SUPERBS
Case Studies
Volume II

Building and Re-building Sustainable Communities

Series and volume editor
Lars Rydén

Financing
Interreg IIC, The KK-Foundation, Sida, The Swedish Institute

Production
The Baltic University Press 2003
Editing: Lars Rydén
Lay out: Fredrik Degerbeck

© The Baltic University Programme
ISBN 91-070017-4-0

Project co-ordination
The Baltic University Programme Uppsala University
Box 256, 751 05 Uppsala, Sweden
info@balticuniv.uu.se, www.balticuniv.uu.se
Preface

The SUPERBS project attempts to make sustainable urban patterns visible and understandable. The project has for this purpose developed eleven model sites where ways to work with sustainability are examined and demonstrated. The character of the model sites varies. Some models are whole cities, like Turku, Uppsala and Kaunas, others are small neighbourhoods like Hågaby and Suchy Dwór, and a few are individual buildings as in Lüneburg and Hamburg. The model sites may be visited.

Each model site is examined by researchers and the resulting case study reports are published in four volumes. At each site, three different aspects of sustainable urban planning and community development have been explored. In addition, some further material from so-called resources municipalities where other relevant development patterns occur, are included.

The report series has been organised according to four themes, each illustrated by cases from two or several countries: Volume 1 deals with basic patterns of sustainability, Volume 2 with sustainable urban planning, Volume 3 concentrates on participatory approaches and democracy, while Volume 4 deals with environmental management. There is, however, no clear-cut division. Each of the reports has material relevant for all themes.

The purpose of the case studies is first to serve as study material in education on sustainable community development, secondly to be used by others who find the approaches used worth repeating.

In addition to these reports a TV series – City 2000 – is produced with one program from each one of the eleven model sites. The TV series will be the visual companion to the reports and more than anything else bring the inhabitants of each place into the picture.

The reports in this volume constitute a considerable amount of work spread out over more than a year. I would like to use this occasion to express my gratitude to all those who after many difficulties finally have put together their results. I hope and believe that the efforts made were well invested. The reports together provide a highly interesting reading on efforts in many different countries in our region to deal with the outstanding problems of our time: environmental pollution, economic and sometimes social decline. It is about how insightful individuals, cities and universities have found new ways to develop meaningful patterns of living, patterns that we may all be proud of and that will last, be sustainable. Thank you for sharing it with us.

Lars Rydén
Series editor

Contents

1. How do people want to live?
   Dorota Włodarczyk and Margorzała Dymnicka
   5

2. Garden city urban patterns
   Dorota Włodarczyk
   13

3. Building a sustainable neighbourhood – Kronsberg
   Madeleine Granvik, Dorota Włodarczyk and Lars Rydén
   26

4. Urban planning and land-use in post-socialist Estonia
   Jussi Jauhiainen
   38

5. Development of an old wooden house residential district
   Jussi Jauhiainen
   44

6. Development of a former military district
   Jussi Jauhiainen
   51

7. Development of an industrial district
   Jussi Jauhiainen
   57

8. Protecting the past of historical Veliky Novgorod
   Igor Alexandrov, Ludmila Petrova, Vladimir Druzhinin and Tatyana Kauda
   60

9. Urban planning in post-soviet Novgorod
   Igor Bezlakovsky, Vladimir Kuzninich and Tatyana Ivchenko
   68

10. Decision support techniques in urban planning
    Saulius Lukosius and Linas Klucininkas
    79
Abstracts and authors

1. How do people want to live?
   Dorota Włodarczyk, Magdorza Dymniczka
   The importance of inhabitants’ attitude to the area they live in is
   drastically illustrated when deserted settlements sooner or later
   are degraded, abandoned and destroyed. On the contrary, liked
   areas are often well maintained and have a low recirculation rate.
   In this paper a questionnaire study of values individuals express
   in their choice of settlements is reported, asking the inhabitants in
   Suchy Dwór, near Gdynia in Poland, Dorota Włodarczyk is a
   practicing architect and a lecturer at Gdansk Technical University
   and Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm. dwiodl@gda.gda.pl;
   dorota@sarch.kth.se. Magdorza Dymniczka is a sociologist and a
   lecturer of Gdansk Technical University. mdym@gda.gda.pl.

