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FROM HORIZONTAL TO VERTICAL: HABITUS TRANSFORMATION IN RESETTLEMENT OF UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES TO HIGH RISE BUILDINGS

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Abstract

Housing... amongst the many discussions of architecture and sociology, there isn't a topic more timely and relevant. A main concern in the discussion, the urban poor living in long established underserved settlements, grow and spread by the day. To provide better living conditions and claim valuable real estate, many governments including Sri Lanka commonly adopt resettling the people to high-rise social housing. The success of this solution however is still debated upon. The process of resettlement involves changing the environment of the people from horizontally spread neighborhoods to the vertical towers. Social implications of the process could be observed in many precedents, yet the understanding about the transformation is limited. The study intends to critically look in to the social life of resettlers and see how the transformation happens. The broad concept of social life is narrowed down and analyzed through the concept of "habitus" and related theories. Mihidusenpura social housing in city of Colombo was selected as the case study to explore the transformation over 10 years. The study explores how each aspect is affected with time, what needs to be preserved and in conclusion how habitus can be manipulated using architecture and proper planning to create successful social housing.

Keywords: home, neighborhood, housing, low income, habitus, transformation

1. Introduction

Houses are a physical entity as well as a social and a psychological entity. It touches every human being in profound ways. (Adams, 1982). It is interesting to see how "low income" or "urban poor" is identified by the living conditions of the people, with housing as the benchmark. It is observed that the urban poor who exceed the minimum per annum income per family (US \$1,345 per annum) that benchmark the poverty in Sri Lanka (Department of Census and Statistics, 2011; Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, 2012). live in squalid conditions in low income settlements, otherwise known as slums.

Slums-watta in Sinhalese—occupy the central, northern and northeastern parts of Colombo. According to Sevanatha (Sevanatha) Slums in the inner city areas are the oldest low-income housing in Colombo *The Watta Dwellers* (Silva & Athukorala, 1991) This identification with particular *wattas* remained strong amongst communities involved in this research. Strong community ties are evident amongst the watta residents and these results in forms of social control. The resettlement causes loss of these structures and strong ties. Residents in fact, do not want to leave their people behind and move. Especially the reports of Forced evictions show how people are traumatized and lose all the social, cultural and economic values because of being evicted and resettled. (Perera, Ganeshathasan, Samaraarachchi, & Ruwanpathirana, 2014)

In Colombo, government implements Land exchange and land sharing method and relocation method and provide multistory housing to slum dwellers in order to free up land. *Samaratunga, T. C. (2013)* The guidelines provided for the government agencies show that much attention need to be given in relocating (A guide on planning of condominium property and management, 2007), yet the process takes place only using physical and legal attributes such as voting rights, availability of an address etc.

The paper sheds light to the transformation of the social setting that takes place once a community is resettled and how this knowledge can be used to make resettlement of urban poor smoother and a

successful process. Subsequently architectural solutions are suggested to the identified situations.1.1 Objectives

- To study about the social values and relationships in underserved communities with the architectural setting.
- To study the social transformation after the relocation in to a high riser social housing.
- To understand what elements contribute to betterment of the social life and what has receded with negative impacts
- To compare and contrast the two situations and arrive in to conclusions about how to go beyond where we are today in social housing, in making policies and in architectural approach.

2. Theoretical framework

Social setting is a highly vague and a broad term. To define and quantify a society’s change and its transformation, the concept of Habitus by Pierre Bourdieu is used.

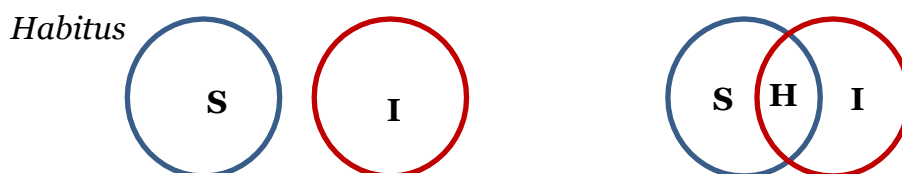


Figure 1 Habitus, agency and structure (Mallikaarachchi, 2003)

This figure shows that habitus is a common point between social structures and agent. Structures like rules, norms, regulations and the individual together create the way one would perceive the world. The importance of this concept is that it is described by Bourdieu as a genetic structure. It has a power of genesis and generation. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 135) habitus could be thought of “as a sort of spring that needs a trigger and depending upon the stimuli and structure of the field [social setting], the very same habitus will generated different, even opposite, outcomes.” The research makes use of this generating power to see how habitus of the relocated people change after they have been moved.

2.1 RELATED THEORIES

Habitus is difficult to be discussed without discussing the theories that relate to it. The other two, much discussed theories put forward by Bourdieu are fields and forms of capital.

