

Importance of Destination by understanding the role of place making

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ABSTRACT

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India has rich and diverse historical settlements. There are many old cities which have their settlement growing around the central core which may consist of religious centers or markets or may be a fort. With time these core got redeveloped and modified to get adaptive towards the changes and hence survive through time. There are many such cities which with time have added different layers which include physical environment and social attributes both leading to the expansion comprising of cultural, architectural, religious, economic and social beliefs. All this multi-layer has combined together in giving the sense of identification to that urban space. Sense of belonging in that place can also be distinguished on the basis of the physical setting of the settlement, which includes topography, climatic conditions, type of vegetation which may act as dominating factor of city expansion but most of the time it has been overlooked which leads to social and cultural development in unorganized manner. The study over time has also shown that these center cores have provided a physical meaning to the places and helped in shaping the surrounding environment, social spaces for gathering and interacting, participation at community level, etc. In this paper an attempt has been made to understand the elements which act as markers and contribute to place identification, the factors which influence any settlement having a nodal point from which a settlement has started and ultimately lead to place identification.

KEYWORDS: Cultural Value, Destination, Placemaking, Community participation, Transformation of city

INTRODUCTION

Every city has its unique identification from which they are known to the people not only at the local level but around the world. Such places extend its boundaries and move out from neighborhood to community and then reach out to the city making that city attractive and inviting people from other places to visit those place and hence helping in generation of business and investment opportunities. Every city or region has its own special characters and elements that can be address as destination which can led to place identification and ultimately will become place markers. To understand the linkages, we need first to understand the elements

that act as a contributor at different levels and scale in urban scape.

All the urban scape has a public space within them and these spaces are used by every individual on daily bases starting from their place of residing to the place where they work or do recreational activities. All the places which lies in-between have a potential to become a destination if any important activities are linked to it which can be in the form of historical monument or a commercial hub or even an event which may have occurred in past and have giving a meaning to that place. Such places which act as a destination where any leisure activities can happen be it point of meeting with friends, developing business, walking

along the high street or just simply a place of relaxing. Hence such places has a potential of becoming the places where creativity can be developed for further attraction of other activities and infrastructure, expression to understand the relevance of that place in individual memory so that a mental map can be created and innovation which leads to development of that space.

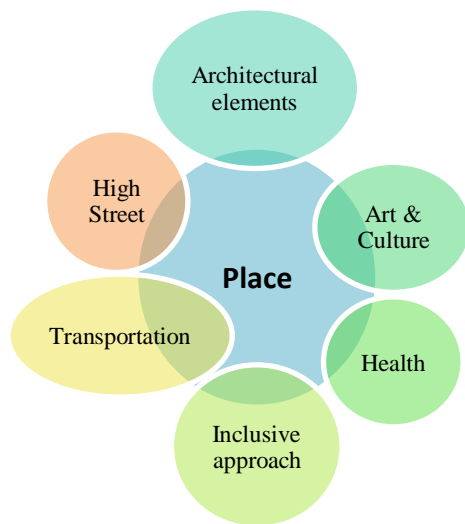


Fig. 1. Element of Place (Source: Author)

It is therefore important to develop all such spaces in the right manner as place making can have an impact on transformation of that space in correlation to architectural values of that area, community upliftment, inclusion and innovation of the streetscape, market development and most importantly the mental health of people.

To understand the place making which leads to development of any destination the role of urban territories and linkages need to be explore be it in any rural location or in a metropolitan city. The place making concept needs to be distinguish between space and place. The functional aspect of any area makes it a physical space while place gives the conceptual meaning to the space by establishing the sense and relation between the people and that space. Space is transformed into place due to the activities in which people are involved and perform over there.

