

Enhancing security and safety in low income neighbourhoods and informal settlements



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1 Factors Shaping Urban Shelter Design

Urban Sprawl, fragmentation and segregation

The propensity to disperse expansion of the city has complex origins, which combine many factors, including development control, planning urban transport supply, housing and communications, the price of land, employment opportunities, quality of services and to the identity and lifestyle. It is also an expansion that is not reduced to a social group or a type of urban structure.

In cities like Manila (capital city) fragmentation and segregation are observed in every level, as it also happens in many other countries, especially in the developing world. Metro Manila is divided into 16 cities each with its own mayor and its own policies. In the wealthiest of them all, Makati, which is also the financial centre of the Philippines, the average annual family income is 662,845 PHP, more than the double than Malabon 235,534 PHP, showing the big differences between the city itself (National Statistic Office of the Philippines).

Cities tend to occupy more space because of urbanization and demographic growth than what is needed, even though now we know there are multiple methods for a better occupation of the territory, the use of infrastructure systems and the extension of basic services, elements that ensure better quality of life (UN

Habitat, Cities and biodiversity outlook). Cities are facing now the problems caused by urban sprawl and with that, problems of fragmentation, lack of infrastructure...etc. The importance of planning is crucial now and this can be observed in the change experienced in development countries's policies. During many years the main focus in most of the developing countries was the housing and shelter but lately there has been a shift towards planning and its importance is growing more and more as it is seen as a very necessary element. It was pointed out "planning is therefore essentially a form of governance" (Jenkins, 2007).

In average, each inhabitant in year 2000 was occupying an area greater than that was used in 1990, or spatially cities expanded at a rate greater than its population growth (Angel, 2011). As it has been said Metro Manila presents division in many aspects and in different scales and this creates many similar problems in every scale: traffic congestion, lack of feeling of ownership, segregation, time spent in car, pollution, health issues, level of noise above limits...etc. (Gehl, 1987). The role of the planner in each case is to find which tool to use. When this previous stage has already happened there is a need to restructure the city with innovative solutions (Jenkins, 2007).

Major commercial centres and urban peripheries

In this context of cities in the rapidly urbanizing developing world in most of them two kind of phenomena are going on at the same time. On one side there are the new major commercial developments and on the other the expansion of the urban periphery.

There has been a trend to more strategic levels of planning as globalisation and trans-national activity increase importance. In the macro-level scale the new developments present limited structured forms of representative decision making dominated by the state interests in the face of global economic pressures (Jenkins, 2007), like the city of Makati or the still on-going development of Fort Bonifacio, a district in the city of Taguig, both in Metro Manila. In these islands of skyscrapers and commerce there is a big corporation developing the land, so there has not been a continuous process of decision-making and they have been planned with very little connection with the space that surrounds them, enhancing the

limits, rather than mixing different uses and types of people. In relation with the whole this does not produce a good effect. Some cities have been able with good planning strategies to overcome the economic and globalisation pressures like Curitiba in Brazil. The financial sector develops along five fingers and the residential part relies in between them. While having a high density it has been possible to not only maintain a good mix between residential and commerce areas but also having a good transportation system and leaving the car in another sphere and. The results of Curitiba are unique (Gehl, 2001)

In this context we find two different kind of expansion: the new major developments operated by big corporations in specific places and the development of the periphery. The urban periphery planning is dominated by the phase of widespread urbanization. "It is a stage of not urban not rural land" like Harry Smith, Paul Jenkins and Ya Ping Wang in their book "planning and housing in the rapidly urbanising world", proclaim. The typical image is gated communities along access roads that do not create a place, where neighbours do not know one another. They exist because of security reasons and they are possible because of the increase use of automobiles. In these areas desirable conditions have been created in the form of private gardens for private outdoor activities but communal outdoor activities have been reduced to a minimum. Jan Gehl describes them as "life around, but not between the buildings". The small and medium scales are decisive factors. With fences, walls and lawns it is possible to completely isolate one place.

This is a self-reinforcing process. When people feel insecure they usually try to limit their time outside the "safe places". If activity between buildings is missing, the lower end of the contact scale between humans also vanishes. The boundaries between isolation and contact become sharper - people are either alone or else with other on a demanding and exacting level, (Gehl, 1987). Walls enhance the security but they also prevent the exchange, increase the tensions between social groups and don't help create a place. (Jane Jacobs, 1961). When the chances of a casual meeting are lost, the tensions are increased and so the uncertainty. Reducing insecurity and fear levels is priority as making those areas more efficient and integrated.

