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Designing Defensible Spaces in Large Cities. Outlooks for Polish Urban Areas

Introduction

In the book *Kryminologia (Criminology)* edited by J. Błachut, A. Gaberle and K. Krajewski, the authors presented a key conclusion regarding spatial distribution of crimes. As a result of conducted research, they reached the conclusion that "taking into consideration the place where crime is committed, it must be concluded that there is more crime in the cities than in the countryside".[1] It was calculated that up to 80% of criminal events takes place in urban areas and that crime ratio is 2.5-times higher in cities than in villages.[2] This is confirmed by A. Bałandynowicz, who claims that "crime is to a great extent a problem of large cities […]. Despite noticeable differences in crime level between similarly-sized cities, as a rule bigger cities have higher crime levels".[3] A. Kossowska notices that "the biggest cities […] have their particular traits, which include high frequency of crimes such as: thefts of private property, break-ins, crimes against the authorities, state institutions and public order, as well as extortion by force and assault and robbery".[4]

Research on crime in urban environment resulted in the emergence of many methods and instruments targeted at preventing this negative social phenomenon. This work aims to present one of the methods of

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[1] J. Błachut, A. Gaberle, K. Krajewski, *Kryminologia (Criminology)*, Gdańsk 2004, p. 215.

[2] Ibidem.

[3] A. Bałandynowicz, *Zapobieganie przestępczości: studium prawno-porównawcze z zakresu polityki kryminalnej (Crime Prevention: a Legal-Comparative Study in the Area of Criminal Policy)*, Warsaw 1998, p. 26.

[4] A. Kossowska, *Przestępczość na terenie wielkiego miasta (Crime in a Large City)*, in: *Zagadnienia nieprzystosowania społecznego i przestępczości w Polsce (Issues of Social Maladjustment and Crime in Poland)*, red. J. Jasiński, Wrocław 1976, p. 167.

designing secure space, formulated for the first time by Oscar Newman[5] in his book *Defensible Space* published in 1972. This theory is grounded in the concepts of human territoriality and co-operation in security activities. Despite the lack of further research on this theory in recent years, a lot of its postulates remains valid and the main rules of designing defensible space can still serve as indications for people responsible for implementation of secure space programmes in large cities. Defensible Space is also the first comprehensive strategy of providing security to local communities in their place of residence. It is a result of Newman's empirical studies of the state of security in New York residential complexes, in which he analysed spatial distribution of security, comparing data regarding committed crimes and types of buildings and land development. The solutions proposed by O. Newman have mostly been implemented in American cities, but due to their universal nature can be successfully used in any other metropolitan areas. Their particular feature is the lack of necessity of constant engagement by the local authorities, either conceptual or financial.

Sociological Concept of Human Territoriality

To be able to fully understand the concept of Defensible Space, it is necessary to define and highlight importance of the underlying concept of human territoriality. The study of human attachment to space has its roots in the concept of animal territorialism, which says that all species have a tendency to claim for them space that guarantees their survival. Consequently, animals take care of their claimed area and protect it from other, potentially dangerous, animals. The territorialism of animals isn't limited to defending their space, it also includes herding behaviours towards other conspecifics, including partners and issue. Furthermore, the environment, towards which animals express territorialism, does not need to be their natural habitat. Dogs, for example, live in human dwellings and in time start to treat them as their own secure space, defending it from potential threats like other people – non-residents of the claimed space – trying to cross the border of it (doors to a house, gate to a garden or even street adjacent to a house).

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[5] Oscar Newman (b. 30 September 1935 – d. 14 April 2004) – an American architect of Canadian descent, urbanist, known for creating the concept of Defensible Space, author of numerous publications in the field of urban space and crime prevention in cities. In 1959 graduated from the University of Montreal in the area of architecture and urban planning, founded The Institute for Community Design Analysis, a non-profit organization for research on urban space.

