

Table of Contents

1	Background and assignment	3
2	Aim and question at issue	6
3	Result	7
3.1	Klaipeda, Lithuania	7
	The place	7
	The residential area	8
	The flat/house	9
3.2	Ozersk, Kaliningrad region	10
	The place	10
	The residential area	11
	The flat/house	11
4	Conclusion and final discussion	13
	Reference list	15
Appendix 1:	Summary of the Swedish study	16
Appendix 2:	Procedure	17

1 Background and assignment

During the greater part of 2004, a project has been carried out in the County of Kronoberg with the aim to find out how women can reason when choosing a place to live. As a part of the project, two small pilot studies, with the same objective, have been carried out in two of the member regions within the Euro Region Baltic – ERB. In this report, short backgrounds to the studies are given and the results from the pilot studies are presented.

Seagull DevERB WP 4: Rural development

The Seagull report 6-2004 contains much information about the rural areas in the ERB as well as the result of a SWOT-analysis made within each region. Several common factors are stated for the rural areas in sub-regions all over ERB.

- Good geographic location
- Diverse landscape and beautiful scenery
- Good tourism opportunities in the rural areas
- Low educational level
- A need to apply modern technologies and marketing techniques
- Unequal age structure
- Brain drain of intellectual resources to the west and to the cities
- Inability to attract young people to the area
- Highly separated labour market, and lack of attractive work opportunities for women
- High unemployment rates
- Difficulties to organise public services in sparsely populated areas
- Uneven development of social economy/cross sector co-operation

Some of the main problems in the rural areas are connected to unequal age structure, brain drain of intellectual resources to the west and to the cities and inability to attract young people to the area. The highly separated labour market and the lack of attractive work opportunities for women have a great impact on the possibilities to attract young well-educated women to rural areas.

What is it then that attracts people? What are they looking for when they settle in a place? As mentioned in the beginning a study, with the objective to find out how women reason when choosing a place to live, has been carried out in the County of Kronoberg, Sweden during 2004. In order to make use of the knowledge attained in this study both concerning method and result it was also implemented as a part of work package 4 in the Seagull-project focusing on rural development. Two pilot studies has been carried out, one in Klaipeda, Lithuania and one in Ozersk, Kaliningrad. These two regions announced their interest in having a small pilot study made in their region when the opportunity came up.

The aim of the study is to increase knowledge about and the understanding for the way in which women can reason about their choice of living. The result of the study will be presented to relevant actors within the Seagull-project and contribute to increase the knowledge about how young women can reason when choosing a place to live.

Women's choice of living in the County of Kronoberg

The study in Sweden was more comprehensive and is based on separate interviews as well as focus group interviews. The target group for the Swedish study was young women in the age bracket 25-35 years.

Small increase of inhabitants

The idea of making the study in the first place came from the low numbers for net moving. In the County of Kronoberg, Sweden, the number of inhabitants has not increased very much over the last years. Out of eight municipalities only one increased with a great number above zero (596 persons) in 2003, whereas the rest had a net moving just above or below zero. How can this be changed? One of the questions that arose was how to attract people to choose to live in Kronoberg. In order to do this it is important to find out what people are looking for when they choose a place to live.

Why women?

The women of today are more emancipated and make more demands than previously. It is also the women that bear children, which in turn contributes to increasing the inhabitants. Therefore it would be interesting to find out how young women reason in the choice of living? What wishes and demands do they have? Is it possible to meet these demands and maybe attract settlement?

The report from the Swedish study is available in Swedish and English and can be found at the web page of the Local Authorities Association (www.kfkr.se) or by contact by e-mail at info@kfkr.se. A brief summary of the Swedish study can also be found in appendix 1.

Need for updated knowledge

Apart from the question about how to attract people to settle, there is also another aspect on the issue connected to structures and gender. Physical planning, which means planning of buildings, roads and so on has in Sweden for a long time been considered as gender neutral but in practice it has mainly been an area dominated by men. Men and women see and value their living differently. Studies show that men and women find different values in the physical surroundings and approach differently to spatial issues. The room of the man is expansive while the room of

the woman is more local according to Boverket (1996). Men and women should therefore both contribute to the process of planning.

Our society changes and this of course implies changed living conditions and values that, in their turn, create a need for new knowledge in the society planning. Those people who today plan the society are often shaped by values from the past. In Sweden, without exception, the majority of these have always been men. A continually important question for planners of housing, housing areas and society in the main, should be the demands of the people for whom the planning is conducted. Today the constellations of families differ from fifty years ago when the majority of houses were planned for the nuclear family. Through better knowledge and understanding of how people reason when they choose their housing, the planners and other people involved in the process will have a better basis to go on for future planning of society.