Fields are where people fight for social recognition and position, and habitus is what makes them use the right weapon in the right manner to win or just survive. The forms of capital are the weapons, or currency he uses to gain position and power in this field. Bourdieu (1997). (Grootaert, 2004.)

Table 1 Theory vs variables assessed in the cases

Theory	Variables
Fields Arenas where agents engage	Religion, Language. Occupation, Gender, Local Organizations
Social Capital	
Bonding Social Capital strong relationships/ bonds with a group of people, homogeneous in socio financial position and demographic characteristics.	Level of trust, communication, Number of interactions per day, Respect and acceptance of neighbors

<p>Bridging Social Capital Refers to social networks amongst people of heterogeneous social groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of trust, interdependence on neighbors • Inclusion of different religious groups in celebrations
<p>Linking Social Capital this capital spans in the vertical dimension. represents the linking social ties between groups and people in positions of authority and influence. (Grootaert, 2004.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with people of power • Relationships with the people who has higher economic, social and cultural capital
<p>Objectified cultural capital Symbolically and materially active, objectified cultural capital often presents it self as ownership of physical goods culturally valued.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicles owned • Nature of furniture Level of decoration of the houses
<p>Economic capital A person's revenues and possessions that can be liquidated are included in economic capital. This can be converted in to other forms of capital easily, while it's not that easy to do vice versa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of income Other means of income

HYPOTHESIS

- In underserved settlements the physical, social and cultural factors drive the people to create a social habitus towards their home and immediate environment
- The people resettled in high risers, the new physical, social and cultural factors drive the people to create a personal habitus towards their home and immediate environment.

3. Methodology

The research needed an extensive study of literature to build up a strong theoretical framework in order to quantify social change with use of existing literature on the field and research. The research was Identified, analyzed and presented as a transformation process.

1. The site for the selection of cases needed to be an area where the initial settlement of the relocated people or a part of it is intact., where
 - Since the study focuses on the process of transformation, the ability to observe the original habitus is needed. Therefore
 - The settlement needs to have people who are still in the process of adjusting to their new environment.
 - The settlement needs to have people who have adjusted to the new situation, yet remember their previous settlement.
 - The settlement needs to be of 5 stories or above, because the impacts of moving from a horizontal community/ settlement to a vertical structure need to be observed.
After setting the case selection criteria two housing blocks in Mihidusenpura housing scheme were selected where samples of people who have been living for 3 years and 10 years respectively in high rise social houses could be seen.
2. A pilot study was undertaken with the involvement of 30 families with a brief questionnaire. 8 Families were selected to study in detail, 4 resettled only for 3 years and 4 resettled for 10 years.
3. Onsite observations and interviews done with the insight gained from Pierre Bourdieu's study done in the "distinction" Analyzed with coding of interviews and behavioral analysis
4. Analyzed and presented according to parameters of theory of field, forms of capital and habitus. (Lewin, 1951) (Bordieu, Distinction ; A social critique of judgement of taste, 1984) (Robson &

Sanders, 2009)

The following components were identified for the field study.

Component 01

- Observing the social behavior of people who had been resettled for 3 years and 10 years.
- Identifying the habitus and level of change by inquiring about
 - Social fields
 - Cultural capital
 - Economic capital and
 - Social capital
- Identifying the response of the residents towards the change in their built environment.

Analyzing and presenting the transformation of habitus of the residents from horizontal to vertical with the aspects using the criteria extracted from literature

Component 02

- Identifying the behavioral patterns of people in their built environment that provides an explanation to the nature of their habitus
 - Studying the impact on the change of architecture from horizontal to vertical.

4. Findings

4.1 SOCIAL IMPACTS OF RELOCATION

The derived graph identifies the first 3-4 years since resettlement as a period of “initial shock”. It is observed that during the first few years, people rent out the houses they get from the government and move back to the slums. People are traumatized from their homes being taken away and losing their community. The people become lonely in their houses, showing masks of politeness and keeping distance, making them unhappy about the new “home”. The habitus they possessed is left useless in this new setting and they have to find ways to survive anew. Especially the transformation of the habitus leave them disoriented.

If people are made to remain in the housing for this period, create a satisfaction in the first few years, by the time of ten years they would develop habitus that would help them define and engage in the new environment in new ways

It is seen that the Bonding social capital shows a drastic change. For the people of this income group bonding social capital or social support is a currency that can be invested in gaining social leverage and earning other forms of capital. Help is needed always to get by and cope.

