City Space Architecture

Towards Socio-Spatial Equity in Public Space.
Urban Design for the Street Vendors of Hyderabad

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Abstract

Street vending has historically driven and dominated the informal economy in the Indian city of Hyderabad. The inception of urban migration saw a range of marginalized groups move into the city, creating stark rural-urban differences and causing residents and the city to struggle to adapt. They eventually established themselves along the river to meet daily needs and adopted street vending as a means of occupation toward sustenance. While urban design in the city actively excludes these vendors from urban belonging, they retaliate through subversive practices and tactical urbanism to impose belonging, in a quest to find their right to the city. Neoliberal policies continue to distance these disengaged communities from the city considering them undesirable through dominant concepts of unattractiveness. While the government disapproves of informal vending in the public realm in Hyderabad – especially along the Musi River – branded designer "pop-up stores" and gourmet food stalls are encouraged, advertised and publicised. Inequitable law enforcement has created turmoil in the access and right to public space in the city. This study highlights the need for strategic placemaking to build healthy relationships and equity in the city. Various perceptions of public space among street vendors are analysed to help integrate these disengaged residents in the city. The paper concludes with empirical findings for designers and planners to examine, in delivering a customized design plans articulated to prevent further distress to micro-urbanism patterns existing in the city and its urban fabric.

Keywords: urban design, street vending, public space, urban equity, placemaking

Street vendors are ubiquitous around the world. Regardless of whether street vendors follow local regulations or operate informally, policymakers treat them as signs of disorder. Uninformed evictions, hostile policies and constrained reform usually exclude them from broad urban opportunities and participation. Urban design is currently practised to debar street vending from urban-built environments - portrayed as undesirable through dominant concepts of unattractiveness. However, street vendors actively participate in evading laws and municipal regulations by using subversive practices, changing the aesthetics and functionalities of cities. Often, these vendors are at the centre of urban equality movements - advocating for indemnity in the city. While the city's urban form often discourages street vending, specious policies disguised as accommodative schemes have intensified vendors' oppression, creating a surge in dissident practices and behaviour. Although street vending has been extensively investigated before, vast studies explore how street vendors challenge exclusion by defying ordinances of control through seemingly ordinary yet spatially intricate strategies (Certeau, 2013). The ethical basis for understanding the informal perceptions of public space and social in/exclusion stems from the argument that access to public space is crucial for achieving social justice and fulfilling fundamental human rights (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1974; United Nations, 2016). Responding to the contribution and the role of street vendors in the urban informal economy and the economical sustainability within the city as a whole - urban design to facilitate socio-spatial equity and justice is seldom the focus of intensive research. This paper calls for strategic placemaking to help integrate street vendors into the city - aligning with the scholarship interpreting urban design as a tool for creating a transparent process capable of advancing equitable spatial configurations (Tonkiss, 2017).

Urban design should address neoliberal policies that make cities increasingly hostile to underrepresented groups, by enabling the oppressed to claim rights to the city and participation in various urban opportunities and public affairs; regardless of gender, sexuality, caste, health or age (Sandercock and Lyssiotis, 2003). This study, advocates for urban design toward inclusivity by analysing street vending in Hyderabad - for an inclusive placemaking approach that collectively allows informal vendors to participate and contribute to evolving urban public space. Since the inception of urban migration into the city of Hyderabad, riparian settlements along the Musi River spawned and evolved. They continue to subsist today despite official eviction attempts and the absence of laws and policies protecting their fragile economies. For over four decades now, hundreds of informal residents residing in the riparian settlements along the Musi River have adopted street vending as an occupation within the public realm along the river. After presenting a brief overview of the street vending activity along the Musi River in Hyderabad, growing hostility toward informal occupations in the city is risking livelihoods and disrupting the web of connections in the city - creating estranged communities within an urban environment superficially promoting integrity and equity will be outlined. Further, the study will use observations, maps, interviews, and surveys to analyse the tactics local street vendors use to navigate everyday challenges. First, they seize economic opportunities by placing themselves in active zones within the built environment. Second, they satisfy their daily needs by inhabiting public property through hidden networks. And third, they claim implicit ownership of public space by placing private belongings on public property outside of operating vending hours.

The result of these practices is often adroit, leading to tactical urbanism that disputes the presiding ideologies of the formal counterparts. This study advocates for the adoption of these tactical urbanism paradigms within formal urban design and planning practices to improve equity and inclusivity in planning. The findings of this study can help designers and planners devise strategies to improve street vendor visibility and sense of belonging, facilitate inclusivity in planning, and entail improved opportunities. In addition to expanding ideas of what and who belongs to the city, these strategies can help create a more accepting community - by establishing participatory and inclusive planning in the built environment.