2 Aim and question at issue

The aim of the study is to increase the knowledge about and understanding for how women can reason when choosing a place to live.

Question at issue

- *In which different ways can women reason when choosing a place to live?*

By doing this, factors can be identified that impact women's choice of place for settlement in order to facilitate local and regional planning and increase attractiveness in the region. The result of the study can be used as a base for further discussions on the subject as well as information to use for future local and regional planning.

Starting point for the study is, as already said, women's *choice* of housing which is important to remember. The study is not about *why* women move and the important is not what they have at the moment (in terms of house or flat, big kitchen or small). The important is to find out what they want and what is important when it comes to choosing a place to live. The study is based on interviews made in focus groups, one in each country. The method of working and selection of target group is presented more closely in appendix 2.

3 Result

There is of course no single answer to the question in focus for this study. The choice of housing are affected by many different aspects such as the surrounding society, what situation in life you are in (studying, working, starting a family, economically etc) and also what values you have. The past affects our choices as well as the planned future.

Through the two focus group interviews many aspects were given upon the choice of housing. Since this is a qualitative study based on interviews it is not possible to generalise the result. This is on the other hand not the purpose of the study. The purpose is to show the variety of aspects that exist. The ambition cannot always be to reach universal generalisation, the emphasis in this case should be on the contextuality and the heterogeneity of knowledge.

The survey has been made in two different regions with different basic conditions. Therefore the results are reported separately for each country.

3.1 Klaipeda, Lithuania

The different perspectives and way to reason that came out from the interview in Lithuania has been sorted out under what geographical/spatial area they were mentioned, 1) the place (town), 2) residential area or 3) the flat/house. All of the following presented are things that came up in the interviews. Eventual conclusions, reflections and discussion are put in the final chapter.

The place

According to the women, in Lithuania children normally move from their parents when they start the university unless there is a university in the town. If there is one, normally the children would live with their parents during their education until they get married or get a job.

When it comes to choosing the place to live it is pretty much work or studies that decide this. One opinion mentioned was that where you live is not so important. The important thing is to have an interesting and well-paid job because here is where a lot of time is spent. If it is well-paid you can do whatever or go wherever you want in your spare time and that is why the place is not so important. If you are single the job becomes one of the most important factors when choosing to live in a certain place.

If not single, a husband or boyfriend might be the reason to why choosing a place to live. If the husband is in the military, for example, the wife might have to move to wherever he gets placed and then the choice of living would be a non-choice.

To have friends nearby to do things with in your spare time is valuable. When it comes to be close to the family the opinions differs from that it is important to live close to the family to that it is not so important. Lithuania is a quite small country so nothing is really far away. Still it can be difficult to travel since public transportations are not always the best. The opinion is that this should be improved because not every woman has a car of her own.

The reason for not wanting to live in a small place, in some cases the place of birth and childhood, is that there is nothing to do. The women say there is a lack of jobs as well as stores and things to fill the spare time with.

To live where it is nice and calm is mentioned and to be close to the ocean is also preferable for some people.

Keywords: work, university, husband, non-choice, public transportation, family, ocean

The residential area

When it comes to the residential area there are many opinions as well and this seems to be the area that there are the most opinions about of the three geographical areas.

Here the theme closeness seems to dominate. Closeness is important. To have close to day care for children, to work, to school, to the centre, to the shops is mentioned as important. One woman tells that when she last moved with her family they choose an older apartment that were not so nice instead of a newer, nicer one because the older one was close to day care. Another woman tells that they also choose an apartment closer to day care even though it was on the bottom floor, which is not preferable, they all agree on. But the closeness to day care was more important. Also it is important for it to be close for the children to go to the playground. A third woman tells that they changed apartment this year because then it would be closer for their child to go to school and it would not have to pass any streets with traffic on the way there. Safety is also an aspect of importance.

Another reason for wanting things to be close is because then it is not needed to have a car or to use the car all the time. One woman thinks that the closeness gives freedom.

Good neighbours are also preferable because it increases the feeling of security. Neighbours can also go together and help each other and do things together when needed. One woman gives the example of how she and her neighbours have gone together and raised money to fix things around the apartments.

As already mentioned before, security and safety is important for the children but also for themselves. The environment is important. Calm and nice are mentioned by many as preferable. One woman tells that she lives close to some industry and that she is very worried about the pollution they make and she would like to move away from it just like some of her friends have done. The thing is that she has not chosen her living. When she married it was already decided that she and her husband would live in the same house as her fathers-in-law because their house consists of two separate apartments. This can be another example of a non-choice of place to live. By non-choice is meant that it was decided by other circumstances that were not really possible to influence.

