

of the city share the necessity of human activity. Thus, targeting the public space could possibly be the most straightforward way in which to erase the boundaries between the informal and the formal areas within a city. However, a careful review of literature on slum-upgrading projects reveals that, landscape is frequently regarded simply as a problem. Hence the solution is put on the physical structures placed in mere space. Perhaps this is a result of the global scale which frames this issue. A consequence of the search of an agreed definition of slum, in order to incorporate slums within mainstream monitoring instruments, such as national population censuses, demographic and health surveys etc (UN-HABITAT 2003, p10).

The projects from Manila, Philippines and Khulna, Bangladesh, illustrate the power of the surrounding landscape. Even though they share common factors of what constitutes a slum the local circumstances of the surrounding landscape give rise to different opportunities and requires innovative, specific solutions. For example, in the study site of GK Baseco, part of the slum-upgrading work carried out by Gawad Kalinga includes building secure houses. For the purpose of equality the houses are similarly constructed and blank walls can be found on either end of each row of houses. Between the houses the streets are narrow and there is hardly any public space. In relation to this the students proposed to turn these blank walls into productive end-walls where the villagers would have the ability to grow food (ASLA 2010). This proposal would make use of vertical space that might otherwise have been overlooked or deemed useless. Through the project carried out in Khulna it was discovered that the building of informal settlements had created thousands of man-made ponds. This is also a feature that could have tremendous values for the community. In addition to recreation, this provides opportunities for water retention, water supply and food production. In many cases these remain an unseen resource and are used as common dumping grounds instead (Rekittke 2009).

Official maps and planning material are key tools to getting around and understanding a foreign study site. Furthermore, spatial information is vital to be able to draw any kind of conclusion or propose changes to a site. However, due to the fact that most informal settlements have been deemed illegal, they have predominantly been ignored and left out of any national map material. In addition, they have also been blinded out from commercial cartography such as google maps (Nijman 2010, Paar & Rekittke 2011). This is another important aspect that is demonstrated in these two projects. The central aim of Rekittke and Paar's documentation of the Manila project was to contribute to the extrication of urban slums (Paar & Rekittke 2010, Paar & Rekittke 2011). Even though informal settlements are physically separated from the formal city they are frequently connected through technological media. Retikke and Paar show that with today's technology of smart phones, digital cameras and open source internet mapping, these areas can be documented with small means and at low cost. Although the time and effort this requires of the people involved have not been taken into account. Both these projects were initiated by universities located in foreign countries as part of a master's course. This in turn meant that apart from the field work, submitted projects only resulted in design proposals originating from a distant studio. One might discuss whether these projects can be viewed as actual slum-upgrading since they were mainly theoretical. Another question that arises is "Whether the short period of time spent in field is enough for the students to understand the incredibly foreign environment, and whether the students would

confuse the context of informal settlements with the local culture?” Rekittke (2009) argue that by subjecting students to these environments they learn that pitifulness or donation does not change the world-but one’s own design action can. I agree with Rekittke, even a small period of time spent in this environment could inspire some of these students to get involved in similar projects later on. Such an experience cannot be taught or understood solely from a text book. It should be noted that the work initiated by Rekittke and Paar’s in Manila did motivate local volunteers to carry on the mapping in nearby communities involving their local authorities. This suggests that small singular actions can evolve into larger-scale improvements. Thus, governmental involvement or sponsorship is not initially required to make a significant difference for communities of informal settlements.

According to Christian Werthmann Latin America is where the most interesting landscape interventions in relation to slum-upgrading projects are taking place today (Beardsley & Werthmann 2008). Architect Mariana Legúia (2011), explains that in the past the movement focused on building grand projects but today it has matured into modeling possible worlds and small-scale utopias of everyday life. Both the Villa Tranquila and the Antonico creek project clearly embody this change. These projects focus on the importance of public space and ways in which to integrate the project within the community or most importantly with the community inhabitants. However, something that has to be taken into account concerning all four projects is that the architects involved are also the main authors of the papers describing these projects. That is, the problems and outcomes revolving these different areas are portrayed from the architect’s perspective. Villa Tranquila was initiated by architect Flavio Janches without any government involvement. Nevertheless municipal slum-upgrading projects were also being carried out within the area. It is possible that this combination is what made the project successful in the end. In the case of Antonico creek, the project has not yet been carried out. Hence, no conclusion can be drawn. Ideally to be able to use these projects as a model of inspiration it would be helpful to know the inhabitants response, before during and after an upgrading project. Also, analysis of a project should be carried out a significant amount of time after completion to adequately determine both immediate and long term results. Janches (2011) philosophy can be compared to planting a seed within the community that will grow and evolve with time. The first implementations of Villa Tranquila was deemed successful but will this process continue and if not, why?

