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## THE SHAPING OF THE IDEA OF HOME IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN POLISH TOWNS

**Summary.** The paper presents the idea of home and place as a factor disturbing sustainable development in town space. The values that are connected with the fact of possessing own home in a healthy environment contributed to transferring settlements into suburban estates and decomposition of the urban town plan. These processes were discussed based on Katowice, where the main actors of changes in the environment of the residence became the development companies. After all, the development of residential buildings excluding the residents of lower income turned out to be a source of unsustainability in town development.

**Keywords:** sustainable development, home, housing estate, suburbanization.

## KSZTAŁTOWANIE SIĘ IDEI DOMU W KONTEKŚCIE ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU W POLSKICH MIASTACH

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł prezentuje ideę domu i miejsca jako czynnika zakłócającego zrównoważony rozwój w przestrzeni miast. Wartości, jakie łączą się z faktem posiadania własnego domu w zdrowym otoczeniu, przyczyniły się do przenoszenia osadnictwa na tereny podmiejskie i dekompozycji układu urbanistycznego miasta. Procesy te zostały omówione na przykładzie Katowic, gdzie głównymi aktorami przemian w środowisku zamieszkania stały się firmy deweloperskie. Rozwój budownictwa mieszkaniowego wyłączający mieszkańców o niższych dochodach okazał się w rezultacie źródłem niezrównoważenia w rozwoju miasta.

**Słowa kluczowe:** zrównoważony rozwój, dom, osiedle mieszkaniowe, suburbanizacja.

## 1. Introduction

The New Charter of Athens 2003 – a document indicating the main guidelines for sustainable development of towns – is a proposal by the European Council of Town Planners for a different, more responsible view on town space. According to the authors of the resolution, one of many disadvantages of contemporary towns is suburbanization and, connected with this process, intensification of contrasts among the large areas of poverty in old districts and wealth of new residential estates<sup>1</sup>. The guidelines presented in the Charter For The New Urbanism clearly demonstrate a need to develop metropolis inside the urban areas, not outside the existing town border. Therefore, the application of the assumptions of sustainable development contradicts the need of the rising middle class representatives to possess home in an ecologically friendly environment<sup>2</sup>.

In Polish conditions until the system transformation period, the possibility of living in an own house was substantially limited. The real estate development companies used the existing situation and despite an extensive debate in the urbanists and sociologists circles they started expansion to suburban areas of towns, at the same time contributing to their spreading outside the old investment borders. The fact for these considerations is important that a residential building placed on a fenced and separated area is a spatial archetype that is a subject of human demand. It is an important issue as nowadays a house or an apartment cannot be separated from the spheres of politics, business and total economy. What is more, these spheres remain in a dialectical relationship and the economic crisis in a country or another part of the world entails the problems for households<sup>3</sup>. In addition – what M. Castells and L. Burkhalter paid attention to – an excessive supply concerning real estate leads to disturbance in a harmonic development of urban space, create suburban areas with a dominant residential function<sup>4</sup>, that spread for kilometers outside the town centers, what causes the very city crisis.

It is assumed in the paper that the results of the common activities of development companies and town administration contribute to the reinforcement and redefinition of the needs connected with a residential space. The foundation of a similar assumption is a thesis by John Logan and Harvey Molotch included in their common work from the year 1987. As the authors state: *The market in the area of land and real estate sales organizes the urban*

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<sup>1</sup> Nowa Karta Ateńska 2003. Wizja miast XXI wieku, [http://www.zabytki-tonz.pl/pliki/karta%20atenska%202003\\_pl.pdf](http://www.zabytki-tonz.pl/pliki/karta%20atenska%202003_pl.pdf), [accessed: 26.05.2015].

<sup>2</sup> K. Kajdanek, *Suburbanizacja po polsku*, Nomos, Kraków 2012.

<sup>3</sup>D. Harvey, *Bunt miast. Prawo do miasta i miejska rewolucja*, Wyd. Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, Warszawa 2012.

<sup>4</sup> M. Castells, L. Burkhalter, *Spółczesność i miasto post-konsumpcyjne. Przestrzeń publiczna i mieszkalnictwo*, Respublica Nowa, electronic version, <http://publica.pl/teksty/spoleczenstwo-i-miasto-post-konsumpcyjne-przestrzen-publiczna-i-mieszkalnictwo>, [accessed: 10.05.2013].

