Place-making: A Crime Prevention Strategy in Urban Spaces

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Abstract—Contemporary research on urbanism suggests that many experimental projects and pop-up interventions in urban spaces have led to increase in more successful and revitalized sites. Making great places means making safe places. This research will inquire about three case studies on how place-making has prevented crimes from occurring. This research paper examines the urban square project from Chennai and compares it with projects from other cities abroad. Our analysis shows a strong correlation between human behaviour with the environment. The results conclude that place-making affirmatively deters crime in urban spaces. (Abstract)

Index Terms—Placemaking, Situational Crime Prevention, Human Behaviour (keywords)

I. INTRODUCTION
Negative spaces, decrepit buildings, shabby streets and abandoned alleyways are the eyesores of the metropolitan cities, which in turn becomes the flashpoint for crimes to happen. Situational crimes can be prevented and the fear of crimes can be reduced if the cities are designed with thoughtful interventions. When a person commits a crime because he had the opportunity to do so is said to be a Situational Crime. For better understanding, try and conjure up walking alone in a street that has poor lights, with no surveillance cameras to monitor. The environment alone influences the criminals to snatch things from people, who were walking alone in the street. This type of crimes happen when there is no one to stop the crime. Activated public realms attract more people to use the space which reduces the opportunity for criminals. Hence the prevention of such crime is termed Situational Crime Prevention (SCP). Placemaking aims to enhance the functionality of urban space, improve mobility and attract new business opportunities. It offers an approach to deter crime which does not just include changes in the environment or surveillance improvisation but also enhances the quality of the public realm. Sometimes the smaller things we do in a place will have a long-term impact. City, buildings or urban spaces affects us on a subconscious level without the users being aware of it, as the behavioural aspect of a person is based on the built environment he lives in. The environment can encourage or discourage humans to act. A good social environment can motivate people to interact with each other. A poor environment can influence crimes to happen. Lights, shades, spatial allocation, air quality, smell and sound in an environment can have impacts on human health. A healthy environment is necessary for a healthy society. From understanding the correlation between humans and the environment, designing spaces for both is the only way to promote a safe and healthy urban environment.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This paper investigates how placemaking can be used as a crime prevention strategy in urban spaces. Three case studies on varying scales from India and abroad were selected, [1.] Analysing the social space as a dynamic whole, inquiring about the pilot projects based on place-making and understanding the change of human behaviour in the intervention spaces, [2.] Understanding the design by qualitative experiences from the selected case studies. This research is purely about the qualitative experiences of the urban space and how designated space can have an impact on human behaviour on a subconscious level.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW
The first major topic in the study is to understand the correlation between humans and the environment. The study of human psychology in the environment lacks theories that can be applied to all types of environments based on Gifford’s “Environmental Psychology: Principles and Practices” (2002). Due to this, psychologists and behavioural theorists have theorized various human-environment behavioural models. This literature review looks into two behavioural theories, stimulus load theory and behaviour-constraint theory to understand the interrelationship between the human and the environment. The stimulus load theory conceptualises the environment as stimuli that provide psychological stimulation (Gifford 2002). These stimuli can range from elements such as light, sound and to other complex elements such as the quality of the buildings and streets. The behaviour-constraint theory states that the restrictions are imposed by the environment on the people. When people lose some degree of control in the environment, the first experience they have is some sort of discomfort says Bell and Paul A in their “Environmental Psychology” (1996) Depending on the state of a place either vibrant or dark alleyways, the human movement changes accordingly based on the environment. Secondly, the design objectives for the analysis of human behaviour in the outdoor environment were conducted by the urbanists like William H. Whyte and Jan Gehl in the early 2000s. In Whyte’s (2009) study, the data was observed by counting the pedestrians and capturing through photographs based on the social situations happening and converting the study into quantifying data for the design practices. Meanwhile, Jan Gehl (2013) observed the public spaces based on the activities by their purpose, repetition, and pattern (either stationary or movement). He came up with his methodology to study the social space by coining the steps of counting, tracing, tracking, looking for traces, mapping and photographing. Thirdly
understanding the benefits of the type of projects that have a long-term impact. Placemaking has the potential to activate unused negative spaces, and add value to the city while preventing crimes and providing safety to the civilians. Proposing buildings as interventions in every urban infill project won’t fix the problems such as situational crimes. If planners and designers want an urban project to be effective in a positive way, they need to understand the users of the particular space. Placemaking can promote the use of city space. Those sites can provide amusement, pleasure and protection. Jane Jacobs explained the life that every place possesses in a city in, “The Death and Life of Great American Cities”. She says, “Build streets that invite people to walk on them at all hours of the day and night”. Criminals don’t like the possibility of being interfered with by anyone, which says they look into opportunities of not being witnessed by anyone.

