

PLACEMAKING FOR AN URBAN PLAZA

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Abstract : In the global trend of urbanization , our communities , people and places has been encroached by communication technologies ,thereby weakening the livability and quality of urban life. This cause urban environments to expand, creating lifestyle changes and, as a result, the use of public spaces. Friendly quality of streets began to disappear and the essence of community got lost in the hustle of traffic. The implications of rapidly changing economic and social circumstances have become profoundly important in shaping how people use and form their societies. Placemaking is a method to enhance the comfort, safety, attraction, and vitality of public spaces in order to encourage people to engage in social activities. This concept is used to improve public spaces and to transform a space into a place. Urban plazas are one of the significant public spaces in an urban environment. Urban plazas are open public spaces that represent a city's identity as well as the cultural heritage of its citizens. Since ancient times, this has become place where members of the community congregate and "urban life" takes place. The 'life' of plazas develops and evolves in response to the people's contemporary needs. Now people want to connect, get retreat from their hectic life and interact with the community. This is for the concept of "placemaking" is to give spaces back to the people. This research paper investigates that what are the issues in urban plazas which discourage people from using them and why this space fails in making into a great place. The research has been done to find out the simple solutions for urban plazas so that they can foster social life and also how can space be transformed into a place. Also to study parameters and principles which make a normal urban plaza a great urban plaza. Case studies have been done on various urban plazas on the principles of successful urban plazas to evaluate and find out where they lack, the negative and positive points .The design solution will be provided that can be used as design guidelines for future urban plazas encouraging more and more use of that place and encourage social interaction.

Index Terms - Placemaking, Urban plaza , Sense of place, Sociability, Community

I. INTRODUCTION

The global urban population has been rapidly growing, and as a result, the physical configuration of cities is continually changing, mostly in detrimental ways. If the population grows, so does the need for infrastructure and facilities. The implications of rapidly changing economic and social circumstances have become profoundly important in shaping how people use and form their societies. Increasing migration, communication technologies, and globalization cause urban environments to expand, creating lifestyle changes and, as a result, the use of public spaces.

One of the most significant public spaces in an urban environment is the urban plaza. Urban plazas are open public spaces, offering an opportunity for social interaction. These places have always been the focal point of the urban fabric and act as a center point for a gathering purposes. Increasing road traffic, user group segregation, and neglecting these spaces, are some of the reasons why "social life" is degrading in urban plazas. Therefore, the concept of "placemaking" has come to the forefront to regain the importance of these urban plazas.

This paper attempts to investigate how placemaking can better foster social activity in public plazas. The study examines what makes a great place and principles for a successful urban plaza to make a space socially responsive.

II. PLACEMAKING

Nowadays, people want to connect, interact to feel more authentic. They want to retreat from their hectic life and discover the community and the places. The principle of placemaking is not new. The creation of a place that distinguishes a community is referred to as placemaking. It inspires people to reimagine and rebuild public spaces as the core of a community. Placemaking refers to a common way of forming our public sphere to maximize shared value by strengthening the relationship between individuals and the places they occupy.

"Placemaking is based on the assets and skills of a community, rather than on relying solely on professional experts".

It takes a place to create a community and a community to create a place. (Project for Public Spaces)

Simply put, "the community is the expert" when it comes to public places when using a placemaking technique. Placemaking principles are generally considered what we like and need, how we feel in a space, is there a social life that exists, do we feel safe?

Place-making is a people-centered and community-driven approach that assists in the process of planning and designing high-quality urban spaces. This approach considers the perspectives of the individuals who live in a certain location to determine their desires from that place as well as their expectations for it. Placemaking aims to build a place not just design it. Placemaking is more about promoting new ways of usage than just fostering improved urban design. It reflects on the physical, economic, and social identities that identify a place and keep it changing.

2.1 From space to place

Space is something that has no character, they are attractive to no one, and are the necessary geographic evils of all types of human settlement. Space is an empty object, but when meaning is assigned to it, it transforms into a place. Basically, space becomes a place when it has meaning and the meaning is added when people connect and have a social life.

It is not simply a matter of filling people into space. It is about bringing people together and this is how space is converted into a place.

