

## TAKING UP RESIDENCE NEAR THE GARDEN AS THE SUBSTITUTE OF THE GARDEN-CITY IDEA

The housing development and spatial structure of the suburban areas  
as the combination of ignoring a place context and a myth of living in the garden-city  
on the example of the buffer zone of the Łagiewnicki Forest in Łódź

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### Abstract

Garden city is an idea regarded as one of the reasons for the spontaneous sprawl of buildings around the city. The paper compares the assumptions described in the book "Garden Cities of Tomorrow" with the way of the investment implementation on the outskirts of Łódź, in the buffer zone of the Łagiewnicki Forest. The analysis of the spatial structure of the newly urbanized open areas, made on the basis of aerial photography and introduction of geodesic division shows that the emerging housing development is not being inspired by the idea of the garden city. The newly urbanized areas are being built up in any manner without designed spatial composition, road system and public transport system and ignoring the use of landscape. The suburban housing emerges as individual investments, inhabitants of urban sprawl are not active in the life of local communities. The current situation requires the creation of effective urban planning doctrine. The guidelines described by Howard may serve as an inspiration for improving the quality of space in suburban areas, providing urban standards which are used require a quality space while implementing new investments.

### Streszczenie

Miasto-ogród to wizja uważana za jedną z przyczyn pączkowania zabudowy wokół miast. W artykule zostały porównane założenia opisane w książce „Garden Cities of Tomorrow” ze sposobem realizacji inwestycji na przedmieściach Łodzi, w otulinie Lasu Łagiewnickiego. Analiza struktury przestrzennej nowo urbanizowanych terenów otwartych, wykonana na podstawie zdjęć lotniczych i wprowadzanych podziałów geodezyjnych wykazuje, że powstająca zabudowa jest realizowana w chaotyczny sposób i nie czerpie inspiracji z idei miasta-ogrodu. Nowo urbanizowane tereny są zabudowywane w dowolny sposób bez zaprojektowanej kompozycji przestrzennej, układu drogowego i systemu komunikacji zbiorowej oraz wykorzystania uwarunkowań krajobrazowych. Zabudowa powstaje jako indywidualne inwestycje, mieszkańcy subburdiów nie tworzą wspólnot i nie są aktywni w życiu lokalnych społeczności. Obecna sytuacja wymaga stworzenia skutecznej doktryny urbanistycznej. Wytyczne opisane przez Howarda mogą stanowić inspirację dla poprawy jakości przestrzeni na terenach podmiejskich, pod warunkiem zastosowania standardów urbanistycznych, wymagających zachowania jakości przestrzeni przy realizacji nowych inwestycji.

**Keywords:** Garden City; Ebenezer Howard; Urban Sprawl; Suburbanism.

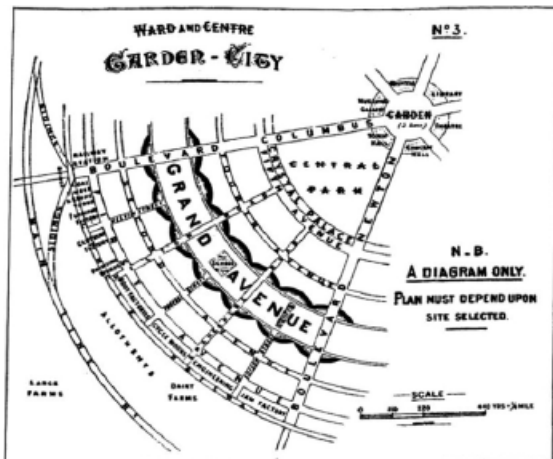
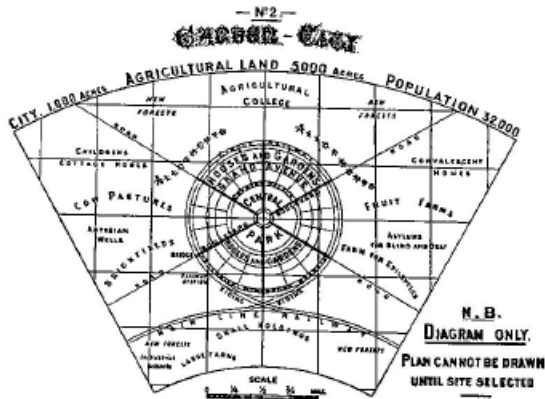


Figure 1.  
Garden-city scheme: diagrams E. Howard



## 1. INTRODUCTION. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TOPIC CHOICE

The idea described in the book “Garden Cities of Tomorrow” is considered to be one of the reasons for suburban budding, which constitutes the most dynamic changes in the structure of cities in Poland. In some opinions E. Howard’s idea popularized owning home by everyone, not only by elite, made it “a product of pop culture and an object of mass consumption” [2]. The structure of urban suburban areas has been compared with the assumptions described by Ebenezer Howard on the example of the changes taking place in the buffer zone of the Łagiewnicki Forest in Łódź.

