

Contested Space: The Living Urban Heritage of Hyderabad & Shahjahanabad, Delhi

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Abstract: This paper draws from the experiences of redevelopment of historic precincts in the cities of Hyderabad and Shahjahanabad, Delhi. Close interaction with the people, administrators and political leaders of these precincts reveal a great enthusiasm amongst all to improve the residents' general standard of living. But the notion of 'public realm' as perceived by the public officials and the public itself are radically different. The former see it as a commodity, while the latter lets the socio-cultural forces dictate its usage; and this difference hinders redevelopment. This paper contends that the lack of a common perception is due to the inability of the officials in understanding the cultural economics and history of urbanism of the city-core, as a result of which most livelihoods become vulnerable. The paper also examines the relevance of regulatory and planning tools to historic Indian city-cores so as to sustain the city's resources.

1. THE BACKDROP

Sustainability is a concept and strategy by which communities seek economic development approaches that benefit the local environment and quality of life. It is the only ideal to which a diverse population should align. But eventually, the concept or the strategy acquires preference over the community for whom it is invoked. In the drive for 'redevelopment', the people for whom it is envisaged are left out of the planning process. This leads to speculation, which in turn leads to divisions within a community regarding their stand on the intended project. Going by the experience of working on redevelopment of historic city-cores and inhabited heritage precincts, this 'speculation' has emerged as the main obstacle in the entire redevelopment process.¹

¹ This conclusion is drawn from the authors' observations during the many interactions with the community and stakeholders regarding redevelopment projects in Hyderabad Old City and the Jama Masjid Precinct, Shahjahanabad, Delhi.

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Historically, the Indian city-core organism had an ecology of its own, which was disturbed by introduction of the regulatory reforms enforced by the colonial powers, primarily to achieve their own ends (Hosagrahar, 2005). Owing to high adaptability of the populace, the organism evolved a lifestyle around these regulatory reforms until the national independence in 1947 brought the imposition of modern (read western) planning principles, and subsequently, economic liberalization exposed the irrelevance of those principles on the already withering historic urban fabric (Singh, 2010). This spelt doom for the physical quality of the city-core, but admirably, the socio-cultural vibrancy endured. The age-old custom of multi-usable spaces still held good for the city-core. In their own indigenous way, the local populace sustained the cultural-economic continuum amidst pressures from increasing density, loss of public space to automobile infrastructure (Doxiadis, 1971), and, lack of basic urban services. This increased the need for redevelopment, being on the threshold of that which now, has brought forth the accumulated problems of a century and, along with it, the expectation of being resolved equitably. (Fig. 1)

2. TWO CITIES, ONE CULTURE

All historic-core problems have design solutions. For the Charminar Precinct in Hyderabad to become a quality public realm, a simple idea of Pedestrianisation is proposed. There are schemes like ring roads, metro rails, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, parking complexes and, a host of others options, to support and sustain this idea of Pedestrianisation. There is a government approval to the project and conditional political leadership, but a very strong public resistance. The idea of disallowing vehicle movement in the half-an acre of land earmarked for pedestrianisation around the monument (Fig. 2), does not appeal to the local business and residential community who is habitual of having their vehicles and those of their customers come right up to their shop fronts, even though at the expense of humiliating inconvenience to the pedestrians and public transport vehicles. No consideration is given to the fact that the very monument, which is the major source of identity of the area, is succumbing to environmental pollution and vibrations created by the vehicle movement around it.²

² The Charminar Pedestrianisation Project was commissioned due to the damage the traffic vibrations were causing to the monument as per a report given by NGRI (National Geophysical Research Institute) in 1998. Over the years, several measures have been taken to reduce vehicle movement around it, and Pedestrianisation is the last of those measures to be implemented.



Figure 1: The Walled City of Shahjahanabad, Delhi: People shaping their city in response to external pressures. (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2008)