Furthermore there was a discussion about the standard of day care and schools. It is good that they are spread out in the residential areas so that it can be close to them but the teachers are not always good. This means that you might want to have your children in another place. Sometimes people pay bribes in order to get a place for their children in the school they think is the best since usually many people want to place their children there. Another opinion about day care was that it should be cheap.

Additional the reputation of the residential area is important which the group stresses. If the reputation is good you feel secure, if it is bad you will not feel safe and secure living there and that will make you unhappy and probably you will try to move. Good possibility of public transportation is also mentioned as important.

Keywords: closeness to things, good for children, good neighbours, security, safety, non-choice, calm, nice

The flat/house

There were of course also opinions given about the actual housing. To find a place to live such as a rental apartment is difficult if it should be in a certain area and not too expensive. Economy is important when choosing and it is common to share a place to live with some one (if you are single) in order to reduce the costs. Sharing with a friend has positive sides as well as negative sides though. Also, the nice places to live are usually too expensive and sometimes made to attract foreigners. Young persons can only afford the less nice ones.

If you are single it is difficult to get a bank loan to buy an apartment unless you earn good money. This year there is a special offer from the bank for young

families that want to buy a house. They are offered a loan with lower interest rate than usual. Also you have to be less than 35 years of age for this loan.

The best is if you can buy your place to live because then it is not so important what it looks like, you can always change it into what you want. If the place to live is rented it becomes more important how it looks and how it is made.

It is not preferable to live on the bottom floor or on the very top floor. The bottom often feels insecure and people on the street can look into your place, which is not liked. Privacy is important. Also the sounds from the street will be heard more on the bottom floor. On the top floor many times the roof is bad and it will rain into your flat and it is you who have to fix it, not the owner of the whole building. If you have good neighbours, they might help to pay for it. If the roof is good it could be very nice to live high up since there will be more sun and light coming in the windows.

Other things that are mentioned are the importance of having a nice bathroom and a big kitchen. Balcony is also important and where the house is situated (in terms of residential area and closeness to service etc). To have separate rooms is also stressed especially if you are sharing but also as a family.

Keywords: economical, expensive, special loan, top floor, bottom floor, bathroom, kitchen, balcony

3.2 Ozersk, Kaliningrad region

The result from the focus group in Ozersk region is being presented using the same structure as when presenting the result from Lithuania. In this way it is easier to see similarities and differences in the way of reasoning between the two regions looked upon.

The place

When it comes to the place of living there was several aspects revealed in the way of reason among the women. One aspect that was underlined was to be safe and secure. Some of the women came from areas of former Soviet Union where they felt it was not safe for them or, if having children, for the children to grow up. So they choose to move to Kaliningrad because it would be safer. Another aspect was to be in a place where it is possible for the children to get an education.

To be closer to relatives was also a reason given for the choice of place to live. This can also give a kind of safety and security. Another reason related to relatives and family is to move to where the love lives (boyfriend/future husband) which in

some cases meant to leave family and relatives behind. To be close to loved ones and/or family and relatives could also be seen as a sort of security. All thought that living close to family and relatives was important but it is not always possible.

The women also pointed out that there is a lack of job opportunities here, which is bad. At one part of the interview some of them became quite dejected and said that they did not see a future for themselves and did not feel any support from the government for women. What they felt was important was for their children to have a good future. The younger women as well as some of the older did not agree with this. They meant that anything is possible and that you can do what you want if you really want it.

Keywords: safety, education, security, close to family and relatives, for the best of the children, lack of job opportunities

The residential area

Not much was said about the residential area. What was mentioned was a wish of having closer to the stores and to have a centre with more services than the post office. A wish for the school to be closer was also expressed. The opinions for the residential area could also be valid for the place (such as the village) since in some cases the place is too small to have different residential areas.

When it was asked what was the best with living where they live the answer was that the closeness to nature was the best. “It is all there is here!” was one ironic comment to this though. The feelings are mixed.

The women also tells about an organisation named “Friends” that they have organised themselves in one village. Its for women and children and the activities includes study language, doing work out, dancing, sewing together etc.

Keywords: close to school, work, stores, centre, nature

The flat/house

When it came to the opinions about the actual place to live not all of them had chosen the place themselves. Some had been given a place to live in coordination with that they also got a job in a farm for example. When the farm later was privatized they had become owners of the house. Some rented an apartment or a room in an apartment and here the level of rent was an important factor.

