



THE ROLE OF INTEGRATION OF SPATIAL AND SOCIAL EFFORT IN THE REGENERATION OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Barbara Joanna Olczak

Summary

Regeneration of residential areas, with the main goal to improve the quality of space and life for residents, is often very costly and time-consuming. It is important to direct the regeneration process so that the effort and costs yield the expected results both for those responsible for the actions and residents of the relevant areas. The author has worked in a multidisciplinary team handling spatial and social integration of illegal residential districts in Montevideo Department, Uruguay. It was an opportunity to learn about the governmental scheme and the methods it employed. She participated in several projects at different stages and witnessed the results of the effort. Inspired by the effects of the scheme, she attempted to identify activities that were based on similar assumptions in Poland.

The pilot scheme by Ewa Kipta, later transformed into the Lublin Regeneration Scheme, was selected because it reached out to residents at an early stage of implementation. An in-depth analysis indicated that the social factor is important for the identification of the condition of the space and the effort to improve it. Residents took part in determining the directions of activities in their districts when detailed designs were being created and implemented. Regardless of the form of dialogue, the effort led to long-term effects the residents evaluated favourably in both cases.

Keywords

regeneration • residential environment • space quality • spatial and social integration • dialogue with residents

1. Introduction

Issues related to the quality of space in residential environment are vitally important as the residential function takes up increasingly significant share of the city [Wojtkun 2004], and the urban population continues to grow. In 2010, 52% of the global population lived in cities [UN-Habitat, Rapport Annuel 2010, p. 2]. Nine hundred twenty-four million residents, 32% of the urban population, live in substandard conditions, i.e., poverty with basic needs such as access to water or sewer systems left unattended [UN-Habitat 2003 as in: Sandhu 2015, pp. 382–389]. In light of the current dynam-

ics of the global population's growth, problems of today will intensify as two-thirds of the population is expected to live in cities by 2050 [Carley and Spapens 2000 as in: Kamieniecki 2002, Szymańska 2008]. The highest population increase is observed in developing African, Latin American, and Asian countries where the largest share of the urban population lives in slums [López Moreno et al. 2010]. The author came across the problem of urban sprawl and relevant control measures for its repercussions in residential developments during her student training in Montevideo, Uruguay. Active participation in the government scheme of the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment (MVOTMA) called the District Improvement Program (*Programa de Mejoramiento de Barrios*, abbreviated PMB) dealing with the spatial and social integration of illegal districts has resulted in a new, broader look at the issue of housing district revitalization. Experience gained over four months in an interdisciplinary team dealing with the issues of spatial and social integration of illegal housing districts in the suburbs of Montevideo, Canelones, and Pando, including participation in several projects at various stages of implementation translated into the direction of scientific research. It is, however, impossible to transplant the Uruguay experience directly onto the Polish ground because of different geographic, cultural, political, and social contexts. The author intends to point out common problems of the illegal residential settlements in Uruguay and housing developments in Poland, mainly degraded residential estates in city centers. They include intensified social segregation, growing issues in problem locations, and lack of proper development and maintenance of public space. In her search for a Polish effort to improve the condition of the existing housing space based on assumptions similar to those of PMB, the author found out about Ewa Kipta's scheme in Lublin.

In her research, the author was aware of the accumulation of problems in illegal residential settlements in Latin America. The solutions seem to be potentially applicable in the effort to improve the condition of the degraded housing space in Poland due to their interdisciplinary approach [Jadach-Sepioło 2010].

2. Object and methods

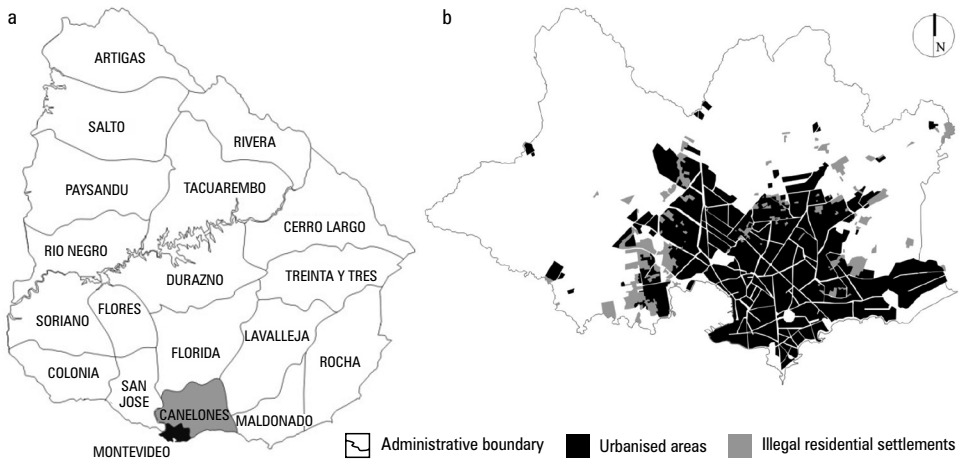
The paper's goal is to present actions, both spatial and social, that contributed to the improvement of the existing housing space, were appreciated by the residents and by the professionals involved, and yielded long-term results. The first stage of the research entailed the presentation and analysis of the procedural methodology of PMB and the regeneration of neglected districts of Lublin. The second stage involved case studies of selected activities. The research methodology is based on experience, literature studies, descriptive analysis, and case studies. The literature studies included subject literature, "good practice" publications, and websites regarding activities aimed at the improvement of residential environment.

