Full Length Research Paper

Spatial security and quest of solutions to crime in neighbourhoods in Urban Zimbabwe: Case in Marlborough East, Harare

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This article focuses on issue of security in Marlborough East neighbourhood of Harare, Zimbabwe. Residents in the neighbourhood have suffered severe losses of property, life and valuables. The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between neighbourhood security and the physical environment by establishing patterns of spatial insecurity through the lens of environmental design in order to suggest sustainable security measures for the place. This research was designed as a case study in which data were collected by means of a feasibility study, key informant interviews, photography. Data analysis entailed use of SPSS 16. It was established that in Marlborough East, there is a strong relationship between security issues and the built environment. To a great extent, security enhancement in the built environment should embrace aspects of place habitability, promotion of surveillance and visibility. Moreover, security by-laws need to be enforced during the design process and that the primary solution to security is provision of livelihood sources. It is stressed that spatial-oriented security in Harare's neighbourhoods is a function of livelihoods availability, environmental design and environmental stewardship.

Key words: Security, environmental design, place maintenance, livelihoods, economy.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, crime is problematic by nature for it affects urban liveability (Dambazau, 1994; Monk, 1993; Offidile, 1984). A view often shared by criminologists is that crime is dynamic; new forms of crime emerge and old forms assume new dimensions. Dambazau (1994) asserts that crime and fear of crime are included in discussions of neighbourhood liveability. Their occurrence in particular places imply significantly on travel patterns and in extreme cases, property values are affected. Residents of a neighbourhood are very sensitive to safety issues. Some streets and places of the neighbourhood are known to be less safe at particular times of the day (Lea and Young, 1984). In supporting Dambazau's line of thought, Lea and Young (1984) observe that a high incidence of fear of crime diminishes the quality of community life. In America, the issue of race is purported

to greatly influence crime variations (Monk, 1993). Levels of crime prevalence vary over place and time. Herbert (1982) speaks of geographies of crime. Offenders and offences show marked tendencies to concentrate in particular sections of the geographical space (Herbert, 1982). Evans et al. (1985) observe that space and time are intrinsic dimensions of human existence. The trio perceives that the general public's sense of safety is related to place and different times of the day in place. It is generally believed that the everyday life of offenders as well as of victims and potential victims is shaped in part by the understandings of the nature of particular areas; within them of specific locations (Dambazau, 1994; Herbert, 1982; Offidile, 1984). These understandings are undoubtedly important in shaping the geographical distribution of offending behaviour. In terms of world rankings, Seabrook (2007) identifies Brazil as one of the most violent countries in the world with Sao Paulo as one of the least safe cities. Among cities in official records of insecurity are: Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro, Bogota,

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Medellin, Sao Paulo, Detroit, Moscow, Manila, Addis Ababa, Gaborone, Kingston, Caracas and Lagos (Seabrook, 2007; Shepherd, 1997; Stonteich, 2000; UN, 1994). In the sub-Saharan region, most crimes involve the use of firearms. South Africa is ranked highest in crime problems (Goldsmith, 2010; Stonteich, 2000; Shepherd, 1997). Goldsmith (2010) notes that Johannesburg has well-documented crime problems although, it performs better in other categories which contribute to liveability.

In the local context, there is serious concern that crime is a serious problem in neighbourhoods of urban Zimbabwe. Specifically such concern is to do with street crime (Overseas Advisory Council, 2009). The situation was in the last decade or so compounded by state of the country's economy which was deteriorating economy each day. Herald (2010) observes that armed robbery and vehicle theft increased in 2009 compared to 2008. Targets of criminals were touring visitors, residential properties of the rich. Criminals were noted to wield edged weapons and firearms (Herald, 2010). In keeping with this argument, Goldsmith (2010) ranks Harare the worst city in terms of liveability standards, in particular, personal safety. Herald (2010) points out to the increase in murder cases in the city of Harare and attributes the phenomenon to the prevalence of urban farming as a coping strategy for survival by city households against the households' incapacity to afford food in the shops. The rampancy of urban farming implies maize fields harbouring thieves and robbers. Daily, assaults, rape and muggings were also becoming common in maize fields (Herald, 2010). According to the same source, other explanation for the rising crime levels was noted as power blackouts and poor maintenance of open spaces. Nevertheless, the paper celebrated that crime decreased from 26,084 in 2008 to 19,151 in 2009, marking a 27% decrease (Herald, 2010). Despite all these statistical fluctuations, crime remains a problem in the city of Harare. Yet underlying the crime problem in the city, and in the country at large, has been the problem of general unemployment. This is evidenced by the rampancy of urban informality in all urban centres in the country with the formal sector operating below capacity hence failing to absorb jobseekers (Chirisa, 2007, 2009).