2. Garden City Urban Patterns – Dorota Włodarczyk
   The garden city idea was introduced in the early 1900s as a re-
   action against poor environments and social alienation in
   industrialised cities to provide both a “marriage between town and
   country” and the economic and social advantages inherent in ur-
   ban life. In the article the ideas behind the concept and several
   examples of how it has been realised are given. The recently com-
   pleted neighbourhood Suchy Dwór in northern Poland is described
   with a focus on urban planning and the role of carefully designed
   social space. Dorota Włodarczyk, see presentation above.

3. Building a sustainable neighbourhood – Kronberg
   Madeleine Granvik, Dorota Włodarczyk, Lars Rydén
   Eleven recently built neighbourhoods applying principles of sus-
   tainability in all its aspects – environmental, economic and social
   – are described with a more detailed discussion of Kronberg
   outside Hannover, Germany. Kronberg with 15.000 inhabitants and
   working places for 2.000, consists of 10% single-family homes and
   90% multi-storey buildings. Considerable obligations were
   made in all phases of the project to secure a high quality of life
   and to use natural resources sparingly. Madeleine Granvik is a
   geographer at the Swedish Agricultural University, Madeleine.
   Granvik@puu.slu.se, Dorota Włodarczyk, see presentation above.
   Lars Rydén is a Professor at the Baltic University Programme.
   Lars.Ryden@balticuni.uu.se.

4. Urban planning and land-use in post-socialist
   Estonia – Jussi Jauhiainen
   Post-socialist cities are often characterised by large suburban,
   densely developed areas for manufacturing industry on the
   periphery, hardly maintained traditionally important inner city areas,
   and a deteriorating ring of housing between them. Implementing
   sustainable development and participatory planning practices in the
   redevelopment of these areas has become a challenge for
   planners in the former command economies. In the study, the
   role of public and private agents in promoting rehabilitation and
   gentrification in the rundown areas in Tartu are looked at. Jussi
   Jauhiainen is a Professor of Geography formerly at Tartu Universi-
   ty, now in Helsinki and Oulu, Finland, with an interest in regional
   development, jussi.jauhiainen@helsinki.fi, jussi.jauhiainen@oulu.fi.

5. Development of an old wooden house
   residential district – Jussi Jauhiainen
   Supilinn is a declined wooden house residential district in central
   Tartu, where no renovation has occurred for decades, and many
   inhabitants lack water, sewage, flush toilets and hot water.Supilinn
   exemplifies many similar districts in the Baltic states, with
   considerable cultural values and a wide gap between actual and
   potential land values. The new master plan attempts to improve
   the economic performance of Supilinn and to foster gentrification,
   by increasing the population by one third in a decade, improving
   services, replacing currently rundown buildings, building new
   streets and expanding the use of the riverside area, without loosing
   the very particular milieu. Jussi Jauhiainen, see presentation above.

6. Development of a former military district
   Jussi Jauhiainen
   The district of Jaamamõisa, a former housing area for Soviet mili-
   tary forces at Raadi military air base, has an aging and decrea-
   sing population (from about 4.000 to 3.000) due to the emigration
   from Estonia in the early 1990s, especially by people of ethnic
   Russian origin. In the neighbourhood, 28% of the population were
   ethnic Estonians. Jaamamõisa’s development potential is dis-
   cussed in terms of its advantageous location in the town structure.
   But Jaamamõisa may also turn into a ghetto and specific attention
   should be paid to the particular socio-ethnic composition of the
   area. Jussi Jauhiainen, see presentation above.

7. Development of an industrial district
   Jussi Jauhiainen
   Industrial development has suffered particularly from the change
   to a market economy system. The article describes the industrial
   area of Kekk in Tartu which was important for the construction
   industry. The current re-use is seen as a simple example of prac-
   tical sustainability, where the absence of a strong municipal inter-
   vention and initiative from private owners are the important factors.
   Former industrial buildings may be the only possible facilities for
   enterprises that do not necessary need or cannot invest in their
   surrounding environment. Jussi Jauhiainen, see above.

8. Protecting the past of historical Velikiy Novgorod –
   Igor Alexandrov, Ludmila Petrova, Vladimir Druzhinin,
   Tatjana Kuda
   Velikiy Novgorod, the most ancient city in Russia with a history
   going back to 862, poses special urban planning and development
   problems. In the article the legal steps taken to protect the cultural
   layers in the city are described. The resulting restrictions come
   into conflict with the tasks of the complex planning of this part
   of the city, which presupposes reconstruction of the historical city
   environment. As an example, the work with the Nikola-Dvirsch-
   chensky cathedral is described. Igor Alexandrov is an urban plan-
   ner and Professor of architecture at Novgorod State University,
   archeologist Ludmila Petrova at Novgorod state unified museum
   was director of the project to develop a historical-archaeological
   basic plan of Velikiy Novgorod.

