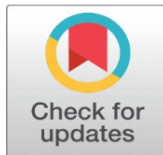


VISUAL IMPRESSIONS AND INTERVENTIONS IN NON-PLACE SPACES WITHIN MAQBOOLPURA: A CASE STUDY OF AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT IN AMRITSAR

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ABSTRACT

Informal settlements are a common phenomenon in Indian cities, where the urban poor carve out their own spaces outside the formal planning system. Maqboolpura is one of the oldest informal settlements in Amritsar, which grapples with various urban design issues such as a poor built environment, inadequate open spaces, and ignorant public places. These issues affect the livability of the people of informal settlements. Non-places, characterized by a lack of identity and social relations, are prevalent in Maqboolpura due to their marginalization. This paper aims to explore the visual impressions of public spaces and the potential of redesigning the non-places in Maqboolpura to improve livability. This paper analyzes the visual impressions through the spatial structure of streets and the patterns of use by the dwellers in Maqboolpura. It proposes the design interventions to improve the non-places, such as creating multifunctional and flexible community spaces with the help of art and landscape in the process. The paper argues that improving the visual appeal of public spaces and reimagining the non-places can contribute to the adaptive livability of Maqboolpura. It covers the core aspects of public spaces inside the informal settlements to improve the quality of spaces for the urban poor.

Keywords: Informal Settlements, Urban Design Issues, Livability, Visual Impressions of Public Spaces, Redesigning the Non-Places

1. INTRODUCTION

Urban informal settlements in India, such as slums, jhuggi-jhompri clusters, and resettlement colonies, face miserable living conditions due to overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of open spaces, and low-quality services. [Patnaik & Narain \(2016\)](#), p. 333-350, [Bhagat \(2010\)](#), p.147-161. These issues affect the visual appearance and the psychological wellness of the dwellers in these settlements. One of the biggest informal settlements in Asia, Dharavi, Mumbai, is an example of how the urban poor make their places outside of the official planning system. Dharavi faces the issues of rapid growth, insufficient amenities, and a largely informal

economy. On the other hand, while improving visual impressions is crucial for the livability of residents, the majority of interventions in these settlements do not target this aspect.

Maqboolpura, situated in Amritsar, Punjab, is an informal settlement accommodating around 18,370 residents within its 1.29 square kilometer area. This area is neglected during formal planning procedures, leading to urban design issues impacting its livability, such as the creation of non-places in these informal settlements, an unpleasant built environment, underutilized open spaces, and poorly planned streets. Addressing the visual impressions of non-places in the informal settlements is a crucial factor for improving the livability of the dwellers, as these spaces hold significant and symbolic value for them (Figure 1). This article aims to enhance the adaptive livability of Maqboolpura, an informal settlement, by transforming its non-places. It analyzes the current challenges, proposes design interventions, and evaluates their impacts on the social, economic, and environmental aspects of Maqboolpura.

Figure 1

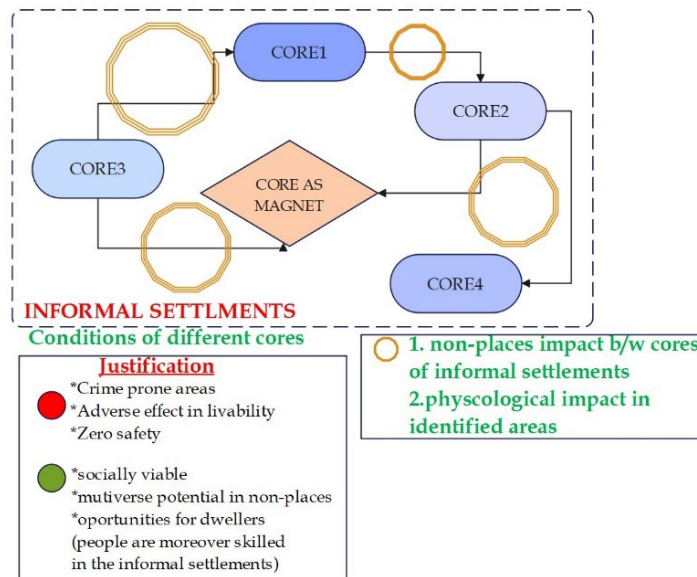


Figure 1 Condition of Cores of Informal Settlements & its Non-Places.

Source Author

2. LITERATURE

2.1. INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND ITS NON-PLACES

Dwelling areas where occupants frequently miss city facilities and necessities, where dwellings could not conform to building and planning codes, and where individuals typically need more security of tenure for the property [UN-Habitat \(2015b\)](#). "Urban areas not planned or regulated by the state and where residents lack secure tenure, access to basic services, and adequate living conditions". The author argues that informal settlements are not merely a problem to be solved but a source of creativity and innovation for urban design. [Brown \(2020\)](#)

