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2 IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN HIGH-RISE A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH CPTED OBSERVED IN THE PUBLIC REALM IN WIDZEW

POPRAWA JAKOŚCI ŻYCIA NA OSIEDLU BLOKOWYM. ZRÓWNOWAŻONE PODEJŚCIE CPTED OBSERWOWANE W PRZESTRZENI PUBLICZNEJ NA WIDZEWIE

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Abstract

The article focuses on the sense of security as a very important element affecting the quality of life and its improvement. Attention was drawn to crime and security in public space, which, is used by old people. The aim of the study is to use the CPTED methodology – Dutch solutions in the field of crime prevention such as architectural, urban and green design. The main criteria used in the method is visibility, accessibility, attractiveness and territoriality. Observations and analysis on the use of this method were conducted by the author on the high-rise (real estate) in Łódź-Widzew.

Key words

CPTED methodology, security, crime, Łódź-Widzew.

2.1. INTRODUCTION ON CPTED

When we are talking about crime and, especially, the feeling of crime, there are several aspects to consider, such as the offender, the victim, the kind of crime and the situational context (Brantingham/Brantingham 1981, p. 7). This chapter on improving the quality of life deals with the situational crime-prevention in the neighbourhood of Widzew and will reflect on those aspects in the public space that could be liable for crime or, at least, the fear of crime, especially in cases of elderly people. It will also attempt to give solutions to make the aspects that can increase the quality of life both more resistant and more accessible.

Together with Jane Jacobs, the author of the book *Life and Death in Great American cities* we discussed some aspects thereof during a field walkabout, observing with both Polish “sociological eyes” and from a Dutch CPTED and urban planning perspective, we explored the Widzew high-rise in the surroundings of Widzew (dworzec kolejowy – railway station). Earlier research presented in the booklet *Crime prevention in High-rise Housing. The Crime Prevention Carrousel* (ed. Tim Lukas, Max Planck Institut, 2007) gave insight into the situational differences between Polish, Hungarian, German, British and Dutch approaches on crime prevention. The example: in The Netherlands high-rise almost always equals social housing, owned by housing corporations. Improving high-rise by demolishing entire apartment blocks like in Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam (NL)¹ is impossible in countries like Poland and Hungary – simply because the majority of high-rise is privately owned, and the owners of condominium units are hard to convince to change the structure of a block. Home ownership in Poland often means that people will longer remain living in their (first) dwellings, since there is no need for migration when feeling comfortable at home. An attractive and safe environment allows to grow old in one’s block: the public space, the area where a lot of interactions between people take place or should take place is easier to transform, because it has fewer owners.

A change in approaching public space to make the elderly feel comfortable, therefore increasing the quality of life seen from the CPTED-scope, a scope borrowed from the D of Design (urban design, landscape architecture/designing public space), were interpreted and brought to Poland by Moffat on the basis of his circle and inner circles (1983) (Fig. 1).

2.2. THEORETICAL BASIS: THE CRITERIA

Before delving into the casus, there is a need for the introduction of a brief theoretical basis for the CPTED-criteria, following the so called VATA-criteria in the Dutch approach. In the Dutch approach during the design process maintenance, the security and the friendly use of public space go hand in hand.

¹ COST, Bijlmermeer, Paul van Soomeren, Justin de Kleurver, et al (2014).

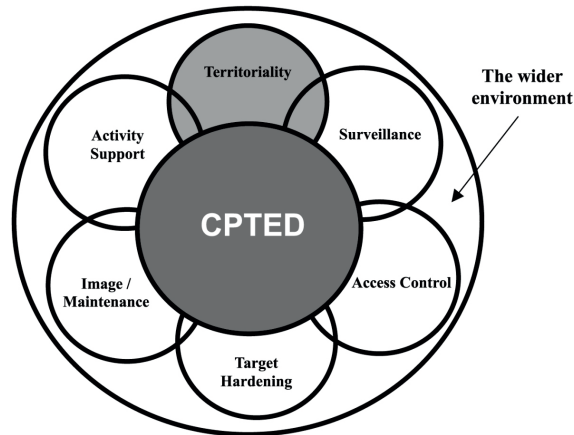


Fig. 1. CPTED according to Moffat (1983)