## 2. CITY SPRAWL AND THE IDEA OF EBENEZER HOWARD

### 2.1. The establishment of a healthy city movement

Just as in modern urbanism, in the nineteenth century there was a search for solutions to improve living conditions in the city centers and to boost the development of suburban areas. One of the visions, which was to become the recipe for repairing all the problems of the city and the formula for its creation in a new, better way, is the idea presented in the book “Garden Cities of Tomorrow”. City Garden should be a self-sufficient unit. Howard assumes that the city, built by a group of shareholders, should make optimum use of location conditions, have a small scale, compact structure, clearly defined spatial composition with clear interiors and green, clearly marked boundaries of areas with different functions.

### 2.2. Moving the objectives into reality

The first built garden city is the closest to the idea of Howard-Letchworth, situated with the use of location conditions, constructed in accordance with the designed coherent composition, surrounded by green areas, managed by the Management Board elected by the shareholders. Further embodiments of the idea of Howard usually ignore his reflections on social and economic issues and relate to increasingly simplified managements guidelines of residential areas.



Figure 2.  
Project of the garden city Żabki, arch. Tadeusz Tołwiński



Figure 3.  
Advertisement of the planned garden-city Żabki [2]

### 3. THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE

Spatial problems of city border areas have been described in numerous publications by architects, urban planners, geographers, sociologists. The issue of suburbanization was examined by Peter Lorenz, and the consequences for cities resulting from the overgrowth of suburban areas were studied by Sławomir Gzell and Andrew Lisowski. Sociological analyzes of suburban areas are performed by Katarzyna Kajdanek, whereas the sociology of the city is a topic of Bohdan Jałowicki's research. Issues related to the management of the space and the regional economy can be found in publications by Tadeusz Markowski and Jan Maciej Chmielewski. Krzysztof Kowalewski describes the economic consequences of suburbanization in Poland. The conditions of legislation are under consideration in publications by Andrzej Jędraszko and Hubert Izdebski. The history and consequences of the idea of garden-city have been described by Adam Czyżewski.

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY. THE CHOICE OF THE SITE

The studies deal with the comparison of the assumptions relating to garden cities with the changes in the spatial structure of the areas located on the outskirts of Łódź, in the buffer zone of the Łagiewnicki Forest. The research technique is based on a combination of observation – inventory method in the field with the analysis of aerial photographs of the area and the analysis of the literature. The changes of land use and further plots' divisions were examined on the basis of data from the Lodz Internet Land Information System – Intersite. An inventory of the newly built housing is carried out in the field and enables the analysis of land management of the newly secreted plots as well as it examines the dimensions of the emerging housing.

Łagiewnicki Forest in Łódź is interesting, because this is green enclave in postindustrial city and one of Poland's largest forest complexes coming within the city limits and where hasty urbanization of open areas is still taking place. The aim of the study is to analyze the quality of the newly urbanized areas and to compare it with the idea that contributed to the popularization of housing close to nature.

### 5. CASE STUDY. A COMPARISON OF GUIDELINES FOR THE GARDEN CITY WITH THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEWLY URBANIZED AREAS IN THE BUFFER ZONE OF THE ŁAGIEWNICKI FOREST IN ŁÓDŹ

#### 5.1. Location

Howard assumes that projects should be suited to the circumstances arising from the location, economy and social structure of future residents. In Łagiewniki the suburban development location is not the result of analyzes with regard to the landscape determinants. This is place without masterplan, so the newly urbanized areas near Łagiewniki Forest are being built up in any manner without designed spatial composition, road system and public transport system and ignoring the use of landscape.

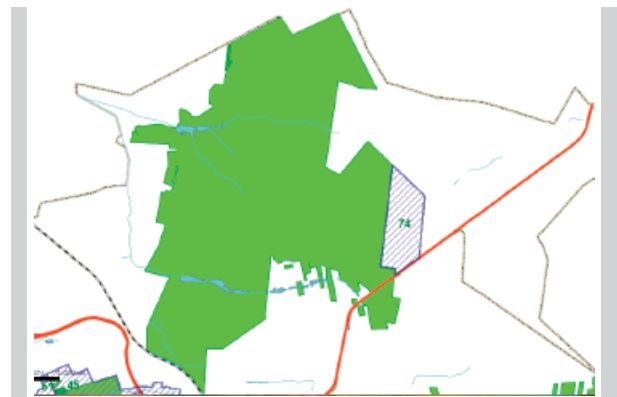


Figure 4.  
The buffer zone of the Łagiewnicki Forest, masterplan is only for area marked with digit 74, [www.mapa.lodz.pl](http://www.mapa.lodz.pl), 30.08.2015

#### 5.2. Spatial structure

Garden City has got a clear spatial structure. The new urbanized area near Łagiewniki Forest does not have compositional axes, green or public spaces. In the buffer zone further properties are divided into smaller plots and built up in a chaotic manner. There are accidental geodetic divisions and communications systems leaving no space for public areas and compositional axes.





