

Sustainable Placemaking – Envisioning the Potential of Everyday Places (Exploring and Redefining Public Spaces of Kathmandu)

Niharika Mathema^a, Sudarshan Raj Tiwari^b, Martina M. Keitsch^c

^{a, b} Department of Architecture, Pulchowk Campus, IOE, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

^c Department of Design, Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

Corresponding Email: ^a niharika12.mathema@gmail.com, ^b srtiwari@ioe.edu.np, ^c martina.keitsch@ntnu.no

Abstract

Urban environments are now changing rapidly in Kathmandu resulting in the haphazard and unplanned development of most new urban areas. The high urbanization rate involves risks of accelerating seclusion, displacement, gentrification and social inequality. These transformations raise questions on how livable, inclusive and sustainable public spaces are. In the context of swift urbanization, where the importance for creating sustainable and inclusive cities is at stake, addressing public spaces is crucial. It necessitates designing quality public spaces that will ensure healthy, inclusive and meaningful experiences for city dwellers in increasingly dense urban environments. One strategy to address this can be Placemaking, which has emerged as a movement for shaping public spaces since the 1960s. It can be an innovative and promising way to respond to current urban dynamics and deal with the ongoing urban transformation in Kathmandu. In this attempt, the research focuses on the case study of Indrachowk. The thesis has adopted mixed methods approach to gain holistic and in-depth information about the underlying issues in Indrachowk and to explore the prospects of Placemaking to address them. For that, critical place quality evaluation has been done and then Placemaking strategies responsive to Indrachowk's historic and social fabric have been discussed.

Keywords

Placemaking, Public Space, Experience, Quality, Sustainability

1. Introduction

The roots of the Placemaking phenomena date back to 1960s when two planners, Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte advocated for a community-driven, bottom-up approach to designing places for people rather than cars and traffic. As both a comprehensive idea and a practical approach for improving and shaping the public realm, Placemaking inspires people to collectively rethink and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community thus strengthening the relationships people have with places and enhancing the character of the city. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates shaping our social life in public spaces. It aids creative patterns of usage of public spaces, particularly paying attention to the physical and socio-cultural identities that contribute to the image of a place and thus support its ongoing evolution [1]. Simply put, Placemaking is the process of turning a 'space' into a

'place'. The difference between space and place can be described in the extent to which people have ascribed meaning to a specific area. Meaning can be given or derived in two different ways, namely:

1. A direct and intimate way: for example through the sensory experiences like vision, smell, touch, taste and sound.
2. An indirect, conceptual or metaphorical way mediated by signs, symbols, arts etc. [2].

The ultimate goal of Sustainable Placemaking is the creation of a sustainable community which embodies the defining attributes of improved quality of life, social wellbeing, economic vibrancy and healthy environment. Through Placemaking, public places not only become more functional, they radiate a more attractive, warm and inviting atmosphere to people of all ages, abilities, genders, income levels and backgrounds. Good Placemaking celebrates the

importance of human scale and enhances our urban experience by bringing liveliness to public spaces. It is a *strategic, multi-faceted, assets-driven, purpose-based* dynamic process which draws people together to create meaningful places for memorable experiences. The key outcome of Placemaking is the sense of attachment we feel towards the place.

1.1 Problem Statement

Kathmandu, the major cultural, economic and political centre of Nepal, is one of the fastest growing cities in South Asia [3]. It has witnessed a significant level of urban growth over the past decades, which is evident in the rapid expansion of city cores and the emergence of urban sprawl [4]. Contemporary urban development trend in Kathmandu accelerated by homogeneous and standardized forms; the car, the shopping complex, the business park, the grey and hard surfaces has weakened citizens' sense of place, further diminishing our essence of community and local individuality. As the automobile invaded our communities, people and the places have been shunted aside. In the last decade or two, Kathmandu has aggressively embraced car-centered planning, prioritizing vehicular movement over human traffic and the city has become increasingly hostile to people. The friendly and welcoming quality of public spaces has disappeared. The problems of everyday public spaces in Kathmandu can be categorized into two levels: the immediate and the higher level. The immediate problems include underutilized and under-performing spaces, poor connectivity, unsafe environment, and lack of maintenance, which cause problem at the higher level; the city's walkability and sense of place.