2 Design of Sustainable Shelter and Neighbourhoods

Urban sprawl consequences in low-income neighbourhoods.

Security and safety

In the Philippines there are not many examples of expansion initiatives in the periphery that mix housing projects for high and medium income with social housing projects supported by the State or the municipalities. It is also noted that cities have expanded in a disorderly way, with precarious and informal areas lacking infrastructure and services, public transport or road access. They all contribute to the overall trend of spatial dispersion, with impacts and social costs, both environmental and economic.

Slums are a product of irresponsible policies, insufficient infrastructure and pressing rural-urban migration. They are severely neglected areas: housing is inadequate; services are deficient and facilities for recreation or capital investment, simply non-existent (Jenkins, 2007). In the year 2050 around 75% of the world's population will be living in cities (when now is around 50%). With the actual rate of growth it is impossible to just "clean" the cities of slums.

When kept in distant locations, slum dwellers cannot access justice and security. Additionally, slum dwellers and urban poor face a particularly high risk of crime and violence and often they rank among the prime victims of urban crime (UN Habitat. Building safety through Slum Upgrading). On the other hand, usually, the social subsidized housing tends to be located in areas where the land is cheaper, in other words areas bad connected, far away and with little access to public services in the periphery (UN Habitat. State of cities in Latin America).

Yet, it is also important to recognize the deeper causes of insecurity and violence and take into account the incidence of poverty, economic inequality, social exclusion, gender prejudice, and youth unemployment. The state institutions must guarantee the safety of slum dwellers and protect them also, not only the most favoured citizens, (UN Habitat. Building safety through slum upgrading).

In order to design quality sustainable shelter and neighbourhoods and successful upgrading programmes a good planning is necessary. Safety is an issue that is common to every part of the world and in order to achieve good, long-term neighbourhoods the inhabitants need to feel secure. Through careful design, in collaboration with the institutions and the community, it is possible to achieve it.

Intervention approaches for achieving urban safety

The issue of the security in the streets has been very developed with many theories during these past decades. When approaching security enhancement in low-income neighbourhoods or already existing informal settlements with problems the method that UN safer cities programme uses and recommends upgrading. As a tool as it strengthens the community, which is the first base for secure place. There are some key aspects that every intervention must take into account in order to succeed.

a) The need to strengthen social cohesion. The concept of social cohesion refers to the strength, or weakness, of the network of personal, family, professional, and neighbourly relationships that characterizes urban life. It reminds of the importance of social interaction and union between all the social groups coexisting in the city.

In order to dissolve the limits as the Global Report on Urban Settlements 2007 recommends, the first step is “a commitment to go down the road of community involvement, with all that this will entail”, including a trust in the people. This means that the first step to work with to break the limits is the community itself.

b) Reducing the “urban divide”. It is not a problem of poverty, but more related with the difference between social groups and between neighbourhoods that could cause the frustration that influences the level of crime. Differences concern incomes, living, access to basic services, and participation in political decisions.

Related with this is the urban sprawl, the gated communities and the insecurity mentioned before. When different income and social groups do not casually meet the tensions and the insecurity are increased and the gap between them gets

bigger. As Jane Jacobs points in her book “The life and death of great American cities” the problem of insecurity cannot be solved by spreading people out more thinly, trading the characteristics of cities for the characteristics of suburbs and gated communities. A well-used city street is apt to be a safe street. People have to have motifs to go into to them, so mixing public and private is the best option to create safer streets. Sharing public spaces between low and high-income groups where they can casually meet is an aspect to work with.

When boundaries are needed a good solution for them is to be opened during day but closed at night hours. That will allow a continuous flow of people during the day, and the feeling that space does not belong only to a specific group of people but to a whole (Gehl, 1987)

c) Effects that the urban environment may have on citizens. The size, the morphology and the structure of cities can encourage violence and bad behaviours. Big cities, generally, are more violent than smaller ones because of the anonymity they provide. Certain environments characterized, for example, for insufficient lighting and lack of maintainance, increase the possibility of committing a crime, according to research conducted by UN-Habitat. The “broken windows theory” by social scientists James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling in New York assures that maintenance can also be a way of promoting safety.