Key Concepts in Non-Place Spaces

According to Augé's theory, non-places are spaces where individual identities remain undefined, social relations are tenuous, and history is not forged. In Maqboolpura, an informal settlement in Amritsar, these attributes are evident in

various forms, affirming its status as a non-place. [Augé \(1992\)](#) Michel Foucault's heterotopia concept, outlined in his 1967 essay "Of Other Spaces," describes unique societal spaces. These spaces, distinct yet reflective of others, include gardens, cemeteries, and ships. They fulfil specific societal roles while remaining separate. [Foucault \(1967\)](#). Edward Soja's concept of Thirdspace, outlined in his 1996 book "Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places," offers a framework for reconsidering and evaluating often marginalized spaces in traditional spatial analysis. Thirdspace serves as a bridge between physical spaces (firstspace) and mental or imagined spaces (secondspace), emphasizing the social and cultural processes that shape how we perceive space. [Soja \(1996\)](#) Dylan Trigg conducts a phenomenological study to differentiate between place and non-place. He examines their uncertainties and conflicts, probes the nature of their distinction, and considers intersubjectivity and affectivity's impact on the concept of place. [Trigg \(2014\)](#).

The following are few concepts which are explored by these authors:

- **Transient Nature of Physical Spaces:** Investigating the ephemeral and transient characteristics of spaces through which people move without creating enduring connections.
- **Anonymity and Lack of Social Interaction:** Examining spaces where individuals remain anonymous and social interactions are minimal or non-existent.
- **Impact of Drug Menace on Social Cohesion:** Evaluating the impact of drug prevalence on the disruption of social bonds and community cohesion.
- **Interventions and the Potential for Transformation:** Discussing the role of interventions in transforming non-places and the possibility of fostering social connections within them. [Augé \(1992\)](#), [Trigg \(2017\)](#). In the context of Maqboolpura, this concept helps us identify and analyze the characteristics that make it a non-place, such as the lack of meaningful social interactions and the transient nature of its physical spaces.

Theories of Interventions in Informal Settlements

- By understanding the complexities of urban informality, the authors explore a range of theories that address the understanding and management of informal urban areas. The challenges these areas face and the various strategies that can be employed to improve living conditions and integrate them into the broader urban framework. [Marinic & Meninato \(2022\)](#)
- Fegue's research focuses on the planning theories and policies relevant to informal settlements in Sub-Saharan Africa. A critical evaluation of specific operations in Zimbabwe, such as 'Murambatsvina' and 'Garikai,' assessing their effectiveness and impact. The outcomes of these interventions may involve relocation, upgrading of settlements, or other policy-driven solutions. [Fegue \(2007\)](#)
- The researchers suggest strategies to improve informal settlements through a comprehensive approach that includes upgrading infrastructure and ensuring access to essential services. By highlighting the importance of community involvement in planning, they seek to achieve inclusive and sustainable interventions. [Vahapoğlu et al. \(2019\)](#)

- Ghasempour investigates the concept of informal settlements and the various approaches to interventions. The author discusses the importance of theories that support community participation and policy changes. The strategies focus on infrastructure development and the empowerment of residents so they can easily participate in their living spaces. [Ghasempour \(2015\)](#)

A case of Maqboolpura is a reflection of the broader challenges faced by informal settlements. Studies on Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) in Maqboolpura highlight the complex interplay between crime, safety, and livability in informal settlements. [Singh & Dua \(2023\)](#) By situating our past research of CPTED within this body of knowledge, we contribute to the ongoing discourse on improving the livability in such areas. Our study adds to the understanding of how visual interventions can transform non-place spaces into places of meaning and engagement for the community.

Amritsar, a historically significant city in northwest Punjab, embodies the challenges of informal settlements within Indian urban landscapes, reflecting the struggle of the urban poor outside formal planning systems. Among these settlements, Maqboolpura, one of Amritsar's oldest informal areas, grapples with pressing urban design issues like a poor built environments, inadequate open spaces and non-places, and a lack of identity, social connections, and health. This research aims to explore and redesign these non-places. This paper attempts to enhance livability by assessing visual impressions, analyzing street spatial structures, proposing interventions, and advocating for multifunctional community spaces integrating art and landscape to transform Maqboolpura into a more adaptable and livable environment.

2.1.1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MAQBOOLPURA

Maqboolpura, a community on the outer limits of Amritsar, acquired the nickname "village of widows and orphans" when it began to house victims of the Partition in the late 1940s. These days, it struggles with drug abuse, poverty, and mortality associated with them. With 18,370 residents and a total area of 1.29 sq.km; Maqboolpura has a population density of 14,246 persons per sq.km. However, inside 100 hectares of the site, hazardous zones, unusable spaces, and dumpsites need to be in better shape, and tiny industrial units and illegal developers have encroached on more than half of the territory under the Maqboolpura unit. The death rate in this specific informal colony causes variations in the population. [Singh & Dua \(2023\)](#). As researchers, [Singh & Dua \(2023\)](#) cited their case study that was published in their research publication. Because of its direct relation to issues in non-places and its visual impressions in Maqboolpura, this case study is essential to our present research as it offers more insights into solutions in these zones.