Neighbourhoods in urban Zimbabwe fall in three basic categories: High density residential areas (HDRAs), medium density residential areas (HDRAs) and low density residential areas (LDRAs). Ideally, low LDRAs are the safest of the residential areas. This harbour the wealthiest classes who can afford security systems including CCTVs, security alarm systems and organised neighbourhood watch. High density areas are often noted with lack of such systems due to high poverty level experienced in them. Unemployment levels are high in HDRAs forcing some of the well-bodied community members, particularly the youth turning to be thieves, robbers and muggers. Marlborough East is located about six kilometres north of the central business district of Harare. The area is by the junction of Harare Drive and Bindura-Mazowe Road. To the north, it is bounded by the peri-urban farms and to the west is Marlborough West Avonlea is located to the south of the area. To the east it is bounded by Mazowe road and Mt Pleasant. A greater part of Marlborough East is public open space. The place lacks in basic neighbourhood functions. A Police station manned by the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) officers in the area has the responsibility for dealing with crime. But it is not located in Marlborough East; rather, it is located in Mount (Mt) Pleasant. There are no major shopping centres in the neighbourhood. Residents go to other neighbourhoods for shopping. These include Pendenis, Bond, Mt pleasant, Ashbrittle, Greencroft and Westgate. For those who mentioned that shops were available, they were close to the neighbourhood peripheries where they could access other neighbourhoods' services conveniently. Commercial facilities available in the neighbourhood provide lower order services. As well, there are no entertainment facilities in Marlborough East. Schools are available but to the majority of them are privately-owned. This has implications on affordability issues and quality of education provided. Such a lack of adequate basic facilities creates demand for travel on a daily basis to nearby neighbourhoods. In terms of employment, residents with stable employment work in town and most of these are landlords. The majority whose employment is anchored in the neighbourhood are either gardeners or housemaids. The neighbourhood is divided into two by Harare Drive which is the only through road. In the times of economic decline (1997 to beginning of 2009) the area suffered great neglect with regards to maintenance, particularly grass cutting and street lighting. This means that there was overgrown vegetation especially in the hot wet season. The study further revealed that, neighbourhood patrols by the police were no longer common. Neighbourhood watch was also not anymore a popular practice among the community members. In light of this, crime has been occurring on a daily basis in Marlborough East leading to residents losing property and lives.

The study aimed at investigating the relationship between neighbourhood security and the physical environment. Specifically, objectives were set to establish patterns of insecurity in Marlborough East; to evaluate the environmental design aspects for Marlborough; and to identify measures for security enhancement in the area. The period of focus was from the year 2000 up to the year 2010. This period was chosen on the basis of it having been characterized by economic hardships. It is these economic hardships which led to various urban councils failing to provide services to their towns in general and the neighbourhoods in particular. Neighbourhoods were neglected and abandoned at the expense of service provision, hence liveability deteriorated. The study adopted an analytical framework
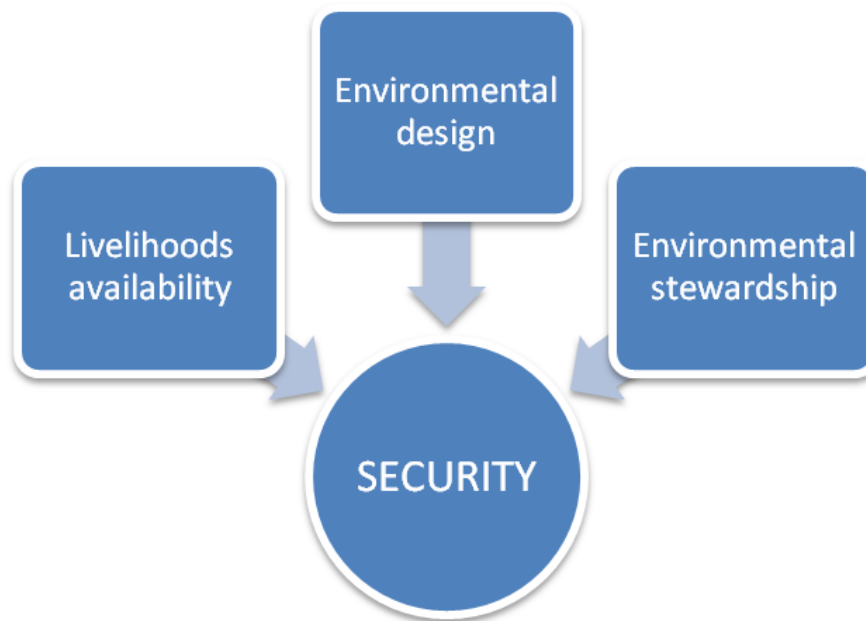
Figure 1a. Conceptual framework. Source: Authors' creation (2010).

cognizant of geographical distribution of crime in the neighbourhood of the case study area. It took a preventive approach to crime solutions, particularly crime prevention through environmental design (CPTEDs). The paper is premised on the notion that neighbourhood security is a function of environmental design, livelihoods availability and environmental stewardship (Figure 1a).

