

The determination of a seniors-friendly landscape benchmarks in urban settlements

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Abstract

The urban landscape is of particular importance for older people, who have more time than professionally active people to contemplate it. Landscape-friendly urban settlements give a sense of aesthetics, relaxation and security. The more beautiful the environment is, the more willingness to take advantage of its charms, i.e. to be active. That is why planning "friendly" landscapes within housing estates is so important for the sustainable development of cities and their inhabitants. Therefore, the aim of this study was to determine the benchmarks of a friendly landscape in housing estates, which can be used by urban planners and developers to plan the development of a housing estate in such a way that it has landscape values. The research was presented on the example of the City of Olsztyn in Poland.

Pro-senior citizen policy

The aging population has resulted in considerable changes to global demographics, which has led to increased efforts of international organizations to develop pro-elderly policies, legal acts and frameworks (Fig.1).



Fig.1. Age-friendly policy documents. Source: own elaboration.

Pro-senior citizen strategy

The documents suggest the following guidelines:

- 1) Enabling seniors to choose the place of residence and lead an independent life.
- 2) Encouraging seniors to engage in the decision-making processes of the local government.
- 3) Providing proper housing conditions for seniors through relevant land management and urban zone development.
- 4) Promoting seniors' activity by providing full and effective participation in social life and by providing the right to decent, secure and independent living.

The WHO emphasizes that in all countries, and in developing countries in particular, measures to help seniors remain healthy and active are a necessity, not a luxury (WHO, 2002). Seniors' activity is a part of the process of active ageing (WHO, 2007), where active ageing is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age.

WHO, 2002. World Health Organization. Active Ageing: A Policy Framework, Geneva, <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/WHO-Active-Ageing-Framework.pdf>.

WHO, 2007. Global age-friendly cities: A guide. World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/ageing/publications/Global_age_friendly_cities_Guide_English.pdf

Seniors, as a socially sensitive group

It is hard to pinpoint the moment when ageing begins. What can be identified, however, is the ageing markers (Fig. 2).