Figure 5.  
The buffer of Łagiewnicki Forest, the area between Książka, Rogowska, Krysztalowa and Wycieczkowa Street, [www.mapa.lodz.pl](http://www.mapa.lodz.pl), 30<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2015



Figure 6.  
The buffer of Łagiewnicki Forest, the area between Książka, Rogowska, Krysztalowa and Wycieczkowa Street, visible chaotic divisions of plots with accidental communication system [www.mapa.lodz.pl](http://www.mapa.lodz.pl), 30<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2015, own elaboration



Figure 7.  
The buffer of Łagiewnicki Forest, the area between Woskowa, Książka, Klimatyczna and Wycieczkowa Street, visible chaotic divisions of plots with accidental communication system in the Sokołówka river valley, [www.mapa.lodz.pl](http://www.mapa.lodz.pl), 30<sup>th</sup> Aug. 2015, own work



**Figure 8.**  
The buffer of Łagiewnicki Forest, the area between Woskowa, Książka, Klimatyczna and Wycieczkowa Street, land leveling in the Sokołówka river valley, photo. author, 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2015

### 5.3. Environmental protection

In Garden City very important are local environmental conditions. In the buffer zone of the Łagiewnicki Forest the budding form of housing is growing on floodland, areas essential for ecosystem. Valleys of rivers are urbanized in a chaotic way by individual investors.

### 5.4. Architecture

In Garden City there are houses situated in a line on similar plots. Building has similar dimensions, style and detail. In the new urbanized area near Łagiewnicki Forest the suburban housing emerges as individual investments – way of developing the plot and architecture of the building are formed according to likings of the investor. Houses have different forms, dimensions, details, materials.

### 5.5. Transport

Garden Cities are interfacing with railways, services for residents are in short distance and are available on foot. Howard's guidelines are close to the principles for designing sustainable transport, described in the book "Good Policies in organizing Public Transport" [10]. The communication in the buffer zone of Las Łagiewnicki has been dominated by cars.



**Figure 9.**  
New houses, Aleksander Ryżewski street, photo: autor, 30<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2015

The development of individual transport, resulted in the urbanization of more and more remote areas. The freedom of movement is one of the reasons for suburban growth and poor condition of local communities. What is more, the time used for commuting takes many hours, as described Katarzyna Kajdanek.

### 5.6. Community

Howard's vision assumes that shareholders together form the city, where social ties are strong, public spirit integrates the local estate spirit, local services meet the needs of the residents, new workplaces are created. Howard's vision assumes that shareholders together form the city, where social ties are strong,



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New residents of the buffer zone of Łagiewniki Forest do not form cooperatives, do not establish close contact with neighbours and do not seek contact with those who have lived here for generations. The development and management of the newly urbanized areas show that the newcomers feel closely related to the place where they will live within the limits of the purchased land and they turn away from the only public space – the access roads. Front gardens have replaced the remote controlled gates with the driveways to the garage. Such a solution does not favour meetings with other residents, on the contrary, it prevents them. Anti-burglar blinds are often installed in the windows and monitoring cameras appear on high solid fences.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The structure of the new urbanized area in the buffer of Łagiewnicki Forest has nothing in common with the vision promoted by Howard, except for the desire of users of still emerging houses to live near the green spaces.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The comparison between guidelines for garden-cities and changes of land management in the area surrounding the Łagiewniki Forest shows that the spatial structure in suburban areas has nothing in common with the guidelines. They are regarded as one of the reasons of housing budding around the city – the idea described by Howard for the garden-city. The visible changes on the maps of the analyzed land show that the areas around the Łagiewnicki Forest are urbanized in a chaotic way by individual investors. The urbanisation of suburban areas is the result of liberal legislation concerning spatial planning and also social changes. Raising the standard of living and possessing a car mean that the areas situated farther from the city centre without the access to public transport can be accepted as a potential place to live. The development of individual transport results in urbanization of the more remote areas away from the city. Howard has developed a vision of repairing the world and the subsequent implementations of his ideas were compromises between the suggested ideal visions and everyday life. The guidelines were usually used for building housing estates.

## 8. SUMMARY

Howard's projects are close to the guidelines of a sustainable city, yet his ideas are often described selectively and identified with promoting new housing developments outside the urbanized areas among greenery. The paradox is that one of his visions that has been developed for the repair of urban problems contributed to a huge suburbanisation.

The emergence of scattered buildings outside the city resulted in irreversible spatial and social changes that are likely to intensify. Special action must be taken to stop the overgrowth of free suburban areas urbanization because changes are disadvantageous and chaotic.

Guidelines for the garden-city can become an inspiration for improving the spatial structure of suburban areas, providing the proposed housing development is formed according to specific rules which will take into account the spatial composition and location conditions. Developing a new way for spatial planning cannot only concern the legislation changes. Awareness and acceptance of limitations resulting from the local law is necessary and of high importance.

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