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# A Study of the Life of Social Spaces of Bhopal based on the study of urban theorist: william h. Whyte

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**Abstract:** Public spaces consist of outdoors environments, which generally give relief from urban hectic life. These places are sidewalks, streets, parks, city halls, squares, plazas, and other forms of gathering spaces. They are generally vegetated, and places where civic, cultural and social activities occur. These spaces are livable settings that play important role for community identity. Public spaces area stage for public lives, which promotes sense of community, sense of place, people connection, and therefore create a sense of belonging. Public spaces provide the opportunity for people to gather and enjoy experiences with others. Public spaces benefit cities economically, contributing significantly to the land use values of a city. Often, public spaces provide retreat from the automobile orientated life and locate in natural settings. The presence of green spaces in the city increases people's appreciation and awareness of the natural environments and provide habitat for the urban fauna.

**William H. Whyte:** The notable writer, journalist, and researcher began his career at an unprecedented time in America's history of housing. William Whyte and his associates systematically studied various parks, plazas and sidewalks in New York City in the 1970s in order to understand how people used them. They found, for example, that people gather in various ways on plazas, and during specific times, such as the lunch hour, many people cluster in small groups, chatting and conversing with one another. They also discovered how people sometimes gather in unconventional sites such as at the edges of sidewalks. Based on the results of this work, Whyte consulted with officials in New York City to improve the placement and design of its parks and plazas.

**Keywords :** Open space, plaza, Street Life Project, Sitting space, Comfort, Streets & Plazas, Light, Food, Water, Trees and Triangulation etc.

## I. EXPECTED OUTCOME

Methods to make vibrant public spaces. Simple solutions for the public spaces so that it could be applied on existing public spaces and plazas.

## II. AIM

The aim of this paper is to research and examine how we can make healthy, productive and enjoyable public spaces by studying the literature by William H. Whyte on Public life & Plazas theory and explore its potential to support social life in Bhopal city.

## III. OBJECTIVE

The writer "William H. Whyte" did observations and analyzed "Why some spaces work and why some fail".

The main objective of this dissertation will be to study what are the problem with Indian public spaces and how could we can transform them into vibrant public places.

## IV. SCOPE

In this modern India where quality of life is the top most priority of the citizens, lacks hospitable open public spaces. India lacks good hospitable, interactive public spaces which eventually lead to a productive and healthy environment. Modern India's private spaces are better than its public spaces - there are interior spaces tastefully cultivated by rich and poor citizens alike; but our modern public spaces are mediocre.

## V. LIMITATION

The study is limited to the identified exploration areas within the Bhopal & will cover only open and public spaces.

## VI. METHODOLOGY

Studying the elements of successful public spaces according to William H. Whyte's study, Review of literature - Interpretation of the theory. Identifying exploration areas in Bhopal City - Understanding social life. Observations and site study through photography and interviewing users.

### A. Case study of Iqbal maidan Bhopal :

The site is set on the bank of the upper lake in the heart of the old part of the city of Bhopal. The precinct, to which the site belongs, has a rich cultural background with influences of both Islamic traditions and architecture. Thus there exist a strong Muslim community living in the area even now.

Iqbal maidan was a part of the royal precinct in Bhopal and was known as the Khirniwala maidan. The space has evolved as the buildings around it came over a span of time adding to its character and use. The ground has also been developed into a park by the Bhopal Development Authority.

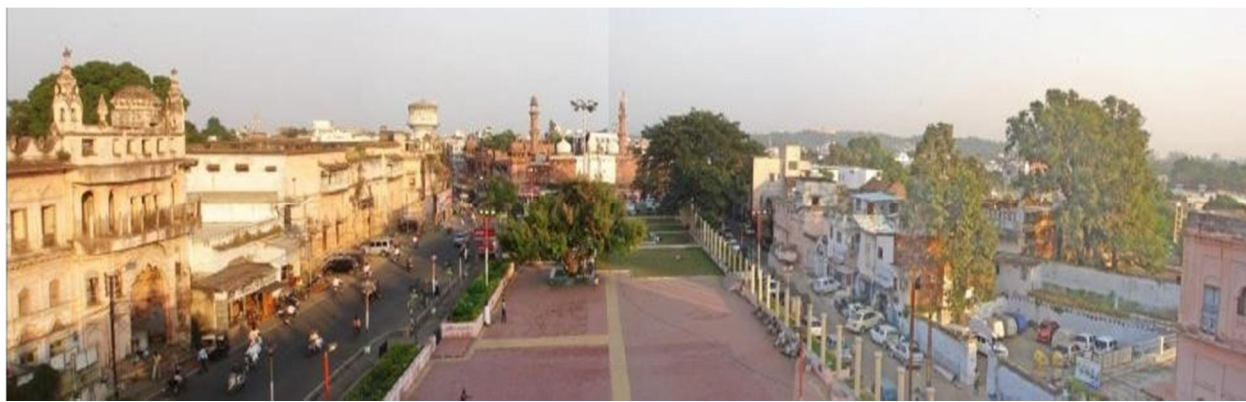
The famous "Sare jahan se accha" from Iqbal has been engraved on the inner walls and stages. A monument by the name of Shahin Monument was built by the famous artist Jai Swaminathan and Rewen David. The monument has four brass plates engraved with recitals from Iqbal about Shaheen.