Study Extent: Riparian Lands of Musi River in Hyderabad

To examine the socio-spatial and economic idiosyncrasies of street vending in the Hyderabad context, the riparian boundaries of Musi River – along the Old City, once known as the walled city of Hyderabad – where informal vending first began in the city (Cohen, 2011a). The Musi River flows through the heart of Hyderabad, dividing the city into northern and southern halves (Sultana and Sultana, 2021). The riverbanks encompass diverse land uses, including residential neighbourhoods, commercial outlets, and green spaces (Figure 1).
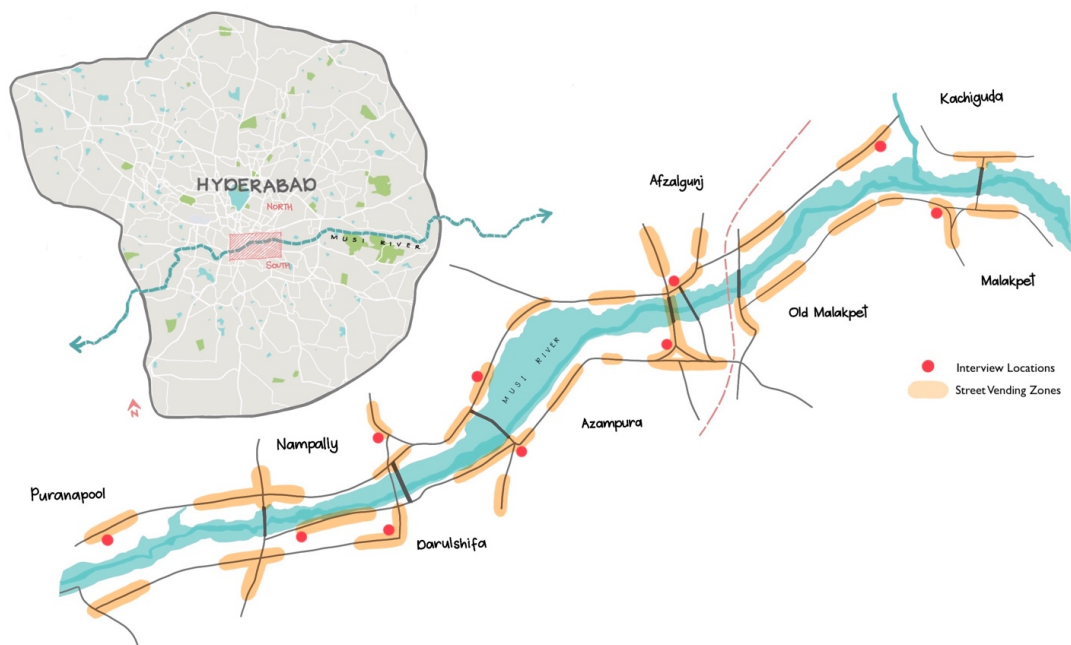

Figure 1. Street Vending zones along the Musi River in Hyderabad. *Source: Author*

Historically, the Musi River played a crucial role in the city's development, serving as a site for trade, transportation, agriculture, and urbanization (Tallavajjula, 2023). The communities residing along the Musi River are often low-income households, migrant workers, and informal settlements, who often face social challenges such as inadequate access to basic services, limited educational and employment opportunities, and marginalization from mainstream society. Despite these challenges, the riverbanks

remain a space of cultural exchange, with residents from various linguistic, religious, and ethnic backgrounds interacting. However, the area faces economic disparities, with pockets of poverty and unemployment coexisting alongside rapid economic growth (Cohen, 2011b). The Musi riverbanks represent a complex socio-spatial landscape characterized by diversity, resilience, and socioeconomic challenges.

Research Methodologies and Materials

The purpose of this research is to examine how certain groups navigate public space in Hyderabad. To emphasize connections between informal and formal counterparts, this study uses qualitative methods to analyse the socio-spatial tactics employed by informal vendors in the city. To understand the paradigms of socio-spatial patterns, idiosyncratic practices and micro-urbanism paradigms, it is crucial to superpose and examine cartographic, qualitative and pictorial evidence to draw targeted details and scrutinize underlying interdependencies. To gain a better understanding of how street vendors navigate volatile dynamics, a random sampling approach was utilized to select street vendors for interviews along the Musi River, with the aim of capturing diverse perspectives, perceptions, and experiences. Across various street vending zones spanning a 20-kilometer stretch of the river, two vendors were selected at random for interviews. Each interview session lasted approximately thirty to forty minutes per street vending zone. Additionally, informal conversations were conducted with policemen and pedestrians to gain broader insights into street vending dynamics and public space usage. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, covering predetermined – open-ended questions – supplemented by clarifying questions as needed. Broadly, the following questions were discussed with the interviewers:

- Can you describe your experience as a street vendor in this area?
- How long have you been a vendor in this area?
- What are some of the challenges you face on a daily basis?
- Have you experienced any discrimination while vending in this area? Or do you feel welcome?
- What changes or improvements would you like to see in this area to support your livelihood?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a street vendor?

Observational data was also collected to document physical characteristics and interactions, while geographic mapping techniques helped identify key locations for data collection. Thematic analysis was then applied to qualitative data gathered from interviews, conversations, observations, and mapping exercises. This method of sampling had limitations such as sampling bias and time constraints. However, the subjects considered and interviewed in this study have been street vendors for a long time along the Musi riverbanks and offered valuable insights into street vending dynamics and perceptions along the riverbanks.