There is enough premise to conclude that human is also a territorial being. In describing the bond between human and space, the notion of "territorialism" has been replaced by a similar one – "territoriality." It must be noted that human territoriality is much different from animal territorialism, as it encompasses a significantly larger area, which often is not completely and easily defined. People can for example extend their attachment and sense of "ownership" to the territory of their whole country, even though it is impossible to personally explore every place in a country. Moreover, the limits of human territorial attachment are fluid and flexible, e.g. as a consequence of migrations. Even after emigrating to another country, people feel constantly strong responsibility and attachment to their original country's space, despite living outside of its borders. For the purpose of this work however, the most important aspect is human territoriality in microscale, concerning the closest living space – the building in which a person lives (regardless of the number of dwellings in this building), the closest surroundings and public spaces on the border of the claimed space. As Edward Hall said, "Man, too, has territoriality and he has invented many ways of defending what he considers his own land, turf, or spread. The removal of boundary markers and trespass upon the property of another man are punishable acts in much of the Western world. A man's home has been his castle in English common law for centuries, and it is protected by prohibitions on unlawful search and seizure even by officials of his government. The distinction is carefully made between private property, which is the territory of an individual, and public property, which is the territory of the group".[6]

As a summary of the notion of human territoriality it will be apt to quote the broadest definition of this phenomenon, contained in the book *Psychologia środowiskowa* (*Environmental Psychology*). The authors state that "human territoriality is a set of human behaviours and cognitive processes based on the right to rule over a given physical space".[7] In the context of methods of designing secure space, this rule over space should be understood as undertaking activities aimed at eliminating threats, taking responsibility for providing security in the area and making conscious changes in the space.

Urban space can be divided into three categories, indicating the level of its appropriation by users. According to this classification, a terri-

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[6] E. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension*, New York 1990, p. 10.

[7] Cf. P. Bell, T. Greene, J. Fisher, *Psychologia środowiskowa* [*Environmental Psychology*], Gdańsk 2004, p. 346.

tory can be primary, secondary or public.[8] A primary territory is one, which remains under a complete rule of one user or a small, strictly defined group of users, strongly connected with each other. An example of such space would be a house or an apartment, but also an allotment. This is a space belonging to a particular person or group and protected by them. Trespassing on this space is considered a safety threat and is usually also against the law. A secondary territory on the other hand, is one with a limited rule over space, exercised by many loosely connected users. These users however still feel at least partially attached to and responsible for the area. The best example here would be common spaces in multi-storey residential buildings, such as corridors, elevators, entrances and directly adjacent green areas. The last type of territory – a public one – is such a space over which the users have no rule. Providing a sufficient level of security and public order is a responsibility of relevant public institutions, e.g. state authorities or local administration and their subordinate units. This type of space is typical for streets, parks, city squares, beaches, boulevards, public transportation and other all-access areas.

To guarantee a sufficient level of responsibility for a given area and activate human territoriality, it is necessary to designate and delimit the different types of space. Signs that inform about the type of space and, as a consequence, about the allowed ways of using it, are called 'space markers'. The most obvious markers include information signs like 'Entry forbidden' or 'Private property', etc., but those are not the only markers possible. A fence, a wall or a hedge is also a space marker, as is a ditch or an embankment. Different types of lighting or the level of orderliness and tidiness in an area, which indicates the level and type of control over the area, also serve as markers. On the other hand there are also negative markers, which indicate that there is insufficient control by the owner of the area, or no clear owner at all – graffiti, broken infrastructure, neglected buildings, etc. Appropriate use of markers significantly influences how people use a space, potentially limiting actions against safety and public order. Markers assert control over an area, even if the owner is abstract and anonymous, and effectively discourage potential troublemakers from committing criminal acts, at the same time improving the sense of security of other users.[9]

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[8] Cf. R. Głowacki, K. Łojek, E. Ostrowska, A. Tyburska, A. Urban, *CPTED jako strategia zapewniania bezpieczeństwa społeczności lokalnej* [*CPTED as a Strategy of Providing Security to Local Community*], Szczytno 2010, p. 29.

[9] R. Głowacki, K. Łojek et al., op.cit., p. 29 et seq.

The Main Components of the Defensible Space Concept

The concept of Defensible Space was described for the first time in 1972, in a book of the same title written by Oscar Newman, an American architect and urban planner of Canadian descent. It served as an answer to an earlier publication by Shlomo Angel, entitled *Discouraging Crime through City Planning*, which was the first scientific approach to connecting features of physical space with crime levels.[10] Newman in his work analysed connection between the levels and spatial distribution of crime in New York City, comparing it with data acquired from the New York City Housing and Development Administration regarding forms of housing development in various districts of the city. Basing on his observations he reached the conclusion that there is a strong correlation between the type of physical space and criminal activity in the area.