*phenomena and determines what the life in a town looks like*<sup>5</sup>. This thesis will be developed in a further part of the paper. A connection of different theoretical-research conceptions, applied in this depiction, is consistent with the socio-spatial perspective suggested by Mark Gottdiener<sup>6</sup>. It suggests basing the *new urban sociology* on the analysis of social phenomena including the political, economic and cultural aspects at the same time. The social urban phenomena have a multi-dimensional character, not able to reduce to the selected economic or cultural issues only. A similar depiction of the topic requires looking at home in the context of suburban areas that develop in a quick pace. In the background one should take into account the fact that it is an effect of urban policy activity, supporting the formation of suburban areas. When searching for the theoretical references connected with this issue one may, or even should, relate to the macrostructural conceptions and to the ones created earlier – culturalistic. Moreover, the relationships of home-suburban area are strongly associated with a discussion of researchers about the place and space, thus in the paper the theories describing these issues will be raised.

## 2. Space and place in social theory

Yi-Fu Tuan – American geographer of Chinese descent – after publishing the work *Space and Place* once raised a discussion concerning what space for people is. He presented a vision of place as a “humanistic space” as a mainstay of security in opposition to the space that offers freedom somehow but does not provide a closer relationship with the people<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the place reaches a human scale, it is build according to the scheme of a human body and satisfies its needs. The conception of “place” which is a tame space belongs to the classical depictions of this problem in the humanistic geography.

In sociology one of the first works concerning this issue is the work by Florian Znaniecki *Sociological bases of human ecology* published in 1938. Space – according to this author – does not exist in a permanent and objective way as it is experienced in a different way by the entities and it is valued differently. Furthermore, the particular spatial values have the non-spatial values ascribed. *Space, as well as other formations of social groups, should be examined using a humanistic coefficient, that is from the perspective of attitudes and values that people experience, being a sum of various social systems. The groups of people, especially the groups establishing organized groups, in the sphere of their collective experience and activities, usually possess some spatial values that they treat as a common*

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<sup>5</sup> J. Logan, H. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes, The political Economy of Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1987, p. 17. following: A. Majer, *Socjologia i przestrzeń miejska*, PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> M. Gottdiener, R. Hutchison, *New Urban sociology*, Wyd. 4, Westview Press, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Y. Tuan, *Przestrzeń i miejsce*, PWN, Warszawa 1987.

“property”, not in a clearly economic sense but in a broader meaning, that they “rule” them together using them for the purpose of completing some group activities (...)”<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, spatial values connected with human activity assemble the space into a mosaic of places subordinated to social groups. This thread also appeared in case of a different Polish town researcher, a continuator of culturalistic mainstream - Aleksander Wallis. He introduced a notion of *cultural area* into urban sociology, defined as a *functionally determined space which is a subject of an intensive and long-term interaction between the set of material, esthetic and symbolic values focused on it and a particular group (community)*. Next the author explains that *thanks to that, on this area this group (community) may spontaneously satisfy its various needs concerning culture, reaching a feeling of social integration and possibilities of development*<sup>9</sup>. Places become them only in the set of relationships with the some social groups, they serve these groups enabling development and satisfaction of needs, limited to the cultural ones. However, this conception does not take the economic aspects and material benefits into account, the sources of which are places. Culture gains a dominant place here, nevertheless, it is difficult to analyze the contemporary urban processes from this perspective.

A significant contribution into a sociological understanding of space was made by a French representative of neo-Marxist structuralism, Henri Lefebvre. This philosopher noticed a confrontational character of space, resulting from the fact of different perception and utilization of its resources by the social units and groups as well as the institutions of political power. First of all, he noticed the role of the organs of government in shaping the space, what caused that it became a reflection of social relationships dominating in society. According to the author, the way of space perception is not a permanent construction as it depends on the social way of its utilization that changes along with the social development. Therefore, originally space was treated as a clear form, later it became a social formation, a result of social division of labor. These days space is a formation, a product serving for reproduction of social productive forces. Lefebvre, when talking about space, meant a configuration of three elements. These are: *spatial practices*, which are every day, repeatable activities in space involving production and reproduction, *representations of space*, that is the way of presenting space by planners, developers, architects in connection with the requirements of production relationships, *representational space* symbolically, the situations directly experienced, marked by emotions, along with its dynamics and variability such as church, cemetery, home. The space defined in such way possesses properties typical for the structure, a change in one module may affect its other components in a way difficult to predict and plan<sup>10</sup>. When relating the Lefebvre’s conception to the notion of home, one obtains a vision of social formation of the specifically coded symbols, serving for reproduction of productive forces which has the

