



# MP Nagar Zone 1

 Bhopal





Fig.1 People we met during our fieldwork

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# MP Nagar zone I

## Bhopal

Urban ecological planning

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# PREFACE

This report is the outcome of a one-semester fieldwork in Bhopal, India, conducted by students at the Faculty of Architecture and Design at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in collaboration with the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA) Bhopal and SPA Delhi. The fieldwork was part of a research project “Smart Sustainable City Regions in India” (SSCRI) financed by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU). The one-semester fieldwork is an integral part of the 2-year International Master of Science Program in Urban Ecological Planning (UEP) at NTNU. Previous fieldtrips have been undertaken in Nepal, Uganda and India.

As is tradition, the diverse backgrounds and nationalities of students participating in the UEP fieldwork ensures a multi-perspective view. This year’s 21 fieldwork participants are architects, social workers, engineers, landscape architects and planners, coming from Albania, Bangladesh, Canada, China, France, Germany, Honduras, India, Lithuania, Morocco, Mexico, Norway, Tunisia and the USA

This first semester fieldwork gives students a real life practice of the so-called ‘UEP approach’, which focuses on an integrated area-based situation analysis followed by strategic proposals. Through daily interactions with local communities and relevant stakeholders, students became acquainted with the community and discovered the complex realities of these areas, with their specific assets and challenges. By using a design thinking and participatory methods, this exercise gives the community a voice by making them active participants.

The main topic studied was informality in all its forms, and particular attention has been given to public space, gender, heritage, land and urban transformation. Students were also asked to put their areas and proposals in the perspective of the Smart Cities Mission, which is the largest urban development fund and initiative currently implemented by the Government of India.

The semester started with two intensive weeks of preparation with a number of lectures at the home campus of NTNU in Trondheim. The first weeks of our stay in Bhopal, the students became familiar with the city while staying at the SPA Bhopal campus, through a number

of lectures and presentations from students and staff from SPA Bhopal and a heritage walk through the old city. By the end of these first weeks, students were divided in six groups and assigned an area.

Through a joint workshop with SPA Bhopal, SPA Delhi and Krvia Mumbai on participatory methods familiarized themselves with their communities and participatory methods, which helped them to build trust with the residents. They continued using these methods and design thinking methods to conduct a situational analysis involving different stakeholders. A joint workshop with the design students from SPA Bhopal on co-design followed by a number of community workshops integrated the design thinking approach that helped to co-design a series of proposals.

Students prepared four situational reports with proposals. This reports sums up the work done by group 2 in MP Nagar.

Hanne Vrebos, Rolee Aranya, Brita Fladvad Nielsen and Peter Andreas Gotsch, fieldwork supervisors, NTNU, Department of Architecture and Planning





Fig.2 Streetscape in MP Nagar zone I

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- BMA- Bhopal Municipal Authority
- BMC- Bhopal Municipal Corporation
- GoMP - Government of Madhya Pradesh
- MP- Madhya Pradesh
- MP Nagar- Maharana Pratap Nagar
- UEP- Urban Ecological Planning
- SPA- School of Planning and Architecture





Fig.3 Rooftops in MP Nagar zone I

# INTRODUCTION

## MADHYA PRADESH AND BHOPAL

In the center of India lies the state of Madhya Pradesh (MP). It is the second largest state in India, occupying approximately 9.38% of the country's area (mp.gov.in, nd). MP has a rich and colorful history dating back to prehistoric times. Remnants of MP's prehistoric legacy can be seen at UNESCO world heritage sites such as the archeological rock shelters of Bhimbetka. Its past is usually divided into three time periods, which reflect its extensive history of rulers, warriors, and dynasties that have shaped MP (Madhya Pradesh Tourism, 2015). Among these rulers were famous figures such as the Mauryan emperor Ashoka the Great. Though often

left out of the historical detailing of MP's history, women too were noteworthy rulers in MP. This includes women such as Maharani Ahilya Bai Holkar of Indore, the Gond<sup>1</sup> queen Rani Kamla Devi, and Rani Durgawati (Madhya Pradesh Tourism, 2015).

Bhopal has been the capital of MP since 1956 although the city was established in 1709 by Dost Mohammad Khan (Madhya Pradesh Tourism, 2015). What sets it apart from many other capital cities in India is its history of muslim women leaders. The Begums of Bhopal have had a great deal of influence on the collective memory of the city. For four generations spanning from 1819 to 1926, the begums ruled successfully over Bhopal. Their reign is remarkable as a "dynasty of women formally recognized by high muslim authorities" and these women are considered by many to be some of the most outstanding Indian leaders of the 19th century (Sultaan, 1980).

In 1819 following her husband's assassination, Qudsia Begum boldly declared that her daughter Sikander Jahan Begum would take power when she came of age. In the meantime, she held



Fig.6 Begums of Bhopal

the position of regent, making her the first of the dynastic Begum rulers of Bhopal. Historical accounts detail her generosity, wisdom, and competency to rule over the city. Time and time again the position of these Begums was challenged by both Indian and British opposition in favor of a male ruler. When the position was handed over to a male ruler, as in the case of the power transition between Sikander Jahan Begum and her cousin and husband Jahangeer, it was incontrovertible the Begum's male counterparts were incapable of ruling as successfully (Sultaan, 1980). The end of the Begum rule over Bhopal ended in 1926 when the

<sup>1</sup>Gond refers to someone who belongs to the Gondwana kingdom which ruled from the 15th to 18th century in several places in India including MP

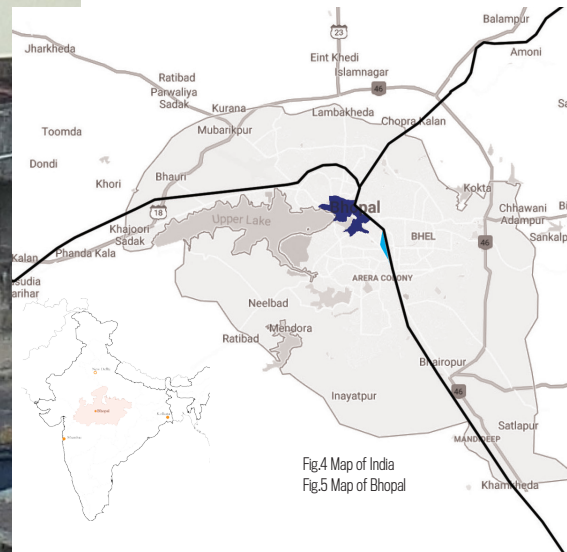


Fig.4 Map of India  
Fig.5 Map of Bhopal



succession of power was handed over Hamidullah Khan, son of Sultan Kaikhusrau Jahan Begum. Khan was fortunate enough to be bequeathed with an “affluent, progressive and well-organized state” carefully crafted by his mother (Sultaan, 19080). She is considered by many to be the most famous ruler of Bhopal. The achievements of these impressive women in Bhopal’s history should not be understated.

### CONTEMPORARY BHOPAL

Today, centuries after the glory of the Begum rulers, one cannot talk about Bhopal without also mentioning the Union Carbide incident. Bhopal is world renowned for experiencing what has been deemed one of the worst industrial chemical disasters ever witnessed. On the night of December 2–3 in 1984, methyl isocyanate gas leaked from a pesticide plant in the north of the city, leaving thousands dead. Though this event received international attention, it is rarely openly discussed as it remains a sensitive topic. Despite

this significant and tragic event, the city has progressed far beyond the infamous gas tragedy of 1984.

Like many cities in India, Bhopal has witnessed significant transformation due to increasing urbanization and globalization. With 463 square kilometers of planned area, Bhopal stands as one of the top largest cities in India (BMC, 2018). The city’s transition has been further augmented by participating in nationwide initiatives such as the Smart Cities Mission driven by the Indian Ministry of Housing and Public Affairs. Cities chosen for the Smart Cities Mission have the liberty of defining what it means and takes to be a “Smart City”, however the purpose of the mission is to drive economic growth in the hopes of improving the quality of life for its citizens by taking advantage of coupling technology with local area development (SmartCities. Gov.In, nd). Although in Bhopal various sectors of the city have been specifically focused upon for the Smart Cities scheme and not others, the mission is ultimately

a city wide-initiative and its successes are hoped to flow into the rest of the city.

### MP NAGAR ZONE I

As one of the largest planned commercial areas in the city of Bhopal, Maharana Pratap Nagar (MP Nagar) zone I is of particular importance to the city at large. Other commercial areas of the city are places like the New Market, which is another major economic hub of the city, but it lacks the size of MP Nagar.

MP Nagar zone I was strategically planned for commercial development by the Bhopal Municipal Authority (BMA) in the hopes of decongesting the historic center of Chowk Bazar located in the Old City of Bhopal in 1990 (Gupta, 2018). Additionally, the BMA planned the area in such a way that there would be easy mobility of goods and people between transportation hubs of the city like Habibganj Railway and MP Nagar. The introduction of Jyoti Cineplex was a catalyst for the development of this commer-

cial area and since its inception the area has witnessed a great deal of transformation. Included in this transformation were things such as displacement of slums to make way for the DB City Mall along with the creation of hotels and hostels for students studying at nearby coaching centers.

Although it consists primarily of commercial space, supporting companies such as banks, firms, hotels and office buildings, it also includes the shops of informal vendors, green spaces, educational facilities and apartment buildings. The residents of the area include pavement dwellers, small slums, and those living in apartment buildings. Thus, a number of stakeholders occupy the area and create a mosaic of different users. The heterogeneity of both space and stakeholders creates a complex situation that requires a significant level of understanding to approach any given issue. Over the course of three months we have attempted to reach a deep and holistic level of

understanding of the area through ethnographic and participatory methods to begin an appropriate analysis of the current situation in MP Nagar zone I.

### ABSTRACT

Our first inclinations to approaching the project’s task of working with informality was to work with commercial informality through street vendors and shops in the area, although our focus stakeholder group changed after some time. One of the values of UEP is to work with underrepresented and marginalized communities and individuals (Aranya, Sliwa, Refstie, 2018), therefore our approach was to investigate the stakeholders and understand the vulnerabilities faced by them in their respective circumstances. Our objective was to find these underrepresented and marginalized actors in the area and subsequently to understand the situation in a holistic manner through ethnographic and participatory methods to identify strategies that would allow for a change in their circumstances, all with the

help of the stakeholders themselves.

Throughout our interactions with the informal vendors, we came to learn a great deal about the commerce in MP Nagar zone I. We came to understand how there were a myriad of different circumstances and differences in tenure, security, and status among the mostly male street vendors. For example, some have business licenses, others do not. Some vendors have licenses for things that they are not selling but having this license contributes to a sense of legitimacy for their business regardless. We discovered that their presence was permitted and acknowledged by some actors working with the municipality and that there was some level of representation for these vendors to the municipality if there are any issues. Additionally, some are more stable in their business and own their makeshift shops while others rent their shop and place in the vendor area from someone else. All however, face similar precarious situations in land tenure



Fig.7 Rooftops MP Nagar zone I



Fig.8 Entrance to the area, Chetak Bridge

## SMART CITIES

Bhopal smart city development corporation limited is owned by the Indian government, Madhya Pradesh Urban Development Company Limited, and the Bhopal Municipal Corporation. Smart City Bhopal focuses on four areas which include: modern infrastructure, investment opportunities, creating employment opportunities, and increasing transit oriented development. A number of strategies have been implemented to meet these smart city goals. Though it has received its criticisms, the Smart Cities initiative represents the city’s aspirations and goals for future development that will affect the lives of its citizens.



as the land they are occupying for their business belongs to private hands. Their future in the area is uncertain and therefore many choose not to upgrade and invest too much into their shops.

Although we found it interesting to work with these stakeholders, a number of experiences and stakeholder analyses changed the course of our project. We came to identify other stakeholders that were underrepresented in the area which caused us to significantly shift our focus from informal vendors to women in public space as further analysis of the area was conducted.

It is important to emphasize the commercial nature of the area. In many places in India, it is common for a single building to be of mixed use acting as both a commercial and residential space for a family. Often times these buildings have businesses on the first floor with the second and third floors acting as housing for the business owners and their family.

This building use however is not the case in MP Nagar. Since the buildings were formally planned for commercial use, the owners of the buildings have adhered to strictly maintaining their space as a place for business. This fact contributes to the transient use of the buildings and space in MP Nagar. There is not a community sense in the same way one could

find in a slum neighborhood for example. The missing sense of community turned out to be a crucial element in our situational analysis and strategic proposal. Though the area has a transient feel, we discovered that some of the more permanent users of the area were students that stayed in the hostels of MP Nagar who are studying for entry exams in nearby coaching centers. These hostels were the result of increasing number of coaching centers that sprung up around MP Nagar. Some of these students have been living in the area for years. Our change of focus was solidified after working with women living and working in the hostels in MP Nagar zone I.

### SHIFT IN FOCUS

The project's main stakeholder group was modified as we gained more insight into the complexity of the area. The analyses were done through activities such as stakeholder mapping, allowing us to map out and visualize the vulnerabilities faced by multiple actors. In addition, this stakeholder mapping allowed for a visualization of power dynamics that shape the area. Following our observation that the area was dominated by loitering men and that women were often not seen in the area, we began searching for the women who used the area. Our question then was how women use or do

not use the space in MP Nagar? The information gathered through the women we met allowed us to gain insight into the vulnerabilities and issues faced by the women in the area. Thus the project's focus was steered toward understanding the imbalance of gendered public space in MP Nagar.

Through participatory and other methods the women in the hostels we worked with verified our observations that women do not occupy public spaces in the area as frequently and as freely as men in the area do. The reasons for this are detailed elsewhere in the report. This revelation led us to begin focusing on women in the area since our research indicated that there are frequently gruesome rapes, molestations, and abuse of girls and women in MP Nagar zone I. Though the impetus of the project was initiated by a focus on safety for women, our group began focusing on increasing the shared ownership of the area for the women in the hostels since the women revealed to us that they did not feel unsafe in the area unless they were out late, which does not occur often due to the hostel's strict curfew time of 20:30. Additionally since the women seem to feel little ownership or pride over the area the we then sought to find strategies to empower these women to appropriate public space in MP Nagar.