Overview: Street Vending

Public spaces offer diverse opportunities for social interaction, making them accessible to everyone and serving as focal points for organized commercial activities that bring

communities together (Peimani and Kamalipour, 2022). Throughout history, streets have been commercial centres, making cities like Rome, Athens, and others known for their unique public spaces (Çelik et al., 2008; Calaresu and Heuvel, 2016; Hartnett, 2017). Since the overcrowding of informal settlements and street vending along the Musi Riverfront, urbanizing imperatives encouraged policymakers and officials to modulate street activity by outlawing certain users and activities contributing to disorder in public space. With growing urban migration, a multitude of small businesses helped underrepresented sellers to operate at the intersection of informal production and formal consumption networks (Akhter Ali and Kamraju, 2023). Although street trading is typically associated with Informality and Informal economy in the Global South, studies seldom view street vending as a representation of societally excluded groups in the urban city and their idiosyncratic cultural practices (Recchi, 2020). Rapid urbanization causing accelerated urban-rural migration flow, privatization of public space (Canniffe, 2018), deprivation of public-welfare funding and opportunities, and the need for equalising public space challenge the navigation of formal domains and their informal counterparts (Frug, 2001; Morales, 2010) - beyond the prosaic dichotomy at an international level. The global urban poor continue vending on streets as an easily accessible occupation, while growing inequalities make cities increasingly hostile to the underprivileged (Bhowmik, 2012). While most residents of the formal city rely on these informal occupations for their everyday services, policymakers and officials continue to estrange street vendors from extensive public participation, often treating them as a hindrance to access to public space (Kamalipour and Peimani, 2019). Especially targeted are vendors in prime nodes of the city, where their presence undermines prepotent narratives of a ubiquitous modern city; jeopardising the right to public space and visibility in the urban public space (Crossa, 2009; Yatmo, 2008). Social and spatial constructs of economic gentrification play a crucial role; with officials targeting and removing vendors from urban-poor communities, while branded pop-up stores encroaching onto the pedestrian realm are seldom questioned. Moreover, their visibility within the public realm is deemed unappealing based on appearance, calumniating them as delinquents, circumventing legal procedures, and immoral contenders to formal store owners operating locally. Moreover, they are constantly inculpated for compromising hygiene and sanitary health through littering and occupying public spaces; causing hindrance to pedestrian and vehicular traffic (Williams and Gurtoo, 2012).

Street vending is not always considered disorderly by authorities in an urban setting. While marginalized groups continue to work in the fear of being ousted, pop-up stores, festive kiosks or designer stalls that are visually appealing are rarely reprimanded; and often encouraged and advertised; actively striving to displace the urban poor away from the public realm. Planners and designers seldom operate in the interstices of informality and its relationship with public space; they are often coerced to abide by regulations that overlook critical socio-economic intricacies within urban informal economies – promoting "defensive urbanism" paradigms – to evolve and breed hostility within the built environment (Akhter Ali and Kamraju, 2023). While the formal kiosks are considered a contribution to urban design and enhancement of public space within the city, usually large and established companies benefit in the process, further disengaging marginalized groups from the city (Bostic et al., 2016). In most cases, the underprivileged are targeted through constrained urban policies that isolate them from city centres and public space (Flock and Breitung, 2016). The attempts to evict these

street vendors also take implicit forms; through oppressive regulations designed to outcast stagnant activities like street vending rather than other mobile encroachment on sidewalks (Jiang and Luan, 2021). Moreover, sidewalks in Hyderabad are often occupied by illicitly parked vehicles and two-wheelers using them as a quicker route to evade congestion on the road (Figure 2). Pedestrians are often honked at - on public pedestrian sidewalks - to create space for two-wheelers to use public space. Such activities are rarely criminalized despite causing heavy inconvenience and distress to the public realm, its users and their safety. Public space and usage policies are generally precarious, rapidly evolving and changing, making it barely accessible and difficult for street vendors to comply with law enforcement amid active exclusion attempts (Batréau and Bonnet, 2016). Crucial to this study is the analysis of the ways urban public space is designed and maintained, making streets hostile to street vendors by restricting access and estranging the marginalized from the right to public space, creating belligerent environments and as a result widening inequality in the city. Street vendors endure active exclusion and estrangement, resulting in the practice of resistance through the demonstration of tactical urbanism patterns (Tallavajjula, 2023). Legal regulations push the tolerant extents of these practices, resulting in occasional acts of protest causing mobilization of these groups and ensuring the confrontation and negotiation of rights to space with officials (Kamalipour and Peimani, 2019). One such mass protest led to the formation of the Street Vending Act in 2014, which prompted both national and state governments to reconsider hostile regulations; and accommodate the demands of the urban poor (WEIGO, 2022).

Figure 2. Two-Wheelers occupying Pedestrian Sidewalks in Hyderabad. *Source: Hans India.*

While the Act continues to be inconsistent with its regulatory ordinances, the formal acknowledgement of the marginalized community of street vendors and the informal economy remains volatile with no substantial change in the way their visibility is viewed

in the city (Cannon et al., 2019). Despite legal action to support their cause, street vendors seldom challenge the organizational body or explicitly confront officials. It is often through tactical responses that these vendors often negotiate public space to street vend (Falla and Valencia, 2019), carve pockets of space within the public realm through incremental encroachments (Bayat, 2000), transform public space through tactical urbanism to improve street vending locations (Kim, 2015), and evade official repercussions through manoeuvring around legal regulations (Lata et al., 2019). Various studies have thus corroborated that public space design and policy play an important role in furthering the alienation of vulnerable marginalized street vendors and lack of justice enabling them to oppose such exclusionary statutes (Graaff and Ha, 2015). The absence of systematic attention to equity and inclusivity in the built environment, however, affects everyday functionality and dynamics of how public space vitality and placemaking practices can help facilitate the reintegration of various urban residents in the city. With this intent, the public space in Hyderabad is analysed in how the street vendors are disparaged and continue to be excluded from vast urban opportunities.

