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Slums: Aspects, Social and Spatial Analysis

Do you know that great numbers of slums exist all over the world? But what are slums first? They are greatly inhabited poor neighborhoods found in urban areas as informal settlements which are identified by unorganized housing and very bad living conditions. Each slum has its own size and characteristics which vary from one slum to another and from one country to another, but similar slums having similar characteristics and sizes could exist. Most of the slums lack one or more of many specifications such as durable housing, access to improved water and sanitation, sufficient living areas and secure tenure. There are many causes for slums' growth. These causes include economic stagnation, high unemployment, poverty, poor planning, politics and other concerns. Some slums are historical and remained till the present time. However, many slums existed in the urban areas located in the United States and Europe during the 19th and early 20th century. Nevertheless, slums in most cases nowadays are found in the urban regions of evolving and undeveloped parts of the world including developed economies. According to UN-HABITAT, around 33% or 863 million people of the urban population in the developing world in 2012 lived in slums. The highest percentage (61.7%) of urban population living in slums was recorded in Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by other regions in the world. Even though slums are unorganized and unplanned, there exist legally created and formed slums and illegal ones. A lot of information concerning social cohesion, spatial configuration, design, segregation, integration and other approaches could be learned from the issue of slums.

Some slums have better conditions or differ from other slums due to many factors. First of all, household types and sizes differ from one slum to another. For example, single and extended families and women-headed families are found in "Hay El Sellom" slum in Beirut^[1]. In addition, the members of each household there varies between 2 and 13 people per family, and the number of children is also in this range but most commonly 5 children per family^[1]. Moreover, the form of occupation is also different between slums. Statistics show that two thirds of the households rent, but most of the others own a building or an apartment in "Roueissat" slum in Beirut^[1]. However, in "Wata Mousseitbeh", another slum in Beirut, statistics show that almost all residences are divided between squatted and rented^[1]. Another issue is the access to sanitation and drinking water. Many slums have no or inappropriate access to sanitation. According to a 2008-09 National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) survey on the characteristics of slums, 81% of the 93 million slum residents in India have inadequate access to sanitation^[3]. According to an article written by Jordan R. Fisher, people living in the Dharavi slum, which is located in India, fall ill with new cases of cholera and dysentery

due to using the water of a nearby river for drinking. This nearby river is also used by people to relieve themselves, so that's the reason behind the spread of diseases. Furthermore, durable housing is also a main factor to compare slums^[4]. UN-HABITAT analyses show that Sub-Saharan Africa's slums are the most deprived; over 80% of the region's slum households have one or two shelter deprivations, but almost half suffer from at least two shelter deprivations^[5].

Many case studies and comparisons have been done between different slums. A good comparative case study could be done on two slums located in Beirut and its suburbs. These slums are "Hay El Ayn" and "Ouzai". "Hay El Ayn" is a slum which belongs to Baiqut's municipality and located in Beirut's suburbs. Its original population was from Bekaa, but its dominant current population is from different Lebanese areas. Types of occupations in that slum are divided equally between rented, owned and squatted. The main services are poor and the quality of construction is fair. The "Ouzai" slum belongs to Beirut's municipality, and it's located in Beirut. Its original population was from south Lebanon, but its dominant current population is people who lost their inhabitants in the war and the migrant workers. Types of occupations are mostly rented and squatted, but few of them are owned. The main services are poor and the quality of construction is divided between poor and fair^[1]. Slums might also be compared according to location and type. Many kinds of slums might exist within the same city. For example, three types of slums could be recognized in Jeddah. The first type is the pirate sub-division slums which are parts of lands located on the periphery of cities (figure 1)^[2]. These lands are illegally sub-divided and then sold privately to individuals to develop. The second type is the urban villages slums which are unorganized settlements existing inside the planned cities (figure 2)^[2]. The third type is the squatter settlements slums which are formed by the illegal occupation of empty regions of land (figure 3)^[2]. Finally, slums could grow in various positions near each other or segregated depending on the benefits. For example, in Jeddah, the slums are segregated, but in Agra (India) they are integrated^[2].



Fig (1): Pirate sub-division - Al Harrazat ^[1]



Fig (2): Urban Village – Bani Malik ^[1]



Fig (3): Squatter settlement - Rabwa ^[1]

Space Syntax Limited is aware of two settlements in Jeddah. These two settlements are an urban village (Bani Malik) and a squatter settlement (Rabwa), and they could be taken as an example in order to compare the spatial characteristics between these two types of settlements. Bani Malik belongs to the municipality of Jeddah, and it has been constructed 50 years ago. It illustrates an apparent internal spatial structure which has developed around a central spine. The spine is facilitated by a number of minor connections to it, and the structure is also clear in the distribution of land uses which focus on small scale profitable uses along its internal spine. On the other hand, Rabwa has existed for around 10 years and it also belongs to municipality of Jeddah. There is a spatial hierarchy which doesn't generate a clear structure; there is a point where greatly reachable lines converge; but many of the most accessible lines don't join to this point. In addition, this structure isn't matched by the allocation of land use as shown in figures 4 and 5.



Fig (4): Bani Malik: Choice analysis radius 800m ^[1]



Fig (5): Rabwa: Choice analysis radius 800m ^[1]

The topic concerning slums could end up being a primary source to learn some essential information about different issues. First of all, people living in slums should have good relationships with each other, so social cohesion in this case exists. They should work together as one team in order to make their living situations better. However, segregation

exists and is blocking them from achieving this goal. I think that segregation should be the key to start thinking about integration and reaching it. Eliminating this segregation could support movement through different areas and develop familiarity between slum inhabitants over the long term. Thinking about finding good job offers for slum households is also important in my opinion to avoid a lot of problems. If these households don't have jobs to earn money and support their families' financial needs, they could tend to perform crimes and violence to do so. As a result, in order to decrease the probability of crime and violence in an integrated slum society, good job offers should be given to households. Concerning the spatial configuration of slums, many slums grow close to highly visited places such as touristic buildings. For example, a lot of slums are found near Taj Mahal which is located in Agra (India). The reason behind that is to get good job opportunities such as selling products to people or transportation etc ... In my opinion; this is not acceptable because doing so results in a lot of pressure on the place and people visiting this place. In addition, when people grow slums near these places, they are constructing buildings and living in unplanned construction regions which are illegalized by the government. This makes chaos and unorganized informal settlements which end up being slums in the end. Furthermore, slums differ in their outer shape design. Some of them might have in their construction something that makes the buildings similar such as the color and shape for example. This is called an organized chaos where slums tend to follow a certain repeated rhythm in their construction based on a specific unit even when this rhythm might be unplanned.

To sum up, slums are informal settlements located in urban areas in which many people live in poverty and very bad living conditions. These slums should have social cohesion between them to reach better living conditions through sharing of resources and services. The spatial configuration of slums is that they are situated in places where their inhabitants could find good job opportunities and earn money or they could be historical and remained till the current time. In addition, segregation of slums might be the key to integrate them in order to improve their situation. Each slum has its specific situation and case, so thinking of and finding solutions for slums is determined by the present aspect of each one, its specifications and its conditions. As a result, each slum has a different approach than another slum, but it's probable to find two or more similar approaches for two or more slums due to their similar cases and situations sometimes.

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