IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering

PAPER • **OPEN ACCESS**

Suburbs vs Third Places?

To cite this article: Agnieszka Kepkowicz *et al* 2019 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Mater. Sci. Eng.* **471** 092078

View the article online for updates and enhancements.



IOP ebooks™

Bringing you innovative digital publishing with leading voices to create your essential collection of books in STEM research.

Start exploring the collection - download the first chapter of every title for free.

This content was downloaded from IP address 218.59.193.14 on 19/09/2019 at 22:56

Suburbs vs Third Places?

Agnieszka Kepkowicz [1], Halina Lipinska [1], Dorota Mantey [2]

[1] Department of Grassland and Landscape Planning, Faculty of Agrobioengineering, University of Life Sciences in Lublin, ul. Akademicka 15, 20-950, Poland
[2] Department of Urban Geography and Spatial Management, Faculty of Geography and Regional Studies, University of Warsaw; 00-927 Warszawa, ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 30, Poland

akepkowicz@wp.pl

Abstract. In the shaping of suburban public space, a lot of attention is devoted to creating places enabling the strengthening of social ties, which is consistent with the ideas of integration and cohesion advocated by sociologists and urban planners. The so-called Third Places fit this description; they constitute the space between home and work, where we rest among friends and make ourselves visible to others. However, the previously conducted research indicates that the possibility of isolating oneself and living within the family is frequently the reason why residents of present-day suburbs choose such places. This means that the suburbs are becoming a space for recreation in a very restricted company or in outright solitude. The objective of the present study was to analyse the preferred forms and places of recreation, and the kind of personal interactions and relationships established by the inhabitants of suburban communities. During the study, several forms of preferred activities were distinguished, namely spending one's free time on one's own, which includes walks (also with a child or dog – very much preferred), pursuing sports such as hiking, jogging or cycling close to the place of residence. Family meetings and inviting friends to one's home were the most frequent forms of community-building activity. Another type of social interaction were meetings of neighbours and "club" meetings i.e. of people with similar interests and meetings related to spiritual life. The survey results indicated that the natural environment as well as the cosy and friendly atmosphere of POS were the most valuable components of POS in the opinion of the residents. The results also showed that, according to residents, the shaping of suburban public open space should take into account a wide range of people's preferences in conjunction with the natural environment resources of the surrounding areas.

1. Introduction

In the shaping of suburban public space, a lot of attention is devoted to creating places enabling the strengthening of social ties, which is consistent with the ideas of integration and cohesion advocated by sociologists and urban planners [1-6]. These are named Third Places and fit this description. Oldenburg [7] defines them as the space between the home environment (Fist Places) and the work environment (Second Places). This is where we take a rest from our everyday duties, meet other people, and make ourselves visible to them. Third places depend on our choice, and "*the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals*" are their inherent characteristic [7].

Some authors expand the concept of third places to include some unique aspects, and call them fourth places. They mention club space [8, 9] where people with similar interests meet [10], and public space, where relations between strangers are established [11].

Yet another kind of third places is proposed by Kuksa and Childs [12] introducing "significance" related to faith or metaphysics as an attribute of gathering places.

Content from this work may be used under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 licence. Any further distribution of this work must maintain attribution to the author(s) and the title of the work, journal citation and DOI.
Published under licence by IOP Publishing Ltd

Thus, it would seem that after Gehl's discovery in the 1970s [13] that life went on also between buildings, and with the awareness of Oldenburg's concept of third places, people would be informed enough to develop the community-building function of public space.

However, studies conducted [1] in suburban villages belonging to the Warsaw metropolitan area in 2015 indicate that the frequently cited reason for choosing this particular place to live is **the possibility of isolation and rest without the need to interact with other people, of living in peace in the family circle** [1]. Other authors point out the peculiar mechanisms guiding people to choose suburbs as a place to live: this choice is made more frequently by people who are less open to interaction with others and being part of a community [14]. This means that suburban communities have a dualistic character because they are frequently divided into the "locals" and the "new arrivals" [15]. These phenomena lead to the isolation, or at least maintaining a distance from people with whom there is no everyday interaction [16]. This would mean that suburbs become a kind of space that is in opposition to gathering and community-building spaces, which Oldenburg defines as third places [7]. This gave rise to the question about the proposal of public space dedicated to the suburbs and based on the actual needs of their residents. The study objective was to analyse the preferred forms and places of relaxation, and the kind of personal interactions and relationships established by the inhabitants of suburban communities.