Ambiguous Vending Regulations in Hyderabad

Regulatory attempts to beautify public space through exclusion are evident in Hyderabad, a city where volatile vending laws, discriminatory law enforcement and constrained reform continue to persecute the marginalized. Irrespective of the introduction of the Street Vending Act in 2014, street vendors in Hyderabad face multiple perils: heavy fines and penalties, verbal hostility and physical harm. Despite licensing procedures in place, authorities and police officials continue to adopt a high-handed approach (The Hans India, 2021).On the other hand, the arduous licensing procedures bring into question how street vendors fill regulatory licensure forms. Elaborate details on the form require high language skills that most street vendors lack (Bhowmik, 2003). Upon receiving licensure documents, antecedent regulations are modified, leaving most of these street vendors in distress. While the Street Vending Act was implemented nationally in 2014, it was at the discretion of state governments to add more policies to the national act. The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act safeguards the rights of street vendors while regulating their activities. Although the Act aims to balance the interests of vendors, consumers, and urban governance by recognizing street vending as an integral part of urban livelihoods (NASVI, 2014), they have disproportionately affected the street vendors in negative ways – disguised as public order, hygiene and safety standards. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) intended to demarcate vending zones to improve the safety of street vendors and pedestrian users and minimise vehicular congestion on arterial roads. The exhaustive survey identified over 163,073 vendors and over 138 vending zones (Deekshith, 2022). However, today this policy remains unimplemented, causing hostility to take myriad forms in the city. Although these street vendors mainly originate from the informal settlements along the Musi River and have existed since the inception of the urbanizing city, they continue to be calumniated and excluded from urban activities and participation. Neoliberal proceedings and processes reflect wider ideologies that have progressively divided the city into a modernizing one, in a race toward international participation. Furthermore,

the introduction of the Musi Riverfront Revitalisation project to "beautify" the Musi Riverfront has prompted officials to consign urban poor to the interstitial spaces of the city that once marked the rural-urban fringe (Tallavajjula, 2020); jeopardising the livelihood of multiple street vendors who dwell along the river. Privatization of public space, sanitization and beautification processes have rendered the lives of street vendors increasingly perilous. Obtaining street vending licenses and permits is seemingly straightforward on paper according to the Indian government. But for most street vendors – many of whom are rural immigrants – these seemingly simple steps are highly demanding; very few can understand and manoeuvre the licensing process (Basu and Nagendra, 2020). As a result, most street vendors in the city are forced to sell informally. Among street vendors not holding a license, some veterans – generally vendors with ties to local formal businesses – count on strong socio-spatial ties to navigate through the dynamics of power that regulate public space in the city. Other vendors with no special ties are often exposed and remain vulnerable to imperious officials and city police.

Rampant ethnocentrism exasperates the struggles of street vendors originating from marginalized backgrounds. Selling on the streets provides these vendors with access to self-sustenance albeit insecure. The volatility of policies under the new Street Vending Act quickly led to street vendors selling informally, taking advantage of the otherwise inaccessible public space along the Musi River (Deekshith, 2021). The presence of these marginalized street vendors in the urban city's public space prompted ethnocentric reactions from policymakers and residents, while around 10 million people in India depend on street vending as a profession for their livelihoods and sustenance (Bhowmik and Saha, 2011; NPUSV, 2006). These oppressive conditions have deteriorated over the last decade. The trend of ethnocentrism was only worsened by branded street-side entrepreneurs, as claimed by many street vendors along the river and lakefronts in Hyderabad through a survey (Personal communication, 29 December 2019).

Local hawkers and street vendors have claimed they were made to pay roughly 20% of their income to GHMC officials as bribes (Deccan Chronicle, 2021). As a result of venality, vendors have been forced to raise prices to recover additional costs incurred. The shelving of the Street Vending Act attracted little to no attention from the urban residents. The street vendors, the informal economy and the livelihoods they rely on were heavily disturbed by the recent pandemic in 2019. However, the corporation and authorities are yet to reimburse the marginalized as per the Act, through the PM SVANidhi scheme. The Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PMSVANidhi) scheme, mobilized by the Government of India, supports street vendors who were adversely affected during the Covid-19 pandemic. The scheme provides working capital loans to street vendors to help them resume their livelihood activities and recover from economic disruptions caused by the pandemic (Government of India, 2020). Moreover, the non-regularisation of street vendors – although illegal according to the Street Vending Act of 2014 – has left several vendors unable to reclaim their earlier vending "zones" after the public space encroachment drive in 2018 (Deccan Chronicle, 2021), an initiative aimed to reclaim and clear unauthorised constructions and occupations in public areas, under the guise of restoring public spaces for their intended use, such as parks, sidewalks, and recreational areas (Business Standard, 2018). The state claims to have created 300 restricted vending zones, while only 200 restricted no-vending zones exist in the city. Conversely, the municipal corporation identified over

156,000 street vendors in its limits, but only 144,000 street vending licenses were issued (GHMC, 2021). However, this urge and spirit are lacking in terms of setting up vending zones for street vendors. As of 2021, officials asserted the demarcation of 138 street vending zones – while 300 were promised – out of 152 officially identified street vending zones. Irrespective of the street vendors' rights outlined in the Act of 2014, hasty enforcement of removal drives without prior notice has caused the displacement of over 50,000 hawkers and vendors from rightful public space and land. Moreover, they continue to levy hefty fines and classify these marginalized informal sellers as "destructive forces" in the city. While increased competition has created branded companies to set up remote stalls and kiosks along pedestrian sidewalks and the public realm, officials and police seldom penalise them. Street vendors continue to pay daily "rents" to use public space for their vending activities, while these kiosks randomly demand eviction of these vendors to set up stalls. Many vendors have retaliated, fighting for their rights, only to be penalised and harassed further from being included in the city (Rajesh, personal communication, 23 December 2020).