2.2. IMPACT OF POOR BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND INADEQUATE OPEN SPACES ON INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS RESIDENTS

The built environment and open spaces complement each other, and they are especially integral parts of every settlement, whether the built environment and open spaces are organized or disorganized. Every settlement can breathe because of its presence. If the built environment and open spaces are managed poorly,

residents of every settlement cannot live up to livability standards. A rich and healthy existence is out of reach for the people of Maqboolpura due to several issues. The street patterns of Maqboolpura's informal settlements, which lack amenities and are ill-planned, give their occupants a bleak vibe. Rapid population growth has resulted in dense and uneven housing structures, which have degraded the environment and caused poor sanitation. The absence of varied street-to-façade layouts and open, green areas limits the occupants' visibility and accessibility. Since the spatial arrangement is hierarchical and inefficient, the built environment is similarly insufficient.

The few authors who explore the statement about the adverse effects of a poorly built environment should be considered, and inadequate open spaces are also an integral part of informal settlements where residents can have an adequate environment. The poor urban planning and transport policy in African cities have negative consequences for informal settlement residents, such as increased congestion, pollution, accidents, and social exclusion. [Klopp \(2023\)](#) The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are criticized for failing to adequately address the challenges and opportunities of informal settlements, such as lack of tenure security, basic services, infrastructure, and environmental quality. The SDGs do not reflect the diversity and complexity of informal settlements, and ignore the potential of community-led initiatives and partnerships to improve their living conditions. [Satterthwaite \(2023\)](#).

[Hatekar \(2023\)](#) investigates the relationship between informal settlements and urban economic growth in India, using a spatial econometric model and census data. He finds that informal settlements have a positive and significant impact on urban productivity and income, by providing cheap and accessible housing and labour for the urban economy. He also notes that informal settlements are often located in areas with poor environmental quality and infrastructure, and calls for more investment and planning to improve their living standards.

2.3. IDENTIFICATION OF NON-PLACES IN MAQBOOLPURA

Figure 2

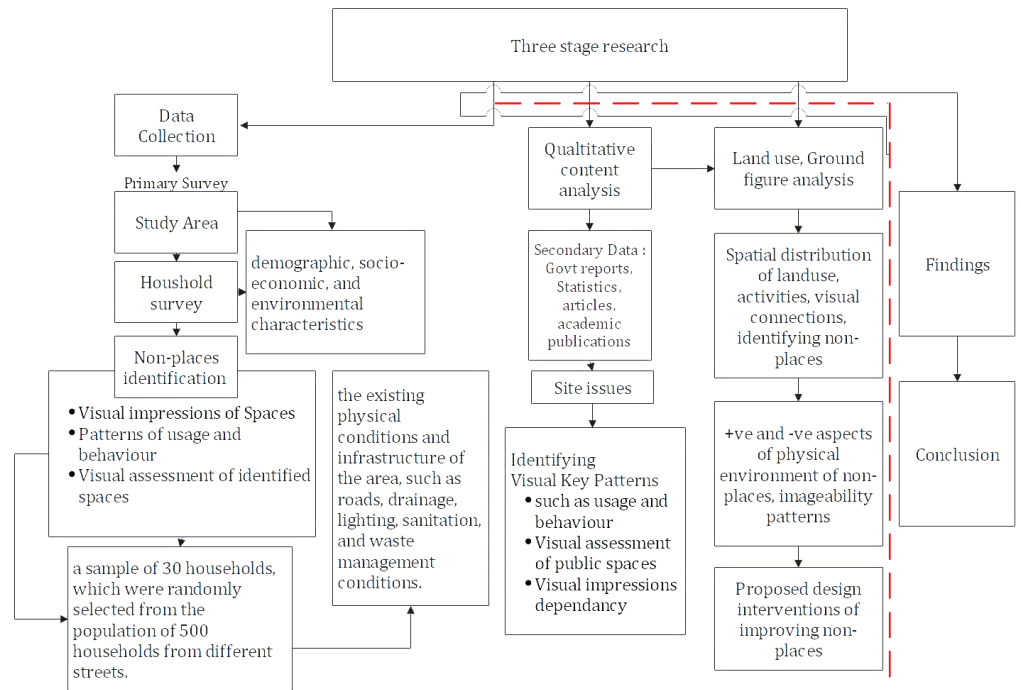


Figure 2 Identification of Non-Places Through Morphological Analysis, Images as Selected Streets: 4,6,8,10.

Source Sketches Adapted from [Singh & Dua \(2023\)](#)

2.4. METHOD

Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato, in their extensive handbook on urban ethnography, discuss the analytical strength and theoretical value of ethnographic methods. They highlight how these methods contribute significantly to our understanding of complex urban worlds, particularly by studying economic, political, demographic, and cultural topics. Pardo & Prato (2017) The concept of urban ethnography from a phenomenological perspective, focusing on the everyday life of city inhabitants. This approach provides valuable insights into the lived experiences of individuals within urban infrastructures and spaces, offering a platform for qualitative methods in urban studies. Duijzings (2024) Ananya Roy utilized a critical ethnographic approach to examine the politics of urban informality and the state's role in shaping informal settlements. This research method analyses power structures and social hierarchies to reveal how marginalized communities are oppressed and excluded. Roy's study aimed to explore the intersection of urban informality and state power and how this relationship affects the lives of informal settlement residents Roy (2005), 147-158. The focus is on understanding how the absence of formal recognition and the transient nature of non-places affect the vulnerability and resilience of residents amidst urban development and governmental interventions. It provides a framework for conducting research in urban informality, emphasizing the need for a multifaceted approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative analysis to address the diverse aspects of livability in areas like Maqboolpura.