A safe street, according to Jane Jacobs, is proposing a clearly differentiates between public and private space, and has people in constant movement. The blocks should not be too large but they should have numerous corners and intersections. For her, a safe place is correlated with the multifunctional, compact and dense city where the street, the neighbourhood and the community are vital. A well-used mixed city street is likely to be a safe one. As pointed by her the problem of insecurity will not be solved by changing the city streets into suburban like streets. This probably accentuates the problem, as the statistics show.

Design is also a feature which will allow the avoidance of limits and will strengthen the security without segregating parts of the urban life. There are designs of Charles Correa like Belapur housing (1983-1986) in Bombay where the basic unit is “a shared courtyard, 8m by 8m, around which 7 houses are grouped” This creates a intermediate space between the outside and the houses, a space that

belongs to the neighbourhood, where people can be and can be seen and secure by the community. These kind of designs enhance the social exchange, as people are not constantly confined to their houses

Security and safety address in urban development

In many urban development initiatives, renewal or upgrading, local planners or designers rarely integrate safety in the list of issues that must be improved to enhance quality of life in cities and towns.

Usually, public safety and security are perceived by public administration as the police's work and, to some extent to the military forces. The Government provides the legal framework under which private companies can offer safety services to society. Finally, crime prevention issues are not clearly stated in the action plans of local and national governments.

Global report on human settlements 2007 points out that in many cases, given the usual inefficacy of the national police system, community policing is an alternative that it is often suggested. (Example: Local Partnership for Urban Alleviation (LPUPAP) communities in Kushia city in Bangladesh. It has been reported that groups of young men band together and attack drug dealers).

During the past two decades crime prevention strategies have been increasingly integrated in comprehensive urban planning practices. Attempts to do so appeared during the 1990's as government policies gradually shifted from repression to more comprehensive and participatory approaches involving local civil authorities and community based organizations (UN Habitat. Building safety through slum upgrading).

The Safer Cities Programme of UN-HABITAT has realized that there are four key factors that policy makers and urban managers should look at: the degree of social cohesion, the extent of urban inequalities, the risks of the built environment, and the scope of inclusiveness in urban governance.

All these challenges, in conclusion, reiterate that urban safety is a matter of urban managers and planners. Both areas, development and safety, should come together.

Case studies. Holistic approach

As addressed in UN Habitat programme “Safer cities” the “Key actor of a culture of urban-safety and reference centre of knowledge and good practices on urban safety and social cohesion is the community” So is not only the design needed but also the community work to achieve good urban planning. There is a need of mixing.

All of the cases presented have taken into account the various layers and levels that the upgrading and that safety and security building have. They have a very rich and complete approach collaborating with the community and trying to solve the “softer need” of the poorest, as employment, education, security and social cohesion. Some of them have a big budget and a big trained team since they are municipalities or government initiatives. In other cases the actors are international agencies in collaboration with local communities. The scale of the cases vary and so the scope of each one of them.

The flagship of these urban renewal and security enhancement projects are the successful PUIs (Urban Integrated Project), in Medellín, Colombia. Between 2003-2007 elected mayor Sergio Fajardo focused on “reactivating” forgotten and marginalized communities in the city with a slogan called “Medellín the most educated” and with “social urbanism” as tool strategy. The Integrated Urban Project covered the dimensions of the physical renovation, social participation and institutional coordination, in order to solve specific problems such as the lack of control over the processes of land occupation, the poverty, lack of opportunities and sense of belonging, the deteriorated environment, the social segregation and severe security issues that the city was facing.

These processes included the generation of public spaces, the provision of urban facilities and infrastructure and the housing upgrading. A very carefully developed security plan was developed which included different stages such as the mapping of the crimes, raising community awareness and the modification of the physical environment to eliminate conditions that facilitate crime. As a result emerged the network of “library parks” and schools, designed as symbols that aim to dignify and recognize the most excluded. “The combination of safety policies

and social investments was thought for these projects as an inseparable. “Nothing is isolated” by Secretary governor of Medellin Jesus Ramirez in 2009, reflects the thought of safety and citizen’s coexistence assumed as attached elements in the upgrading projects.

But this safety issue when it is not properly addressed by the municipalities can remain unsolved. This is the case of the upgrading of “Favela de Barrio” in Rio de Janeiro, where, despite all the success achieved in many other aspects, safety and security were not addressed as such and the presence of drug traffic, network, and dealers undermined the project (UN habitat, Building safety through slum upgrading)

Kenya is another country where urban safety appears to be a major concern to the government. The “Vision 2030” document reflects the country’s goals in safety as they look for “society free from danger and fear” and “security to all the persons and properties”. Launched in 2004, KENSUP, the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme is a partnership between the Government of Kenya and UN-habitat. KENSUP is acknowledged to have played some role in building bridges between the community and the Kenyan Government.