1.2 Rationale

It's painfully obvious that development trends of the last few years in Kathmandu are unsustainable. In a developing country like ours, public spaces are far from being viable in terms of both quantity and quality. Many public spaces have become less attractive or inaccessible over the years due to traffic, haphazard parking, "unfriendly" architecture, crime or other circumstances. It has also been noticed that the growth of human societies, lifestyle modifications and technological advances is leading to a sense of "placelessness" where places do not convey any meanings [5]. The importance of quality public spaces in this fast growing and diverse city cannot be

overstated. Good public place gives the area an identity. It tells the story of the place, facilitates random but valuable encounters among pedestrians and contributes to inclusiveness, improved connectedness and sense of belonging, sociability and vitality, economic prosperity and general well-being [6]. As the tie between sustainability and sociability, Placemaking initiatives can make our cities more livable by improving the quality of the public realm. Moreover, it provides concrete actions and tangible results that address sustainability goals in real ways. However, there exists a considerably wide knowledge gap in the understanding of Placemaking, both at theoretical and practical levels in the context of Kathmandu. This study sets out to fill these gaps by generating new knowledge on this phenomenon.

2. Research Objectives

Overall Objective:

- To investigate the attributes of "Sustainable Placemaking" as a framework to create quality public places and look into its prospects in Kathmandu.

Specific Objectives:

- To understand and explore how people live in, use, respond to and imagine the city's public spaces.
- To investigate the problems, barriers and major issues in Kathmandu's everyday public spaces which discourage people from using them.
- To provide a comprehensive understanding of the positive aspects of Placemaking and attain information on how to efficiently incorporate this concept into planning and practice.
- To provide new theoretical and empirical insights as well as actionable information to decision makers and planners about the importance and relevance of Placemaking in the context of Kathmandu.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Public Spaces

Public space is a primary ingredient in the urban environment that forms the backbone of a sustainable city. These spaces frame the city image, define the

character of a city, shape the cultural identity, are part of the city's unique character and provide a sense of place for local communities. Public spaces are like open-air "living rooms", the "front-porches" where public life unfolds. They help foster civic identity and improve social integration and inclusiveness. Healthy public spaces as great equalizers can be the starting point to create sustainable and livable city and are the springboard for enhancing the civic realm and contribute to community - socially, economically, culturally and environmentally. Public spaces include:

- **Open spaces:** Parks, gardens, playgrounds, public beaches, riverbanks and waterfronts, etc.
- **Public facilities:** Museums, art galleries, libraries, civic/community centers, indoor public sports facilities.
- **Streets:** Streets and sidewalks, avenues and boulevards, squares and plazas, downtowns and marketplaces, alleyways and lanes.

3.2 Place Attachment and Sense of Place

Place attachment is a unique, emotional relationship between an individual and the physical surroundings creating an intimate association with the spatial setting. Simply put, it is a comprehensive concept which refers to "person-to-place" bond. Place attachment as a subset of sense of place. Sense of place is formed through experience, shared stories and memory; the various interactions humans have with place. It refers to how we perceive a place. Humans learn by experience which is a factor that converts a 'space' into a 'place' facilitated by our senses through emotions, thoughts and feelings to determine personality to environments. "Experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality" [2]. However, sense of place has both emotional and physical aspects of experiences i.e. a combination of social and physical dimensions. It describes our relationship with places expressed in different dimensions of our life created from our interactions with the places.

3.3 Tools of Placemaking

Not all public spaces are places, not all locations are destinations and not all liveable spaces are loveable places. Placemaking is the key to that difference. There are various tools of placemaking used to effectively deliver the Placemaking strategy which focus on the balance in the **triangle of use**. This can

take the form of "hardware" i.e. "space" such as urban design and architecture, public space products like furniture; "software" i.e. "sense" such as place activation events and place branding efforts; and "orgware" i.e. "strategy" which includes formulation of place management regulations, organization frameworks and policies [7].

