

Spatial Aspects of Public Spaces Identified as Sites of Protests. Examining Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract:

Public spaces in cities have also been arenas for civic engagement and political actions like protests. This paper examines the association between protests and spatial aspects of public spaces in the city of Hyderabad from the perspective of stakeholders and agencies concerned. This paper lists and presents the spatial and related aspects mentioned as reasons for identifying some of the public spaces as sites of protests in the city by agencies concerned in response to a questionnaire survey. Through analysis of the responses of the survey participants collected on an agreement scale, the paper indicates which sites and spatial aspects of public spaces in the city are mentioned more by agencies concerned in identifying them as sites of protests. Such an exploration also reveals which spatial aspects better qualify the public spaces as sites of protests as identified by the stakeholders. The study also adds to the current studies on protests and public spaces even as it especially presents a less studied stakeholder perspective on the topic.

Keywords: Public spaces, Protests, Protest activities, Stakeholders, Agencies concerned, Spatial aspects.

1. Introduction:

Public spaces are valuable arenas for democratic action which is highlighted by Parkinson, who argues that “public space matters because of the functional necessity of physical arenas for democratic action. Indeed, I claim that physical arenas matter even to action in virtual public spaces. Democratic debate in the news media, the internet, or in civil society still requires physical anchor points for the purposes of political dramatization and communication”^[1]. Further public spaces in cities are used for many activities but their political nature and longstanding value to political actions like protests is reflected in the statement captured in the paragraph from an article, which reads as “The nature of public space has, of course, always been intensely political, and in some ways contemporary protest is just the latest chapter in a millennia-old tussle between rulers and the ruled”^[2]. Public spaces are not merely forums for debate but also potent realms for the expression of dissent. The larger meanings, political and cultural value of public spaces in this regard are aptly captured in the observation as part of Low’s study on two plazas in San José, Costa Rica: “public spaces, such as the Costa Rican plaza, are one of the last democratic forums for public dissent in a civil society”^[3].

2. Literature review:

There are many valuable studies related to the topic that explore the association between space and protest activities. For example the paper “The Architecture of Repeated Rituals: Tel Aviv’s Rabin Square” explores, “relationship between architecture and civil participation by specifically looking at the formal attributes of Rabin Square in Tel Aviv”^[4]. The same paper examines the association between the design of the square and its assembly, through defining factors mentioned as “symbolic meaning, crowd configuration, order and surveillance”^[5] and refers to role of aesthetics in shaping the symbolic meaning of the public space reflected in the statement, “architectural aesthetics are often recruited to emphasize symbolic meaning”^[6]. The same paper also hints at the idea of practice of protests as a “repeated ritual through intentionality”^[7] in a given public space. Further Hatuka (Hatuka, T. 2023) notes that the design of protests is hinged on the “spatial form of gathering and the gaze of remote viewers”^[8]. The latter observation hints at the performative dimensions of public spaces as an important aspect and the former to the shape and geometry of public spaces in hosting and shaping protest activities. Another related study about publicness of public space refers to “centrality, connectivity, visual access, thresholds & access to place”^[9] constituting “physical configuration”^[10] as one of the meta dimensions qualifying the “publicness of public space”^[11]. In a conference paper that explores the relationship between urban space and protest studying two Egyptian squares it is observed that the effectiveness of Tahrir Square protests is due to its “higher degree of centrality, proximity and accessibility than Rabaa Al-Adawiya”^[12].

Another research paper through critique and theoretical argument explores association of physical spaces with the space of political realization and notes in its concluding para, “rather than the form, dimensions and topography, the symbolic aspect of public spaces proves to be of fundamental importance”^[13]. From another perspective, a study on association between power and space with focus on evolution of events in Seoul plaza and its transformation explores “how power influences a space which is a social product of the exercise of power, thus re-defining power in spatial practice”^[14]. A study on transformation of a public space in Egypt reviews “the development of Al-Qaed Ibrahim square throughout the Egyptian socio-political changes, with focus on the square’s urban and emotional contextual transformations”^[15]. Further some of the studies on protests in Hongkong, related to their spatiality refer to and are not limited to, “how the attitudinal impact of occupation has varied according to people's spatial proximity to the protest sites”^[16], investigation of “relationships between built environment features in urban spaces and the spatial distribution of HK protests”^[17], which study presents that “protests are spatially concentrated in areas with a high building density, high government and commerce POI density, high park density and metro accessibility, and an abundance of street greenery” and “high centrality and road density”^[18], and capturing spatial manifestation and navigation of the protests using time lapse videos dovetailed with crowd counting^[19]. In another research article spatial evolution of protest activity is examined and a spatial count model using Geocoded sample of protest events overtime in New York City is deployed to indicate that “protests become increasingly spatially concentrated, with a disproportionate amount of activism taking place on or in close proximity to privately owned public spaces. Spaces in close proximity to powerful organizational or institutional targets also experience heightened protest activity”^[20].