## FIRST ANALYSIS

Our fieldwork study began with defining area of MP Nagar zone I. Street grid boundaries helped during the first steps of situation analysis by providing a solid base for observations and identifying bigger stakeholders and landmarks. With such information, the definition of the area started to expand. Repeating attributes, such as girls hostels, were marked. Further stakeholder analysis showed the network of connection between different stakeholders which was the base for expanding the selected area until further issue localization.



Fig.9 Map of MP Nagar zone I with the designated area

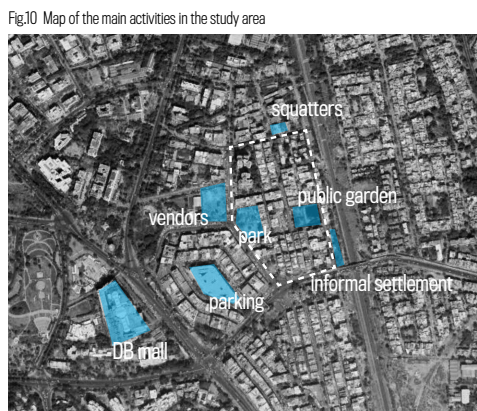


Fig.10 Map of the main activities in the study area



Fig.11 Map of the main girls hostel in the study area

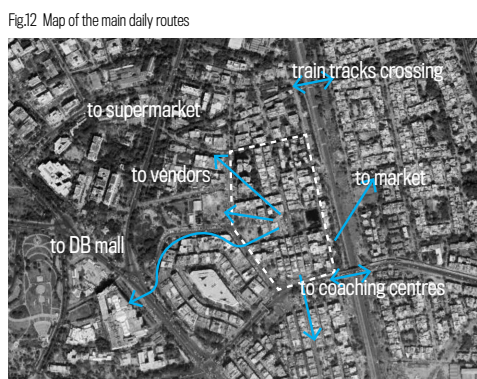


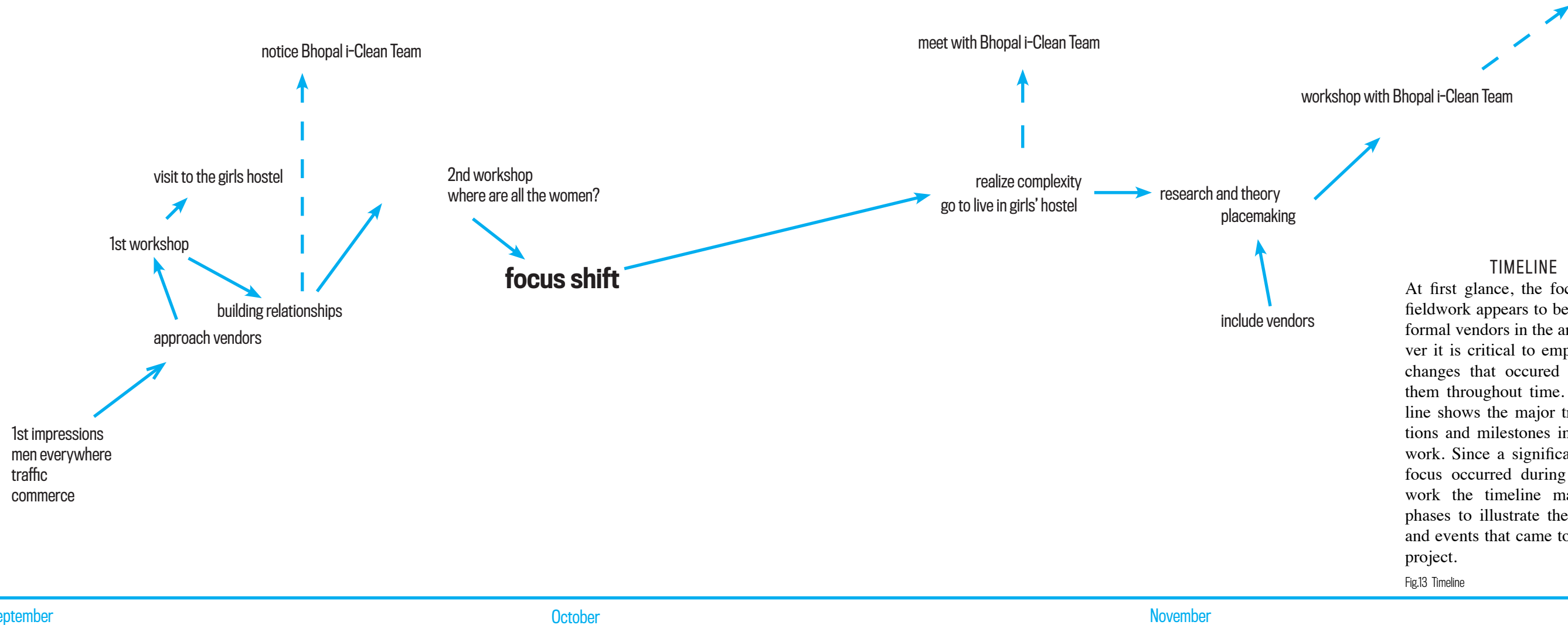
Fig.12 Map of the main daily routes



Identifying stakeholders  
Focus on vendors  
local issues

Focus on women  
areal issues

Interaction between stakeholders



TIMELINE

At first glance, the focus of this fieldwork appears to be on the informal vendors in the area. However it is critical to emphasize the changes that occurred and detail them throughout time. The timeline shows the major transformations and milestones in the fieldwork. Since a significant shift in focus occurred during the fieldwork the timeline marks these phases to illustrate the processes and events that came to shape the project.

Fig.13 Timeline





Fig.14 MP Nagar Zone I from a rooftop

# MP NAGAR ZONE I

## HISTORY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Before India's independence from the British, Bhopal's main commercial area was limited to the old city, and the main marketplace was Chowk Bazaar. After trying to address the congestion in the area of the old city, the BMC focused on making MP Nagar a wholesale regional market that could easily serve the old and new parts of the city. These new areas of Bhopal are primarily located in the south east parts of the city. Though it was intended to relieve the congestion of the Chowk Bazaar, the development of the area into a wholesale regional market did not have as significant of an impact on the issue as it was intended to.

Nevertheless, MP Nagar's development has witnessed a great deal of transformation over time. These last activities, appear during the 1990s, at the time of the Information Technology boom, which played a significant role

in the development of MP Nagar. The area has also been shaped by its surrounding as it is located conveniently "near corporate offices and residential colonies including Arera colony, TT Nagar, BHEL and Shahpura, occupied mainly by young service class executives and entrepreneurs (Roy, 2012)".

Today, the city of Bhopal has more marketplaces, such as New Market and Bittan market along with the old city market Chowk Bazaar, which serve the city level population, due to their location and establishment. MP Nagar however, remains the biggest marketplace in Bhopal. Despite its commercial character it is also a housing area. According to our sources, there were 10 832 people living in the area in 2011 (Purva, 2015).

At the beginning of the millennium, MP Nagar was still the major commercial hub. Divided into two zones i.e. zone - I and zone - II, the area accommodates many business houses such as offices of major hardware and software firms, daily newspaper offices and press, hotels and restaurant, coaching center and entertainment (Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, 2000)

Population  
10 832

Area  
1.5 km<sup>2</sup>

Density population (pers/km<sup>2</sup>)  
6 908

(Purva, 2015)



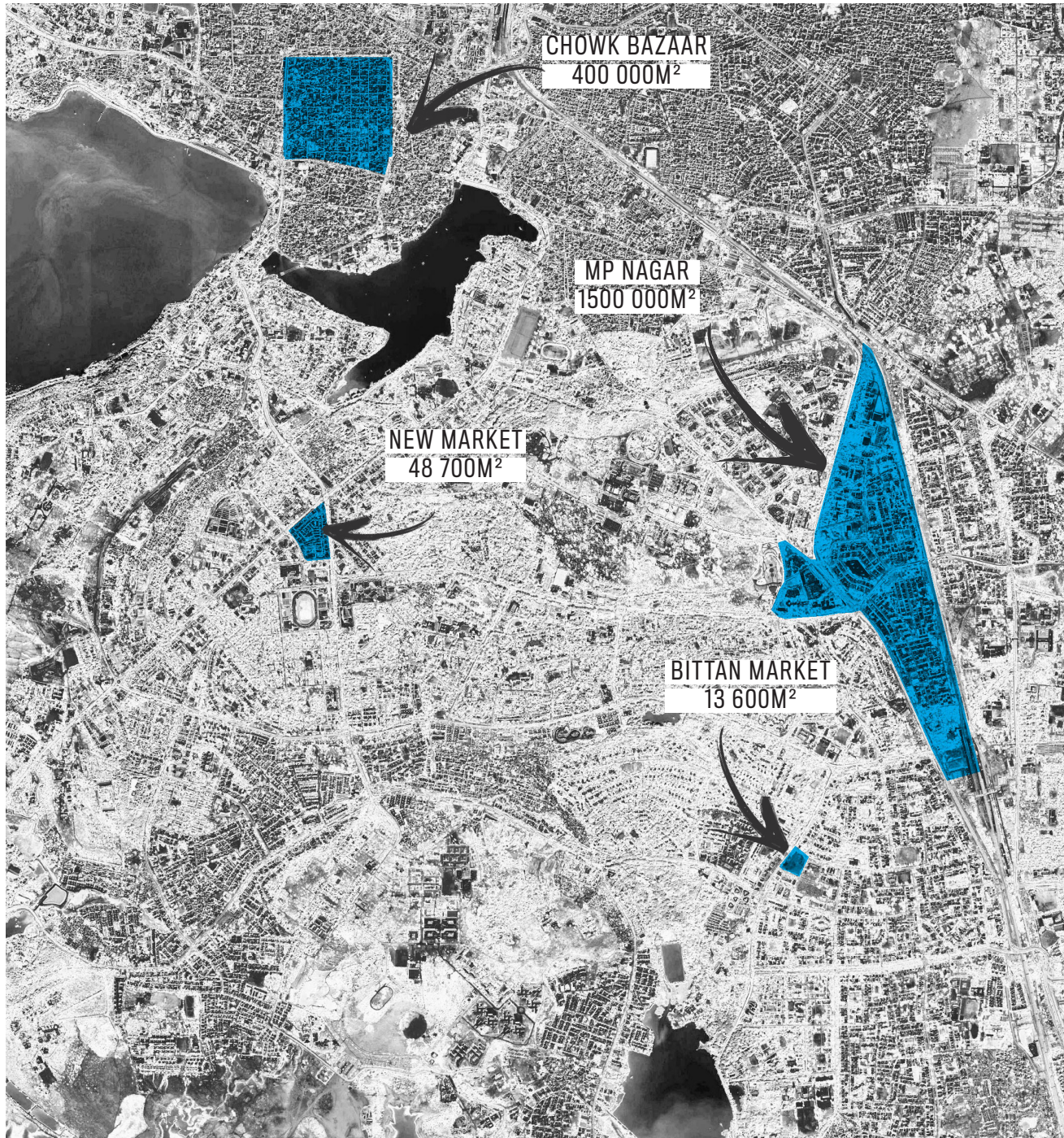


Fig.15 Comparaisn of Bhopal marketplaces

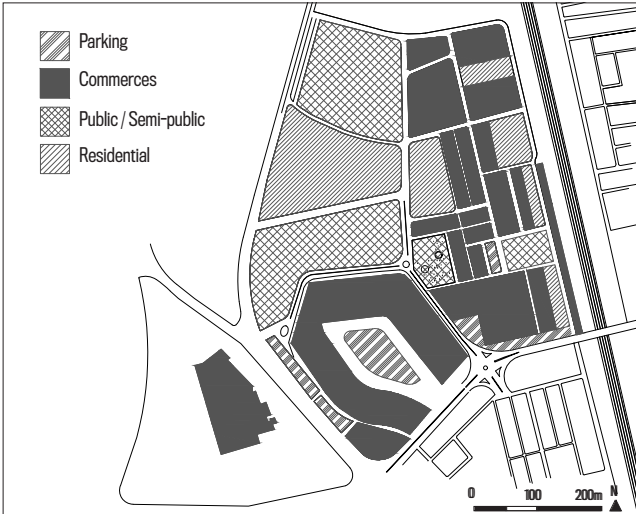


Fig.16 Picture of Chowk Bazaar



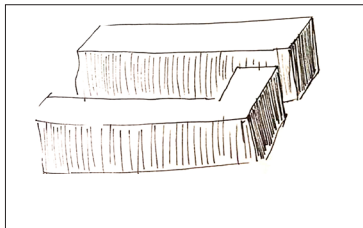
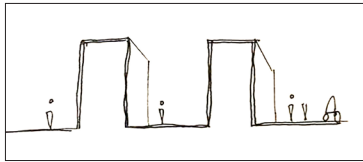
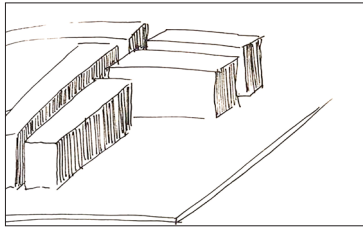
Fig.17 Picture of New Market





	MP Nagar	MP Nagar Zone 1
Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	1500 000	430 000
Commercial area (%)	54	56
Residential area (%)	7	8
Public / Semi- public (%)	11	26
Mixed (%)	28	10

Fig.18 Top: Map of repartition of activities in MP Nagar  
Fig.19 Middle: Table of proportions of activities in MP Nagar  
Fig.20 Bottom: Sensitive section of MP Nagar  
Fig.21 Right: Schemes of urban morphology in MP Nagar



OUR AREA

After having calculated the density of building in our area, we can see that only 35% of the ground is occupied by construction. Moreover, if we observe the urban morphology of MP Nagar Zone I (fig. 22) we can see that the buildings are in direct contact with the street and public spaces. There are almost no medium space or private spaces unbuilt. However, when we walked in the area for the first time, we did not realize how much free space the place could offer.

