Community based solution for slums sociology essay

A " slum" is often used to describe informal settlement within cities that have inadequate housing and squalid, miserable living conditions (city alliance, n. d. myths and realities of slum upgrading. [online] Available at: [Accessed]

Slums aren't some kind of contagious sudden growth in a city. Slums in actuality are created when people leave their rural villages to go in search of better life in the city. They are the result of natural economic forces. Due to the high cost of land and rent in the city they resolve to living in slums.

Slums, as they are illegal establishments, are the breeding ground of many social problems. They range from personal sanitation to formation of many illicit activities that threat the peacefulness of the city. Lack of water restricts and leads to bare minimum personal sanitation, transforming the slums into a residential and human waste dump.

Slums are usually overcrowded settlements with many people crammed into a single space. These settlements often lack basic municipal services such as water, sanitation, waste collection, rain water drainage, lighting and roads for emergency access.

For decades these settlements and communities have been unserviced and unrecognized, making them vulnerable, with each year, to worsening living conditions and social indicators on a downward slide; such as, resident crime circles that breed and dwell on the ignorance of the government.

This is the usual horror story of slums.

Population Boom

With each year the population on earth grows. In the year of 2011 we reached a milestone of 7 billion people on earth, out of which more than 1 billion people lived in slums. That is one seventh of all humanity. In a developing country such as Sri Lanka this number is further reduced to 1 in 3 people. (http://www. wsws. org/articles/2004/feb2004/slum-f17. shtml) In a country with a population of 21, 481, 334, (http://www. statistics. gov. lk/PopHouSat/CPH2011/index. php? fileName= Activities/TentativelistofPublications) this amounts to 644, 440. This is a relatively high figure of slum dwellers, compared to most countries.

Cause of slums.

Although viewed solely for its putrid tenure, slums in Sri Lanka and around the world have a complete history and livelihood behind the ramshackle, make-do houses.

In the early 1940s the world of Industrialization seeped in to Sri Lanka (http://www. dailynews. lk/2009/12/15/fea01. asp) This movement turned the world of elite upside down and changed the functioning society in the country. The cities and the economy began to prosper but this creation of vast jobs was the main reason for migration of residents from rural areas of the country to the urban. This huge influx of people built up their own houses and communities in the available spaces in and around Colombo. The resulted so called " Wattas" are the only form of settlement affordable and accessible for the poor.

These communities today are vast cities with their own law and infrastructure. The earliest residents who have fared well from their move to

the cities, now rent out their houses to new, fresh candidates of the urban dream. According to the census of population and housing 2011, an average of 593, 942 people migrate to Colombo; out of many reasons such as, marriage, education and displacement, employment rem ranks the highest cause for migration with a staggering 240, 805 people.

However, Wattas do not merely represent the shifting of jobs from rural agriculture to the concentration of industrial opportunities in urban areas; it's also the main driving force of the industrialized city. They are a significant economic force and a representation of a successful city. As much 60 percent of the employment is in the informal sector of the urban population (http://www. citiesalliance. org/About-slum-upgrading)

The current approach / take your society glasses off.

According to the City Alliance publication on slum upgrading the attitude of the government towards urbanization is an important component.

Inability of the municipal organizations to realize the existence of slums, most of the slums dwell in its own justice system. This leads to many underground illegal power sources that control the whole community. However, the current authorities believe that if they provide the poor with urban services, it will attract urbanization and cause the slum to grow.

" However, even with no services provided the slums and shanty towns in Sri Lankan urban areas continues to grow. Is the Colombo urban development plan missing something?"

The above stated view has lead them to implement the current system slum eradication; completely uprooting the shanty communities from their lands and relocating them in to apartment complexes located in rural areas. But this method continues to fail throughout because of the government inability to realize the actual needs of the slum dwellers.

Slum upgrading on the other hand is a process that gradually improves, and incorporate the informal areas into the city. It is not simply about water or drainage or housing. It is about creating an atmosphere and putting into motion social, economic activities that are needed to turn around the deforming trends in the area.

This constitutes of providing the slum dwellers with the economic, institutional and community services available to other citizens. These include legal (land tenure), physical (infrastructure), social (crime and education, for example) or economic services. (http://www. citiesalliance. org/About-slum-upgrading#Why_is_slum_upgrading_important)

Steady corporation and perpetual communication among the involved parties, residents, community groups, businesses as well as local and national authorities, is a vital component for a successful upgrade. Moreover slum upgrading creates a sense of ownership, entitlement and inward investment in the area, incrementally forming a dynamic and upgraded addition to the city.