3. Research gap:

The literature review studies reveal that so far there is no comprehensive list of spatial aspects or feature

s collated against which the association between public space and protests can be examined. Further spatial aspects of public spaces reviewed with respect to protest activities are either set out or interpreted from various studies by the researchers and are not listed or built fully based on the opinion of the agencies or stakeholders concerned. This paper addresses these crucial research gaps in the studies pertaining to the topic and builds a notable study model based on stakeholders' opinion.

4. Objectives:

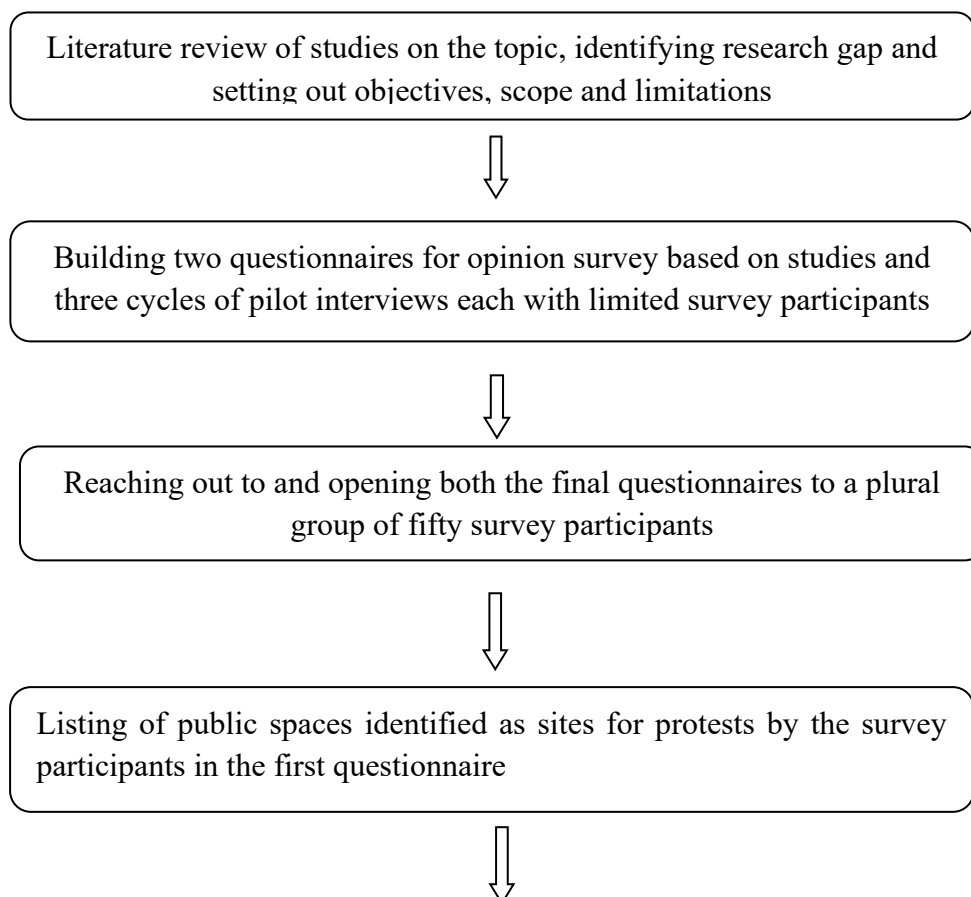
The objectives of this paper are,

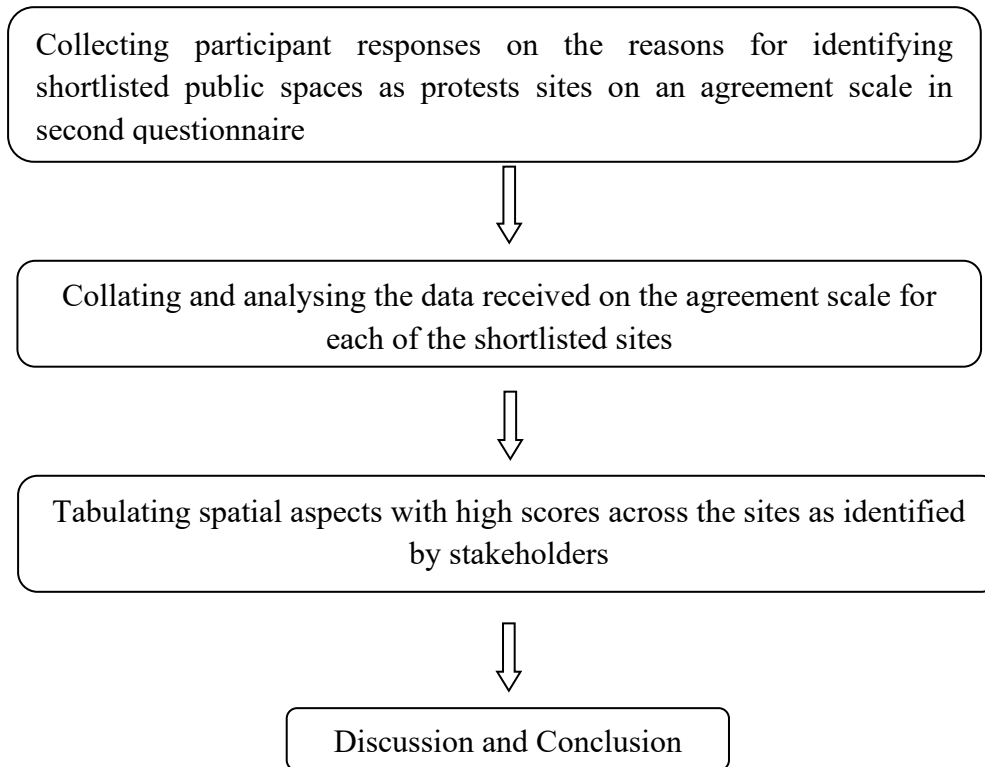
- To shortlist public spaces in the city identified as sites for protest activities through a questionnaire survey by agencies concerned.
- To find out which common spatial aspects or features of the shortlisted public spaces in the city are mentioned more as reasons in identifying them as sites for protest activities by the agencies or stakeholders concerned.
- Build a brief repertoire of spatial aspects that better qualify some of the public spaces as protest sites.

5. Methodology:

The method adapted navigates through literature survey, building of questionnaires based on studies and pilot interviews, conducting the survey with fifty participants, shortlisting of protest sites as identified by them, analysis of participant responses collected on an agreement scale , and shortlisting of most identified spatial aspects by them, as elucidated below .

Figure 1: Methodology chart.





5.1. Questionnaire survey: The questionnaire survey is organized in two parts. The first questionnaire asks the participants in the survey to name prominent public spaces in the city which they consider are used for protest activities. The questionnaire provides a list of sites against which participants in the survey can tick mark identified sites for protests. The list of sites in the first questionnaire is developed through three cycles of pilot interviews with limited participants in each cycle till sites list reached fair level of saturation before opening for full survey with fifty participants .

The second questionnaire shown below asks the survey participants to shortlist one or two sites from the first list of sites named by them in the first questionnaire and asks them to mention the reasons which they consider contribute to the qualification of the shortlisted public spaces as sites of protest against a graded scale of importance. The reasons are briefly descriptive for the survey participants to understand them, yet they have spatial connotations useful for further analysis. A substantial part of the responses for both the questionnaires were collected through in person interviews facilitating prospect of clarifications if any to participants and some were collected through Google forms and few others through telephonic interviews as per survey participants’ preference.

Table 1: Second questionnaire.

Spatial aspects.	Sub spatial aspects.