9. Urban planning in post-soviet Novgorod
   Igor Bezjakovsky, Vladimir Kuzmichev, Tatjana Ivchenko
   Development and implementation of a program for rational use of
   the land of the city has become first priority for ensuring self-
   government and democracy in Velikiy Novgorod, and is seen as
   the first step towards a system of sustainable city development.
   The article describes how new routines and legal instruments are
   introduced to support local self-government and public participation
   urban planning, and the development of a real estate market. A
   system of zoning establishes legal rules which regulate the use
   of land and constructions of real estate. A geographic information
   system (GIS) has been introduced to develop the cadaster of the
   city. Igor Bezjakovsky, Vladimir Kuzmichev and Tatjana Ivchenko
   are urban planners in Velikiy Novgorod.

10. Decision support techniques in urban planning –
    Saulius Lukosius, Linas Klucininkas
    Computer based techniques are getting an increased role in ur-
    ban planning. This article gives an example of how Geographic
    Information Systems have been applied as a decision support
    system in the evaluation of alternative locations of a new culture
    and sports hall in Kaunas, Lithuania. The considerations included
    distances to public transport, major roads, possibilities to build
    parking places, and the number of potential visitors within walk-
    ing distance. Saulius Lukosius is head of urban planning in Kaunas
    and Linas Klucininkas is an Associate Professor of environmen-
    tal engineering at Kaunas University of Technology.
THE TRI-CITY
Gdynia, Gdansk and Sopot

The Tri-City is a conurbation of three cities: Gdynia, Gdansk, and Sopot, bound together by co-operation. The three complement each other. There are approximately 800,000 inhabitants in the area.

Gdynia is a young city, both in terms of history (civic rights were granted in 1926) and age of its residents (the average age is 37). It is also a green city. Forests constitute 45% of the city’s area. When Poland regained independence in 1918 after 123 years of foreign rule, and Gdansk obtained Free City status, the decision to build a new port was made. In less than 20 years, Gdynia developed from a small fishing village to become – at that time – the most modern port on the Baltic Sea coast, competing with Gdansk and Hamburg. Today, although conditions are different, Gdynia’s coastal location is an important asset. It is a dynamic centre of economic activity and the seat of the Navy headquarters. The city is the centre for maritime education: the Maritime Academy, the Naval Academy, the Gdansk University Faculties of Marine Biology and Earth Sciences and many scientific institutions are located there. The city boasts its own architectural style – modernism. Gdynia, currently with 250,000 inhabitants, is acknowledged as one of the wealthiest cities in Poland in terms of savings and the lowest unemployment rate.

Thanks to many royal privileges, it became the silo of Europe. In 1793, when Poland lost its independence, it became a part of Prussia. During the Napoleonic wars the French army occupied the city, and for a short time Gdansk became a Free City, but after seven years Prussian rule returned and lasted until World War I when Gdansk obtained the status of a Free City.

In Gdansk, World War II started on the 1st of September, 1939, when the first shots were fired at Westerplatte. The city was nearly totally demolished when liberated by the Soviet army, which methodically ruined and burned its historical monuments. After the war at a great expense and with the involvement of its inhabitants, the city emerged from the ruins, though renovation continues still. It was here that the Solidarity movement was born.

The Main Town lies on the left bank of the Motlawa river and boasts gothic, renaissance, and baroque architecture and beautifully shaped urban spaces.

Gdansk is the biggest and the oldest city in the Tri-City agglomeration. Its history began in 997 – the year that the bishop of Prague came to Gdansk, bringing with him Christianity. Lying at the crossroads of trading routes, it became home to Poles, Germans, Dutchmen, French, Scots, Italians, Scandinavians, and Jews incorporating different cultures.

In 1308 Gdansk was invaded by The Order of Teutonic Knights. After more than a hundred years, Gdansk regained liberty and became part of the Polish Kingdom.