This study adopted a mixed method approach, combining positivism and interpretivism. Positivism puts emphasis on replacing beliefs with scientific objectivity and empirical enquiry by arguing that the human world could be detached and analysed in an objective way; that is, emphasis on scientific objectivity and observation through the five senses rather than subjective beliefs (Kim, 2003). It is based on the assumption of a mind-independent reality, that is the physical world and social events are analogous in that researchers can study social phenomena as they do physical phenomena (Kim, 2003). Interpretivism, on the other hand wields the argument that there is no mind-independent reality to correspond with hypothesis to serve as an external referent point on their acceptability (Kim, 2003). It is argued that there should be openness to the understanding of people whom researchers study and tentativeness in the way researchers apply their conceptions of those being studied. What is true in one situation or context may not be true for another. Both positivism and interpretivism have their own weaknesses and strengths. It is on the basis of this argument that this research adopts both. The intention of adopting a mixed method approach was to capitalise on the strengths of each of the paradigms in order to reinforce each's strengths.

The target population for the study were residents of Marlborough East and the key informants pertaining to crime issues. The sampling units were the residents and environmental areas or spots identified in the area. The study made use of a combination of purposive sampling and stratified random sampling. The rationale for doing this has been to get a representative sample as well as avoid bias. A purposive sample is one which is selected by the researcher subjectively. The researcher attempts to obtain a sample that appears to him/ her to be representative of the population and will usually try to ensure that a range from one extreme to the other is included (Colloway, 1997). Sixty respondents were chosen on a purposive sampling basis. This was thought to be representative of the population considering that Marlborough East has an approximate of 500 plots/stands. It was the intention of the researchers to exclude bias; as a result an equal number of men to females were chosen (30 females and 30 males). The researchers also felt that age could have an implication on the results. To cater for this, the respondents were sub-grouped into the children (below 13 years), the youths (13 to 30 years) and the adults (31 years and above). An equal number of respondents were chosen from each age group.

The final sample was such that it had 30 females and 30 males, 10 of each of these were chosen from the three categories, the children, the youths and the adults. Primary data began with a feasibility study. This feasibility study was done in order to have a familiarization with the study context and an appreciation of the real need for a study. Discussions were held with the police officers who
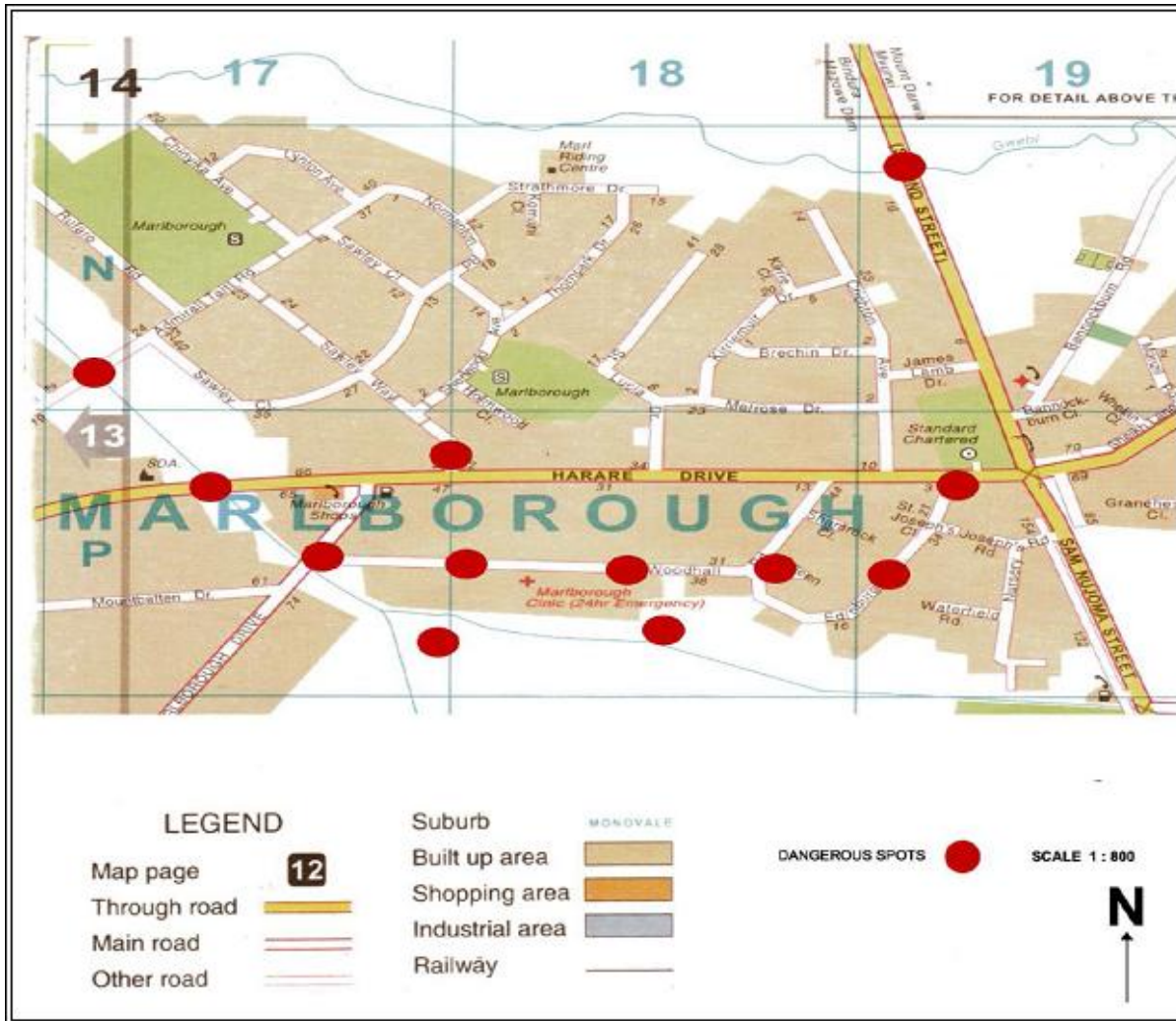
Figure 1b. Distribution of crime spots in Marlborough East.