2. Materials and methods

The studies were of an exploratory character. The authors intended to examine the phenomenon and confront it with the research hypothesis which stated that the preferred form of activity among people moving out to suburban areas was spending their free time with family and recreation without the need to interact with other residents, while having access to a few key forms of gathering places.

The studies were conducted in seven villages in Izabelin district, namely Mościska, Laski, Izabelin B, Izabelin C, Hornówek, Sieraków and Truskaw. Izabelin district borders with the north-western part of the Warsaw metropolitan area. The character of all seven villages is consistent with the typical traits of all suburban villages such as the "dormitory town" character of residential space and close links with the nearby urban centre in terms of employment, supplies, and cultural life [17, 18, 19, 1].

Izabelin district covers an area of 6.501 ha and has more than 8,000 inhabitants [20]. Forests are the dominant type of land use in Izabelin district as they account for nearly 78.3% of the district's area. Nearly 8.9% of the district's area is covered by farmland, including 6.1% by built-up areas and 2.5% by roads [21]. The villages in Izabelin district are surrounded by the forests of the Kampinoski National Park.

The objective formulated in the introduction was achieved by means of qualitative studies [22, 23] conducted in March 2018. The questionnaire survey (see questionnaire form in Annex 1) sought to identify the preferred activities undertaken in one's place of residence as well as residents' needs and expectations related to gathering and recreation places. The questionnaire was posted on two community websites: one run by an association DziałajMY [Let's Act] and on the website "Mieszkańcy Gminy Izabelin" called [Inhabitants of Izabelin District]. The 92 completed questionnaires were obtained. Table 1 shows the basic information about the respondents.

3. Results and discussions

Asked about their identification with the place where they live, residents expressed a very positive opinion (4.3 on a scale of 1–5), with 50% of respondents choosing 5. The respondents declared that **their preferred place of meetings with friends** living in their neighbourhood was their own home and garden (81%). Spending time in the nearby forest is **the most frequently undertaken activity.** This is where the residents usually walk their dogs, jog and cycle, and sometimes spend time with family. Another activity is going to the local shops. The third most popular activity is inviting friends and neighbours in one's home. A less frequently undertaken activity, according to the respondents, is participation in cultural events in Izabelin district (exhibitions, concerts, picnics, fairs). The residents go to squares, playgrounds and parks very rarely. The main reasons mentioned by the respondents include the lack of 24.4% gathering places or a low attractiveness of the existing ones 48,7%. They

[1] in-depth interviews with the residents of both villages, accompanying the study on the demand for gathering places using the example of Warsaw [1]

also indicate the limited availability of playgrounds or school sports grounds; they complain about big crowds or a lack of a suitable offer of leisure activities (11.5% respondents declare that there are more interesting places to visit outside the place where they live.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' basic characteristics

	[%]
Sex:	
men	28.6
women	71.4
Age:	
14–18	4.8
18–25	4.5
26–35	9.5
36–45	38.1
46–55	19
56–65	23.8
over 65	0
For the better part of the day, I stay:	
within the village	57.1
outside the village	42.9
Length of residence in Izabelin district	
1–3	4.7
4–10	13.9
11–20	34.6
21–30	23
More than 30 years	2.3

Source: authors' own materials

The respondents declared that green (26,5%), aesthetic value (16.9%) and safety (14%) are **the most important characteristics of space determining their choice of a place to spend their leisure time.** Easy access and the secluded character of a place were also mentioned (39,5%and 34,9% responses respectively). This means that people want both tranquil secluded places and "by the way" spaces. Some respondents 14% mentioned characteristics of space such as availability of sanitary infrastructure, special outdoor fitness equipment, creative offer of cultural activities, unpretentious atmosphere, spatial order, safety, beauty, cleanliness, quiet.