Source: Adapted from R. Moffat (1983, p. 23)

Four criteria are distinguished:

Visibility

One of the most important criteria. It includes several aspects, such as natural surveillance, that is seeing and being seen from houses and slow-driving cars. Since the feeling of insecurity is often associated with the evening or night, lighting and the particular quality of light constitute an important aspect. The visibility (f.i.) from neighbourhoods into parks and green areas is important as well. Special attention is paid to faking security. Often inhabitants of neighbourhoods propose to light pathways through parks to make them safer at night, but often it is better not to light them at all: there will be no one to help you when you are in the park in a dangerous situation. Better not to go there if not necessary. Light gives a false sense of security.

The last aspect, also mentioned in one of the circles of Moffat, is image and identity. How do I find my way in the neighbourhood? Are addresses easy to be found? When the elderly want to visit each other, it can prove very uncomfortable if wayfinding appears impossible. Even a question of *How do I find my block when all blocks look similar* (important not only when you are in a beginning phase of Alzheimer; the image of the area becoming part of the mental map is the real issue) is crucial.

Accessibility

Access control constitutes another issue discussed by Moffat, although only in one aspect of this important criterion. It is also connected with the problem of accessibility in all uses of the public realm. Can everybody enter the flat, is it accessible to all users, especially the (elderly) people with a physical or a visual

handicap? And is there a way to escape when you feel in danger? Sometimes victim escape-routes and offender access points are worth researching and discussing in advance, when planning a neighbourhood.

Territoriality

Who is responsible for which area? Does anybody feel responsible for this area at all? Where am I welcome and where not? These three questions are crucial for the sense of security in the neighbourhood. This criterion is very similar to accessibility. But it is also important to prevent corners, recessed doorways while structuring the blueprint and layout of dwelling blocks and their neighbourhoods and, simultaneously, create many corners, balconies, loggias and bay windows on the first and second floor – all aspects of natural surveillance as well. That gives the impression of being seen and heard when something happens while being on the street.

Attractiveness

This aspect emphasizes the attention for a user-friendly design and maintenance on various levels. This is where the broken window theory comes in. To prevent vandalism or erosion, objects or items should be immediately repaired after the incident of interference in public domain (whether they are demolished by vandals or disturbed by official non-governmental organizations).

For the elderly, the best way to get a grip on the situation is to have a walk around the area of Widzew. In the survey that took place in May 2015 we mapped the area, had small street interviews and tried to look at public space in particular. The street survey was done in the area of Widzew directly situated at the Widzew railway station. The situation will be explained in two stages. First one comprises a street survey conducted on foot, by walking through the original layout, with the footpath as it was designed in the seventies. The second involves the more recent layout (the central shopping centre).

2.3. THE SURVEY

On the street itself, we firstly looked at the original blueprint from the neighbourhood and analyzed the spatial conditions. A rigid layout of high-rise flats with apartments soars up to the twelfth floor with a lot of green spaces in between, both parks and smaller green belts in between the flats, used as a common meeting place and playground. Traffic is limited in the heart of Jasnogórska street and is situated at the fringes of the neighbourhoods. Parking lots are connected to this infrastructure as a loop.

2.3.1. From the train station through the layout of the high-rise

Following and addressing VATA we can observe: Arriving by bus or train, we have to move to the high-rise, the place where most people live. It is far away and the blocks are oriented so that the apartments get the sun from the south and the kitchens are on the cooler northern side. Much can be said about this choice, but a person can wonder why there are no windows at the side of the station and the routes to the apartment blocks. Indeed, there are none. It would be good to have “social eyes” closer by the station than it appears in the status quo (Visibility) – Picture 1.