1. City transformation via place marker

Not every city is vibrant much enough naturally to attract people to make their destination in that particular city. Hence the need of creating destination with the help of place markers come into existence, so that more people belonging to different age groups can be attracted to that particular city and everyone can have their own unique experience. Destination can be anything like museum, adventure islands, squares,

historical monuments, amusement parks, waterfall and many more that act at the city regional level and becomes point of attraction for people. Hence place markers come into existence which comprises of elements which can be sit out place in a park or a coffee shop with open sitting along the coastal or may be a recharging station. It like making a check list of this to do when one plan for a destination to be visited and become a most visited place in the destination. So any city attraction can be understood at three different level

- 1.1 City region
- 1.2 Destination identification
- 1.3 Place making

1.1 City Region

When it comes to find out the region of the city which influence the place markers, focus is always on the node created which leads to economy generation which can be related to tourism circle of influence or commercial activities or even a business hub. City region identification starts with the city core which is denser and has most of the activities which help in making that place more lively and well connected to different places which when clubbed together becomes the point of attraction. City region can also be influenced by the topography of the land, marking not only the limitation but also making spots for the people to visit it. City region can also be identified by the function which is dominating in it and thus the city is not characterized only by its size but also the role which it plays in within the context like religious or cultural hub, commercial or business centers.

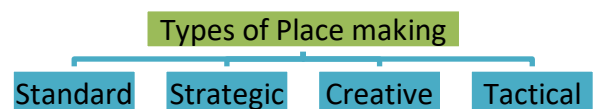


Fig. 2. Types of Place making (Source: Definition of Place making: Four Different Types)

In this paper the focus will be on the social aspect which are linked with the cultural and religious activities that contributes toward the place making of any giving location which is in town or in city. The urban functions at the city level represent different typologies of activities which compromises of residential, institutional, commercial, recreational and administrative. In light of recreational activities social and cultural environment which develop in any particular place reflect the city growth in terms of visitors who feel connected to the place and religious activities contribute maximum in shaping environment around the religious center or place. Such places have

its own essences and values which is preserve by the community participation.

Destination identification

Destination can be anything, it is basically the place which can be visited for the various purpose like leisure activities, adventure or even a community activity place. It can be a complex network consisting and depending upon

- a) Connectivity between the destinations to make place comfortable to approach.
- b) How beautifully it can be projected, made.

Fig. 4. Power of 10 (Source: Place making, what if we built our cities around places?)



The destination that looks feel comfortable and are inviting the most successful places as it gives the sense of safety, approachable, mental peace and are in harmony with the surrounding. The destination which have choices to visits and explore are the most visited place by the people as they can have maximum utilization of their time and stay. Such options can in an open surrounding or in close location. Most of the religious centers consists not only of religious activities but also have tourist attractions due to its architectural and historical significance.

1.3 Place making

Place making as the word suggests reflect creating space in the cities or town, but this is not what it completely means. The concept of place making is transformation the space with the help of community participation and creating linkages between the visitors and the people who live at that place which can be done with the help of space designing and activities generation.

It is a process in which local community works in correlation with the relevant authorities in

transformation of the place in order to make better connection in terms of accessibility, neighborhood comfort. Place making is a sustainable approach which provide opportunity to re-envision the city by creating connection with the people and the nature. It helps in reimagining the space and strengthen the community. A public realm is shaped up which consists of the shared values which draw attention towards its physical, social and cultural evolution.

Any area or location we visit has its own essence and values which is noticed by the people and ultimately it become the identity of the area. It can be a small shop at the corner of the street which is not well visible from far distance or an iconic building which can be seen from distance. In both the scenario, there are four elements which play an important role, which are

- a) Well-connected and accessible.
- b) The surrounding of that place reflects the image that one wishes to experience.
- c) People are self-encouraged in getting involved in the activities going there.
- d) The cultural and social environment is such that person who have visited once wants to visit again.



Fig. 5. The Chicago Riverwalk which was developed for the people residing in the vicinity. (Source: Question of Cities, forum for nature, people, and sustainability)

Around any religious centers it is common to find the space with is either abandoned or are under-utilized, such space if not taken into consideration can become the blind spot of the area which will lead to safety and security issues, giving negative image of the place. We can also find areas which have the potential of becoming the point of attraction which can increase the foot traffic in and around the precinct of the religious centers. Thus it is important to identify the spaces which has the future of revenue generation that will ultimately help the local people in contribution and awareness about its positive impact on their own life.