The main goal of the Defensible Space method is to "restructure the physical layout of communities to allow residents to control the areas around their homes".[11] This restructuring should concern not only apartments itself, but also streets, alleyways, spaces around buildings and common parts of houses (corridors, elevators, halls, etc.) Space should be designed in a way that allows people to practice commonly held values and lifestyle. This definition emphasises the importance of controlling common territory and skilful shaping of space by its users. Consequently, Defensible Space programmes should be independent from state administration and should rely mainly on engagement and ideas of users and residents of a given area. Thanks to such an approach, they are independent from political situation, attitude of local authorities or changes in public financing. Furthermore, they enable engagement of all space users, also those from lower social strata, assigning importance to each member of a local community.[12]

Oscar Newman used the word 'defensible' to underline the importance of local community members in providing security in an area. Space is secure and safe from threats not only thanks to its design, but also because of residents' and users' engagement. According to Newman there are five factors that constitute a defensible space: territoriality, natural surveillance, image, milieu and safe adjoining areas.[13]

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[10] Cf. S. Angel, *Discouraging Crime Through City Planning*, Berkeley 1968.
[11] O. Newman, *Creating Defensible Space*, New York 1996, p. 9.
[12] Ibidem.
[13] On the basis of O. Newman, *Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design*, New York 1972.

The first factor has its source directly in the sociological theory of territoriality, described in the first part of this article. In the context of Defensible Space the most important is for the residents to have a sense of integrity and inviolability of their homes. The houses should, metaphorically, resemble fortresses – refuges closed to outsiders, accessible and used only by residents. This approach to creating a defensible space requires therefore clear separation of private and public parts, which puts emphasis on the use of markers informing about the borders between each kind of territory and their users.

Another factor constituting a defensible space is natural surveillance. A well-designed space should allow its residents to control as much of its area as possible, with an extreme form of this control being surveillance. It is assumed that constant surveillance by space users effectively deters people from committing a crime, because their act would be easily observed and their identity established. This surveillance does not need to be formal, i.e. conducted by designated professionals (security guards, caretakers, etc.). Instead, it should rely on constant presence and vigilance of users, such as local business owners, or simply residents. It must be stressed however, that surveillance itself will not be enough without a prompt reaction to security threats. Observation of a criminal act must be followed by an appropriate reaction of the observer or by notifying relevant agencies.

The next factor – image – means that the users' feeling of security is influenced by the state and look of the space.[14] A neat, orderly, well-kempt space suggests that it has an active owner and is therefore cared for and controlled. Well-maintained social infrastructure, street furniture and green areas, combined with clear marking of the space, make it less probable for acts against local order to happen. Neglected and poorly maintained areas on the other hand suggest that committing illegal acts in that space will not have any serious consequences. Broken windows, omnipresent graffiti or littered streets prove that the area has insufficient level of social control and, in the context of criminal actions, provides anonymity and impunity. Furthermore, neglected places drive away normal users, influencing social composition of the area and exacerbating the level of pathological behaviour and social deviations. Image can also be understood metaphorically as a certain lifestyle and set of common values

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[14] The issue of the influence of space's image on the level of crime was developed into the 'broken windows' theory, first presented by George Kelling and Catherine Coles. Cf. G. Kellig, C. Coles, *Wybite szyby: jak zwalczyć przestępczość i przywrócić ład w najbliższym otoczeniu* [*Fixing Broken Windows: Restoring Order and Reducing Crime in Our Communities*], Poznań 2000.

of the residents. In this case a threat will be posed by a person, who is unable or unwilling to adapt to the local community rules and acts in a way that violates those common values.

The fourth dimension of a defensible space is its milieu. This should be understood as all outside factors that influence a space in regards to its security. An important factor in the security of residential complexes is the presence of public and semi-public spaces (shops, restaurants, public utility facilities, transportation) in the neighbourhood. Typical users of such spaces may (willingly or unwillingly) disregard borders and intrude the private residential space, violating its residents' privacy and potentially posing a threat. Thus it is very important to clearly delineate borders between private and public spaces. The residents should also have the ability to observe the neighbouring public spaces and the borders. Another important factor of milieu is the distance to police stations, fire stations and various other public security institutions. It should be short enough to allow for a swift intervention in case of a threat.

The final factor of a defensible space is the safety of adjoining areas, which is connected with the abovementioned milieu and natural surveillance. Safety of adjoining areas means that it is possible to control not only a person's private territory, but also passageways leading to it. In this way it is possible to identify a potential intruder even before a violation of private space takes place. Newman's proposal in this regard is to design passageways in such a way that they will be visible from inside apartments. It is also important not to create narrow alleyways between buildings or backyard entrances; the possibility of creating informal passageways should also be limited.

