Augmentation of Livability for Transgender Community through Inclusionary Public Spaces: An Architectural Study of Raipur (Chhattisgarh)

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Abstract

Public spaces are the locus of activity and interaction in any urban area. Such spaces provide identity to cities, towns or neighborhoods and define the people and culture over there. Inclusiveness is one of the core aspects of livability and is directly associated with Public or Community Spaces. Large population and rapidly expanding urban areas have prompted the need of more inclusivity in public spaces to attain true livable spaces. The aim of the paper is to discuss the livability of Transgender community at Public spaces in India. The study shows how this community was legally included as 'Third Gender' in country's legislation yet lacks social acceptance and security. It shows the challenges and issues faced by them at public spaces. The community was studied on ethnographic basis to understand their culture, lifestyle etc. The findings have indicated towards a social stigma from people and insensitivity in designing of civic spaces. The larger objective of the study is also to provide recommendations on the design aspects and interventions in public places to educate common people to increase their inclusiveness towards the Transgender society, through an integrated approach in architecture. Active engagement of multiple communities is the key to socio-economic and socio-cultural growth. In response, communities have to collaborate on working and living environment and incorporates the no gender-limit adaptability for an augmented livability.

Keywords

Community Spaces, Livability, Public Spaces, Stigma

1. Introduction

Since historic times, Cities were deemed as the centres of livability and economic powers attached to their identities. The rapid and enormous expansion of urban areas characterized by unplanned growth has raised serious concerns regarding the living conditions of the cities. Over the years, the issue has persisted and increased with an increase in the gap between theories and practices. Livable a subjective interpretation that may vary for individuals. It is a concept, like the quality of life, that people seem to recognise, but is difficult to define in a manner that everyone understands. For any space to be livable, it should be clean, safe, economically significant, affordable, beautiful and have efficient administration along with infrastructure, vibrant socio-cultural activities, parks, institutions, public transport and economic opportunities. Amongst all these factors there must be underlying belongingness to a community (Balsas, 2004).

2. Methodology

The aim of the paper is to discuss the augmentation of livability of the transgender community. This community is one of the marginalized communities in Indian mainstream society and is still facing issues like stigma and exclusion. Despite in 2014, the Supreme Court recognised a transgender individual's right to self-identification as male, female or the third gender. This brutally affects their quality of life because they lack employment opportunities, education opportunities, health care opportunities and many more. The objective of this paper is to explore the contributory role public spaces play in increasing livability and inclusion in Indian cities for the community. To understand the definition of transgender secondary qualitative data was collected. To understand the contribution of public spaces in the frameworks of livability, such as, the Ease of livability Index and Centre for Livable Cities. To understand the transgender community, to highlight the gap in literature and to recognise the issues faced by them in public spaces primary and secondary qualitative data was collected and reviewed with respect to livability frameworks. Then the recommendations for proposals were in the case study was done.

The research was initiated with collection and compilation of qualitative data from secondary sources. The secondary sources include reports, journal articles, books, online newspaper articles and other relevant documents. This research helped to understand the current scenario of the transgender community, essential steps for understanding and analyzing for achieving more livable communities. Moreover, data collection was done from secondary sources available in the public domain.

The research work is divided into four sections; the first section is about the introduction to the research, the second discusses about the livability concept, the third discusses about the transgender community in India, the fourth discusses about the interventions regarding the community through Architecture.

2.1 Introduction - Transgender

The term 'transgender' has now become an overarching term that may include a wide array of experiences and gender identities. Largely, the Transgenders are individuals, independent of their age or sex, with personal characteristics and appearances eccentric to the societal expectation of male or female. It has been argued that the term 'Transgender' has attributed more meaning to it with the availability medical technology for transsexual individuals. However, the prior notion of eccentric behaviours continue to dictate the paradigm. When describing there are two categories of gender, cisgender and transgender. The category of cisgender is commonly referred to as man / male or woman / female. When people choose a gender other than the gender assigned at birth, then they express their gender through several identity terms, all of which largely fall under the category of transgender. In India, there are also several local terminologies used to describe gender transgressions. Some of these may further have specific socio-cultural religious connotations (Oliver, 2013).

