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Spatial Planning Strategies for Reducing Crime in Urban Residential Areas: A Case of Kollam

Crime and the fear of crime are serious issues that affect society and contribute to the decline in the quality of life. The study focuses on the physical and non physical approaches to crime prevention in urban residential neighborhoods. People in today's world lock themselves in their homes with little interaction with outside world. The tragic outcome of this situation will be the feeling of powerlessness. Crime reduction strategies have the ability to restore the sense of power and control over crime and defend against any threat in one's neighborhood. The study explores into the research analysis on the present safety condition of the crime oriented residential neighborhoods in Kerala context. The research was conducted through visual audits, safety audits and community participation. Three urban residential areas within Kollam Corporation was selected and analyzed in order to understand how much the environment has contributed to the unsafe nature. Interview with locals provided an insight on how the residents perceived their own safety. Observation through visual audit was also done in order to understand how the area functions now and how people use it. Cognitive mapping was done with women, old age and children to ascertain their perception of safety in their neighborhoods. The environmental crime prevention strategies reduce chances of situational crimes, will improve the quality of spaces and give an image to the place. The strategy aimed at reducing one condition of the environment would not solve the problem of crime. Hence physical as well as social accepts through community participation was incorporated. This could create a good urban environment and thereby induce crime prevention.