The Defensible Space theory has been met with some criticism. One of the critical voices was Paul van Sommeren, who wrote that: „Newman built their theories on quicksand consisting of the magic concept of natural surveillance or informal control. Their theoretical construction stresses the importance of creating better physical possibilities for informal control. But creating those possibilities does not actually result in effective control being exercised because:

- Residents have to make use of the given possibilities (which they often do not, or do not want to do).
- Offenders have to perceive control and they must not be able to 'escape' it (for example by hiding).

In short […] Newman forget that it takes two to tango. Not only community life, surveillance or control, but also offenders who are shifting from criminal to non-criminal behaviour. The theories of Jacobs and

Newman deal with the community angle and will be most useful if one wants to reduce feelings of insecurity. If one wants to prevent real crime, however, the most important piece of the puzzle is still missing: the offender".[15]

Summarizing the factors constituting defensible space, it is reasonable to say that the security of residential areas depends mainly on the level of control that the residents can exercise over their space and on the extent to which they can influence changes happening in the area. According to Newman, this is mainly connected with the number of households in a building or residential complex.[16] He postulates to look at residential density levels by introducing the term 'dwelling unit' and distinguishing between three main types of residential buildings: single-family houses, walk-ups and highrises.

The single-family houses can be divided into three types: detached, semi-detached and row houses. Detached houses share no walls with other buildings and contain a single dwelling unit, semi-detached houses are formed by two dwelling units with one common wall, while row houses have a few dwelling units sharing walls from two sides (apart from the outermost ones). A common feature of all single-family houses is the fact that both inside and outside they have only private space. Neither the entrances or corridors, nor the green areas are shared with residents of other dwelling units. The walk-ups are buildings that are no more than three storeys high, containing a few dwelling units. Their distinctive feature, in contrast to the previous type, is the presence of spaces shared among all the occupants. These spaces are entrances, stairways, corridors and often common green areas adjacent to the building.

The highrises are multi-storey buildings with elevators, housing tens or even hundreds of dwelling units. Common spaces in such buildings are shared between a large number of people and do not belong to any individual person or family, making them in effect semi-public. Spaces adjacent to the building, like gardens, sidewalks or yards, are usually very loosely marked and considered all-access, consequently becoming public spaces.

According to Newman, the higher the number of people share between them a space, the lower their sense of ownership and responsibility for that space and, as a result, the lower the level of control exercised over it. This means that buildings with larger number of dwelling units are easier to be accessed by outsiders, who potentially pose a threat to residents.

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[15] P. van Soomeren, *Safe and Secure Cities. The Physical Urban Environment and Reduction of Urban Insecurity*, Amsterdam 1996, p. 8.

[16] Cf. O. Newman, *Creating...*, op.cit., p. 14.

Furthermore, the limitation of control is also informal – more residents mean more conflicting interests and expectations, making it more difficult to effectively introduce mechanisms aimed at creating a defensible space. Oscar Newman writes that the level of crime in a residential area depends on (1) the height of a building (and, consequentially, the number of dwelling units sharing one entrance), (2) the number of apartments in a building and (3) the number of other residential buildings in the neighbourhood. All of these factors influence the level of crime in two ways: reinforcing social pathologies and limiting the ability and will of residents to control the space around them.

As can be seen, the Defensible Space theory focuses on residential spaces, completely omitting the security of public spaces. Due to the fact that security of an area in this concept is reliant on surveillance by residents, the solutions proposed by Newman cannot be easily used for areas with other functions – industrial, commercial, office, recreational, etc. Nevertheless, the Defensible Space theory should be taken into consideration when designing residential districts in large cities.

Building Defensible Space in Large Cities

In the context of the subject of this article, it seems particularly important to try to translate the theory formulated by Oscar Newman into specific solutions, possible to implement in large urban areas. Newman in his work set down five main guidelines of designing defensible space.[17]

Table 1. The main guidelines of designing defensible space

1.	Assigning specific parts of the space to specific groups of residents, who are able to use and control it in the best way.
2.	Territorial defining of space in residential complexes, so that it reflects zones of influence of specific residents.
3.	Designing the buildings in such a way that the residents are able to observe semi-public and public spaces, both outside and inside the buildings (entrances, corridors, stairways, etc.).
4.	Including in the residents' zone of influence not only the interiors of their buildings, but also adjacent streets.
5.	Designing buildings in a way that does not suggests vulnerability of their residents.

