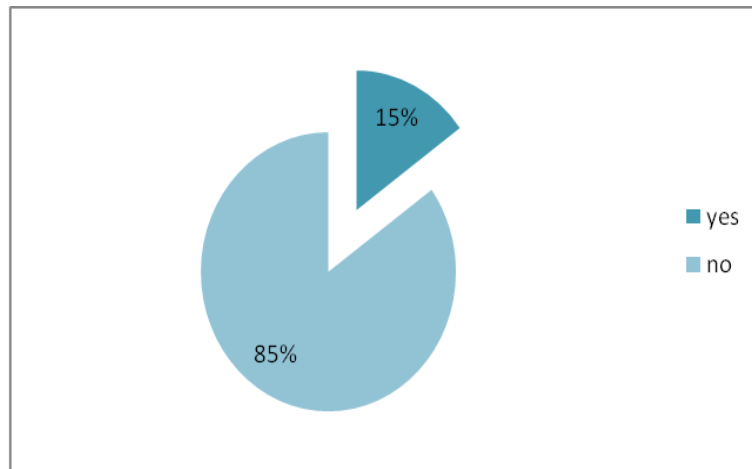


Figure 6. *Do you consider that you have all necessary facilities for a good habitation?*

An indicator of life quality, including housing, is the space given to recreation, that green space. Thus, the nearest park around homes is Polytechnic park, which offers the possibility of practise some sports.

However, this park has a large area and is not sufficiently organized and equipped. Therefore, only 17% of tenants think they have enough green space (Figure 7). In the

blocks that have the exit to the Regie Boulevard there are a number of gardens that rather have an aesthetic function.

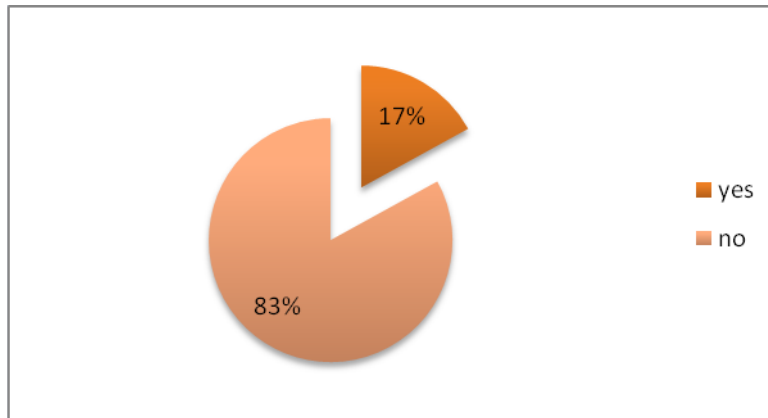


Figure 7. *Do you consider you have enough green space?*

Therefore, the lack of green space is a problem for this area's residents. As a solution, the Polytechnic Park can be arranged by increasing and managing the facilities for sports, but also by improving landscape aesthetics. However, despite some complaints, 68% of residents consider the quality of these homes as one superior to other student complex (Figure 8).

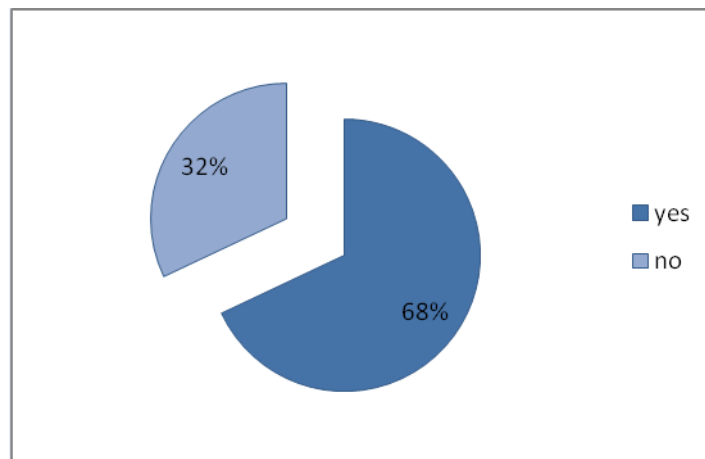


Figure 8. *Do you consider this campus has better conditions than other campuses?*

One reason of this campus popularity is because of the many sites related to entertainment, like clubs or terraces. (Figure 9). So, many students like this youthful atmosphere.