A number of physical infrastructure projects have been implemented under the KENSUP, and some of them have the potential of enhancing urban safety and security in these areas. For example, part of the proposed 12 kilometre access road linking in Kibera area has been built to improve access into the settlement. Other initiatives such as street lighting, water networks and storm water drainage will also contribute to enhancement of safety and reduction of fear of crime. High mast lighting has also been placed in open spaces perceived to be crime hot spot areas, mainly done through “Adopt a light” a community-based initiative that enables companies to advertise and light. Incidences of attack have dropped drastically.

In other cases, it is not municipalities driven actions but international agencies are able to meet the needs of the urban poor.

Cape Town has long had a reputation for violent crime with some of the highest murder and rape rates in the world. There, UN-habitat is already implementing a four key programme for Safer cities called Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU). It is an urban upgrading project whose four pillars are: making the environment less conducive to crime, developing a culture

of prevention, supporting preventive policing and law enforcement and preventing victimization. Basic features to promote security in the street level are for example: proper lighting on the main ways of access and secure points. The plan consists on the development of different ways of lighted access, basic pavement, playgrounds and a series of landmarks- cubic red lighthouses- that protect and support. The crime rate has dropped 40% in the area of Khayelitsha township.

The lighting is very important because it keeps people using the streets and the sidewalks “The value of bright street lights for dispirited grey areas rises from the reassurance they offer some people who need to go out on the sidewalk, or would like to, but lacking the good light would not do so” (Jacobs, 1961). Safe streets’s essence is the sidewalk use and the constant succession of eyes.

Port Moresby, capital of Papua New Guinea is currently selected as one of the least liveable cities because of its high crime rates and poverty and due to the lack of public facilities. The government tried to make a series of upgrading strategies and security enhancement but they were not completely successful. The main reasons for the failure were the lack of sensibility, the corruption in the system, the existing youth gangs “raskols” and the social tensions that infrastructure developments bring with in Papua New Guinea.

But there are examples of upgrading which have successfully dealt with the needs of residents in Papua New Guinea. Typically, these have been smaller scale and have involved a long process of developing partnerships and trust. They are not infrastructure upgrading methods. They are punctual actions in a very specific environment like the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi project (YLMP) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)’s Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP). One of the key reasons for recent successes in YLMP has been that the community itself feels that it directs priorities. The pillars are the promoting of sport and youth engagement, reintegration and skills development, awareness of urban safety and community engagement. As a result, PNG Power (Papua New Guinea’s electrical company) has extended the electricity network into some areas to create safer lit spaces, and in return communities that take responsibility for such infrastructure can participate in broader social development opportunities.

Conclusions

Today, local authorities and urban planners have come to terms with the idea that urban crime prevention and reduction can be best solved by addressing specific demands of local residents for social inclusion, security and safety, through their direct involvement in planning integrated improvement of their neighbourhoods. This can be seen in the urban integrated projects that are taking place all over the world but specially in Latin America. Upgraded living conditions and empowered secure communities are the main outcome. Authorities are more prepared to build urban safety when they formulate inclusive urban upgrading policies

The problem of measurably assessing impact of crime and violence prevention initiative, is a reason why it is difficult to mainstream initiatives such as that of Safer Cities. Infrastructure projects result in concrete quantifiable outputs, therefore use of donor funds can be easily justified and the development efforts are visible.

The persistence of the idea that safety and security is responsibility of the police also undermines many upgrading projects because their scope could be larger. If local conditions are safe and secure, infrastructure projects have the opportunity to be implemented more effectively. Improved safety and security conditions allow better development opportunities, which is why it should be integrated into the overall. Improved infrastructure, such as better street lighting, roads and common spaces, can assist in crime and violence prevention. The problem is, as said before, that in many initiatives there does not seem to have been any effort at linking the construction work to crime and violence prevention.

Security and safety are a self reinforcing process and they must be part of the planning regulations and of the architectural projects. Mixing between different income groups it is necessary in order to build the trust and fencing is a short-term solution, that is causing and will cause severe complications, because they don't solve the real problem . The current concerns and impossibilities challenge us to demand and innovate. A good public space can induce social behaviour and make a city safer

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