Resistance and Revolution at the Centre of Hyderabad's Public Space
The local street vendors of Hyderabad continue to carve out a living despite being subjected to hostility every day, risking penalties, fines, detention and displacement. But the city of Hyderabad and its public space is not only a space of exclusionary regime and oppressive processes; it is also a platform hosting various human geographies, their resistance and revolution. The street vendors assert this by marking scantily accessed public spaces, and occupying and appropriating space and belongings. To gain a better understanding of how street vendors navigate volatile dynamics, various informal street vending zones (Figure 3) were examined and two street vendors at each site were interviewed; along with police officials, residents and pedestrians passing through the vending zones along the Musi riverfront, an area that extends over 20 kilometres. The study focuses on marginalized street vendors, who contribute the greatest to the informal economy of Hyderabad. The data addressed in this study was collected between November 2019 and August 2020. Interviews typically lasted thirty to forty minutes per vending zone and were carried out in the vending zones while observing interviewees' activities in these vending zones.
Street vendors mainly comprised a diverse group of men whose seniority and gender determined the hierarchy of power on the streets in the vending community. Women contribute to the making of goods sold by the men of these marginalized families. Typically, these street vendors come from remote villages in search of urban opportunities and live near their corresponding street vending zones along the river to reduce daily commutes. As a result of their meagre incomes, most of these vendors live on riparian land in overcrowded housing units. Shared by multiple family members, their housing units are often inter-generational houses, hosting up to eight to ten people in two rooms. Common bathrooms are typically shared by more than ten families. Lack of space, privacy and income push these street vendors to occupy public space, not just to avail economic opportunities, but to fulfil personal needs that would otherwise remain unsatisfiable.

Figure 3. Concentration of vendors along the historic precinct of Musi River in Hyderabad. *Source: Author.*

Findings

Interviews with street vendors revealed several concerns about how public space and its components affect their perception, accessibility, belonging, and right to urban public spaces.

Availing Opportunities and Participation

Vendors usually start selling around 9:00 a.m. and continue street vending for nine to thirteen hours depending on police interception, official persecution, weather conditions and customer demand. Three types of street vending zones and locations along the Musi riverfront are identified: streets connecting major urban nodes, historic landmarks, and public squares. Vendors place themselves within public spaces in the city differently within each of these socio-spatial typologies.

There are many reasons why different vendors choose to occupy different sections of the riverfront, including familiarity with the space, similar vending businesses, the space, similar vending businesses, and proximity to their residences. They often operate as a family. These vendors often operate as a family. While the women of the house take care of the vending cart, the men are often seen walking along passers-by to showcase their artefacts for sale. Their tactics and strategies differ along various stretched of the riverfront. Vendors along the Musi riverfront – in all three zones – tend to occupy the posterior end of pedestrian sidewalks, aligned next to each other. They sometimes occupy nodal points near traffic intersections, statues, and landmarks like museums or historic buildings, where they align themselves at the intersection of public space and customer interaction.

Many street vendors admitted to positioning themselves at key nodes of the city, as they can easily disperse in case of official persecution (Figure 4). Various street vendors have claimed to continue vending on the Chaderghat bridge over the Musi River despite living eight kilometres away in Karmanghat (Figure 5). Rather than vending at the nearest location, they preferred travelling to Chaderghat everyday to work where they felt some semblance of home. Some inherent features of the built environment including public infrastructures like street width, lighting infrastructure, presence of other street

vendors or even the pavement type and quality determine which spots within a street vending zone are preferred.
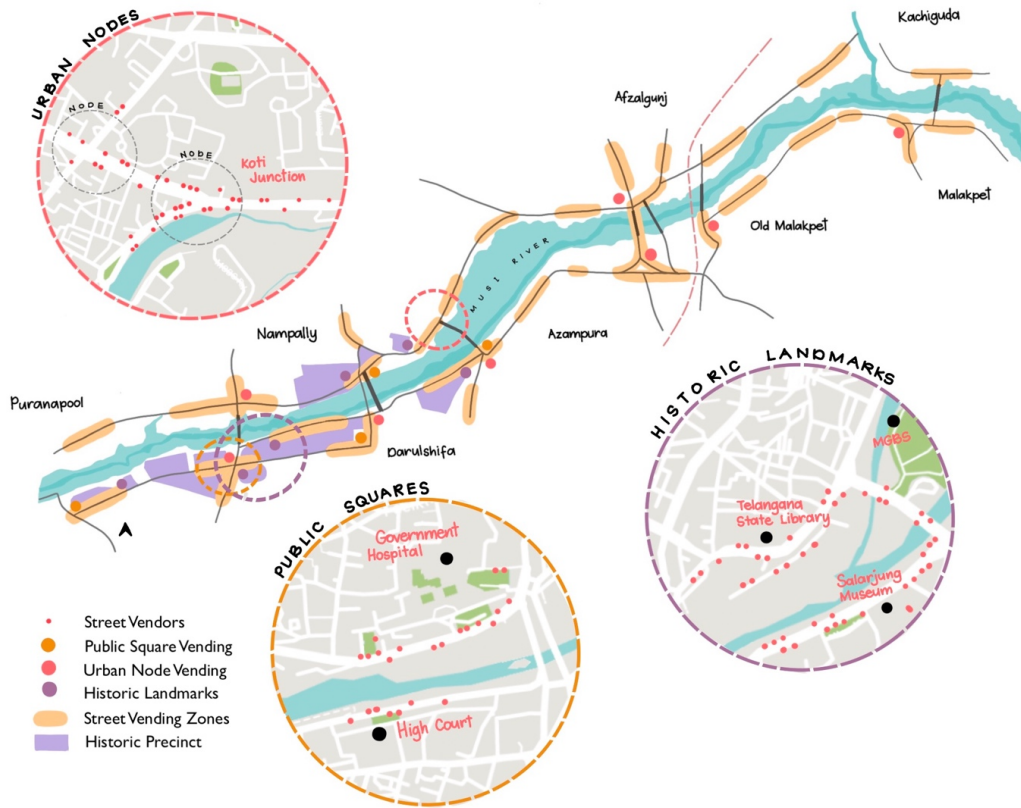