2.5. SELECTIVE PARAMETERS TO ASSESSING LIVABILITY AND VISUAL IMPRESSIONS OF NON-PLACES IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

These parameters and methods provide a systematic way to assess the livability in urban settings, incorporating both quantitative data and qualitative evaluations.

Key Factors	Methods	Visual Impressions: Visual impressions of livability can be captured through
<p>Urban Form and Mobility: These tend to most influence residential satisfaction—a sense of community and belonging. Kovacs-Györi et al. (2019)</p>	<p>Analytical Hierarchy Process and Entropy (AHP), Factor Analysis & Principal Component Analysis (FA & PCA), Spatial Multi-criteria Decision-making Method: These quantitative methods are commonly used for assessing urban livability. Khorrami et al. (2021)</p>	<p>Visualization Frameworks: These frameworks help to conceptualize urban livability beyond utility-based approaches, considering human well-being, functioning, capability, and freedom. Biswas (2022)</p>
<p>Economic, Environmental, Institutional, Social, and Governance Domains: These five distinct domains are considered important components of livability. Khorrami et al. (2021)</p>	<p>Geospatial Analysis: This method can model the livability for cities, as done for Vienna, Austria. Kovacs-Györi et al. (2019)</p>	<p>Urban Visual Intelligence: This concept uses AI and street-level imagery to study cities, enabling as researchers to understand the physical environment and its interactions with socio-economic factors at various scales. Zhang et al. (2023)</p>
<p>Affordability, Education, Transportation, Safety, Entertainment, Environment, and Maintenance: These are a few aspects to consider when measuring livability. Factors to Consider for Livability When Searching for a Home. (2024)</p>		

3. VISUAL IMPRESSIONS AND ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SPACES IN MAQBOOLPURA

Figure 3

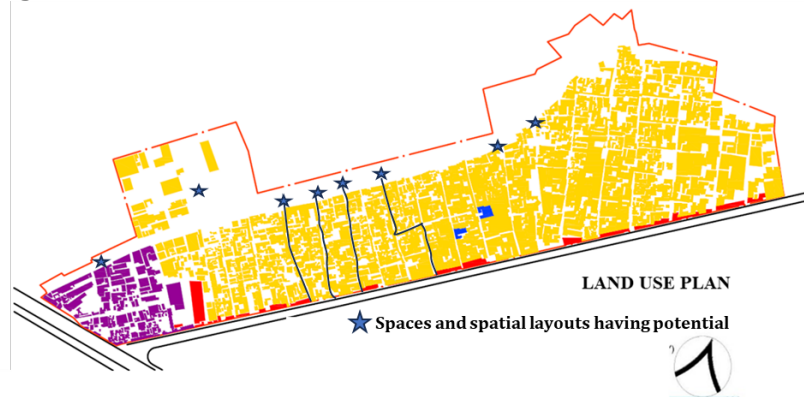


Figure 3 Examination of Spatial Structure and Layout of Streets

Source Plan Adapted from [Singh & Dua \(2023\)](#)

3.1. PATTERNS OF USAGE AND BEHAVIOR BY THE RESIDENTS IN PUBLIC SPACES

Based on a primary survey, the varied scenarios of individuals participating in diverse activities in shared spaces were examined. Yet, these activities used unsafe

areas, recognized as non-places of informal settlements. The patterns of usage and activity that were categorized included socializing, children playing, and individuals moving about their everyday activities within their dwellings.

Figure 4



Figure 4 Patterns of Usage and Behavior by the Residents in Pedestrian Spines, Capturing the Essence of Community Through Primary Survey.

Source Author

The possible three patterns are based on primary surveys:

- 1) People may socialize on the street or outside their homes to maintain a sense of community and belonging and exchange information and support.
- 2) Children may play in alleyways or open spaces to enjoy their leisure time as well as to develop their social and cognitive skills.
- 3) Individuals may go about their daily lives in public spaces to access the resources and services they need, such as shops, markets, or transportation. Regretfully, the aforementioned patterns conceal flaws and disrupt street connections that lead to open areas with unhygienic conditions (Figure 4).

The physical and social characteristics of public spaces, such as:

- 1) The size, shape, and layout of the spaces may influence how people move, gather, or interact within them (Figure 2). The street layouts are linear, but they are diverted into various pockets, which are non-places.
- 2) The availability, quality, and maintenance of the spaces, which may affect how people perceive, value, or use them. The livability of each space is low. Some particular areas feel secure and clean, but within a few streets, the numbers of streets are 4, 6, 10, and 12 (Figure 3).
- 3) The population's characteristics and dynamics can affect social aspects like cohesion, inclusion, and participation. The case study shows how Maqboolpura has a varied population of different ages, especially women, children, and the elderly. These groups may have different levels of involvement and well-being.