2.2. Introduction - Concept of Livability

The term livability has divergent definitions and appeals to different thoughts within the context of human wellbeing and quality of living. The term has been difficult to measure and define (Balsas, 2004) (Leby and Hashim, 2010) (Van Kamp *et al.*, 2003).

Vuchic describes livability as a series of elements that make a city livable and is: "generally understood to encompass those elements of a home, neighbourhood, and metropolitan area that contribute to economic opportunities, welfare and safety, mobility, convenience, recreation and health," (Vuchic, 1999). Veenhoven argues that livability is the quality of life in the nation — the degree to which its provisions and requirements fit with the needs and capacities of its citizens. A key theme across the various definitions

and applications of the concept is that it is inherently anthropocentric — livability is a reflection of ‘quality of life’, ‘wellbeing’ and/or the satisfaction of the needs of ‘the people’ (Veenhoven, 1996).

Livability concerns with the eminence of the built environment and the space created. It also deals with ease of utility of a space and its safety. Livability is also in the creation and maintenance of a space that invites and is pleasurable (Parkinson *et al.*, 2006).

Jane Jacobs argued that, although cities are built of buildings, streets and neighborhoods they trend over time with the way people live and work in them. Thus, the cities could be more functional if we provide better urban settings (Jacobs, 1961). Wheeler argues that the most important element in discussions of livability is the subjective experience of living in particular places. It is important to identify the perception of livability of local communities as key attributes and it will help assess the livability (Wheeler, 2001).

The concept of Livability witnesses changes in the context of India. This partially due to societal variations where the West eyes certain aspects as basic needs while they might be add on in India (CII, 2010). Livability depends on local prevalent economic, social and cultural aspects. In the United States, livability related to overall ‘quality of life’, while in the United Kingdom, livability related to the local environment i.e. cleanliness, safety and greenery (Pandey, 2013). Yuen & Ooi highlighted that cities around the world are re-examining their urban assets and remaking themselves to enhance competitiveness. The discussions on vibrancy and livability of built spaces has been increasing with a stress on the quality of life (Development, 2008).

In India, owning a house is a high point in the lives of people (Rama U Pandey, 2014). McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) report published in April 2010 mentions that Indian cities fall short of delivering even a basic standard of living to its people of all quality of life indicators (Sankhe *et al.*, 2010). Thus, the difference between ‘need’ and ‘desire’, or a need-based approach compared to a rights-based approach is what differentiates the context of livability in Global South and North. In developing countries, it is observed as an emerging issue and has major attention in the metropolitan cities due to low quality of living. The quality of life is the need of the Indian cities.

The main objective of the community livability is the satisfaction of its residents and the quality of the urban environment of the community. The important needs of the residents, the experiences shared and economic and socio-cultural background define their satisfaction levels (Rizk Hegazy, 2020).

Livability Frameworks – Smart City Ease of Living Index

The index is identified as Ease of Livability Index, it is a tool to measure to identify the extent of livability of cities. The Ministry of Urban Development has developed a set of ‘Livability Standards in Cities’ to generate a Livability Index and rate cities. There are 79 indicators that involve a set of core indicators (57) and supporting indicators (22) that have been suggested in the document. The four pillars – social, physical, economical and institutional have been the basis of comprehensive development and the genesis of 15 categories (Ministry of Urban Development, 2017).

Figure 1 Model to compute the Livability Index. Source: Ministry of Urban Development

Rama Pandey (Pandey, 2013) in their interviews and discussions with participants about their understanding of livability highlighted that for few participants' scenic beauty in and around the residential area makes the locality desirable for living. Some residents perceived community gathering spaces as one of the factor influencing livability of residential area. This reflects through the testimonials related with the necessity of congregational spaces for people's welfare. Some participants perceived safety and security as an important factor for livability. Secured campuses were viewed as an essential necessity associated with the residents' safety and psychological peace. Respondents' preference to live in localities with likeminded people indicates the strength of community living as it provides psychologically a sense of wellbeing and security. Few of the participants feel that largely the quality of surrounding environment could be made livable through large open spaces and cleanliness in locality.

