

Sustainable Urban Development and Street Vending with Particular Reference to Selected Streets in the Bangalore Metropolitan Area

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Abstract—Streets in the Indian context are multi-functional spaces. Their role as public space can be understood from different perspectives, like streets for connectivity and access to built and un built spaces and also as a public realm which contributes to the imageability of an urban area. According to National Policy of Urban Street vendors, 2004 by Govt. of India “A street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built up structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head load)”. A sustainable urban development involves balancing of the built physical environment and social equity. One of the ways of achieving this is by providing an opportunity for informal sector economic activities on streets. Street vending adds colour and liveliness and promotes social interaction between different social, economic and cultural groups. It also enhances the safety of the street. This paper will explore variety of informal sector commercial activities on selected streets of Bengaluru Metropolitan Area. The aim of the paper is to substantiate the need for informal sector commercial activity in selected streets for a socially equitable urban development.

Keywords: Street vending, Public realm, Social interaction, Economic sustainability, Imageability

1. Introduction

These Bengaluru the capital city of Karnataka in India was founded by Kempegowda I in 1537 A.D. is the fastest growing metropolitan city known for its salubrious climate. The city evolved from being a traditional core, the cantonment area and further extending its urban boundaries due to the impact of IT and BT. The change in urban form with respect to streets and public realm of Bengaluru is due to impact of urbanization.

Streets in Indian context are the multi-functional spaces, with diverse characteristics adding vibrancy to the area. However, with the dominance of motorized traffic the streets are losing their functionality as inclusive public spaces, and seem to have stopped catering to the social interactions ranging from cultural parades, civic protests and informal sector economic activities.

Street vending forms an integral part of urban setting of the streets, adding socio-economic and cultural benefits and providing a means of livelihood to the poorer sections of society. Street vending adds imageability to public spaces which act as banners illustrating the different cultural components of the city like language spoken, what people like to eat, buy, etc. They form the first impression of the space which forms the honest view of the people who socialize, what is popular and what makes a place unique. To highlight this, the case of the Gandhi Bazar Street, Avenue road and 100feet road Indiranagar have been documented to substantiate the role of street vending for a sustainable urban development (see Fig. 1).

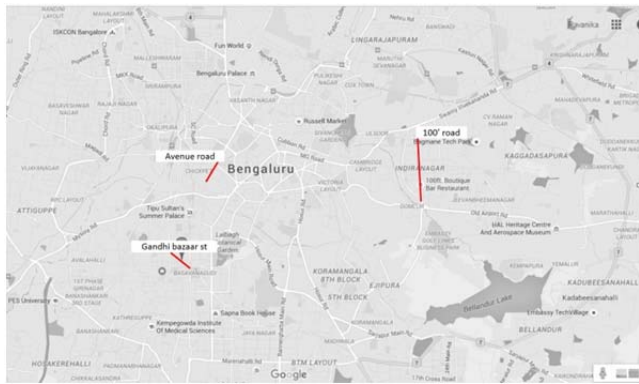


Fig. 1: Selected Streets of Bengaluru Metropolitan Area
(Source: Google Maps, Edited by Author)

2. Sustainability

The term sustainable development was brought into common usage by World Commission on Environment and Development (The Bruntland Commission) in 1987. The balancing of three major factors i.e., the physical environment, economy and social equity leads to the development of streets and public realm spaces in a sustainable manner. The physical environment involves the efficient uses of spaces with respect to time and social equity facilitating the social interaction between different social, economic and cultural groups to promote the economic objective of livelihood through street vending (see Fig. 2).

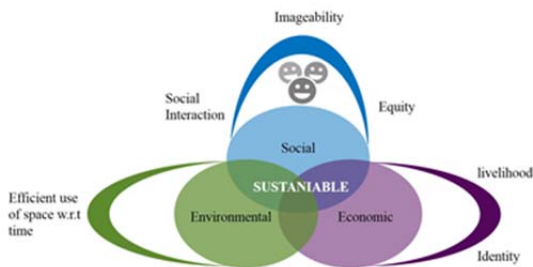


Fig. 2: Concept of Sustainability and Street Vending
(Source: Edited by Author)

1. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT SUSTAINABILITY

According to National Policy of Urban Street vendors, 2004 by Govt. of India “A street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built up structure but with a temporary static structure or mobile stall (or head load)”. Street vendors may be stationary vander, mobile street vendor and peripatetic vendor. The paper shall be focusing on the stationary and mobile street vendor of Gandhi Bazar Street and Avenue Road.

Gandhi Bazar Street is a part of Basavanagudi planned development which has a vibrant informal activity on either

side of street along with the formal business activities in the buildings that define the street. The Gandhi Bazar Street consists of flowers, fruits, vegetables and other vendors selling agriculture produce, due to which the street attracts tremendous amount of activities and pedestrian inflow throughout the day (see Fig. 3). The right of way [ROW] across the street is 24M of which sidewalk measures about 3.5M on either side (see Fig. 4). The space along the sidewalk stretch is made active by street vendors. The basic needs daily shopping needs of the residents in the area are met by the street vendors who are located in the walking radius.



Fig. 3: Street Vending at Gandhi Bazaar selling local agricultural produce like vegetables, flowers, etc. (Source: Author)



Fig. 4: Typical Traditional Street of Gandhi Bazaar
(Source: Author)

Avenue road which forms an integral part of Pete area of Bengaluru, is characterized by formal and informal commercial activities. The traditional narrow street consists of wholesale stationary and book market attracting larger number of pedestrians when compared to vehicles (see Fig. 6).