3.2. VISUAL ASSESSMENT OF THE EXISTING PUBLIC SPACES

Figure 5



Figure 5 Visual Assessment of Existing Public Spaces and Streets which are in Dilapidated Conditions

Source Singh & Dua (2023)

The infrastructural quality of Amritsar's informal settlements divides them. The main areas where commerce thrives have smooth roads that facilitate the flow of life. But the deeper one goes into the poorer sections (Figure 5), the more the roads deteriorate. The rough and uneven network of paths towards non-places makes it unsafe for all age groups. Open drains, dirty water, and garbage expose the lack of proper sanitation and affect living standards.

The contrast in the infrastructure in terms of disproportionate scale, uneven texture, dull colors, and monotonous composition reveals economic inequality and influences emotions and perceptions within built spaces in Amritsar's informal settlements.

Figure 6



Figure 6 Visual Impressions of Different Pockets of Non-Places Where Each Image Depicts Low Livability.

Source Author

Maqboolpura, an area in Amritsar, Punjab, reflects a tragic narrative marked by the devastating impact of drug addiction. Its streets portray a distressing scene (Figure 6):

- Children, clad in tattered clothes, orphaned by drug-related deaths are left vulnerable without access to essentials like education, healthcare, or safe environments for recreation.

Figure 7

Criteria	Low-Livability	Visual Impressions ↓	High-Livability	Visual Impressions ↑
Access to basic services	Lack of access to basic services	Housing conditions, Sanitation, health	Access to safe water, improved sanitation, solid waste disposal, electricity, and health care	Good housing conditions
Housing quality and security	Informal housing, tenure insecurity and vulnerability to hazards	overcrowding, poor structural quality	Formal housing, adequate living space, tenure security	Good Structural quality, dense areas management
Economic opportunities	Low income, high unemployment	Dependance on Informal activities and market	High income, low unemployment	Access and making of formal markets and help to generate economic activities
Social cohesion and participation	Social exclusion, marginalization, discrimination	Non-Places in excess	Social inclusion, integration, empowerment	Non-places as Public or communal spaces

Figure 7 A Visual Impression Dependency on Low- and High-Livability Scales

Source Author

- Public spaces here lack basic amenities such as clean water, sanitation, and electricity, exacerbating the plight of these children.
- Dilapidated and overcrowded houses, often used for drug consumption and trafficking, further deteriorate the community's living conditions.

3.3. IDENTIFYING FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE LACK OF IDENTITY AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

The visual evaluation of Amritsar's "non-places" highlights the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to address the issues of poor infrastructure, economic disparity, and social marginalization that these impoverished communities face (Figure 8). The development of basic services, social programs that support fairness and inclusion, and infrastructure should be prioritized to improve the living conditions of the residents of these informal settlements since their emotional connection to their physical surroundings gives them a sense of belonging.

Figure 8

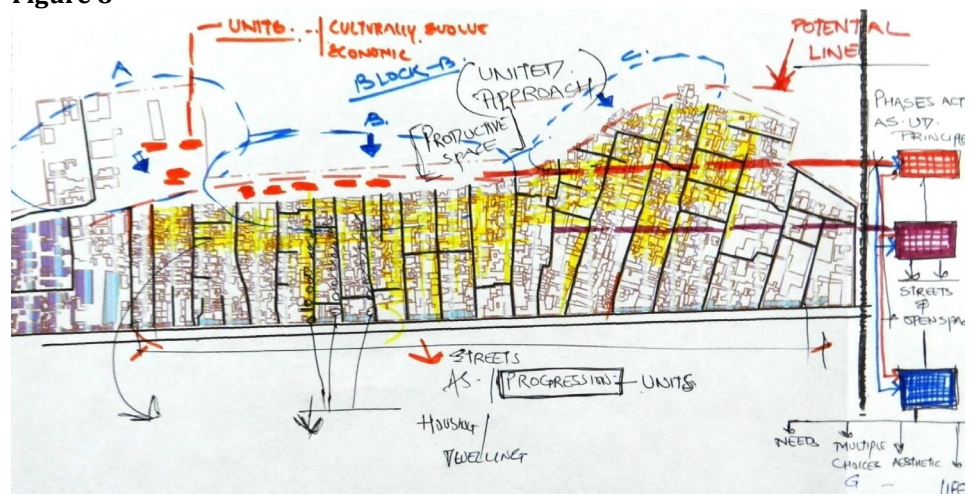


Figure 8 Identifying the Factors Through Sketch Contributing to the Overall the Visual Impressions.

Source Author

4. REDESIGNING NON-PLACES IN MAQBOOLPURA: POTENTIAL INTERVENTIONS

4.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF REDESIGNING NON-PLACES

A concept plan of an urban area showing the factors that contribute to the overall visual impressions. The colored lines indicate different types of corridors and spaces that create a sense of connectivity, diversity, and identity (Figure 9). The handwritten annotations highlight the social network and the flow of people and activities. The drawing illustrates how urban design can enhance the visual quality and impressions of these settlements.