Picture 1. No “social eyes” in the neighbourhood of dwellings: other choices for orientation have been made

Photo: T. Woldendorp

Upon leaving the train station, we follow the crossing (zebra) up to the neighbourhood. At the moment, after crossing Rokicińska street, there is no direct passageway. Why is there no connection with a good path to the blocks? (Accessibility) – Picture 2. Turning around, we encountered people who just “popped out” of the bus heading to the railway station and found out that the material used for the unofficial crossing for pedestrians was very unsuitable. After the bus stop, the pavement ends, so you have to stroll over the material. There is simply no other route, but a concrete zone, designed only for cars. The route is uncomfortable, not only for high-heeled women, but also for those wearing regular shoes: catching a train in these conditions is almost impossible. The route is especially hard for the handicapped or elderly (Accessibility) – Picture 3.



Picture 2. No logical connection to the footpaths in the neighbourhood

Photo: T. Woldendorp



Picture 3. Material unsuitable for elderly people and women in general

Photo: T. Woldendorp

Once in the neighbourhood of the first blocks, there is almost no sign of visitors or other users of public space. There are shrubs all over, and even the potential “social eyes” can be frustrated by an overdose of green (Visibility).

Finally, a good part of Widzew emerges: with clear visibility and a direct view of the central pathway users. “Social eyes” observing from several floors increase the feeling of being watched (Visibility), the long line of sight is not blocked by green barriers and a well-lit direct street is sparsely used by slow-driving cars (Visibility). The greenery is attractive and well-maintained (Attractiveness) (“People take care for the area, feel responsible!”) – Picture 4.



Picture 4. The sole Syringa in the neighbourhood
– the landmark facilitating wayfinding on the scale of a block (Visibility)

Photo: T. Woldendorp

However, it all changes when the school suddenly appears halfway through the neighbourhood. It was created somewhere in the middle of a direct roadway in the early years of the 21st century, while the routes take a turn and vanish out of sight of dwellings. This results in a well-lit lane in the middle of nowhere. Why should you encourage people to go into the park, where no-one can see you (the absence of “social eyes”) and there is nobody to help when in danger (Visibility)? – Picture 5 and 6.



Picture 5. A well-lit lane in the middle of nowhere. Why should people be encouraged to go into the park, where no-one can see them (absence of “social eyes”) and there is little chance for help when in danger? The route should not be lit, instead a better connection between the two isolated neighbourhoods should be found

Photo: T. Woldendorp



Picture 6. The same strategy applied elsewhere in Widzew.
 Perfectly-lit path in the park, while people should meet in the line of dwellings
 with ground floor and first story apartments

Photo: T. Woldendorp

The route should not be lit. Instead, a better connection between two isolated neighbourhoods should be found – Picture 7. Its positive aspects comprise its maintenance and daytime attractiveness of the place for pedestrians (Attractiveness) – Picture 8. Unfortunately, at night-time, the elderly are unable to cross this route due to the prevailing darkness (Visibility).



Picture 7. Good visibility, suitable material in the heart of the neighbourhood

Photo: T. Woldendorp



Picture 8. Lined-up blueprint without recessed doorways (Territoriality: not accommodating for throwing away litter!) and balconies for extra “social eyes and ears” (visibility)

Photo: T. Woldendorp

The same strategy seems to have been applied elsewhere in Widzew. A perfectly-lit path has been created in the park, ideal for people to share, so they have company in the sight of dwellings with apartments at the ground floor and first stories (Visibility).

Strolling through the neighbourhood around Ulica Jasnogórska, we have discovered a beautiful case of placemaking: originally the land on the fringe of the area was owned by the housing corporation, but renters colonized the public area illegally and became responsible for it, kept it well-maintained. Unfortunately, it is against the law. The increase in the quality of life would require for the block owners to change their attitude.

We have discovered a playground and a place to sit for the elderly in between some blocks. Unfortunately, no one really feels responsible for it, since not all the addresses are linked to the greenery. Since the entrances to blocks are not located by the greeneries, people do not feel responsible for their maintenance.

Meanwhile, groups of tramps, users of alcohol, youngsters spending their free time in areas meant for children are colonizing the site. Due to the high number of robust shrubs, not enough sight on the playground and no feelings of responsibility (therefore lacking the big four principles of CPTED), the elderly people do not dare to use it as a communal meeting place.