The Bridging social capital is on the rise showing their new relationships created amongst neighbors to survive in the society. The linking social capital has a trend of a slight drop followed by increasing, showing that since moving, the people have created relationships from out of their social strata indicating upward social mobility

They have a sense of belonging to the place, depicted by the increase in Cultural capital. They have accumulated cultural goods later in to resettlement, and has redecorated their houses to show their social status. These are signs of the newly developed sense of belonging to the place. Fields the people engage in reduce once they move, but recovers. Privacy increases just as they move, and then decreases. But does not reach the level it was when they were at the previous settlement. This shows their extroverted habitus in slums transforming in to an introverted habitus.

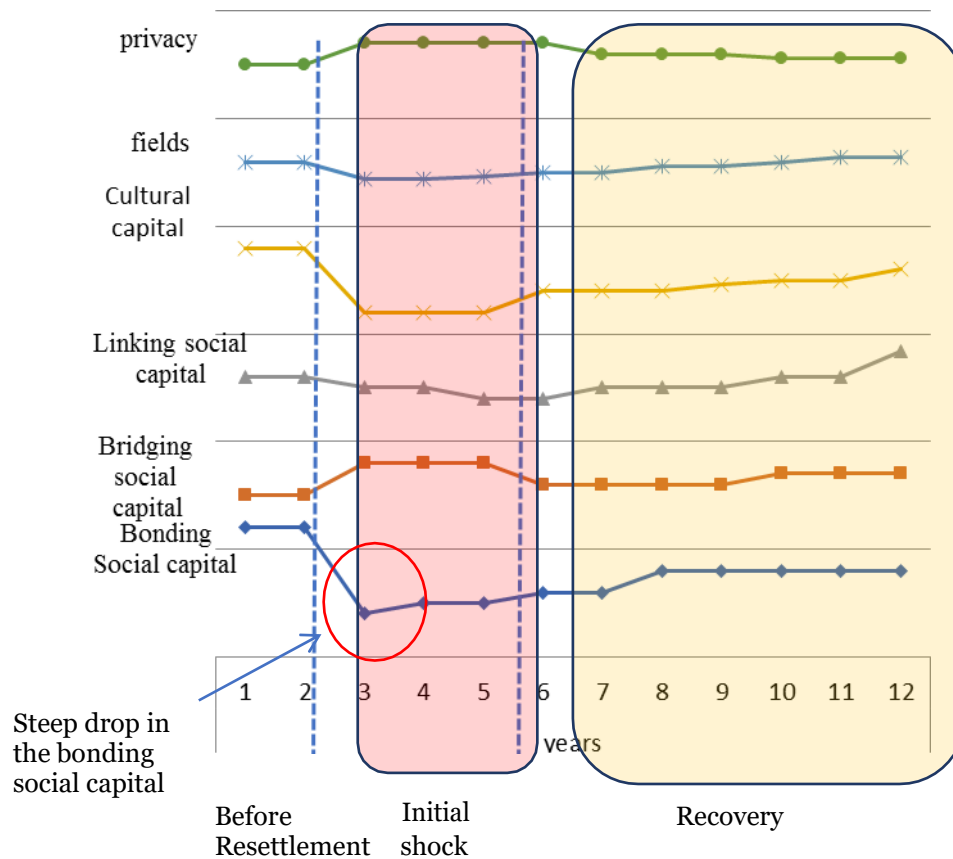


Figure 2 time series graph for transformation (Source: Author)

Habitus is a generative and an adoptive concept. **In long term** people have generated and adapted their habitus to maneuver through the new society without conflict. Here The lack of bonding social capital makes a huge difference. The architectural layout, dispersing the people, lack of informal gathering spaces, separating with linear monotonous series of houses, the vertical separation from each other and the linear corridors that do not urge a man to pause on his way to acknowledge a fellow man are some of the reasons why the bonding can be never restored in theses housing schemes. The society here is fragile, not as strong as in the slums they lived in. Therefore interference in the architectural design and the process need to be to ensure long term satisfaction. Creating spaces that are not rigid allowing them to relate it to their previous environment, creating spaces for informal gathering could ensure better relationships with their fellows. The resettlement needs to be done so that at least few people from the same community would be living in close together. Methods of clustering inside a housing block need to be explored to create smaller unique neighborhoods within the housing. The above suggested changes would ensure longevity in the housing, the former habitus would not have to be destroyed and rebuilt differently.

SUCCESS OF SOCIAL HOUSING

This research proves Social housing, in this case cannot be called a complete failure. People who came from row houses are appreciative of the facilities provided. The new habitus developed helps them engage with the outside world in a positive manner. However better attention should be directed to prevent social degradation. A tutor being turned in to a grocery vendor is a serious disadvantage for the community as well

People also feel threatened by the new communities resettled to the scheme. Their habitus in the previous settlement has made them to be weary of the outsiders and they still are. It drives people to abandon the vertical house for a horizontal house. People who possesses a low economic Capital cannot afford to dream of moving in to a horizontal settlement Therefore It is needed to ensure that the resettled people are given a sense of permanence, instead of constant change. The slow passive growth is suggested rather than the fast paced renewing of the neighborhoods that is already difficult to grasp

In the larger picture amassing all the poor in the city and putting them in segregated corners of the city causes serious social segregation and social stigma. Mihidusenpura itself has six blocks and more coming up. The residents expect to move away from this stigma and be recognized in a better manner. As suggested by Briggs in his article brown kids in white suburbs, an ideal solution would be to make small clusters scattered in a city, not building a socially segregated colony.

