Conviviality as a Spatial Planning Goal for Public Open Spaces

Leena Thombre, Charumitra Kapshe

Abstract: Conviviality is a popular concept in urban design while referring to the good qualities of public spaces. This concept is the need for current times when social life in physical public spaces is declining away largely to forces like social media and the virtual world. The human tendency to feel satisfied and happy exists in existence with others. The social media has taken away the role that established Greek agora as the first centre of public interaction which initiated the concepts of modern democracy. Where popular public spaces have big roles to perform, the small public spaces in the neighbourhood and markets perform an important role to stage the everyday local nuisance in people's life. Even If public space is satisfactory enough to take away the loneliness and boredom of everyday course of modern living a lot can be achieved. Conviviality is one such factor which helps to elevate the satisfaction of spending time with others. This paper is an attempt to understand conviviality and relate it to public open spaces from the physical planning point of view.

Keywords: Planning, conviviality, public open spaces.

I. INTRODUCTION

The following paper deals with the concept of conviviality and its relationship with public open spaces. Conviviality is a quality which encourages human interaction and liveliness. In this fast-growing technological world, situations of human interaction for real are getting less. Public spaces in physical planning are those spaces which bring people together. There have been several dimensions to discuss conviviality such as philosophical, social, cultural aspects. In literature related to public spaces, conviviality is talked about at several places. In many countries especially developed countries, lot of efforts and measures are happening to bring people in public spaces and built lively communities. This paper is theoretical research on ideas of several renowned authors who have addressed similar concerns about convivial public open spaces. A framework is presented based on dimensions of conviviality in public open spaces.

II. UNDERSTANDING CONVIVIALITY

Convivialism from the Latin word "convivere" means living together, it has been associated with sociable, friendly and festive traits [26]. For some philosophers' conviviality meant when different people got closer over a good long meal and time flew over inspiring conversations [2]. The term has now become a key concern in many social-cultural theories [21]. As seen through the literature of cultural studies, philosophy to urban geography, sociology and anthropology the term "conviviality" from being friendly and lively quality is evolved to be considered as deeper concern about human modes of interaction [26].

Conviviality as a matter of philosophy came into prominence with Ivan Illich's work as 'Tools for conviviality' in 1973. Illich (1973) has suggested in any society as conviviality is reduced below a certain level, no amount of industrialization can satisfy the needs it creates among society members. A very appropriate example he gave is that of cars, production of cars has dominated the process of planning to that level where human interaction possibility has reduced to negligible level in public spaces [16]. Vertovec (2014) commented on Illich's work, for him social tools such as social institutions could be developed in a way to help people live compatibly in a complex society. He saw rationality as a source of frustration and emotional instability for people [16],[26].

Conviviality as a concept is widely popular among philosophers and intellectuals across the world. In convivialist manifesto – A declaration for interdependence, group of French philosophers has condemned the formation of society on capitalist and consumerism mode [8]. Conviviality turns out to be the very essential social and cultural requirement to provide every individual with a space in the public realm where participation is appreciated. Heil (2015) says, conviviality conceptually transcends the English sense of having a good time in the company of others. The convivial approach focuses on culture and its positive development rather than economistic development [15]. It tends to focus on everyday life of people where free time, free space, convivial technology, convivial organization act as social capital which comes from cultural networks rather than existential resources such as income [24]. Conviviality is not something which can solve serious problems, but it is a way to rise above them by celebration, it can happen when resources are scarce, and its utility rises above economic and political benefits [22].

The term 'conviviality' manages to evoke a connection between a mood and atmosphere that requires the presence of others.

Conviviality requires an attitude that can be amiable, cheerful, graceful or gracious. People want conviviality because it gives them and others a taste of happiness which they could not conjure up on their own [1].

III. CONVIVIALITY IN PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

Urban public open spaces such as parks, plazas, waterfronts and natural areas of our cities host people from different walks of life who can come together in a context of mutual enjoyment. Public open spaces provide an opportunity for every individual to become part of the whole. In a well-designed and well managed public space, the regression of daily life can be kept aside for a while. Being with people different from oneself responding to the same setting similarly creates a temporary bond [7]. Such bonding resonates into increase in a feeling of having good times with strangers.