Sopot is a one hundred year old city which developed as a favourite holiday spot for residents of Gdansk. In 1823 J.J. Haller, a former doctor in Napoleon’s army, built beach facilities for holidaymakers to enjoy the sun and the water. The place was transformed into a spa, accelerating the construction of summer houses, inns, villas, and hotels. Today Sopot have 50,000 inhabitants. Every year two million tourists visit the city. Sopot offers wide sandy beaches, swimming, sport facilities and a unique 511 meter long pier. The town is proud of its open air Opera House built in 1909 for an audience of 4,200 people. Half of Sopot’s area is a part of the Tri-City Landscape Park.
1. How do people want to live?

Residential preferences and values in Gdynia, Poland

Dorota Wlodarczyk and Margorzata Dymnicka

1.1 Background
   1.1.1 Home and its setting
   1.1.2 Avoided areas
   1.1.3 Preferred areas
   1.1.4 Economic conditions, affordability
   1.1.5 Gated communities

1.2 The local community in Suchy Dwór – a questionnaire study
   1.2.1 Aims of the survey
   1.2.2 The questionnaire
   1.2.3 Sociological comments on the survey

1.3 Community life
   1.3.1 Inhabitants’ initiatives
   1.3.2 Developing social life

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Home and its setting
Home is not just the house, but the local area, in which meaningful aspects of life are experienced. People spend much of their lives at home, with their families, first as children and then as parents raising their own children. Not only is the house of primary concern, but also its immediate surrounding. The settlement, in a very general sense, very obviously reflects how individuals and families strive to express their life values, which might be concerned with raising children, professional life, health, safety or leisure.

With home we will here understand not only the house itself, but also its immediate and less immediate surrounding: the closest houses and the neighbourhood respectively. The structure of the urban tissue is important. The lack of well defined outdoor spaces creates a barrier in getting to know each other, developing a sense of community and increases fear and incidents of crime. There are some changes in everyday life, which transformed public activities into private ones, e.g. public entertainment has been replaced by television, neighbourly meetings by private phone conversations. Nevertheless whenever people have the chance they prefer to interact, talk and have person-to-person contacts. This encourages them to buy houses arranged around common spaces, equipped with gardens, where they can interact, realise their hobbies and sports activities.

In this case study we have investigated how the inhabitants in Suchy Dwór, a small new neighbourhood in Kosakowo municipality near Gdynia in Poland (described in the adjacent case study), experience their residential environment and which aspects are important to them, as reflected in their preferences, choice of living area. In addition we have studied which areas in Gdynia are preferred and why, as a further and wider study of the values that individuals express in their choice of settlements.

1.1.2 Avoided areas
The importance of attitudes of inhabitants to the area they live in is drastically illustrated by the fact that detested settlements – if not revitalised - sooner or later are degraded, abandoned and even completely destroyed. Around the world there are several examples of radical reordering of unsatisfactory places: the award winning housing project Pruitt-Igoe, Louisiana (1955), designed by M. Yamasaki – the author of NY World Trade Centre – turned out to be so inhumane that authorities after consulting the inhabitants in 1972 demolished it. Similarly the residential towers “Les Minguettes” in Lyons were blown up in 1983. In Detroit, the evening before Halloween from 1986 and during several years, people set hundreds of fires in an effort to burn down their own unsatisfactory neighbourhoods.

The reasons for fragmentation of a city and creation of unfavourable residential ghettos are many. They may be political, philanthropic or just an effort to gain social control. High-rise public housing in costly inner-city sites, the immediate solution for shortage of dwellings, resulted in the construction of inhumane, high density residential slabs, in order to keep reasonable cost-per-unit. Many such districts, which turned into slum areas, were erected in Western and Central and Eastern Europe, during the 1960s and 70s and until the 1980s and 90s.
1. How Do People Want To Live?

The result of the often drastic zoning of a city were suburban monotony, and spatial segregation of people by household type, family status and age. Not surprisingly, the working-class landscape, with residential towers and slab buildings exceeding the psychologically acceptable 4-stories limit became undesired by inhabitants. The standardised, prefabricated boxes in ill-planned environments with poorly defined public spaces resulted in increased vandalism and abandonment. Many areas, in monotonous setting, with no chance to be revitalised were abandoned by inhabitants, as soon as they could afford to move. The areas, inhabited by left-behind low-income or unemployed people, were doomed to social degradation.

