

City's resilience and comparting crimes

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According to Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 'A city's resilience depends on its physical assets as well as its policies, social capital and institution. 'There must however be a system of resilience in place which will allow for the restoring of continuity following Acute or chronic Stress which overturns the equilibrium. Such restoration is re-established as quickly and efficiently as possible.

For a city, Resilience means to have an infrastructure which withstands such acute adverse events such as water shortages, extreme heat, fire, flooding, landslides and enabling the early return to daily order post destruction. The implication is that investment in a robust infrastructure, as well as its maintenance and servicing, must be prioritized to minimize damage and downtime and increase both efficiency and reliability. Resilience against Chronic Stress is a little more challenging as acute. This article will focus on resilience against the following chronic stress factor: Crime. It is important to understand where crime in communities stems from and why underdeveloped areas experience higher levels of crime. Combatting social problems such as crime cannot be controlled using robust infrastructure. Instead, Landscape architects must take a different approach to address such problems. Clever urban planning can dramatically reduce the risk of violence and other social problems.

The causes of crime are complex. Poverty, parental neglect, low self-esteem, alcohol and drug abuse can be connected to why people break the law. In most cities, alleys are one of the most dangerous places. There is a lack of storm water management and paving infrastructure which means that these places are at night deserted and often serve as a major breeding ground for

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crime and environmental degradation. Alleyways are the routes hidden behind the aesthetically pleasing façade of a building. They are the narrow paths that hide the more utilitarian, less attractive functions of urban life and are often the shortcuts used by locals or well acquainted city dwellers. A growth in population and higher demand of housing however, has led to the slow diminishment of alleyways within residential areas. There is a requirement to understand the relationships between crime and the physical and social environments of alleys in order to combat crime and make the area safer for residents. According to Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, when designing, the following factors contribute to the decline of crime in urban environments:

- Avoidance of a sense of neglect
- Social control
- Lighting for nocturnal safety
- Good visibility
- Good Connection between public and private realms
- Realise that different uses have different needs

Downtown Los Angeles

Avoidance of a sense of neglect

The SLAGAMP (South LA Green Alley Master Plan) began in 2012 and focuses on 16 square miles of alley space in Downtown Los Angeles to address a multitude of city problems and create a positive impact in communities. This project is a good example of how Landscape architecture can attract pedestrians into an area and combat crime levels through implementation of the six factors listed above. The green alleys masterplan programme

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understood that it was community support that was actually driving the success of the programme. Over the course of over 40 workshops, interviews and surveys, the city collected information from its inhabitants in order to determine what changes needed to be made. Some of the design solutions that were proposed such as permeable paving that help restore water management and create community connectivity have been implemented. Semi permeable paving with a sub layer consisting of 600mm aggregate now captures and filtrates 1000's of gallons of rainwater a year, which in turn takes the pressure off the sewage system and help prevent flooding while creating a good connection between public and private realms.

Social control

In 2014, a street art organisation known as GABBA, joined the alley regeneration movement. What began with just a few murals of flowers in 2014 has blossomed into an artistic movement with over 110 murals which have brightened up the previously unused, abandoned alleys that populate Downtown Los Angeles. It is important to point out that there is a unique difference between graffiti and street art. According to the U. S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, Graffiti is primarily used by gangs to mark turf or convey threats of violence, political messages or racial slurs. Street art is a subset of graffiti writing, but with the intention of interacting with the public, understand what they are seeing and have an emotional response. The introducing of street art in Downtown Los Angeles attracts people which makes these areas less isolated. The vast amount of alleys in the south of Los Angeles have, as a result, been regenerated and turned into a destination rather than a place to avoid. Colour and much

needed life has been added to a previously rundown neglected area. Another way of combatting alley crime is gating. Lockable gates installed either end of the alley, prevents access by non-residents. Alley gates help prevent crimes such as littering and anti-social behaviour by inhibiting access to alleys by non-residents.

Lighting for nocturnal safety

The subject of street lighting in relation to crime rates, is an ongoing debate.

A study, released by The Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health¹, studied dozens of cities and towns in England and Wales with reduced lighting on their streets in an attempt to discover a link between lighting and crime. Some street lights were dimmed while other street lights were completely turned off. No link was established during the three year study conducted between 2012 and 2015. Coauthor Shane Johnson of University College London also pointed in his summary for this report, " but it is important to note that it does not mean this will be the case under all conditions, and so changes to lighting should be managed carefully. " A study conducted in the UK by Painter and Farrington in 2001 found that in two residential areas, crime was dramatically reduced in neighbourhoods where street lighting had been increased. This reduction in crime was also seen in adjacent neighbourhoods. There have been huge variations of results to further studies conducted globally. As stated in the college of policing in England and Wales 2008 brief titled The effects of improved street lighting on crime, ' Improved street lighting had a positive effect in reducing crimes such as burglary and theft. It did not, however, reduce the incidence of violent crimes. Perhaps surprisingly, the positive effects of improved street

lighting are felt in the day-time as well as at night. ' The journey also concluded that there are two main explanations for why improving street lighting reduces crime:

1. Improved street lights help to increase surveillance and deter potential offenders
2. Improved lighting signals investment in the community and thus reversing the ' broken window effect

Mike Riggs a former staff writer at CityLab, made the following observation on the topic of street lighting and a sense of community, ' it brings us outdoors in our neighborhoods, and helps us get to know each other. Fear keeps us out of the alley, and attraction to light and what it represents draws us to illuminated streets. ' There is something about a well-lit space that feels less dangerous and somehow safer than its darker counterpart.

Good visibility

Narrow spaces, blind spots, corners and paths that are badly lit create a feeling of uncertainty. Good visibility is not soley reliant on lighti