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<sup>8</sup> F. Znaniński, Socjologiczne podstawy ekologii ludzkiej, [in:] Malikowski M., Solecki S. (ed.), Społeczeństwo i przestrzeń zurbanizowana. Teksty źródłowe, Wyd. Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, Rzeszów 1999, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> A. Wallis, Informacja i gwar, PIW, Warszawa 1979, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> H. Lefebvre, The Production of Space, Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991, p. 33.

feature of being an element of greater entirety, connected with a system of production, power and planning interrelationships. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate the idea of home in the market economy and to protect urban space from the pressure of real estate industry in the times where money is put first.

Place and space are not single-dimensional in the presented conceptions. Using the language of Znaniecki – they possess different spatial values and are valorized differently. Sometimes various understanding of these values may lead to spatial conflicts. Iwona Sagan presents it in the following way: *For some people place may be their place of residence or production, for others it may be a good on the market to buy, sell or rent for profits. The most extreme interests are represented by the residents for whom place has an existential significance and by producers striving for making it as profitable as possible (...)*<sup>11</sup>.

A development of this approach is a conception of *urban growth machine*, by Logan and Molotch mentioned before, which presents a relationship between the development companies and town council as for them increasing the area of space invested for residential and industrial construction provides a considerable amount. The construction of real estate and its turnover replaces the industrial production from the previous period. The increase in urban space occurs in a result of imperative, in order to increase income of town budget it is necessary to increase the number of people who pay taxes continuously, what is possible due to the creation of new residential and service investments. The authors notice that with such policy it is not profitable to invest in things that do not provide income, therefore, in the groups of poorer residents that need financial outlays<sup>12</sup>. Although the theory of Logan and Molotch is not new and does not fully explain all the contemporary urban processes it seems that in the conditions of a bit underdeveloped economy it highlights the existing state of Polish towns very well.

The growth machine, or rather speculative capital formed, according to D. Harvey, is a direct reason for economic crisis in 2008. The author of *Rebel cities* indicated the series of connection between the American economic crisis and the real estate market. According to the researcher, a great amount of fictional capital credited by banks and supported by the government was transferred to the construction industry in order to speed demand. However, the supply did not manage to follow the demand and thus the prices of apartments were increasing. A fiction is the fact that the capital may multiply on its own without obtaining the value increase in production, therefore a collapse in this matter occurred. The prices fall decreased the local finance that based on investment taxes and together with cutting the expenses by local and state government it lead to a rising urban fiscal crisis<sup>13</sup>. This conception, outlined in a simplified way, presents the main actors of this performance who

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<sup>11</sup> I. Sagan, *Miasto sfera konfliktów i współpracy*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, Gdańsk 2000, p. 61.

<sup>12</sup> J. Logan, H. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes, The political Economy of Place*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1987.

<sup>13</sup> D. Harvey, *Bunt...* op. cit, p. 83.

are: the state supporting of the idea of possessing home by the citizens, “class alliance” of bankers, developers, construction companies and dispersed ex-owners of houses who due to a loss of financial liquidity were disposed of their property. The consequences of this crisis also reached Polish investors although the Polish banks were not involved in granting mortgages for the customers without verifying their incomes.

### **3. The idea of home and the process of suburbanization in Katowice**

The phenomenon of suburbanization began on a wider scale after the political transformation in the year 1989. From this moment one may observe an escape of the residents of the blocks of flats in Katowice to suburban areas. The reforms from the years 1951 and 1971 led to the inclusion of southern settlements with low building density and rural character into the area of Katowice. They became the scene of expansion of Katowice residents. At that time also the numerous development companies started activity dealing with the construction of single-family house residential estates matching the needs of new residents. Apart from the state and the local government they became the most important actors influencing the development of residential space. The largest of them, functioning up to this day are: Dombud, Millenium Inwestycje, Feniks, Olimp and Trojan. The community of the suburban residential estates in Katowice in the early phase of suburbanization was researched by sociologists in the years 2002 and 2006. The objective of the research was to identify the most important social-demographic characteristics of the residents and the creation of a model of symbolical values that could connect the people living in the residential estates outside the city center<sup>14</sup>.