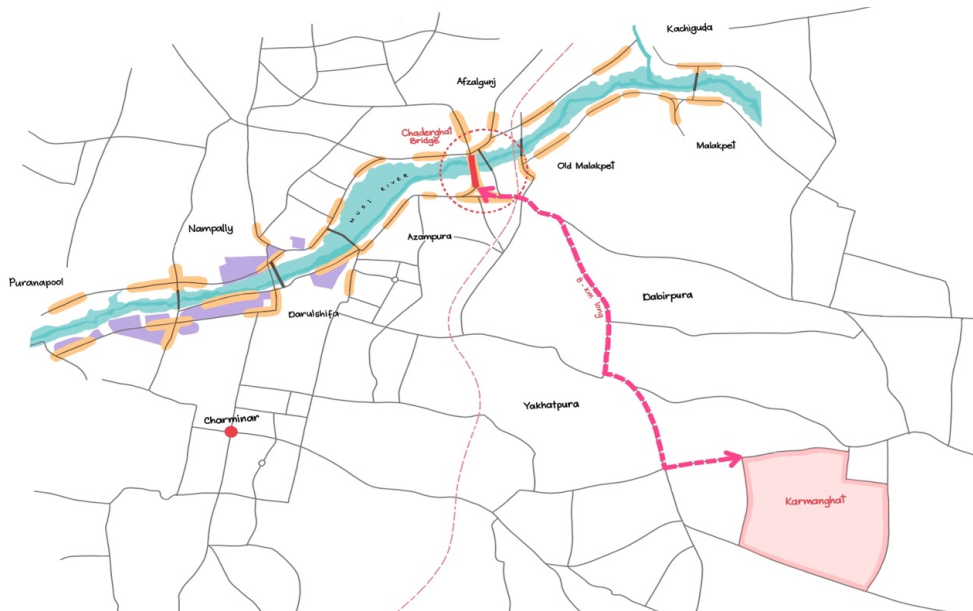Figure 4. Different Street Vending Zones along the Musi riverfront. *Source: Author.*

Figure 5. Vendors' Daily Commute between Karmanghat and Chaderghat Bridge. *Source: Author.*

Sidewalk Design
A combination of sidewalk characteristics, such as unevenness, inconsistent widths, and materials used created barriers for street vending for some participants. Inadequate sidewalk width caused some participants to abandon their usual vending zones and find alternate spots or routes, increasing uncertainty in sales, costs, and expenses. Participants revealed low sidewalk width as a constraint when selecting vending locations. Upon careful observation, it is evident that sidewalk widths and heights are not standard across all streets along the riverfront. Additionally, some streets lack sidewalks altogether.

> *"When you go to Chaderghat Road, just south of the river, there are spots where there's literally no sidewalk, and you are right next to a busy street with heavy traffic. There are a few vendors there, but it is unsafe".*
> *Int-10: Street Vendor on Chaderghat Bridge, (35M)*

> *"As we walk along the Chaderghat Road, it starts off with paved sidewalks, and then once we cross the Chaderghat bridge, the sidewalk abruptly ends. There's no sidewalk anymore! It feels very dangerous".*
> *Int-14: Street Vendor at Koti Junction, (42M)*

> *"It's not just about us vendors. The missing sidewalks are a hazard for pedestrians too. I have seen a drastic decrease in pedestrian traffic lately. It is only cars that stop to buy papayas from me now".*
> *Int-16: Street Vendor on Chaderghat Bridge, (58M)* (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Fruit Vendor near Chaderghat Bridge (no sidewalks). *Source: Author.*

Urban Renewal

Projects like that the Musi Riverfront Revitalisation Project focused on "beautifying the city", while ignoring the needs of its other residents whose occupations rely on the urban space affect the street vendors largely. Such projects have threatened the occupation of many participants through lack of information and intimidation. All participants talked about eviction threats and official persecution for vending along the riverfront. Informal conversations with policemen revealed that they have a passion for levying hefty fines when not bribed sufficiently.