What's is happening in this 65%, who is occupying the space? How is it characherized? What is possible to do with this space?

URBAN MORPHOLOGY

We can observe since 2010, the development of informal commerce in the unused land on the west. Around this time MP Nagar experienced a major milestone in its commercial activity with the development of the DB mall. The growth in the informal sector is an important development in the area's land use as well as commercial activity since its inception as a formally planned area.

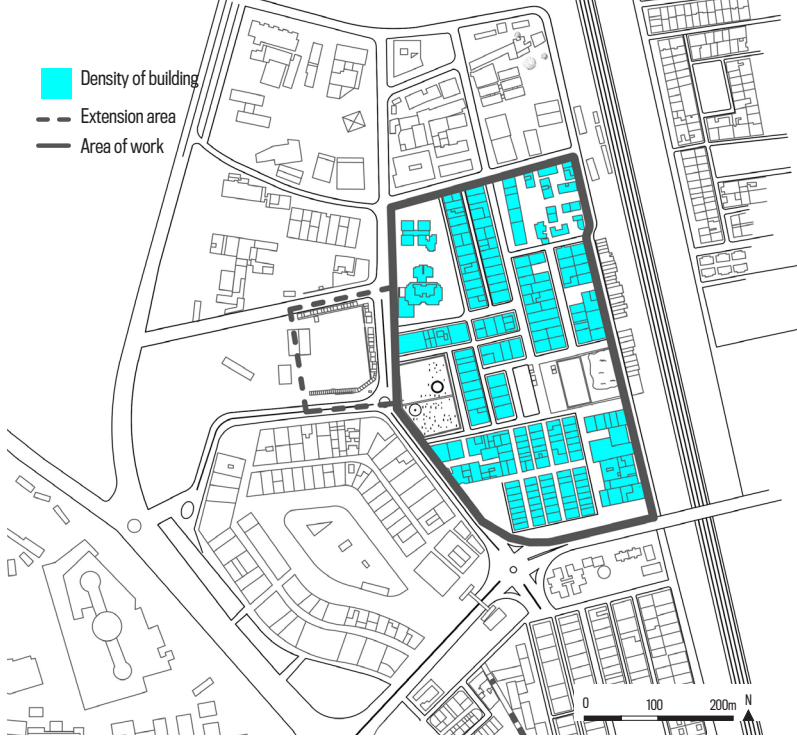


Fig.22 Map of density of building in the study area  
Fig.23 Historical urban morphology of the study area







Fig.24 Picture of one of the rooftop in MP Nagar

# STAKEHOLDERS

Throughout the fieldwork we identified many different stakeholders connected to our area. Meeting one stakeholder often led us to new ones, which led to the creation of a network of connections between them. Due to the size of the area and the different layers of production and activity however, some connections were temporary. The area consists of a variety of social and economical ecosystems. We assembled some of the most prominent stakeholders to our fieldwork in a diagram.

One of the first connections we registered was the interdependency between informal and more formal businesses. We talked to women who reside

in an informal settlement in the area that also work as cooks in the girls hostels, the people who work in the offices and formal shops, eat and buy services from the informal street vendors. The area was planned as a formal business district, and has from there generated economical space for more informal businesses. This is a pattern we have observed all over the city and on our travels around the country. From our observations throughout the city, wherever there is people with purchasing power, there will be informal services providing chai and cigarettes.

As exemplified in the stakeholder map (fig.29), there



### INFORMAL ECONOMY

Much has been written about the importance of an informal economy in developing nations. The term “informal” has also been extensively written about and can be understood as a continuum, with the determinants of what constitutes legal, illegal, or accounted for as a socially malleable concept and subject to change throughout time and space (Portes and Haller 2004). There are a number of ways in which the manifestations of an informal economy have been described and categorized. These include subcontracting, migrant work, sweatshops, and of course street vendors such as those in MP Nagar zone I. Although these vendors operate in a more informal manner as opposed to more visible and accounted for businesses, they represent economic forces unconstrained by regulations (Portes and Haller 2004) and are therefore important to the urban centers in which they reside.

are many different stakeholders in the area. Ideally we would have contacted and built relationships with the majority of identified stakeholders so as to understand the area properly. However because of time constraints the study was necessary narrowed down to what we determined were the key stakeholders in the area. It is important to consider power and influence among and between the stakeholders. To do so, we created a figure (fig.24) detailing these dynamics among the stakeholders we have identified. This information is not only useful

to visualize the power dynamics but also how a given strategy could affect other stakeholders or potentially create conflict. For this commercial area, established businesses in formal shopping centers and commercial business buildings are better represented and more secure. Land tenure security and business licenses are ways to ensure a business’s security as it will be able to conduct business without the same worries as a vendor who occupies land they do not own. Perhaps most importantly are the rights to access services, develop,

and transfer property that comes with secure land tenure (USAID, 2014). Spanning from formal to informal, we believed it would be appropriate to begin comparing formalized vs informal commerce in MP Nagar zone I. We initially identified a section with 150 informal vendors as our primary focus. The informal vendor area is comprised of businesses such as restaurants, snack shops, hair salons, and chai stands among a mix of others.

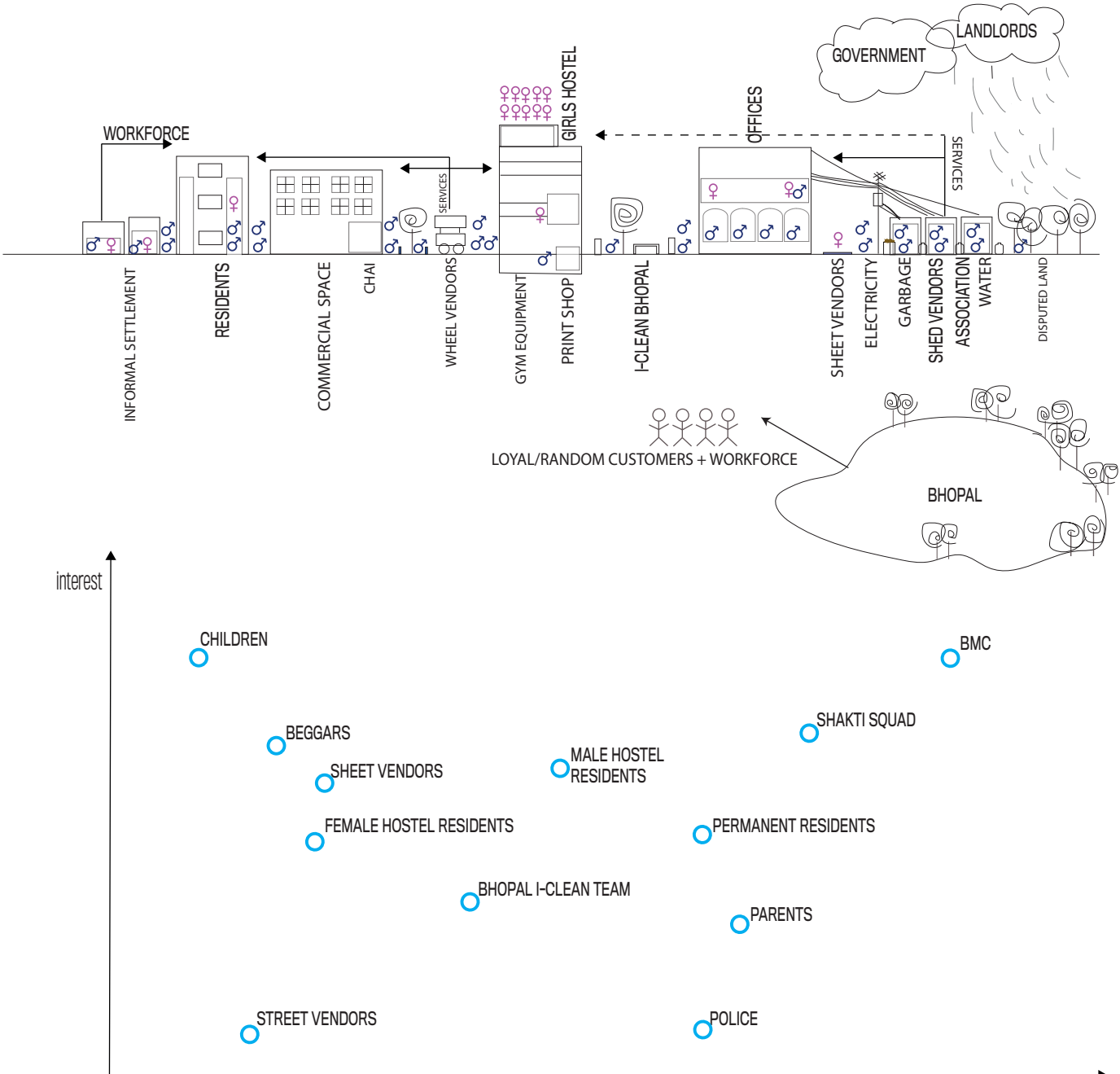


Fig.25 Top, Spatial stakeholder analysis  
Fig.26 Bottom, Stakeholder mapping considering influence





Fig.27 Tobacco stains ruin many city walls

# METHODS

The study of MP Nagar zone I was carried out in a period of six weeks, which consisted of daily interactions with the stakeholders. The goal of the study was to understand the issues of the area and challenges faced by the locals. Primary data was gathered by using participatory methods which let us identify local and marginalized groups, and the challenges faced by them. However it should also be mentioned that the stakeholders' strengths and paths of opportunity were also considered. A number of methods were implemented with the help of students from SPA Bhopal, SPA Delhi and KRVIA Mumbai as well as our interpreter. The methods that were used are necessarily eclectic, as they were used to try to gain an understanding of complex and ever changing situations and realities of a given area and community.

The first site visits consisted of area observation. It helped us form a first impression of the area. We were faced with a commercial zone full of working people and congested traffic. This

was followed with spontaneous interactions with the local street vendors. They were the first stakeholder group encountered by us. Due to their positioning in the street, they were visible and easy to approach. By continuously visiting the same chaiwala<sup>2</sup> we were able to learn about the hierarchy and the politics of the vendors. While spending a lot of time there we were asked to take selfies numerous times, after realizing that this could be used as a strategy for building rapport we started asking locals for selfies ourselves. These small steps helped people in the area to get familiar with us and take the first steps in building a relationship of trust.

A large extent of our data was gathered by approaching the locals with semi-structured interviews. Preparing questions beforehand helped us to guide the conversation and not take up a lot of the time from vendors. For the first few visits, our questionnaire was about everyday routines which helped us get an overview of the

- METHODS USED
- Interviews
  - Mapping
  - Visual area definition
  - Post-it game
  - Transect drive
  - Surveys
  - Participatory observation
  - Ethnographic research

<sup>2</sup> Hindi word for chai vendor



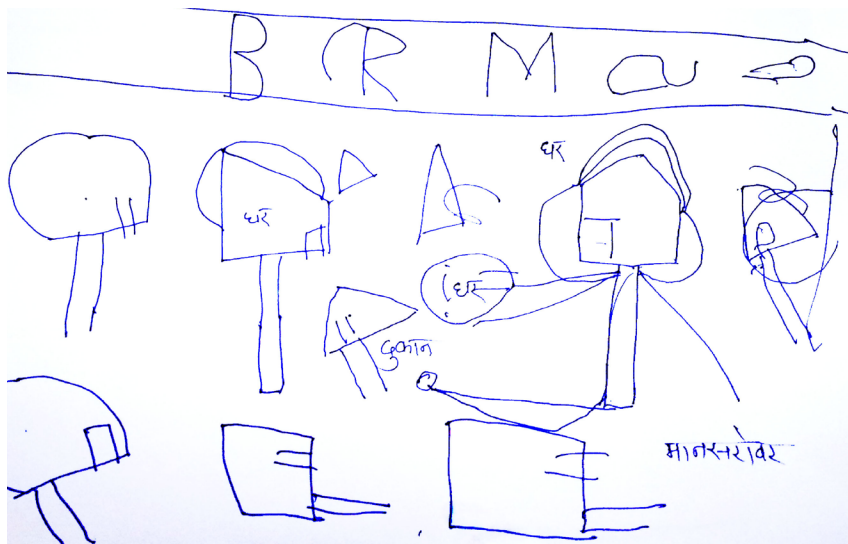


Fig.28 Mapping method, drawn by a child in the study area

area and how the small businesses worked. When more concrete area-based issues such as safety and traffic were identified, the questions became more focused. Interviews were held throughout the whole period of the area study and helped us receive unbiased information from the people.