operate in Marlborough East. The researchers also made field observations in the study area to draw comparisons between views of the police officers with the actual situation on the ground. This was done in the first weeks of January 2010. In February 2010, interviews were also conducted with the City of Harare staff as well as Police Officers at Marlborough and Harare Central Police Stations. It was an interactive process whereby the researchers wanted to know issues as they arose during discussions. The researchers took photographs to aid observations made. A roll-out household survey was done between May and June 2010. The researchers visited Zimpapers, a state newspaper company in the country to get some information regarding crime in its archives.

Data collected were analyzed both manually and by computer packaged programs. The reason why both data analysis techniques were applied is that most of the questions were both open and close-ended. In order to further process and analyze the data meaningfully, they

were sorted into titles which were related to the objectives of this study. The study sought for quantitative and qualitative data and both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was done through the coding and cate-gorizing data following each question on the overview schedule and checklists. Analyzing qualitative data was done through the following steps: Developing a post-coding system by grouping responses provided in such a way that it became easy to find possible suggestions for action that can be taken; grouping and coding, the interpretation of these responses made; and summarising the data both qualitative and quantitative. Interpretation of the study results involved closely linking them to literature review and to the set hypothesis.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF CRIME IN MARLBOROUGH EAST

Figure 1b shows the distribution of crime spots in Marlborough East . In this neighbourhood, crime is not

Plate 1. Overgrown grass in the open spaces of Marlborough East.

evenly distributed; it concentrated in certain areas. Most crimes commonly occur in areas adjacent to the open space which runs on the western side of the neighbourhood and also at the intersections of roads and the water course where there are bridges. This kind of crime distribution can be linked to the travel behaviour of Marlborough East residents. They usually pass through the open space along the water courses (shortcut routes). Marlborough East generally lacks neighbourhood service functions such that residents have to travel long distances in search of daily basic products.

As indicated in the map, crime also occurs in the southern side of Harare Drive, that is, along the water course and along Woodall road. In this zone, is an open space (improperly maintained as evidenced by overgrown grass and other kinds of vegetation) which supposedly provides hideout for muggers and thieves. The area is also marked by unusual quietness; has few houses and few streets, contrary to the features of the area to the north of Harare Drive. The quietness is attributed to little vehicular and human traffic generated by few residents in this part of the neighbourhood. Overall, the majority of crimes occur in areas which are distant and isolated from Marlborough Police Station. Criminals seem to first assess the chances of them being identified in action. It was noted in the study that some respondents linked the increase in the rates of criminal activity in the area to the removal of a sub-police station which used to be located in Marlborough East. They also

noted that it was a rare occasion for housebreaks to occur on stands along Harare Drive. Probably the road, being a through road, is always busy. By nature, through roads are wider as compared to narrower local and access roads. This combined with the existing better street lighting and sparse vegetation might guarantee potential victims of clear views of the surrounding environment, more space to runaway from or chase criminals and to distant themselves from suspected persons. Vehicular traffic casts lighting makes the area visible almost all the time. The road also generates a lot of human traffic especially those who drop off at bus stops. These people are most likely to be a threat to criminals for they play an informal surveillance role. Criminals tend to feel unsafe and unsecure in the presence of people.

Identified dangerous spots: Features and explanations

Some noted dangerous spots and related factors in the study area and their features are described here in some considerable detail. One critical spatial zone worth discussing is the open space along the water course running north-west of Marlborough East. This is an area which is very large when considered in relation to the cost of maintenance in the form of grass cutting. No grass cutting takes place in this area (Plate 1). It has also

Plate 2. Typical squatter structure in the open spaces adjacent to Marlborough East.

been observed that there are a few squatter structures in this open space showing to some extent of how urban shelter is a problem in Zimbabwe (Plate 2).

Overgrown grass characterizes the open space where increased cases of rape, robbery, murder and violence have been reported.

Commenting on this squatter zone, residents in Marlborough East expressed concern that the open space provided them with a way to pass through on their way to get daily commodities from adjacent neighbour-hoods yet there were a number of known incidents that the same people were being mugged at least twice week. They suspected that the squatters were the chief culprits. The residents suggested that availing shops, entertainment, schools and employment opportunities would help in reducing their trips through the 'dangerous' open space. "We prefer long and winding but safe roads rather than the shorter but unsafe routes," said one of the residents.

One of the squatter structures found in the open spaces of Marlborough East and are suspected to harbour criminals.