> *"We are constantly on the move. Despite having a licence, they are very harsh with us. It is particularly bad when they have orders to evict us for a project they intend to mobilize. I remember, they even hit us with a cane just for asking why they want us to leave the area – this was in 2016 I believe, when they were rushing to start the Riverfront revitalization project."*
> *Int-1: Street Vendors near MGBS, (38M and 32F)*

> *"I think it was during the Revitalization project, they (policemen) hit us even if we asked something as simple as "What is happening?". They also treat us like criminals. We are never spoken to nicely. They come yelling "Move! Get out!", and they push our carts, and we often incur product loss due to their behaviour".*
> *Int-3: Street Vendors near MGBS, (28M and 31M)*

Limited Access to Information

As the city continues to modernise, digitalisation has taken most information online. However, most of this information is now primarily in English. Most older participants revealed that they have trouble accessing and understanding information. In most cases, they receive information from policemen during their encounters. Although newer generations are taught English in school, most vendors are older adults who lack access to information due to language and technology barriers.

> *"I find it hard to navigate all the new advancements. My only source of information is the police, but they are very unpredictable – sometimes they are nice, sometimes angry. I don't get help from other vendors too because they are young and find it hard to explain everything to me".*
> *Int-2: Street Vendors near MGBS, (68M)*

> *"We are always the last to find out about what happens to us and our lives. Me and my wife are very old, we do not know how to use a phone. Basket weaving is our ancestral occupation. We don't know much about anything else".*
> *Int-5: Street Vendors near Imlibun Park, (66M and 61F)*
> (Figure 7)

Figure 7. Basket weavers along the Musi River near the historic MGBS (Imlibun). *Source: Bhaskaranaidu.*

Maintenance
Most streets along the Musi riverfront lack maintenance. Although street cleaners are assigned to each area, trash is a common sight. Some participants located in areas of high litter mentioned cleaning the space they use. Irrespective of their efforts, they are often called unclean.

> *"When I first came here, there was litter everywhere –*
> *leaves, plastics, food etc. But we saw potential and decided*
> *to clean the space and set our stall up. We continue to*
> *clean this space because it's our place of work".*
> *"The police come every other week to extort more money*
> *from us. They say we left our trash behind, but we always*
> *clean it up".*
> *Int-6: Street Vendors near Koti Junction, (34M and 32F)*
> *(Figure 8)*

Sustaining Livelihoods
Vendors develop and inhabit networks within public spaces in order to hide from officials and fulfil their daily needs that would otherwise remain unsatisfied. The porosity of the city's urban fabric and the Musi riverfront houses long stretches of rarely utilised pedestrian sidewalks and public space connected to alleyways, lanes, and informal housing that they use to disperse into during official raids and evacuation drives.

Figure 8. Street Vendors along Koti Junction *Source: Bhaskaranaidu.*

Keeping and "hiding" their goods is paramount not only when police are nearby, but also overnight when some vendors prefer to leave their goods where they sell rather than take them home where space is limited. Typical urban infrastructure like electrical control boxes, unused public restrooms, bushes and trees, and abandoned religious structures precariously serve as "cabinets" to leave daily goods and belongings in the vending zones they inhabit. With street food constituting a major portion of street vending businesses in Hyderabad, the vendors collaborate internally to share services. Street food vendors, for example, leave packaged meals at other street vending carts or in electrical boxes on street poles for lunch-hour gatherings around noon. This collaboration is a prime example of their sustainability and resilience. Most police officials and authorities avoid interspersing this lunch-delivery system, which many officials claimed to be innocuous – unrelated to street vending infringements.

> *"We have a system of our own to keep one another informed, and helping each other in our respective vending areas. We try to stay in groups in junctions (intersections) so we have multiple routes to leave the area if policemen target us. We sadly never know when they will target us, it is often very random".*
> *Int-17: Street Vendor near Koti Junction, (28M)*

> *"We incur lot of loss when we disperse hastily during police raids. With time we have created a network of our own, where we hide our daily belongings in light boxes and trash cans that no one uses. I don't want to reveal the exact locations – I am afraid someone might steal them".*
> *Int-9: Street Vendor near Koti Junction, (30M)*

> *"Sometimes they set up kiosks and stalls. Most of them are nice. They help us with food, in relieving ourselves, and the police if they see them troubling us".*
> *Int-11: Street Vendor near Koti Junction, (27M)*

> *"Food vendors on the other end of this street help us with our food needs. We share all our goods – I provide them with vegetables from my cart, and they provide me with lunch every afternoon.".*
> *Int-11: Street Vendor near Koti Junction, (27M)*

Street vendors exploit the mundane disorder of the city to encroach and informally privatise public space to store their personal belongings and vending goods. As a result, some vendors store their goods close to neglected dumpsters in the city, trusting no one will pick them up. Vendors are often seen leaving their goods in areas that are difficult to access, knowing that the police or other residents will not access these spaces. The permeability and accessibility to public space and the built environment along the Musi riverfront help accommodate vendors wishing to rest mid-vending hours. In the afternoon hours when police surveillance is less frequent, vendors use bushes and trees as washrooms and makeshift restrooms. At times, the solidarity of others, such as local vendors and residents, official kiosks and stalls help vendors satisfy daily needs like using restrooms and charging equipment.

Exercising Belonging
Street vendors in Hyderabad use public spaces in the city to work and socialize. However, rarely accessed public spaces and greens along the riverfront often become gathering spaces where the street vendors gather to socialize and relax. Some vendors stay within the central public spaces along the riverfront to expand their business horizons and grow connections. Most street vendors prefer vending in groups to create activity, which additionally provides these vendors with privacy and support when persecuted by official reform. Religious activities such as praying are seldom carried out publicly. Additionally, vendors have carved out private niches within public spaces to meet those needs. While these marginalized groups express their vision through tactical urbanism in the central city, designers seldom envision this when designing cities and the public realm.