### MAPPING

On our second visit to MP Nagar zone I, we were lucky enough to encounter a newspaper boy working in the area. Even though we were visiting the area with Hindi speaking students from SPA and did not have the problem of a language barrier, we had

difficulties explaining what we would like him to do. Having not been fully prepared to use the method and being spontaneous led to us asking the wrong questions and not explaining ourselves properly. The newspaper boy was asked to draw his home and its surroundings. Not confident about the execution of the method ourselves we ended up with a map that we were not able to understand or use for further analysis. The result of the map itself was not fruitful but we ended up having a contact in the area who afterwards would recognize us on the streets. While reflecting on the results of the exercise we realized how we

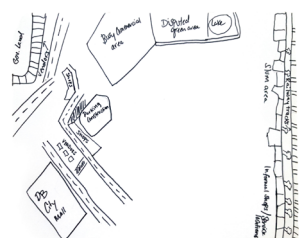
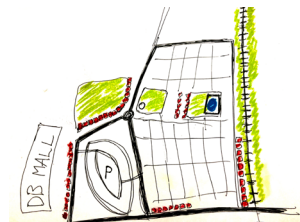
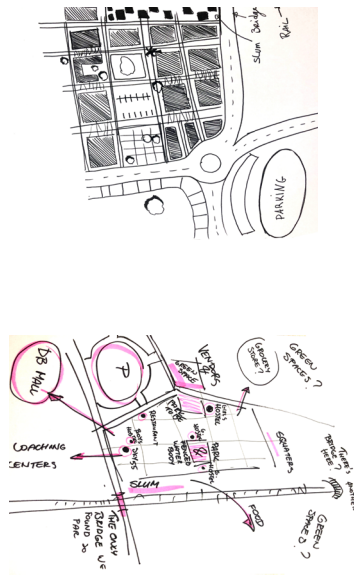


Fig.29, Fig.30, Fig.31, and Fig.32 Mapping method, by members of our group

should test the methods before trying to use them with other people and tried to draw the maps of the area ourselves. The results we got from our own drawings showed us which parts of the area we were not yet familiar with and should look more into (fig. 30).

### POST-IT GAME

On the second week of area study we visited the site with the SPA Bhopal design students for a joint workshop on participatory methods. Our attempt to continue approaching the street vendors with

interviews again, was not received well by the chaiwala we had been visiting. The reaction of being uncomfortable with the questions we asked resulted in us losing a connection we built for the last week. This forced us to come up with a method that would help us learn how the vendors experience their business but would not invade their personal life. After understanding the complexity of approaching people's livelihoods, we developed a post-it game based on the design guidebook (The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design,

2015). By using different icons of tangible assets five different vendors selling various goods and services (such as food, cigarette, chai, auto repair and tires) and a customer were asked to describe and answer the following through the images on the post-its: What are the basic needs to establish your business? Which 5 things would you like to add to your shop? What is the best thing in your shop and which factors made you extend your shop on to the street? After analyzing the gathered data, we learned that the basic needs

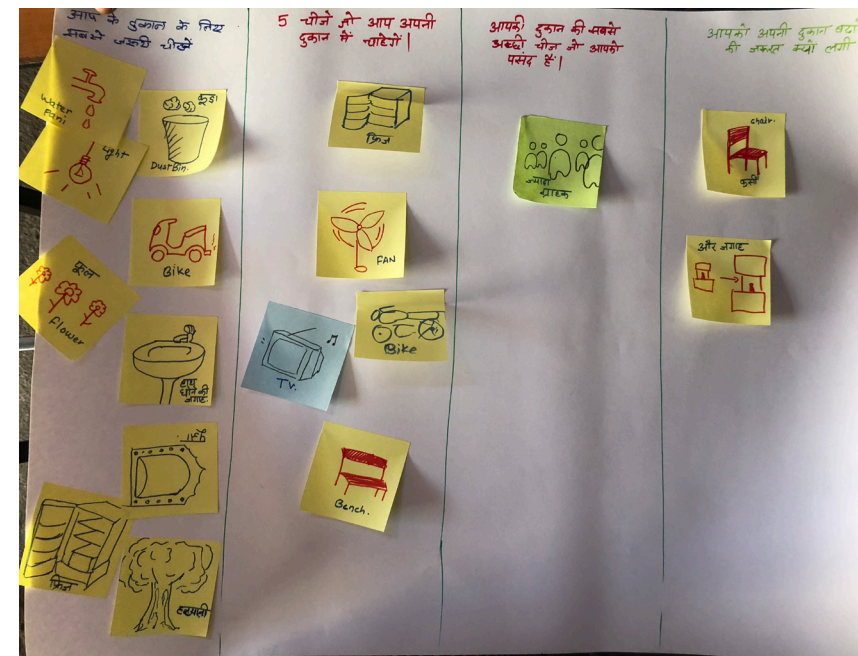


Fig.33 Post-it method used with informal vendors



	Water access	Water /lavabo	Toilets	Music	cigarette	children	more customers	love	animals	Tree	Flowers	Security	Internet	TV	Computer	More space	place to pray	roof	exit life	bike	cycle	car	Other bike	solar panel	electricity	bed	light	fan	chair	fridge	freezer	bench	Cart	pot	table	dustbin	Plates	slove	Tools			
	WATER AND HYGIEN			HUMAN RELATION AND DISTRACTION					NATURE			COMMUNICA TION			MODIFICATION OF SPACE				DEPLACEMENT			ENERGY		FURNITURES																		
Family guy														x								x						x														
Family guy's customer	x											x				x												x					x									
Cigarette guy	x											x	x											x				x														
Chai guy										x				x														x				x	x									
Auto repair guy				x								x	x			x																					x					
Auto tire guy	x											x		x																												

Fig.34 Table, analyses of the results from post-it game. Which 5 things would you like to add to your shop?

to start a business for most of the vendors who participated is water and a dustbin, everything else is dependable on the type of business the vendors are sustaining. Bigger investments are not planned because precarious tenure status<sup>3</sup>. The gathered data also led us to realize the problem of the security in the area. Four out of six people that we questioned mentioned that they would want more security (from theft, vandalism, etc.) in their shops.

This issue surrounding security stood out to us because through our conversations we learned that although many vendors will not invest in upgrading their shops, they will invest in something like a surveillance camera. We had observed and learned that many of the informal vendors watch each other's shops to ensure some level of security. For example, one particular cart vendor leaves his cart in front of a chaiwala shop

during the day and then comes by in the night time to pick it up and do business in the evenings. This informal policing of the area gives it a level of security by having more than just one pair of eyes on the business. Still, we wondered about the safety of the vendor area since so many of them reported that it was an important issue to them.

<sup>3</sup> Mode by which land is held or owned, or the set of relationships among people concerning land or its product (USAID, 2014)

Fig.35 Tobacco vendor



TRANSECT DRIVE

During one of our visits to MP Nagar zone I, we met with some of the residents living in the area. A few young men were willing to go on a transect walk with us. It was interesting to learn that even though MP Nagar seemed that it could be covered by walking, the residents would only use their motorcycles to get around. When asked why they use vehicles for relatively short distances, the answer from one of the men was:

«It's too hot and too polluted here to be walking!»

Student, 21

MP Nagar has a hectic traffic situation because of numerous scooters and motorcycles rushing through the area and being parked on pavements and sidewalks. It is also not uncommon for people to drive on the wrong side of the road. We expected to see more of the area but after a short ride on motorcycles we arrived at a hookah lounge which they told us is where they hang out. Subsequently, we were



Fig.36 Picture of transect drive

able to ask for a visit to the residential area of MP Nagar zone I which started development in 1996. The residents have seen how the area has become overcrowded with vehicles after the construction of DB City Mall. We ended our interaction with the residents by asking what are their expectations from the Smart Cities mission in Bhopal. They expressed a hope for more parking spaces for their bikes, fewer homeless people and beggars, and better malls. Such spontaneous interaction provided us with a different perspective of the city and the area based on the local young men's point of view.

LIVING IN THE GIRLS HOSTEL

Ethnographic methods were useful in this context as they are commonly used to develop an understanding of human activities in a broad cultural context (Zaharlick 1992). They involve forming parti-

cular relationships that are established over time. What makes these methods unique from other forms of research is the “subordinate position” assumed by the researcher (Zaharlick, 1992). Meaning that the researcher’s purpose is to learn about something that is unknown of foreign to them (Zaharlick, 1992). Moreover, ethnographic methods were used as they have the advantage of being malleable and applicable to many situations and are therefore of much use to research that is more dynamic and unpredictable than traditional lab research.

As ethnographic research we spent two days living at a girls hostel located on the opposite side of the street from the street vendors. We first encountered the girl’s hostel while doing an observational walk with the SPA Delhi students. This participatory

Fig.37 Picture of the common area inside the girls' hostel





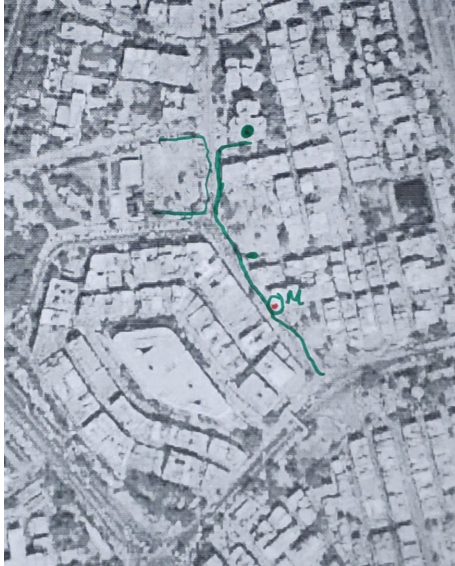


Fig.38 Results from the mapping activity



Fig.39 Picture of a woman teaching us how to tie the scarf

observation helped us understand the lives of women residing in the area, the life that was not yet visible to us.

To understand the perception of the public space in the eyes of the residents at the girls hostel, a few participatory methods were used during our stay at the girl's hostel. Asking questions about the use and perception of public space by the women, led us to understanding how it is not common for young women to roam around the city. Lack of free time is one of the reasons. Weekends are used for leisure but even then chores must not be forgotten. Going out usually means shopping, going to the movies or visiting Lakeview walk path outside of MP Nagar, which was mentioned to us as a

public space in Bhopal that many residents frequent.

To learn more specifically about MP Nagar, the women were shown pictures taken in different parts of the area and asked whether they could define the location as likable or unfavorable. The answers suggested that women prefer places that are populated but not crowded. Empty spaces were defined unsafe unless surveilled. The green pocket parks that are present in the area are appreciated but underutilized because of the traffic pollution or litter in and around them. The streets in MP Nagar zone I were described as overcrowded with vehicles resulting in an unwelcoming setting for pedestrians. In an attempt to learn the routes taken to get to the coaching centers or other

routine destinations, the women were asked to mark their everyday footpaths. The satellite image of the area was difficult for the women to understand, which made the task of identifying the locations on the map more difficult. After different attempts to identify the landmarks on the map that would ease the navigation process, one route map was delivered.

We visited the women at the girl's hostel a few times after our stay was over. The purpose of it was to go out on a transect walk with the women and visit favorable locations. A similar smaller exercise was done with the women on the first day of our stay in the hostel when they invited us to accompany them to a beauty parlor.

Before leaving the build-

ing it is a common practice for the women put their scarves to cover their faces, which they taught us how to do. The hostel owner who saw us leaving explained how they cover themselves from the sun and hide their identity at the same time. Those of us who chose to wear the scarves agreed upon the sense of safeness and anonymity behind the scarf. Not many places were covered during that walk which is why we wanted to invite them on another roam in the area. Although the date and time were agreed upon arrival, the women did not join us on a walk. It was agreed to postpone the transect walk after the Diwali break<sup>4</sup> in order to gather more women for the walk and maximize the information we could gather. Our attempts to contact them after Diwali were ignored. It is difficult to say why the women were not interested in meeting us anymore and whether a longer stay and a deeper relationship would have made the transect walk more inviting. We believe that with more time, we could have built a stronger trust relationships with the women, which would have lowered the threshold of participation.

It was difficult to sum up the stay at the girls hostel at first, but after some time passed and

<sup>4</sup> Indian holiday known as the festival of lights

the reflections regarding our stay continued, we expected more tangible results. Nevertheless the information we gathered from our ethnographic research targeting the women underrepresented in the area resulted in a better understanding of the complexity of the issue of appropriation of public space for women in India.

## CONCLUSION

During two months of research, we experimented with different methods in order to understand the different layers of the area. It was taken into consideration how differently the area and the people should be approached. Starting with observational walks and ending up cohabiting with the women

in the hostel, we gathered many different traits of the area. Even though deeper understanding of visual methods took time, we realized how participatory methods not only invite people to engage more in the action, it also makes it more interesting for ourselves. The failures faced in the process were the result of ill-preparedness. On the other hand, considerable amount of time was spent preparing for the women hostel's activities, but unforeseen reaction of the women did not let us proceed with our research in the expected way. Nevertheless, unbiased data was gathered in the process and used in the development of area's situational analysis.

Fig.40 Post-it game with street vendors







Fig.41 Mental representation of MP Nagar

# SITUATION ANALYSIS

## SWOT ANALYSIS

SWOT analysis are used to identify key issues that influence the growth and development of an organization, or in this case, area (Pickton and Wright, 1998). Although commonly used by businesses to identify strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats, their application can also be used to evaluate a community. In addition to identifying these characteristics that are considered a strength to the area, this analysis also helps determine what kinds of obstacles may be there when trying to accomplish something. These types of analysis are commonly used for their simplicity and ability to highlight important factors in a holistic manner.

For this analysis we attempted to think about the area as a whole despite its diversity and complexity. We identified a number of strengths of the area, namely its lively nature due to its popularity as a commercial zone. The DB mall is well known in the whole city, which is a strength for the area given its appeal to many

residents of the city and others nearby. Some of the weaknesses include traffic, few public toilets, difficulty to move around for pedestrians, its gendered spaces that could prevent people, especially women from using and frequenting parts of the area, and also its litter and vast amounts of waste. Some of the opportunities we found are that it could generate more customers throughout time given the right circumstances, it could become a more gender inclusive part of the city, more utilization of the green spaces available, and lastly that it is always in use by either customers in the daytime for the businesses and its residents in the nighttime who may contribute to businesses staying open later. Lastly, some of the threats to the area we could identify are that the area continues to become increasingly hostile toward women and girls in the area as it becomes more popular and that it could also experience gentrification with the creation of more businesses in the area.