Youngsters spend their time on the fringes of the neighbourhood. They remain out of sight with no informal control. It is unfortunate, because people tend to want to stay in the heart of the events, want to be seen. Visiting this place seems

to show that you have to be ashamed to be young: promoting *Welcome in my backyard* (WIMBY) is also the slogan for meeting places. It is possible that if the young were to hang out in places where they can be seen, they would not colonize the meeting places for the elderly and the (other) neighbours.

2.3.2. Spatial conditions after the renewal in the early years of the new millennium

After the communist era Poland woke up and, on a large scale supported by EU-financing infrastructure, was renewed. All from the scope of getting a better quality of life in the high-rise. But there is a difference between wellness and well-being: New infrastructure, an increasing amount of cars, parking garages, shops, shopping centres and even shopping malls were created at the fringes of the neighbourhoods of the part of Widzew where we did the so-called “walkabout”. My introduction of the term *walkabout*, is connected with the song *Big Science* that was written in the late 1970s by the American composer, singer/songwriter Laurie Anderson about the loss of wayfinding in new towns: “Hey pal, how do I get to town from here? Well just take a right from where they are going to build that new shopping mall, go straight to where they are going to put in the highway... and keep going until you hit the place where they are thinking of building that drive in bank” The EU-money was depleted too fast.

2.3.3. Examples from the nearby neighbourhood (shopping centre)

After the larger shopping malls were introduced in the late nineties, the places where shopping and meetings had taken place became isolated areas. Their new functions (e.g. as public toilets) were not successful and after some time destruction by vandalism took place. No one feels responsible. The solution might be to let the hipsters swarm into Widzew: they know what gentrification constitutes. More and more people are using bicycles. That lifestyle is good for both the environment and as an anti-obesity tool (health) – the last aspect is especially important for the elder inhabitants. We found a florist shop on the bicycle path, which constitutes a negative aspect of placemaking, as both cyclists and pedestrians are deprived of their space to move. But, in this case, territoriality becomes the enemy of public space and its use. There is a lot of space, yet, in the end, everybody queues in the public realm.

2.4. LESSONS THAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM WIDZEW FOR THE WHOLE OF POLAND

Some lessons can be learned from the CPTED-approach in order to improve the quality of life, following the VATA-principles:

Visibility

1. Lighting pathways through parks should not be done as it may lead to the creation of a false sense of safety in people. Instead, pedestrians should be lead in the line of sight of “social eyes” from one neighbourhood to another.
2. Generally, the shrubs and bushes should be kept away from the path while tree-growth should be stimulated on lawns.
3. The positions of trees and lampposts in urban plans should always be checked before planting trees.
4. Night-routes should be created, where slow-driving traffic is linked to bicycle paths.
5. Windows, balconies and loggias should be created on the upper side in new apartment blocks.

Accessibility

1. Bicycles should be given more space, since they are the best future prospect for all groups of people: in order for the elderly people to move, they need a safe and secure continuous bicycle path network.
2. Path materials should be chosen carefully and thoughtfully – public realm should be accessible for all users at any time.

Territoriality

1. There should be no recessed doorways in the blueprint.
2. It should be made clear (through hedges or fences) where people are and are not welcome.

Attractiveness

1. A fence is a fence; a fence guides with hedges and creates an attractive environment.
2. Landscape together: by making a public space, placemaking and involvement starts: design together with the neighbourhood!

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Zarys treści

W artykule podjęto temat poczucia bezpieczeństwa jako bardzo istotnego elementu mającego wpływ na jakość życia mieszkańców i jego poprawę. Zwrócono uwagę na przestępczość i poczucie bezpieczeństwa w przestrzeni publicznej, którą m.in. użytkują ludzie starzy. Celem opracowania jest wykorzystanie metody CPTED – holenderskich rozwiązań w dziedzinie zapobiegania przestępczości – jako rozwiązań architektonicznych, urbanistycznych i projektowania zieleni. Główne kryteria wykorzystywane w metodzie CPTED to widoczność, dostępność, terytorialność i atrakcyjność. Obserwacje i analizy dotyczące wykorzystania tej metody były prowadzone przez autora w Łodzi na osiedlu Widzew.

Słowa kluczowe

Metoda CPTED, poczucie bezpieczeństwa, przestępczość, Łódź-Widzew.