Every public space has its rhythm of use and regulation, frequently changing daily. The activities performed during lunchtime in a public plaza might make it more welcoming in the daytime as compared to activities performed during night in the same plaza [3]. The public celebrations could happen in a year like the fireworks at new-year midnight in Times Square plaza, New York which brings millions of spectators for momentary togetherness in an everyday public open space. On the behaviour of the public in public spaces, Goffman (1963) says-"Illustration of the open regions provided by convivial occasions such as carnivals, during these costumed street celebration brings a person in contact, a contact felicitated by being out of role" [13]. In the case of India, cultural occasions such as Ganesh Chaturthi and Navratri festivities are celebrated on streets or public areas; this allows creating momentarily bonding between strangers and non-strangers.

Conviviality emerges as a frequently used term when planning for multicultural societies are discussed. Over the thought of addressing differences in public spaces, Ash Amin (2008) says – "Conviviality as everyday virtue of living with a difference based on the direct experience of multicultural. It is a word that has begun to circulate in thinking on social inclusion and cultural recognition of differences in Public open spaces" [3]. Fincher (2003) consider planning to develop community may be seen as an attempt to help long term relationships or connection to a particular space, conviviality is something more fleeting and is about the many small connections we make with others that makes us feel happier or part of population. He says, one of the important tasks in planning for diversity and difference is facilitating interactions and encounters among people, it does not suppose to be interaction to develop community but rather it can be interaction of a casual, superficial and friendly kind. Furthermore, spaces can be planned to make such encounters more likely, more pleasant and unaccompanied by anxiety [10].

One of the examples of spaces where interactions are expected to be convivial is that of cafes or restaurants. When we buy a cup of coffee, it provides paid privacy yet being in the company of others, contrasting to spaces like trains and buses where we do not expect to enjoy the company of others probably because they lack potential for self-expression and interest. Sociable eating can be a good cause to generate conviviality, eating alongside others in public spaces is an activity in which good times are spent [22]. When eating happens on streets or semi-private eateries, they attract more people to take a pause when moving through open public spaces. As we discuss the moment of self-expression and interest, the presence of street performers is another opportunity where people take a pause in public open space and enjoy mutual admiration for performing artist [23]. The activity could be a mere expression of creativity which might generate revenue, but the presence of such performers increases conviviality factor in the open space.

IV. MEASURES OF CONVIVIALITY IN PUBLIC OPEN SPACES

As Peattie (1999) notes, there is complex economics of conviviality which always requires resources to provide and participate in, there needs to be spaces, seats, food and drink, sound system etc and at the same time people willing to pay for it [22]. Researchers have also questioned- will the public spaces left will be commercial ones? collectively, the shopping malls, arcades, corporate plazas and galleries and many such contrived and themed settings create a pseudo-public space from which risk and uncertainties of life are ca [4]. As conviviality has several expressions which can be achieved through politics of spaces where political, economic or personal motives may dominate, we have considered those public spaces in our study which are truly public and democratic in sense. They represent the bare face of securities and insecurities involved in society and yet they host the local nuisance and possibilities of interactions. Public space does not mean pseudo-public spaces which are privately owned and highly regulated to prohibit. It is instead taken to indicate a civic space in which people of different origins and walks of life can co-mingle overt control by government, commercial or other private interest. Such civic spaces are the key to convivial city life [9].

Henry Shoftoe (2012) in his book 'Convivial Urban Spaces: Creating effective Public spaces' asks- what kind of public spaces people prefer to be in? The book aims to tease out what gives some places personality as conviviality. Without convivial public spaces the cities, towns and villages would be mere accretion of buildings with no deliberate opportunity for casual encounters and positive interactions between friends and strangers. As suggested by Peattie (1999), conviviality should be taken as planning goal while designing cities and towns, further adding to it, Tridib Banerjee (2001) expected research over conviviality scale for public open spaces in different land uses which has triggered the idea of our study to create a framework for evaluating conviviality in public open spaces [4],[22].

Conviviality can be discussed as occasion, atmosphere, cultural aspect, attitude or quality of life [1],[13],[21],[23],[26].The term conviviality fitting for my research purpose is a quality of urban public open space which felicitates mingling of people in their everyday course of life.

V. CONVIVIALITY AS SENSE OF PLACE CONCEPT

Earlier conviviality was explored as a philosophical concept explain the idea of culture, behaviour, migrant population etc. Since the last two decades, this concept is being discussed by urban design and planning subjects. This concept evolves mainly under the sense of place discussion. People usually participate in social activities according to their sense of place [5]. Physical parameters, also, to respond to the existing functions in place, by creating meaning cause the formation of the sense of place.