3. Results

3.1. Programa De Mejoramiento De Barrio

Program goals

The main goal of the scheme is to improve the quality of life of people living in illegal residential districts through spatial and social integration with the surroundings. The motivation was the difficult housing situation in Uruguay and the growing number of residents of illegal districts. The scheme covers the whole country but focuses particularly on the two most populated districts, out of nineteen. The Uruguay population in 2013 was 3,440,157 people, including Montevideo Department with 1,377,617 people, and Canelones Department with 551,681 people [Nalbarte et al. 2014]. This is caused by the urban primacy, a phenomenon characteristic of Latin America where each country has one dominant city (except for the largest one, Brazil) (Fig. 1a). This situation translates into population density and spatial distribution of the population. The average population density in Uruguay is 18.4 people/km². In the department of Montevideo, it reaches 2523 people/km², and in the department of Canelones, it is 106.9 people/km². In the remaining seventeen departments, it is 10.9 people/km² (Fig. 1a) Quantity and spatial distribution of barrios in the department of Montevideo is presented in Figure 1b [INE, PMB].



Source: by B. Olczak based on INE and PMB

Fig. 1.a. Population density in Uruguay 1b. Barrios in Montevideo Department

The scheme was started in 1999 following an agreement with the government of Uruguay and BID (Inter-American Development Bank). The goal of the scheme is to improve the quality of life in illegal residential districts in the entire country. Its strategy provides for integrated spatial and social effort with the active participation of residents. The scheme was joined by such institutions as local authorities, MVOTMA

(Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning, and Environment), or MTOP (Ministry of Transport and Public Projects).

Description of activities carried out

The profile of the scheme was composed based on the experience of the author during her training from September 2006 to January 2007 in Montevideo, Montevideo Department and Canelones and Pando, Canelones Department, including site visits, surveys, meetings with residents, and discussions with architects and social assistants working for the scheme.

PMB has projects of varying sizes and profiles to suit the *barrio* (district), its size, nature, and needs of the residents. Interventions are generally holistic and set for a long-term perspective. In the case of critical living conditions, however, temporary spot solutions are proposed to improve the quality of life in the short term, and give scheme experts time to handle the formal situation of the site and prepare the target project. Investment projects under the scheme focus on natural material-based solutions, which go back a long way in Uruguay. Such materials are easy to come by, cheap, and offer very good insulating properties appropriate for the local climate. Houses are built from wood, clay, and straw. The scheme offers natural material construction training courses.

Any action starts with a site visit to profile the situation of the district. At this stage, the *barrio* is qualified for eligibility. The second stage is the selection of the multidisciplinary working group to prepare a project for the district. Next, the team and residents conduct an architecture and urban-planning survey and interview each family. This input is used to prepare the project. Before it is implemented, the project is approved by the council or residents. The implementation involves regulatory matters, spatial issues: architecture and infrastructure, and social problems. It is often divided into stages because of the range of changes and financial effort. A completed project is evaluated jointly by all stakeholders participating in it one stage at a time.

A project includes the following domains: architecture and urban planning, society and culture, regulations and administrative matters (land ownership), as well as technical and environmental issues. Each district has its tailor-made project. Residents participate actively in all stages of project implementation. It fosters neighbourhood relations, district organisation, and local initiatives. According to the analyses, the key stage is the architecture and urban planning survey and community interview [Guerra 2006].

PMB architects informed that the current procedures are a result of several years of work of multiple experts. No dialogue with residents was employed at first. Typical residential developments were proposed. Incidents of residents adapting homes to their needs and destroying them as a result or moving back to their initial dwellings were so widespread that significant funds were wasted. This is why a new, effective model was sought for the scheme by trial and error. Residents of *barrios* are very attached to their places and homes; most of them built by themselves with the help of family or neighbours. Very strong neighbourly ties, observed during the program operation, currently constitute the foundation of the PMB's activities, which are bringing good results.