The most frequently visited places in the neighbourhood are forest areas (27.1%), local shops (21.2%), recreational forest clearings (16.8%), particularly Polana Lipkowska, even though it is located outside the boundaries of Izabelin district, and the Mokre Łąki clearing. Some respondents visit the centre of Izabelin – 10.2 % (primarily the Izabelin Cultural Centre (CKI), the District Office and library). Other places mentioned by the respondents are related to education – 8.8% (schools, kindergartens, lower secondary school) cafés and restaurants (5.8%), playgrounds (3.6%), sports club (1.5%), ice rink (1.5%), church (0.7%), private cultural centre (0.7%), local streets within the housing estates (0.7%), swimming pool at the Centre for the Blind (0.7%), and Visually Impaired (0.7%).

The favourite place for the residents of Izabelin district is the forest (40.6%) because: "it is a forest", you can walk there on your own and with dogs, it is pleasant, there are not too many people but there are animals, and residents find peace and quiet here. Recreational forest clearings are the second favorite place (29.7%). Respondents indicate Polana Jakubów, the fantastic playground in Polana Lipkowska (located outside the district's boundaries) and Mokre Łąki (a successful combination of natural values and sports activity). Residents associate these places with memories of good times and pleasant events (e.g. wedding, parenthood).

The less frequently mentioned places include a few local cafés and restaurants (10.8%) and favourite shops (5.4%), CKI (5.4%),), historic church (located outside the district's boundaries) (27 %), Centre

for the Blind and Visually Impaired – a unique place (2.7%) and private cultural centre (yoga classes (2.7%).

According to the respondents. the forest (97.7%) is **the most attractive element of landscape**. followed by animals (58.1%) and meadows (48.8%).

The residents expressed very critical views on the tree felling carried out by the Kampinoski National Park Authority along their favourite hiking trails and on the reduction of the acreage of one of the most attractive recreation places – the Mokre Łąki clearing – carried out by the district government.

According to the respondents. the gathering places that their neighbourhood lacks the most include. above all. a mini-park/large square with a range of recreation options (50%). a place for teenagers (50%). publicly accessible sports and recreation areas (e.g. sports fields. tennis courts. skate parks. outdoor gyms – 47.6%.) adventure playground for children (42.9%). cycling lanes with rest areas (40.5%). local cafés. pubs. restaurants (40.5%). a square in the vicinity of service and retail establishments (38.1%). Besides. a few residents indicate the need for an open neighbours' spaces (e.g. village lounge. neighbours' community centre). Individual respondents mentioned a playground for small children. a broader offer of community-building events and activities at the Izabelin Cultural Centre. places for open meetings. and a shopping gallery.

Asked about their preferences with regard to the need for publicly accessible spaces that would be places for recreation in an attractive natural setting. where the company other people can be avoided. or gathering and community-building places for residents. the respondents indicated both types of spaces (50% and 50% respectively). It is evident that preference is given to the former.

When analysing the residents' answers about **special values that are related to the quality of public space and should be protected**. three aspects can be distinguished. The first and most important aspect is the preservation of the natural environment resources. followed by maintaining the cosy character of the village and. lastly. maintaining green areas associated with a friendly public space (Table 2).

Table 2. List of elements related to the quality of public space in the district that should be particularly protected according to the respondents – ranking of all answers

Description	Quantity [%]
Protection of nature (trees – particularly the old ones, forests, the Kampinos Forest) Do not cut trees Maintain purity Protect beauty Protect animals Protect against intensive development	64.1
Cosy character of the village Single-family housing Intelligent integration of municipal infrastructure with nature Small shops Slower traffic Tranquility Purity Clean air Aesthetic buildings Character of a health resort	19.2
Maintaining green areas within the village Strips of green and trees along streets Existing smaller and large squares, parks and places for recreation Green in the centre of the district ECO playgrounds Friendly cycling and walking lanes Places of recreation for children and youth	16.7

Source: authors' own materials

The above results confirm the results of literature studies and surveys conducted in Julianów and Józefosław in 2015 [1]. In addition, the residents of the studied suburban areas more frequently engage in activities that do not require establishing interactions with other people. They place more emphasis on physical activity or contact with nature rather than socializing with other residents.

Nonetheless, the respondents declare the need for friendly gathering places. These places are clearly divided into two zones: forest and open areas on the one hand, and built-up areas on the other. Places located in these two zones have different characteristics.