Figure 8

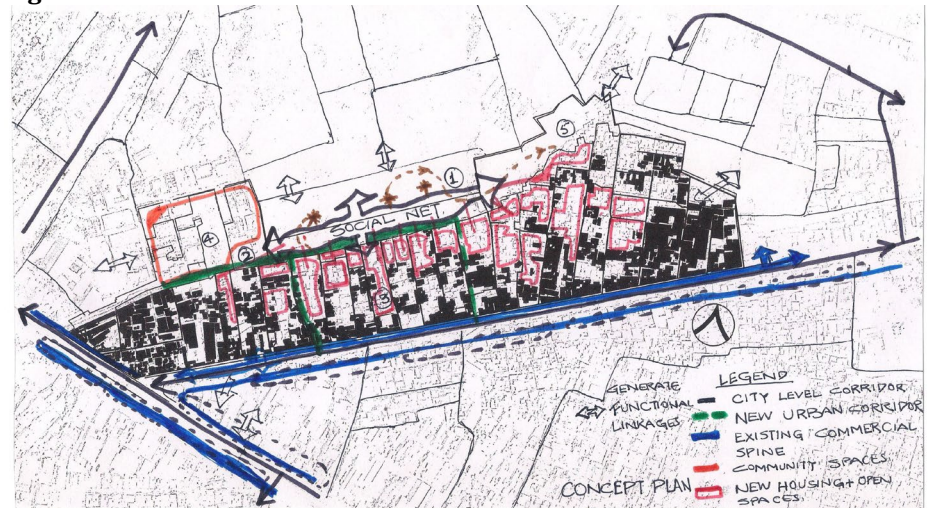


Figure 9 New Possibilities for Designing Cores of Community that Deal with Improving Visual Character and Impressions.

Source Author

4.2. PROPOSED DESIGN INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPROVING NON-PLACES

A possible way to improve the non-places is to consider how the community cores can be enhanced by reimagining-built environments (Figure 10) that stimulate the human mind and enhance social interaction. Some strategies of designing spaces that could be used are:

Figure 10

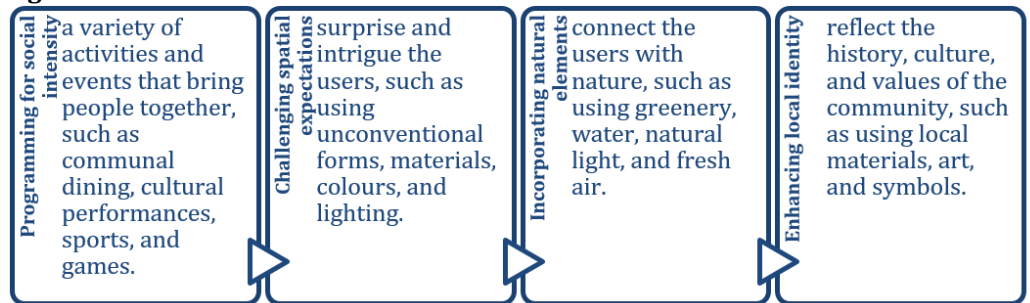


Figure 10 Four Strategies to Improve the Non-Places.

Source Author

4.2.1. DEVELOPING VERSATILE COMMUNITY SPACES AND INTEGRATING ART AND LANDSCAPE FEATURES

Figure 10



Figure 11 Existing and Proposed Urban Fabric to Create Versatile Community Spaces and Built Environment.

Source Author

The design of the informal settlements allows the user to see the space as a whole, with urban blocks, street patterns, recognizable spaces (Figure 11) for community participation, home-based economic activities, and a clear layout. The people of informal settlements move through the connected spaces, discovering new views and interesting places along the way.

Figure 12



Figure 12 The Model Shows How the Industries and Spaces Coexist with the Adjacent Natural and Built Areas.

Source Author

- **Multifunctional Community Spaces:** Designing areas that can serve multiple purposes, such as hosting events, gatherings, meetings, or recreational activities, to maximize utility and community engagement.
- **Incorporation of Art:** Integrating art installations, murals, sculptures, or other artistic elements into the community space to enhance aesthetics, create focal points, and promote cultural expression.

- **Landscape Elements:** Including green spaces, gardens, water features, or natural elements that not only beautify the area but also provide opportunities for relaxation, interaction with nature, and environmental benefits (Figure 12).

5. KEY FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The Role of Visual Appeal in Enhancing Livability

Incorporating community spaces and recreating non-places into informal settlements is crucial for enhancing the livability of these areas. These spaces serve as focal points for social interaction, recreational activities, and collective gatherings, giving residents a sense of community and belonging. By improving the visual appeal of these spaces, they can become vibrant hubs that enhance the overall livability of informal settlements. This approach not only improves the physical environment but also contributes to the social and economic development of these communities, highlighting the importance of inclusive urban design in creating sustainable and resilient cities (Figure 13). There are few key findings regarding the importance of redesigning the non-places:

- 1) **Importance of Visual Aesthetics in Public Spaces:** Visual aesthetics play a crucial role in shaping people's perception and experience of public spaces. Well-designed, visually appealing environments can create a sense of place, evoke positive emotions, and encourage social interactions. They also contribute to a sense of safety and well-being among residents and visitors.
- 2) **Relationship between Improved Visual Appeal and Adaptive Livability:** Improving the visual appeal of public spaces can enhance their livability by making them more attractive and enjoyable for people to use. When public spaces are visually appealing, they are more likely to be used and cared for by the community. This can lead to increased social cohesion, a stronger sense of community pride, and improved overall quality of life.
- 3) **Potential Socio-Economic Benefits of Redesigned Public Spaces:** Redesigned public spaces with enhanced visual appeal can have several socio-economic benefits. They can attract more visitors and tourists, leading to increased economic activity in the area. They can also improve property values and attract new businesses and investments. Additionally, well-designed public spaces can have positive impacts on public health, mental well-being, and environmental sustainability.

