New Trends in Psychology

Community Development

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Abstract: The article approaches the issue of crime-prevention through urban planning in Norway, discussing the ideas and differences between physical(hard) and symbolic(soft) delineations of territory, questioning if they might not be that different, since they share similar objectives: to protect against someone or to prevent someone from accessing an area. In Norwegian history, the year 1970 marks, among many others, the beginning of a new urban planning movement called Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). The basic idea behind the program – as well as the Scandinavian crime prevention system – is to prevent crime. However, the main difference is that the new movement militated for the marking of territories with symbolic, inclusive measures rather than fences and walls.

Keywords: crime-prevention; urban planning; Norwegian history

"Urban environments can be designed or redesigned to reduce the opportunities to crime (or fear of crime), but without resorting to the building of fortress and the resulting deterioration of urban life. This is not just law enforcement and punishment and not just armed guards and big-brother surveillance, but the 'restoration' of informal social control and the way of helping ordinary citizens 'regain' control and take responsibility of their immediate environment."- Stanley Cohen, 1985.

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Definition of the Key Concepts

Urban Planning: The branch of architecture dealing with the design and organization of urban space and activities;

Territoriality: is a term associated with nonverbal communication that refers to how people use space to communicate ownership or occupancy of areas and possessions.

Gentrification: the process by which a place, especially part of a city, changes from being a poor area to a richer one, where people from a higher social class live;

Crime prevention: the act of stopping a crime from happening or of stopping someone from committing a crime;

Exclusion: to prevent someone or something from entering a place or taking part in an activity.

Crime-preventing architecture would traditionally protect buildings or other properties by designing physical obstacles. Taking as an example the middle age community, whose inhabitants were protected from the outside danger by walls. Today in the US, 'gated communities' hold as much as 9 million of its population. Also known as guarded living areas, these communities are, to a certain extent, separated from the outside communities.

The movement earlier described, CPTED – Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, appeared to contest the development of such communities, believing that using walls and fences as crime-prevention measures would create fortress-like cities.

The CPTED advocates for the use of 'soft' measures for the prevention of crime. The soft measures include particular designs of benches or fences, to symbolic marking of territory, placement of street lights, etc. not only to increase safety, as shown in the example above, but to also improve the organization of social space in the city.

Why these measures?

The beliefs of the CPTED are based on the fact that crime results partly from the opportunities presented by a physical environment, as well as tempting targets and a lack of capable guardianship.

The movements promote the idea that by the layout, structural and physical means, design or re-design of an environment, one can reduce crime opportunity and fear of crime. The supporters of the movement, claim that for the ideal results, the projects must be applied with a multi-disciplinary approach, for example: engaging planners, designers, architects, landscapers, law-enforcement and (ideally) the engagement of the residents/space users.

Newman differs from **Jacobs** by stressing the importance of informal surveillance and its power to discover people who do not belong. So, while Newman emphasized the importance of inhabitants having knowledge of each other within the area, Jacobs argued that control could be exercised even when people did not know each other.

The gentrification of cities

According to Mike Davis, who in 1992 attempted to describe the development of gated communities that manifested in Los Angeles, the separation between the social classes was caused not by the desire of the upper class to remove themselves from other groups, but rather by the increase in the number of people seeking to live in urban areas.

Zukin concluded in 1997 that the segregation was caused by the focus that shifted to the aesthetics and safety in public spaces, linking the factors mentioned above to the 'gentrification'.

The Defense of Territory

The article in discussion questions whether the gentrification, having as an effect the renewal of certain buildings and areas in the city, has indeed been triggered by the aesthetics.

The study shows how the apartment block owners are applying for certain minimum standards, such as private outdoor areas, only available to tenants of the building. For these measures to be possible, the tenants considered having all gates/entrances closed. Therefore, the question becomes: is the defense of territory becoming more than just a mean to reduce crime?

In the case mentioned above, the means to delimitate territory are used not to reduce crime, but to avoid other people and denying people access.