Classification	Reasons to be ticked which participants consider contribute to the given public space as a site used for protests against an agreement scale which enables them to qualify their opinion either as, Most important reason or aspect, One of the important reason or aspect, Not so important but notable reason or aspect and, Not at all an important reason or aspect. (Table 3&4 show demonstration).

Cause related.	<p>Because the public space is used to protest on specific or local area causes, or any or many causes.</p> <p>Due to its capacity for accommodating crowd numbers.</p>
Centrality & Prominence.	<p>Because of its location, centrality, (centrally located).</p> <p>Because the public space is a prominent place for protests in the city.</p>
Proximity & Land use	<p>Due to proximity of the public space to parks, important government buildings like the, Legislative Assembly, Secretariat, Raj bhavan, DGP office, etc., other buildings like a press club, political party or union office , assembly or community halls , cultural buildings, hotels, etc.,</p> <p>Because the public space is in a specific land use zone like administrative or historic district or mixed use or commercial, residential, etc., area of the city.</p> <p>Because of bustling activity around the peripheries of the public space.</p>
Connectivity & Accessibility	<p>Because the public space is well connected to public transport, city bus, metro, and easily reachable.</p>
Connectivity & Accessibility	<p>Because the public space is reached from many city roads.</p> <p>Because the public space has no physical obstructions and is accessible to use it.</p> <p>Because the public space is pedestrian friendly.</p>
Routes & related	<p>Because the public space is on a major city road or spine or on important connecting city routes.</p> <p>Because it is at a road intersection or road junction.</p> <p>Because rallies either start or go enroute or end here.</p>
State & related	<p>Because the public space is a State - designated space for protests.</p> <p>Because it is easier to obtain police permission to organize protests here.</p>
Visual aspect	<p>Because there are no visual obstructions to see the public space or site.</p> <p>Because it is fully visible also from near distance and has transparent boundaries and edges.</p>
Visibility & performative	<p>Because the public space has potential for grievance redressal and visibility to authorities.</p> <p>Because it is a public space of high visibility with potential for media coverage and publicity.</p> <p>Because the public space obstructs city traffic for high visibility of protest events.</p>
Practice of protest	<p>Because the site or public space has a history of, protests or long years of practice protests.</p> <p>Because of regularity of protests that occur in the site or public space.</p>
Symbolic, memory & related	<p>Because of the presence of a statue or a landmark structure in the site or public space.</p> <p>Because of, the presence of a commemorative memorial or sthupam in the site or public space or because of the site being in a historic or heritage precinct.</p>

