Integration of the Urban Poor into the Society

Planning for Socially Sustainable Communities

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Introduction

'In the planned city… the poor should at best be hidden or at worst swept away'

The former UN-habitat Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka aimed to point out at the most important issue of the future of our cities. Urbanisation of the poverty is one of the most serious problems that planners and government representatives need to deal with. Planning often tends to increase social exclusion in the cities and there is a lack of pro-poor and inclusive plans that place the urban poor to the centre of the planning process. (Watson, 2009)

The paper tries to explain the possibilities for the urban poor and how to integrate these segregated groups into society to be able to access social and physical infrastructure. The community and public spaces are the inevitable key factors which help to create a platform for people to interact to exchange capital and knowledge.

Literature Review

"For too long we have put the economy and jobs at the centre of city planning and development. People are what make cities and they would follow the jobs. It is now necessary to think about people's needs, including where they will live, and put them at the centre of city development." (Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat).

According to UN Habitat, for the very first time in the history, we have been facing the problem of urban population exceeding the rural one. When it comes to numbers, 70% of the world's population is nowadays living in the urban areas. In 2014 30% of the urban population of developing countries resided in slums which represents 881 million settlers. (UN-Habitat, 2016)

Housing determines the mutual relationship between every single human being and the surrounding physical and social space. Despite increasing demand housing has not been in the centre of political priority over the last 20 years. Since 1996, in Europe and the US, housing has become more of an asset for investment than a place to live. (UN-Habitat, 2016)

According to UN-Habitat, today the world is more unequal: 75 per cent of the world's cities have higher levels of income inequalities than two decades ago. The world is divided by access to opportunities, consumption, public space and services, education, technology and employment and access to income. (UN-Habitat, 2016)

Urban areas provide a lot of economic opportunities that attract migrants from rural areas. Poor households are forced, because of their low incomes, to make a trade-off between the quality and location of where they live. To live in a preferred location with access to livelihood-generating assets at prices they can afford, they are obliged to live in cheap, high density, environmentally poor locations. (Meikle, 2002) There are several approaches to the informal settlements: eviction, abandonment, regulatory enforcement, resettlement, integration and improvement and regularization. (UN-Habitat, 2016)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development aims to reduce inequality within and among countries (Goal 10.) and make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Goal 11.). (United Nations, 2015) Open city, as defined, is planned to bring together different people who vary by class, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation. (UN-Habitat, 2016)

Too many cities fail to make sustainable space for all, not just physically but also in the civic, socioeconomic and cultural dimensions. With too few exceptions, master planning has failed to integrate the interest of the urban poor in the physical and socioeconomic spaces of the city. (UN-Habitat, 2016)

According to speakers from Latin America at Habitat III these people have not only poor access to social and physical infrastructure like education, health,

water supply and electricity, but they also tried to point out at the lack of access to public spaces and recreational areas. (Deb, 2016)

UN Habitat describes that public spaces have a major role to play in sustainable cities as they represent meeting points between individuals and communities. Easy access to these places contributes to social inclusiveness. (UN-Habitat, 2016) According to WHO, availability of public spaces is essential for dwellers' overall physical and psychological well-being. Thus, it is important to create and improve access to public spaces for population living in informal settlements. (Deb, 2016)

Urban Planning in The Global South

Planning in the developing countries is influenced by the historic context of migration and discrimination. On the other hand, one could argue that urban planning system is nowadays influenced by the context and shaped by wide range of local, national and international forces.

Urban planning system in the developing countries has been influenced and shaped by the ideas from the global North. These ideas were designed for one place and therefore implementation in the other part of the world is most of the time inappropriate. These types of planning were used mainly during colonisation times. (Watson, 2009)

Today, one can argue that urban planning systems are part of the problem as they serve to promote social and spatial exclusion, are anti-poor and do not try to reach social and environmental sustainability. Separation of low-income groups is present in most of the developing countries. There is no mixing of plot sizes, resulting in lack of employment opportunities that mixed neighbourhoods have. Most of these neighbourhoods are situated far from the centres, on the outskirts, and travel cost makes access to all the facilities in the urban space difficult for the low-income residents. Urban spaces are considered undervalued by the city officials and they fail to support the livelihood needs of the urban poor and contribute towards improving the quality of their life. (Brown, 2011)As the physical upgrading is always needed to be satisfied first, there is little attempt to satisfy socio-economic development. (Nassar & Elsayed, 2017)