Leon Krier, an architect describes modern zoning as “alienation and social division... solidified in a urban form”. His comments that revitalisation of such areas requires “de-zoning” in the form of constructing pedestrian scale neighbourhoods with a vital mixture of residential, cultural, commercial uses, indicates why the areas were unacceptable.

![Figure 1.1 Pruitt-Igoe, Louisiana, built in 1955 became a socially problematic residential area and was demolished in 1972.](image1)

![Figure 1.2 Chatham Village, Pittsburgh, built in 1931 remains unchanged. The urban arrangement is attractive for both inhabitants and visitors.](image2)

1.1.3 Preferred areas

Each city, perhaps, can distinguish within its fabric the residential areas, where people desire to live, houses are well-kept and the sense of time and place is easily perceived. The social, cultural and physical arrangements correspond to the needs of the inhabitants and create the feeling of attachment that finally is the most efficient factor to preserve a good living environment. Some features are repeatedly observed in preferred areas. One is a well-defined urban space. Open spaces are accessible and woven through the community integrating different housing types. Another is the social fabric. Inhabitants of various income and age groups are living in the area. Finally there is often a possibility for the individuals to exercise responsibility and some control over their environment.

The above mention features are characteristic for garden city neighbourhoods. Not surprisingly, the most successful residential estate in Gdynia, as described below, is Kamienna Góra created in 1920. Another successful example in the Baltic region is Svarträcken in Uppsala (1930). In North America, Chatham Village in Pittsburg (1931), Cité-Jardin in Montreal (1940) and Radburn in New Jersey (1923) are outstanding. The last two examples should be underlined as, contrary to Europe, the mobility of people in North America is immense – people change their dwellings and locations several times during their life. Despite this, Cité-Jardin, developed in 1940 as a medium-cost housing for French Canadians, is still inhabited by the original occupants, who maintain their houses and are happily preserving ties to their neighbouring families which they know already for generations. Many garden city urban principles used here were borrowed from Radburn by architect Samuel Gitterman. The houses, grouped along cul-de-sacs, are aging beautifully, the greenery has matured and the advantages of town and country life are still present. The garden city principles were equally used when developing the Suchy Dwór area.

1.1.4 Economic conditions, affordability

Heterogeneous social composition is extremely important for creating a vibrant and architecturally attractive community. The coexistence of different income and age groups gives opportunities for desired interactions. Especially, the children and elderly can enjoy outdoor neighbourly contacts. The diversity of household types helps architects to inscribe in often homogenous residential settings different, but still harmonious new elements.

Smaller households and lots are usually connected with higher density and affordability. Affordability is determined by the proportion of income that a household can spend on shelter. This maximum is, however, different for different countries and also has varied through time. To calculate the shelter cost-to-income ratio gross or before-tax income of all members of the household is compared to total shelter costs. For example in 1986, the provinces in Canada agreed to use 30% of before-tax income to measure affordability for the purposes of defining need for social housing. Normally the percentage has varied from 25 to 50%. If more than that percentage of the family income is spend on housing (ownership or rental), the family tends to have financial problems.

There are several ways to modify residential development standards to make housing more affordable. Compact developments and a more efficient use of land are key factors in reducing the housing costs. Modified standards can lower costs by reducing the amount of land required per housing unit and thus distributing the costs
1. HOW DO PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE?

among a greater number of units and, at the same time, reducing costs of service including infrastructure. The decision to build affordable houses is obviously determined by economic factors. Still the author of an affordable house design should above all be concerned with the functional needs and aesthetic preferences of the client, rather than with personal aspirations to make a mark in professional circles.

There are several design principles to be taken into account when creating affordable houses. Thus affordability is enhanced by eliminating irregular contours of the house: a rectangular configuration, for instance has about 20% less perimeter than an L-shaped unit of the same floor area, and is thus cheaper. The type of building is also decisive for improving heat economy, etc. It is estimated that compared to a completely detached unit, the semi-detached and row house offers reduction in heat loss by 21% and 43%, respectively.

1.1.5 Gated communities

Some individuals value personal security and seclusion more than anything else in their living situation. Commonly this is expressed by fencing in their own house – sometimes apartment – by high walls and locked doors. More recently a special type of residential areas express the same type of life value. In the so called gated communities the inhabitants live, locked off from the outside world by large fences, with access through guarded “gates” allowing only the inhabitants to pass.