## SWOT

### STRENGTHS

Popular area (DB mall), serves people from all over the city  
Even though hectic, has public spaces  
Lively  
Vendor community

### WEAKNESSES

Congested traffic  
Two public bathrooms  
Not enough space in the street for pedestrians  
Gendered spaces  
Waste

### OPPORTUNITIES

Evolves more - more businesses, happy vendors - happy customers  
Becomes a more inviting area for women  
Green areas being used  
Daytime for offices, night time for residents

### THREATS

Becomes hostile to girls  
Gentrified



## ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Before focusing on one or several stakeholders in the area, we recognized issues from observation and communication with several people in MP Nagar. We categorized some to apply for the

### MOBILITY

There is not enough parking spaces in MP Nagar, and during the day the streets are filled with cars and scooters, blocking formal and informal pedestrian thoroughfares. We were also told by some of the vendors and residents that traffic was a major issue in the area.



Fig.42 Picture of night traffic in our study area

extended area of MP Nagar zone I, and some that are more limited to the informality around the street vendors. One of the methods we used led us to extend our focus area and group to a larger scope.

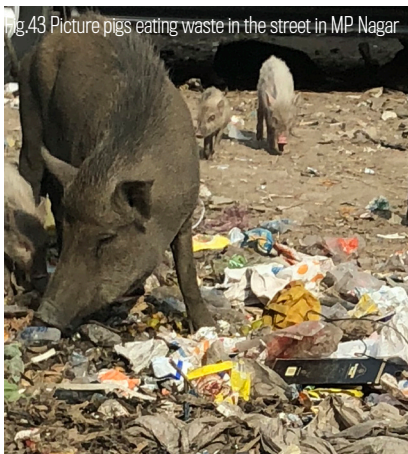


Fig.43 Picture pigs eating waste in the street in MP Nagar

### ELECTRICITY

The street vendors have meters and pay bills to the municipality. We are unsure of how these connections were established given their lack of secure tenure. Nevertheless, we observed on almost every occasion we visited the vendor site, as well as other places in MP Nagar that the electrical lines make sparks and loud buzzing sounds, suggesting either faulty lines or that the lines are overloaded. This is important to note because the area is prone to electrical fires.



Fig.44 Picture of an utility lines in MP Nagar

### WASTE MANAGEMENT

There is only one container for trash next to the park, and it is always full. On both sides of the railway tracks, there is green space full of trash, with pigs and cows walking about. Garbage is collected every morning by the municipality workers but not the evening so much of it remains laying around. It seems that there is no waste water management in the street vendors area. Disputed land is being used to dump waste water. In addition there is no separation between organic and solid waste.

### FOOD SECURITY

We were not able to ask about these issues much but through the card game we wondered: How do the street vendors get their supplies delivered, and do they have a proper place to store food? How do they store their water? Are women in the hostel happy about their food selection? Market or shop where you can buy fresh and affordable food? This issue is also connected to waste management.

## INFORMAL HIERARCHY

The municipality is responsible for the vendors in the area, and there is a contact person between the vendors and the municipality. The street vendors around the disputed land has an association with a president and the association collects money from all members. Where does this money end up? And which role does the middle man between vendors and municipality have?



Fig.45 Fig.46 Picture of place behind informal vendors shops



Fig.47 Picture of the land behind the informal vendor own by the DB Mall

### DISPUTED LAND

The landowner of the disputed land can move the vendors any day. The development of this area, depending on the business or establishment that is created there, could have significant impact to the surrounding areas. For example it may or may not relieve or exacerbate the traffic or parking situation in MP Nagar.

### LAND TENURE

A lot of vendors in the area are renting the actual business. Which means that the people working there don't have land tenure OR a formally legal business. We have categorized them into four different situations. Permanent & formal, Temporary & formal, Permanent & informal and Temporary & informal.



## DEFINING THE FOCUS ISSUE - WHY WOMEN?

Cities have since the beginning of urbanization been constructed and designed in the eyes of men. This has created an urbanity beneficial for the man, and not for what has not been seen by him. Since the very first day in MP Nagar, the gender imbalance became an apparent issue. During two months of fieldwork research with the informal vendors, we were the only women drinking chai and buying cigarettes. We concluded that in order to fully understand a complex urban situation, we needed an equitable point of view. We knew that the women resided and worked in the area, but they were never to be seen on the street. Seeking a deeper understanding of why this was so, we decided to live some days in a girls' hostel.

Leading up to this point we had already deliberated on different points of departure, and which stakeholder group to focus on. Throughout the five weeks of fieldwork, we aspired to be as open as possible, and to avoid taking turns based only on our own subjective opinions. Nevertheless, MP Nagar zone I not being a defined social and structural organism with clear boundaries and stakeholder hierarchies, required us to take premeditated decisions based on perceptions.

«Entire city structures have been generated on the basis of patriarchal capitalism: land-use zoning patterns, including the form, location and type of residential areas, transportation networks, public open space, and the relationship between work and home result from male-dominated expectations and values» (Cuthbert, 2003)

The street vendors had been the focus for the most time of the fieldwork, and we spent a lot of time identifying issues faced by them. However, the findings from the design workshop generated more questions than answers. The most relevant information we extracted from the participatory method was the apparent collective need of better (physical) security for their shops. During the design workshop with the post-it game, we had one potential female participant who was the wife, and worked at one of the eateries. This was, from our understanding, because her husband did not want her to have a say. The lack of input from women stakeholders in the area caused us to identify women in the area are underrepresented.

Despite obtaining a relation of trust with several of the vendors, and having a translator available, further collaboration with them seemed complicated. This was because we were feeling treated differently owing to the fact we are women. This made it natural to reassess women as main stakeholder. The street vendors represent the most vulnerable group in relation to the analysis we made on informal economy. However, the overall least represented group of the area are women. Working with women in the area, and including our own perceptions as women, we tried to understand the social structures and the main issues of women in the public space.

## THE WOMEN WE WORKING WITH

In the area, there are many different women working and residing, such as street beggars, office workers, students and residents. The women in the girls' hostels represent some of the more permanent users of the area. We also chose to limit the scope of focus group to women residing in the women hostels, as trying to include all women from the area would be too extensive for this work. The women from the hostels are between 16 and 30 years old, and they live away from their parents. The majority have moved from cities far away from Bhopal, to study or take preparatory classes

at coaching centres in MP Nagar. Some of the women are married, but the majority are not.

## FRAGMENTED COMMUNITY FEELING

Given the commercial nature of the area, the use of the spaces in MP Nagar zone I follow the work schedule of shops and business owners. As previously stated before, its residents have been identified as more permanent users, but other users such as students staying at hostels that are studying for entrance exams could also be considered more permanent users. The establishment of coaching centers in the area led to the crea-

tion of these hostels and other services such as chai stands or shops or hookah bars that cater to a younger student crowd. However, the buildings in which the hostels are found were not built for residential use and are therefore not the most conducive to a community atmosphere within or between other hostels in the area. This feeling is something that we identified early in the fieldwork, as we compared our sites to other students working in slums or old parts of the city that have a stronger sense of community.

## WOMAN

"Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age." (United Nations Women's Watch definition)



## PERCEIVED + REAL SAFETY

We were met by the owner of the girl's hostel while trying to arrange our stay there, where we planned to use participatory methods to gain more insight. He explained to us that the hostel provides basic amenities for the women such as bathrooms, showers, exercising facilities, Wi-Fi, dining table, sofa, swings, and a terrace. The rooms are swept every morning. For the most part, women spend their spare time studying in their rooms. One place outside their rooms that we noticed being used in the hostel was the terrace. Women spend a lot of the time there to call their families and friends. Private rooms are not used for such purpose because of the thin walls which do not provide enough privacy. The characteristics of the hostel give it an enclosed and safe feel. Even though the terrace is usually occupied by more than one girl to contact their relatives, it is still one of the more remote places in the hostel. During our visit we learned how important family is to the women. Even though they live far away they do not think about crossing and disobeying them. Such things as haircuts or choices of clothing might depend on their family.

An important part of the stay at the girls' hostel was to understand the women's views on men and women partaking in



Fig.48 Picture of a corridor in the girl's hostel

public space. The women told us that men are usually seen in the outdoors loitering because they have fewer responsibilities while women commonly are faced with work, chores or taking care of children. They explained that if a woman is seen outside having time for herself she is commonly perceived as avoiding her duties. From what we understood, this might be the reason why they tend to do things from the comfort of the hostel. To add to that, one of the ladies working on the ground floor in the same building as the girls hostel, brings her chai to the office instead of drinking it in front of the vendor. In comparison, the young men (from transect walk) who live with their families two streets away, tend to skip classes to linger in the city and

enjoy their chai on the streets. The curfew times for the girl's and boy's hostels are different as well. The girl's hostels are inaccessible after 20:30 while boy's are usually unrestricted up until 22:00. After trying to understand the consequences of being late we learned that it was unthinkable to the women to be out that late. As it was explained to us, the purpose of the curfew time is for the girl's to be protected from running away. On the other hand, when one of our members tried leaving the hostel at around 22:30, the women began to worry about her safety.

**"If a girl is not back by 20:30 it means that she has run away with a boy. The area is safe. It's not about that."**

Hostel manager

Fig.49 Picture of the common area in the girl's hostel, used by girls after the dinner.





### “ABSENCE” OF WOMEN

A master's thesis “Reclaiming Gendered Urban Spaces: Enabling Inclusiveness by Advocating Spatial Mediation for Mobilizing Women” by Neeruja Gupta from the School of Planning and Architecture in Bhopal (2018) was done on the issue of appropriating space for women in MP Nagar zone I. Gupta conducts an extensive safety analysis of the area based on parameters from Oscar Newman's Creating Defensible Spaces (1996), which we have further referred to for our use of assessing spaces in the area.

Gupta concludes on several tangible factors which makes MP Nagar zone I seem less safe for women. The author points out general lack of street lights, especially in the side streets of the area. She also points out that the public

space is poorly defined, difficult to cross the street and poor visibility of bus stops. These are common “risk elements” that we have observed as well. Many of these elements can be countered with concrete solutions, such as more street lights, and clearly marked bus stops.

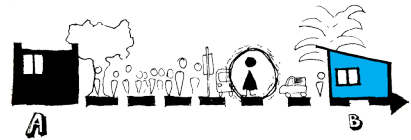


Fig.50 Scheme depicting the use of public space by women



Fig.51 Collage about gender imbalances in public space



Fig.52 Picture of a street with low night light and full of garbage

### SAFETY IN BHOPAL

In Bhopal the issue of women's safety has long been addressed, and the GoMP and the BMC have initiated:

#### SHAKTI SQUAD

In the beginning of 2018, the Indian police force established a police squad aimed at helping women, called Shakti Squad. They have traveled around to coaching centres including MP Nagar zone I and II, and talked with girls and women about safety. Now, only half a year later, an articles in the Free Press Journal states that the Shakti Squad has already “gone

missing” from the institutions they were expected. (Free Press Journal, 2018)

#### PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN BHOPAL

In 2015, the Government of Madhya Pradesh (GoMP) presented a pilot project on women's safety in public transport in Bhopal, which resulted in an Action Plan to make it safer for women to commute.

The report showed that 90% of women in Bhopal were either students or housewives, meaning a huge economic gender gap between men and women in the city. The report also highlights articles from the local news claiming that most women would chose not to work instead of working late due to “lack of safe commuting options”. (CARE Action Plan)



Fig.53 Picture of public space in our study area, used mostly for bikes





Fig.54 Picture of the She Lounge

### SHE LOUNGE

The She Lounge is a Smart City initiative from the Bhopal Municipal Corporation. The she lounge concept won the prize for best Smart City initiative at a Smart Cities conference in Delhi 2015. The city of Bhopal's BMC scheduled eight of these lounges for completion in December 2015, one in MP Nagar zone I, but today there are only two lounges in the city. It is intended to primarily give women a place to use a toilet that differs from other unwelcoming and male oriented public toilets. However, it can also be a safe space for women to wait for their buses etc. They were planned to provide an air-conditioned waiting room, female staff, Wi-Fi and radio. (Jain, 2016) At our visit to the She

Lounge at the Polytechnic Square, we could not find everything that was promised. The place was dirty and run-down, and it did not seem like a place anyone would want to rest. Despite this condition, judging from the feedback in the guest book, this initiative is appa-



Fig.55 Picture of the She Lounge

rently something the women have been waiting for and welcome. The she lounge has a long journal that documents how well received this initiative has been by the women of Bhopal.

Nevertheless, we ask ourselves the question whether the right solution to a problem is to create a box in which to

hide women? According to the definitions from the CARE India's flagship approach, "Gender - Transformative Change" (2017), the she lounge's approach could be considered gender neutral, meaning that the: "[p]rogram approaches or activities do not actively address gender stereotypes and discrimination (p. 12)". The solution has been to put women in a box. What we do know, is that most violence against women happens within the private realm, behind closed doors (Wesley and Gaarder, 2004). Is the woman truly safest where she cannot be seen? Is it maybe rather a question of implementing measures which will integrate - and not segregate the women from public space?

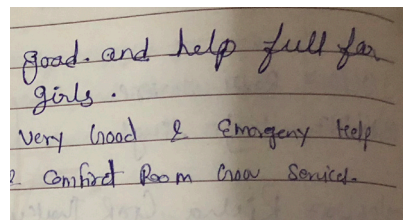
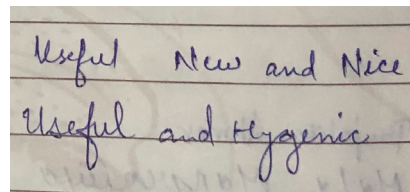


Fig.56 Picture of girls' reviews of the She Lounge

### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEELING SAFE AND BEING SAFE

The presence of women in public space has been linked to the safety of a space. According to a UN Habitat report on the topic, a public space is regarded safe when inhabited by women and children. The report presents some characteristics that contribute to such places, which include good lighting and visibility, easy access and mixed use.