Integration of Informal Settlements

Comparing traditional planning which relied heavily on spatial design to construct cities, integration must also consider all other dimensions of urban development today. The integration of informal settlements is a multidimensional process that includes both spatial aspects like planning and upgrading of units, and non-spatial aspects like socio-cultural integration and inclusion through legal frameworks. (Deb, 2016)

Urban space is considered to be a crucial resource for poor households that cannot be ignored in the context of sustainable development. The lack of recognition of urban space as a critical urban resource and undervaluation by city officials results in failing in supporting the livelihood needs of the urban poor. Urban space is defined as channel for communications, source of livelihood, or place for social interaction. It is a crucial resource for poor households, particularly those engaged in informal sector employment who suffer from harassment, crime, insecurity of trading location, lack of shelter, and lack of facilities. (Brown, 2011)

In addition, informal settlements need to be well connected with traditional market places and other areas with opportunities of employment. Urban design can also help provide opportunities by allocating and designing spaces for informal livelihood activities like vendors and hawkers. (Deb, 2016)

There is still little consideration of the social dimensions which influence how space is used and perceived by the residents. Madanipour, who is quoted in Brown's paper, argues that environmental awareness depends on social and economic hierarchies, and that our interaction with urban space cannot be fully understood without understanding the social context of urban life. He argues for a socio-spatial approach to urban analysis which identifies the role of space in social interaction. (Brown, 2011)

Public Space and the Sense of Community

Recent studies confirm that uncontrolled urban growth over the past decades has led to the loss of neighbourhood public space which results in difficulties for residents to find a place for social interaction with their neighbours.

According to Rappoport, who is quoted in Chitrakar's publication, neighbourhood does not necessarily involve neighbouring, suggesting that social

contact and interaction do not happen in the absence of a common ground. Public space offers this common ground and facilitates the processes of social exchange and interaction among neighbours.

Public space is intertwined with everyday life in neighbourhoods in such a way that it is directly related to the quality of day-to-day social life. Public space concerns not only the physical but also the social and psychological dimensions with a significant overlap among them. The physical dimension refers to the physical environment or provision of public space which provides a setting for social interaction, whereas the social dimension refers to the use or activities occurring in the space. The psychological dimension relates to the perception of public space, which may be expressed in terms of how people interpret the space and give meaning to it, and how such meaning helps to develop a sense of community. Rogers's definition of sense of community as "the extent to which any member of a neighbourhood feels connected to and committed to others in the community, which bears on a sense of security and belonging". Public space is not just physical platform but it also has subjective meaning for the users that accumulate over time. (Chitrakar, 2016)

Interesting approach in the field of architecture when it comes to designing neighbourhoods could be observed in the work of Charles Correa. In many of his projects one could observe significant layout that is characteristic for this architect. Using cluster structure of units around courtyards creates possibility of mental extension of the house to the public space that is shared by other residents. In his project of Belapur Housing in New Bombay he is trying to mix 90% of income groups bridging them via creation of clusters of houses differing in size around a courtyard which represents platform for social interaction. Using basic layout of the units allows residents for later extension of their houses. MHADA in Bombay is a notable example of high-rise building where people are supposed to get out of the elevator at certain point in the building to provide natural interaction among the residents. A compensation for small size of unit is provided by establishment of common spaces for community activities and rooftop terraces. (Correa, 2000)

Chitrakar describes a different approach to provide common platform for social interaction. Local organisations in Kathmandu Valley in Nepal are involved in a range of sociocultural activities taking place within the community, and thus

contribute towards developing social interactions and maintaining social cohesion. (Chitrakar, 2016)

Participation in the Development of the Sense of the Community

According to Kassahun, the development of sense of community is dependent upon the bonding and bridging type of connectedness. Bonding social capital associates with strong ties in a closed social structure. Bonding connects individuals who are members of a certain group. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, refers to the aspect of social capital that emphasizes tolerance of different members as social actors, connecting diverse social groups. (Kassahun, 2011)

A research carried out in Ethiopia proved that a household with more generalized trust is very likely to participate in community development. (Knack and Keffer definition of generalized trust- trust we have in those "we do not know," but the trust arises because of our confidence in a known social structure). Because they bring individuals into contact with people different from themselves, they are more likely to lead people to take part in the larger society and thus to achieve social cooperation. (Kassahun, 2011)

On the other hand, a household with higher particularized trust has a lower likelihood of willingness. (Fukuyama's definition of particularized trust- the trust we have in individuals that "we know"). This could be due to the possible fact that people with particularized trust have narrow social networks. Hence, they could feel discomfited in the larger heterogeneous community. (Kassahun, 2011)

The research proved that establishment of a sound participation of the poor people in community development programmes, a better understanding of the livelihood of the poor and the collective decision-making within the community is fundamental. Some people can feel that adding new activities to traditional associations may jeopardize their cohesiveness and can create difficulty during partnership formations. (Kassahun, 2011)

Urban Shelter Design

'. . .protecting the needs of ordinary people rather than privileged minorities, the public rather than private interest, the future rather than the present' Lovering quoted in Watson (Watson, 2009).