In order to learn about the symbolical-imaginal sphere the question was important of what, in that period, was an own house for the resident of a residential estate. It has to be noted that for the majority of those examined it was a new experience as only 12% of respondents possessed a single-family residential house before as well, with the majority of new owners moving from the flats in residential estates with the multi-family blocks of flats. It turned out that from the selected categories the majority of respondents identifies home with safety and good, friendly composition of the social environment. It may be concluded that the idea of home was constructed based on the model of Yi-Fu Tuan place, as a safe space, surrounded by friendly people. The analysis of the justifications for the localization of real estate chosen by the respondents showed that the developers’ idea of building houses away from the city, near nature, met the needs and visions of home of the residents. Over a half of those examined indicated the location in green and quiet area as advantages of the

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<sup>14</sup> B. Rożałowska, *Dom jako realizacja potrzeb i prestiżu w nowej przestrzeni miejskiej. Socjologiczne studium ładu osadniczego na przykładzie Katowic*, typescript, University of Silesia 2008.

residence (Table 1). It can be clearly seen that the town lost its appeal to some of the residents. One should remember, however, that before the war the majority of Poles lived in rural areas, therefore the traditions of living in the country, even due to family relationships, are still strong. The processes of post-war urbanization caused the increase in the number of residents living in towns, but for some of these people, the so-called *urbanity*, was not attractive enough that they would not look for a better space to live with their family.

Table 1

The causes of residents moving outside the center  
in the early phase of suburbanization

What determined the choice of the place of residence?	Incidence	Percent
location of rural neighborhood	64	35.2
quiet, peace	20	11.0
green, nature	10	5.5
far from the town	3	1.6
proximity to the center, easy access	20	11.0
price	12	6.6
close to the family	3	1.6
friends	4	2.2
coincidence	9	4.9
no response	37	20.3
Total	182	100.0

Source: B. Rożałowska, *Dom jako realizacja potrzeb i prestiżu w nowej przestrzeni miejskiej. Socjologiczne studium ładu osadniczego na przykładzie Katowic*, typescript, University of Silesia 2008.

A dream about a small house with a garden, described in the 70s by J. Turowski, was an important factor influencing the development of the suburbs. The expanding suburbs did not offer the residents that what is usually associated with the country. The building plots were small, over half of the properties had the area less than 350 m<sup>2</sup> and the houses were often located in a close proximity to the neighbors (table 2). The area of the houses, however, in comparison to the flats in the blocks of flats in Katowice is quite big, over 15% of those examined owns a building with its area of up to 120 m<sup>2</sup> and the houses of 20% of those examined is larger than 200 m<sup>2</sup> (table 3).

The house constitutes a great symbolical value to the residents of new residential estates, they did not notice the shortcomings stemming from a bad design of the building, its ugliness or an overly tight placement of the buildings. A definite majority of those examined was

content with their residential space. The house became a *place* for them as it fulfilled the basic need of living in the environment that is socially friendly and ecological.

Table 2

## The area of plots in new residential estates

The area of the plot	Incidence	Percent
up to 150m <sup>2</sup>	20	11.0
150-249 m <sup>2</sup>	31	17.0
250-349 m <sup>2</sup>	47	25.8
350-449 m <sup>2</sup>	36	19.8
450 and more m <sup>2</sup>	43	23.6
Total	177	97.3
System lack of data	5	2.7
Total	182	100.0

Source: B. Rożałowska, *Dom jako realizacja potrzeb i prestiżu w nowej przestrzeni miejskiej. Socjologiczne studium ładu osadniczego na przykładzie Katowic*, typescript, University of Silesia 2008.

Table 3

## The area of the house

The area of the house	Incidence	Percent
up to 120m <sup>2</sup>	27	14.8
120-139 m <sup>2</sup>	25	13.7
140-159 m <sup>2</sup>	40	22.0
160-179 m <sup>2</sup>	24	13.2
180-199 m <sup>2</sup>	20	11.0
200 and more m <sup>2</sup>	37	20.3
Total	173	95.1
System lack of data	9	4.9
Total	182	100.0

Source: B. Rożałowska, *Dom jako realizacja potrzeb i prestiżu w nowej przestrzeni miejskiej. Socjologiczne studium ładu osadniczego na przykładzie Katowic*, typescript, University of Silesia 2008.