Authorities should recognize the existence of urbanization in Sri Lanka and focus and seek out alternate solutions rather than focusing on rural tranferral development; it is rarely effective.

Nature of the Subject and Topics to be explored

" the places we live"

The activities tend to include the provision of basic services such as housing, streets, footpaths, drainage, clean water, sanitation, and sewage disposal. Often, access to education and health care are also part of upgrading.

" Who are we to deny any person from an impoverished background the opportunity to work, which may allow them to earn enough money to lift their family out of the slums?"

What you've read above is the usual horror story of slums. Despite the squalor of living, slums do consist of an infrastructure of its own and it is not all bad. The residents are a close-knit community who are not hesitant to help another member of the community who is in need. People who are well-off in the area are frequent activists of the community who focus on improving the community as it is of their own family.

No matter the conditions, slums have an electric and enigmatic connection between each resident forming a constantly updated network. This is a trait that lacks in the concrete jungles of cities, where a person sometimes would not even know the existence of his neighbor; confined to the tight schedules of work, they are almost like wound up figurines walking around the city to complete the day's tasks.

With no consistency in life, slum dwellers are masters in adapting to lives situations. Facing the obstacles of their lives, they are not hesitant to start

from ground zero which leaves them as an open and accepting community for improvement.

The expected impact of the proposed project, Area Code, is the redevelopment of the available space at 186, Sri Siddhartha mawatha, Kirulapana to stand as a sample housing community and a centre for initiating connection of the community to the city of Kirulapana. It's mission is to inspire, innovate and impact the surrounding area, Kirulapura, and transform the community to a dynamic addition for Kirulapana. The centre would both stand as a formal league structure and as an open, community oriented functional space. When completed, Area Code, will address the afore mentioned issues of slums and slum eradication ad hoc to the Kirulapura community. The space will invite the community residents, interested parties, individuals and societies in to the space to discuss issues and seek out alternative methods of slum alleviation, provide education on legal aspects of informal living and proper construction of houses, inform and create awareness of opportunities available to an average citizen of Sri Lanka, both young and old and initiate social trends that will benefit the society in the long run..

The center will be the home to housing units and a community space which will be available for activities such as meetings, educational seminars and local function. This space will transform to a more formal social area at night targeting the outsiders of the community to create cohesion and awareness between the city and the community. Ultimately the impact of the project will provide a innovatively refurbished facility which would bring together the community and provide a focal center for the community.

Funding

" United in peace, Let's Build a Great Nation: HE. The President Mahinda

Rajapaksa

With a set current fund for the sustainable development of cities and slum

alleviation, the development and the operation of the proposed centre will be

funded by the Sri Lankan government.

The project will be supervised by the Urban Development Authority, who

overlooks the city urban development and the integration of communities

and its benefits, on behalf of the government. (http://www. uda. lk/)

To ensure the project is a successful initiative the UDA will partner with UN-

HABITAT, the United Nations agency responsible for human settlement

(http://www. unhabitat. lk/about. html), who will provide managerial and

technical expertise specified to national slum alleviation.

Precedence

**" When you look inside you will find that the apartments are
actually like any middle class apartments in the world. So
this is not a slum; the slum is in your head."**
" an unplanned piece of city can work as well as one made by architects."

(http://torredavid. com/)

There is plenty of precedence to housing complexes. Around the world

plenty of housing unit designs are undertaken and built for various

demographics and various countries; and plenty more for slums. But the

research yielded a continuous stream of generic data, which for most part

focuses mainly on the most cost-efficient way of implementing housing to a collection of illegal dwellers.

Therefore my precedence and solutions came mainly from installations and ideas rather than a slum-wipeout-in-a-box mega housing unit implementations.

" An Idea sparks the imagination and the physical design process takes through the many stages and implications that the project has."

So you decided to stack them up to save real estate. Tell me, how is that not a vertical slum?

Torre David/ Gran Horizonte Installation and Café

A controversial installation by architecture critic Justin McGuirk, photographer Iwan Baan and the team of Urban think-tank of Venezuela, [Arch Biennale Venezuela 2012] Horizonte café opens up a fresh perspectives at these so called slums.