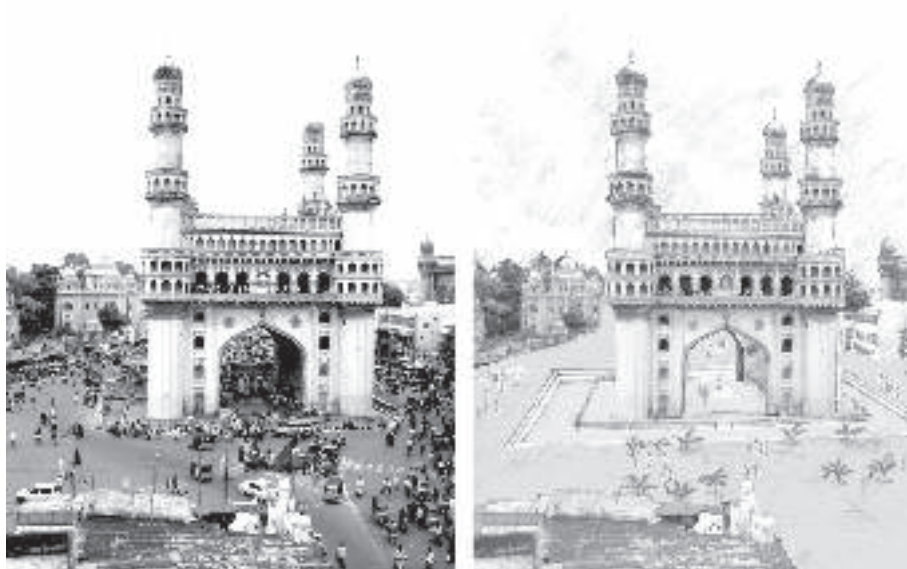


Figure 2: A View of Charminar, Hyderabad and the Pedestrianisation Idea (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2010, & Graphic by Richard Sadokpam)

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Figure 3: The ceremonial entrance path to the Jama Masjid with Meena Bazaar and water basins hugging it (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2008)



Figure 4: The Inter-relationships series (Source: Graphic by Abdul Bari)

Similar is the case of the Jama Masjid Precinct in the walled city of Shahjahanabad, Delhi. A large tract of precious public land between two of the most iconic places in India - the Jama Masjid and the Lal Qila lies underused /misused. A poorly maintained Meena Bazaar hugs the main ceremonial entry path to the Masjid, a number of gated parks and large water basins serve as garbage dumps and refuge for the homeless migrants (Fig. 3). Yet there is a strong resistance to the idea of shifting the bazaar to a new complex away from the ceremonial entrance path to the Masjid, while ideas of consolidating all segmented parks into a single pedestrian public space and rationalization of urban services get lost in the heat of the argument of the bazaar relocation.

The end users, residents, businessmen, and other stakeholders of these areas are such a diverse group of people that the urgency of implementing such ideas is overshadowed by vested interests and a lack of faith in the government. This doesn't imply that the diverse group does not want a change. But change can mean different things to different people, and what bring the dissenting groups on a single platform are not just design solutions. There is a historic cultural-economic force at work, which is so overwhelming that it will take an indigenous effort to dig into the system, understand its dynamics, and bring out an economically sustainable solution tenable to all.

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3. AN INDIGENOUS EFFORT: THE DYNAMICS OF ECONOMY AND CULTURE

A Precinct is a complex set of time and activity layers interpretation of which is not simple. It helps to analyse them in a series of inter-relationships, and bring out their inter-dependencies to identify/isolate those which need to be planned, those which instigated, those which hoped and those which predicted (Fig. 4). Keeping *space* and its perception as the common factor, what follows is an experiential explanation of these interrelationships in the two city-cores mentioned above, along with notes on improvement.

3.1 Local Community & Tourism

The notion, that tourism in historic city-cores is essentially 'monument' driven, is a layman's perception. And sadly, a majority of the public officials seem to share this perception. But, consequent to spending time amongst the local community -- to collect data and communicate redevelopment ideas -- the fact emerges that it's not the built heritage that generates tourism as much as the local community itself through its economic and cultural activity. And this, precisely, is also the perception that the local community supports and projects. The fact that Hyderabad's Charminar Area receives a footfall of

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Figure 5: People exiting into the Matya Mahal Gali from the Jama Masjid after Iftar (breaking of fast) in the month of Ramzan (Source: Abdul Bari, 2012)

80,000 per day while only 8,000 of these visitors actually visit the monument, is proof enough of the legitimacy of their contention. (Fig. 5)

3.2 Tourism and local Businesses

Local businesses have, over the decades, evolved to cater to the growing tourism in addition to their regular customers.³ This has been a good trend since a good amount of money, which would have otherwise gone outside had there been national chains in place of these local businesses, stays within the local economy.⁴ This indicates that there is a good local economic growth, which is something that most people regard is needed for a good quality of

³ A socio-economic survey of the shops in the Madina-Pathergatti stretch of the Charminar Precinct suggested that 53% of the premises were locally owned and 86% were engaged in retail business. Both factors are considered to be good for the local economy.