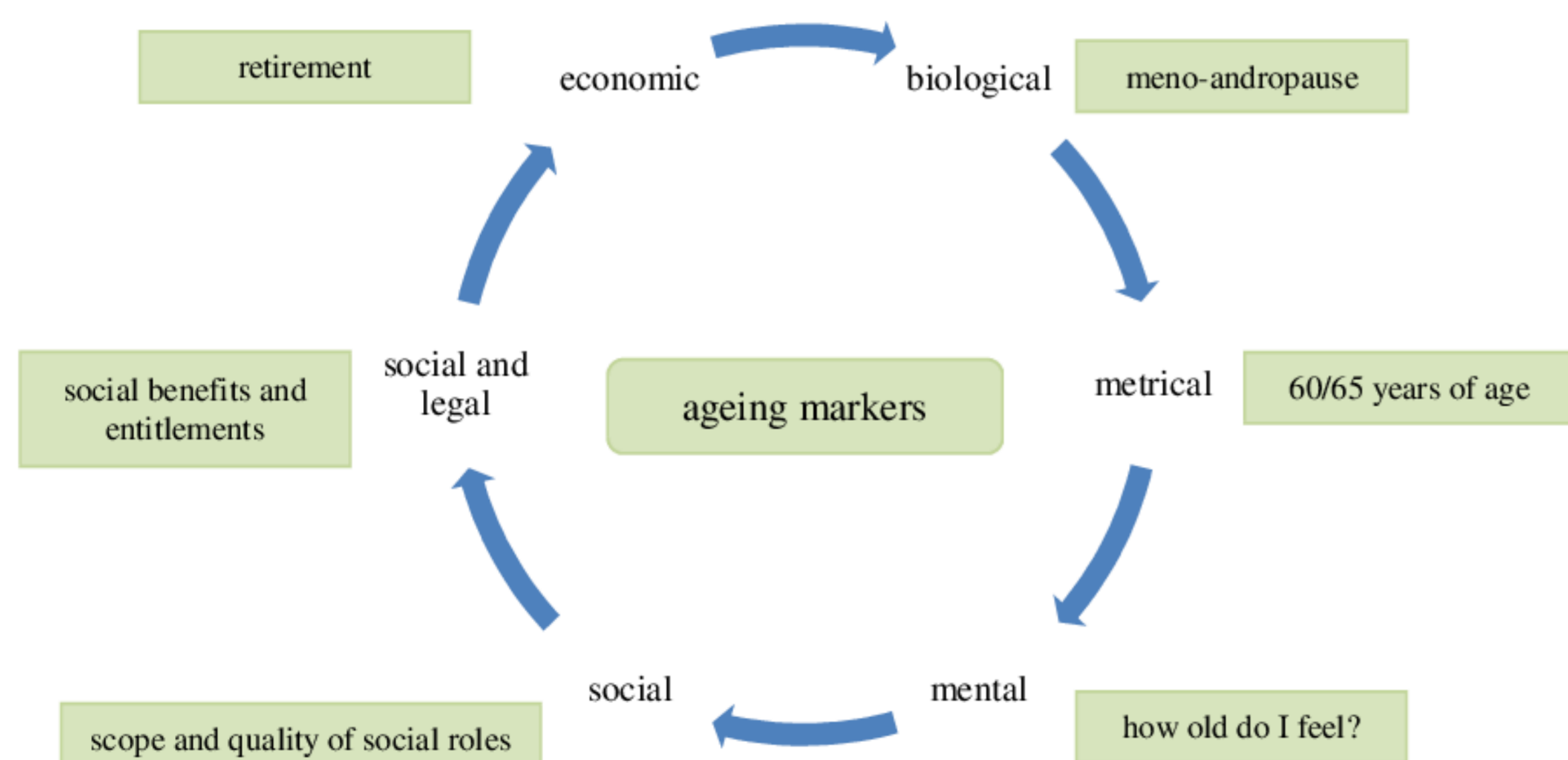


Fig.2. Ageing markers. Source: own elaboration on the basis of Szarota (2011).

The political and law-making approach to seniors may also be connected with retirement and the acquisition of additional benefits and entitlements. According to WHO (WHO, 2007) the following subgroups of old age can be differentiated: *pre-old age (45-59), *early old age (60/65-74) – the young old, *old age proper (75-89) – old-old, *oldest-old (90+) – oldest-old-lifelong. In statistics, old age is defined as a population aged 65 and over or 60 plus.

The retirement age in Poland is 60, so this age was adopted as the starting point of old age.

Szarota, Z. 2011. Demograficzny obraz polskiej starości (Demographic Image of Polish Ageing). <http://www.utw.up.krakow.pl/pliki/tektorium/wyklad1.pdf>

The landscape of an urban housing estate - definition

Definition of the urban landscape (UNESCO Recommendation, 2011) - an urban area understood as the effect of the accumulation of cultural and natural values over the course of history and the occurrence of attributes, going beyond the notion of "historical center" or "complex", perceived in the wider context of the city and taking into account its geographical location.

The essence of the contemporary urban landscape is the interpenetration of the relationship between the natural and cultural spatial structure, their use and the symbolism and content written there. The city is also the most physiognomically and functionally complex and symbolically complex type of landscape, rich in visual and aesthetic values and evidence of the centuries-old civilization heritage of its inhabitants. The urban landscape as a comprehensive spatial record of complex natural and cultural conditions and relationships: historical, social and economic, is an excellent expression of human economy. At the same time, it has a strong influence on it, determining the degree of identification with the city. The reference to the category of landscape allows taking into account the relationship between forms and uses, lifestyles, cultural patterns and the dynamics of ecological processes (Nyka 2012).

UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape 2011. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Nyka L., 2012. Przestrzeń miejska jako krajobraz [Urban space as a landscape]. Czasopismo Techniczne, t. R 109, z. 1-A/2, Wyd. PK, s. 49-59.

Landscape dominant

A natural or man-made spatial form constituting a distinctive or characteristic landscape element, subordinating the entire landscape composition (e.g. a sacred building, a tower, a monument, a large lonely tree, a rock). The dominant landscape can be exposed by means of a viewing foreground (undeveloped space, a square in front of the building) or a natural terrain. The dominant feature can be indicated by lines leading to it (e.g. marking out streets so that they lead directly to the market square or church - viewing axes), (Czarnecki, 1960).

Czarnecki, W. 1960. Planowanie miast i osiedli (Planning of cities and neighborhoods). PWN, Warszawa 1960.



The dominant feature is a focal point that facilitates orientation in space, it also influences social behavior by shaping emotional and aesthetic feelings. It can affect him both positively and negatively. A well-located dominant as a spatial accent affects the clarity and legibility of the urban layout. It also makes it possible to identify the object with a place that is visually distinguished in space, emphasizing its importance.



Fig.3 a (Garrison church),b (Town Hall). Examples of landscape dominants in Olsztyn. Source: the authors.

Benchmarks of a seniors-friendly landscape in urban settlements

Table. 1. The benchmarks of seniors-friendly landscape in urban settlements.