The project starts with the introduction of Torre David, a 45-story office building in Caracas, Venezuela, abandoned due to the death of its developer and the fall of economy in 1994. Where some would see it as an abandoned, dirty building, many squatters in Caracas saw it as a shelter. And today Torre David is an improvised home for more than 750 families (more than 3000 residents) who would otherwise live in slum around the edge of the city.

Supported by the idea " why should the people live in slums when there are empty office spaces in the city?", the residents of Torre David has created an

amazing infrastructure in this abandoned building. Self- put up walls and partitions scattered all over the building form a self-made city. The spaces in this concrete shell is not only occupied by residential units but also with the necessities of the community; which includes a church, a grocery, a hairdresser and a gym.

The UTT spent an year studying the social dynamics within this building and the community. They came to conclusion that successful urban development lies in the collaboration among the architects, designers and the population of the slum dwellers. Thereby forming the café Horizonte.

Built in the ground floor of the Torre David, also the popular meeting point, where the residents gather and converse, as an installation, Gran Horizonte, takes the form a Venezuelan arepa restaurant . It forms a genuine point of discussion and social space along with an exhibition space. Introducing the common ground spaces already created by the residents of Torre David, such as meeting spaces, worship and leaisure, reinforces the cohesive nature of the settlement.

Gran Horizonte brings in the public for the taste of the culture formed in Torre David. Along with the exhibition it provides an experience Torre David forms an exhibition space along with a common ground that sparks imagination and discussion to create alternatives for the millions of people in the world that reside in similar settlement.

This display of Torre David also questions the innovation of organic methods of development and the global phenomenon of formal/informal hybridity.

I looked to this project as precedence as it forms and practices the idea of collaboration between the city, people and the designers; to bring out their needs and their actual lifestyles and how their living standards combine with them.

This project provides a point of meeting for two communities with completely contrasting way of life. It flawlessly formulates a path from one person to another, leading to interaction and acceptance.

Throughout my research one thing that leapt at me was that slums aren't a horror story, they are just a community of people forced into the living conditions through many economical and legal factors of the country. To prevent citizens, especially of a developing country such as Sri Lanka, migrating to the city for better jobs and better life is an absurd theory. Relocating them back in to the rural areas after bulldozing their homes is a failing system as they move back into the city after abandoning their homes in the village. Torre David addresses the issue as it is and sees a community potential rather than their informal, improvised tenure.

Torre Davis is also an testament to failure and success, in the way the failure of the original building lead to the success of the humanity to make sense of this and occupy it.

Torre David not only stands for a mere installation but it becomes a protagonist for design. So it's not about the project itself but what the project represent and the issues this project is raising. The issue of extraordinary conditions which is a metaphor for many other conditions

Site

The Garage

" Why should we move from here? We have been here from our parents time, from 1972. There are no jobs elsewhere. This is a good place." – W. G Indrani, a settler in Kirulapura

As the current slum eviction program continues, the inhabitants of the slums have been provided housing in the form of huge apartment complexes that are placed way out of the city. The inhabitants have established their life in the city; the city is their life source in the form of occupation, income, connections, relatives and education. Therefore completely tearing them away from it and relocating to a rural area is a glaring flaw.

The settlers, many without legal claim to their lands and houses, do not want to move anywhere else, even with the promise of a larger plot and better health and sanitation facilities. They know they are sitting on a gold mine of potential opportunities. Indicated in the quote above, the lands acquired are prime plots and they provide the settlers what they came to the city for; better income. Through their access to many jobs, both legal and not-so legal, the settlers are provided a steady income.

The Garage

Immediate Context

Built in [year], [name] is a currently derelict automobile repair shop. Owned by [name] is put aside after a financial crisis. For [time period] it has been

the convenient local shop for automotive repairs in the Kirulapana

community. The shop compromises of a spacious [area for cars], oven,

conference rooms and a extra workshop in its backyard to accommodate

more [in need of] cars

Situated in the heart of Havelock city, the structure faces the Dehiwala Canal

with its border lines decorated with shanty housing.

[located in the western edge of male]

Immediate context

[Located in Sri Siddhartha road, the site is surrounded with lush greeneries.

The access to the pathway is provided through the High Level road; the main

arterial road of the city. Due to the close vicinity to many prominent high

schools and work places along with the junction that separate bus route 120

and 138, this road experiences high level of traffic during the peak hours.