Figure 13



Figure 13 Visual Aesthetics from Non-Places to Public Spaces.

Source Author

5.1. DISCUSSION

5.1.1. ROLE OF SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND CULTURAL CONTEXT IN COMMUNITY SPACES

The critical role of social capital in the success of community public spaces cannot be overstated. It highlights that the design of these spaces must go beyond aesthetics to "Promoting social unity and cooperation among individuals and groups."

Core Findings:

- 1) **Social Capital Dimensions:** It identifies the key dimensions of social capital such as social cohesion, community belonging, and social interaction as pivotal to the success of public spaces.
- 2) **Environmental Perception:** Residents' perception of their environment is significantly influenced by their social capital, impacting how they engage with public spaces.
- 3) **Objective Environment:** The objective quality of community spaces, including their design and facilities, is closely linked to enhancing social capital.
- 4) **Design Principles:** Public spaces should be designed with diversification, humanization, suitability, and inclusiveness in mind to cater to the diverse needs of the community.
- 5) **Space Elements:** Integrating space, facilities, and social elements in the design process is essential to improve social capital and the overall happiness of residents. [Qi et al. \(2024\)](#).

An in-depth analysis of urban social group dynamics in Milan has been conducted using anonymized mobile phone data. This research explores the relationship between social interactions and urban spaces. The emphasis is on the value of Call Detail Records (CDRs) in offering insights into group behavior and urban planning.

Core Findings:

- 1) **Urban Groups:** The study identifies cohesive social groups within the city and analyzes their interaction patterns.
- 2) **Data Utilization:** CDRs are employed to investigate the co-location and interaction of these groups within Milan's metropolitan area.
- 3) **Group Behavior:** the insights into group size, membership stability, and location visit frequency are provided, showing a preference for certain locations and a blend of telephonic and physical interactions.
- 4) **City Dynamics:** how group preferences can influence the dynamics of urban areas, pinpointing locations that attract group gatherings.
- 5) **Implications for Planning:** a nuanced understanding of social group behavior, which can inform urban planning and mobile network infrastructure development. [Zignani et al. \(2019\)](#)

The interrelation between public spaces and social divides in informal settlements is a multifaceted issue encompassing spatial, social, and economic dimensions. The public spaces in these areas are often created through local initiatives and are vital for community dynamics. Nevertheless, they encounter obstacles related to enhancement and official acknowledgment.

Core Findings:

- 1) **Local Self-Help:** Public spaces in informal settlements are typically the result of local self-help efforts, reflecting the community’s needs and attachment [D’Cruz et al. \(2014\)](#).
- 2) **“Unfinished” Spaces:** These areas are often “unfinished,” allowing for flexibility and future adaptations to meet evolving community needs [Kamalipour \(2023\)](#).
- 3) **Incremental Urbanism:** Informal settlements are seen as laboratories for studying incremental urbanism, with public spaces emerging through self-organization and informal adaptation [Kamalipour \(2023\)](#).
- 4) **Communal Use:** Despite being public in terms of ownership and accessibility, these spaces are communal in terms of use and attachment, playing a crucial role in the physical and social dynamics of the settlements [D’Cruz et al. \(2014\)](#).
- 5) **Challenges in Formalization:** The improvement and consolidation of public spaces in informal settlements can be a prolonged process, facing obstacles in formal recognition and support [Kamalipour \(2023\)](#).

5.1.2. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DESIGNING COMMUNITY SPACES

The study underscores the significance of community engagement in architectural design, advocating for the inclusion of local perspectives to achieve intelligent and responsive architecture. The mutual benefits of knowledge exchange between architects and the community lead to contextually relevant and efficient building solutions. Encouraging community participation empowers individuals by giving them a role in shaping their environment. The article highlights the global case studies that illustrate the beneficial impacts of such collaborative endeavors, showing how participatory design can significantly affect the architectural landscape and enhance the community’s livability. [Delaqua \(2021\)](#) The ability of participatory architecture to create places that are deeply rooted in the needs and character of the community and functional. It shows that design can be a collaborative effort, resulting in more welcoming places for residents.