The place is important for several reasons like we all want to be a part of a community other than ourselves, and it can't be found in a physical space alone. Placemaking can be an effective method for connecting us to our communities. It may also help us in responding to contextual factors such as safety or climate. Will you choose a dark alley or a busy, well-lit one? There are few examples of how placemaking can make a difference. Another aspect that affects us is that we want to stay and spend time in places that evoke empathy and attachment, and companies in those places typically flourish as a result.

2.2 What makes a great place?

These six elements derived from the initials of places help in making the great place :

- People

Successful public spaces are well-used and well-liked by a large number of people. A good design improves a place's attractiveness, and regular programming actively draws in new and repeat users by giving them an incentive to return.

- Lush Landscaping

Bringing Nature Into Urban Areas And Providing Shade has long been part of efforts to build or improve green spaces. Lush greenery and appealing water bodies are also combined to create outstanding destinations.

- Accessibility

Public places must be readily accessible by public transit to retain their importance. In any climate, getting around should be easy. Car-free zones are an important way to build people-friendly environments.

- Comfort

People should feel safe and secure in public spaces. This normally involves providing adequate shade, illumination, seating, and a universal style.

- Engaging

Small or seemingly insignificant elements may make the difference between an ordinary and remarkable space. We make a public space more engaging for all by putting a greater focus on design and details.

- Sociability

A good public space evokes a sense of sociability. It could be a scenic view, or it could be a funny sculpture. It also helps people to share the room, keep an eye on each other, and enjoy being with other people.

III. DEFINING URBAN PLAZAS

Urban plazas are open spaces that serve as focal points in the public space network, serving as a platform for social and economic interaction as well as a focus for civic pride and community expression. It reflects the city's character as well as the community's cultural background. Since ancient times, they have become places where members of the society congregate and urban life takes place as the fundamental component of the city structure.

According to (Levy, 2012), the main difference between a public park and a public plaza is that “on a square, citizens are not connected to manifestations of nature, but the heart of urban culture, history and memory”.

Due to changes in the usage of public spaces over the last few decades, many urban plazas have lost their importance and role. As a result, developing urban plazas as both public and green spaces is becoming more important and essential.

Urban plaza design should be a feature of urban design. Otherwise, instead of being a part of the city, they become detached and meaningless. This chapter aims to examine the current position and situation of urban plazas, as well as to establish design strategies.

3.1 Principles for a successful Urban plaza

A set of basic principles and objectives are obtained from the selected books (Life between buildings by Jan Gehl and Social life of small urban spaces by William. H. Whyte.) , and the literature study that must be applicable to a successful urban plaza and make it as a part of a great place :

Table 3.1: Parameters for the analysis of urban plazas

S.No.	Derived approach (Parameters)	Elements	Description
1.	Visual image and identity	Facade, Architectural design, identity, Function, Image	Attractiveness, Scale, Shape ,Historical background Landmarks, Views and vistas, Entrance, Function of building
2.	Uses and activities	Activities and uses	Activities
3.	Access and mobility	Parking, Accessibility	Transportation, Footpaths, Routes, linkages
4.	Urban elements/ amenities	Amenities	Trees, Dust bin, Benches, signage, Street light, Street furniture, Sculpture

5.	Form	Surrounding, Neighborhood Outer space around Legibility/visibility	Sense of enclosure, legibility, Permeability, Outer and inner environment
6.	Microclimate	Noise, Wind, Sun/shade, climate	Noise, Wind, Sun/shade, climate