Generally in all the other dangerous spots, grass is overgrown, street lighting is poor and there are lower volumes of traffic. Maintenance matters have a direct impact on place surveillance and visibility. The study noted that there is a direct link between housebreaking and lack of safety measures and maintenance in Marlborough East. Residents were asked to describe the houses which they had seen in their areas being targets by criminals, specifically housebreakers and robbers. The majority (36%) pointed out those without adequate measures for security in place (Figure 2).

This is in line with the concept of target hardening and the broken windows thesis that measures which make attack difficult should be put in place and that maintenance is a very important aspect for it shows the physical presence of owners respectively. Thus as a way of preventive measurements, target hardening and maintenance should be considered as starting points. From Figure 2, it can be deduced that criminals consider two issues when faced with choosing to attack a target. These are the times taken to get through the preventive mechanisms and the chances of them getting what they are looking for. This shows that a 'manipulation' of the environment could be done to keep criminals away from certain targets. But there were also temporal aspect to do with crime in Marlborough East. The study established
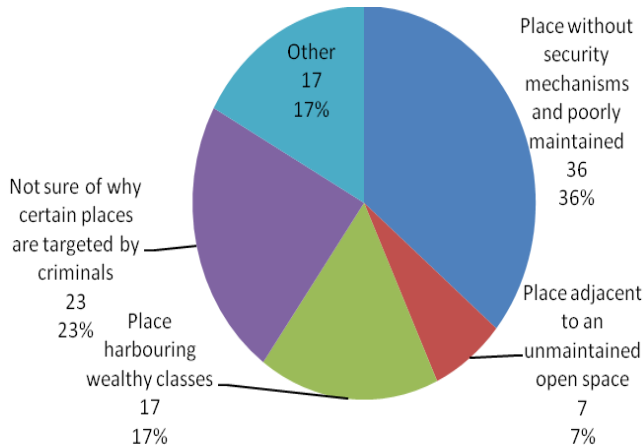
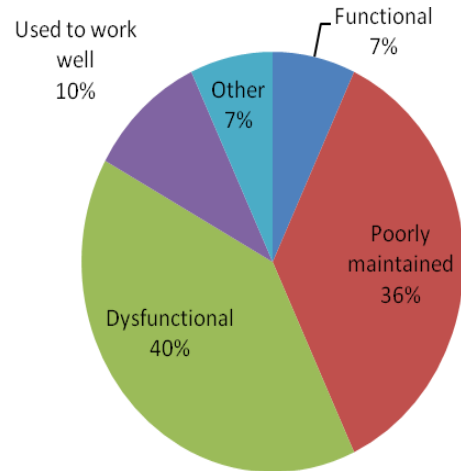**Figure 2.** Characteristics of houses often targeted by criminals.

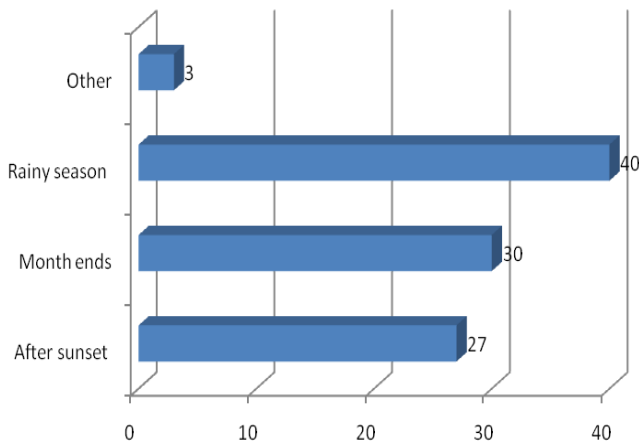**Figure 4.** Residents' opinions about street lighting.

Figure 3. The temporal aspects of crime in Marlborough East.

that critical security concerns in Marlborough East are cause for concern mainly during the rainy season, after sunsets and at the end of every month. Figure 3 shows a summary of the respondents' views about temporal patterns of crime occurrence in Marlborough East.

Seasonality and time are key determinants to crime increase in urban neighbourhoods in Harare. During rainy seasons, grass often grows quicker and faster than during the dry seasons. Sometimes it grows beyond acceptable heights, raising security concerns. It becomes frightful to move in the unmaintained areas. From the study, it was noted that crimes often occur from 6 in the evening until early hours in the morning. Darkness promotes vulnerability to attacks. Some crime in Marlborough East occurs during month-ends because criminals know that they have more chances of targeting person with valuables. From the findings of this research, people with valuable possessions and women in particular are often targeted when they come from work. This usually happens during the evening especially when

there were power-cuts. Thus the motives to commit crime in this case are somewhat economic though the conditions of the physical environment also matter (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). In Marlborough East street lighting challenges were note in many areas, facilitating crime incidences. According to the broken windows thesis by Wilson and Kelling (2003), crime is subject to the conditions of place maintenance. Browning (2009) observes a direct and positive relationship between commercial activity and crime yet, the findings in the study area do not quite support this. There is very little commercial activity in Marlborough East. Crime prevalence is severe in the neighbourhood but there are no direct links to commercial activity. Instead of the absence of commercial activities to directly reduce crime, the inverse is occurring whereby the non-existence of commercial activities is indirectly causing crime. Residents travel through unsafe places in order to quickly reach commercial centres in the adjacent neighbourhood.