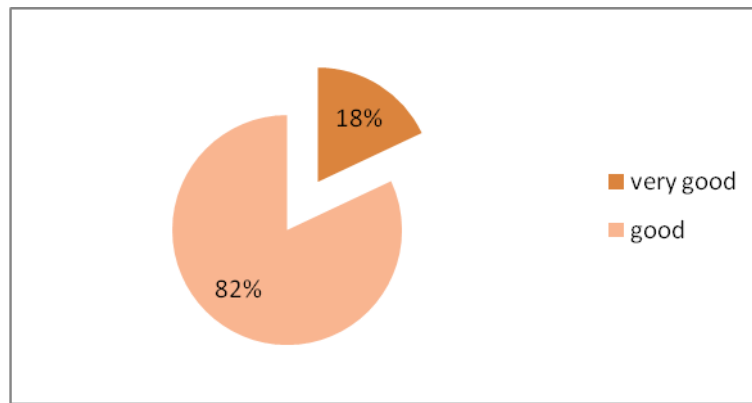


Figure 9. Inhabitants opinion towards entertainment places

Nobody have a bad opinion about the entertainment places, but 4 people said they are sometimes dissatisfied of the service quality, more exactly – regarding the balance between the quality and the price. But overall, they have a good opinion. In the same time, some terraces are placed at the ground floor blocks, which for some residents can be annoying, because of the noise given by the loud music, especially in summer.

Thus, 6% of respondents feel that noise is always annoying, these complaints coming from the female sex; 38% are not bothered by noises, and 56% are sometimes bothered by noise (Figure 10). This produces mental discomfort, a state of stress. It notes, however, a high percentage of those who consider themselves disturbed by the noise of places of entertainment, even if temporary. But many say they are accustomed to this atmosphere and not feel bothered.

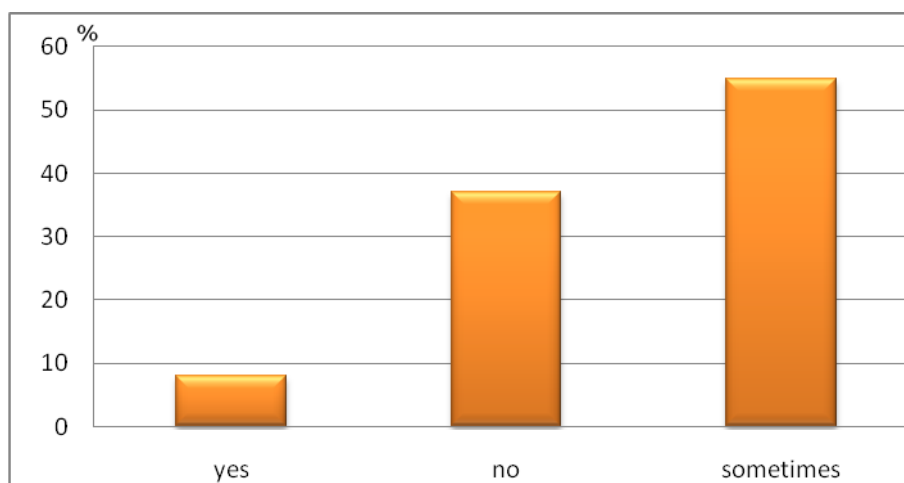


Figure 10. Are you disturbed by the entertainment places sounds?

In spite of this inconvenient, 50% of respondents intend to stay here next year, 18% do not want to do this and 32% are yet undecided (Figure 11).