IV. OBSERVATION AND FINDINGS

4.1 Location

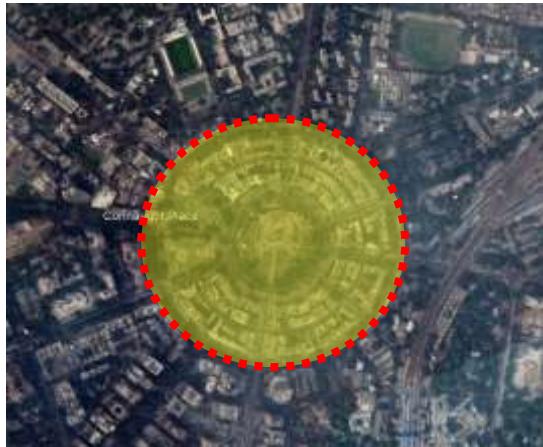


Fig 1: Image showing the location and surrounding of Connaught place

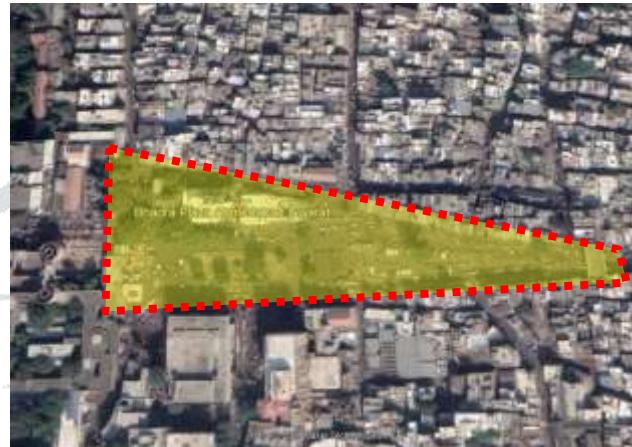


Fig 2: Image showing the location and surrounding of Bhadra plaza

- **Location:** Connaught place , Near Rajiv Chowk metro station, New Delhi
- **Consist of :** Global chain stores, Underground market, vintage cinemas, bars and Indian restaurants and urban square

- **Location:** Bhadra plaza ,Bhadra rd, old city, Ahmedabad
- **Consist of :** Informal market, mosque, Bhadra fort, Teen darwaza, Vintage retail stores and a square.

4.2 Access and Mobility



Fig 3: Image showing the Access and parking of Connaught place



Fig 4: Image showing the Access and parking of Bhadra plaza

- It is accessible from six sides connecting the plaza with all the main road of that area.
- People have much options to move around and have a clear view/ vistas from all parts of the plaza.
- Proper parking is provided for two wheeler as well as for four wheeler.

- It is accessible from various different lanes making the plaza more congested.
- Pedestrian movement is interrupted by the traffic movement therefore People don't have much more options to move around, are force to move in a single direction.
- Very less parking is provided which leads to illegal parking in some areas especially in the service lane.

4.3 Activities and uses



Fig 5: Image showing the activities and uses of Connaught place



Fig 6 : Image showing the Access and parking of Bhadra plaza

4.4. Visual Identity and Microclimate

Connaught place: Quite less natural sunshades are provided but buildings have a colonnaded structure which works as a shade and provides comfortable environment during day time.

Bhadra plaza: Shades are only provided in front of shops and restaurants, and also near sit outs. Trees provides shades especially near sit outs which acts as comfortable open interactive space.

4.5 Urban elements and Amenities



Fig 7: Image showing the Urban elements of Connaught place



Fig 8 : Image showing the urban elements of Bhadra plaza

4.6 Form



Fig 9 : Image showing the scale and sense of enclosure of Connaught place



Fig 10 : Image showing the scale and sense of enclosure of Bhadra plaza

- Connaught place have a fully sense of enclosure and having a closed square form. The space is easily accessible and visible making it a legible and permeable.

V. RES

- Bhadra plaza have a partially enclosed form making it a amorphous form of plaza. The space is easily accessible but not have clear views and vistas making it only a legible space.

The results and analysis revealed that the square's configuration, spaces, and elements do have an impact on the plaza's sociability. The placement of elements, the availability of appropriate open and green spaces, accessibility, and visibility was among the main criteria that led to the plaza's sociability.

5.1 Linkage and accessibility

According to research, it is analyzed that linkage, interaction, and accessibility have a strong relationship with visitor footfall. Both variables have a direct impact on social attractiveness and liveliness. Surroundings and linkages often affect the category of visitors who visit an urban plaza; for example, Connaught Place is visited by people of all income groups, while Bhadra Plaza is frequented by people in the middle-income group. Convenient access from Public transportation must be provided. Designing Car-Free Zones is an important way to build people-friendly environments.

5.2 Uses and activities

It has been noted from the study that the location and scale of a different urban plaza might affect the activities associated with it. It is analyzed that if there is compact planning like in Bhadra plaza, people only explore few parts of it whereas in Connaught place people tend to explore every space due to its open planning. Another factor that attracts visitors is the types of activities provided by the urban plaza. It is analyzed that all urban plazas provide different types of activities which attract people like outdoor food services mostly attract people to eat and spend time. Connaught place offers activities like sitting, walking + meeting, shopping, eating food joints, etc. like whereas Bhadra Plaza offers activities like temporary markets.