<p>Multiprogram Ship, Caracas, Venezuela: The urban development initiative that includes interventions in public areas of Caracas. It serves as an urban device connecting the main mobility systems of the neighborhood and creates new relationships with the public space through its vertical platforms.</p>	<p>PORET Kindergarten, Zimbabwe: Following the philosophy of holistic sustainability, the PORET community in Zimbabwe has been active since 1996. The PORET-kindergarten is a pilot project that regenerates local craftsmanship and building know-how.</p>	<p>Kāpäclājui Indigenous Training Center, Costa Rica: Originating from participatory design workshops, this project covers a sense of belonging in the community. It was an opportunity for the community to co-create spaces, that are coherent with their surroundings and centred on the user’s needs.</p>	<p>Community Center of Camburi, Brazil: This centre is a building by and for the local low-income community of quilombolas, descendants of Afro-Brazilian slaves. It reflects the community’s active role in the design and construction process.</p>
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“Participatory Design to Co-create Community Spaces” highlights the effectiveness of a collaborative method in design and planning. This approach

engages stakeholders throughout, promoting inclusivity and in a democratic way. It also boosts social cohesion, capital, belonging, and ownership among community members. This strategy is crucial for neighbourhoods' long-term social sustainability and resilience, as shown by improved interaction patterns and community space use which are further characterized by workshops, surveys, interviews, prototyping, and user journey mapping, the method encourages active community participation. [Qi et al. \(2024\)](#).

5.1.3. ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES THROUGH COMMUNITY SPACES

Understanding the Shaping of Public Space: It's crucial to understand how public spaces are shaped within informal settlements, as these areas can be hubs of innovation and vibrant urbanism. The Medellín study focuses on the Proyecto Urbano Integral (PUI), a transformative urban project in informal settlements. It emphasizes community engagement and participatory design to shape public spaces that reflect local needs. The PUI's success, known as 'the Medellín miracle', showcases the potential of public space development to foster urban renewal and resilience in informal areas. The study also notes the importance of incremental development, allowing spaces to evolve with the community. [Arteaga \(2021\)](#), [Kamalipour \(2023\)](#)

The outlined strategies emphasize the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the economic, social, and cultural dimensions of life in informal settlements. Tackling these facets can enhance the living standards of the inhabitants and facilitate the seamless integration of informal settlements into the wider urban context. The strategies include affordable housing, service investments, community involvement, governmental participation, security of land and housing, and urban planning. [Rossini \(2024\)](#)

Community gathering spaces are important for making social connections and combating loneliness and isolation. They are the well-loved places where people naturally congregate, such as libraries, parks, and coffee shops. These spaces serve as 'third places' beyond home and work, where individuals can interact organically, build relationships, and feel a sense of belonging. They are essential for community-based climate resilience strategies, providing a safe and welcoming environment for all, and are crucial in establishing trustworthy havens within the community. These spaces are highly relevant and beneficial for informal settlements. It can be a hub for social interaction, cultural expression, and community organization. They provide a shared area where dwellers can come together, which is especially important in densely populated and often underserved regions in informal settlements. It can help to improve livability by reducing isolation and gives revenue to people by providing a small economic sector. [Kamalipour \(2023\)](#), [Shafqat et al. \(2021\)](#), [Hernández-García \(2013\)](#)

5.1.4. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SPACES IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

The complexities of public space development within informal settlements. It examines the unique dynamics and challenges faced in these areas, where formal planning is often absent, and the community's needs and interactions shape the public spaces organically. The case study highlights the importance of considering the local context and the inhabitants' active role in creating functional and inclusive

public areas that cater to their social and economic activities. Qi et al. (2024). The three key points which can be considered as follows:

Public Space & Social Cohesion: The public spaces promote social cohesion, highlighting how diverse activities and groups contribute to a sense of community. The neighborhood streets serve as venues for social interactions among dwellers.

Physical Aspects & Sociodemographic Factors: The physical features like accessibility and mixed land use encourage social interaction, affected by factors like ethnicity and age. The presence of street furniture can encourage social gatherings.

Future Directions: The directions should focus on intangible aspects of urban space, assessing the social performance of public spaces, and interventions to promote social interaction and cohesion.

6. CONCLUSION

The visual impression of public spaces and the potential for redesigning non-places in Maqboolpura, an informal settlement in Amritsar, Punjab, present a critical opportunity to address the pressing challenges faced by residents. This research has undertaken a thorough analysis of the current issues and proposed design interventions that could significantly impact the social, economic, and environmental aspects of Maqboolpura. Maqboolpura, like many informal settlements, faces numerous challenges that impact the livability of its residents. These challenges include overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of green spaces, and poor sanitation facilities. These issues not only affect the physical environment but also contribute to social and economic disparities within the community. One of the key findings of this research is the importance of visual appeal in public spaces. By enhancing the visual aesthetics of public spaces in Maqboolpura, we can create environments that are more attractive and inviting, thereby encouraging social interaction and community engagement. This can lead to a stronger sense of community pride and belonging among residents. Furthermore, redesigning non-places within Maqboolpura has the potential to significantly improve the adaptive livability of the settlement. Non-places, such as empty lots or underutilized spaces, can be transformed into vibrant community hubs that serve as focal points for social and economic activities. By reimagining these spaces, we can create more inclusive environments.

The proposed design interventions for Maqboolpura focus on addressing these core aspects of public spaces within informal settlements. These interventions include creating multifunctional community spaces, incorporating art and landscape elements, and programming for social intensity. These strategies aim to not only improve the visual appeal of public spaces but also enhance their functionality and usability. It is important to note that inclusive urban design plays a crucial role in creating sustainable and resilient cities. By involving the community in the design process and considering their needs and preferences, we can create environments that are more responsive to the diverse needs of residents. This approach not only improves the quality of life for residents but also contributes to the overall health and well-being of the community.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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