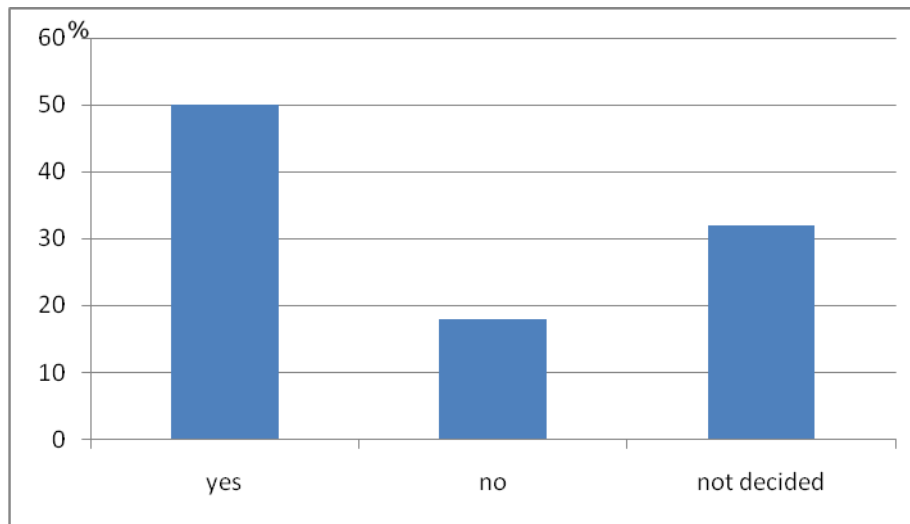


Figure 11. *Are you going to remain here next year?*

These data correlate with the advantages and disadvantages offered by these places. The main advantages of living in this campus are those related to the accessibility (this is the main advantage for most respondents -30%, figure 12); for example the subway stations Petrache Poenaru and Grozăvești are nearby, as well as that of Crângași. The area is near the centre of Bucharest and students can easily reach their Faculties. Another advantage is the nearby existence of Carrefour supermarket and a lot of entertainment places.

This environment is one that facilitates social ties. In these circumstances, the information flows faster (loans of books, courses), this space being one of interaction and socialization. Many students declared they remained in these homes because they have many friends here.

An important aspect is the low cost rent which cannot be compared with an apartment rent (30% of residents consider that the main advantage given these homes are the acceptable monthly expenses, Figure 12). In addition, for many this is a secure area, without conflicts, without gang neighbourhoods. The only problem in this space would be the stray dogs that can become a public danger.

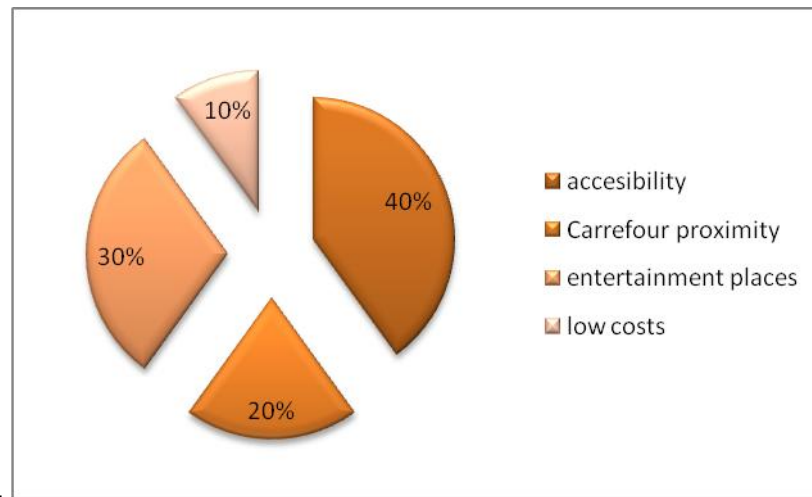


Figure 12. The living in campus advantages

Among these advantages there are also disadvantages entered by the lack of facilities, facilities that would improve the housing quality (Figure 13).