> *"While our vending habits bring us together, we also respect each other's religious practices. We take turns and come together in an open unused space to pray. When one is away, we take care of their carts".*
> *Int-11: Street Vendor near Salarjung Museum, (38M)*

By utilizing pedestrian sidewalks and public space along the Musi riverfront, they are not only able to sell their handcrafted goods but also showcase their art of making their goods by transforming public space into a makeshift "museum".

Towards Socio-Spatial Equity through Urban Design

It is evident through empirical findings that marginalized street vendors emplace their resistance and geographies of belonging along the Musi riverfront by inhabiting, appropriating, and transforming public space in Hyderabad. Their rudimentary processes of navigating and applying tactical urbanism in the city interrupt dominant hierarchies of freedom of access to public space in the city. The existing definition of Urban Design in the city of Hyderabad strongly dictates the removal of these informal settlements and street vendors from the riverfront. Lefebvre (1974) emphasizes that dominant social forces often produce and control urban space, resulting in inequalities and social exclusion; while neoliberal urbanization processes continue to perpetuate spatial injustices by prioritizing capital interests over community needs (Harvey, 2008). This study has helped find that idiosyncratic practices, needs, and eccentric urbanism paradigms of various groups are seldom accepted and integrated within the urban fabric of the city; arguing against the existing hierarchical and exclusionary approach to urban design and access to space in the city. Soja's (2009) concept of spatial justice further highlights the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities in the urban landscape, often reinforced by planning practices through multiple meanings and definitions of urban spaces and dominant narratives that exclude marginalized voices (Massey, 1995). Additionally, Zukin (1996) outlines the commodification of urban space and the displacement of marginalized communities, particularly through processes like gentrification. Planners and designers must engage with marginalized communities to promote equitable design practices that accommodate their rights and activities in public spaces (Harvey, 2008). Sadly, planners and designers seem to rarely operate at the intersection of equitable design and political regimes in Hyderabad. By aiming at addressing the critical need for more comprehensive research on the complex dynamics between the built environment and social attributes, this paper discusses patterns in socio-spatial processes in the city through the lens of street vendors. Factors such as temporal aspects, spatial configurations, and social relationships identified through empirical research in this study can act as a base for designers and planners to consider when designing cities, to ensure the voices of marginalized communities and individuals are considered in the decision-making process. Street vending and other informal means of occupations that function in public spaces epitomise the activities urban designers and planning officials have neglected, if not excluded actively. Vast patterns and variations in accessing public space highlight the complex interplay between the social dynamics, spatial dimensions, stakeholder involvement, and community engagement policies in shaping public spaces in the city.

Conclusion

While neoliberal movements continue to push marginalised and vulnerable groups away from broad urban opportunities and participation, some of these communities continue to avail opportunities and exercise belonging in the city in the form of street vending. The analysis of various street vending zones revealed the intertwined nature of key factors identified through theoretical foundations. The rich public realm in Hyderabad, situated mainly along the Musi River has rampant ethnocentrism, unstable vending regulations, and gratuitous law enforcement that continue to marginalize vulnerable groups. While structural inequities and precarious sustenance have restricted the

marginalized street vendors of Hyderabad from organizing into movements to fight for justice and equity, they implicitly claim the right to the city by exhibiting their everyday lifestyle patterns within the public realm of the city. The street vendors exhibit tactical urbanism through their encroachments onto public space in the city, satisfying their otherwise forsaken needs. Their practices disrupt the hegemonic constructs and practices that shape the "ideal" city. Planners and designers often do not have the lived experience to visualise how design features, standards, and design considerations leave out underrepresented people and their practices. Through this study, firstly, the street vendors in Hyderabad continue to informally seize opportunities, which can be enhanced through design and planning toward inclusivity. This includes not withholding the built environment from parts of society, and critically assessing facilities to fix, integrate and enhance while combatting political implications and contestation to help vendors continue to sell and establish vending infrastructure inclusively within the city. Secondly, street vendors have customarily sought refuge within the urban fabric of the city, especially in the public realm, to satisfy their supporting needs of sustenance. Design accommodations to support their daily needs through permanent infrastructure like public restrooms and showers, dining areas, and charging stations can significantly alter their quality of access to public space in the city. Lastly, as vendors impose their right to space and belonging by carrying out personal activities, creating solutions to make these activities visible can encourage feelings of inclusivity for these vendors and may strengthen the identity of the city. Empirical research also revealed that street vendors and other marginalized communities who inhabit Hyderabad's public space every day would benefit from prayer rooms, lavatory facilities, multicultural hubs, and multilingual signage.

The inclusivity employed in designing public spaces and cities vastly impacts the survival abilities and capabilities of marginalized groups to make a living and negotiate a right to space and belonging in cities. Prioritising placemaking strategies can help address these dynamics by promoting justice, and welcoming differences rather than excluding marginalized groups from urban opportunities. This study provides the experience of the street vendors and suggests ways to learn from urban citizens who identify as vulnerable, and to rely on urban design to defy dominant definitions of "the appropriate" by organizing and emphasizing the right to space within the built environment, allowing all urban residents equitable rights.

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