Sense of place is a subjective perception of people about their environment, depending upon their experiences, their motivation, their intellectual background and physical characteristics. It is both psychological and physical concept [14]. Similarly, conviviality as the spatial quality is a term which evokes the sense of togetherness at a place and its existence will depend on psychological and physical aspects. As Jorgenson (2001) has discussed people's feeling about a place is a sign of emotional dimension, their beliefs about a place, shape the cognitive dimension (see Figure 1). Their function in a place is a symbol of the behavioural dimension creates a sense of place, the concept can be used in building a framework for a sense of conviviality at a place [18].
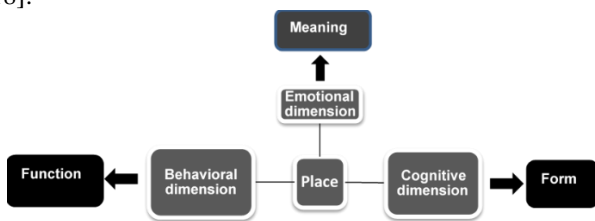

Fig. 1.Dimensions of creating places by Jorgenson and Stedman, 2001.

VI. PUBLIC BEHAVIOR AT CONVIVIAL PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

William Whyte (1980) in his groundbreaking study-'Social life of small urban spaces' have studied several plazas in New York and discussed on every aspect of the emergence of social life in them. In his study, he found that best-used plazas are sociable places, where more people in groups are interacting or meeting people or exchanging goodbyes [27]. A high number of people in groups in a plaza are better congenial to attract more individuals. People roaming as single do prefer places where they find people in groups. If anybody is alone, a lively place can be the best place to be. The most used places also tend to have more women. As Illich (1973) has hinted conviviality to be individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and the intercourse of persons with their environment, therefore in a convivial experience people are more likely to enjoy company of those who are around in their physical environment [16].

Public open spaces host social life of citizens when it exists in complete democratic mode, by this, it means when people follow a daily course of life irrespective of their chosen social life depending upon their caste, class or religion which happens in either restricted or private spaces.

They are either moving, passing by or staying at a public open space during their daily movements from one place to another, this happens when they are going for work, returning to home, going out for shopping, meeting friends, visiting temple or mosque etc. Some activities are part of daily routine while some are occasional. The rhythm of happenings vary from time to time in any public open space and also vary from region to region, as in the cold region the intensity of visitors will be high during day time whereas in hot regions people will access outdoor spaces after evening [27]. If we speak about Indian cities, they face major warmth across the year, so evening hours appear more suitable for outdoor activities for a large part of the year. In contrast to that colder regions face vice versa.

Jan Gehl (1987) has made the classification of outdoor activities in his book 'Life between buildings' where he has discussed the behaviour of people at open spaces between buildings. He has mainly classified between –necessary, optional and social activities. Considering necessary activities as of those which required degree of individual participation and will be carried out irrespective of the good or bad outdoor environment such as daily grocery shopping, going to school or work, in general, the everyday task will belong to this group. Optional activities which depend maximum on outdoor environment conditions and completely depends upon wish to perform such as taking a walk, sunbathing, sitting and standing around enjoying life. Lastly, social activities are most convivial and depend upon the occurrence of necessary and optional activities. Social activities need the presence of others and moderately depend on outdoor environment conditions. Social activities include children at play, greetings and conversations, communal activities of various kind and most considerable social activity of all hearing and seeing others [11].

Food and drink outlets can attract people to public space. These can range from cafes and bars with outside tables to portable refreshment kiosks where people can get takeaways to be consumed in adjacent sitting areas. Theprimary form of passive engagement is people-watching; William Whyte (1980) found that what attract people are other people, and the life and activity they bring [27]. The most-used sitting places are generally adjacent to the pedestrian flow. Street cafes, for example, provide opportunities, and excuses, for people-watching and other forms of passive engagement, as do fountains, public art, beauty, commanding views and other activities occurring in public spaces [6]. There can be resultant unplanned activities which can occur on the way for necessary activities such as chance meetings, asking update about well-being to known faces or taking a pause to observe the activities in the vicinity such as cultural ones or street performances. Some public spaces do perform the role of organizing group meetings, friends' meetings or community meetings etc.

At the city scale, town centres are more likely to felicitate all the above activities. Also, such activities are based on necessary and optional activities as mentioned by Jan Gehl [11]. Therefore, the physical setting required for such experience is preferred to be mixed land use.

