

Connectivity: Connecting Activity Rethinking Streets as Public Space under the Six Dimensions of Urban Space Design in the Context of Bangladesh

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Abstract : With the encroachment of automobile upon our communities for decades and the concomitant urban sprawl resulting in a loss of public place, it was only a matter of time before people, realizing the role of streets in stimulating urban prosperity, would start reclaiming them to rebuild their communities. In order for this restoration of communities to take effect it is imperative that streets be freed from the dominance of motor vehicles. A holistic approach to pedestrian-friendly street environment can help build communities that embody the cities in which they are found. While the developed countries are finding more and more innovative ways to integrate walkable streets to foster communal living, the developing countries still have a long way to go. Since Dhaka is still struggling to balance the growing needs of accommodating automobiles for increased population with the loss of urban community life that comes with it, it is high time that alternate approaches are looked into. This study aims to understand streets as a living corridor through which one discovers and identifies with the city. The research area is chosen to be Manik Mia Avenue, overlooking the South Plaza of the National Parliament Building in Dhaka city. Being the site of supreme power, it is precisely this symbolic importance that the National Parliament Building has in the psyche of Bangladeshis, which has given Manik Mia Avenue a significant place in the country's history. Above all, being an avenue it is essentially a neutral territory, universally accessible, inclusive and pluralist. The needs of the Avenue's frequent users are analyzed with the help of a multi-method approach to survey consisting of an empirical study, a questionnaire survey and interview with relevant users. The research then tries to understand the concept of walkability by exploring the different ways in which the built environment influences walking. For this analysis, the six dimensions of Matthew Carmona are taken as a guideline for a holistic approach toward the different interacting facets of an urban public space. Based on the studies, a set of criteria is proposed to evaluate, plan and design streets that are more contextual in nature. The study concludes with how the existing street patterns of Dhaka city can be rethought and redesigned to cater to peoples' need for a public place. The proposal is meant to be an inspiration for further studies in this respect in the context of Bangladesh.

Keywords : public space, six dimensions, street, urban, walkability

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