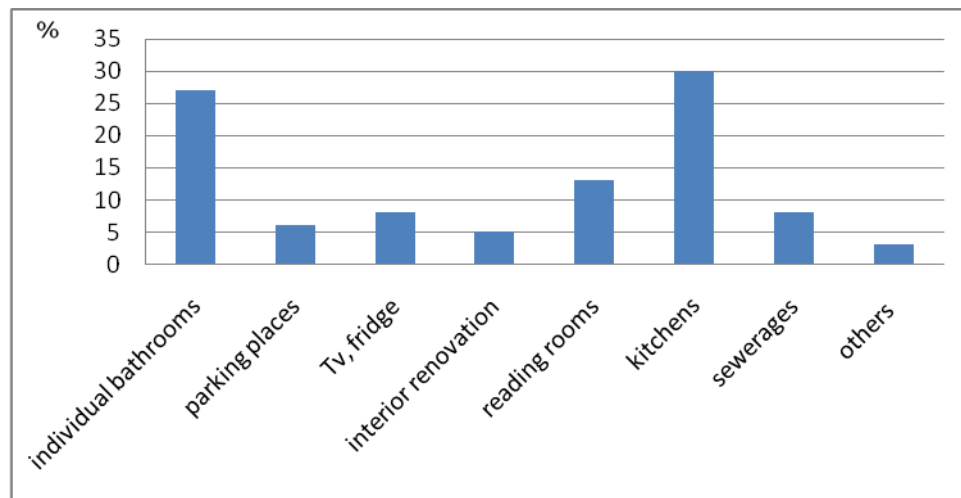


Figure 13. The missing campus facilities

Students residing in this area consider that among the features that should be added to the there are private bathrooms, (also, many of them complained of their poor maintenance). Another problem of many students is the lack of kitchens, of locations where you can cook. Also they want some extra facilities like TV cable and free internet, more furniture, air conditioning or washing machines, generally more interior features of each room. Students would like their rooms to be painted every

year. Furthermore, it is claimed the lack of parking places, because cars are parked out in Splaiul Independentei, or among the nearby small streets, the movement being hampered. Also, there is a necessary of sewerages, because after heavy rains, water seeps not entirely. Many students would like having a reading room, designed for their individual study, and sites for student meetings, debates or conferences.

Students want Polytechnic park to be more arranged for recreation, or for different sports. Some say that they would deprive supply stores, especially those with clothes, because Carrefour supermarket is the only place of supply of this kind, except small shops at the block's ground.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this area is marked by student activities, and some economic and cultural activities, being an area under construction and reconstruction. The landscape is marked by the Grozăvești bridge overpass. Urban life quality in the area studied is not very high, the environment recording many failures (especially on the Popovăț and Vizitiu streets, with damaged homes and a degraded landscape). Also, the space following the Regie camp, is unorganised, marked by waste and ruderal plants.

This creates a need for a better organization and planning of this area, for a proper and an efficient use, and to improve the life quality.

The student campus Regie is one with insufficient equipment that requires new facilities to improve the living conditions which involve the housing quality.

Despite its shortcomings, it is one of the most popular campuses because of the building scale, the proximity to the many known entertainment places, and due to its specific student-life atmosphere.

Overall, residents are almost satisfied with the conditions offered by this complex, but at the same time they want additional features such as individual bathrooms, reading rooms, parking lots, or other living facilities.

This camp stands out with a significant planning and organizing potential, given primarily due to its position in city (near the university centre, accessibility to the means of transport), but also due to renovations that were made recently, adding the history of these blocks (one of the oldest Bucharest camps). However, this development potential is insufficiently exploited; there is a need of other facilities to compete with other European student campuses.

Therefore, the quality of housing depends on the internal environment, which means the building, and on the proximity of the external environment [11, p.43].

Therefore, improving the life quality involves raising aspirations and a high utilization of human potential [12].

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