⁴ 'After reviewing the finances of the locally owned businesses and comparing them to benchmarks for their national competitors, it was determined that for every \$100 spent at the local businesses, \$45 stayed in the local economy. When the same methodology was applied to the national businesses, only \$13 remained local.' (Farr, 2008)

life. As a result a large number of residents in these areas now own cars and have adopted a lifestyle which needs a large number of electrical appliances for daily convenience (Hiro, 2007).

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3.3 Local Businesses & Parking

In such a scenario, parking becomes a priority issue. A large inflow of customers from outside, in addition to a large outflow of residents from inside, chokes the narrow human-scale streets, pollutes a highly dense area; but more than that, changes the entire perception of *public space*. To say that these areas do not have enough space is unjust, simply because these city-cores were never designed for motorised vehicles. Cars and parking areas have become a nuisance only because appropriate technologies and policies were never adopted.

The total parking requirement for the Charminar Precinct was projected to be a figure of 1,425 ECS, while a proposal that was put forward using an intelligent mix of technology, development models supported by legislation (TDR)⁵ and sensitive street design, achieved a figure of 2,411 ECS. This should silence any argument against a city-core not having enough *space*. Apart from which the fairly large-scale de-congestion of Shahjahanabad, after the introduction of the Delhi Metro, is indicator enough to suggest that one can find solutions to the *access* problem as well. Ironically, one of the major obstacle stalling both the ‘Charminar Pedestrianisation’ and the ‘Jama Masjid Precinct Redevelopment’ is a lack of adequate parking infrastructure. To put things in perspective, at present only 1.5% of the Indian population owns a car (Hiro, 2007), and that has been enough to choke even the urban streets built for them (Fig. 6). This only indicates the potential of adopting non-motorized transport in city-cores.

3.4 Parking & Street Vendors

An incomprehensible situation finds the informal business community, which gives a lot of colour and vibrancy to the city-core environment, sharing space with the automobile parking. Urban Street Vending is not only an important component of the traditional Indian bazaar, an essential urban service provider, but also a contributor of 30-40% to the national economy (Mitra, 2006). Yet,

5 Transferable Development Right (TDR) means an award specifying the built up area an owner of a site or plot can sell or dispose or utilize elsewhere, whose site or plot is required to be set apart or affected for a community amenity or development for public purpose. The award would be in the form of a TDR certificate issued by the Competent Authority. GO Ms No.86, 2006 Hyderabad Building Revised Rules encourage provision of parking in built-up and congested areas by giving certain incentives to the property owner like the TDR.

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Figure 6: Existing on-street parking along the Pathergatti Arcade in the Charminar Precinct, Hyderabad and the streetscape idea. (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2008 & Graphic by Richard Sadokpam)

for all its ingenuity, it is perceived as an encroachment on public space. The situations in both the city-cores were identical. The local business owners are divided on the status of urban street vendors. Some just want to wish them away while some have economic tie-ups with them. The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, now an Act, gives due recognition to this community.⁶

In case of the Pathergatti Street Vendors in the Charminar Precinct the authorities, after great persuasion, decided to take the first step prescribed by the policy and enumerate the hawkers. But in the circumstance of not having any mechanism to bring that enumeration to identification and registration, the initiative couldn't go beyond a day of on-site survey. However, the answer to the Street Vending problem does not lie so much in enumeration as in designation. Any undesignated street space is deemed by a street vendor to be a

⁶ India's 2004 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors entitles street vendors to provisions of solid waste disposal, toilets, aesthetic stalls/push-carts, electricity, drinking water, protective covers against different weather conditions and storage. Apart from this it encourages ULB's to register street vendors without any numerical or quota restrictions. This policy was eventually enacted in the parliament in 2014 as the Street Vendors (Protection of livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014.