Symbolic, memory & related	Because of important or memorable or seminal protest events that have happened in the site or public space. Because there are buildings of symbolic importance around the public space or site.
Space & Convenience	Because the site or public space is off through traffic of the city & does not obstruct other day to day city activities or city traffic. Because it is convenient to organize Dias, tie banners etc in the public space.
Space & Convenience	Because there are roads around the public space for easy movement of people. Because there is adequate room for un-hampered mobilization of people. Because it has a regular shape for convenient crowd or assembly configuration. Because of availability of adjacent open space or spaces to the site. Because the site or public space is adjacent to community halls or auditoriums. Because the public space or site has convenient entrances & exits.
Amenities	Because of the availability of amenities like water and sanitation in the site during protest events. Because of the availability of parking facility in the site or public space.
Comfort & aesthetics	Because of presence of many trees and prospect of shade, benches for comfort in the public space. Because of the aesthetics or aesthetical appeal of the public space or site. Because of presence of Illumination in the public space.
Capital city	Because the public space is located in the Capital city of the State.

5.2. Building the questionnaire: The reasons listed in the questionnaire table are spatial and related aspects or features collected firstly from review of studies related to protests and spatial aspects of public spaces. Secondly the reasons in the questionnaire table over and above their collation from studies are consolidated as per inputs from survey participants in three rounds of pilot interviews like the method adapted for the first questionnaire, each with limited number of survey participants from the agencies concerned until the list of reasons reached saturation. Following this stage the questionnaire is opened up to collect responses from fifty participants. The classification of the reasons indicated in the first column of the table is undertaken for grouping reasons of similar nature with spatial connotations, legible organization of the table and importantly for analysis. Further for the purpose of the study, the spatial connotations are considered as spatial aspects and the detailed reasons as sub spatial aspects of public spaces. Also though few categories in the classification column, viz., “cause related”, “State and related” and “practice of protests” are not physical spatial aspects, they have a bearing on the protest activities in a given public space as reflected in ensuing analysis. Importantly these aspects were mentioned as reasons in identifying given public spaces for protests by various agencies or stakeholders concerned during the interviews.

5.3: Participants in the opinion survey: The paper presents responses from a total of fifty respondents who participated in the opinion survey. The total of fifty survey participants includes representatives of political parties and unions, journalists, police personnel connected with law and order and surveillance,

advocates, researchers and activists, experts from the domains of urban planning, urban design, architecture, heritage conservation, landscape design, political science and others.

5.4 Scope and limitations: The scope of the study is limited to collating and analysing responses from the opinion survey, highlighting spatial aspects or features of the public spaces mentioned as reasons for identifying them as sites for protest activities by agencies or stakeholders concerned. Though the questionnaire is built from a combination of literature survey and inputs from survey participants in pilot interviews, each of the participant groups could show a bias in expressing certain kinds of opinions. However, the given diversity of agencies or stakeholder groups facilitates more balanced outcomes in the analysis of their responses to the survey.

The study is based on the opinions of the survey participants, which cover a broad range of spatial and related aspects, and is not about collecting only their mental images of the visual quality of the public spaces which they mentioned as sites for protest activities. Other aspects not in the scope of this paper include and are not limited to the study of typology and frequency of protests, protest behaviours of the agencies concerned, protest crowd densities, and their spatial association.

The list of public spaces identified as sites for protest activities by agencies concerned is not an exhaustive list of all such spaces in the city, but includes a fair diversity of locations. This paper is part of a larger body of work on the topic and is limited to an analysis of the spatial aspects of public spaces identified as protest sites by concerned agencies or stakeholders. The detailed analysis of sub spatial aspects is presently not included in the scope of this paper.

5.5. Shortlisting protest sites: In response to the first questionnaire, survey participants tick-marked public spaces they consider to be prominent sites for protest activities. Each survey participant can tick any number of public spaces from the questionnaire list as protest sites. In the opinion survey, it is observed that certain public spaces were identified as protest sites more number of times by the survey participants. Therefore, although fifty participants in the survey have given their opinions, the total number of times they identified spaces as protest sites will be more than survey participants number.