### WOMEN'S SAFETY FROM UN-HABITAT

Shilpa Phadke presents, to us, surprising results from interviews on safety that she has done with women in Mumbai:

"When one talks to young women about their fears of sexual harassment in public space, they tellingly articulate less a fear of physical harm than the anxiety that by continuing to access these spaces where they are sexually harassed, they are in fact courting a risk to their reputations." (Phadke, 2013)

The UN Habitat claims that if a public space is safe for women and children, it is safe for other marginalized groups (UN-HABITAT, 2012). In their report on gender-responsive planning, they

further state that a place becomes even less safe for women when areas are avoided by women. They conduct safety audit tours with women to identify the factors which make them feel safe and unsafe. This way, the women are entitled as experts of their own area. The UN Habitat defines safe places for women as overall "gender-sensitive" and "inclusive public space". They highlight some main characteristics of what makes the spaces safe, which are:

Easy access and mobility within, to and from the space

Good lighting

General visibility

Mixed use of the space

Extracted from the *Women's safety audit*. What works and where? (2008), these are some of the most common ideas for change in policy or environment. Out of all, better lighting was the most urged physical change.

While suggesting the implementation of this physical change or infrastructure could positively impact the safety and use of a space for women in MP Nagar, we believe these suggestions would be too top down and ignore the spatial and social dimensions contributing to gendered spaces of the site. The most common physical change to

the environment regarding women safety include:

"unblocking foot paths  
destroying/rerouting unsafe paths  
improving public signage  
providing public water and toilet facilities  
removing old cars from public areas  
generally improving upkeep of public areas  
redesigning waiting areas and/or exits for public transit  
redesigning pedestrian handrails for greater visibility in a highway overpass  
redesigning landscape elements for better access and visibility  
installing elevators for greater accessibility  
installing transparent bus shelters  
providing intercoms in public transit areas" (UN Habitat, 2008)



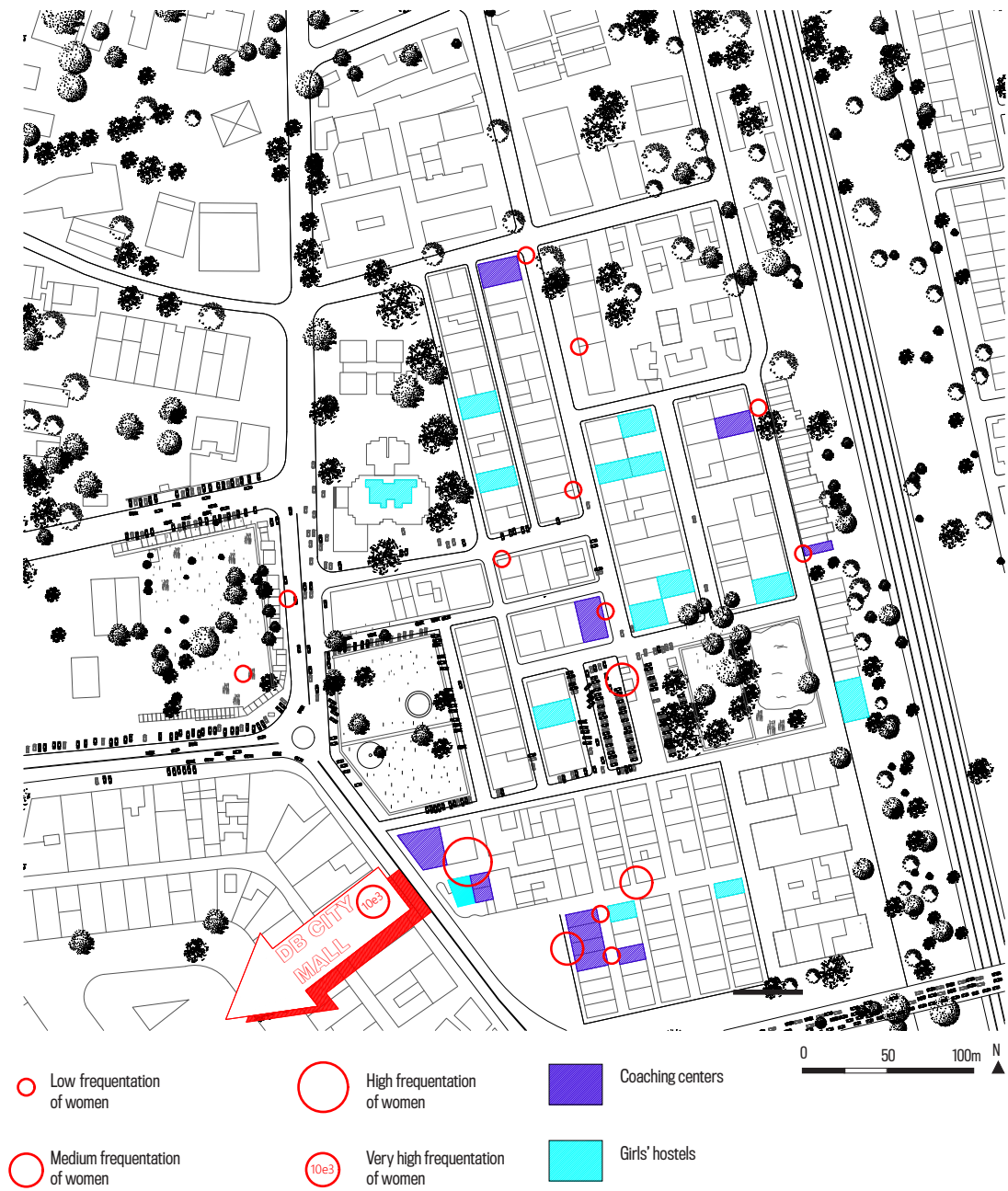


Fig.57 Map of the public space occupied by the girls in our study area

“Women’s safety involves safe spaces. Space is not neutral. Space which causes fear restricts movement and thus the community’s use of the space. Lack of movement and comfort is a form of social exclusion. Conversely, space can also create a sensation of safety and comfort, and can serve to discourage violence. Therefore planning and policy around safety should always involve and consider women.”  
 (UN Habitat, Global assessment on women’s safety, 2008)



## LOITERING

The text “Why loiter? Radical possibilities for gendered dissent” (2009) by Indian sociologist Shilpa Phadke et al., relates the discourse of gender conflict in public space to the Indian context. The text examines the concept of loitering and its practices in the urban context. In India, the act of loitering is common among young lower-class men, taporis. Loitering is the act of being in public without any specific aim, with pleasure/recreation being the only purpose. The Indian woman, on the other hand, inhabit public space always with a sense of purpose; being it shopping bags, school attire or babies. This segregation of access to public space is enhancing the notion of the women belonging in the household, which again challenges the equal rights of genders.

The segregation between middle-class women and lower-class men is enhanced through imposed fear of the other. Women are susceptible to harassment by groups of men like taporis on the street, which makes public space feel unsafe for them. The taporis, on their side, are also prone to keep a distance due to fear of accusation. The problem that arises in the discourse of equal rights to the city, is how to include both parts without excluding the other.

Phadke argues that loitering is “a fundamental act of claiming public space and inclusive citizenship” (Phadke, 2013), and that women should therefore loiter more. This idea is somewhat controversial as in parts of the Indian society, loitering is seen as something anti-social.

The text ends with propositions on how loitering can contribute to a more inclusive city. The first one refers to de Certeau’s idea of “walking as an act of negotiation” (de Certeau, 1984). Further, the possibility of being anonymous (recall the act of covering is regarded an asset, especially for younger women, liable to attract the male gaze. When we went on a walk with three of the women from the hostel, they all completely covered their head with shawls, except for the eyes.

## GOVERNANCE OF WOMEN

During the study’s observational period we noticed that due to the area’s commercial sector domination, its usage pattern and user demographics are varied but also consistent. In other words, observational study of the area allowed us to conclude that the gender most frequently using the space of MP Nagar zone I are men working in different commercial shops (both formal and informal) throughout the space and time of day. We

Taporis: “Bombay slang for loiterers and voyeurs who wear bright clothing, spit great distances and whistle at women who happen to pass by.” (Urban Dictionary)



Fig.58 Picture of women in the street by night in the area on the other side of the railway

## SAFE SPACE

The most common physical change to the environment regarding women safety include:

“unblocking foot paths  
destroying/rerouting unsafe paths

improving public signage

providing public water and toilet facilities

removing old cars from public areas  
generally improving upkeep of public areas

redesigning waiting areas and/or exits for public transit

redesigning pedestrian handrails for greater visibility in a highway overpass

redesigning landscape elements for better access and visibility

installing elevators for greater accessibility

installing transparent bus shelters  
providing intercoms in public transit areas”  
(UN Habitat, 2008)



were careful not to conclude this until we had visited the site at various points in the day. The visibility of women was very little to nonexistent at many points of the day. The area vastly changes throughout the day, with (mostly) males visibly dominating the area in the commercial shops both inside and outside the buildings in the mornings and afternoon and well into the evening hours. In the evening a mix of genders of all ages can be seen enjoying the vendors' products. After evening hours, however, the usage and gender fluctuation changes and it again becomes a visibly male-dominated area. This can partly be explained by the commercial area's work schedule. Women in the hostels are also required to adhere to strict curfews, limiting their use of the area's space after a given time. The phenomenon of segregated gendered public space in MP Nagar allowed us to begin thinking about the issue of women in public space.

One cannot discuss the issue of women in public space without also considering safety however. Daily news stories describe chilling rapes, abuse, and molestation of girls and women in MP Nagar zone I. Still however it is our belief that increased visibility and utilization of public space by women would increase their tendency to be stewards of

the environment and increase a feeling of ownership over a space. As one of the top most dangerous cities for women (NCRB report of, 2016), it would be naive to approach the idea of increasing the visibility of women in public space in Bhopal without also considering the complexities of safety and cultural norms associated with the utilization of public space.

### FRAMING THE ISSUE IN A SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

The girls' hostels we worked with all had a curfew at 20:30 in the evening. First we thought this was because the area is not considered safe for them after this hour, but according to the hostel manager at hostel where we stayed, it has more to do with avoiding the women having relations with men. The women, although most of them adults, are still under the supervision of their parents. According to the hostel manager, the hostel rules work as an extension to rules imposed by most Indian parents. If the women are not home by curfew time, they will inform their parents. In this way, the parents can still conduct a high degree of control over the women and their whereabouts. One could say that this policing of women of the area is not a matter of safety, but rules imposed to protect family pride and protection of common Indian norms.

### WOMEN AND INFORMALITY IN INDIA: THEORY

Douglas North understands institutions as "The humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights) (North, 1990)." Informality depends much on "criteria that is established in a system of social order (Altrock, 2012)." North's conceptualization of institutions aligns closely with the ways sociological research seeks to understand the underlying mechanisms determining the behavior of people in public space. Using North's definition of institutions in this context allows for a better understanding of how informality is linked to the issue of women in public space, particularly in MP Nagar zone I.

The institutional theory's definition allows us to go beyond the typical discussion of laws and regulations to understand informality. It adds a level of complexity by including non-written social conventions or "rules". These of course, are also subject to change throughout time and space and in this way, informality is interconnected to both regulation and social realities because both are shaped

by institutions. Closely related to this is the idea that "public space embodies socio-cultural meanings (Chen et al, 2018)." This becomes increasingly apparent when considering how politics come to influence how cities and spaces are planned and for whom they are planned. These ideas are exemplified when considering how these institutions and non-written rules dictate the use of public space for women in MP Nagar. To elaborate further, consider the family as an institution. Since these women have an unwritten socio-cultural contract with their families, their use of public space is largely shaped by expectations and norms. This has been termed an "intergenerational contract" between parents and their children (Nussbaum, 2001).

To link this issue to what is formal, consider the legal rights of women in India. Though India has given women a number of rights in their constitution, including the "right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex" there remains a culture of patriarchal values (Nussbaum, 2001). This formality means little in public spaces where the rights of women are not policed by anyone but society itself. This then leads to a discussion of how power in society manifests itself in public space. This idea has been written about by well known intellectuals such as Michel Foucault who

said that the display of power dynamics, especially that of the state can be observed in public spaces. Chen et al (2018) has suggested that "this conception of space necessarily moves beyond the physical to become a place of continuous contestation for belonging and power (p.7)."

### NEGOTIATING SPACE FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC SPACE

When thinking about the issue of negotiating space Shilpa Phadke's quote highly resonated with us: "How does one argue the need for better public policy - one that offers infrastructure such as improved street lighting, more women friendly public transport, more accessible policing without necessarily suggesting that complete surveillance is the only solution to concerns around women's safety? How can one argue the legitima-

cy of the desire to court risk and insist that risk should be a matter of choice (for marginal citizens as well) rather than be thrust upon them by shortsighted planning and policies? How does one move towards dismantling the norms that ensure the control of female sexuality through the binary of respectable and non-respectable women? How can we assert that women are at risk in public spaces while simultaneously rejecting representations that project women only as victims in need of a protection that inevitably moves towards restrictions, surveillance and control?» (Phadke, 2005, p. 59).

We define negotiation of a public space as "collaborative and participatory actions in the production of public and private space" borrowed from O'Kelly (2007).

## LEGAL RIGHTS

Supreme Court rulings have decided that women cannot be arrested after sunset and before sunrise. This is to avoid women harassment by the police, normally happening in the morning hours. She has a right not to be called to the police station for interrogation. This is also to avoid molestation. (timesofindia) This conflict between "unwritten" patriarchal power and the relationship between women and formal institutions like law enforcement highlight the disparities between where women's rights fit in the continuum of "formal and informal".