Figure 7: Street Vendors on the Madina-Pathergatti Stretch before (left) and after redevelopment (right) in the Charminar Precinct. The tree pit in the foreground with the tree grate was designed to provide shade to the vendors and pedestrians (saplings are yet to be planted). The bollards were designed to segregate motorized vehicles (5.0m carriageway) and as furniture for vendors to cling to. (Source: Abdul Bari, 2010)

Figure 8: A news clipping showing the redeveloped (left) and the yet to be redeveloped (right) stretch of Madina-Pathergatti Street (Source: The Time of India, August 11, 2011)



potential location for his business, and this creates a chaotic environment since there is no culture of regulated space designation on Indian streets. Surveys showed that Pathergatti Street has an arrangement between the local business owners and the Street Vendors wherein Street Vendors occupy the Street Space in front of closed shops till 11am, after which that very space is used for shop owner/customer parking (Fig. 7 & 8). This arrangement leaves no option for the pedestrians but to share space with motorized vehicles on the carriageway. And, it is ironic that in a city built on the human scale, the humans have no *space*; while nature doesn't even find a place in the debate for it.

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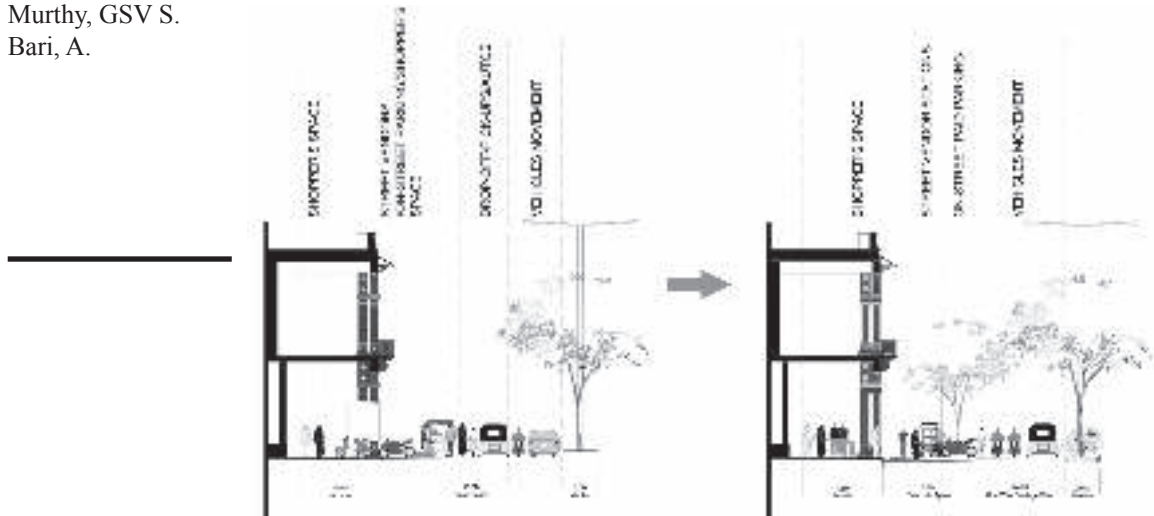


Figure 9: Existing ecology of the economic activity on the Pathergatti Street and the idea of a balanced intervention (Source: Graphic by Abdul Bari).

3.5 Street Vendors & Streetscape

Public officials are uncertain on the status of Street Vendors while the political leadership is absolute on their right to do business. The municipal authorities in Shahjahanabad have traditionally issued licences for the *tehbazaar* businessmen,⁷ while those in Charminar took on the task of making a prototype heritage kiosk (both mobile and stationary) for the street vendors. This task was under-taken in a bid to make the street vending activity physically coherent with the built heritage of the area (Fig. 9). But the common factor with both these situations was that there was no space designated for the street vendors. Due to which the *tehbazaar* still doesn't have a place to conduct business, while the heritage kiosks have never been distributed since there has been no enumeration (Fig. 9)

In fact, one of the major counter arguments to the Pedestrianisation of the Charminar Buffer Zone, apart from parking, was the forecast that street vendors will swarm the area unchecked if it were pedestrianized. The local business owners were united in their stand against Pedestrianisation on this account.

⁷ *Tehbazaar* means selling products on pavement and road by hawkers who move from one place to another on wheel-driven carts. The Jama Masjid Precinct alone is estimated to have thousands of such hawkers who are issued licences by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi to conduct their business on the streets.



Figure 10: A view of the Pathergatti Arcade façade with the commercial signage (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2006).

The Meena Bazaar shop owners in the Jama Masjid Precinct too had similar reservations against the street vendors for the design of their new shopping complex. Yet, for all their reservation, the month of *Ramzan* by its own virtue authorises unchecked street vending activity (with police protection) on almost the entire street space. The same is the situation at Pathergatti, Charminar as in Urdu Bazar, Jama Masjid. The fact emerges that the people who swarm these city-cores during festivals, do so on account of the diversity which the street vendors offer on their wares, products and prices. Their importance to the street, the city and the economy at large is re-asserted thus.