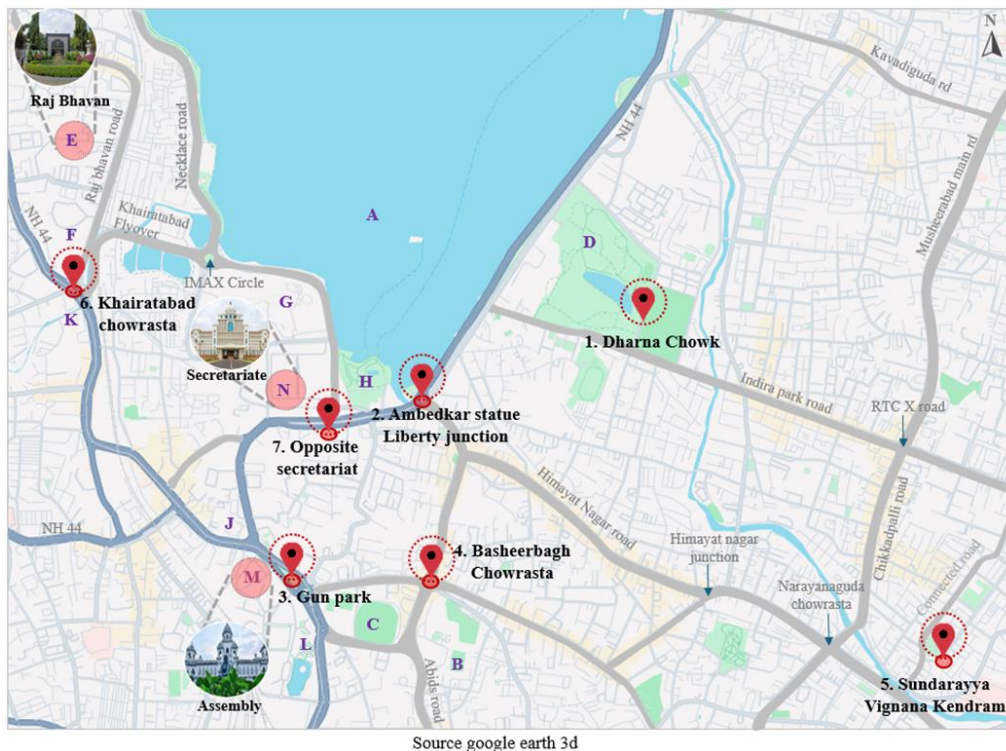
In the table below, the names of public spaces identified as prominent protest sites are listed in the first column, and the number of times they were identified as protest sites by agencies or stakeholders concerned are listed in the second column. Spaces or sites that are identified at least four times are considered to represent a fair majority of consensus among survey participants and are highlighted .Of these sites top three sites namely Dharna Chowk ,Ambedkar statue, Gun park, sites based on the number of times they were identified by survey participants as sites of protests are taken up for analysis .

T\$able 2: Shortlisted protest sites.

Public spaces identified as prominent sites of protests by agencies concerned or stakeholders	Number of times they were identified as protest sites by agencies, (Responses).
Ambedkar Statue, Liberty, Tank bund.	14
Basheerbagh Chowrasta.	8
Begumpet Airport.	1
Charminar Mecca.	1
Dharna Chowk, Indira Park.	41
Golconda "X"roads.	2

G.P.O,Abids.	2
Gun Park,Indira park.	11
KhairatabadChowrasta.	5
Malakpet “X” roads.	1
Mojamjahimarket.	1
MoosarambaghChowrasta.	1
NCC Gate, Osmania university.(O.U.)	1
Necklace Road.	1
Nizam College grounds.	1
Osmania university Arts college.	3
Opposite Secretariat	4
Paradise Circle, Secunderabad.	1
Parklane Gandhi statue, Secunderabad.	2
Rethiphalbus stand.	1
RTC “X”roads.	2
Secunderabad Clock tower.	2
Somajiguda Press club	1
SundarayyaVignanaKendram, BaghLingampally.	6
TarnakaChowrasta.	1
UppalChowrasta.	1
YMCA Chowrasta, Garden restaurant, Secunderabad.	1
Total of responses	116

Figure 2: Shortlisted protest sites map.



- A. Hussain sagar lake B. Nizam college Grounds C. LB Stadium D. Indira Park
 E. Raj Bhavan F. Administrative Staff College of India G. NTR Gardens
 H. Lumbini park J. Ravindra Bharathi K. Vishweshwarayya Bhavan
 L. Public garden M. Legislative Assembly N. Secretariat

6. Data and Analysis:

The responses from the opinion survey about identifying public spaces as sites of protests by stakeholders are collected against an agreement scale and scores of spatial aspects are arrived at as indicated in the following demonstration tables. The demonstration, assumes responses given by a single survey participant for one of the spatial aspects in Table 3, and considers actual scores pertaining to one of the shortlisted site for data collected on three of the spatial aspects in Table 4, below.

Table 3: Demonstration table.