Regardless of the bias that may exist in the description of these projects they still portray that the landscape of informal settlements can be used as an asset and is not solely deemed to be hazardous waste sites. However, if the concept regarding the importance of common space exists within these settings depends on how you interpret what this concept really means. There is no doubt that the inhabitants of the communities investigated value space. Space is seemingly a rare resource, enough so that many choose to build houses in unsafe places, which for example might risk getting flooded several times a year. Although, the concept of space that is not private and can be used and valued by everybody as a common resource is something that at least not in the straight forward way initially exist in these examples. One might argue though that this is not unexpected. The people of these communities possibly cannot afford to think in this way. That is, space is a rarity of immense value if you don’t claim it somebody else will. High criminality or unpleasant environments, may force people to stay away from the public

areas. Furthermore the high turnover of people might discourage getting engaged in the local environment. Of course these are just hypothesis which may be true to different extents depending on the history and specific circumstances of the settlement. Conversely, investigating this question from a different perspective the answer might change. That is, without the connections and social interactions taking place in for example a park the importance of common space is lost. Thus, if the city square is always empty then there is really no difference to an over-crowded street filled with garbage. The prejudice against slums that they are only home to misery and poverty is that of an outsider's ignorance. The examples discussed in the thesis show that slum inhabitants are incredibly resourceful and innovative and social networks develop regardless of a seemingly haphazard structure. In conclusion it seems that the spirit or the core of the concept revolving the importance of common space exists but without the actual physical space that enables these networks to connect and evolve.

The second question of the thesis was to investigate if landscape architecture exists as a profession within the settings of informal settlements. It is true that according to statistics from IFLA, the profession of landscape architecture is increasing in the developing world. Although as discussed by Taylor (2011) this is mainly in regards to traditional city planning of the formal city. As long as informal settlements are not regarded as part of the city structure it is my belief that the profession cannot exist in these communities to any great extent. The main reason being, that at some level the authorities have to be engaged or at least acknowledge informal settlements to be able to make larger scale improvements. The greater cities in Latin America are perhaps the best modern examples where the boundaries between the informal and formal city are slowly starting to be erased and in doing so giving an opportunity for landscape architecture to develop there. In relation to this one might ask if landscape architects from western cities/foreign countries should get involved with slum-upgrading programs/projects in developing countries. With the knowledge acquired from this thesis I will argue that landscape architects from western cities should get involved for two main reasons. Firstly, the way in which we live and use our resources in the western world, does not only affect us locally but globally as well. For example, flying around the world is easily achieved for somebody with money. However, air-travel releases a large amount of pollutants involved in the process of global warming. Secondly, as was pointed out through Nijman's (2010) description of one of Mumbai's bigger slum areas Dharavi, urban slums are already connected to the city mosaic, now measures need to be taken that acknowledge this. Often simple landscape interventions can provide alternative solutions to slum eradication and propose more economically sustainable and profitable long-term use of the land. Dagenaar's (2008) project proposal for the heavily neglected Khulna railway is a good example of this. These proposals would hopefully also make the authorities realize the potential of landscape architecture rooting the profession locally.

Alternatively one might argue that the environments of informal settlements are too foreign for landscape architects from the formal city. They are faced with new social rules, boundaries and obstacles that might be hard to understand as an outsider only staying for a limited amount of time. Though the work carried out by Paar and Rekkittke (2011) have shown that it is possible to overcome a lot of these obstacles simply by relying on good communications with locals and help from our modern day technology. Perhaps the bigger obstacle facing these kinds

of project is how the profession is perceived. Rekitke (2009), discusses that contemporary landscape architecture is predominantly perceived to be a deluxe profession flourishing in times of peace and economical high. The views of the world renowned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, weighs in on this subject. As part of a research program investigating changing urban conditions around the world at the Harvard graduate school of design, Koolhaas spent several years observing the city of Lagos, Nigeria. From this Koolhaas concludes that the rapid urbanization taking place in the developing world is outside the control of formal planning. It should mainly be perceived as a visual phenomenon. The architect can observe but have no means of influencing its development (Sharro 2006, Harvard University 2012). Architect Anders Wilhelmson professor at the Swedish Royal Institute of Technology stated 2009 in an interview that: it is often the young inexperienced architects that engage in these issues while the well established architects are involved in projects building flashy hotels in countries such as Dubai (Gunne 2009). However the work discussed in this thesis strongly suggests that this sense of helplessness is a poor excuse. Hypercities will most likely be the cities of the future and urban slums, a rule rather than an exception if no major action is taken. The formal city planner including the landscape architect profession needs to move away from generalizing slums as hopeless areas of misery.

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