City centres and town centres provide such kind of feasible conviviality. Town centres- the more well-used and varied they are, the more they are likely to have the quality of people friendliness. These centres are more than just collections of shops. They provide for culture, entertainment, leisure, recreation, civic life and the exchange of community views, ideas and opinions. Uses and activities are more important than buildings to the life of a town or city. Greater diversity helps to create a more livable city. The aim should be to produce environments which are of a mixed-use nature and are of a deliberately rich and varied character [25]. The convivial activities can be measured and mapped to evaluate how convivial any

public open space functions. In simple terms following activities can be considered -eating and drinking, people watching, meeting others, on the way to some necessary activity, participating in culture activity, engaging in casual play, appreciating beauty and looking at art. All these activities express positive coexistence between strangers and no strangers at a public open space.

VII. PERCEPTION OF CONVIVIALITY AT A PLACE

Psychological studies of perception and cognition look at how we organize, identify and interpret information through our senses. Specific places and moments generate feelings and experiences; previous experiences shade understandings and lead people to recognize the particular subject or respond in specific ways. Perception refers to an interpretation of what we take in through our senses. The way we perceive our environment is what makes us different from other animals and different from each other. Different types of spaces trigger a series of psychological activities of people, such as feeling, cognition, memory, association and thinking. Awareness and appreciation of environmental perception and, the perception and experience of place is an essential dimension of urban design. While sensations may be similar for everyone, individuals filter, react to, organize and value those sensations differently [6].

Perception sometimes confusingly referred to as 'cognition' concerns more than just seeing or sensing the urban environment, it refers to the more complex processing or understanding of stimuli. Ittelson(1960) identifies four types or dimensions of perception, each operating simultaneously: Cognitive, affective, Interpretative and evaluative. Given below is understanding of convivial perception in the cognitive, affective and interpretative form [17].

A.Cognitive Perception

Cognition is a term referring to the mental processes involved in gaining knowledge and comprehension. These are higher-level functions of the brain and encompass language, imagination, perception, and planning. The very basic psychological assessment that every individual does at a public space is that of atmosphere for wellbeing. By the word wellbeing, it is referred to perception of an accessible, comfortable and safe environment. The feeling of safety can be achieved through design and the management of the space and is also perceived by observing the behaviour of others. Comfort is a feeling which is achieved through several means such as physical form, aesthetics, climate,

pollution, crime and at same time capacity to sit, stand or lean etc [11],[23],[27].

B. Affective Perception

Affective perception involves our feelings, which in turn influence our perception of the environment; equally, our perception of the environment influences our feelings. Convivial environment evokes positive feelings such as delight, joy and friendliness [23]. A convivial public space appears attractive, relaxing and active. Aesthetics play an important role in attracting people. The eateries or street vendors stall, cultural activities and art on display attract strangers at a public space. People feel joyful in the company of others while participating in similar activities. All these activities at a public space make the space active where many passive activities like people watching give the feeling of relaxation and joy. Grandeur or scale of space, good climatic condition brings delight to anybody [12].

C. Interpretative perception

Interpretative perception encompasses the meaning or associations derived from the environment. In actively processing information, we rely on the memory of past stimulation for comparison with newly experienced stimuli. One of the most fundamental human traits (presumably from our tribal hunter-gatherer origins) is the need to mark and claim territory. This is potentially problematic in public open space because, in theory, it belongs to everyone and no one. One of the psychological attractions of a good public space is the promise that it will satisfy our innate curiosity [23]. Sense of place concepts about places often emphasized the importance of a sense of 'belonging' and emotional attachment. This belongingness is either conscious or unconscious sense of place. Emotional attachment is more inherited in the unconscious mind of people.

VIII. PHYSICAL FORM OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE TO FELICITATE CONVIVIALITY

The physical form can affect activities and perception or vice versa in building a sense of conviviality at a public open space. Why is something successful and especially, how can it be generated? Many principles of urban design have stood the test of time and can be applied to making our towns and cities better places in a sensible and economically viable manner. Some traditional towns and buildings have proved pleasing and successful, Tibbalds (1992) argues that these qualities should be built into new developments which are clearly of their age yet at the same time 'people-friendly' [25]. On the one hand, Lefebvre (1991) theory on the social production of space remind us that we should not wish to regenerate, because essentially what makes a city is created by its people and it is a mistake to believe this creation can be planned, but on the other hand, some guidelines are needed to prevent the domination by powerful and private interest of influential people [19].

As we have discussed the formation of the sense of conviviality is combination of activities, perception and physical form,

some of the authors have specifically discussed the social life and meeting of people as social capital which can be generated with knowledge of urban design. The major contribution in this field is done by William H. Whyte(1980), Francis Tibbalds (1992), Jan Gehl (1987) and Henry Shaftoe (2012). The important issues of pedestrian freedom, how to make places easy-to-use and accessible have come out as a major requirement to make people-friendly public spaces. Jan Gehl (1987) offers the tools needed to improve designs of public space. According to him to increase walking and cycling in a city, it is must to increase the quantity and quality of well- designed public spaces that are human in scale, sustainable, healthy, safe and lively.