To have a good house with a good standard was the main factor given for the choice. But as mentioned, not everybody had had a choice, which did not have to

mean that they were not satisfied. To build a house to live in was also mentioned as desirable.

Mainly the reasoning was about water pipes and sewage. It was explained that many times the water and sewage is bad in houses and apartments and therefore it is very important to check it so it is good. Otherwise there can be major problems with leakage and flooding as well as with mould and dampness.

Other things mentioned as important or preferable was to have a garden, a big bathroom and that the heating worked well. Central heating is preferable. If heating with gas it is preferable with a gas pipe instead of gas in a bottle. To have technical things such as dishwasher etc is of course preferable. Some told that they had all the technique they needed while others said that what they had is very old and they would like new.

Many of the women seemed happy with their place to live but at the same time there were many expressions of dissatisfaction with their life situation. They also explained that yes, they might have more wishes about their place to live and the area but other things are more important such as the family. To give the children a good education and one woman said that she would not hesitate to sell her house if it was needed in order to give the grandchildren an education.

Keywords: non-choice, level of rent, good standard, water pipes, sewage, central heating, the life-situation, other things more important

4 Conclusion and final discussion

The two groups differed much from each other, the group in Klaipeda seemed to be more homogenous than the group in Kaliningrad where the backgrounds of the people being interviewed seemed to be different and the age was more spread (for more information about the groups see appendix 2). In the following some comparisons of the answers from the two focus groups are made mainly to point out different aspects and ways of reasoning.

In the interview in Klaipeda the reasoning was that work is important for where to live. Young women of today that has a high education are of course eager to make use of it and in the rural areas there are only a few, if any, jobs for them, which makes them seek to live in the bigger cities instead of the countryside. It is difficult to stay in a small place if there are only a few or no opportunities to make a living. Although Lithuania is a small country, commuting between work and the place to live is not so common as for example in Sweden. One reason for this is that to have a car is too expensive and the public transportation system is not working satisfactory. This is something that could be changed.

Also mentioned are the lacks of public service as well as entertainment. Included in the public services are of course day care and school, which is important, this is natural since these women are in the age when they might have children.

The answers from the group interviewed in Ozersk region was also about work as well as about things like security and the possibility to a good education for the children. This seemed to be from a different aspect than the one in Klaipeda. Background and past experiences do make a difference and form opinions, wishes and demands. The answers in Ozersk was based on longer life experiences and the demands seemed to be more for basic things such as security, education, possibility to make a living by having a job while in Klaipeda the women talked more about an interesting job, not just any job. The young women that did participate in Ozersk also seemed more interested in to have more than just a job than the elder women. It should be interesting and give something more than just a salary for survival reasoned the young women. Young women of today have other wishes and demands than their mothers have and this must be considered if the rural areas should be developed and attract people for settlement.

The answers about the residential area and the place to live such as house or apartment were different for the two regions but at the same time they touched the same themes such as closeness to stores, family, work, school etc but in Klaipeda

the reasoning were more detailed. This could possibly have to do with the fact that the experiences and life situations for the persons being interviewed differed a lot.

The group in Klaipeda seemed to have the basic needs satisfied while the elder women in Ozersk have a different background where they sometimes had to struggle just to survive. Similar for the groups was of course to raise the level of standard of living. But the starting level is different for the two regions.

One way to attract people to live in rural areas is to increase the level of standard of living. To live in the countryside has to be easy as well as comfortable. Living in rural areas should not exclude you from the rest of the world. Electricity, telephone lines and also good possibilities to go to the city and other places is important as well as to point out the values that rural areas has that the city does not have such as closeness to nature for example. Some people think that it is better for their children to grow up in a smaller place than in a city. Many times it is also cheaper to live outside the city and you can afford a better place to live but then these places have to exist. Houses or apartments of good standard must be built and the infrastructure must be improved.

This study does not give one straight answer to how to make people settle in rural areas but it gives hints about what women wants and consider important when choosing a place to live. Much of what is presented in the results has been pointed out already in the SWOT-analysis made in each region and this study can be seen as a sort of confirmation of this. It also points out things that the ordinary citizen finds important and they are the ones rural development is for. As already stated in general the reasoning in both regions are about improving the standard of living but the starting points as well as the basic conditions for development differ.

The method used in this study is somewhat a new way to gather information and when the Swedish part has been presented in the County of Kronoberg it has been welcomed as interesting and have given rise to discussions and new thoughts. It could be seen as a one of several tools for making future strategies for rural development. When persons in decision-making positions are about to decide about strategies for regional development, studies like this can help to prioritise what to focus on or what themes or new themes that should be more carefully looked into. It also involves the persons the strategies are made for and can bring valuable aspects into the work.