3.4 Types of Placemaking

1. **Standard Placemaking:** The most universal type of Placemaking, it is an incremental method which focuses on improving places to serve as magnets for people thus resulting in an improved quality of life. Standard Placemaking initiatives include street facade activations, park improvements, events in squares and plazas, etc.
2. **Strategic Placemaking:** This type of Placemaking is *goal-oriented* aiming to develop places that not only enhance the quality of life but are also uniquely attractive to talented, creative and skillful community members, thereby attracting investment and economic opportunities. Often demanding broad spectrum alliances, Strategic Placemaking is a targeted process typically focusing on downtowns and along defined centers, nodes and corridors with dense urban populations and projects tend to be larger as compared to Standard Placemaking.
3. **Creative Placemaking:** Creative Placemaking seeks to harness the power of culture of an area through art and innovation to strengthen communities and evoke a place story. Types of projects include public art installations, mural displays, asphalt and chalk art projects, etc.
4. **Tactical Placemaking:** It involves making a momentary modification in design or use of a space allowing people to see its potential and experience it themselves. Fundamental characteristic of Tactical Placemaking projects are that they are *low-risk, low-cost, and short-term with high transfer value*. Often referred to as "guerrilla urbanism" or "pop-up urbanism", it is the process of creating quality places using a deliberate, phased approach that emphasizes testing a project to stage substantial interventions. Examples include Complete Streets projects, Open Street programs, Road Diets, Play Streets, etc. [8].

3.5 Ten strategies for transforming public spaces through Placemaking

One of the biggest challenges rapidly urbanizing cities today is facing is being healthy, productive, accessible, inclusive and sustainable. Project for Public Spaces (PPS) [9] highlights ten ways to transform public spaces through Placemaking:

1. Improve Streets as Places
2. Create Public Spaces as Multi-Use Destinations
3. Build Local Economies through Markets
4. Architecture of Buildings Support Places
5. Establish a nexus between Public Health Agenda and Public Space Agenda
6. Rethink Community Planning
7. Utilize the Power of 10+ i.e. good public place must provide at least 10 good reasons for people to be there [10]
8. Create a Comprehensive Public Space Agenda
9. Use a "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper" Approach
10. Restructure Government to Support Public Spaces

3.6 Placemaking vs. Placemasking

In actuality not all public space events are Placemaking efforts [11]. **Placemasking** occurs when cities prioritize economic growth while socio-spatial equity becomes peripheral or irrelevant thus reinforcing inequality, gentrification and displacement [12]. Placemaking goes hand in hand with social equity. It is a dynamic process of shaping places for all ethnicities, races and economic groups However, ensuring that places remain inclusive, without compromising the rich diversity is not simple. Placemaking can sometimes have unintended consequences which are not anticipated like benefitting only a small segment of community. When we compare Placemaking with Placemasking, we must scrutinize the initiatives through the lens of social justice. For instance, when our efforts are designed for future high-income groups rather than existing low-income community, it results in seclusion instead of helping existing residents become economically stable to sustain lives. Therefore it is critical to integrate ideas of social inclusion and ensure that the outcomes are authentic and meet the community capacities [13]. A good way to avoid such problems can be to involve the whole community in the process in order to reduce the outcomes being biased to only high income groups.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Paradigm

Since the theme of the research refers to exploring a new concept as well as providing precise results, *Mixed Methods Approach* was adopted so as to incorporate the advantages of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a complete understanding of the research problem. The study seeks to understand the meaning in events and in human experiences in the selected public space of Kathmandu through the lens of Sustainable Placemaking and to gain in-depth information about the underlying issues and challenges regarding everyday public spaces. The theme of this research cannot be approached from positivist view as the experience of public spaces varies among the people. In this sense, the reality is seen within the *Pragmatic Paradigm* since the reality is assumed to switch between two views of the one external reality and the multiple perceptions of the social actors evaluating beliefs in terms of their practical functioning. The study uses an *Abductive Reasoning/Logic System* to produce scientific accounts of public space experiences by drawing on the concepts and meanings used by the social actors.

4.2 Research Design

The two main sources of data collection can be categorized into primary and secondary data. The primary data were basically sourced from expert interviews, case studies, field observation, on-site interviews, stakeholder interviews, online questionnaire survey, photographs and ethnographies. Meanwhile, data from relevant literature reviews of books, articles, journals, reports and websites are the secondary data of this research. The collected data have been analyzed and further elucidated.