Inclusion of the informal settlers into the society is the problem that planners and the governmental representatives need to solve in all developing countries. As previously mentioned, there is a need of creating inclusive cities for everybody. All income groups must be included in the city with access to all the facilities. Fundamental importance of connecting the urban poor with the rest of the city needs to be done. There is a strong demand to create common platforms for people to meet, exchange goods and knowledge. Different income groups enter the urban space to participate in the process of urban development of the community living within the same area. Public space is a key point in the neighbourhood to foster a sense of community. The more people come in contact with others, the more they have an opportunity to widen their thoughts with a possibility of a greater social exchange and interaction. The chance to share their views with neighbours is given by providing public spaces. (Chitrakar, 2016)

The urban planners in the global North have made successful proposals of connection of different income groups through mixing social groups within one neighbourhood. In the global South one can also find similar attempts.

Common Neighbourhood

One of the solutions to the problem of integration of the low-income residents could be creating common neighbourhood with mixed types of housing. This neighbourhood can accommodate informal settlers, previously working in informal sector, low income people and middle-income residents.

Figure 1- mixed neighbourhood)

(yellow: low-income residents, orange: middle-income residents, green: public space)

To reduce the need of living in a gated community with people of the same capital, especially for the middle-income people, and being motivated to live with lower income groups there is a need of establishing a community centre that can help to create a good reputation for the neighbourhood through providing various bridging activities.
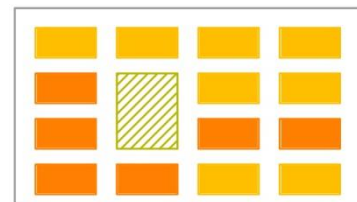
In the planning process a strong concept of the neighbourhood needs to be created to provide residents with a tempting way of spending their free time or opportunities of growing their economical capital or food production (for example urban gardening).

Social mix of the residents could be one of the solutions on how to decrease the gap between income groups and provide common platform for gathering.

As an example of mixing people in the global South one can use project designed by National Housing Authority called Harmony Hills. As the design proposal could be considered as the pioneering one in Metro Manila, there is no proof whether the project would be a successful one. The lack of creating common community centre, that provides activities helping to reduce the social gap among the residents, could make a failure of the attempt.

Connecting Neighbourhoods via Common Public Space

There are other ideas, how to provide connection and decrease the gap that has been widening last decades. Creating new mixed developments is not a solution for already existing neighbourhoods. There is a demand to reduce the boundaries and the distance that many people need to commute to provide their families with basic needs. Creating common urban spaces that connect two different-income neighbourhoods could be seen as one of the solutions to the problem of segregation.
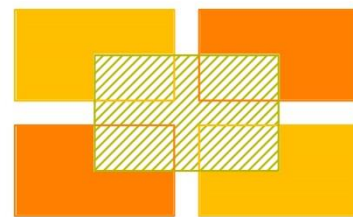

Figure 2- Connected neighbourhoods via public space

(yellow: low-income neighbourhood, orange: middle-income neighbourhood, green: public space)

The created urban space could provide gathering zone for trade, school, religious and free time activities. Low-income residents, who have been previously living in the slums, that are considered in a way quite narrow-minded as they have been living within one community and still have very strong ties towards its members, can gain the opportunity to interact with middle-income people, who can bring economic and social capital to the neighbourhood. Through trade and common activities, goods and knowledge could be exchanged. The urban space should be easily accessible from a number of different neighbourhoods and should be considered as the new core of the larger area that consists of various ones. A new community centre that facilitates the newly created neighbourhood with community activities, that can bind residents

together, is an inevitable part of this design. Social workers represent an important part of this development as the need of reduction of the social gap should be done through various educational workshops. This idea represents not that offensive way for the various neighbourhoods so residents do not need to feel the pressure of being forced to interact and the whole process of the community development has quite natural character for all the residents who are given opportunity to take part in the bridging process.