Demonstration of score for “Proximity and Land use” spatial aspect as a sample case.					
Classification. (Spatial aspects)	Reasons which stakeholders consider contribute to the given public space as a site used for protest activities(Sub spatial aspects)	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)
		Most important aspect	One of the important aspect	Not so important but notable aspect	Not at all important aspect
Cause related	Because it is used to protest specific or local area causes				
	Because it is used to protest on any or many causes				
	Due to its capacity for crowd numbers				
Centrality & Prominence	Because of its Location / centrality (centrally located)				
	Because it is a Prominent place for protests				
Proximity & Land use (0.6)*	Due to its Proximity to Government buildings / Legislative Assembly, Secretariat, Raj bhavan, DGP office etc.,	4			
	Due to its Proximity to other buildings like press club / party office / assembly halls / cultural buildings/hotels, etc.,		3		
	Due to its Proximity to parks			2	
	Because it is in a specific land use zone: administrative, historic district, mixed use, commercial, residential,				1

	etc.,				
	Because of bustling activity around peripheries			2	
Contnd...					

The four points agreement scale assigns weightage values to the level of responses of the survey participants shown as (4), (3), (2), (1), in the top row of the table above. The scale moves from (1/4) 0.25 to (2/4) 0.5 to (3/4)0.75 to full score of (4/4)1 for a typical spatial aspect.

For example, the score for “Proximity and Landuse” aspect, assuming response given by a single participant as indicated in the table 6.1,above will be $(4/4+3/4+2/4+1/4+2/4) \times 1/5$ (number of sub spatial aspects) which is **0.6***.

Therefore considering responses of all the participants, the “aspect sum score” for each spatial aspect will be the total of all participants response scores for that aspect.

Table 4: Demonstration of three spatial aspects scores collected for one of the sites. Dharna chowk.

	Spatial aspects	Aspect Sum score	% mean score (scores x 100/41 responses *)	% Contribution (Scores/total of scores x100)
1	Cause Related	28.500	69.512 (28.5x 100/41)	7.406 (28.50/ 384.831x100) Total
2	Centrality & Prominence	36.500	89.024	9.485
3	Proximity & Land use	23.300	56.829	6.055

* Number of responses is referred to from Table 2.0

7. Sites & analysis graphs:

Survey participants responses pertaining to three shortlisted sites namely Dharna Chowk ,Ambedkar statue, Gun park are shown in bar graphs under respective sites below. The bar graphs capture the percentage mean scores of all spatial aspects for each of the cited sites, as per the demonstration indicated in the Tables 3 and 4 above .

7.1. Dharna Chowk: “For over two decades, 'Dharna Chowk' near Indira Park in the heart of the city, has been the main centre for thousands of protests by political parties, people's organizations, employees' unions, students' groups and others”(The News Minute,15th May 2017). “Dharna Chowk, a designated “assembly space” near the centre of Hyderabad, India’s fourth largest and fourth wealthiest city, has been the site of thousands of political demonstrations since its creation in the late 1990s”^[21]. The chowk is located on the road between Indira Park which is a city level recreational space and the NTR stadium which is the name of a multipurpose open space used for many public events. As part of these two open spaces, the Dharna Chowk is positioned in an ample public open space amenable for assemblies located in a dense central part of the city. The chowk is integrated with the city road network. The NTR stadium which is immediately adjacent to Dharna Chowk is surrounded by service roads on all four sides.



Figure 3.:Dharna Chowk protest, Indira Park.

Photograph from “Photo Gallery: Capture Dharna Chowk Protest In Hyderabad,” by Praveen K (2017, May 16), Oneindia.

Sourcelink:<https://www.oneindia.com/photos/photo-gallery-capture-dharna-chowk-protest-in-hyderabad-56349.html>