The New Urbanism

Zygmundt Bauman (2001) claims that in an insecure world, people tend to seek safety through the marking of territories. However, in 1988, he emphasized the 'low points' of crime-preventing measures, claiming that they can be either *seductive* or *excluding*.

The idea of marking territory as a measure to prevent crime could be *seductive* for the inhabitants of the communities that they are planned for, but *excluding* for the people who do not live in or do not use the crime-prevented communities.

Ironically, Jones and Newman, both stressed the importance of creating and planning multifunctional areas to prevent urban areas from being unpopulated during some parts of the day – the contrary of what resulted from the gentrification in certain parts of the city.

Shell Protection

The concept of *shell protection* refers to those luxury flats that are well shielded from the outside world by the use of security and access control systems such as video surveillance, card readers and/or security guards (Aspen 1997).

The danger that comes with living in such enclosed environments is the distorted perception of reality. Studies on social behavior suggested that the main reason behind city living and low social integration is the fear of violent criminality.

Richard Sennett (1996), holds that the ideal of creating a safe city in many ways is incompatible with the idea of a city as described above. The city is chaotic, varied and uncontrollable. Parts of the city are unknown and will naturally cause fear. Urban planning is, according to Sennett, purification mechanisms meant to give the people more control over their environment and prevent the unexpected. The aim is getting control over the social life.

Sennett's perspective demands a greater acceptance of the uncontrollable and unpredictable – both natural parts of the city. In this way, with a greater acceptance, the citizens will gradually feel less unsafe. Sennett's ideas are supported on the base that the fear of crimes experienced by many is often linked to public places.

The results for the author's research based on interviewing architects and urban planners suggested that when asked about criminality, most people referred to the **criminal acts** that we are exposed to in **public places**.

Would that problem, however, be solved by territoriality? Sennett believes that the answer is no. Once you have marked a territory safe by wrapping it in a fence, everything outside of it becomes **public space** unless every public space becomes privatized.

"*You will not find one architect who likes wrapping houses in steel fences.*"

The article in question emphasizes the idea that fences and walls are exclusive measures, while the vast majority of architects and planners expressed the wish to make the environment be more inclusive.

Opera music as a Crime-Preventing Measure Case Study: Copenhagen Railway Station

The Copenhagen Railway Station serves in the study as a perfect example of how symbolic measure can be used as a crime-preventing measure. In the said area, police had been experiencing troubles with homeless people who occupied the train station's entrance and a group of drug dealers.

In an attempt to rid the Railway Station of unwanted groups of people, the administration started playing opera music and Christmas carols unbearably loud. The choice of music was based on the reasoning that the people occupying the entrance would not identify with the music played. Consequently, the effects were visible, the unwanted groups choosing to stay outside of the entrance, rather than inside – even at temperatures below 0.

However, despite the measures being effective in keeping the groups outside of the establishment, the illegal activities kept happening outside of the station's doors.

Norbert Elias (1982) describes how the modern Western society has developed a sense of sensibility which, among other things, may have caused the elimination of violence in our everyday life. Violence has become regarded as "inhumane" and the violent behavior is tolerated less than before.

Elias claims that the violence is hiding behind the scenes and even disturbing aspects of our lives become more or less absent. In consequence, could be a defenseless society unable to develop resistance. Therefore, he uses these arguments to support the use of soft measures of crime-prevention methods.

However, in my opinion, a society that is expecting to live in a world in which violence is non-existent is looking at an ideal standard that is impossible to attend. Living in a society that becomes defenseless and unable to develop resistance will mean living in a society that is not able to fight against violence when meeting it.

Conclusion

The marginalization or removal of certain people from public spaces poses a serious ethical dilemma. Do socially empowered groups have the right to organize public spaces in a way that accords to their notion of order?

This ethical dilemma is discussed because of the fact that soft measures make the act of exclusion almost unnoticeable for everyday users – suggesting that there is an alternative. Soft measures are subtle and difficult to discover. In this way citizens are prevented from reflecting on exclusion and the ways in which urban areas are open to some but closed to others.

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