No.	Benchmark	Specificity
1	Decorated greenery	Areas with various forms of greenery in appropriate proportions (isolation greenery, recreational greenery, marking the boundaries of territories): a) the dominant low greenery (lawns, shrubs, flower beds) with avenue trees (at the main pedestrian routes) and clumps of trees in a park arrangement. b) large areas of arranged greenery. c) clear and friendly communication system in green areas for various users (walking, cycling, rollerblading, etc.) d) incorporating the elements of small architecture (benches, garbage cans, playgrounds, etc.). e) a system ensuring separation from communication, residential, industrial, commercial, etc. functions (appropriate distance, use of screens, insulation (mainly in a natural form - rows of trees, shrubs and anthropogenic - walls, fences, elements of small architecture).
2	Clear spatial layouts	Not too many infrastructure elements (functions) that cause a sense of confusion, chaos, randomness and slums (which is the result of perceiving it as a threat).
3	Opening viewing	A spatial composition with an open layout, ensuring the possibility of observing the surroundings within a range of several dozen to several hundred meters. There are no closed spatial systems with short visibility. Too large distance to other functions, elements, etc. causes a feeling of being lost, too short a distance to a feeling of threat resulting from the proximity of other functions.
4	Aesthetics (facade) of buildings and other spatial objects	Subdued colors (the colors of anthropogenic elements must consistently refer to the surrounding architecture and natural elements). The distinct colors of the modernized housing estates irritate the recipients and are unsightly. Architecture and shapes rather traditional, harmonized with each other. Spacious and bright entrances to buildings and their staircases.
5	Harmonious fine infrastructure	Small infrastructure (street furniture, roofs, benches, squares, playgrounds, illuminated alleys) - identical to the style of the surrounding buildings and devices.
6	Cleanliness and maintenance of development elements in a non-deteriorated condition	Maintaining cleanliness of all elements of the estate - private, common, small architecture, green, etc. Removal of vandalism and ongoing modernization of used development elements.

The seniors-friendly landscape in Olsztyn City settlements

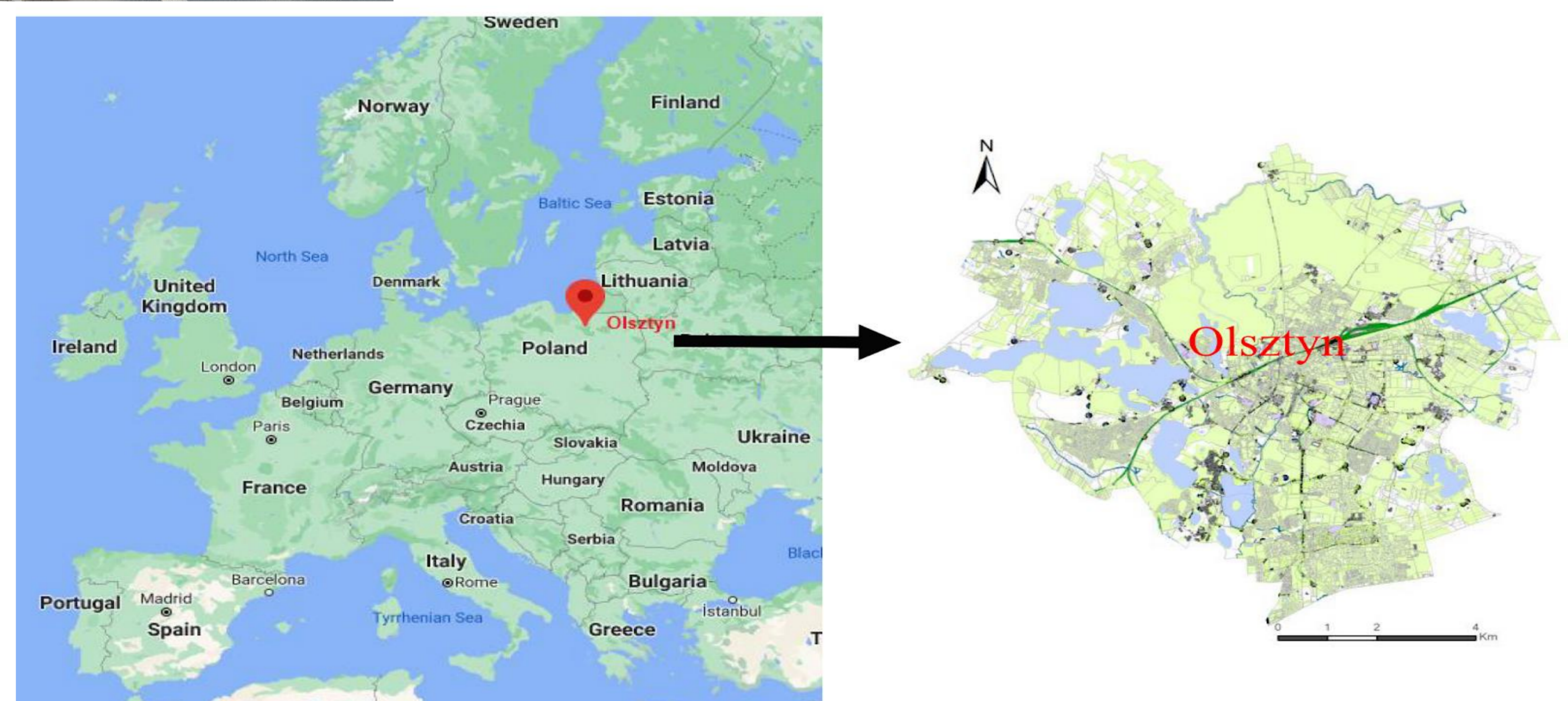


Fig.4. Olsztyn City. Source: own elaboration.



Fig. 5 a,b,c. Elements of housing estate infrastructure in harmonious aesthetic arrangement. Source: the authors.