3.6 Streetscape & Modernisation

In trying to address the issue of making street vending activity coherent with the built heritage, the actual built heritage issues of this key public realm of Hyderabad remain unresolved. Commercial Signage of the various shops in the Pathergatti Arcade was starting to come up in ridiculous sizes and colours (Fig. 10, 11) and to curb this, a uniform signage system was designed and a sample put up in 2000 (Fig. 12). A modestly sized and simply designed signage in a single language understandably didn't appeal to the local business owners. Another attempt with uniform size and colour but three languages and relevant graphics in 2007 also did not find decisive acceptance.

Simultaneously, most local business owners started renovating their shop fronts unchecked, with flashy new materials in a bid to outdo each other, thereby further worsening the look of the historic facades. A bold contractor, appointed for the conservation of the stone facade, pulled down all the commercial signage of a considerable length of shop frontages of his own accord. But, in the absence of any consensus over the design of the new

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Opposite page (All photographs by Abdul Bari):

Figure 11 (Top Left): Conservation work for the Pathergatti Arcade

Figure 12 (Top Right): The sample uniform signage put up in 2000.

Figure 13 (Centre Left): Uniform signage on the MG Road, Lucknow. Uniform colour does make the street a lot more boring (2011).

Figure 14 (Centre Right): Connaught's Circus, New Delhi: Uniform signage but multiple colours make a shopping arcade more legible and more acceptable to business owners. (2008).

Figure 15 (Bottom Left): Dadabhai Naoroji Road, Mumbai: Signage can well be designed to fit into the architecture of historic facades. (2009).

Figure 16 (Bottom Right): An example of historic façades being 'modernized' by local business owners, Pathergatti, Hyderabad.

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signage and the unwillingness of the shop owners to use uniform signage, the old signage patterns came back as soon as the conservation work was over. A more pro-active municipal setup would have taken advantage of the help offered by the local contractor to reduce the visual chaos. (Figs. 13, 14, 15)

Apart from the modernization of the building frontages, the zoning regulations and building bye-laws have a devastating effect on the historic urban fabric (Hosagrahar, 2005). The SYJ Complex on the Madina-Pathergatti Street is an example. Built in the 1980s, the complex was constructed after the demolition of a part of the perimeter building of the *Diwan Devdi* property, the palace of the Hyderabad nobles, the Salar Jungs. Owing to the setback rule, the historic line of the building frontages which gave the street a continuous façade was broken. As a result, there is not only a break in the architectural style of the street, which runs almost 800m, but also in the morphology of the city-core built form (Fig. 16)

3.7 Modernisation & Regulation

Most construction activity in city-cores is done in stealth, and is legalized by the municipality during 'regularization'. An owner of a commercial property in the Charminar Buffer Zone had to shell out an amount of around \$3000 to make a newly constructed modern facade of his coffee shop coherent with the built heritage. Though there was legal approval to the construction by the