Table 1: Aspects of Livability of Transgender

S. No.	PILLAR	CATEGORY
1.	Institutional	Governance
2.	Social	Identity and Culture
3.	Social	Education
4.	Social	Health
5.	Social	Safety and Security
6.	Economic	Economy and Employment
7.	Physical	Public Open Spaces
8.	Physical	Transportation and Mobility
9.	Physical	Waste Water Management
10.	Physical	Reduced Pollution

Liveability Frameworks – CLC Index

The Inter-Ministerial Committee for Sustainable Development had provided a strategic blue print for the Centre for Livable Cities (CLC) based on it in 2008. The integrated model of planning and development of Singapore provides an inside of ten principles, that are the physical, economic, social, and environmental aspects of urban living which goes hand in hand(Hee and Dunn, 2013).

Figure 2 Singapore Livability Framework, Source: www.clc.gov.sg

2.3. Understanding Public Spaces

Our closest environment plays a crucial role in determining the quality of life as an individuals and as a community. *Place*—the broader physical and social environment where we lead our lives, both in and outside our homes and workplaces—influences our likelihood of becoming or staying sick with chronic conditions and of developing certain diseases within our communities. The socio-physical features of our surroundings impact on our capacity to be socially engaged and physically active. This could be through urban parks, safer street, effective transportation or quality citizen engagement. Social determinants of health are important because these are factors that we, as individuals and as a society, have the power to change and improve. A public space is a shared physical space that is accessible for people to socialize and make connections. Outdoor public spaces offers optimum physical and psychological benefits which varies from indoor civic environment, such as libraries, schools, government buldings and recreational spaces(Gardner, Marpillero-Colomina and Begault, 2018). Public spaces are currently gaining huge attention, as the cities are growing inward.

The identification of the relationship between a community and the built spaces as a physical entity is an important aspect for liveability of community. A good physical environment does not necessarily entail the required livability because the best physical setting should allow the community to get maximum livability(Rizk Hegazy, 2020).

Understanding Inclusionary Public Spaces

Inclusion is not an antonym of exclusion rather a process that can be used as a tool for improvement. It actively encourages people to engage and cultivates trust. Ultimately, it allows the community to shape,

achieve, and sustain a common vision for the space. Inclusion in a broader perspective means when people from all spheres of life feel welcomed, respected, safe and accommodated—regardless of who they are, where they come from, their abilities and disabilities, their age, or the way they use the space (Gardner, Marpillero-Colomina and Begault, 2018).

3. Transgender Community in India

India has always embraced the concept of unity and diversity, but the society faces moral failure when it is unwilling to accept different gender identities and expressions. The transgender community in India faces extreme discrimination and violence. The members of this community stand at the lowest status of all the marginalized communities in the country. Citizens are accepting modernization and acceptance, however, the major reason for rejection of inclusion is due to the inherent notion of stigma since decades.

3.1. Historical Background of the Transgender Community

There are mentions about the transgender community in ancient Indian mythological texts and archaeological sites. This literature helps us in understanding the response of the public or the acceptance of the community in the historic times. Contrary to the contemporary age, the society in those times was evolved enough to understand the sensitivity of gender-related differences and put in efforts to accept the same (Pattanaik, 2014). Position of the transgender community during the medieval era has been the same as in the ancient. *Khwajsara* or eunuchs were common in the Mughal era. They were elaborately engaged with mainstream society (Bano, 2008). In the post-Mughal era, discrimination against the community began. The colonial rule mandated the eunuchs to certify and register themselves under the Criminal Tribes Act (Sikri, 2014). The social status of the eunuchs further declined with the addition of an amendment to the Act which was subtitled as “An act for the registration of Criminal Tribes and Eunuchs” (‘The Criminal Tribes Laws (Repeal), Act, 1952, No. XXIV Of 1952’). Medical inspections and regular surveillances of the community members became a routine activity. The existence of an individual amongst such a community was considered as a criminal offence.