Variety of the Typology and Size of the Unit

A wide variety of the residential dwellings is the fundamental step of providing better, socially mixed residential areas. As observed in many countries, the design of the social and low-income housing is strongly influenced by the lack of the economic resources. Therefore, designers and architects worldwide are trying to reduce the cost of the unit by creating insufficient size of the apartments. One can observe, that we can find many remote areas that are not well connected to the city centre, consisting of the same type of the unit, mainly one-storey detached or terraced houses.

Figure 3- variety of typologies

(yellow: low-income unit/house, orange: middle-income unit/house, green: public space)

Providing people various sizes of units, corresponding to the capital of the future owners, can ensure natural occupation of the units by different income groups. There are many families nowadays who can afford living in bigger unit but the fear of losing the connection to the neighbourhood and family members is discouraging them from moving to a bigger unit as it usually means moving to another part of the city.

Bistekville II could be use as one of the examples. Beneficiaries were allocated, according to their economic status, a unit within one neighbourhood consisting of different housing typologies, which helped to mix various income groups. (From previous settlers to middle-income university graduated professionals.)

All the proposals designed in the future should conclude different types of units, from small units of sufficient size for single-parent families to bigger units that can provide accommodation for extended families.

The necessity of densification of cities needs to be met with understanding. Therefore, architects and urban designers should consider a major
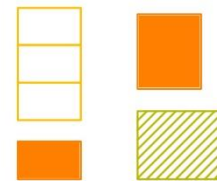
shift from contributing to creation of the urban sprawl, by providing families small one-storey units, to densifying the cities via creating multi-storey buildings easily accessible to the city centre or major public space.

Many people in developing countries have a strong need of being connected to the ground as they have never experienced living on the upper floor of the building. Therefore, architects should come up with ideas how to secure the feeling of the ground to all the residents living in the building while providing residents possibility for placing their own businesses within the building. The typology of the apartment housing should consist of different sizes of units. The ground floor should be mainly dedicated to commercial activities and community spaces to enhance the feeling of fellowship. The connection to the ground could be provided by using continuing slabs over the atrium belonging to the lower floors or creating public terraces or public roofs, that can become the place for social gathering or free time activities like urban gardening or dancing.
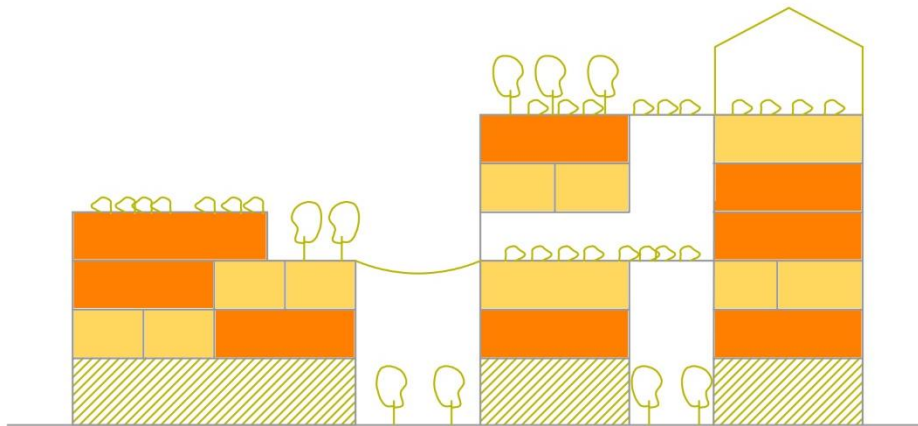

Figure 4- variety of units, example of the typology using slab and terraces as places of gathering

(yellow: low-income unit, orange: middle-income unit, green: public services- community centre, commercial space)

Importance of the Public Transportation

The proximity to the public space and the city centre is one of the main reasons why urban workers are becoming informal settlers rather than moving to a remote part of the city. The cost of the transportation and in many cases inadequate public transportation system discourages people to move to newly

designed low-income neighbourhoods as they cannot cover the expenses of commuting to work or school.
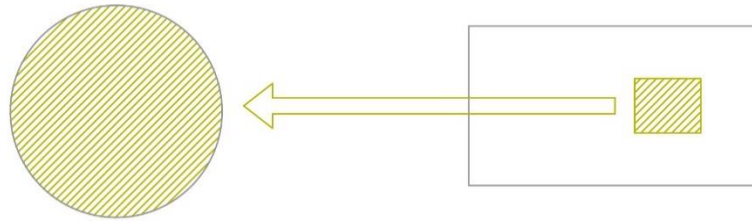

Figure 5- connection of the neighbourhood to the city centre

(square- public space insite a neighbourhood, circle: city centre)

Travelling by the public transportation is one of the bridging activities that many people in the city do together independendently on their social and economic status. New neighbourhoods, that are not located close to the city centre, should be provided by efficient public transportation, which can reduce the problems of traffic and increase the interest of the future residents to move to the newly designed neighbourhood.