Source: own compilation based on: O. Newman, *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space*, Washington 1976.

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[17] O. Newman, *Design Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space*, Washington 1976, p. 101 et seq.

Assigning specific parts of the space to specific groups of residents is aimed at creating in the community a sense of responsibility for their closest surroundings. Residents actively working on maintaining a desired level of security guarantee order in the area and limit the possibility of a crime taking place. According to Newman's concept, handing control over residential areas to their residents results in better surveillance of these areas. It is however doubtful that this postulate could be effectively fulfilled in a typical Polish large city. The dominant form of residential building in Poland are large complexes of high-rising blocks of flats. Their typical feature is lack of assigned area around the building, which means that entrances are directly at the border with public space. Another type of residential complex that has quickly risen in popularity in the recent years is a gated community with borders between private and public space clearly marked using fences and guarded gates. Such enclosures are definitely positive from the Defensible Space point of view, as the space owned by residents is explicitly marked, but this solution is controversial as it solidifies, or even increases, social divisions.[18]

Equally difficult in large cities seems to be marking space in a way that reflects zones of influence of specific residents. In large residential complexes most of passageways are open and accessible also to non-residents of the area. Pathways between buildings are often used as preferable walking paths for thousands of passers-by. Residents are therefore unable to survey the whole territory and have very limited influence on the security of zones adjacent to their houses. This of course makes it also impossible to take control by residents over adjacent streets and other public spaces. The final guideline, concerning potential vulnerabilities of the residents, may sound a bit cryptic. What Newman has in mind are not personal traits of the occupants, but design features that may suggest to a potential criminal that a particular building and people living in it would be a good target. The most obvious example is an exclusively looking detached house with a neatly groomed large garden and an open view of the contents of garage, which allows to assume with a large dose of certainty that its inhabitants are affluent people and good targets for a break-in. On the other hand, cheaply built and poorly maintained highrises are a domain of people in worse financial condition. This postulate seems to be especially difficult to fulfil in Poland, due to the fact that houses are usually considered a major indicator of social and financial status.

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[18] Cf. D. Bartoszewicz, J.S. Majewski, *Zamknięte osiedla, czyli getta dla bogatych* [*Closed Communities or Ghettos for the Rich*] [online] website wyborcza.pl, http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,2785902.html (last visited 2.04.2017).

Translating Newman's theory into the urban spaces of large cities, one must remember that his main postulate is creation of spatially limited and inaccessible residential structures over which residents extend their surveillance (as noted by B. Czarnecki and W. Siemiński – the residents become an inner police).[19] This will only be successful if space is designed in a way that allows for unlimited surveillance by the residents. As a consequence, all kinds of courtyards, balconies and extensions should be used to allow for constant observation and to divide private and public zones. This kind of residential buildings was popular in Poland before the II World War, but during the years of social realism it was superseded by cuboid houses with flat fronts, bereft of courtyards or extensions. In the report *Rozwój miast w Polsce* (*Development of Cities in Poland*), published in 2010 by the Ministry of Regional Development, the authors clearly state that "the imposition of modernist urbanist doctrine in its socialist form, focused on ideological goals, impoverished the landscape of polish cities. Its features became architectural monotony, uniform residential complexes and overfunctional space development".[20]

The Defensible Space concept was however successfully introduced in the United Kingdom. Its effectiveness in eliminating threats was summarized by B. Hillier, who wrote that in the United Kingdom historical attachment to Newman's theories was cast into doubt by new research and by postulates of sustainable development.[21] He states that designing residential complexes according to Newman's guidelines causes them to become fortresses, which are hard to penetrate by potential criminals, but at the same time severely limit social opportunities of residents. Newman glorifies solutions that result in a clear division of people using a certain space into residents and outsiders, treated as intruders. Additionally, Defensible Space solutions encourage the use of cars even for small, everyday tasks like shopping. This is against the current trend of new urban ecology, which aims to regain the city for pedestrians, promotes public transportation, bicycle or scooter rentals and transformation of streets into pedestrian or mixed-use zones. According to Hillier, to stimulate city life and decrease the number of car travels, cities need to be easier to get around on foot.

Effectively fencing a residential building off from the surrounding public space makes it also impossible for passers-by to react to anything

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[19] B. Czarnecki, W. Siemiński, *Kształtowanie bezpiecznej przestrzeni publicznej* [*Designing Secure Public Space*], Warsaw 2004, p. 35.