3.2. Issues and Challenges faced by the Transgender Community in Public Spaces

They face high levels of stigma in almost every sphere of their life as there is no acceptance in mainstream society. Public spaces are not gender-biased. However, the notion of stigmatization towards the community has augmented their challenges at these spaces. The major challenges are discussed as follows:

Economic

Mx Abhina stated that the transgender faces the problem of unemployment even after proper education. Further, she said that the average cost of living for Transgender is 3 times higher than the male or female. (Oliver, 2013). They face a serious lack of opportunities. Subpar education and lack of skill development lead to incompetencies within the currently challenged national economy. The proportion of the total transgender population working is 38% compared to 46% population of mainstream society. Only 65% of total transgender population find employment for more than six months in an annum compared to 75% of mainstream society. (Nagarajan, 2014) The lack of economic opportunities has forced the community to get involved in professions like sex work and child trafficking. Interactions with the community members suggested that more than 3/4th of the Transgenders aged 14 – 45 were involved in some or the other kind of sex trade. The global estimates by UN AID have reflected the high prevalence of this activity in India and other developing South Asian countries than most of the world (UNAIDS, 2014).

Social

The transgender community is subjected to exclusion and discrimination and the main reason of rejection is mostly the inherent stigma due to the long persisted mindset of the mainstream society. Disowned by family members and face identity issues. They are treated as untouchables, oftentimes they are abused and ridiculed. The discrimination and marginalization against them have restricted their access to healthcare, education, going to public spaces, lack of social security, no participation in decision making. It is at the age of adolescence when a child comes up as a transgender child. However, they are disowned by their families and cannot complete their basic education. Since, they lack social inclusion and are under-skilled they have to indulge themselves in odd jobs like begging in trains, dancing and singing and forced in flesh trade. Ms Mridu, Technical Officer, Department of AIDS Control, NACO stated that sentinel surveillance reports of NACO revealed a high level of HIV prevalence in the community (Oliver, 2013). Mx Akriti Patel, Transgender, Gujarat informed that in the Govt. hospitals there are only male and female wards but there is no separate ward for the Transgender Community (Oliver, 2013). The youth of this community is at high risk for multiple psychosocial problems, including family and peer rejection, harassment and bullying, trauma, abuse. They are also at a high risk of facing psychological issues. They are often not allowed to access public spaces and do not have a sense of safety and security.

Physical

The families of transgender individuals disown them and they face insufficient housing and shelter opportunities. Due to stigma in the society landlords and house owners refuse to give rental houses to them. They do not have enough earning to afford a house of their own. They face violence and harassment for using public toilets and are sued away. They are also denied access to other public spaces parks, shops, religious places, etc. They are pushed to the peripheral areas of the city where they are ignored to a further extent. The commute to the city center and other public spaces become difficult for them.

4. Study Area

The following part of the research discusses about the city of Raipur (Chhattisgarh, India) as a case study for augmentation of livability of the transgender community. As this community is one amongst the most vulnerable groups in the Indian society along with the women, children and elder individuals. The city of Raipur was chosen from a set of other Tier-II Indian cities based on a set of parameters like population, position on ease of living index, education, poverty etc. The city had been recently ranked as the 7th best city to live in India, as per Ease of Living Index 2019. It was released by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. It will be counted as India's one of the fastest growing cities. It is amongst the fastest growing urban centers in the state of Chhattisgarh.

4.1. Transgender in Raipur – Demographics

There was no formal count on transgender population before the Indian Census 2011. Previously, the reports and studies done was on the basis of assumptions and expectations. The total inhabitants of transgender in India is 4.87 lakh according to this census. There was seen a huge shift in the demographics as they started coming out as transgender. Figure-3 shows ratio of third gender population to total population is medium in state of Chhattisgarh. The two possible assumptions about the demography of transgender could be, first, some states are already more populated and some are less populated than others and second, the states having more acceptance in the mainstream society. This could mean acceptance of self-identification as third gender, lesser stigma and marginalization, better opportunities for economic stability, lesser crime against them.