Image: Base map showing Iqbal maidan & surrounding area.



Image: Traffic Pattern on the streets.



View of Iqbal Maidan from Moti Masjid

Image: panoramic image of the Iqbal maidan from Moti mahal & from moti masjid.

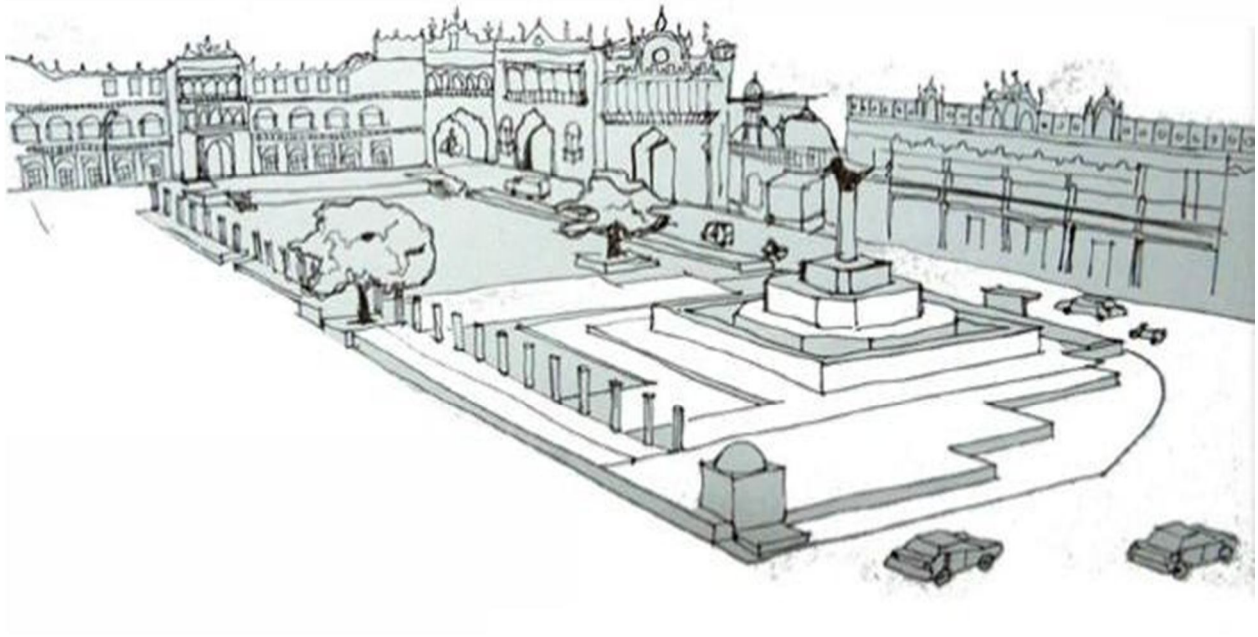


Image: sketch of Iqbal maidan.