2. Place linkage

No matter how attractive or socializing a place is one can only relate to it if it leaves a mark in that person memory which means capture the attention and can be recalled with the help of mental mapping of the place one has visited. The physical outlook of that place hence need to be approachable and well-connected from all the possible mode of transportation. More the flow of movement is smooth more people will be visiting the area. Hence the space which is physically integrated with the movement be it via road, rail, air or even pedestrian creates a visual imprint of the area landscape. In all the possible physical connection that can be built roadways are highly used and highways are the most accessible form of commuting which links the cities and places of interest. For example any place which is having any landmark of public interest is always surrounded with smaller places which support the activities happening in the main location, for example India gate in New Delhi is a place which is visited by almost everyone being locals who reside nearby or people who come as tourist from the surrounding cities, near to it lies other places of attraction and connaught place being one of them which not only have its architectural values but a history which can easily be correlated to India gate. Thus we can say that one major landmark contribute to the other smaller places and help them in becoming a landmark and giving an identity in as a whole. Both the places have different feels and every individual express it in their own manner by building connection in their own memory.

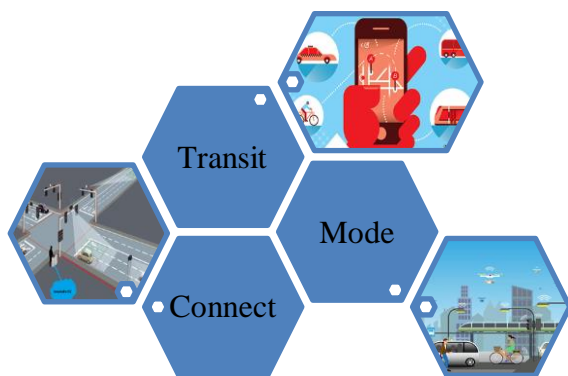


Fig. 6. Communication and connectivity

3. Place identity

Many places are undergoing changes to the large influx of people who wants to take a break be short staycation to the nearby places over the weekends or long vacation to the far of destination. While in the process of planning and finalizing the destination, one makes the list of activities that they want to get involved in along with the factors which they wish to explore be it natural topography of that place, important event occurring during their visit, facilities provided in terms of recreation and most importantly the perception of others who have previously visited the same place.

Therefore, the creative development of all such places can be seen which help in place making and providing identity to it. Art and architecture hence play a very important and integral part in development based on community and activity which are existing in that particular location. Architect Jane Jacobs has mentioned many times the planning and development related to community upliftment should be holistic keep human at its center.

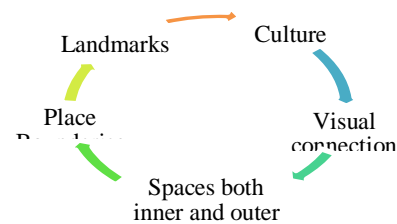


Fig. 7. Characteristics of place (Source: Author)

Every place has its own cultural identity and reference which is well understood by the art and architecture which exists in its vicinity that leads to the increase in the footfall in that space as people gain the feel of belonging to it. Different places attract different kind of foot traffic. For example, any religious place is not only visited by the pilgrims who came there to offer their devotion to the deity but it is also visited by the people who are attracted towards the culture and the activities associated with it. In order to keep up the attraction of that place the overall city fabric is preserve and renovated to meet the need of people. The prevailing art and architecture is enhanced and more layers and patterns are added in the entire city scape as such places attracts steady flow of people throughout the day. Whereas places which are event oriented which is time bounded like live performances on street or in a particular location gets a footfall which is high only during those days when performance has been scheduled. Also there are places where individual goes for their own personal skill enhancement by involving in some activity like learning art, music etc. Such activities are in continuous with day and time variation but are regularly taking place.