4. Conclusions

The conclusions drawn from the present survey encompass several domains and topics. First of all, they indicate the preferred activities undertaken by residents of the suburban areas. They also explain the reason for these choices. Then, they describe the unique characteristics of suburban public space, taking into account the character of interpersonal relations. The conclusions also highlight the significance of the scale of solutions, both the small, local scale and the larger, landscape scale. The problem of preserving the *genius loci* as an important element of building the identity of places has also been raised. It is important in the light of the unique characteristics of the suburbs linked with their demographics and the large number of new residents coming from other areas.

The preferred activities undertaken in public space are primarily individual forms of leisure such as walks around the village and in the nearby forests, meadows and fields, jogging, cycling, walking the dogs. Nature turns out to be the most valuable component of public space. Residents want these natural places to be particularly protected.

Necessary activities [13] include primarily visits in local shops and, to a lesser extent, educational establishments (schools, kindergartens), also in churches.

One's home is the basic gathering place and the participants of these meetings are limited to the selected persons. If, however, residents meet outside home, they meet in recreational forest clearings, playgrounds or cultural centres (district and private centre).

Residents indicate the significance of third places (local cafés and restaurants, libraries) and fourth places. A full spectrum of fourth places was mentioned: gathering places for people with similar interests (sports clubs, cultural centres, playgrounds, places for youth), places with a religious function (churches) as well as openness to casual meetings with strangers (unlike in the case of Senett – [16]).

Residents did not declare their willingness to visit gathering places belonging to *public open space.* Why is that so? In the survey from 2015 [1], respondents declared their lack of willingness and lack of time. The residents of Izabelin district, however, indicated a different reason: the small number of such places and their poor quality. There is a noticeable need for the creation of classic gathering places such as a square in the centre of the village or a mini-park, a square in the vicinity of service and retail establishments, publicly accessible sports and recreation grounds, or gathering places for youth. Residents also wish for places where they can not only accompany their children but also spend time together with them.

Summing up, it can be stated that despite the predominant preference for spending leisure time on their own (or in a small and selected group of friends), residents wish for gathering places and forms of interaction having the following character:

- casual, neighbourly
- closer to meetings of neighbours from the same street
- joint play of children and youth outdoors
- casual, in a broader group of the local community
- casual, along tourist trails and recreational forest clearings
- with family members, along tourist trails and recreational forest clearings
- meetings for entertainment purposes (cultural centres)

Residents indicated two scales of spatial solutions:

- small scale, different from the scale of large urban areas, where there would be space for facilities such as a "neighbours' street" and small gathering places, both "by the way" and more secluded,

- supralocal scale which includes tourist trails, cycling routes and large recreational forest clearings that are associated with the weekend recreation for residents of the capital city.

Residents pointed out some special places, e.g. their favourite local shops, little restaurants, cafés and spontaneously selected outdoor places such as forest clearings, lanes, or secluded places. They called for placing this places under protection. This is particularly important because such places give rise to the *genius loci* and help residents identify strongly with their place of residence despite various divisions [24].

Residents had high requirements regarding the quality of public space, which could be related to the fact that the majority of the respondents had university education. Besides calls for e.g. the improvement of the sanitary infrastructure, there have also been calls for the creation of an unpretentious atmosphere in public space, caring for beauty and tranquility as well as developing a creative recreational or cultural offer. It can be assumed that these needs are consistent with the idea of creative cities [25].

The present study is part of the search for optimal spatial solutions to achieve social cohesion and build social capital. Its novelty results not only from the fact that the needs of suburban area residents concerning public space were indicated. The study also describes the actual forms of activity related to recreation and diversity of gathering places.

The survey results also indicate the specific forms of public open space that could be dedicated to suburban areas.

They can become the starting point for research in other suburban villages (not only in other cities in Poland but also in other countries), which would expand and supplement the knowledge about the issue related to the search for optimal solutions for suburban public open space.