Bridging via Free Time Activities

Creating new neighbourhoods cannot solve the existing housing situation in the global South for all the urban population. The importance of bridging people cannot be ignored in the future. Considering the fact, that the governments and non-governmental organisations are not capable of satisfying the demand for housing in the near future, one can predict that the existing wide gap between social groups will not be easily reduced.
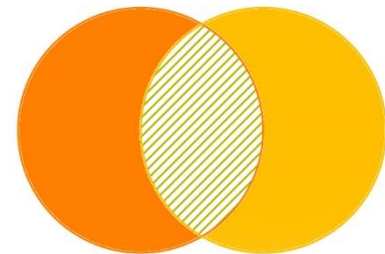

Figure 6- bridging activities

(yellow: low-income residents, orange: middle-income residents, green: common platform)

However, the idea of bridging the people can be done on social level. There are multiple activities which people, coming from different income groups, can join. Social workers play inevitable role of this type of bridging as it mainly consists of connecting people. The fundament of successful bridging is education as people need to be educated and willing to participate in the development process.

Workshops and common free time activities are supposed to become the core of the whole process of bringing people. Governmental organisations should

provide platforms for this movement towards connected neighbourhoods. There are several successful projects in the world bringing people together. It was proved that urban gardening could not only supply people with food but it can provide platform for people to interact. Low-income people can bring experience regarding farming while middle-income groups, willing to learn or participate in the process, can bring the economical capital to the project.

Trading on streets is nowadays considered as undesirable and is trying to be removed. Having in mind the demand for organically grown food in countries like China, the establishment of public market for farmers who follow organic growing, could become another platform for bridging.

Thinking about age groups there are various activities that can bring people together. (See Table 1)

Table 1- Bridging activities of different age groups

Age group	*Activity*	*Place, space*	*Importance*
Kids **0-15 years**	-Education -Play -Free time activities	-School -Playground -Community centre, art schools, dance schools	Learning process can start from the very beginning, influence of the future
Teenagers and students **15-22 years**	-Education -Shopping -Sport -Computers -Free time activities -Transport -Religion and celebration	-School -Public space -Playground, basketball court, dancing platform -PC room in community centre -Cinemas, dancing, karaoke, Zumba -Public transportation -Place of worship	Occupying young people and giving them activities that can influence their personal growth, Activities for youngsters by community centre
Adults **22-55 years**	-Work -Free time activities -Transport -Religion and celebrations	-Proximity of public space, commercial use of the ground floor - Urban gardening, community centre - Public transportation -Place of worship	Provide job opportunities, Activities for different income groups organised by community centre
The elderly **55- years**	-Meeting places -Free time activities -Religion and celebrations	-Café -Place in community centre for board games, urban gardening, dancing -Place of worship	Provide free time activities that can contribute in the life of the neighbourhood

The Role of Architects

The contribution of the architects in the process of integration of the urban poor into the society is significant. Integration is done on two levels- spatial and social and architects are responsible for providing the first type.

Architects, as professionals designing new neighbourhoods, need to keep in mind the importance of bringing people from different income groups. Coming up with tempting concepts, interesting mainly for middle-income groups, can secure desired social mix. The mixing can be done on building level and on neighbourhood level. The public space is the fundamental platform for new development allowing people to exchange goods and knowledge. The public space need to allow all age groups to do different activities all year round.

Connection to the city centre need to be secured by the designers, when planning a new development, and extension of the public transportation also need to be included in the new plan.

Architects, dealing with social housing in developing countries, many times need to meet numerous demands from various factors. The land aimed to become a new development is supposed to accommodate as many residents as possible because the demand for housing is very high. Usually long and narrow streets running through homogeneous neighbourhoods are the only open public space. Therefore, architects should be the ones trying to implement public spaces into the proposals as they are the core of the creation of inclusive neighbourhoods and cities.

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