IV. CASE STUDIES

Three case examples for placemaking have been taken into the study.

Placemaking in Chennai

Kathipara Flyover is one of the most important junctions of Chennai city. The spaces below the Kathipara which was considered to be negative space beneath the grade separator transformed into an Urban Square cum multi-modal interchanging point with a children’s park. The 14-crore project was undertaken by the Chennai Metro Rail with funding from the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA). The transit park recontextualises 5 fundamental landforms of Tamil culture as described in Sangam literature. Not just as a vibrant placemaking, the project was meant to create an impact as a vivid precinct to make the transit route a lasting impression in people’s minds. The project has created a safe environment for metro users and other pedestrians. The metro stations near the grade separator have reasonable footfall, which will increase the opportunities for making more impactful social spaces in and around the city. The Urban Square project has made a greater impact on the city. Pedestrians and commuters have increased impressively, clearly showing that the project provided a crime-free zone. This project become a stepping stone and paved the way for more similar projects in many places like Koyambedu.

Placemaking in Vancouver

Placemaking doesn’t stop the crimes directly, but it will provide a setting where people can sit, stand and walk safely irrespective of day and night. The alleyway projects in the districts of Vancouver have shown the results. The bold rethinking of downtown alleyways brought vibrancy to the under-utilized spaces in the city, which now laneways become one of the important business functions, friendly, accessible and lively parts of the city. The land cost in Vancouver increases the difficulty of providing public spaces. The underused laneways seemed to be an affordable option than dedicating a land parcel. The contrast theme and bold colours caught the attention of the commuters and youngsters. The dark alloys were transformed into vibrant pathways making the people use the laneways regularly. It is observed that the number of users of the laneways doubled. Notably, men were the predominant users of the laneways, since the transformation, the gender ratio came to an equal balance.

Placemaking in Philadelphia

In Philadelphia, Wharton street’s illuminated murals have become the trend spot. The Knight Foundation conducted a mural art program to fight crime, two artists made their proposal and successfully implemented their idea. A new electric installation has just popped up and it become a f
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V. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The five parameters have been taken for the understanding of the correlation between humans and the environment.

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<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Kathipara Urban Square</th>
<th>Vancouver Laneways</th>
<th>South Philly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>The Urban Square is well accessible through the connecting roads from the primary roads.</td>
<td>Laneways connect the two streets as cross streets.</td>
<td>Here the downtown streets have good accessibility.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>The Visual transparency welcomes the commuters and the vehicles in and around the grade separator.</td>
<td>The two ends of the lanes open to the two streets visually draw the commuters passing through the busy Vancouver.</td>
<td>The intervention through neon lights open up the illuminated way between the darkened streets.</td>
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<td>Functionality</td>
<td>The large urban space under the grade separator possesses a good socio-economic value.</td>
<td>The laneway functions as a hangout spot, play area and community party area.</td>
<td>The street does not have any specific function to happen every day.</td>
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<td>Legitimacy</td>
<td>The legitimate elements like lights and surveillance are installed that ensure safety.</td>
<td>The laneway is installed with lights in order to attract the commuters to use the way regularly.</td>
<td>The neon street lights are quite effective after installation providing a sense of safety from the dark.</td>
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<td>Quality</td>
<td>The public realm is well maintained.</td>
<td>The community takes care of the laneway.</td>
<td>The street lights require less maintenance.</td>
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**CONCLUSION**

By bringing the community and activity, the case studies have shown how a successful environment can be designed. Placemaking can be understood as an affirmative strategy for rethinking a decrepit space. Firstly, a deliberate approach is observed in each project. Secondly, Urban Square, Vancouver’s laneways and South Philly’s light project addressed the answer by providing an environment that ensures safety on a subconscious level. Successfully responding to the requirements in the research, these projects were able to become a guide for placemaking. The ultimate goal of these urban projects was to activate the inactive through tactical interventions.

**REFERENCES**