In order to attract people to settle and to make rural development profitable it is important to establish the demand and how a person reasons in the choice of living. Better knowledge and greater understanding for the reasoning are important ingredients in the planning work. How shall we plan the society so that the inhabitants can feel happy and want to settle in what today is rural areas? The people today who plan our societies cannot make themselves the standards.

Reference list

Boverket, 1996. *Hela samhället: Jämställdhetsaspekter på fysisk planering och byggd miljö*. D.1. Boverket. Karlskrona.

Interviews

Five women in Klaipeda, Lithuania, July 8th 2004

Ten women in Ozersk region, Kaliningrad October 8th, 2004.

Månsson, Erica. 2004. *Rural areas in Euro Region Baltic – empirical description*. Seagull report 6 - 2004

Appendix 1: Summary of the Swedish study

Women's choice of living

- a study to increase the knowledge on settlement in the region

In what different ways do women argue when choosing settlement? With this question as basis, a study has been carried out in the County of Kronoberg during 2004. The study is founded on interviews, separate and in groups, with 34 women aged between 25 and 35.

Many views and wishes have been expressed, which have been classified into the following eleven themes, without any order of precedence: *security, connection, supply, economy, location, chance, information, house/flat, environment, rented flat or home of one's own, and well-being*. Each theme comprises many different aspects and can also be connected to the place, the area, the house/flat (exterior and interior) or to more of these.

Much of what has been expressed is possible to influence by community planning, but not all. To create or find comfort and well-being either runs all through most of the themes or is felt lying behind. Well-being is something personal and hard to define. There are, however, some common things that have crystallized as possible means of creating a feeling of well-being, and these are: freedom of choice, peace and quiet, simplicity, social contacts, security, safety and participation.

Hopefully, the increased knowledge that this study brings will be used at the work with the community planning when it comes to physical buildings, but also when it comes to the planning of other public functions that this target group finds important when choosing where and how to live. The report can also be used as the basis of further discussions on this subject.

Appendix 2: Procedure

The following section presents the methods used for the gathering of material.

Focus group interviews

The pilot studies were carried out in the form of focus-group interviews. In focus groups, just like in deep interviews one and one, it is important to create confidence between the group and the interviewer whose main task is to act as moderator/process leader and ensure that the conversation progresses. The participants in the focus groups, in addition to the moderator, a secretary and an interpreter, are only those people being interviewed. The aim of this is to create a free, independent conversation, which can be disturbed if there are other actors present than the participants in the focus group.

In focus groups a dynamic atmosphere is created between the participants and this contributes to the gathering of a lot of information from many people in a short period of time.

Why interviews instead of questionnaires?

The reason for choosing interview before a questionnaire is that an interview contains more reflection than a questionnaire can give. Also, there are no given answers; instead it is the person being interviewed that set these freely. It is not the intention and it is neither possible to make any generalizations based on the result. In order to make generalizations a larger group should be interviewed based on a representative selection or a questionnaire investigation should be carried out. Interviews have been chosen instead of questionnaires since the intention is to gain a deeper understanding of the choices and assessments that lie behind the choice of living.

Target group

The target group for the study in Sweden was defined to women 25-35 years of age and newly moved among some other criterias. For the two pilot studies carried out within the ERB, information about the Swedish study was sent to give a picture of the method and target group. There were two regions within the ERB that showed interest in being part of the project, having a focus group session in their region conducted by Annika Carlson, who also did the Swedish study. One session in each of the two regions was carried out with a group of women selected by the responsible person in the region.

Klaipeda, Lithuania

In the session in Klaipeda five women were taking part. They were between 25-30 years old and lived in house or flat that they rented or owned. Civil status was married, single or living with boyfriend. Some had children, some not. All lived with either their partner or with a friend. Either they worked or were housewives. All came from Lithuania and had a university education.

Ozersk, Kaliningrad

Ten women took part in the focus group in Ozersk region. This group was a bit different from Klaipeda because the majority were between 45 and 60 years old and three persons were between 22 and 33 years old. Some of these women had moved to Kaliningrad from other parts of Russia during the Soviet time or after the fall of the union because of dangerous conditions in the home region.

There was a variety of civil status and they lived in house or flat with husband, children and family, it differed from person to person. The majority had a low level of formal education; a few had a university degree. Two persons worked today, one studied and the rest were unemployed.

Target group for the results

Target group for the results are primarily people involved in WP 4 focusing on rural development. Apart from this officers and politicians in ERB involved with question of planning as well as making the strategies for regional development should be seen as a target group for the result.