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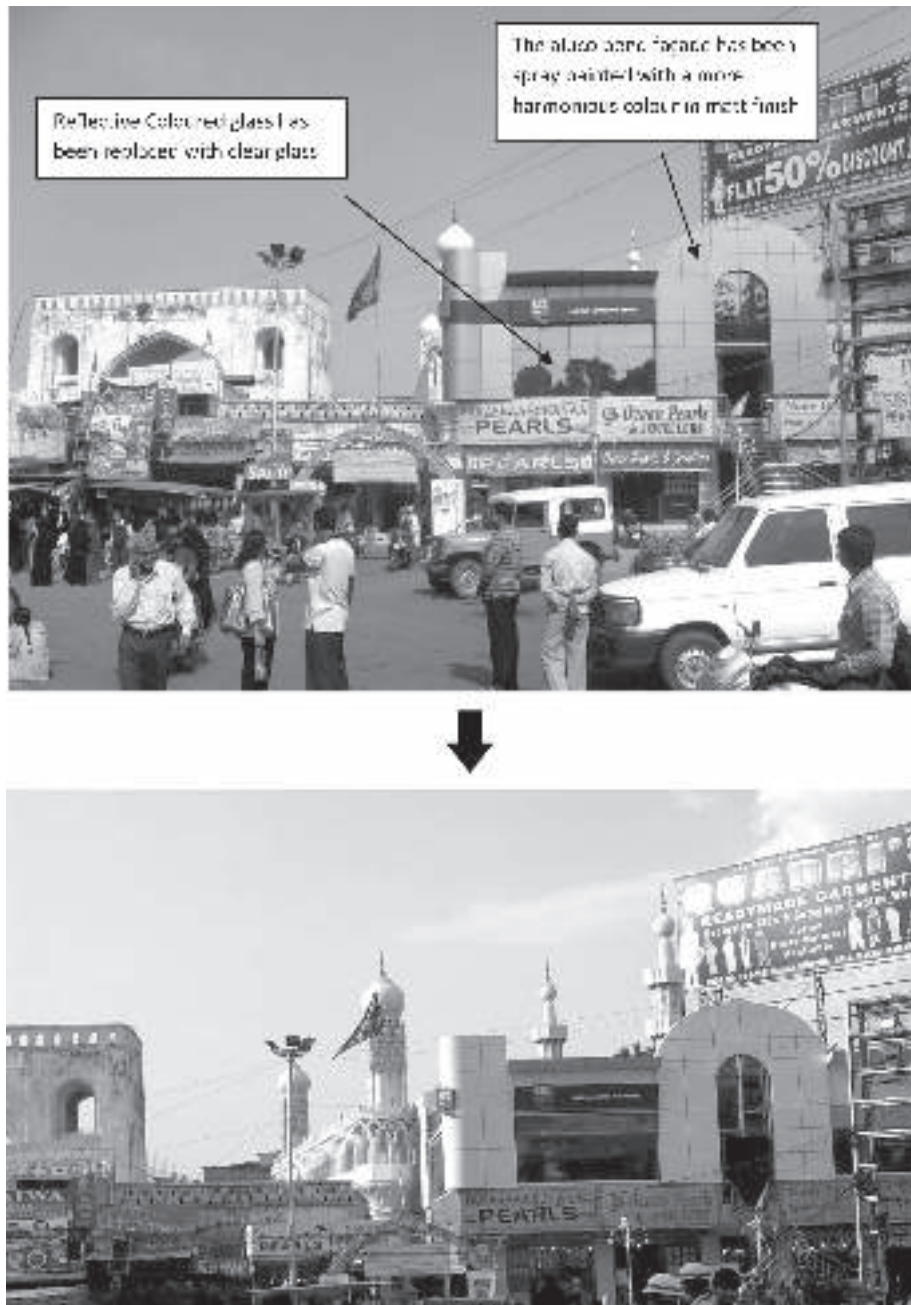


Figure 17: The façade of the Coffee Shop before and after the re-design making it coherent with its surroundings (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2011).

municipal corporation; it was only when a committee submitting a report to UNESCO (for considering the Charminar as one of the *Qutub Shahi* monuments in Hyderabad for World Heritage status) pointed out the modern facade right next to Charminar that the authorities dug up regulations to make a case for re-design^{8,9} (Fig. 17). There is no apparatus within the municipal structure by which the construction activity can be checked in a heritage precinct. As a result of which, citizens suffer unnecessarily and the administration loses a lot of credibility. The local populace also perceives their spaces and properties as having less economic potential due to the heritage tag. This makes them paranoid to any reform which is done for the greater good of the built heritage.

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3.8 Regulation Governance

There are regulatory tools in place for a pro-active institution to facilitate redevelopment. The TDR (Transferable Development Right) provision for parking infrastructure in building regulations and the constitution of a state urban arts commission in zoning regulations are good examples in the case of Hyderabad.¹⁰ But, there seems to be a serious lack of dynamic planning professionals who can think about innovation above the usual bureaucracy. A responsible planner would first formulate a set of problems and then try to understand the specific political, economic, technical and institutional challenges each problem poses. As such, planners strategise how to formulate and sequence specific tasks for specific problems. The choice of planning style should be determined by the nature of anticipated resistance to planning efforts and institutional strategies for overcoming such resistance (Sanyal, 2005).

3.9 Governance & Conservation

In almost a decade of experience with redevelopment planning in the public realm of the two city-cores under observation here, the only phases in which there was a considerable progress was when there was dynamic leadership within the administrative cadre. It appears that the bureaucratic machinery is highly dependent on a single operator as far as redevelopment is concerned.