References

[1] A. Kępkowicz, D. Mantey, „Suburbs as None-Places? The Need for Gathering Places: A Case Study of the Warsaw Suburbs, Poland", Landscape Architecture, 1/2016, 44-67 (7) 2016 (Suburbia jako nie-miejsca? Problem zapotrzebowania na miejsca spotkań na przykładzie suburbiów Warszawy)

[2] L.J. Miller, "Togetherness and the Suburban Ideal", Sociological Forum 10: 393–419. 1995

[3] The New Charter of Athens, Alinea, Firenze, ISBN 88-8125-782-3. 2003 (La Nouvelle Charte d'Athenes)

[4] E. Zeitler, L. Buys, R. Aird and E. Miller, "Mobility and Active Ageing in Suburban Environments: Findings from In-Depth Interviews and Person-Based GPS Tracking", Current Gerontology and Geriatrics Research. Available at: www.cirrie.buffalo.edu/database/149484/ (accessed 24 July 2015): 10 pages. 2012

[5] D.L. Debertin, S.J. Goetz, "Social Capital Formation in Rural, Urban and Suburban Communities", University of Kentucky Staff Paper 474, 2013, Available at: http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/159102/2/s474%20Social%20Capital%20Debertin%20complete.pdf (accessed 10 July 2015)

[6] Ch. Fagan, D, Trudeau, "Empowerment by Design? Women's Use of New Urbanist Neighborhoods in Suburbia, Department of Geography Macalester College St. Paul", Journal of Planning Education and Research, Epub ahead of print 16 June 2014. DOI: 10.1177/0739456X14539353, 2014

[7] R. Oldenburg, "The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day", New York: Paragon House, 1989

[8] Ö. Güzey, "Neoliberal urbanism restructuring the city of Ankara: Gated communities as a new life style in a suburban settlement", Cities 36: 93–106, 2014

[9] A. Kepkowicz, D. Mantey, H. Lipińska, W. Wańkowicz, "Club-landscape as a manifestation of substitutive public spaces in suburbs", Landscape Architecture. The Settling Greenery 3: 56–71, 2014

[10] D. Fleener, "The Fourth Place: Creating An In-Store Community Experience", [http://www.dynamicexperiencesgroup.com/TheFourthPlace.html], 2015

[11] P. Simões Aelbrecht, "Fourth places': the contemporary public settings for informal social

interaction among strangers", Journal of Urban Design 21 (1), pp.124-152
[12] I. Kuksa, M. Childs, "Making Sense of Space – The Design and Experience of Virtual Spaces as a Tool for Communication, chapter – "First, second, third and fourth places – making extra sense of space", Pages 93–99, Chandos Publishing, Elsvier Limited, Oxford GB, ISBN-13: 978-1843347408, 2014
[13] J. Gehl, "Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space". New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1987
[14] J. Kim, R. Kaplan, "Physical and psychological factors in sense of community: New urbanist Kentlands and nearby Orchand Village", Environmant and Behavior 36(3): 313–340, 2004
[15] S. Blandy and D. Lister, "Gated communities: (ne)gating community development?", Housing Studies 20(2): 287–301, 2005
[16] R. Senett, "The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities". London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1990
[17] Chmielewski JM (2005), Problemy rozpraszania się zabudowy na obszarze metropolitalnym Warszawy. In: Lorens P (eds) Problemy suburbanizacji. Warszawa: Urbanista, pp. 52–62.
[18] K, Solarek, „Dezurbanizacja południowej strefy podmiejskiej Warszawy. Charakterystyka procesu, główne zagrożenia" In: Lorens P (eds) Problemy suburbanizacji. Warszawa: Urbanista, pp 63–70, 2005
[19] D. Mantey, „Żywiołowość lokalizacji osiedli mieszkaniowych na terenach wiejskich obszaru metropolitalnego Warszawy", Warszawa: WGiSR, 2011
[20] http://warszawa.stat.gov. pl /vademecum/ vademecum_mazowieckie/portrety_gmin/warszawski_zach/1432022_izabelin.pdf, 2018
[21] https://www.gmina.izabelin.pl/58,gmina.html
[22] E. Babbie, „Podstawy badań społecznych", Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008
[23] K. Madden, A. Wiley-Schwartz, A. Antoshak, "How to Turn a Place Around: A Handbook for Creating Successful Public Spaces", New York, NY: Project for Public Spaces, 2010
[24] S. Blandy, D. Lister, "Gated communities: (ne)gating community development?" Housing Studies 20(2): 287–301, 2005
[25] R. Florida, "The Rise of the Creative Class", (Wyd. Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warszawa, 2010, (Narodziny klasy kreatywnej)