Fig.59 Picture of a man painting the wall of the parking house

# ADVOCACY PLANNING

Advocacy planning term was introduced in 1960's by Paul Davidoff as a response to political practices happening in the US. Marginalized groups were underrepresented and did not have the capability to take part into having a say of their needs in the urban setting. As a result of racial or financial segregation certain stakeholders were excluded of the 'community' that planning provided to. Paul Davidoff suggested a pluralistic and inclusive planning theory instead of a routine practice of top-down approach. According to Davidoff planners should not only do the technical work, but also work on "the creation of alternative ideologies, so that politics could include debate on the most fundamental issues (Pierre Clavel 1994)." In the article "The Evolution of Advocacy Planning" (1994) written by Pierre Clavel, where he discusses Paul Davidoff's advoca-

cy planning theory, it is mentioned that advocacy planning should hearten public awareness of the marginalization of certain groups and involve them in the process of planning and assessing their needs. Advocacy planning theory can be closely associated with the UEP approach. When comparing traditional urban planning to UEP values we can see that in the latter, the planner is perceived as a facilitator rather than implementer. UEP focuses on making the bridge between the formality and informality. By addressing the issues with the people at grassroots level and suggesting proposals on governmental level bottom-top approach as well as top-down can be achieved. We used such notions to approach our fieldwork in MP Nagar zone I.

Public spaces are settings for society. While the ownership of public space belongs to everyone



it comes to be the place of conflict as for different implementations of power. Public spaces become the settings for informal politics of who gets to use the space that belongs to everyone and how (Chen et al., 2018; Dean, 2013). Although women formally have all the rights to share use the public space in the case of MP Nagar the appropriation becomes difficult since the place is mainly dominated by men.

Even though the women living in the hostels are arguably not the most vulnerable women compared to beggars or women in the slum, the impact off more inclusive public spaces could benefit everyone. By advocating the issues faced by the women of public space appropriation to the governmental institutions which in this case are BMC and the Smart city mission, more women stakeholders could be reached. Putting the spotlight on women's underrepresentation could result in more accessible and inviting open spaces for all the residents of the city. Visibility of an all inclusive space could result in greater safeness in the surroundings.

Such intangible assets would improve the quality of life for all stakeholders in the area.

In sum, Pierre Clavel has written about how advocacy planning is the representation of segregated and marginalized groups who cannot take part in decision-making in the urban setting. It has been challenging to address and deliberate on the issue with the women we have interacted with, but the data gathered from interviews and academic research advocated for the needs and threats of public space for women. Looking back to Paul Davidoff's theory we can see that planner not only needs to provide the platform for the undermined, but also to inform and encourage minority's participation in order to address the larger social and economic forces that might have influence to the choices made (Davidoff, 1965).

It is important to ask whether we are we appropriating public space for women or with women? In our work with the proposals we struggled with the complicated link between identifying the issue and the proposals that

we designed. The proposals themselves can contribute positively to the lives of people participating, but we have to ask ourselves about how to generate motivation with the participants? Women appropriating public space is good in itself, and this endeavor could have sufficed. But don't we have the responsibility of advocating our motivations with the participants? If so, the execution of the proposals become much more political, consequently we risk losing participation.

As of now, we don't have an answer to how to generate genuine motivation. We think that the proposals can be seen as conceptual manifestations, and not only substantial solutions to the issue.

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**“[Davidoff] viewed planning as a process - to address a wide range of societal problems; to improve conditions for all people while emphasizing resources and opportunities for those lacking in both; and to expand representation and participation of traditionally excluded groups in the decisions that affect their lives. He challenged planners to promote participatory democracy and positive social change; to overcome poverty and racism as factors in society; and to reduce disparities between rich and poor, White and Black, men and women.”**

(Checkoway, 1994)





Fig.60 Picture of the common area of the girls' hostel

# PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is a people based approach on urban planning. It is a tool to reclaim public spaces by the community to fulfill their needs. To have a better understanding of placemaking, it is easier to break it down to how the public space is approached using placemaking. Placemaking is used to help stakeholders of the area develop tangible and more commonly intangible assets of the place. By building a space around the community, collaboration and participation can be achieved. Over a period of time, small scale hands-on approaches help to develop an understanding, safe and trusting community who takes care of their surroundings. Quality of life is achieved by facilitating long term development of the area. Developing a defined area with the local stakeholders enables a multifunctional usage of space that would suit their needs (Project for Public Spaces, 2018).

The process of the placemaking is as important as the results. It is the continuity of the ideas. By inspiring and facilitating a creative use of a public space, placemaking pays “attention to social, cultural and physical identities” of the defined area and supports the continuity of

its evolution (Smart City Bhopal Placemaking Project Guidelines, 2017)

«Placemaking is about empowered citizens breathing new life into their streets and neighborhoods - making them attractive, inviting and safe.»  
(Oliver, 2013)

Placemaking as a tool could be fruitfully applied in MP Nagar zone I. By implementing small scale changes, the community of selected area could be built and developed overtime to achieve long term results. Local stakeholders such as street vendors, residents, office workers and students living and studying in MP Nagar could become community of the surroundings by learning of possibilities and interventions that are made possible by themselves. The established connections between stakeholders could be strengthened overtime and maybe

even spread throughout the city in forms of similar interventions. MP Nagar zone I could become a commercial area with small public spaces designed for everyone, not only working class men who are currently the dominant users of open spaces. As we learned in the process of the fieldwork, a large number of women are not familiar with having their own say in usage of public spaces, which could be changed in time. Inviting them and other minorities of the public spaces, the area can become safer for everyone. As Jane Jacobs talks about streets being surveilled by the people using them, the more people (and especially women) use the space, the safer it gets (Jane Jacobs, 1961). This way, community becomes the owner of their surroundings and has a hands-on approach to the development of public spaces.

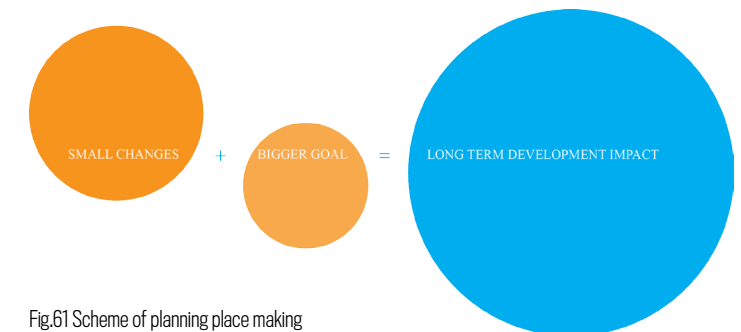


Fig.61 Scheme of planning place making





Fig.62 Picture of the study area from the girls hostel

# PROPOSALS

In this chapter we will present the proposals we have designed to meet the issue of *underrepresentation of women in public space*. Both proposals regard the women of the area as the main protagonists for execution and parameter of success. Since the issue was derived from indirect information gathered while conducting participatory methods with the women, it is crucial that they take full ownership of the further process. The core intention of both proposals is for women to become more active and conscious users of their public space. We believe that this goal addresses the topics of fragmented community feeling, perceived and “real” safety, underutilized public space and informal policing of women. Both pro-

posals could be used together to maximize the potential for women to appropriate public spaces in MP Nagar and beyond.

These proposals address the issue of fragmented community by bringing different women of the area together. The first proposal could not only physically bring women together but also strengthen ties between women with a common goal of participating more in the development of their city. Increased visibility of women transforming the city in public spaces could normalize the act of appropriating public spaces. It is hoped that this could eventually lead to a feeling of ownership of the area. This feeling of ownership depends on security however. Overtime, if women become more

comfortable in the public spaces throughout the city they can increase their visibility, creating a positive reaction whereby other women begin to feel comfortable frequenting the areas. As a result they can improve the safeness of an area.

The second proposal can help address the lack of community feel by allowing women to share information about their areas and gain familiarity without going too far out of their comfort zone.. Familiarizing themselves with the city can create newfound connections and friendship. Using more public spaces would benefit the larger community as well by attracting people to different areas of the city, making places more lively. Women outside of the city

## NEGOTIATING SPACE FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC SPACE

- Fragmented community feel
- Perceived vs real
  - + safety
  - Unutilized/underutilized
    - + public space
    - Informality : Women's rights and
      - + Informal Policing by family and society



could benefit from this map as well. These places would also be determined by the women living in the city as safe or unsafe to go to. As an open source map, it can be inclusive and accessible. Lastly, we realize that the issue of informal policing of women cannot be fully addressed by both these proposals. Informal policing of women could be the biggest hurdles of success for the proposals. Since they are incredibly complicated issues rooted in a cultural fabric, we do not pretend to know how to tackle them. We remain humble and understand that socio-cultural factors this enormous are beyond the ability for us to fully address. Nevertheless we are confident that these proposals can create positive results although admittedly it is possible that these efforts contribute to the gentrification of an area.

Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey's idea of "the right to the city" implies that everybody, independently of gender, race or sexual orientation, social and economical capital should have the same access to space and opportunities in the city. This further ascribes to the citizen's right to and responsibility of transforming public space through use and spatial negotiation; the production of space (Lefebvre, 1996). Instead of excluding women from public space through

norms and cautioning, our proposals encourage the opposite. In order to make an impact on the design and governance of public space in a long term perspective, women need to participate in the democratic process of acting in public.

Faranak Miraftab's theory of insurgent planning is also closely linked to the idea of how transforming a space can be a political symbol. This approach to planning challenges neoliberal trends that are dominating many parts of society and can often further marginalize vulnerable populations by excluding them. She states that "building one's own infrastructure works to build deep democracy when meaningful participation is not otherwise made available (Dean, 2013)". The effects of the proposals depends on women to organize themselves, and cannot risk the safety of the women. Both proposals have "visible outputs", which in itself might contribute to change. Nevertheless, the proposals should also be seen as conceptual manifestations, and not only substantive solutions to the issue.

#### WOMEN'S NETWORK

By creating a network of women who are empowered to take charge and perform activities related to the use of public space, we can

establish a community and sense of belonging to an area. Through our proposals the women can proactively organize themselves to become more visible in public space. In doing so they are indirectly practicing political conduct. By challenging the status quo, they can show that women are not indisputable victims in the city, but rather valuable users. The network can extend in terms of members and pursuits, and in the long run influence the politics of the city more directly, to generate more gender-inclusive design.

«[W]hat women need in order to access public space is not conditional safety but the right to take risks.»

(Phadke, 2005)

#### NEW STAKEHOLDER: BHOPAL I-CLEAN TEAM

For the first proposal, we must first introduce another key stakeholder. The Bhopal i-Clean Team is a non-profit organization whose goal is keeping the public spaces clean and beautiful. Started by Ma'am Kalpana Kekre 6 years ago around, now around 20 people volunteer to meet every Sunday at 07:00 am for a new city beautification project.

On different places in the city they clean up garbage, paint the wall red in order to match and mask the red color of pan that fouls public space, and then decorate the walls with tribal motifs. They have around 200 members, men and women of all ages.

The works of the i-Clean Team is political in an indirect way, through their actions of cleaning spaces of the city, of which the politicians do not take responsibility. They also promote an explicit message through their writings on the wall.





## TASKS WITH WOMEN AND BHOPAL I-CLEAN TEAM

What? Creative placemaking. Make women more aware of the places of their city and neighborhood

Who? Bhopal i-Clean Team, local women from hostels and coaching centres, informal vendors

How? Clean a spot, and paint a wall with message together with Bhopal i-Clean Team and women in the area

The Bhopal i-Clean Team has already done various tasks in MP Nagar zone I, which is how we became aware of their activities. After participating on two of their tasks, we approached them with idea of collaborating with them together with women from the hostel. By inviting women from the hostel and other women who work and live in the area, we wanted to paint a wall in the area and draw motifs related to the issue we have identified in this report. The motifs could be designed by the women, and relate to the issues.

Placemaking with Smart Cities Bhopal

As part of the Bhopal Smart Cities mission, The Urban Administration Department of Bhopal, has initiated a placemaking scheme of which aim is:

“to focus on local community’s assets, inspiration and potential with the intention of creating public spaces that promote people’s health, happiness and well-being.”(Bhopal Smart Cities, nd)

They have published guidelines for placemaking projects in the city and the idea of using placemaking as a tool in MP Nagar zone I has already been addressed by them. A survey has been conducted in an online form to learn what the residents of Bhopal see as the main issues that could be addressed by the municipality and Smart Cities mission. The discussion took place in October 2017 and received 19 answers from 16 people. Most of the answers consists of discussing concrete and tangible measures such as street lighting, sewage,

accessibility of clean water and sanitation, congested traffic and parking spaces. Notwithstanding, some answers consist of a different perspective on what public spaces need such as:

“I request a tap in every park of the city, so that in summer seasons, the plants are nourished making ambiance green and soothing, in various colonies, there must be some jogging tracks in the parks with some swings for children and gym equipment installed there in the parks, so that people become aware of fitness. We can also organize yoga camps in the parks. For old people, benches must be there. There must be a holy place, maintained by committee of that particular area.”

After looking at the survey and other examples of placemaking in India and other places, it is possible to expect that forming a community and approaching public space with all the stakeholders could greatly benefit MP Nagar zone I in terms of livability, safeness and happiness of the people. Bridging

the initiatives of the i-Clean Team, with the Smart Cities, can benefit all parties involved and ensure the sustainability of the efforts to appropriate public space for women.

Yet the most essential part is to create a community feeling among the women. Engaging in the change of the physical environment together with other women, could be empowering. In regard to questions of permits and permission, the Bhopal i-Clean Team have connections to the authorities, and therefore give the women participating a chance to indirectly part-take in the decision-making in the city.



VERNASITOR MAP –  
THE “VERNACULAR VISITOR MAP”

Co-creation of interactive map of MP Nagar zone I. with places that they like, “safe places”, useful places, meeting each other etc.

Together with the women, this proposal seeks to map out places in the area of MP Nagar zone I. The mapping is a collection of the spaces they know of and use, feel safe in, recommend etc. Hence the map will be a collection of local tips created by and for women. The physical appearance is as in a typical tourist map, but the production is more dynamic, with women exchanging knowledge, and showing each other recreational potential of MP Nagar zone I in an open source app. This map could also be included in the Smart Cities Map, used to collect data from its citizens and report and file complaints or comments related the Smart Cities initiatives.

