

Revitalizing Responsive Urban Open Spaces

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Abstract: *In the past, urban built environment has unexpectedly responded to social and cultural values as well as political and functional needs. The spaces have to respond to qualitative needs as well as qualitative needs of people generating authentic and unique characteristics. Most of the cities lost their identity and legibility as a result of rapid development and their consequential destructions. This is directly affected to create socially unresponsive urban space in all over the city. Open spaces are necessary constituent of a positive image and responsiveness to the city. But that is also in a threat of lost space in an urban situation as an urban space. Therefore there is need of 'meaningful, socially responsive urban open spaces "that are capable to accommodate various urban public activities. Thus the study focused on positive transformation of open space in heart of city, as a responsive urban space in a city.*

Keywords:

Lost space, Open space, Responsiveness, Responsive urban space.

I. Introduction to Responsiveness and Responsive urban space in the city

An associated set of place with architectural style, nature, and activity of its setting is known as a responsive environment. Therefore associated set of buildings are the ones, which carry certain characteristic to show a relationship between them. Making a city a responsive environment has become a complex process, as the city is experienced in a dynamical manner. By studying the responsiveness of man to his environment, one can actually understand what part of the city environment and relation of the human habits and how it concentrates in the city. Bentley (1985) used an analytical framework of seven visual and physical attributes for achieving responsiveness in a built environment. The responsive places are thus defined as, "The built environment should provide its users, with an essentially democratic setting, enriching their opportunities by maximizing the degree of choice available to them: we shall call such places as responsive." (Ian Bentley, 1985). A responsive places or settings can be recognized as places where the users are provided maximum choice available in one place. Thus, it can be said that responsive has essentially social components.

This study is focused on effects on urban open spaces, activity pattern of the people and the intention of creating urban responsive urban open spaces. Therefore it is crucial to understand the characteristics of the responsive environment. A responsive built environment is a place where human values are linked to activities and places in order to create an image that is the nature of that environment. Therefore the designer should appreciate the important components of the built environment

i.e. spatial personal, temporal, psychological, private, public and value components to link, human values to activities and places. This clearly expresses that the qualities of responsive urban environment and identified the urban spaces as a place where the social and spatial attributes are intertwined. Therefore it explains that without conductive activities and social interaction, there is no existence of space. However, the final goal of such a city is the cohesive and harmonic picture that is associated with unity.

II. Need of Responsiveness and Responsive urban space in the city

To start with the responsive design approach, the idea of a relationship between social life and arrangement of the built environment should be considered as important. In the past, great cities in history give a spatial pleasure but today in a modern city the urban situation has been chaotic even with a phenomenal increase of urban growth and designers never made a concentrated effort to work out the form implication of their social and political ideas. Therefore designers must make sure that to link human values to activities and places. In other words, this can be identified as the path to achieve responsive urban space in the city. Urban space may once more become communal space. Communal space is extended private space, while public space is parallel to non-space set aside to permit public movement and activities. Therefore the urban space has a close relationship of the public realm.

Looking at the historical cities, they reveal the hierarchical order of connective block patterns. Public spaces are clearly identified and give the meaningful identity of the city with the continuous built mass. In this environment, the elements of the city i.e. edges, streets, nodes, landmarks, and districts can be clearly identified. Considering the modern cities urban form is predominantly horizontal instead of modern vertical buildings, towers, slabs or sky separates which points out as objects and the spaces within them are confused. (Rod McCall, 2005). Therefore in modern cities largely confuse elements of the city and urban public spaces. It is explained that it has become a trend among the present designers that, they consider the private realm of the built environment as the responsibility of Architects, Public-private interference; as the responsibility of landscape architects and public realm as the responsibility of urban designers. (Perera, 2001). Thus this results in a pitiable situation and a serious issue for the public environment. Designers, architects, urban designers and landscape architects will need to work interdisciplinary teams involving a variety of professions. But designers work individually and they specify a specific role, has led to creating unresponsive buildings and urban space. 'To make a design whole, it is absolutely essential that the space created by the building has a positive

character. However, in all cultures which produce great cities and building, space was understood as a positive thing created by the building (Alexander, 1987). Therefore need of the responsive urban space is important which link human value to activities and places is an important concern.

