SAFE & SECURE COLIVING SPACES
THE NEXT PHASE FOR THE CITY OF UNABATED WORKING

17th May 2022   11:25 PM

As I struggle to convince my Uber auto to find a way around the over-flooded Hebbal flyover and drop me at my co-living PG, my phone keeps buzzing in the background with my mother's photo on the display.

18th May 2022   12:00 AM

I wrestle through the knee-length clogged water and consistent rain, my mother still keeps calling and asking about my whereabouts. My live location at this point has been shared with over 3 people I know. My PG's caretaker is standing outside the PG waiting for me trying to make sure I get back safe.

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I finally made it home after an exhausting day at work, fully drenched and shaken up. The adrenaline levels are suddenly replaced with fear of what could have happened walking in an unsafe area late at night, just to get back home safely.

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INTRODUCTION

Bangalore, popularly referred to as the 'Silicon Valley of India' fosters millions of young IT professionals. The city is often appreciated for its green cover and leaves the entire city awestruck with the blossoming of the cherry blossom-like trees 'Tabebuia Rosea' in the spring season. The endless eating spaces and public parks and streets have turned Bangalore into a city of endless joy. It has always earned its name for fast-track development. From the first street light in Asia getting lit in 1905 in Bangalore, to being the third most populous megacity in India. With its constantly growing network, the citizens have observed a sudden spurt in the number of college graduates relocating to the IT hub in the past 10-15 years. This is the direct implication of the ever-growing employment opportunities which ceaselessly keep diversifying the demographics of the city. The endless migration of thousands of new intakes annually, demands extensive housing developments. In a city that has been proselytizing into a culture of magnificent and expensive housing blocks for the rich, looking into affordable housing for these young crowds takes a backseat. The cheaper housing options that are available are in abysmal condition and are now being refuted for the same. In scenarios like such, newer housing options came up. Coliving spaces grew popular in cities like New York and London which experienced a similar demographic transformation to Bangalore earlier. Recently, Bangalore adapted to the same concepts of coliving to try and curb its issue of ever-growing housing

needs. Coliving concepts take their origin from tenements in the U.K, boarding houses in the US, and shawls from Western India. They work as shared living modules. They started earning prominence due to a combination of various factors. These factors include the increasing urbanization rates, a growing interest in independent lifestyles, and most importantly, a lack of affordable housing for the users. The concept of coliving spaces is largely user oriented and friendly. They provide various benefits popularly referred to as the 4C's - comfort, community, convenience, and cost savings.

AREA OF PROBLEM
However, the practical complications of a Coliving model started to be apparent over time. Today, these housing spaces in Bangalore are located either at prime locations with exorbitant prices for a PG, which eventually goes against the basic concept of the model, or they are located near localities that wither to be unsafe and insecure. Veerannapalya, Hebbal is one such locality in Bangalore. One street of this particular area is now completely occupied with different coliving pg's. It gained popularity due to its proximity to Manyata Tech Park, Bangalore, one of the best IT areas in the city, and the cheaper rates of housing provided by the coliving spaces on Veerannapalya street. These are the most inexpensive spaces at an 8Km radius and hence also see a massive residency by people working in adjoining areas. On the evening of 17th May 2022, Bangalore foresaw heavy pours of rain that flooded and blocked the entire main road under the Hebbal flyover. Individuals were required to walk through these water-logged roads after a certain point and make their way back to their homes after a long day at work. This unwanted midnight stroll sparked fear and conversation amongst the residents, who till then had not fully comprehended the safety issues of the area. A walk into the area through the elaborate entrance of Veerannapalya was approximately 20 minutes long. It, however, felt more due to the absence of street lights, proper houses, shut market areas, no street activities, and sudden violent bursts of voices far away on the street or the random individuals sitting on the road and hawking and passing comments as one passed by.
While these spaces were strategically planned for the young population and to cater to their needs, somewhere Urban design practices took a backseat in such cases. What architects must realize is that spaces constricted to the site may not always be the only things that need to be designed, but rather the urban extent should also be considered and taken into account. Bangalore is on its mark of becoming a city for the young and the future. In such a case, understanding and catering to the problems of also making it a safe and secure city are of utmost importance.