#### 4. The role of planners and developers in forming the idea of home

Despite the guidelines included in the New Athens Charter and the Charter of The New Urbanism, aimed at architects, urban planners and property developers in the course of the realization of the first projects, their own visions and ideas were brought to life. The investments were created on cheap lands far from the cities. First fenced residential estates started to appear, beginning the process of segregation in the town space. The example of the Bazant Residential Estate in Katowice may illustrate the extent of the influence of ideas and values of the people connected with the construction industry on the recently created



residential space of Polish towns. The owners of the companies, taking into consideration the shortcomings of Polish towns, built a fenced fragment of the city for their own use. As a result in the rural environment, in the neighborhood of *Finnish* houses, a multi-functional space was formed made from single-family houses placed in rows and from several multi-family buildings with service and recreational facilities. *A city within a city* – as the creators of this idea wanted<sup>15</sup>. Nevertheless, the majority of the territory of the residential estate is fenced and inaccessible for other residents which turns it more into a stronghold of luxurious consumption than a city.

Apart from the real estate developers, the actions of municipal authorities inconsistent with the idea of sustainable development have enormous influence on the forming of the space of the city. It is their investment decisions related to infrastructure development, i.e. equipping the area with water and sewage installations, electricity, gas, construction of driveways enable the formation of new residential estates. The design of general and local development plans, which makes it possible to have a localization of investment that is ordered and compliant with the requirements of a modern town, depends on the city hall clerks. Furthermore, the municipal council, supporting the development of various types of construction, allows improving the quality of life of all residents.

Table 4

The number of apartments for which the building permits were issues in the years 2000-2012

	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Condominiums</b>	<b>Houses for sale or rent</b>	<b>Apartment s for sale or rent</b>	<b>Public housing</b>	<b>Social rental housing</b>
<b>2000</b>	161	142	45	237	-	-
<b>2001</b>	146	72	53	182	45	-
<b>2002</b>	65	29	45	93	-	169
<b>2003</b>	100	-	143	204	3	366
<b>2004</b>	188	93	41	4	29	27
<b>2005</b>	260	34	264	10	21	731
<b>2006</b>	140	3	300	674	2	-
<b>2007</b>	97	66	256	922	44	165
<b>2008</b>	75	-	250	3571	-	-
<b>2009</b>	68	-	32	256	-	32
<b>2010</b>	115	-	97	601	30	-
<b>2011</b>	74	-	74	990	-	-
<b>2012</b>	77	-	156	354	22	-
	<b>1566</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>1756</b>	<b>8098</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>1490</b>

Source: Data of Katowice City Hall. Own work.

Table 4 illustrates the number of apartments of various types, which were built at that time in Katowice. The data show that the number of apartments built for the less wealthy residents is gradually decreasing. After the crisis from the year 2008 the construction of condominiums

<sup>15</sup> Report Silesia 2003. Budownictwo, przemysł, a suplement to Gonicz Śląski, 11. 2003, p. 30.

ceased, the number of public housing completed also decreased and the number of social rental housing investments was significantly decreased as well. The development companies, despite the crisis which became apparent in the year 2009 keep selling houses and apartments. Figure 1 illustrates the number of houses emerging for sale, offered by the real estate developers since the beginning of the year 2000. One may notice the fluctuations on the construction market, which are not related to the global economic crisis. A large leap in the construction industry was made after the year 2005, after the accession of Poland into the European Union. The perspective of the increase of prices of land and the real estate itself launched the mechanisms accelerating the construction investments. The expansion of the city to the suburbs was delayed by the difficulties in designing a local development plan for Katowice city.