The map will also highlight the bus stops and other places they visit daily, so that the user of the map can plan her route

the best chai,  
the best paratha,  
the best sunset on top of a building  
places to sit where there is shadow  
places to take selfies  
cheapest print shop  
beauty parlors  
temples  
secret places

through the new places. By making the map online and interactive it can be constantly updated, and the users can communicate through the app and meet up on the different places.

As a reference we have studied USE-IT, a european printed and online tourist service for young people. They are based in different cities, and collect non-commercial and up-to-date tips from locals.

Based on the american sociologist Richard Sennett’s theories, the quality of public space lies in the balance between observing and being observed, and the sense of anonymity as well as belonging to a group (Sennett, 1986). In Shilpa Phadke’s text on loitering, she presents a series of propositions as to how women can claim their place in public space through loitering. The first one refers to Certeau’s idea of “walking as an act of negotiation” (de Certeau, 1984). She emphasizes the anonymity as an asset, especially for younger women, liable to attract the male gaze.

The women in the hostel always took the same route to their classes, work or to the bus stop. And when we tried to deliberate the area and routes on a printed air photo of their area, they were unable to identify their hostel and other prominent buildings or landmarks in the area. We observed that the majority of the women used their smartphone repeatedly, but didn’t seem to use any map application for their daily navigation in the city. They know which bus to take to go to the places they frequent.



Fig.63 Example of USE-IT map from Bordeaux



## REFLECTIONS

Fortunately, we were lucky to get the time to organize and test our first proposal. During the field-work, we participated on two tasks with the Bhopal i-Clean Team. That way, we created a relationship with them. We informed them about our project, and asked them questions about their organization. This process of trust-building with them was crucial for us in order for them to feel comfortable about collaborating with us.

The organization of the event was not very complicated, and took a week from initiative to execution. At first, we considered a wall for the workshop which was enclosing the park under renovation. Out there were several cars parked in front of it, and according to the volunteers from the i-Clean Team, we were not guaranteed that they would be gone by the early morning the day of our task. In addition to this, the ownership status of the wall was disputable, and there was a chance that we would not be granted permission to paint it. The volunteers then suggested a wall on the opposite side of the informal vendors' strip we frequented the most. This created the possibility of involvement of another key stakeholder group from the area. In our proposal, which was directed toward the women in the hostels but now could benefit other

stakeholders whom we continued having an affable relationship to. To benefit from this coincidence, we asked the volunteers from the i-Clean Team to help us communicate to the vendors we already knew, about our upcoming event. Although the street vendors normally open at 11:00, the chaiwalla offered to open his shop at 07:00 in the morning just for us. This was to us, a confirmation of the relation of trust we had managed to establish to them, through many visits, chais and cross-language communication.

Interventions from the Bhopal i-Clean Team constantly start by cleaning the ground from garbage. Then they paint the wall in a red color of the same shade as the tobacco people use to spit out on walls and ground. They draw motifs with a chalk and then paint on top of it in white. For this particular event, the design was conducted both by the Bhopal i-Clean Team, and partly by us, correlating to the message we wanted to communicate, about more women in public space. The design was made spontaneously, which required collaborations between people. The wall turned out very well, and we were happy to see people promptly appropriating the wall, and taking pictures with the swing.

The biggest challenge for the event was the women



Fig.64 Wall chosen before the event, with I-Clean Team



participation. Three girls from UEP joined, which was very nice, especially since the gender-balance in the i-Clean Team is in male favor. We invited all of the women from the girls hostel, and went there twice to communicate how much we wanted them to come. We distributed posters and sent them messages on social media. Even though they said that they would come, there was only one woman who showed up in the end. She was not from the girls hostel, but part of a group of women we had met on the street some days earlier, and had chai with. She came later than planned, and explained that she had to negotiate with her parents about participating. She was permitted to only stay there for maximum of two hours and her father somewhat entrusted us the responsibility of taking care of her. The initial excuse for interaction with her and her friends, was their attraction to us as foreigners, and it seemed to us that this was the biggest motivation to come to the event. She said:

**“I came here to take selfies to show the others that I was here.”**

Regarding the women from the hostel, the possible explanation for their absence, might be connected to their life situation and relation

to their families. Like mentioned earlier, they almost never go out of their home, except for school or work. Therefore we had cultural norms facing us as a barrier. Furthermore, most of the women we have talked to faithfully follow the rules imposed by their parents. Going outside alone to do voluntary work together with strangers is an activity out of the ordinary.

Although the women did not participate on the event planned for them, the street vendors next to the wall, seemed very happy about the result. Hopefully, the project will inspire them to take better care of the environment around their shops. The participants of the event started taking pictures of themselves in front of the wall, and with today's rush on social media, the wall, with the message “Women Empowerment” will most likely be spread around the city in Facebook and Instagram.

## BEAUTIFICATION + GENTRIFICATION?

Although at first glance the proposal can be seen as a mere beautification projects, our proposal is intended to be more than just that. Since the goal is aimed at creating a platform for women to regain ownership of the city, the actions become less about the art on the wall and more about the symbolism behind them. Through



## IF WE COULD CONTINUE.

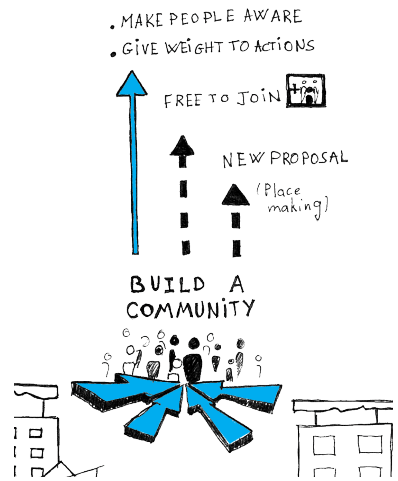


Fig.65 Drawing, if we would continue the project

reclaiming gendered spaces with an organization that deeply cares about the future of the city, the women can gain a sense of pride and begin caring about the city's environment, both ecological and social. As an extension to this, the women can participate in shaping the city in ways they are not often afforded the opportunity to do.

### LONG TERM

Ensuring that the proposals are sustained and managed over time is crucial to meaningful change. The true measure of success for which to measure the proposal is whether it can be generated and taken over by the girls in the area following our departure from the city. For this to happen, a connection between the Bhopal i-Clean Time and more women in the area is crucial. This could be done by one or several girls living in the hostel who could be in charge of encouraging more women to attend the i-Clean events. Including other women's organizations or other groups that focus on women's issues could add even more value to the events. For example the Shakti Squad could improve their outreach, visibility, and rapport in parts of Bhopal. Their presence in the area and collaboration with other women's group could signal to women that they should not shy away from appropriating their space.

### WAY FORWARD

Consequently, if we could continue, we would like to go to every girls hostel and coaching center, and talk with women about this gender equality as it relates to space. After that, we could create a group with people who feel concerned and want to invest some time. Working with them could lead to a new proposal, and why not start to draw the interactive map together?

The target is to build the women community in this area, first to have a group to represent females, but also to make other people mindful of the issue and allow them to join this community. In this way creating a group could give more weight to the proposed activities and the advocacy.



Fig.66 Picture of message on wall



Fig.67, Fig.68, Fig.69 Pictures of workshop with Bhopal i-Clean Team





Fig.70 Picture of wall in MP Nagar

## SUMMARY

From our first visits to Maharana Pratap Nagar zone I, we noticed that streets were full of men occupying every corner. Narrow streets and relatively high houses added to the feeling of insecurity and being watched. MP Nagar is situated in the new city of Bhopal in-between railway and the old city. These two elements are the foundations of the city, during the reign of the Begums of Bhopal. A significant part of history for the detail the reign of these women Muslim leaders, who reigned on the city for four generations from 1819 to 1926. What is now called as the old city of Bhopal extended towards south east direction. Bho-

pal becoming the capital of MP and attracting economic interests later led to development of MP Nagar which was planned as a wholesale regional market. This attracted different businesses such as coaching centers starting in the area. After this the need for affordable student accommodation was created.

As one can imagine, such condensed area is packed with a variety of stakeholders such as office workers, hostel residents as well as permanent residents in the area. An informal settlement and beggars are also found in MP Nagar zone I. Commercial setting attracts high quantities of informal

vendors who are occupying spaces on the streets.

Street vendors were the focus group at the very beginning, because of easy approachability. First attempts at using a visual method failed because of lack of our understanding. Semi-structured interviews were used to learn more about the different levels of informality and hierarchy between the vendors.

During a joint workshop with SPA Bhopal students difficulties were encountered while trying to approach one of the vendors again. This forced us to come up a visual method that would not be intrusive and would



help us gather more information. A post-it game was developed to distinguish strengths and needs of street vendor stalls. The only woman street vendor did not participate in the game, although she showed interest. At this point a milestone was reached. From gathered results it became obvious that in order to reach more stakeholders, broader issues should be addressed and even more importantly, to identify such issues, any input from women was lacking. To gather women's point of view ethnographic research was conducted by living in the girl's hostel.

The chosen hostel is situated on the opposite side of the street from vendors we worked with initially. Young women living in the hostel are from 16 to around 30 years old, from all over the country. They are either studying in coaching centers or working in the city. The hostel provides basic amenities, but does not provide enough privacy. The hostels often were started in commercial buildings which were not planned for residential purposes and lacks the possibilities to be adapted for the needs of women. The curfew time for the girl's hostels is 20:30 while in comparison boy's hostels are open until 22:00. When asked whether this is regarding safety in the area mixed answers were gathered depending of who we

asked. Girls were scared of going outside after curfew time.

After our experience at the girl's hostel we had a great deal of data and information to analyze. Some of the things we gathered from the methods turned out to be very important to the project. We learned that it is not common for women to roam around the city. One reason is their lack of free time. When they do go out it's usually for shopping, going to the movies. When the women do use public space they tend to just use them as transit zones to get from hostel to the coaching centers.

When asked about particular spaces in MP Nagar zone I they like or do not like they responded that likable places are ones that are populated but not crowded. Empty spaces were perceived as unsafe unless surveilled. Green areas are appreciated but underutilized because they are polluted and surrounded with traffic which also contributes to the pollution.

We also gathered from this method how important family was to the girls and how devoted they are to being obedient and loyal to the family values they have even though they are far from their parents and could deviate from their wishes if they wanted to.

After obtainining results from our stay at the hostel we summed up the topics into four categories: Underutilized public

spaces, fragmented sense of community, governing of women by the society, women's safety.

After we interpreted the results and placed them in the context, we sought the girls to verify our assumptions whether they thought these were relevant issues. We received confirmation through anonymous surveys, interviews with women and through talking with some girls of different hostels in Bhopal. They proved our assumptions by saying that there is no place for girls in this city. Our focus issue then became appropriating public space for women.

This idea of gendered spaces and inclusiveness has been discussed by many scholars as well as UN HABITAT implying that it is a global issue not just specific to India. The underrepresentation of women was obvious to us as women who were working in a male dominated area. Working at frequenting the area of the street vendors highlighted the general imbalance of the area. During our fieldwork we seldom got the point of view of women neither did we get the chance to work with them in our early participatory methods. This signals to us that they are likely not included in other decision making processes in the area. Addressing this issue not only helps women but other minorities as well. The UN says

spaces safe for women are safe for other marginalized groups as well.

Placemaking was chosen as a way to start forming our proposal for inclusive public spaces. Placemaking is a people based approach to urban planning. With small scale hands-on approaches locals themselves work on particular locations to develop tangible and more commonly intangible assets. Throughout time, involving more and more stakeholders could end in inclusive community who would address everyone's needs.

Smart city Bhopal has made guidelines for placemaking projects and conducted survey online about residents' needs in the city. Results and examples throughout the country and abroad suggest that placemaking could help to build a community in MP Nagar and help the area to develop inclusive public spaces.

For development of the idea, I-Clean Bhopal was reached, which is a non-profit organization doing beautification task all over the city every week. The organization consists of 200 people who are men and women of different ages.

For the proposal two ideas were developed. The core intention of both proposals is for women to become more active and conscious users of public spaces. In order to make an impact on the

design and governance of public space in a long term perspective, women need to participate in the democratic process of partaking in public.

First proposal – workshop with I-Clean Bhopal, where women of the area could join the volunteers on a project in the area that would be specifically focused on women. By doing this, women of MP Nagar zone I could become more aware of the places in their city and neighborhood, and together do changes to it which would hopefully lead to creating ownership of such spaces. By joining the I-Clean Bhopal team we can be catalysts to invite people, especially women, to work on a specific location in Zone I and appropriate a public space made by locals to locals. This workshop could be continued in various places in longer period in time and spread throughout the city with I-Clean Bhopal addressing not only cleanliness but also perceptions of public spaces and advocating the issue with the messages of their murals.

For the second proposal a co-creation of interactive map app of MP Nagar zone I is suggested. Together with the women, map out places in the area of MP Nagar zone I and include local tips. We observed that the majority of the women used their smartphone repeatedly, but do not seem to

use any map application for their daily navigation in the city. With creation of easy to understand and navigate vernacular visitor map – “Vernisitor”, Women could start exchanging knowledge, and showing each other recreational potential of MP Nagar zone I and later on the city. Such project could be funded by Smart City mission Bhopal trying to develop a city “that can provide a good quality life to its citizens” (Smart City Bhopal, 2018)

The first proposal was delivered as a workshop in collaboration with I-Clean Bhopal. A wall was suggested by the members from I-Clean Bhopal and the location was visible both from the street vendor stalls and the girls' hostel. More than 30 women, who we were in contact with, were invited to the event, regardless only one came. The event lacked local women's input, but unexpectedly, the vendors became found of the idea and happy about such initiative. The painted mural became attractive spot for picture taking, which hopefully will lead to attracting more attention to the theme of the mural – women empowerment. Expectantly, this will spark interest to the topic and continue the discussion on all-inclusive spaces around the city of Bhopal and maybe even further.



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