III. Human Response: How does design affect choice?

As a city is a place designed for a man, it should respond to a man. The casual experience and observation of the urban environment can lead to a significant relationship with the individual. In another word, change the entire meaning of the city to the human mind. In order to study and understand man's response to the built fabric, one must understand physical and social components and how these two elements are interwoven. The relationship or the link which is a mechanism that makes a site work must be understood. Therefore the study will especially try to find out this link or connection. Responsiveness or man will be the measure used to study these aspects. It is obvious that there should be socially responsive places in a city. Therefore this study is focused on socially responsive urban space, based on urban open spaces. Hence it is crucial to understand the characteristics of responsive environment combining with human activities.

Permeability: where people can move and connect

The extent to which urban forms permit/restrict movement

Variety: Range of uses available to people

Multiple functions of a space simultaneously

Legibility: understand the opportunities offered

The potential of a space in holistic manner.

Robustness: Degree to which people can use a given place for different purposes

Place that can be used for many purpose; offer many choices not just single fixed use to the people approaching the place.

Visual appropriateness: whether the detailed appearance of the place makes people aware of the choices available.

Richness: people's choices of sensory experience

Quality of the space with respect to all age groups.

Personalization: Extent to which people can put their own stamp on a place.

IV. Examination and formulation of Design Implication for Open spaces with Historical setting in the city of Bhopal.

Case study of Iqbal Maidan

The precinct, to which the site belongs, has a rich cultural background with influences of both Islamic traditions and architecture along with traces of urban structures. This culmination and co-existence of a multitude of people in this old part of the city draw ones attention



Figure 1: Location of Iqbal Maidan, Bhopal

Intervention should be based on understanding Heritage value of space and potential of space in terms of economic value. A present social aspect of the space: children use the space to play at a specific period. Also, the place is used for occasionally for some functions.

Positive Points:

- Located at Prime location
- It is easily accessible
- No boundary to space
- Both hardscape and softscape
- Historical surrounding
- Historical identity
- Small garden pocket in a busy urban area
- Open to all and allow people to sit.
- Act as Playing space for children

Negative Points:

- No encouragement to pedestrian movement
- Heavy traffic in surrounding
- No replication of historical elements in recent development of maidan.
- No adequate and comfortable seating facility in an area
- No basic amenities
- No proper maintenance and relative development as per need
- No utilization of potential





Figure 2: Analysis of Iqbal maidan and its surrounding

Implication

Permeability is totally covered by parking and vehicular movement around the site. By removing the illegal parking and by encouraging pedestrian movement, visual and physical permeability can be achieved. These preamble solutions can be all ways with variety of activities like introducing paving patterns, trees and pedestrian pathways. Variety of activities along the edge of open space should be encouraged, Right now street vendors are present but they should be provided with well-defined space. This will reduce congestion and

mismanagement of the space. Use of various colours, texture and material enhance the variety. Legibility can be improved by designing a proper and defined entrance to the open space. Therefore considering surrounding historical monuments, use of various scale, proportions, texture and colours should be done to achieve the legibility. As Bhopal encourage cultural values the space can be utilized for encouraging cultural activity just like Bhopal hatt does. Day and Night functions, Night Bazaars should be introduced to the area to achieve the robustness. Tree plantation should be done on moti masjid side so that the trees would act as buffer between the heavy traffic and the open space.

Examination and formulation of Design Implication for Open spaces with the modern commercial setting in the city of Pune.

Case study of Pantaloon's plaza

The precinct, to which the site belongs, has a commercial influence due to the surrounding with hotels, shopping malls, office spaces on one side and residential on the other side. This combination attracts people from different age group and activities together in the site as a congregational space.

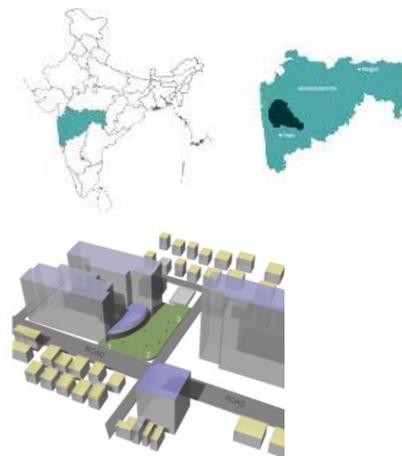


Figure 3 Location of Pantaloon's plaza & its surrounding

Intervention should be based on understanding commercial and public value of space. Present social aspect of the space: children use the space to play at specific period, Adults as a hangout place, office users use this place to take short breaks and for interaction.