Figure 3 Ratio of third gender population to total population. Source: <https://medium.com/@ashvenkat/counting-the-third-gender-aafe7e858e07>

The state of Chhattisgarh has 6,591 inhabitants of transgender in total, out of which 706 are children from age 0-6, 51% transgender population is literate. Their population in Rural regions of Chhattisgarh were counted as 4495 and in Urban regions were counted as 2096. This is also because the major population of the total population of the state resides in rural regions. Figure-4 shows ratio of literacy rate of third gender to total population is low in state of Chhattisgarh. Due to low literacy rate raises various issues related to safety and security, employment, citizen participation, education itself etc. They find it very difficult to make their ends meet despite they are educated. Figure-5 shows ratio of unemployment rate of third gender to total population is very high in the state of Chhattisgarh. Due to low literacy rate and very high unemployment rate, the transgender community faces various social, economic and cultural issues.

Figure 4 Ratio of literacy rate of third gender to total population. Source: <https://medium.com/@ashvenkat/counting-the-third-gender-aafe7e858e07>

Figure 5 Ratio of unemployment rate of third gender to total population. Source: <https://medium.com/@ashvenkat/counting-the-third-gender-aafe7e858e07>

Figure-6 shows, ratio of literacy rate of transgender population compared with rural to urban is very high. As already seen in the Indian Census 2011, more number of transgender individuals reside in the rural areas of the state. Figure-7 shows, ratio of employment gap of transgender population compared with rural to urban is high. The majority of unemployed transgender individuals are reported at rural regions. These disparities between rural and urban in literacy and employment forces them to move to urban areas in search of a better living standards. The district and taluka level data is kept confidential for reasons associated with safety, security of these communities. According to the same census occupational activities including agriculture, manufacturing, utilities, trade, public administration, education, etc. In the census data, of all the transgender individuals in India only 59% have reported their occupational activities as Cultivators, Agricultural Laborers, Household Industry. 41% of them have reported as 'others' and with this it is difficult to ensure inclusivity and the precision of choice of labor. Hence, a huge variety of occupational activities need to be studied to acknowledge the lifestyles of transgender individuals (Venkat, 2016).

Figure 6 Ratio of literacy rate of rural to urban population of third gender. Source: <https://medium.com/@ashvenkat/counting-the-third-gender-aafe7e858e07>

Figure 7 Ratio of employment gap of rural to urban population of third gender. Source: <https://medium.com/@ashvenkat/counting-the-third-gender-aafe7e858e07>

5. Interventions and Discussions

In 'Inclusive Healthy Spaces' the authors explain that *health equity* is recognizing that everyone has different needs for good health and ensuring that those needs are met. It also means removing all barriers like lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education, healthy foods, safe environments, opportunities for recreation and socializing, and quality, affordable housing. In the end, everyone must have the basics of what they need to be healthy (Gardner, Marpillero-Colomina and Begault, 2018). Indicators for assessment can guide and direct long-term planning, show where improvements are needed and then demonstrate over time whether progress is being made (Balsas, 2004). Indicators offer knowledge about what is lacking for consideration. This directs that whatever is getting measured has a chance of getting done. The performance of indicators for the assessment of livability of the transgender community is going to be undeniable lower when compared to the mainstream society. It is also evident from the interviews and surveys taken that the community does not need a special infrastructure. However, they need inclusion in the mainstream society. Ms Rudrani pointed out that there should be toilet facilities for transgender in schools, colleges and hospital wards. Further, the Policy Makers should treat Transgender Community at par with other people, and the society has to change (Oliver, 2013).

The idea behind Architectural Interventions to public space is to break the barrier between the people and the transgender community. As discussed throughout the paper, social stigma is the largest obstacle in the livability of the community. The suggested interventions are for model development based on interactions with practising Architects and activists.

Interventions from the government are necessary because society is marginalizing the community. The administration can intervene in the public realm and liveability is attached to the public spaces. Therefore, the proposed development must be in a public space like recreational, markets spaces, community centers, etc.

Selection of Site: The model development or the pilot project should be initiated in a location that has frequent crowd movement and is close to the activity centers of the city. This would ensure that people who are habitual of frequenting the space do not abandon the place and future interactions could be

possible. It will also prevent the conversion of that space into a Transgender Ghetto with only community members going there. After a survey of 9 locations across Raipur, the location of erstwhile Mini Mata Bus stand in Pandri was chosen. The site lies in the traditional economic district of Raipur adjacent to residential areas with a lack of public open spaces.