4.3 Research Framework

The framework is based on Great Public Spaces Guide by New South Wales (NSW) Government, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

Dimension 1: Getting To and Around

- Walkable
- Accessible
- Connected

Dimension 2: Staying There

- Comfort and Safety (Place Infrastructure)
- Attractiveness
- Clean and Well Maintained

Dimension 3: Participation

- Active
- Diverse and Inclusive
- Vibrant

Dimension 4: Connection

- Sense of Place / Authenticity
- Sensory Experience (Sensescape)
- Stewardship

5. Case Study

5.1 I'M YOU Project by Artudio

I'm You was a street art project initiated in 2020 by Kailash K. Shrestha, Contemporary Visual Artist and Initiator of Artudio, to create vibrant public places that reflect our identity. In Durbarmarg, Keshar Mahal, Thapathali and Maitidevi areas electric poles were covered in weaved bamboos resembling our traditional *dokos* (baskets) with the goal of making our public spaces more interesting and intriguing. In this, he worked in collaboration with 3 local artisans and they covered around 45 electric poles. Shrestha says, *'The Artistic intervention allowed people to rethink and reconnect to the public spaces that no longer felt like public.'* The project acknowledged local materials and practices and created value through art. It was also a skill sharing process to connect people with our history and culture. The project was well perceived by the people using the space because they felt a "sense of belonging". Shrestha says some even offered to help and participated during the process. It brought life back to the areas while keeping alive the traditional skills and prioritizing and promoting local craftsmanship. Sustainability aspect is always embedded in his projects; the use of bamboo proves just that. This is a good example of **Creative Placemaking** that aimed to bridge art to the public by harnessing the power of local practices to strengthen communities and encourage a sense of local pride and create meaning in the place. This Placemaking initiative brought new attention to elevate community assets, culture and local history and injected new energy to the place by applying arts, culture and creativity.

5.2 Umbrella Street Project (Placemaking for Recovery)

Put up by the Sankata Club and Kathmandu Metropolitan City's Ward No. 22, the "**Umbrella Street**" was an idea that brewed over a tea talk (between local traders), a staple of Nepali culture with the aim to attract more visitors and hopefully boost business impacted by the Covid -19 Pandemic. The project was the brainchild of Ashish Man Singh, Secretary of Sankata Club who had proposed that they turn the alley into an umbrella street. He had seen pictures of such colorful installations in the streets of other countries, thanks to social media and suggested this idea to other businessmen in the area to which they happily agreed. They collected Rs. 5000 – 10,000 from among the local traders and with a total of around Rs. 500,000 they got started with buying and setting up umbrellas. Work began on December 15, 2020 and in a few days they covered around 150 meters of the alleyway with 430 umbrellas in hues of yellow, red and blue creating a causal, healthy, safe and fun atmosphere on to the everyday street. After being confined to homes for so many months due to the pandemic, people came there for refreshment. Stringing multicolored umbrellas over the alleyway added more vibrancy to city dwellers' lives in everyday settings. The project contributed not just to economic vibrancy but also to communal well-being. This is a good example of **Tactical Placemaking – LQC (Lighter, Quicker and Cheaper)** project that brought life and energy back to the otherwise dull alley of Sankata. New Road's Sankata Street thus got transformed from merely a '*location*' into a '*destination*' for leisure and merriment. It was quite astounding to see how much appeal the colorful umbrellas floating above the street of Sankata had on us as city dwellers, visitors and as random passer-by. This low risk, low cost and short term project showcased different possibilities and new uses for the place encouraging similar experimentations onto other everyday public spaces before making any substantial changes. The unexpected footfall with around 15,000 people visiting the street everyday shows just how much we Kathmanduites need "Places".