5.3 Urban elements

A plaza should have a range of attractions that make it appealing to visitors and comfortable to use. Street furniture, signage, exits, and pathways will also help to enhance a plaza's identity while also serving as a lure for people to gather. The area becomes a place where people want to relax, meet, and spend time, rather than a place where walking by is an activity. It is analyzed that people are more invited and encouraged to spend time in Connaught place because of urban elements, which are more conveniently arranged, located, and designed to spend time. All of the sit-outs are shaded by trees or temporary structures, allowing people to sit comfortably throughout the day when the sunlight is oppressive, whereas minimal urban elements are present in Bhadra urban plaza. All urban plazas have inadequate street lighting and lamp posts, resulting in darkness at night and a feeling of fear in tourists' minds.

5.4 Visual identity and image

Visual perception is also essential in increasing the social appeal of a place. Most people prefer to meet in those places which they find visually attractive. People like to linger and move around places like Connaught Place and Bhadra Plaza where they find good aesthetics. A unique or special feature of an urban plaza can help to create a strong image of the place. To visually people, every great urban plaza should have a range of attractions and destinations inside it. The power of ten can be used to create attractions inside the plaza, for example, having ten good places, each with ten things to do can result in a successful plaza.

5.5 Microclimate

The common aspect that had a significant effect on the visitors was the microclimate. It has been found that scent issues exist in certain areas of the two urban plazas, which are normally avoided by travelers and leave a negative impact on them. During my study, I observed that colonnaded galleries of Connaught only offer comfort during shopping and walking. Few sittings are offered in the Bhadra plaza, providing fewer shades to visitors, and due to the open planning, the majority of the area near the buildup does not have shade when walking.

5.6 Form

A plaza's primary requirement is "a sense of enclosure." The enclosure is one of Gestalt psychology's perceptual organization concepts. Enclosure or closure also aids our understanding of objects as a whole. The most basic and simple way to construct enclosures is to group buildings around a central space. Connaught place has a fully closed enclosure whereas Bhadra plaza is partially enclosed and has an amorphous square.

The research identifies that an urban plaza should be legible and permeable to facilitate movement through space and into space and also easy to read and amplify features of the location. The focus should be on the 'street to place' movement, or how an individual goes from one location to another, and how simple and friendly the experience is. The quality of a great city is more concerned with people-place relationships than with the use or envy of its elegance.

VI. CONCLUSION

Meaningful places that are regarded as having a sense of place must maintain a balance between many criteria, not just the physical configuration of the place. What leads to a sense of place, a space with a meaning is as important as what happens in that place.

According to the findings from the study, it is concluded that each urban plazas have their different types of spaces and offer different types of facilities, that generate a variety of activities and usage.

The study yielded useful information for urban plaza design, such as emphasizing accessibility to prevent confusion in visitor mind and reduce traffic halts in surrounding areas. The significance of routine maintenance of green-covered spaces, as well as the provision of outdoor play areas and benches. Well-kept areas with suitable street furniture were found to be more comfortable and well-liked by the general public.

An urban plaza with services for active and passive engagements is used and appreciated by all user groups, and thus considered as more vibrant and satisfying by the public. As a result, space transforms into a place where people like to spend time and participate in different activities rather than a place of transportation where moving around is the primary activity. Moreover, it was found that the mixture of different types of activities brings higher user diversity into the urban plaza.

Also, urban plazas that are easily accessible, well connected to the suburbs, and conveniently located are often used. The impact of a good linkage, connection, and accessibility within a whole was proved as a significant factor, which positively affects the sociability and liveliness of the urban plaza.

The use of an urban plaza is often influenced by the opportunities available for different age groups to engage in various activities. Opportunities for a variety of activities are often offered, which helps in increasing sociability among different user groups. The sociability of an urban plaza is also enhanced by urban elements such as sit-outs, lamp posts, street lamps, dustbins, and so on. People usually tend to sit in areas that are shaded by trees or temporary structures.

As a result, it is concluded that user understanding, usage, and experience of urban plazas should be integrated into urban spatial planning, especially in the design of such public plazas to make them lively. As a result, the degree of satisfaction with such urban settings, public plazas being one of them, is an important criterion for investigating the quality of urban life.

Figures and Tables

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