The development of gated communities is most striking in the USA, where approximately 4 million people live in such areas. It is more expensive. However the inhabitants, typically higher income groups, are willingly paying for private security. In contrast they are presumably contributing little to the broader community, the public realm, in which they are situated. Some people choose to live in this kind of enclaves for its seclusion. Ironically, however, according to Blakely and Snyder (1995), while the fear of crime is lower within gated communities, there is little evidence to show that the crime rate is any lower, with the exception of car theft.

The “exclusive” residential enclaves with security kiosks and electronically activated gates defending public access is an anti-urban phenomenon. People turn their backs on each other, with separate access to main road systems creating a fragmented patchwork of housing clusters. The linkage with the outside pedestrian system and recreational spaces is usually very poor. The lots often shuttered in by unreasonably high fences for safety reasons do not define friendly streets and do not anticipate pedestrian movements and neighbourly walks and contacts. This kind of atomisation of the urban fabric, as well as increased dependence on cars, leads to social disintegration and attempts to isolate even more from the outside environment by gating the community.

The gated communities represent the contemporary version of the forgotten need to protect medieval cities with defence walls. In the medieval walled Kraków in Poland the streets entering the market were gated with chains for safety reasons (double protection). A state initiative to build a private, inaccessible to vehicles street – Strada Nuova in Genoa in 1550 – aimed to create a civic monument. The street, outlined with palaces, served private privileged clientele. On one end it was blocked by a garden. However on the other only stairs mark the border. In the 18th century gates and bars were introduced in London’s West End estates as obstructions to through-traffic originating in less reputable districts and to random pedestrians. The phenomena was widely criticised by the public and the gates were outlawed by the Parliament in 1890. The street became a common space structuring community again.

The gated communities, at least in the United States, have typically little variation of housing type or tenure. There is also a requirement for a certain “life style” when it comes to anything from where and when to play golf to how the garden around the house should look like. The historical gated areas had very much the purpose to protect privileges and life styles of rich people. Today it seems to be quite the same. It remains to be seen how long lasting these neighbourhoods will be.

1.2 THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN SUCHY DWÓR – A QUESTIONNAIRE STUDY

1.2.1 Aims of the survey

A survey was formulated and evaluated under the supervision of sociologist Dr Malgorzata Dymnicka and it was undertaken in Suchy Dwór with the goal of achieving the image of social life, preferences and perception of the functioning of the local living environment. It was supposed to obtain the information relevant for constructing a model of socially vibrant community urban spaces. The questionnaire covered the following issues:

1) the inhabitant’s image of the community
2) the inhabitant’s identification with the neighbourhood
3) issues which trouble the inhabitants and require immediate resolution
4) the inhabitant’s evaluation of the functioning of the neighbourhood as a local community
5) the inhabitant’s expectations about an optimal residential environment
6) evaluation of their own neighbourhood (positive and negative aspects)
7) safety issues
8) the perception of neighbourhood’s characteristic places.

The study was conducted as an open questionnaire, on a random sample of 35 households in Suchy Dwór. The survey was carried out by a group of trained interviewers.
1. How do people want to live?

Questionnaire – Local community in Suchy Dwór

The aim of the questionnaire is to obtain honest and complete answers on the quality of life in this community, using mainly open questions.

A. The inhabitants' image of the community

Questions
1. What made you decide to buy a house in Suchy Dwór residential area?

Answers
1. One of the main motivations to buy a house in Suchy Dwór, mentioned by the respondents was the location of the house in a peaceful, green area. Other reasons were affordability, ecological technologies used and the architectural aspects of the residential area. Most of the people moved here from uneconomical slab residential districts with low architectural standards.

2. What distinguishes your present living environment from the previous one? What are the benefits of living in your own house with a garden?

Answers
2. An important advantage, mentioned often by the inhabitants was the raised quality of life (the possession of a private house, more luxury, an independent private garden). Interestingly the higher responsibility and more work required around the house are talked of as unquestioned benefits.

3. What area, according to you, is the most and the least attractive districts in Gdynia? (Fig. 1.3)

Answers
3. According to the residents of Suchy Dwór the most attractive residential districts in Gdynia are those, which have a strong identity, with a defined social and spatial shape – with public spaces, relative feeling of safety.

4. Should the inhabitants have a chance to influence the character and the shape of the neighbourhood area?
   a. yes
   b. no
   If yes, specify which elements.

Answers
4. A vast majority of the respondents appreciate the influence of residents on the shape and character of a residential area. This may indicate an awareness of realistic possibilities of influencing the quality of the living environment.