6. Case Area

Indrachowk is an important ceremonial, open-air market square on the artery passing through the historic section of Kathmandu, converging six streets linking it to Kathmandu's major destinations. Its

temples and bazaar attract streams of devotees and shoppers. In case of Indrachowk, conservationist and professionals agree that its built environment undergoes drastic commercialization resulting in a loss of traditional values and meanings [14]. Disordered, heterogeneous and aggressive traffic streams, increasing building heights and uncontrolled economic activities are the traits of today's Indrachowk. The streets once designed for pedestrian and chariot movements are crammed with automobiles and haphazard parking. These have contributed to convert Indrachowk into a 'mediocre space' of congested streets which lacks cultural values, beliefs and local character [14]. Other challenges include vanishing of traditional trades, gentrification and declining authenticity. Given the complexity of managing Indrachowk, Placemaking strategies would be crucial in preserving and promoting its vibrancy and attractiveness.

7. Findings

7.1 Place Quality Evaluation

Dimension 1: Getting To and Around

Shared streets are often the default condition in historic cities with narrow access and the streets of Indrachowk are no exception as they already operate informally as shared spaces. It's narrow travel lanes are shared between pedestrians, cyclists, pedicabs, cars, motorcycles and even large loading vehicles. With high traffic volume and speeds the limited space of Indrachowk is quite inaccessible and unsafe for people to walk and cycle comfortably. Moreover, electric poles, illegal street vending and informal parking obstruct the pedestrian space. Although the pavement materials indicate that vehicles are guests, the vehicle volume is high and automobile users are not aware and respectful of pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, indiscriminate car parking in the area leads to street blockage and dispute arising from automobile users searching for elusive parking thus discouraging pedestrian activities. Pavements are not in good condition creating obstacle to walkability especially for children, elderly and persons with disabilities.

Dimension 2: Staying There

There is an array of activities related to economy which is one of the primary reasons for people to come to the place. However, the rapidly growing

commercial pursuit in Indrachowk has resulted in the lack of spatial and visual comfort especially for pedestrians. Inadequacy of street amenities limits the use of the space for leisure and recreation. The only opportunity to sit and relax is on the footsteps of the *Wongseshwor Mahadev* (Shiva) temple. Another major problem is encroachment of pedestrian space by illegal vendors. However, there is also a security aspect since street vendors are the eyes and ears for the public space, lighting up the area at night and making them feel safe by acting as informal/natural surveillance popularly known as 'eyes on the street'.

The aesthetic quality of public spaces is as important as amenities to create a comfortable and satisfying experience for users. Achieving a good visual representation of public space through thoughtful design is vital for stimulating positive perceptions and meanings to strengthen people's relation to the space. Tower-like buildings with contrasting styles of facade, color, texture, material and various unappealing commercial signages have led to a visual clutter in the area. The buildings do not achieve quality urban design and are not compatible with Indrachowk's rich historic environment, consequently affecting the visual comfort of pedestrians while walking alongside the street and the character of the whole area is somewhat lost by the presence of large scale buildings.

Dimension 3: Participation

Indrachowk promotes active frontages/plinths that provide interest through displays and visible indoor activities while privileging commercial businesses. While active frontage seeks to offer vitality and security, the street-level interface cannot be assessed solely on physical benefits. How it 'feels' is also an 'essential ingredient' of public space quality. It is therefore important to value subtle nuances of the built environment at pedestrian level. Overall, I observed that the atmosphere in Indrachowk is 'mediocre' due to the 'massive scale' of the buildings dominating culturally important monuments and temples (noncompliance with architectural guidelines) and the predominance of grey building materials making it slightly 'intimidating'. Besides shopping, people come to the place either for religious purpose or for the famous Indrachowk's *Lassi*. However, the atmosphere is impacted by the pollution generated by the traffic. There is a *Pote* (colorful glass bead necklace) *Bazar* in Indrachowk, which has its own legendary status. The *bazar* with almost all the shops

owned by Muslims, who came to Kathmandu from Kashmir as traders at the time of King Pratap Malla, is an interesting and charming place to wander, if not for shopping, then just to watch the glittery *pote* hanging all over the shops. It is also really fascinating to see how people from a completely different culture have adapted themselves to the Newari culture while still preserving their own rituals and traditions.