Establishing and maintaining dialogue with residents during the implementation of activities

According to the authors of the Report: PMB III – study of the impact on the environment and society, due to the wide area of the program, to meet information needs and improve dialogue with residents of illegal districts, an Information and Dialogue Community Center (Centro de Información y Relaciones con la Comunidad) was established. The center's operation is to facilitate access to information for residents, and continue information exchange at all stages of the project, in particular [Scodelaro and Kremer 2018]:

- clarifying doubts, responding to complaints,
- preparation of materials explaining the principles of the program in a form accessible and understandable to residents,
- content management of websites, related social networks and other media publishing information related to the operation of the program,
- convening and organizing consultation meetings,
- documentation of consultation meetings and related activities,
- preparation of material distribution.

Results of conducted activities

A 2011 research indicates that the number of people living in *barrios* in Uruguay dropped by 14,274 compared to 2006. Data for 2011 speaks of 165,711 people in 48,704 houses in 589 illegal neighbourhoods (Fig. 1.b). Compared to 2006, the number of *barrios* went down by 11%, and the number of people living there decreased by 8% [Programa de Mejoramiento de Barrios]. As regards the data, note that although the number of illegal districts is growing, PMB cuts down their population year by year.

The effects of the scheme indicate that the operational program developed over its first years by interdisciplinary teams brings practical improvement. Its implementation, however, requires further, significant expert input and financial effort.

3.2. Regeneration of neglected districts of Lublin

Program goals

The authors were motivated to act by the difficult situation of two districts, Stare Bronowice and Kośminek, caused by technical and social degradation, and by municipal policies. The December 1990 Lublin housing situation report pointed out a significant housing deficit. Eight thousand flats were needed, 85% of which due to critical building conditions [Kipta 2008].

The goals were to improve the quality of life in the two districts, regenerate the 19th-century urban structure, and prepare new local zoning plans.

Description of activities carried out

These actions were founded on a dialogue between city planners and residents and yielded excellent results. It is an example of a pilot campaign, later transformed into the Lublin Regeneration Scheme for 19 districts on over 3,950 ha (27% of city area) with about 200,000 people (57% of city population) [Local Government of Lublin].

As its author, Ewa Kipta noted, the advantage of the scheme was “the fact that residents were invited at the preliminary stage of collecting requests and materials for the plan instead of when the project was ready as is usually the case” [Kipta 2008].

The perception of urban planning in Poland pivoted in the early 1990s. The traditional city-planning approach based on city blocks is appreciated again when compared to the anonymous space of vast residential estates. Conservation officers started to list 19th-century urban fabric. The solutions were inspired by British ideas, including a social and recreational scheme and, more importantly, the transfer of land ownership to residents. Bronowice and Kośminek districts were easier to change than the Old Town – among other things, due to the legal and financial capabilities of the local government [Kipta 2005, 2008].

The operational procedure was the same for both districts, except for the initial stage: the commencement of dialogue with residents. The variation arose from the differences between the districts, or rather between their residents. The population of Kośminek was more homogeneous with a significant share of the elderly, while residents of Bronowice formed several groups with different behaviour styles and standards of living. The work in Kośminek started with an architect interviewing each family. In Bronowice, the beginning involved a survey, a questionnaire, and a series of meetings. Such a dialogue between residents and planners yielded zoning plans with bilaterally verified feasibility, which were then disclosed for public review [Kipta 2008].

Bronowice and Kośminek were the first districts covered by the scheme. The method was described using them as examples (pilot cases). The effort continues as today's Lublin Regeneration Scheme, coordinated for the City Administration by architect Ewa Kipta. The local Lublin Regeneration Scheme covers nineteen districts or areas.

The criteria for selecting areas for regeneration include [Lublin Administration]:

- poor building condition (missing service infrastructure components, technical deterioration of buildings),
- high unemployment rate,
- escalation of other social problems (crime rate, social helplessness, and others),
- the occurrence of threats to the natural environment (high pollution, degradation of greenery),
- the occurrence of degraded areas that can be economically revived or environmentally restored.

In 2006, the scheme was expanded to include land owned by housing cooperatives, in order to prevent degradation of large housing estates built between the late 1960s and the end of the 1980s, which account for about 50% of the housing stock in Lublin.

The areas covered by the regeneration scheme were classified into six groups. Four of them include residential developments.

The list of projects under the scheme is created from requests of interested parties. The only prerequisite is conformity with the goals of the scheme defined for the area. The organisational structures of the regeneration scheme focus mainly on coordinating actions of various stakeholders.