Figure 1.3 Gdynia – Evaluation of districts attractiveness. Kamienna Góra was selected as one of the most attractive districts in Gdynia. The residential area was designed in 1920 according to garden city principles. The centrally located hill with the generous greenery and scenic views provides the setting not only for housing, but also for the city park with carefully composed public spaces (Fig. 2.7). Recognized as the least attractive districts were the industrial area close to the harbour and Chyonia built in 1960-80 as bedroom slab-building district.
5. The houses in your residential area are located along the streets, courts and cul-de-sacs. Which of these urban forms is your favorite and the most appropriate for enhancing social contacts? (Fig 1.4)

6. Are you satisfied with the way in which the public urban space is arranged?
   a. yes  b. no

7. What are the services and objects you would like to enrich your living environment with?

B. The inhabitants' perception of the residential area

8. Immediate connotations with the words: residential area in Suchy Dwór?

9. What do you associate with an eco-village?

10. Is your housing area equipped with any of the elements mentioned above?

5. Some of the respondents pay attention to the form of urban spaces in shaping interpersonal relations. Apart from architectural and urban elements they stress the importance of social contacts, neighbourly interactions and friendships in tightening of bonds.

6. A large portion of the respondents are dissatisfied with the uncomplete state of the open public spaces (streets and parks). It is important to stress that well equipped public spaces create bonds between people and their living environment, encourages responsibility.

7. The respondents main complaint was the lack of technical infrastructure. This is an understandable problem, especially for inhabitants of an area located far from urban centers. This is surely a temporary problem, but its solution will require action on the part of both the inhabitants and the main investor.

8. Despite the few functional and technical problems the respondents feel an emotional bond with their own surroundings. This is stressed in words like: “our osiedle”, “I am happy to live here”, “a quiet, beautiful place”, etc. Sociological research shows that the positive attitude to one’s living environment plays an important role in overall happiness.

9. This question was aimed at determining the ecological awareness of the respondents. The answers indicate that in the opinion of the questioned an eco-village is an enclave of peace, quiet, clean air, greenery, rid of factories and troublesome industry. In the opinion of the respondents such places should utilize natural energy sources.

10. The respondents are aware that accomplishing such a perfect state is not very realistic, but they do not lose hope and aspirations to improve their area in such ways, that in the future it may be considered a positive example of eco-awareness.
11. What features should the ideal settlement have?

11. In the opinion of the residents an optimal living environment should combine social, spatial and economical aims.

12. Do you happen to go for walks in your neighbourhood or further?
   a. yes  b. no

12. The survey showed that most of the respondents declared that they go out for daily walks. This does not mean however that the places designated for such activity are totally safe and rid of obstacles especially for elderly people.

13. Can you say about Suchy Dwór neighbourhood, that it is the kind of local community, where everybody knows and greets each other, and is willing to help for the common good?
   a. yes  b. no  c. no opinion

13. It is an interesting and encouraging fact that the inhabitants of a new area perceive their surroundings in the categories of a community. Even if this is solely a verbal declaration it should be considered a sign of positive attitude towards the co-inhabitants.

14. Can you sketch the boundaries of your neighbourhood on the map?

14. See figure 1.5: “Suchy Dwór – neighbourhood boundaries”.

15. Do you think that Suchy Dwór is a secure area?
   a. yes  b. no

15. The respondents in majority consider Suchy Dwór secure.

16. Is there a need to improve the public transport system? (the bus stop situated closer to the development, higher departure frequency, higher number of routes)

16. Public transport is one of the main elements determining the quality of life in such structures (saves time, money and creates safety). It is especially important for those inhabitants who are forced to use public means of transport to get to work every day.

---

Figure 1.5 Neighbourhood boundaries – Suchy Dwór

a) Boundaries of local community perceived by 1/3 of respondents. b) Boundaries of local community perceived by 1/3 of respondents. c) Boundaries of local community perceived by 1/4 of respondents. d) Two examples of boundaries of immediate neighbourhood on the picture.
1.2.3 Sociological comments on the survey

The description of the questionnaire’s results discussed below (see box) includes an initial interpretation of the data. The main issue connected with inhabitants’ consciousness is the local identity. An important element of local identity is a perception of their living environment. The survey’s results suggest that the inhabitants of Suchy Dwór were fully aware of the quality of the environment, and pointed out as the main reason for purchase, the location, affordability, and the opportunity to own a garden.