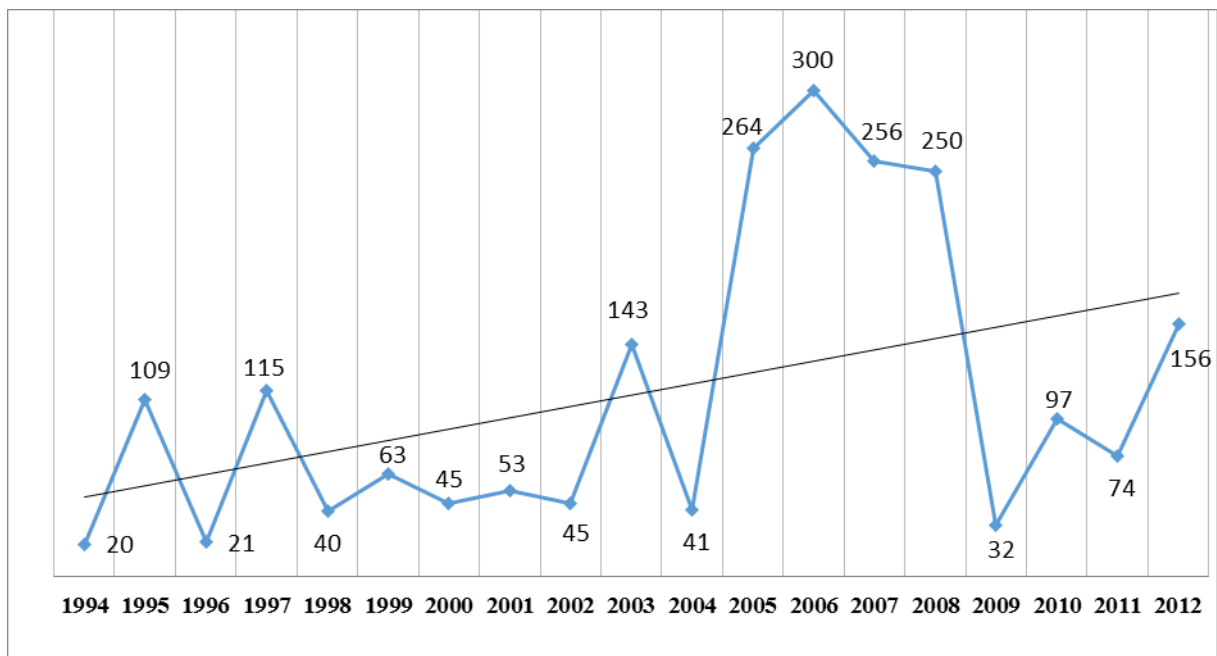


Fig. 1. The number of single-family houses meant for sale by the real estate developers

Rys. 1. Ilość domów jednorodzinnych wystawionych na sprzedaż przez deweloperów

Source: Data of Katowice City Hall. Own work.

The trend line shows that despite a significant slowdown, still the residential estates of single-family house are being built in the suburban area. A visible growing tendency means that the suburbanization process is being developed and disturbances occur in the implementation of the idea of sustainable town development.

## 5. Conclusions

A dream of the residents of Polish towns to live in a rural environment, as in Katowice for example, comes from a considerable stagnation in the construction industry before the system transformation period and later spreading of the trend for possessing home in the suburbs. An attachment to home associated with family values was used by the development companies that were reaching their own objectives in the town space for over twenty years, what had little to do with sustainable development. In effect, the mistakes of spatial development of American cities were multiplied, especially in terms of spreading the cities beyond the borders of city investments and the real estate resources created, mostly meant for middle class, intensified the outlining social inequality. The ideas of new urbanism based on sustainable development did not reach the suitable grounds, turned out to be too modern for the cities disposed of traditional middle class. Furthermore, young local governments that assumed power at the beginning of 90s, were trapped in the “growth machine” and its results were borne by poorer residents. A gradual inclusion of the citizens in the process of town management, postulated by the theoreticians of sustainability in town space, and formation of space better adjusted to the current needs are the necessary conditions for recreating the correct relationship with own city and diverting the tendency to search for the place of residence outside the central areas.

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### **Omówienie**

Artykuł ukazuje, w jaki sposób idea domu przyczyniła się do rozlewania się miast na obszary peryferyjne oraz zwiększenia kontrastów między obszarami biedy i bogactwa. W tle rozważań na temat znaczenia przestrzeni zaprezentowane zostały klasyczne koncepcje teoretyczne F. Znanińskiego, A. Wallisa, Y-Fu Thuana oraz nieco nowsze H. Molotcha, H. Logana, M. Castellsa. W tekście wykorzystano połączenie podejścia makrostrukturalnego z kulturalistycznym, zgodnie z zaleceniami „nowej socjologii miasta” M. Gottdienera, w celu poddania omawianych zjawisk szerszemu oglądowi. Na podstawie danych z Wydziału Budownictwa UM zobrazowano proces suburbanizacji zachodzący w Katowicach. Analizowane dokumenty dowodzą, że tendencje w budownictwie sprzyjają utrwalaniu się nierówności społecznych. Nadal powstają osiedla dla klasy średniej, natomiast bardzo niewiele nowych mieszkań przeznaczają się dla gorzej zarabiających mieszkańców. W efekcie powielone zostały błędy widoczne w rozwoju miast amerykańskich, które skutkują zakłóceniami w zrównoważonym rozwoju miasta.