All the different typologies of activities which have been mentioned above if they are combined together in a particular place along the street which need up gradation will not only help the community in creating a pattern for the visitors but will also create a positive social inclusion of the neighbourhood development. The physical boundaries will be brought down and people can connect with the surrounding visually. Thus once can say that the cultural impact of

place identification can help in revitalization of the whole neighbourhood making it more vibrant, approachable, lively with the help of aesthetics and social activities that place has to offered



Fig. 7. The abandoned street in Italy which was transformed into recreational space keeping in mind COVID protocols. (Source: Question of Cities, forum for nature, people, and sustainability)

In any religious centre the place has its own unique identity. People coming there have a pre-notion of that place and kind of functions which are performed. The religious centre have the shrine which is a physical structure present within the sacred space and other activities associated with it develops all around and may become the node or the spot which have the significance that are inclined towards it. At such places apart from traditional festivities other events are also celebrated which are associated with that particular shrine or religious place in which the entire community gather any perform rituals of it occurrence in the said month of the year and may be continued for days. Apart for the occasion there are rituals which are scheduled on the daily bases like aarti, pooja, lamp lighting and many other depend on the type of religious centre.



Fig. 8. Ganga Aarti in Varanasi

4. Cultural and social Identity

If we define the values in relation to the cultural and social behaviour of an individual or the community and it roles which it plays in their life, we will find that in the recent years it importance is growing and places are more frequently visited which are helping in the growth of the economic values and providing the enriching experience.

Place making if defined in context of such values, then the role of culture, heritage and arts come into form which helps in shaping the live of the people living there. Each and every community has its own cultural identity which is related to history, customs, traditions and infrastructure. Such places have its own uniqueness and special values which is supported by not only the community but also by the authorities. The cultural values are stronger and the person's sense of belonging, engagements are preserved and appreciated. Such places act as an asset which has the potential for development and creating spaces which promote inspirational activities leading to public wellbeing.

There are many places around the globe which is using the cultural factors and activities to educate the people and making them explore the local area. Such approach will develop the sense of engagement and local people will be able to overcome the problems which is causing isolation in the society, poor cohesion in the community and various other disadvantages leading to the economic growth, infrastructure and technology along with regeneration of the culture oriented structure and spaces.

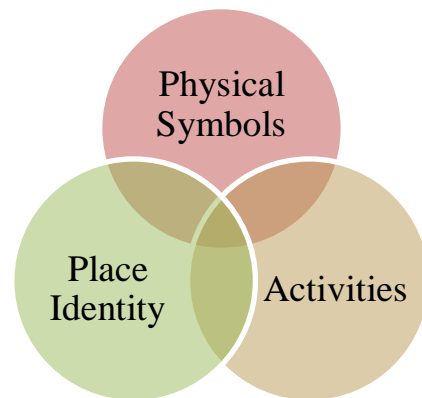


Fig. 9. Social and Cultural components (Source: Author)

In relation to a religious centre which can also be called as spiritual centre contain the social behaviour of the people residing in the vicinity and even beyond it. Their function is not limited to traditional norms; it acts as an arena for cultural upliftment by educating the future generation along with the process to carry it forward. However, if the religious site is opened to people who doesn't feel the essence of that place or respect the traditional values may get criticism from the people who are working hard to protect the society and preserve its value.

5. Sociability in place making

This aspect is hard to achieve in any given place but if once done the place become a remarkable feature in any given location. A place which is welcoming to everyone, people can sit and interact with one another, set up meeting, they are comfortable talking to the

strangers, feeling of being secure is high, will ultimately make people getting attached to that place. The place is open to all age group for performing activities which wish to get indulged in without any interruption of sense of feeling awkward over there. They are not hesitated in making eye contact with the strangers and have smile on their face in even greeting them. And if all such quality is present in one place it automatically become the most frequently visited place for people who are either residing nearby or travel from distance to be in such an healthy environment.



Fig. 10. Sociability of a place (Source: Project for public space)

Each space has its own unique identity, if referred to any religious place the space will be having designated areas to perform the various activities linked to it. The space is defined yet it is flexible enough to alter between the events and gathering. Every religious place has a quality of socializing, it is not limited to any set of people, and everyone is free yet limited according to the culture and community traditional ways. The role of the community participants is to uncover their cultural believes and project the values present in that eco-system. Similarly, the visitor should understand the difference between the location and the place. The user experience is important and it defines the place identity which is the combination of activities, symbols and attributes. All this when combined together gives a placemaking its identity and its role of importance at the city level.