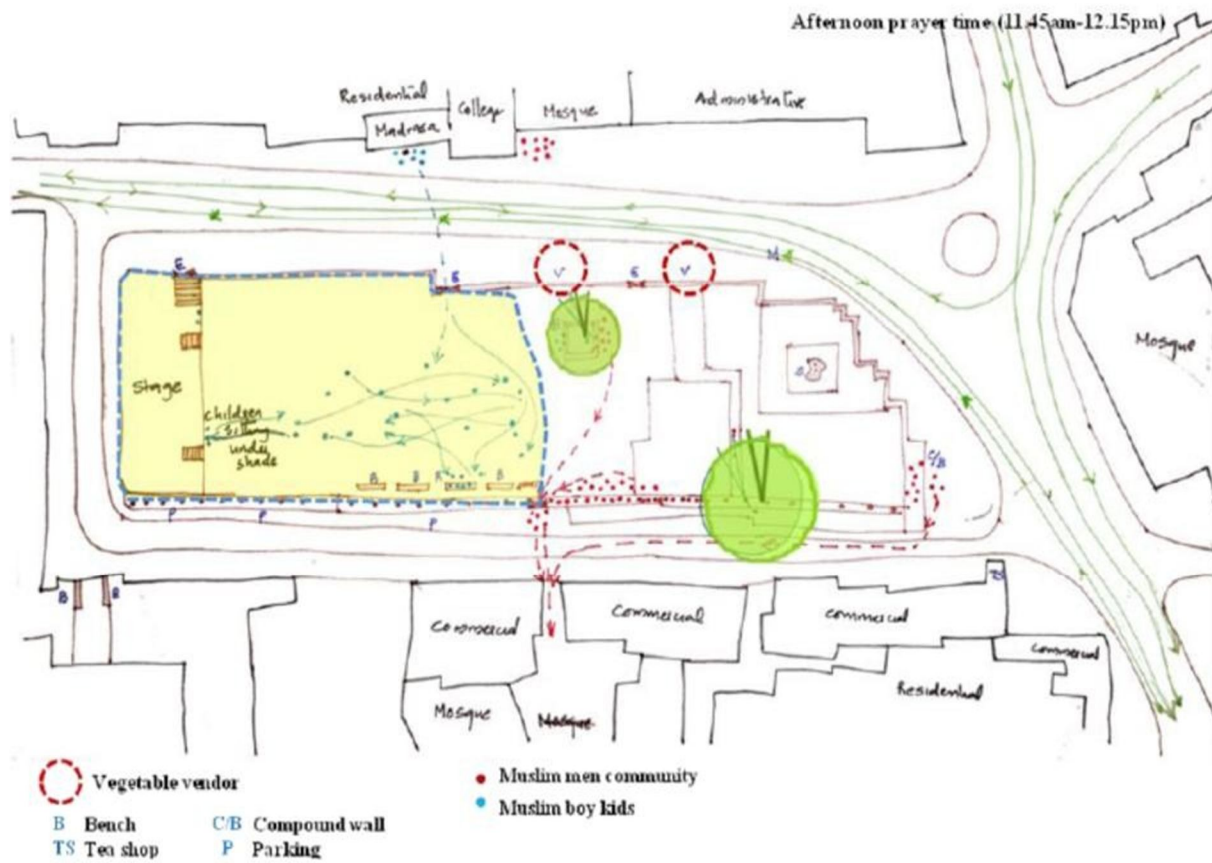


Image: Afternoon activities in Iqbal maidan.