[20] *Rozwój miast w Polsce. Raport wprowadzający Ministerstwa Rozwoju Regionalnego* [*Development of Cities in Poland, An Introductory Report by the Ministry of Regional Development*], Warsaw 2010, p. 12.

[21] B. Hillier, *Can Streets Be Made Safe*, „Urban Design International", no. 9/2014.

disturbing happening inside. This greatly limits the development of in-
formal social control. In addition, this kind of ghettoization may lead
to the spread of social pathologies among residents, as, according to the
theory of differential association, individuals learn deviant behaviours
from associating with other individuals, who exhibit such behaviours:
"individuals develop the kind of beliefs, attitudes and values that cause
them to be more or less prone to use criminal norms. The act of com-
mitting a crime depends very much on the nature of influence and the
amount of time that people spend with others, who support and create
deviant behaviours".[22]

Finally, building closed complexes based on Newman's theory may weak-
en the will to actively participate in the life of a wider community. If there
is a clear division between residents of a building or set of buildings and the
rest of neighbourhood, one should not expect those residents to be active in
matters of the whole neighbourhood, district or even city as a whole. Stress-
ing autonomy does not aid in building correct social bonds with other citi-
zens and, consequently, in building an acceptable level of social capital in the
community. This kind of spatial design strengthens divisions instead of al-
leviating them, because it supports segregation of space based on differences
in wealth. As the authors of the report *Rozwój miast w Polsce* (*Development of
Cities in Poland*) wrote: "the process of growing differences [in Polish cities
– JK] became much deeper in the nineties. The growth of social segregation
became stronger and the process of downfall and marginalization of districts
with old development became deeper. Affluent people start to concentrate in
isolated enclaves of high-standard apartments or gated communities, while
the poor in areas of old, decapitalized buildings".[23]

Summary

To sum up, the Defensible Space theory, created and promoted in the
1970s, may seem archaic from the point of view of current tendencies
in urban design. Many of its assumptions are incompatible with the 21st
century trends in thinking about cities and citizens. Moreover, due to
the socio-political history, Polish urban design lacks attempts to create
defensible spaces, therefore it is impossible to evaluate its effectiveness in
preventing crime in Polish conditions. It is however probable that using
the Defensible Space methods in large cities does not eliminate threats;
on the contrary – it increases social divisions, representing a potential
source of additional tensions.

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[22] N. Goodman, *Wstęp do socjologii* [*Introduction to Sociology*], Poznań 1997, p. 113.
[23] *Rozwój miast w Polsce...* [*Development of Cities in Poland…*], op.cit., p. 75.

Nevertheless, despite arguments indicating incompatibility of the Defensible Space theory with Polish situation, it should not be entirely rejected. Selected elements of this concept can be used as important instruments of crime prevention in urban areas. According to Newman, an important factor in building resistance to crime is the activity of local community. The residents should feel obliged to care for and control space around them, not only private but also public. From the point of view of local authorities it is vital to consider the local community an outright subject of security policy, together with the police, municipal agencies, etc. Citizens can participate in security activities in various ways – from advanced, institutionalized forms of cooperation like neighbourhood watch or regular patrols, to simple forms like informal control and vigilance. Underlining the importance of local community in prevention bolsters the sense of responsibility for law and order in a neighbourhood, which can significantly increase the feeling of security and integrate the residents.

Equally important is the postulate concerning image. It is necessary to make the citizens aware of a connection between the state and look of a space, and the probability of criminal activity in that area. According to the Defensible Space theory residents should feel that they are the owners and caretakers of a space, which manifests itself not only in surveillance, but also in care and maintenance of common spaces, green areas, places of recreation, street furniture, infrastructure and space markers. The residents should aim to introduce and maintain a proper level of order not only in their private spaces, but also in the vicinity, especially in the adjacent public spaces.

Summarizing, despite significant limitations in the possibility of implementing the Defensible Space concept in Polish cities, selected elements of this theory can be used as important and potentially effective tools of crime prevention in urban environment, complementing the activities of public agencies in improving the level of security.

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Abstract

Disappointment with low effectiveness of resocialization and the crime rates in American cities led to formulation of alternative theories concerning crime prevention. One of these theories – the Defensible Space concept created by Oscar Newman, was based on the assumption that urban design can create suitable conditions for increase in crime or, on the contrary – prevent illegal acts from happening. The goal of this article is to analyse the concept of Defensible Space and the main factors conditioning its creation, as well as the possibility of implementing Newman's postulates in Polish urban environment.