Forty percent (40%) of the respondents were of the view that the street lighting system in Marlborough east is not functional; 36% noted that street lighting has was not regularly maintained; 10% had some experience of risk in the neighbourhood. The respondents showed concern over the current state of street lighting and went on to elaborate that the street lighting used to be well implying dilapidation and retrogression in the state of this service in the neighbourhood (Figure 4).

Respondents felt that the bad state of street lighting was due to negligence, poor maintenance and abandonment of the neighbourhood by the City of Harare. A number of the pylons for street lights were fallen to the ground with wiring being disconnected, and sometimes the lights are not switched off during daytime or the lighting is not bright enough to serve the intended purpose. But 7% of the respondents were satisfied with the street lighting. This was probably due to the areas

Plate 3. Typical broken wiring in Marlborough East.

where they reside; some places still enjoyed good lighting and regular maintenance of the lights. Another 7% of the respondents were not knowledgeable of what street lighting used to be like in Marlborough East. The ignorance could be attributed to the fact that the majority of these had recently come from the rural areas, other towns or other suburbs hence could not compare for they had little knowledge pertaining to the functionality of the street lights. Plates 3 and 4 show some electricity pylons to support street lighting, which have suffered neglect and damage. The UNCHS (1998) stresses the role of urban design in ensuring higher levels of security. Good urban design takes into account security and safety considerations in spatial development. It brings a positive difference to crime levels (UNCHS, 1998). Thus, the provision of basic functions in each neighbourhood enhances place liveability. This notion is premised on the idea that when residents are provided with basic services such as social amenities and recreational facilities, they will be satisfied with living in their neighbourhood. Deviant behaviour could be reduced for people would be occupied all the time with little mental stresses. The research established that there were inadequate entertainment facilities in the neighbourhood of Marlborough East. It became an issue with the young and able-bodied being unproductive. They may probably opt for drug abuses which causes them to abscond from reality. In such circumstances, deviant behaviour might be expected. It may be justifiable from the results of the research to say that security concerns in the neighbourhood of

Marlborough East are an urban design challenge, which to solve it, might require interventions from an urban design point of view. This may be implemented through upgrading existing entertainment facilities and introducing new ones.

ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN AND CRIME PREVENTION: A REVISIT TO THEORY

The situation of security and crime incidences in Marlborough East has been described and explained in various theories and conceptual frameworks. Improving 'natural surveillance' of shared land and facilities of nearby residents through literally increasing the number of people who can see it, and increasing the familiarity of residents collectively, residents can more easily detect undesirable or criminal behaviour (Jacobs, 1978). Surveillance entails the placement of physical features and the presence of people on the street who are likely to witness and at the same time deter criminal activity (Jacobs, 1978). The argument behind surveillance is that the presence of people and activities on the street leads potential offenders to feel increased scrutiny and limitations on their escape routes. Jacobs (1978) thus, concludes that security is inversely related to the level of activity on the street. Visibility is enhanced when the environment in the vicinity of a property is clear (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). This brings in the issues of street lighting and vegetation along roads and in open spaces. Street

Plate 4. Fallen pylon: A common feature in Marlborough East.

lighting reduces fear of crime. Places often abandoned after sunset due to lack of adequate street lighting will host quite a number of activities when the quality of street lighting is improved (Browning and Goix, 2009). When a place is well lit, offenders become afraid of being seen by passers-by including motorists. Lighting also benefits the potential targets for they can quickly observe suspicious behaviour and take preventive measures before attack by criminals occurs (Browning, 2009). Other features purposed to deter visibility include tree foliages approaching roads, especially at road junctions, over-grown grass in open spaces and along roads and dense vegetation at residential stands (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). These features are purposed to block views; as a result they probably facilitate criminal activity. To enhance visibility, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) propose that dense vegetation be cleared and replaced with sparse forms of vegetation.

Theory shows that the main issues behind the relationship between security and maintenance are neglect and abandonment. Small indicators of neglect such as broken windows and unkempt lawns are purported to promote a feeling that an area is in a state of decay (Wilson and Kelling, 2003). Anticipating decay, people likewise fail to maintain their own properties (Wilson and Kelling, 2003). This increase in signs of neglect probably entails that a place is abandoned. It is this perception of abandonment which in the words of Wilson and Kelling (2003) "...causes crime and not crime causing abandonment". The proponents of the broken windows thesis supports zero tolerance approach to property maintenance and observe that the presence of a broken window will entice vandals to break more windows in the vicinity. Wilson and Kelling (2003) thus arrive at a conclusion that the sooner broken windows are fixed, the less likely that such vandalism will occur in the future. Target hardening involves a wide range of techniques meant to make attack of a target difficult (Crawford, 1998). The idea behind target hardening is that criminals must not just break a house or attack individuals easily. There should be mechanisms which cause delays in pursuing criminal activity. This has been proposed to increase the chances of offenders being caught and the offenders themselves will rarely try attacks on such targets. Proposed mechanisms include: Phone entry systems, electric gates, burglar bars, CCTV and neighbourhood watch and patrols. However, the concept of target hardening has weaknesses in terms of social exclusionary effects to strangers.