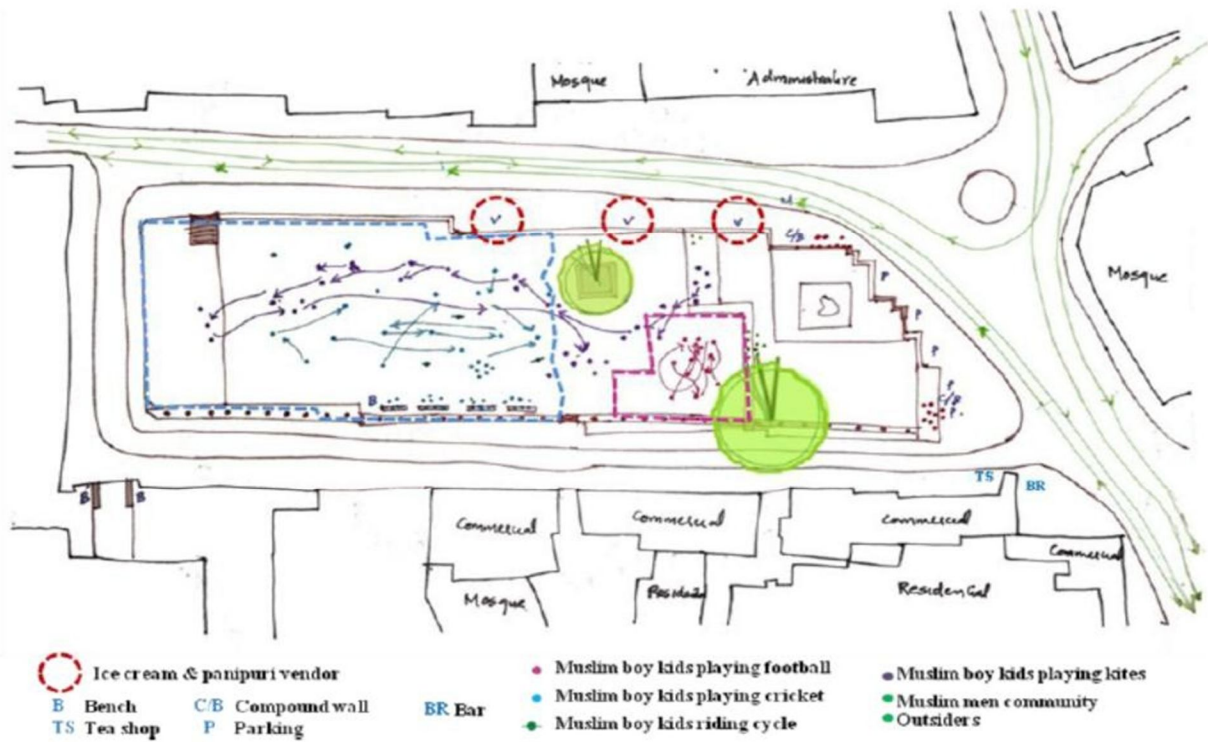


Image: Evening activities in Iqbal maidan.



Kids playing cricket and kites & riding cycle



Kids playing football



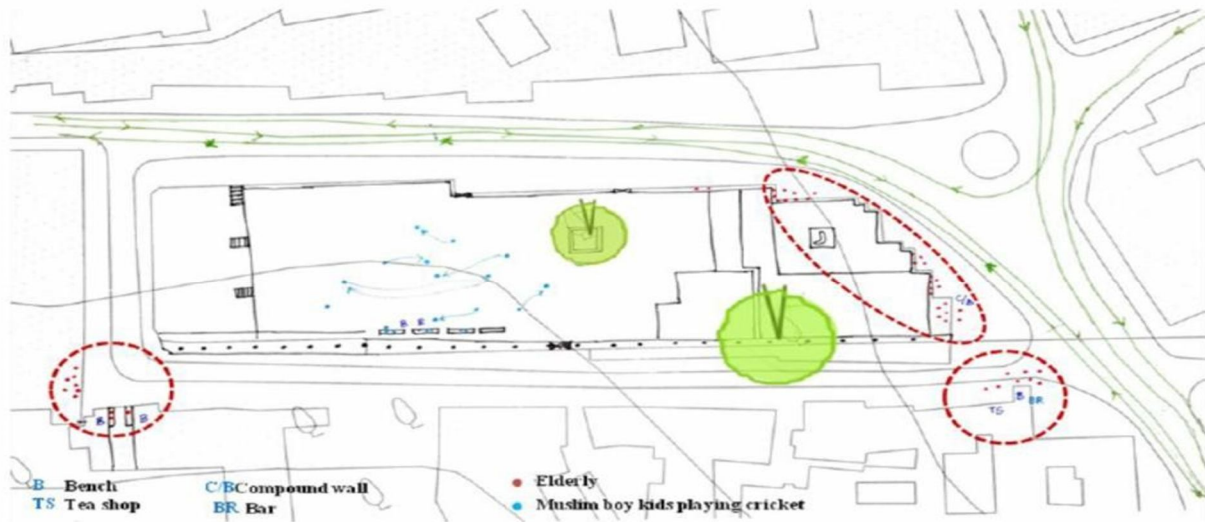
outsiders



Apperance of ice cream & pani puri vendors

Image: various activities in evening like food, sitting, chatting, playing etc.

B. Analysis of space



Passive interface in the day time



Active interface at night: Elderly people in the neighbourhood playing chess

Image: 9:00- 11:00 pm activities in Iqbal maidan



Image: inside maidan showing lack of green spaces.

Low heighted boundary wall defining the edges makes the ground highly visible from all sides and providing sitting space all along the maidan.

### C. Activities And Usage

Iqbal maidan even though it is supposed to be a public space under Nagar Nigam Bhopal, is having a strong territoriality created by the Muslim community in the area. It is full of activities & user groups but highly from same community.

Symbolic barrier for the women and girl kids in the area: men dominant activities in the interface of maidan because of mosques, commercial activities such as workshops, bar, tea shops etc.



Image: inside maidan male dominating activities, hawkers' activities on interface.

### D. Comfort and image

Insensitively placed sitting arrangements. Lack of quality settable spaces. Lack of Green space, shaded areas for sitting.



Image: inside maidan showing lack of green spaces.





Image: inside maidan showing lack of green spaces.



Image: Art installation and the historic significance of maidan.

## VII. SOCIABILITY

In core of the old city where Muslim community is dominant. The strong interface which strongly bounds the maidan culturally which includes: mosques, residences of Muslim community and madrasas offers good meeting place.