Establishing and maintaining dialogue with residents during the implementation of activities

Author of the program draws attention to the difficulties associated with initiating social activities with residents of degraded districts. The difficult material and housing situation of residents requires an individual approach, especially at the very beginning of the dialogue. In the case of degraded districts of Lublin, they began with surveys formulated so as not to ask too much and not to point to solutions that the inhabitants had encountered in recent years. The initiation of the dialogue was planned in such a way as to provide residents with a sense of security (declaration by the vice president of the city that the district would not be demolished) and to build mutual trust (the possibility for residents to complain and express concern for the future of the district) [Report from the meeting with Ewa Kipta on June 18, 2008].

Results of conducted activities

The regeneration of the Bronowice and Kośminek districts started in 1991 in Lublin was a pilot effort. After ten years of the scheme's operation, both districts ceased to be critical areas with the worst conditions compared to the rest of the city. Today, the standard of living and social problems of residents are no different from those in other old and unaffluent parts of the city. Thanks to its results, the scheme was recognised among 'Best Practices' for living condition improvement tools at the HABITAT II conference in Istanbul in 1996. The author of the scheme stressed that the key to such good results was to establish genuine contact between the public structure of the local government and residents. It was important to show mutual respect for participants in the process and to evolve the ability of supplementary cooperation.

4. Summary

Common characteristics of the schemes:

1. Primary goals:
 - to improve the quality of life for residents,
 - to prevent unfavourable situations.
2. Specific objectives:
 - to establish contact with residents at the initial stage before scheme implementation,
 - to continue the dialogue throughout all stages of the research,
 - to bilaterally verify the assumptions of the scheme.

3. Dialogue with residents:
 - adapting the form of starting a dialogue to the difficult situation of residents and their specific needs,
 - individual approach in conducting dialogue with residents' communities, their situation and needs.
4. Stakeholders/co-actors:
 - a team of designers/multidisciplinary team,
 - advisors,
 - local government,
 - residents.
5. Beneficiaries:
 - current and future residents of the districts covered by the schemes and areas nearby.
6. Funding:
 - no data for comparison.
7. Additional information (auxiliary factors):
 - architecture and construction counselling.
8. General procedure:
 - focus on the dialogue with residents at all stages.

The analysis of the operational methods of two schemes, one national and the other local within a city, has demonstrated that both are complex, and as such require a great effort of many experts, and hence also significant funds. The social factor is important for the identification of the condition of space and the effort to improve it both for PMB and the Lublin Regeneration Scheme. Residents take an active part in determining the directions of activities in their districts, and in decision-making when detailed designs are created and implemented. The dialogue is established and cooperation with residents is carried out in different forms depending on the scheme, but led to positive and long-term effects in both cases.

Similar methods are used in the schemes to improve the quality of the housing environment, and the quality of life of residents, despite the diverse problems of the housing environments in questions. Differences are in the problems and resolution standards. The efforts aimed at improving the quality of space yield the best and long-term results when:

- the initial stage includes in-depth analyses of the existing conditions, leading to a spatial diagnosis as a foundation for directions of action and detailed plans,
- the dialogue with residents is practised in various forms at every stage: initially, during implementation, and after completion.

The fact that, after project completion, the residents followed – of their own accord – the “good practice models” established during implementation confirms the effectiveness of the effort. This was the case for the PMB and the regeneration of neglected districts of Lublin.

5. Conclusions

If activities aimed at improving the state of the residential environment based on spatial state identification methods are to be successful, they should:

- 1) be founded on a thoroughly prepared methodology, which is initially well-developed but still flexible enough so that it can be adapted to individual cases,
- 2) start by establishing contact with residents, which is then continued at all stages of the project,
- 3) be part of city policy.

The conclusions indicate the value of the empowerment of residents. In the examples discussed above, people from illegal or degraded districts are treated the same as big investors would. They are invited to participate in a dialogue, which is critical for investigating and diagnosing space and is continued throughout all stages of the project.

In contrast, recovery schemes where people supported by the state are treated as if they were incapacitated and forced to accept designed solutions are ineffective.

The conclusions can be of particular value for regeneration schemes; restructuration schemes; humanisation and transformation of residential environments of low space quality; adaptation of the existing housing stock to changing needs of the residents, and minimisation of the negative impact of suburbanisation and urban sprawl.

The added value of research methods is built on validation based on the evaluation by residents, which provides more necessary information. Dialogue with local residents is an important source of inspiration and information for decision-making. It has to be used at the initial project stage and during implementation in order to ensure the intended results.

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Dr inż. Barbara Joanna Olczak
Uniwersytet Rolniczy w Krakowie
Katedra Roślin Ozdobnych i Sztuki Ogrodowej
31-425 Kraków, al. 29 Listopada 54
e-mail: barbara.olczak@urk.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-9070-9640