According to the situational crime prevention theory (Eugene et al., 2003), situational crime prevention can be divided into two: Measures which reduce physical opportunities for offending and those which increase the chances of an offender being caught. Probability of offending could be reduced markedly by making it more difficult to act (Eugene et al., 2003). The side effect of this, as acknowledged by Kuo and Sullivan (2001), is the displacement of criminal activity to weaker targets. The issue of displacement was however countered by Eugene et al. (2003) in trying to defend their situational crime prevention theory; they said that "…providing effective protection would displace crime and if all targets were

protected, many robbers would no doubt consider alternative means of gaining their ends. At the end, they may accept their reduced circumstances and may even take legitimate employment". From the preceding arguments, it follows that any crime prevention strategy needs to consider the likely effects, both positive and negative. A cost-benefit analysis which seeks to maximize on benefits and minimize on cost of any strategy is critical. Chosen crime prevention strategies should provide alternative forms of livelihood to accommodate the criminals productively in the neighbourhood (Preuss, 2005; Reiss, 1981; Eugene et al., 2003). A second category of situational crime prevention theory and practice involves increasing the risk of offenders being caught. In Kuo and Sullivan's (2001) words, this entails raising the chances of an offender being seen by someone who is likely to take action. It is so because the human factor plays a deterrent role. This evidence helps to stress the importance of target-hardening and surveillance when linked to the context of this study.

According to Atkins et al. (1991), improved street lighting reduces both crime and fear of crime for it improves visibility. This is because improved visibility tends to increase the possibilities for identification and apprehension of criminals and hence deter the perpetuation of criminal acts. It does so whilst at the same time providing re-assurance to those people who are fearful for personal safety in public places. Street lighting is a means of both crime prevention and crime reduction in public places (Preuss, 2005; Reiss, 1981). Lighting plays a significant role in crime prevention to the extent that Atkins et al. (1991) made the following conclusion: "…many factors influence the level of actual crime and perceived risk of which lighting may be one", however, there seems to be a divergence of thoughts about the results of improving street lighting. For example, Preuss (2005) acknowledges the problematic relationship between lighting and crime which increases when one considers that offenders need light to detect potential targets in low risk situations. Preuss (2005) has given an example of an automated teller machine (ATM). An ATM user might be safer when the its immediate surroundings are well lit. However, this same lighting makes the patron more visible to passing offenders. Who the lighting serves is unclear. A general belief is that vegetation and overgrown foliages cause crime. Dense vegetation is linked with fear, fear of crime and possibly crime itself (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). Vegetation is facilitative to criminals in concealing their selection of a target and their escape from the scene, to shield their examination of stolen goods and finally in the disposal of unwanted goods (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). Michael (1999) was of the view that vegetation is neither necessary nor sufficient for crime to take place. Large shrubs, under bush and dense woods substantially diminish visibility and therefore, are capable of supporting criminal activity. On the other hand, Kuo and Sullivan

(2001) claim that though vegetation causes crime; not all vegetation blocks views. For example; widely spaced, high canopy trees have minimal effect on visibility, flowers and low shrubs seem unlikely to provide cover for criminal activity.

In trying to answer the question whether vegetation deters crime, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) propose that in some settings, visibility preserving forms of vegetation may actually deter crime. They do so by increasing surveillance and by mitigating some of psychological precursors to violence. Vegetation can be deterrent to crime by mitigating fatigue. One of the cost of mental fatigue may be a heightened propensity for 'outbursts of anger and potentially…violence' (Kuo and Sullivan, 2001). By this they meant that vegetation aids in the recovery from mental fatigue. An example of this is the public parks which give a sense of wilderness. UNCHS (1998) noted that if people had a more pleasant physical environment, they would be less inclined to commit criminal activities. Designing urban neighbourhoods for functionality is an integral component of planning. The role of urban planning in crime prevention involves two major activities: Physical urban design and economic development. The former takes the form of addressing the design of public spaces through sound architectural adherence to enforcing building standards and codes so as to reduce the opportunities for criminal activity. The latter involves provision for employment opportunities in Master plans. Goix (2009) questions whether the prevalence of commercial space within neighbourhoods serves to concentrate or control violent crime. Jacobs (1978) hypothesizes that dense population combined with retail establishments promote conventional street activities that produce social control benefits for urban communities. Thus, Jacobs notes the existence of a positive and linear relationship between crime and commercial activities. Browning's (2009) analyses are consistent with Jacobs' expectations that the percentage of neighbourhood space devoted to commercial activity exhibits a non-linear relationship with aggravated assault and homicide. At lower levels, increases in the prevalence of commercial activity increase both types of violence. However, beyond a threshold, increasing commercial activity reduces homicide and aggravated assault (Browning, 2009). In contrast, the relationship between commercial activity and robbery is positive and linear.