DESIGN STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS - RESEARCH

"Defensible space therefore is a socio-physical phenomenon,"
Oscar Newman

Oscar Newman, an architect, and urban planner developed the defensible space theory, which includes concepts for crime avoidance and community security. According to Newman, the environmental and architectural design have a significant impact on whether crime rates rise or fall. His first book on the subject, Defensible Space, was published in 1972. The theory began to take shape in the early 1970s. The book includes a New York study that found that high-rise housing structures had greater crime rates than low-rise complexes. He concluded that this occurred because locals didn't feel they had any personal responsibility or control over the vastly populated area. Physical characteristics are intended to foster a sense of territorialism among community members, which will provide a secure living environment for those who look after it. Living and communal spaces are arranged in a hierarchy according to Defensible Space. The notion holds that territorial housing projects are "the biggest deterrents to criminal and vandal activities." Housing units ought to be arranged in groups where everyone benefits. To discourage crime, it is also important
- to define locations for their intended use
- create clear pathways for mobility
- contrast dwellings and outdoor spaces physically
- keep a watchful eye on the outside world from internal spaces.
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DESIGN STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS - APPLICATION

Context - The site is surrounded by low-income housing occupied majorly by a Muslim population. It served as the main gateway to the main city 50-60 years back before the development of the adjacent areas of Nagawara and the connective roads and flyovers including the infamous Hebbal flyover. Earlier it was mostly considered a village area and has recently seen a change in the built form and material, turning from 'kutcha' houses and 'jugaad jhopdi' to concrete and RCC. A railway track forms the border of the area distinguishing it from the newer and more developed parts of the city.
Coliving street is developed right in the center of the area, with huge plots vacant around which are only seldomly used for festivals and functions. The road width around the streets is not more than 6 m and often experience violent outbursts caused due to minor accidents. The absence of street lights and women in markets and streets majorly dot the area's character.

Transformation- First and foremost, the concept of developing a street of Coliving Pg's linearly should be discouraged, instead spreading it in a larger enclosed space covering a U-shaped or L-shaped should be encouraged. This kind of formation of PGs would ensure a community and a safe and secure internal environment. It is also imminent for architects to cater to more than one kind of user group when it comes to these kinds of PGs. An overall mixture in the typology of users would satisfy a mix of essential spaces that get developed in and around the community. The overall redevelopment of the area should be taken under Urban Renewal. The existing houses should reduce the boundary walls for the streets and reflective mirrors need to be installed. Along with the installation of street lights through the secondary roads, the need for pathway lighting should also be encouraged. Converting the large empty grounds into public spaces for rejuvenation purposes for both the user groups i.e existing and coliving ensures creating of a safe space with increased public activities, which act as natural surveillance monitors. Construction of small modules that act as safety boxes on the streets, to provide a safe space for calling in times of need and emergency can also be considered, working on the principles of how phone booths used to exist in earlier times which lost their popularity with the vogue of cellphones. Lastly, given the user group and context, creating more 24x7 market spaces and eating joints catering to the specified needs of the user groups, along the main road of Veerannaplaya ensures an increased street activity. This helps us in avoiding unwanted concealed or isolated routes.

The case in point talks specifically about the situation in the area of Veerannapaly yet it can be used as a modular approach throughout the city as similar problems exist near the new emerging major IT sectors namely, Electronic City, BTM Layout, Domlur, Marathaali, etc. Bangalore has entered an age where it is constantly growing through its IT sector. The future of the city depends largely on how it treats and gives back to its citizens who travel across India to cater to

the market and constantly help it expand. Young individuals need to be looked after for a safer and more secure future, including being mentally secure about the same.

The emergence of these coliving spaces was only half of the solution, developing the areas around them and taking care of the urban design factors and security through design and interventions is the next phase of development for the betterment and advancement of the city of Bangalore.

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18th May 2022   1:30 AM

As I wrap up my tired and exhausting day, I ponder upon this issue and think to myself for how long can I sustain in a city so expensive and affordable places like the current so unsafe as a young individual? What would the future of the city look like if everyone around me starts to think the same? Slowly as I drift off to sleep, I relentlessly try to find solutions in my field of work, Architecture and design.