Fig. 5: Loss of Multifunctionality Across 100' road
(Source: Author)

The extended store fronts and street vendors occupy the narrow sidewalks and make the pedestrian to share motorized space for walking, which reduces the vehicular speed and makes the area safer for pedestrians. The ROW across the street is of 9M of which sidewalks varies over the stretch (see Fig. 7). The street vending not only suffice the needs at neighborhood level but also at city level.



Fig. 6: Street Vending at Avenue Road, Image A showing selling local agricultural produce and image B selling of books.

(Source: Author)

100feet road Indiranagar, which is one of the newer developments known for its retail commercial activity. The street is planned for high speed motorized traffic, with minimum scope for street vending due to the mix of local and non-local high income people in the neighborhood.

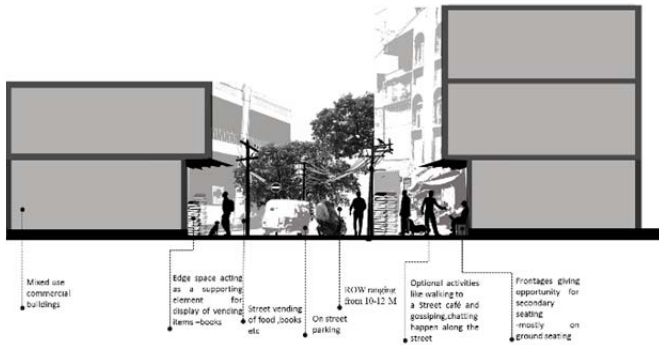


Fig. 7: Typical Traditional Street of Avenue Road

(Source: Author)

The spatial arrangements of the street have been enhanced by various activities on the street along the side walk spaces with stalls, carts and other user activities. The structure of the street spaces by the vendors not only alter the physical but also the social and functional landscape of the street. The traditional streets (includes Gandhi Bazar street and Avenue Road) spaces along with street vending activities add-on vibrancy and increases the various activities for the various kinds of people and also help to socialize with other communities as well. Whereas the contemporary street (100 feet road) lacks this feature (see Fig. 5).

2. SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

“Social equality is a state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects, often including civil rights, freedom of

speech, property rights, and equal access to social goods and services”(Source: Wikipedia). It is through social equity various social organizational features likes’ networks, norms and trust are coordinated and facilitated for mutual benefits. In today’s scenario goods are manufactured at distinct spaces in which the goods and the consumers have no association with the workers and the place of manufacture. Under such scenario street vending drastically narrows the relationship between consumer and workers allowing the buyers to feel the goods, which brings about a better social interaction unlike the formal sectors where goods and services are streamlined in a robotic manner. The informal sector enhances the social interaction bargaining with prices and involves direct communication between seller and buyer. Traditional streets like Gandhi Bazar and Avenue road hold well for above statement. This concept brings flexible economy and the pricing can allow equity of sustainability for various socio economical classes which reduces the differentiating class boundaries.

3. ECONOMICAL SUSTAINABILITY

Economic sustainability refer to creation of local or regional self-reliant and community economics. The concept of street vending varies in terms of scale, location, time, and other specific factors which in turn vary with respect to the people and the types of goods sold. Each region comprises of definite or indefinite number of street vendors who use street trading as a secondary, seasonal, temporary or part time occupation. Street vendors constitute about 2% - 2.5% of the population of the major Indian cities in which Bengaluru comprises of 30000 of the total population of the city. Street vending forms as an employment to 3% of total non-agricultural sector. According to official statistics, this translates to more than 3.1 million street traders countrywide. In spite of street vending being a low-earning activity, nearly 10 million (Unofficial estimates) individuals engage in it in India, contributing to 63% GDP of the country making street vendors an important component of the informal economy.

4. CONCLUSION

Wherever Street vending contribute an important aspect of street life, they add-on vibrancy, color, liveliness, the essential safety as people walk and spend time outdoors. Studies by official sources states about 10 million street vendors in which informal economy can no longer be a temporary phenomenon which has a significant role in providing employment and income generation. Stimulating sustainable economic growth, social equity and economical sustainability and accessibility brings about a sustainable urban development for street vendors. “If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be— community-building places, attractive for all people—then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and will have had an immense impact on the rest” (Alan Jacobs).

This could be achieved by the tentative model street design (see Fig. 8).

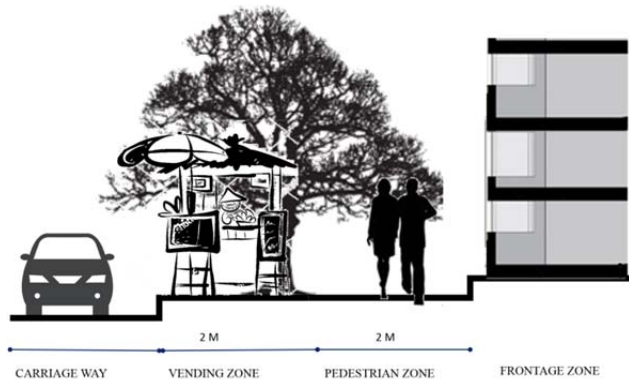


Fig. 8 - Recommended Model Street Design (Source: Author)

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5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We take this opportunity to thank our college, BMS College of Engineering and our department, Department of Architecture for this opportunity to work on the paper. And also, we are forever grateful to the Almighty for his blessings and Dr. Vaseem Anjum Sheriff for her guidance and support in writing the paper.

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