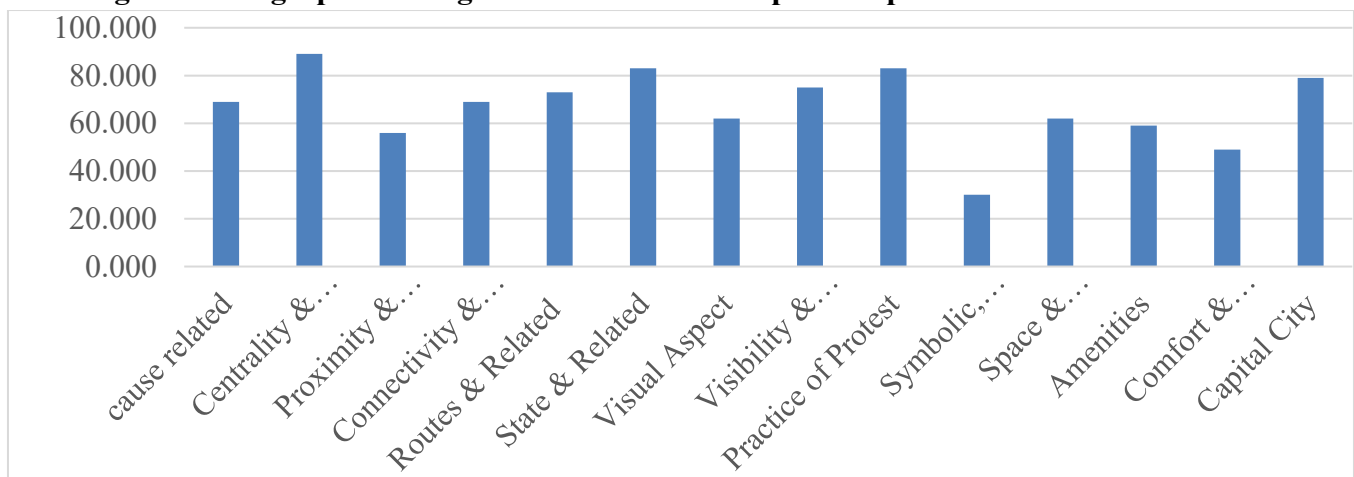


Fig 4:Dharna Chowk protest, Indira Park.

Photograph by **P. Surendra**, published in “Massive rally in Hyderabad against Citizenship Amendment Act” by **K. Garari&D. P. Sunku** (2020, January 5), DC.Source

link:<https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/currentaffairs/050120/hyderabad-says-no-to-citizenship-amendment-act.html>

Figure 5:Bar graph showing % mean score of all spatial aspects for Dharna chowk site.



7.2. Dr BR. Ambedkar statue at Liberty Junction near Tank bund: The statue is located at a high-visibility node close to the Secretariat, at the intersection of the road from Basheerbagh chowrasta and the road from the Secretariat side towards Secunderabad across Tankbund, built along the Hussainsagar Lake. The statue lends symbolic value to the street junction. Further, “the Ambedkar statue at Tank Bund has long been a symbolic gathering point for marginalised communities, especially those advocating for Dalit rights” (The Siasat Daily, 23rd October, 2024).



Figure 6: Ambedkar statue, Liberty Junction.

Photo retrieved from

Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2669759136398510&set=pcb.2669759183065172>



Figure 7: Ambedkar statue, Liberty Junction.

Retrieved from Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/DFINfqWTfsG/?img_index=4

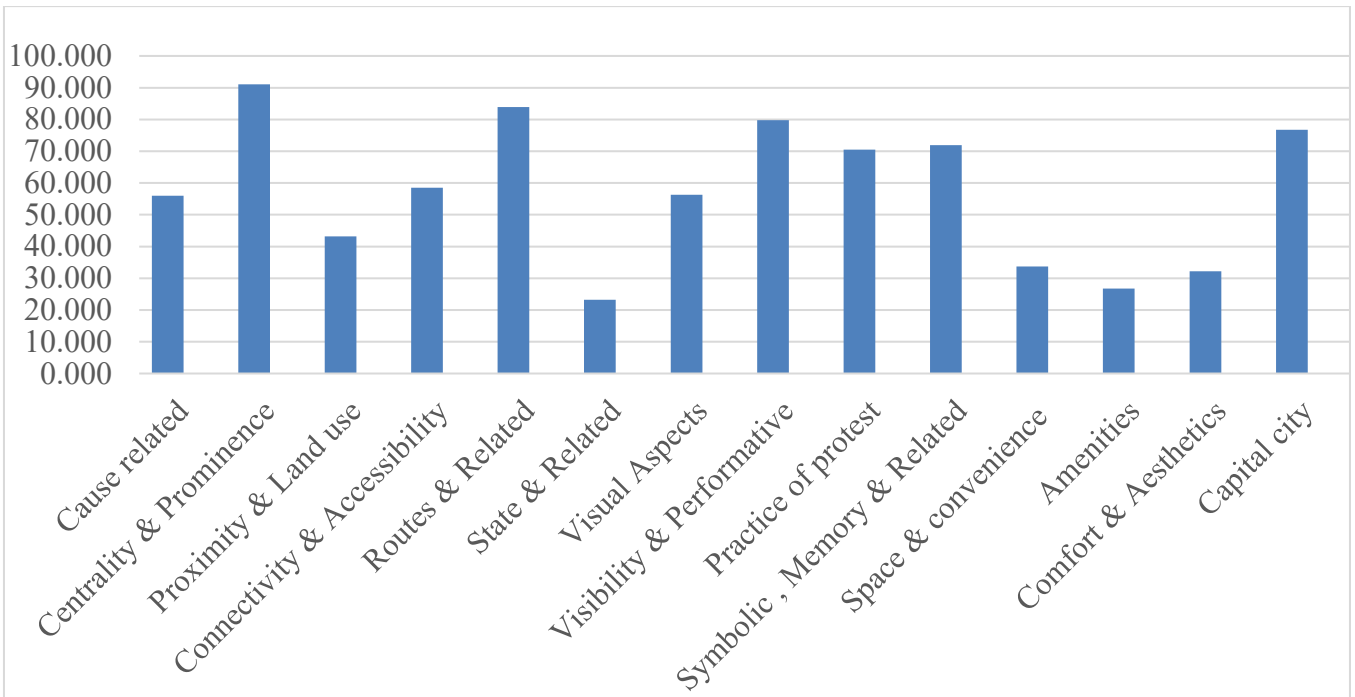


Figure 8: Bar graph showing % mean score of all spatial aspects for Ambedkar statue site.