6. Contribution to quality of life

A place is made more livable and vibrant if social activities are encouraged by improving the aesthetics of that space. As population is growing the places for leisure activities are getting confined in the building as more importance has been giving to performance which are indoor oriented which is leading to the depletion of outdoor surrounding. The place making is an effort which has come up in recent time in which outdoor activities have been made vibrant by adding art and socio culture to the close neighborhood.

Public space like plaza or the alley are getting converted into public attraction with the help of art, adding furniture's, landscaping etc. making that space safe and approachable. The beautification along the public realm are supporting pedestrian walkways. In place making one need to understand the word "Fixing", it's easy to criticize the dark spot in the city fabric or comment on the broken structure but if we talk about the challenges that the community and the neighborhood face due to it, we might improve the living quality which will help in getting people from far off place and regenerating that dark spot into the hot spot in the same vicinity. To achieve this one need to do streamline the planning and development strategies which are aligned with the community opinion and participation leading to benefits which allows public space to be used more efficiently and required infrastructure. In this manner one can easily identify that how the place was been used and how it can be used in future.



Fig. 11. Place where people can comfortably sit (Source: Arch daily).

The community participation is much stronger in any religious places as they want to preserve their cultural values and want people to respect their believes and traditional way of approach. The architecture which is present in any religious structure tells a story and the life journey of that place.



Fig. 12. Place where people can comfortably sit and perform ritual (Source: Introduction. Wayside Shrines in India: An Everyday Defiant Religiosity).

7. Inferences

Place making helps in defining any destination as place making is a method adopted by the planners and urban designer to make a public space which focuses on the people who can gain maximum benefit out that space. It creates a lively neighborhood which encourage pedestrian movement and support walkability rather than using cars or any vehicle to access it. It is a kind of built environment which is convey the emotional attachment as well as increase sociability of that place. The people residing around and in the neighborhood areas know the merits and demerits of the space and how it can be utilized to its best potential. When shared vision of the community and the planners are brought together then any place can be empowered as it gets support and protection from the people for promotion and maintenance.

In addition, the place need to be safe, secure and should have opportunities for socializing along with getting blended in the cultural essences of that place. Accessibility and linkage should be as such that it is well connected and easy to navigate, it should offer variety of options for all the age groups and people of various interest so that they stay longer there.



Fig. 13. Place making features (Source: Placemaking for Regenerative Tourism).

A healthy place leaves a remark in the person memory and the feeling of belonging get stronger. Walking lane, green pathways, option for wheelchair accessibility promote public influx. This help in creating social cohesiveness as socialization can be the most important factor for mental health for maximum people. In placemaking knowing the surrounding is most important as one has to deal with it on a daily basis, be it commuting from home to work place or going to any commercial centre over the weekend to fetch household items. While commuting the feeling of security and safety should be present inside the person, which will ultimately promote mental peace and help in developing attachment towards that place.

In this paper all the factors which have been discussed has been linked to the religious areas which have its own spiritual essences. The architecture which is developed is aligned with the

history of that place keeping in mind the social and cultural aspect. People are always encouraging to visit such spiritual places which has a space for performing rituals. The community participation is most important in such places as they have the responsibility to preserve their cultural values and social behaviour. The activities in such places are planned and organised in such a manner that people get emotionally attached a feeling of satisfaction comes in.

In the light of all the above discussion it can be said that place making is organic in nature and varies from place to place. All the spaces in the place making may have the common characteristics, especially in the area which have a dominating particular typology of activity. For example, in a city square, the importance will be giving to walkability, street scape and the architecture of the surrounding, where as it will differ for the place which has its spiritual importance's. It will also vary from one nation or culture to another. Hence resulting in difference in experiences and expectation which one have from the given space in the place making strategies.

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