(mornings, lunch time or school finishing time and the evenings) This

constant flow of passengers to their destination creates a fast paced and

energetic atmosphere in the area throughout the day.

Even though the area turns into a highly congested, loud human hub during

the peak hours, this bustling activity keeps the area rich with energy.

The Ghandara street, which is on the other side of the High Level road, also

feeds into the bustling romanticism of the area.

A well know haven for artists and treasure hunters, the Ghandara street is

the home to Ghandara, the antique furniture shop and many other art

galleries, antique shops, designer wear outlets, music and lazy café's and bistros.

" If a work of art is a confession, then ' Gandhara Street,' confesses of its unrelenting passion and zeal to cater to artisans and art-lovers of this island."

The Kirulapana area with it's mingling services: bistros, market squares, repair shops, galleries, main transit stops, attracts such a colorful variety of people , rich, poor, young, old, with various backgrounds all throughout the day.

Even though the site and structure is in close proximity to the main street, the lush greenery sets the bustling roads as landscape sans sound.

The frontal view of the garage consist of a panaromic view of Kirulapana and Kirulapura settlements, which is an important aspect as it emphasize the contrast between the city and the slum.

End user demography

Area Code proposed to be developed at (garage number) will be targeting and servicing the Kirulapaura watta and the surrounding community of Kirulapana . Like slums around Sri Lanka, the population of slum dwellers aren't homogenous, they are a diverse group of people with different means, interests and backgrounds. (http://www. citiesalliance. org/About-slum-upgrading). The center will accommodate and act as a common ground mainly for the following groups.

The Children

According to the census of 2011, (http://www. statistics. gov. lk/PopHouSat/PDF/Population/p9p26%20Children%20born. pdf) the ' Watta' of Kirulapana subsist of atleast 1000 families with an average of 3 children. According to a recent survey carried out, I was able to obtain detail regarding the life, education and the activities of the resident children. All the children in the community attend school, at least till the fifth grade. The children from the poorest families, who live on the financial margins, seek out work after school hours to help and support their families. These families, employed as maids and cleaners, sustain their life usually with a mere 400 rupees per day, the daily allowance of well-off high school teenager.

According to the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act (No. 47), 1956 (http://www. hrsrilanka. com/resources/articles/81-terms-and-conditions-of-employment-in-sri-lanka) the minimum age of employment in all sectors is 14 years. This reason coupled with extreme poverty, forces the education of majority of young men to come to a halt after Local Ordinary Levels, and exam taken at the age of 15.

The children usually seek out employment in menial jobs, or in places that accept their level of education. Needless to say, they do not achieve high ranks with their level of education and the majority end up in areas such as Pettah.

The percentage, who are left unemployed with no intent and interest in furthering their education, wonder idle in the streets with their peers. These

young children therefore, with the mindset of ' getting money', are prone to many ill activities and criminal elements operating in the area.

Therefore it is probable these youngsters benefit from this center. The classes and lectures conducted on developing skills and opportunities available for them as a citizen of Sri Lanka will boost their confidence and need to achieve their dreams. Since the voluntary classes are conducted free , this becomes a interesting and an economically viable activity for the insight deprived children of kirulapura.

Along with the above mentioned initiative, the introduction into a new society, and the ability to express and find themselves will encourage them to frequent the centre.

The Driving force

In most cultures and societies women and men have contrasting roles, responsibilities, needs and perception. (http://www. citiesalliance. org/About-slum-upgrading) The gender role played in such a sensitive community in a developing country becomes a crucial aspect of redeveloping a community.

Women play a vital role in slum upgrading. Male oppression is known and is a common occurrence in the society of Sri Lanka, this seeps deeper and darker in to the closed slum communities. Women are constantly abused by their drunken and unemployed husbands, and withheld from their right to voice their opinion. In other cases, women have fled to urban slum communities to evade domestic violence or discrimination in rural areas.

But looked from another perspective, this community forms head strong women, who are capable of running a household among numerous obstacles and poverty. Women are the heart of the community and the driving force behind the family. They are active in the community and are aware of its form and issues. This knowledge and skills are imperative for the slum upgrading to result in a successful initiative.

Violence, abuse, cultural norms, broader issues of gender and resulting vulnerabilities of being a widow are few of the many issues they can address in the " centre", this would create them to form an understanding and seek out solutions. Further information will provide them with legal knowledge and security. These reasons will strengthen the connection between the " centre" and them.

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