The maidan is not visually permeable from the main traffic road. The development of VIP road separated the area from the lake interface which further disconnected the public it should serve.

### A. Conclusion & design guidelines for successful public spaces:

The first step is listening to best experts in the field-the people, who live, work and play in a place.

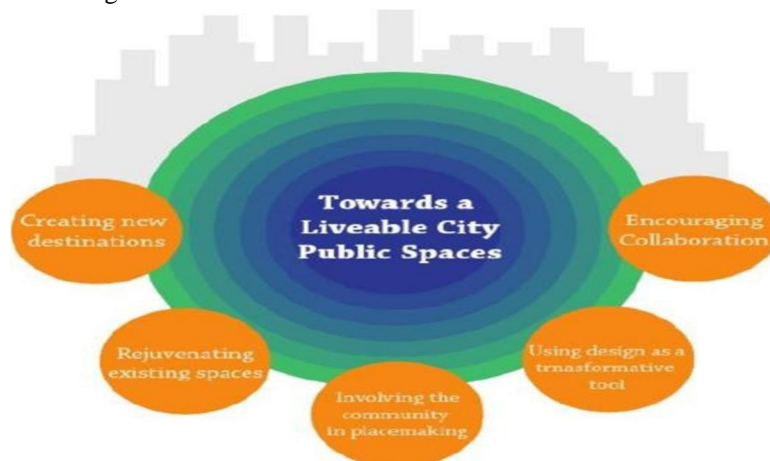
Principles for Creating Great Community Places Effective public spaces are extremely difficult to accomplish, because their complexity is rarely understood. As William (Holly) Whyte said, "It's hard to design a space that will not attract people. What is remarkable is how often this has been accomplished." The key elements in transforming public spaces into vibrant community places, whether they're parks, plazas, public squares, streets, sidewalks or the myriad other outdoor and indoor spaces that have public uses in common. These elements are:

- 1) *The community is the expert-* The people living and working in a place know what needs to be done and how to do it. As they share and use that place with people of different communities and acts a single community
- 2) *Create a place not a design-* If your goal is to create a place (which we think it should be), a design will not be enough. To make an under-performing space into a vital "place," physical elements must be introduced that would make people welcome and comfortable, such as seating and new landscaping, and also through "management" changes in the pedestrian circulation

pattern and by developing more effective relationships between the surrounding retail and the activities going on in the public spaces. The goal is to create a place that has both a strong sense of community and a comfortable image, as well as a setting and activities and uses that collectively add up to something more than the sum of its often simple parts. This is easy to say, but difficult to accomplish

- 3) *You can see a lot by just observing-* We can all learn a great deal from others' successes and failures. By looking at how people are using (or not using) public spaces and finding out what they like and don't like about them, it is possible to assess what makes them work or not work. Through these observations, it will be clear what kinds of activities are missing and what might be incorporated. And when the spaces are built, continuing to observe them will teach even more about how to evolve and manage them over time.
- 4) *Make people feel welcome and at home-* The Objective of creating a public place should be to give people a comfortable environment. People should feel their territorial rights on that public space.
- 5) *Form supports function-* If we don't take into account how people use a place in the beginning, we will have to deal with the consequences later as a place is formed by a community who use it.
- 6) *Slow people down-* More people, staying longer generates activity.
- 7) *Create spaces that are Photo worthy-* By installing public art and elements.
- 8) *Multi-functional spaces-* Spaces which could be used in different ways by the people. Spaces which can be used for different purposes like performing, sitting etc.
- 9) *Start with the petunias:* lighter, quicker, cheaper- The complexity of public spaces is such that you cannot expect to do everything right initially. The best spaces experiment with short term improvements that can be tested and refined over many years! Elements such as seating, outdoor cafes, public art, striping of crosswalks and pedestrian havens, community gardens and murals are examples of improvements that can be accomplished in a short time.
- 10) *Triangulate-:* A great place offers many things to do, all of which enhance each other and add up to more than the sum of the parts.

From the literature and case study final conclusion is public spaces with visual and aesthetic appeal might fail for lack of good places to sit, lack of play grounds, vending karts, where no existing activities are occurring the functional and physical characteristic of public setting are potential to influence the social life and vitality of public space the favourable functional and physical conditions of public spaces are those that encourages interaction, people's climatic comfort and security that encourages recreational activities to occur and in general those will enhance the quality life of plazas visibility within the plaza is an important factor for attaining security. Also the presence of mixed uses around public spaces encourages continuous activities and presence of people thus allowing this natural surveillance to occur.



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