8 Muhammad Quli Qutub Shah, the 4th King of the Qutub Shahi Dynasty which ruled the Hyderabad Region from 1518AD to 1687AD, founded the City of Hyderabad in 1591AD. He laid it out on the Char Bagh pattern and built the monumental Charminar at the crossroads of a major caravan route passing through the centre of the City. It is and has been the most loved monument of Hyderabad since.

9 The Amendment and Validation Bill, 2010 for the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, Government of India states that any building activity falling within a 200m radius of a nationally protected monument is to be regulated. The coffee shop is within the 200m radius of Charminar.

10 See Section 39: Constitution of Arts Commission for the state, HUDA Zoning Regulations 1981.

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Figure 18: The land and the people waiting for dynamic leadership and institutional reform (Source: Photograph by Abdul Bari, 2009).

The answer to this does not lie in introducing new institutions as in the case of Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation proposing to take over the Jama Masjid Redevelopment Project from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (Sanyal, 2005), but in reconstituting the existing institutions through anticipatory and participatory planning, and delegation of power from the state-level ministry to a city-level empowered administrative leader (Fig. 18).

Such leadership is essential wherever the community is unresponsive to para-legal measures. The argument that there can be no conservation without legislation seems to hold true in the current context. But in a democratic context where people are involved, ‘legislation’ is to be seen in a broader context, beyond its punitive aspects. There are various examples of ‘para-legal’ measures, which have been successfully adopted for conservation of the heritage/urbanism by way of a participatory process. These require concerted actions by the government, local bodies and the community (Jain, 2007).

3.10 Conservation & Local Community

The local community is more passionate and eager, than any other stakeholder, to see public realm of their city restored. It, probably, has better and more relevant technological know-how for this task. But their livelihood concern,

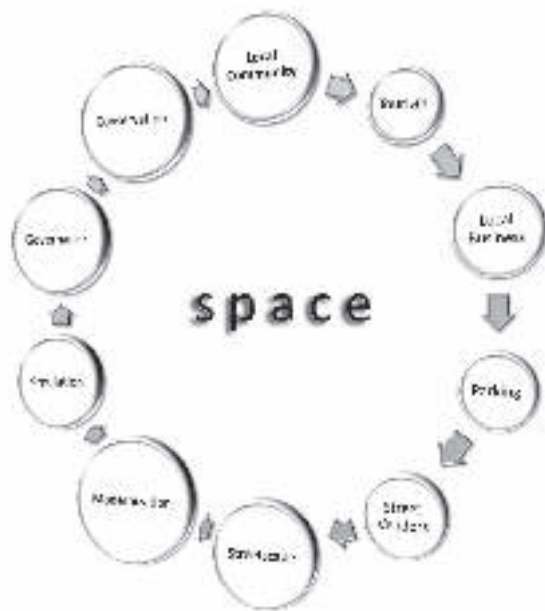


Figure 19 (Left): The interrelationships series after analysis forms into a loop which starts with the local community and ends with it. Space remains a bone of contention in the centre of all things.

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under an uncertain and indecisive planning policy by the government, impedes their abilities and initiative capacities. There is a tremendous amount of distrust in the government regarding conservation of public built heritage. A local business owner at Pathergatti, Charminar mockingly commented to the survey team as to why would the government pay for the restoration and repair of a commercial private building? Where was the revenue in it? But, the perception of the government who funds conservation is entirely different. It is the restoration of the public façade of a private building.¹¹ This ownership paradox is a direct result of the regulatory reforms enforced during colonial rule.¹² The days of the ‘firmaan’ are long over, and the ruler-subject dynamics have changed and re-changed. 60 years is a long enough time for both the parties to get accustomed to freedom. It is, hence, high time the government and the community came on the same platform, though the current planning tools do not seem to be capable enough to facilitate this (Fig. 19)

11 Department of Tourism, Andhra Pradesh has been actively engaged in accessing funds under the JNNURM Scheme and from the Ministry of Culture for looking after the built heritage in Hyderabad, with the revenue model based on heritage tourism generation and promotion. Privately-owned structures present in the public domain are also funded along with tourism potential cases which are completely private owned.