The planner and urban designer, thus, have very significant roles in ensuring liveability in urban neighbourhoods. It has been found that crime, whatever its causes, is always a planner's challenge. From the layout stage, security and safety issues should be taken into consideration so that urban neighbourhoods become liveable. However, this role is not without weaknesses. For example funding of projects requires various players. These players such as NGOs have their own interests. As a result whenever they intervene, the matter

Table 1. Action plan: Security measures for Marlborough East.

Issue	Recommendation	Responsible institution	Required resources	Desired outcome
Employment creation	Responsible authorities ought to introduce SMEs in Marlborough East	Harare City Council Youth empowerment institutions	Land Initial capital	Reduced level of suffering Enhanced social interaction and economically productive use of time
Street lighting	Immediate upgrading and monitoring of the dilapidated street lighting system	Harare City Council Department of Engineering	Labour resources Capital for buying spares	Improved street lighting and reviving public places
Vegetation clearing	Vegetation must be cleared frequently during rainy seasons	Harare City Council Residents associations	Capital Labour	Improved visibility Reduced fear of crime
Target hardening and ICTs	House owners need to acquire target hardening measures such as strong durawalls material, razor wire and burglar bars. ICTs such as alarm and phone entry systems need to be installed.	Individual house owners Private security companies	Capital Modern technologies	Make house breaking difficult

becomes a political issue. It is from this basis that planners ought to find ways of harnessing funders sustainably. Any intervention in trying to solve crime issues in the neighbourhood of Marlborough East should do it from an economic point of view. Though crime has relationships with the physical environment, the root cause is economic hardships, specifically unemployment. The researchers hereby propose that planners should intervene by making employment available. This is possible by subdividing part of the vast council open space land into smaller units which have to be used for youth projects and SMEs such as stone-carving. The open space between Marlborough East and Marlborough West should be turned into productive use such as recreational facilities. These include youth games, female clubs and others which enhance the social life and interaction of residents. All these facilities will give the responsibility of maintenance to certain individuals. It becomes safe to travel to certain areas via the open space routes. There is need for immediate intervention by the responsible actors to device methods, techniques, approaches and fund raising strategies as means of ensuring that the crime situation in Marlborough East is dealt with.

With immediate effect, there must be a massive neighbourhood public space upgrading and clearing of dense vegetation which is causing criminal activities. If funds are unavailable to do this, residents must make reasonable contributions. This must be done through financial means or by providing labour. External actors need to be approached for funding purposes. Target hardening ought to be considered by all; planners at neighbourhood level and residents at household level. At

neighbourhood level, target hardening ought to take the form of gated neighbourhoods, street lighting and residents patrols of their streets during the night. The criminals will feel at risk and will avoid such activity. In the end they will join others in the formal employment which will be provided to avoid displacement of criminal activities to adjacent neighbourhoods. At household level, residents need to put basic security measures such as strong durawalls with electric wires, phone entry systems and electronically operated gates. They also need to make sure that they clear dense vegetation at their stands especially that which approaches the road (Table 1).

Conclusion

The research has found that there are temporal and spatial variations of crime occurrence in the neighbourhood of Marlborough East. Specific trends and patterns have been identified. From the year 2000, there has generally been an upward trend in criminal activity. The major reason for upward trend has been found to be economic hardships which affected the majority of Zimbabweans. General patterns of crime occurrence in Marlborough East have been found. Crime in Marlborough East mostly occurs after sunsets, during the rainy season and at the end of every month. The occurrence of crime after sunsets has been linked to the inadequate street lighting which is failing to enhance travel after sunset thus leading to fear of poorly lit areas. Spatially, crime has been found to increase as distance from the police station increases. This has been linked to

the fact that there is a strong positive relationship between crime and the environment in which crime occurs. The western part of Marlborough East is the most affected in terms of criminal activities. Possibilities are that the open space which runs on the western side acts as a hiding place for criminals. Homes which possess comparative wealth are targeted by housebreakers. The location of dangerous spots follows a special pattern. Either it is located along routes from shopping centres and other functions or along routes from incidental bus stops. General patterns have also been found. It has been reflected from the research that crimes such as robbery, assault and violence are usually targeted at women. Men are safer than females. Motorists are safer than pedestrians. The research has focused on argumentations pertaining to the design aspects of Marlborough East. These include security in relation to neighbourhood functions, street lighting, maintenance issues and road features. The research has found that there are no adequate services and neighbourhood functions. As a result, Marlborough East is not liveable. It is due to this inadequacy of neighbourhood functions that criminal activities are resulting from. A relationship has been found between crime and street lighting such that where street lights are unavailable or are inadequate, crime prevails because it will be difficult to identify criminals and take protective action before the attack takes place. To a great extent, as reflected in the Marlborough East case, the occurrence of criminal activity in space is linked to maintenance of the neighbourhood. Most of the dangerous spots are linked to areas where grass cutting and clearing of overgrown foliages are rarely done. The study has also managed to establish the fact that there are links between crime, the road pattern and the physical appearance of the roads.

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