Selection of activity: The activities at the pilot model should be based on the aspects of the social and economic upliftment. A bottom-up approach should be taken carefully to make the design program to enlist the requirements. Here the key is to get the comfortable spot to satisfy the need of the Transgender community and to achieve people's acceptance. In the primary survey, a growing trend of having F&B stores run by marginalized and gender eccentric communities was observed like in the case of *Nukkad Cafe* or *Tapri Cafe*. The owners of the chain restaurant suggested that the people were sceptical at the onset of the cafe but gradually have become indifferent with his Transgender staff team. According to him, his customers are mostly young people as the older ones have still some scepticism in their minds. India being a demographically young country, such activities could be associated to connect the younger generation with the community.

Figure 8 Nukkad Cafe, Raipur, India; Source: <https://www.inuth.com/lifestyle/food/this-raipur-cafe-breaks-stereotype-employs-differently-abled-transgenders-only/>

To connect two sets of the generation with Transgender, a deep-rooted Indian custom could prove helpful. The Hindus believe that the *Kinnars* or *Hijiras* have divine powers to bless infants or the unborns. Playschools or elementary schools could be constructed with the staff sourced from the community. This could also have units for the Transgender adolescents. The core idea here would also be to educate the upcoming generation about the community. A set of essential urban services such as pharmacies, groceries, gasoline stations etc could be a part of any development as they would slowly enable people to interact with Transgenders on a long term basis. These shops or services could have housing facilities along with

them as per the relevancy to cater to the housing deficits of the community. It could be supported by different revenue models. Such small working-living developments would avoid the community being pushed aside from mainstream society. While designing these spaces care should be given to involving the other type of people from other marginalized communities to avoid the name tagging of the place with the Transgenders.

Establishing Connect and Creating User flows: The user flow and connectivity are key in obtaining the right amount of interactions. While going through a certain user path a person from outside the community must not be overwhelmed or intimidated by the presence of so many Transgenders in his vicinity. If the design induces such responses then the purpose of intervention fails. However, the design should connect visually with the spaces of Transgenders if not through physical features. The final point should also be the safety of the community from any probable kind of violence that could be brought through 'eye on space' concept.

Selection of Materials: The proposed interventions have to be largely undertaken by the administration or the government. Hence, there is a need that these materials must be low-cost materials and the cost of construction should also be less. On a design front, these materials should be inducing sensory emotions of healing and calmness for the troubled routines of the occupants. The materials should aid connect and disconnect at the optimum amount.

Suggested Built Spaces on a city level could be:

- Providing spaces for cultural activities like performing centers or art centers.
- A community center is defines as a place for social gathering, education and skill development classes, recreational activities.
- Health Centers throughout the city with special spaces for the community
- Organized Retail Outlets with alternate shops reserved for the transgender people.
- Gender Neutral Toilets or Third Gender Toilets in all public spaces

6. Conclusion

It was observed during the study that every aspect of quality of life of transgender community is attached with stigma. Extreme social exclusion has diminished self-esteem and sense of social responsibility of many transgender individuals. The design is a powerful toolset, space is eventually created and transformed by social actions. Moreover, the inhabitants of mainstream society become the designers of public spaces for marginalized communities. It was noticed in varies studies that the concept of livability varies from nation to nation. It is a very subjective notion. In the review of the multiple primary and secondary qualitative data, it was found that public spaces become the locus of inclusion. In the frameworks of livability, the design of public spaces are taken as the tool for augmentation of inclusivity and livability. The safety and sense of belongingness in the city and country will eventually increase the safety for others as well. It will increase the diversity of users of those spaces. Along with this, it will help in the economic, social, cultural and physical environment development for all.

The indicators of Ease of Livability Index should provide the qualitative and quantitative data inputs for the marginalized and gender-eccentric communities as well. The design is a powerful toolset, space is eventually created and transformed by social actions. If the Architects and City Planners are keen about

taking inclusion as their priority. The way forward of the research would be the development of an architectural plan for the interventions proposed to foster inclusion of the Transgender community.

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