They emphasized the following features as different form their previous living conditions: privacy, silence, contact with nature, presence of gardens, convenience, etc. These views were reflected in the answer to the question about their favorite residential district in Gdynia. Over 50% of the surveyed considered Kamienna Góra and Orlowo to be exceptionally convenient dwelling areas. Kamienna Góra and Orlowo have extraordinary scenic features.

The surveyed voice their discontent about not completely arranged common spaces, which indicates a readiness to discuss and take action in order to improve the existing situation. It should be acknowledged that the inhabitants have different notions of their neighbourhood, but it is valuable that they can foresee common goals and needs. They include the following in their hierarchy of needs: services and trade, sport and recreational facilities, playground for children, and improvements in technical infrastructure.

Over half of the respondents express their very subjective views on this matter, saying: “this is my community”. Some of the questioned listed such features as: silence, peace, beauty. Another point in the study was the question of ecological awareness. The respondents claim to be concerned with ecological issues and can express their views on the subject. Their notions about an ‘ecological neighbourhood’ include greeneries, contact with nature and quality of the water and air, an efficient wastewater treatment, and intriguingly also shape and scale of urban arrangements.

Nearly all of the surveyed consider mutual neighbour help and stress a sense of maintained privacy as a very important issue. Among other considerations is safety. The respondents expressed their readiness to take an active part in social services aimed at improving the quality of their living environment. This does not however mean that all will take part in community life. It should be emphasized that the inhabitants of Suchy Dwór perceive themselves, as members of a local community where people know, meet and greet each other and take part in common actions for the benefit of the neighbourhood.

1.3 COMMUNITY LIFE

1.3.1 Inhabitants’ initiatives

The area of Suchy Dwór was after World War II used by a Governmental Agricultural Farm, which went bankrupt. After that, a significant part of the land was bought by a developer who started to build a new residential development, in close proximity to a colony of substandard houses rented by previous agricultural workers, now unemployed.

Site visits and surveys showed, that community bonds within the new area are visible and also integration processes between them and their unemployed neighbors can be observed. The main source of interpersonal contacts are children, who transcend socio-economic barriers.

The first important awakening of community bonds was the inhabitants’ initiative to organize a children sport contest. The sign that there is a need for a sport field, was the children’s attempt to play football in one of the courts among the houses. Grown-ups decided to help the children to arrange a football field. One of the dwellers of the older area next to the newly built settlement, proposed to use his own empty lot for that purpose. In June, 1999 a regular children sport contest was organized, for 130 children accompanied by their parents. Food was served and fireworks displayed, and other attractions supported the event. Another interesting undertaking was the street basketball contest, for various age groups. It was decided that the winner’s cup, founded by community members, in category “open”, will be the award to compete for every year in September.

The above mentioned actions prove that the dwellers of Suchy Dwór residential area take care of social well-being, community bonds and good relations with their immediate neighbors (who happen to be not so well off). All that succeeded because of municipality cooperation.

1.3.2 Developing social life

The community has many plans and ideas. One of them is to plant trees, close to their fences, to make the streets, squares and other public places more pleasant. A careful selection of greenery will provide the unique character of their environment. A landscape project was prepared and each urban interior will be planted with a special species of tree: hawthorn (Crataegus), cherry-trees (Cerasus), cypress (Cupressus), laburnum (Cytisus laburnum), cedar (Glaucocpendula). Another idea is to enrich open public spaces with benches, swings and most importantly with an announcement board, where information about activities, meetings, etc. will be placed.

Figure 1.6 Visiting Suchy Dwór. The author of the article to the right in the foreground.
During community meetings, which are taking place within the Suchy Dwór estate, decisions concerned with new initiatives are made. A meeting with a local researcher, Marian Hirsz, is planned for promoting historical awareness and identity. The inhabitants' activities, presented above, show their vital interest in settlement development and participation in community life.

The features, which seem to be important in the realization of local communities are:

- a) the number of inhabitants is limited and stable, so personal acquaintance are possible
- b) decisions affecting members of the community are taken through direct communication
- c) counteracting antisocial behaviour is done directly with friendliness
- d) differences in income and wealth are small
- e) culture and entertainment have to a high degree local colour
- f) the area of the community is small enough to bike or walk from one end to the other

References