The street, the square and the footpath provide structure to the cities that bring them to life and to encourage and accommodate diverse activities from the quiet and contemplative to busy and noisy.

Table 1.A framework for convivial public open spaces

a. Convivial activities		b. Convivial perception		c. Convivial physical /built form attributes	
a1.	Eating and Drinking	**Cognitive**		c1.	Human Scale
a2.	People Watching	b1.	Accessible	c2.	Accessibility
a3.	Meeting others	b2.	Safe	c3.	Aesthetics
a4.	On the way to necessary activity	b3.	Comfort	c4.	Climate responsive
a5.	Participating in culture activity	**Affective/ Emotional/ Feelings perception**		c5.	Mixed land use
a6.	Engaging in casual play	b4.	Attractive		
		b5.	Relaxing		
		b6.	Joyful		
		b7.	Active		
		b8.	Friendly		
		b9.	Delightful		
		Interpretative perception			
		b10.	Territoriality/ownership		
		b11.	Meaning/symbolism/spiritual/identity		
		b12.	Association		
		b13.	Curiosity/discovery		

A human city with carefully designed streets, squares and plazas create pleasure for visitors and passerby as well as for those who live work and play there every day. The qualities of the built environment are discussed in the book 'Cities for people' where he has talked about what should exist at eye level to encourage walking, sitting, standing in public spaces and built possible interaction with friends, acquaintances and strangers. Tibbalds (1992) suggests that the sought-after quality of 'people-friendliness' can only be achieved through the correct mix of uses and activities. He highlights the need to build developments that will last and adapt, with people controlling the scale and pace of change [25]. Henry Shaftoe (2012) has discussed the principles, the psychology of space, aesthetics, shape, size, types of public space and other influences such as the use of the car, climate etc. makes a public space convivial [23]. He adds the creation of convivial spaces are either evolved or can be designed with proper knowledge. The sense of comfort and feeling of joy are basic ingredients with proper management to create convivial public spaces. William Whyte (1980) from his extensive study of New York plazas in the 1970s have explained that far more intriguing than the static characteristics of the architectural landscape, however, are the dynamic human interactions that inhabit them. Whyte's team went on to investigate everything from the ideal percentage of sitting space on a plaza to the intricate interplay of sun, wind, trees, and water. These factors and many more go into what makes a perfect plaza [27].

The above-mentioned authors have discussed the factors of encouraging social life in public spaces as a central discussion of their research, keeping spatial planning as an ultimate tool to achieve it. Where several urban design pioneers have given principle and guidelines for successful public spaces such as Kevin Lynch (1960) theory of imageability or Carmona (2010) six dimensions of successful public spaces, these urban designers kept their focus purely on increasing positive human interaction or conviviality in public spaces[6],[20]. From their work, we can derive some physical form essentials required in a public space for conviviality. The characters which remained in discussion for making public spaces more lively and friendly are mainly the human scale, mixed land use, climate responsiveness, accessibility and aesthetics.

IX. RESULTS

In order to deve*l*op a framework where attributes of conviviality in physical form can be achieved, we have discussed the sense of place theory concept to understand all the tangible and nontangible dimensions of its existence. We studied several authors who have highlighted this concept in their work and provided significant examples to understand their importance. Studying different authors have provided possible activities, perception and built form qualities of a convivial space. We gathered the details of human behavior and human perception when they are supposed to experience conviviality in public open spaces and tried to relate it with built environment qualities where human intervention is possible. In Table 1. given are the dimensions of conviviality in form of activities, perceptual dimension and physical/built form attributes.

X.CONCLUSION

From the study, we gathered an understanding of conviviality and its relation to public open spaces. This

paper explored the everyday dimension of conviviality related to space. The paper has discussed ideas of several authors related to public open spaces, their characteristics and reasons of success. We have addressed the concept of conviviality through a sense of space and perception of it. The cognitive, affective and interpretative perception understand can lead towards bringing more objectivity to the topic. With the help of this study, lies the scope of evaluating conviviality at a public open space. The observation of human activities and measure of human perception towards conviviality at a public open space can help to determine the performance of the built environment.The study has resulted in development of a framework (see Table 1.) which would help architects and planners to address conviviality while planning open spaces. In the urban design field, the physical form attributes for conviviality are discussed but not evaluated so far, this study is an attempt to achieve an evaluation of conviviality at a place as a goal.

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