12 Form-based codes go a long way in resolving this ‘ownership paradox’ by regulating form apart from function.

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Government Level	Local Authority	Community Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove regulatory barriers • Simplify programming rules • Streamline programmes • Revise local objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the resources/funds • Use cost/rent • Develop local potential • Create local programmes and guidelines • Simplify procedures and approvals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve the whole community • Plan using consensus • Allow for private initiative • Encourage planning, marketing, implementation processes and secure sustainability

Figure 20: What redevelopment requires at all levels (Source: AK Jain, 2007)

The most common reason for preserving old buildings, leaving aside historic interest, is that they are useful public resources. This might seem rather obvious, but is often forgotten. A building usually reaches the end of its ‘natural life’ as a result of external economic forces and operational obsolescence rather than because it has ceased to be capable of repair (Sarin 2010). An old building not being ‘listed’ in the protected heritage list does not validate demolition for quick solutions to urban problems. The Khazana Building¹³ near the Chowmahalla Palace in the Charminar Precinct is one such unlucky structure left out of the heritage list. Both the local authorities and the community are unanimous in their will to demolish it and construct a parking complex which is expected to de-congest the area. The fact that the building is still of sound construction, and has space within its compound which can accommodate a parking complex independently does not make any impact on their will to demolish it.¹⁴

Through the zeal to develop “modern” cities and the ‘property’ oriented approach of development initiated by the colonial powers, the treasure of our traditional urbanism – and the quality of our public realm -- is being trampled upon. Beyond the hackneyed reasons of population growth, changing life styles, urbanization and the forces of economic growth, the malaise is much deeper. It includes the lack of awareness, sensitivity and concern for the traditional values, incapacity of institutional framework, non-responsive organisations, flaws in planning, design and development control process, legal and enforcement inadequacies and deficiencies in implementation and maintenance (Jain, 2007). (Fig. 20)

13 The Khazana Building used to be the treasury of the pre-independence Nizam Government. Post-Independence it housed the State Pension Office, and has been abandoned since more than a decade although in a structurally sound condition.

14 By what sensibility can its demolition be justified, when there are numerous other such opportunities for parking complexes? Why doesn't the community or the authorities own up their own heritage, and why do they adhere to regulations and laws more than their association with their own past? Why doesn't their sense of belonging to their own place drive them to stop their building and knowledge traditions from vanishing into extinction?



Figure 21: Map of Hyderabad Old City core showing the proposed Pedestrianisation and other interventions to enable it.

3.11 Tools for an Economically Sustainable Solution

The cultural production has changed, so has the nature of culture and the role of the state. Since the current means of managing the public domain of culture are no longer applicable; we need new ones. There is a need for a fuller understanding of the cultural economy and how it operates, in order to

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effectively govern it. The policy must go beyond instrumentalism or simple subsidy, it requires an intelligent and nuanced policy approach, and moreover, it needs a new cadre of policy makers to implement it. These ‘intelligent agents’ may need to be from the public and private sector, formal and informal economy: they need a very diverse and flexible approach, one that will require the skills of a simultaneous translator skilled in the languages for art, culture and design, as well as politics, administration, economics and state budgets (Jeffcut and Pratt, 2002; Pratt, 2004).

Space is never a constraint in place-making. It is the utilization of space, which makes or un-makes a place. There is enough evidence to support this argument in the current trends of urbanism. The sustainable urbanism (Farr, 2008) movement with its approach of learning from tradition may have solutions to the complexities of our historic urban fabrics. It postulates a responsive urban design, where the question of sustainability is reframed, not in terms of efficiency, form or policy, but of human well-being, social improvement, and social hope (Adhya, Plowright & Stevens, 2010). However, form is of specific interest when historic city-cores are concerned and form-based code tool (Rangwala, 2012) with its approach of reversing the ‘form follows function’ methodology of planning seems to be worthy of an Indian application (Singh, 2010). Both these tools suggest that we rethink our ecological relationship, the relationship of human life to “nature,” to other forms of life, and the relationship to one another (Williams, 2007; Schama, 1995).

More often than not, urban designers and public officials imagine the public areas of the city as a map with access grids, landmarks, various land-use zones and some urban form with a tag to it while citizens imagine it like a formless space. But, witness Pathergatti Street on the day of *Ganesh* immersion during monsoons, or walk through the Urdu Bazar to Jama Masjid on the eve of *Eid* during peak summers, and what you see is a city which is very different from the one on the map or in the minds of its residents. The city is an organism which is living on account of the ecology that it is a part of. When a community is given ownership for their livelihood within the capacity the physical form and the natural habitat offers, it will by its own virtue assume the role and responsibility of maintaining the *balance*. Redevelopment needs as much physical intervention as socio-economic acknowledgement, derived out of the sense that the city’s *nature* offers. (Fig. 21)

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