Dimension 4: Connection

Most people feel a sense of connection to the place including visitors and local traders. The market square is an important ceremonial site and many religious activities take place here. The chariots of *Bhairav*, *Kumari* and *Ganesh* are pulled through here during *Indra Jatra* which is the most exciting cultural celebration of the Newars of Kathmandu with enticing and flamboyant *Lakhe* dance on upbeat music of *Dhime* (drum) and *Bhushya* (cymbals). Places of meaning include *Wongseshwor Mahadev* Temple, *Kantishwor Mahadev* Temple and the magnificent *Akash Bhairav* Temple which forms the symbol of Indrachowk. Merchants selling Nepali Pashmina, Chinese Pashmina, Kashmiri Shawls and Blankets cover the platforms of *Wongseshwor Mahadev* Temple. These shawls and blankets add a vibrant splash of color to the setting creating an interesting atmosphere. The square has a rich built heritage but a large part of it still untapped. Tangible aspect of the Newars' heritage such as the temples and vernacular style houses is inseparably interweaved with the intangible aspects of culture, values and the activities that take place in the public realm in everyday lives. Contemporary urban trends however have somewhat weakened the place identity further diminishing place attachment held by the residents. The specter of modernity has affected the identity and character of Indrachowk over the years and the area has fundamentally changed in aesthetics contributing to declining authenticity. Many locals see the change as an advancement of time however for the elderly Newars of Indrachowk it's getting difficult to see it as "home". The quality of space also gets affected by the Sensory Experience which plays a crucial role in shaping the space identity and leads to satisfaction of users. Sensory experience in Indrachowk:

- **Viewscape:** Gray and hard surfaces, unappealing commercial advertisement boards, strangled and unmanaged hanging electric wires running down the street thus causing visual pollution and marring the aesthetics of

Indrachowk.

- **Soundscape:** Traffic noise pollution – honks and whistles, construction sounds, the cries of street hawkers.
- **Touchscape:** Concrete walls, grey and hard surfaces, potholes and poorly maintained pavements.
- **Smellscape:** Mild scents of incense sticks and ghee lamps (*diyo*) often overpowered by the stench of petrol and diesel, traffic fumes and the obnoxious smell of trash.
- **Tastescape:** The taste of cold, sweet *juju dhau* (King of Curd) *lassi* with nuts and soft, chewy raisins and a chunk of *khuwa* on top. This tells stories and anecdotes of long standing authentic practices that stimulate our memories of the place.

8. Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Analysis

With its inimitable mix of temples, trade and communal uses, Indrachowk serves as the social and commercial core of the city which stands out as a place that represents the traditional social structure and values. The historic centre of Indrachowk is characterized by narrow streets and alleys opening up into large squares and courtyards traditionally used as marketplaces. The historically important monuments, Newari style houses and the social life in Indrachowk have contributed in defining its identity and distinctiveness. It is the place where pageants and processions are held, the venue for social interaction and a bustling center of commerce and activity. However, the market square is too often thought of *simply as place to shop and not as a community place that brings people of diverse age, gender and races together*. As a result of the analyses, the primary reasons that brought down user satisfaction in the area were insufficient spaces for pedestrians due to haphazard street use, inappropriate traffic volume and speeds, illegal parking screening many of the culturally and architecturally significant buildings and monuments, visual pollution due to inappropriate facade arrangements that are not compatible with the historic environment of Indrachowk, unappealing advertising boards reducing the aesthetic quality of the area, unmanaged commercialization and vanishing of traditional trades contributing to decline in authenticity. insufficient physical arrangements,

irregular and unsatisfactory cleanliness and maintenance of the area, unrepaired damaged pedestrian paths, among others. The sense of familiarity with the place has also changed as the cultural aspect has been somewhat altered by the specter of modernity.