5. Conclusion

The research established the following two arguments.

- The communities resettled in these housing come from long established passively grown horizontal settlements. The communities are strengthened by the social bonds they share with each other, the supporting/bonding social capital they possess. The unit relocated in the process, “home” is a social habitus to them. The neighborhood and home doesn’t have separated margins.
- Once relocated, this habitus turns in to a personal habitus. The whole social setting is subject to change. Architects and policy makers need to ensure a smooth transition between the two environments. The research proves that by making the initial 4-5 years a success, the resettlement can achieve long term satisfaction of the people. Effort need to be put in to preserving the habitus of home as a social habitus and keep the bonding capital from completely getting destroyed.

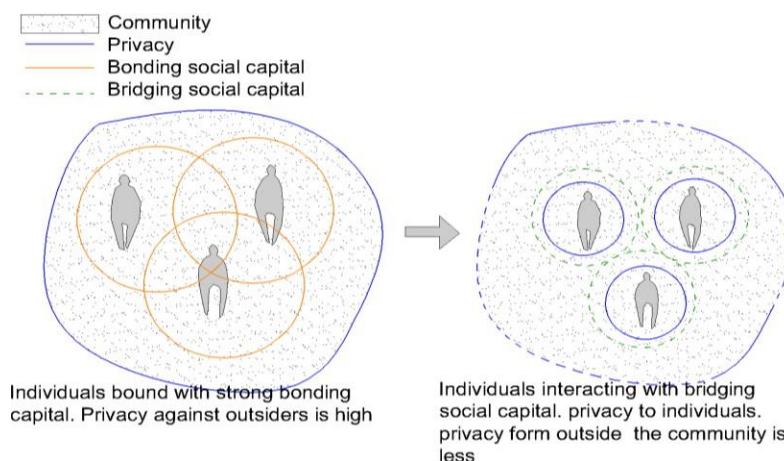


Figure 2 nature of the society before and after resettlement (Source: Author)

In exploring the variables related with habitus, It was seen that the **Bonding social capital is the main contributor towards a social habitus in home**. One may ask is it important to bring back the same quality to the improved housing. The answer would be a yes because this longing for a home where their social ties prevail, is never lost. It was seen that the people aspirations for the future doesn’t involve living in this housing scheme. They expect to move to a horizontal setup, and hidden in this is the desire to recreate their old social background

To create bonding social capital would be a long-term process. It is created amongst people who are well associated with each other. Architectural interventions that would increase common activities are one solution that would bring results in long term. Relocating people of the same community together, adopting better methods than drawing lotteries to determine houses(which is utilized presently) could be a starting step.

Once people move they increase their *privacy* and create new supportive relationships, *Bridging social capital*. These two aspects act as a cushion to huge social change faced by these individuals and are used as means to ease up the transformation. Therefore it is important to maximize communal spaces in the housing scheme to improve interaction increasing bridging social capital and eventually act as bonding social capital generators.

Another implementation of these results is that when removing neighborhoods known for violence and

misdemeanor the dispersing the neighborhoods will render their crime prone habitus inactive and they will have to develop a new habitus to claim position, power and acceptance in the new neighborhood. However the cases studied here do not include such excessively violent communities and more research needs to be conducted on the matter.

Allowing people to amass cultural capital architecturally, allowing them to make adjustments to the physical surroundings proved to be important. The time series analysis proves that the cultural capital is on the rise after they have overcome the initial shock. Facilitating the increase will help make the initial shock period shorter.

Creating opportunities to engage in the community and providing opportunities to improve income are factors that can be used to keep people more interacted in the housing. The research proves that the economic capital has rarely increased because of moving, and those who has improved engage in self-employment run at home.

Social housing is a process of relocating a “home”. The social habitus that once defined their home is distorted in to a personal habitus in the process of relocation. The loss of bonding social capital, which once created a strong community, is a result of the transformation of the habitus. It is vital to pay special attention to rectify the distortions faced in the first few years, and ensure the habitus with reference to their homes is not completely altered. It is needed to ensure a smooth transition between the two environments. To create successful social housing, achieving mere functional efficiency will not be enough. The research proves that by making the initial 4-5 years a success the resettlement can achieve long term satisfaction of the people. Changes done in the architectural and program aspects of housing can create better housing with long term satisfaction of the residents.

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