Positive Points:

- Located at Prime location
- It is easily accessible with no boundary on the sides.
- Both hardscape and softscape
- Commercial surrounding
- Softspace in a busy urban area
- Open to all and allow people to sit.
- Act as multiple interaction center.

Negative Points:

- No considerations of noise pollution.
- Heavy traffic in surrounding

- No defined activity
- No adequate and comfortable seating facility in a area
- No utilization of potential as commercial front

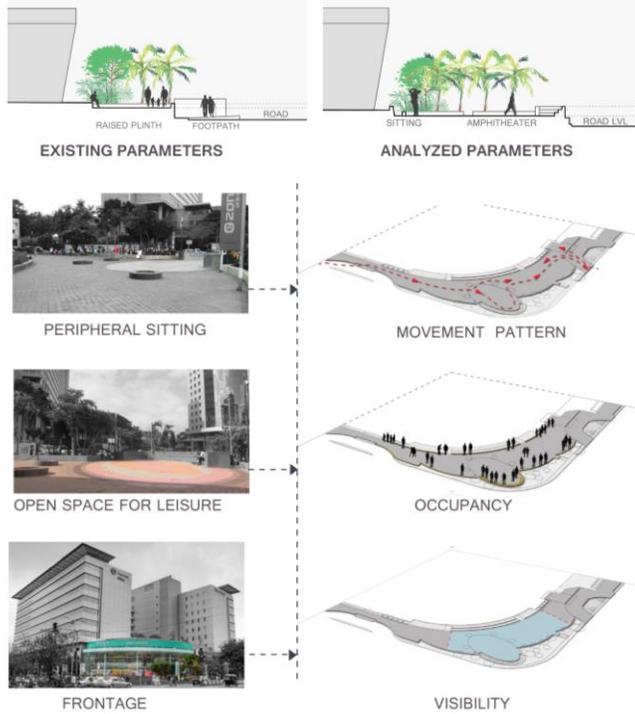


Figure 4: Analysis of pantaloons plaza and its surrounding

Implication

Permeability is emphasized by setback of surrounding buildings and vehicular access near the site. By increasing visual interaction between built space and occupancy pattern while not hampering pedestrian movement, visual and physical permeability can be emphasized. This can be achieved by introduction of urban furniture with visual interaction, landscape and seating spaces. Occupancy pattern, noise levels and visual points were analysed to generate a base curve which does not create any blockage in existing circulation. It helps in channelizing the circulation and creating an urban furniture with respect to the site requirement. Use of texture and material enhance the variety. Therefore considering surrounding buildings use of various scale, proportions, texture and colours should be done to achieve the visual corridor and enigma. Day and Night functions, play areas should be introduced to the furniture for all age groups. Ergonomic proportions were considered to design urban furniture with the help of landscape and play area.

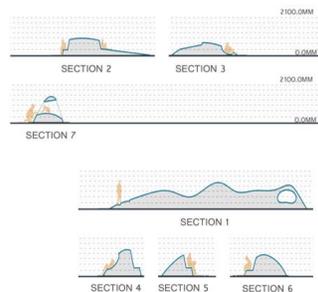


Image 1: Plan, section of the furniture



Image 2: Views

V. Conclusion

As we can see in both the cases that even the background and Architectural setting is different, the open space act as a Public gathering Foci. Thus we can say that, the urban open spaces possess strong unique characters for harmonizing relationship with the city inhabitants as a public gathering foci as well as the perception of positive city image. Hence the positive urban open space plays a vital role of the city image. Therefore the positive transformation through the realizing of such open spaces are extremely essential in order to archive a responsive urban space in the city. System design for urban spaces is based on different parameters which are dependent on each other and has impact on the surrounding activities as well as the up gradation of the space.

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