8.2 Discussion

It is quite apparent that the unique characteristics of Indrachowk are frequently overlooked and a large part of it still remains untapped. The devaluing of the historic environment is destroying its very distinctiveness. Indrachowk, with such rich cultural built heritage, should prioritize the coexistence of building regeneration with local community development and economic benefits and build on the uniqueness of place to stimulate interest in local heritage and culture. Due to changing physical and social environments in Indrachowk, achieving social cohesion is becoming a challenge. The local residents predominantly Newars are creators of Indrachowk's historic heritage. They are equipped with the knowledge, experiences and bear a strong sense of attachment and therefore can be key actors to preserve Indrachowk's identity from the growing economic claims. It is important to give priority to enhancing the historic environment. We should recognize the role of the public realm and provide some attention to the need for pedestrian priority and give shoppers a safer and more satisfying experience. Grey and hard surfaces, ugly architecture, all have a negative impact on the social fabric creating a chaotic streetscape. Thoughtful building design can play an immensely important part in creating a sense of place. Moreover, we need to encourage building owners of Indrachowk to retain and promote the "architecture of place" i.e. architecture that is responsive to the character of the place and accentuate the integrity of Indrachowk's historic atmosphere since it can greatly influence the experience of the space for instance the material and color choices can create a desired palette in Indrachowk making it visually appealing while also maintaining the authenticity of the place.

9. Recommendations

To develop these ideas the concept of Placemaking can be crucial and can help to reimagine and recreate Indrachowk as a flexible, welcoming and vibrant public place where people love to gather and connect.

Placemaking Theme: Creativity, Culture and Community

1. **Physical Improvements and Installations (Creativity)** – *Enhancing the aesthetic quality of Indrachowk*: Using street furniture, including benches, planters, artworks, landscaping, bollards, and cycle parking, can provide definition within the shared street of Indrachowk and map out the travel lane from pedestrians and cyclists thus improving their mobility. Utility boxes, light poles and fixtures can be designed to enhance visual quality and provide a sense of the local context. We can use movable planters and bollards to restrict vehicular traffic access at certain times of the day. The needs of stall holders and street vendors in the market area should be addressed meticulously. Creative and innovative programming such as murals, artistic displays and interactive installations that are low-cost but attractive can be hosted to enliven unique parts of Indrachowk. **Creative Placemaking**, integration of art, culture and history can bring a dynamic sensory experience that will impact people in interesting ways and also maximize the area's rich heritage. For instance, storytelling through colors that celebrate the culture and uniqueness of the historic market square can compel people to slowdown, appreciate and reconnect with the area. Functional does not always have to be boring. Incorporating art for functional purposes, for example in blank walls, dead surfaces, electric poles, ugly signages, etc. can provide an element of uniqueness and add character to the area.
2. **Programming and Activation (Culture)** – *Strengthening people-place bond and fostering a sense of place by capitalizing on assets and strengths of Indrachowk*: Placemaking initiatives can create a better balance between motorists and pedestrians thus providing a high quality pedestrian environment. We can even experiment with *Park(ing) Days/Parklets, Play Streets, Car-free Hours and Open Street Programs* i.e. **Tactical Placemaking**, to evaluate the potential impact on traffic operations. By temporarily shutting down vehicular traffic exclusively for pedestrians and cyclists and hosting a variety of activities and

events that focus on Indrachowk's unique features by building on the its essence and strengthen existing local businesses by highlighting products that can only be found in Indrachowk can inject vibrancy into the place.

Tactical Placemaking Strategies that Echo the Culture of Indrachowk:

- *Pote* and *Pashmina* Exhibition
- Brass-Bronze Item Exhibition, Craft and Clay Markets, Arts and Artifacts, Specialty Market on Weekends
- Cultural Shows and Folklore Sessions
- Traditional Newari Dance Carnival and Music Programming
- *Lakhe* (demon god) Mask Displays
- Local Food Festivals (Newari Culinary Specialties e.g. *Samay Baji*, *Yomari*, *Bara*, *Chatamari*, *Juju Dhau Lassi*, etc.)

3. **Place Management/Place Keeping (Community)** – *Spatial stewardship by engaging community members to sustain Placemaking efforts:* Engaging the residents of the area and the people who work there and allowing them to sustain and keep alive the stories and culture of Indrachowk can ensure responsible management, active care and maintenance of the place and its social fabric. Moreover, we can involve existing local social groups in the area like *Akash Bhairav Indrachowk Club*, *Akash Bhairav Guthi*, *Machhindra Club*, and *Janabahaa Cultural Centre* with joint efforts from Kathmandu Municipality, police and traffic police and collaborate with local artists and performers to showcase their talent and creativity to support and participate in the Placemaking initiatives.

10. Outcomes

Positive sensory experience achieved through Placemaking can enrich place identity, comfort and a sense of place. For Indrachowk:

- **Viewscape:** Scenic, unobstructed views of temples and landmarks that significantly contribute to the character and identity of Indrachowk complemented by quality building design, art works adding interest to the area, landscaping and natural features all creating an “authentic” setting.

- **Soundscape:** People walking and chatting, prayers and hymns, sounds of temple bells, etc.
- **Touhscape:** Soothing and interesting textures and well-maintained surfaces.
- **Smellscape:** The pleasant scent of butter lamps and incense sticks, fragrance of fresh flowers and vermilion, aroma from traditional cuisine.
- **Tastescape:** Newari Culinary Specialties

11. Conclusion

Indrachowk already boasts a number of public destinations that have the potential to become great. Suggested Placemaking strategies can offer multiple things to see, do and engage in one spot, will catch people's interest and also help to establish an enduring bond between people thus strengthening people's connections to the place. In a nutshell, simple placemaking strategies that capitalize on the distinctive attributes of Indrachowk and that promote walkability, unique market experience, public art innovations by paying attention to social identities and historical values, welcoming diversity, engaging city dwellers to encourage community stewardship, can enhance the quality of the market square where people come not just to shop but to socialize, linger and enjoy the overall ambience of the place. *Placemaking interventions centered on the common experiences of shopping, food, leisure, culture and conversation that make the place unique can transform Indrachowk from simply a market square to a multi-use, dynamic community destination.*

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge with much appreciation the crucial role of all the key informants and stakeholders – Vineeta Shetty and Asim Khanal from Placemaking India, Ethan Kent and Lhazin Y. Nedup from PlacemakingX, Prof. Dr. Peter Andreas Gotsch from Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology (NTNU), Prof. Dr. Christina Groba from The Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Katja Bratseth from Byantropologene, Kailash K. Shrestha from Artudio, Ashish Maan Singh from Sankata Club and Shirish Shrestha from Machhindra Club for their valuable time and cooperation.

References

- [1] Derek Thomas. *Placemaking: An urban design methodology*. Routledge, 2016.
- [2] Yi-Fu Tuan. *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. U of Minnesota Press, 1977.
- [3] Elisa Muzzini and Gabriela Aparicio. *Urban growth and spatial transition in Nepal: An initial assessment*. World Bank Publications, 2013.
- [4] MoEST ICIMOD. Unep,”. *Kathmandu Valley Environment Outlook,” Kathmandu, Nepal*, 2007.
- [5] Mina Najafi and MKBM Shariff. The concept of place and sense of place in architectural studies. *International Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, 6(3):187–193, 2011.
- [6] Jane Jacobs. *The death and life of great American cities*. Vintage, 2016.
- [7] Hans Karszenberg, Jeroen Laven, and Mattijs van’t Hoff. 80 lessons to a good city at eye level. *City at Eye Level*, pages 310–325, 2016.
- [8] Mark A Wyckoff. Definition of placemaking: four different types. *Planning & Zoning News*, 32(3):1, 2014.
- [9] Project for Public Spaces. Ten strategies for transforming cities and public spaces through placemaking. <https://www.pps.org/article/ten-strategies-for-transforming-cities-through-placemaking-public-spaces>, April 29 2014.
- [10] Project for Public Spaces. The power of 10+. <https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10>, 2009.
- [11] The Shophouse and Co Group Pte Ltd. What is placemaking? <https://www.shophouseandco.com/what-is-placemaking>, 2013 - 2020.
- [12] Ruth Fincher, Maree Parry, and Kate Shaw. Placemaking or place-masking? the everyday political economy of “making place”. *Planning Theory & Practice*, 17(4):516–536, 2016.
- [13] Dominique Hes, Iderlina Mateo-Babiano, and Gini Lee. Fundamentals of placemaking for the built environment: An introduction. *Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment*, pages 1–14, 2019.
- [14] Bijay Singh and Martina Maria Keitsch. Cultural sustainability and the negotiation of public space—the case of Indrachowk square, Kathmandu, Nepal. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 7(3):129–139, 2014.