7.3. Gun park: The site is located immediately opposite the Legislative Assembly and Public gardens which is a spacious city level park, Ravindra Bharathi an auditorium for cultural events, and is also close to L.B.Stadium, Basheerbagh chowrasta and the Secretariat.

A martyr’s memorial of high symbolic value built in memory of many students and activists who died during the “Movement for Telangana State” [22], marks the heart of the park which is a triangular island surrounded by roads. The site has witnessed seminal protests over time.



Figure 9: Gun Park, Hyderabad

Photographs from *Slight tension at Gun Park in Hyderabad*, **Eenadu**. Retrieved January 7, 2026, from <https://www.eenadu.net/photos/playimages/slight-tension-at-gunpark-in-hyderabad/1/11225>

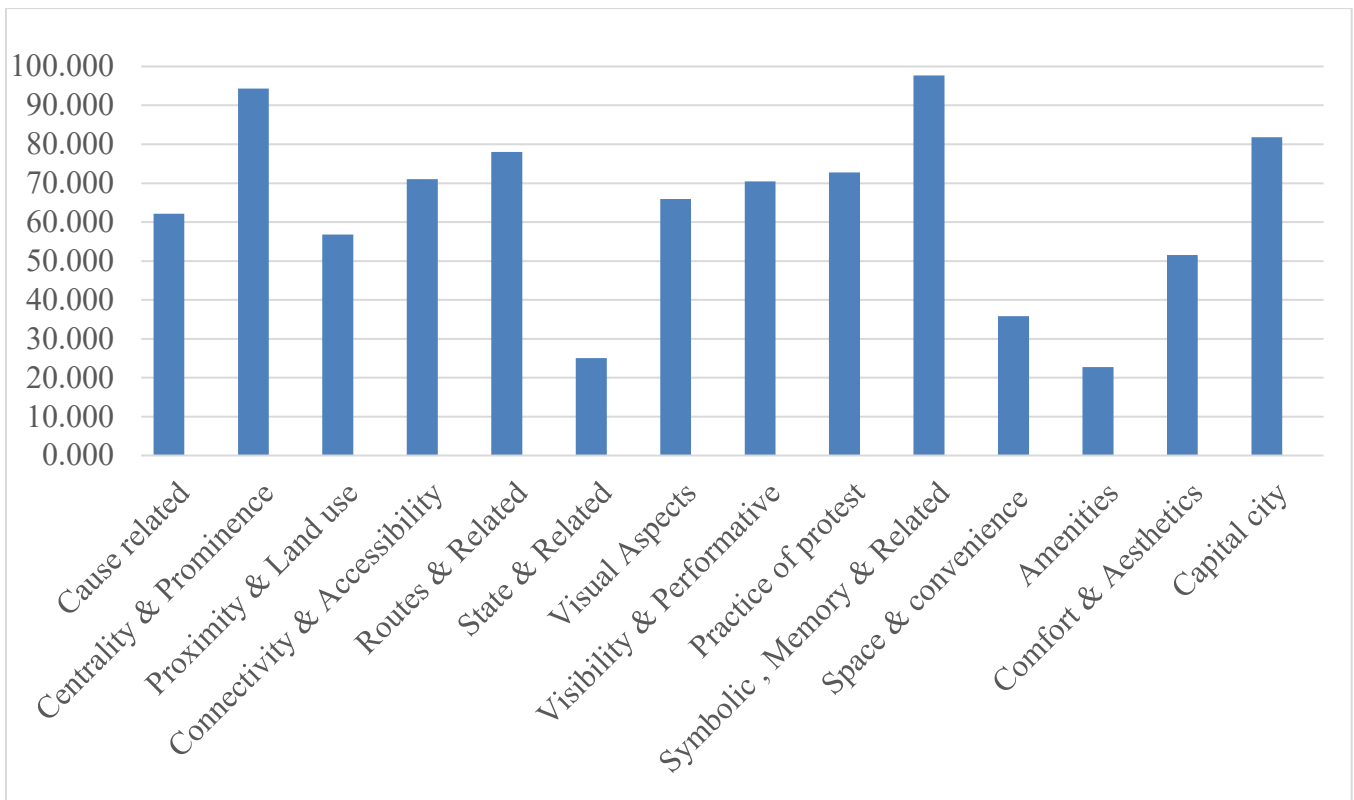


Figure 10: Bar graph showing % mean score of all spatial aspects for Gun Park site

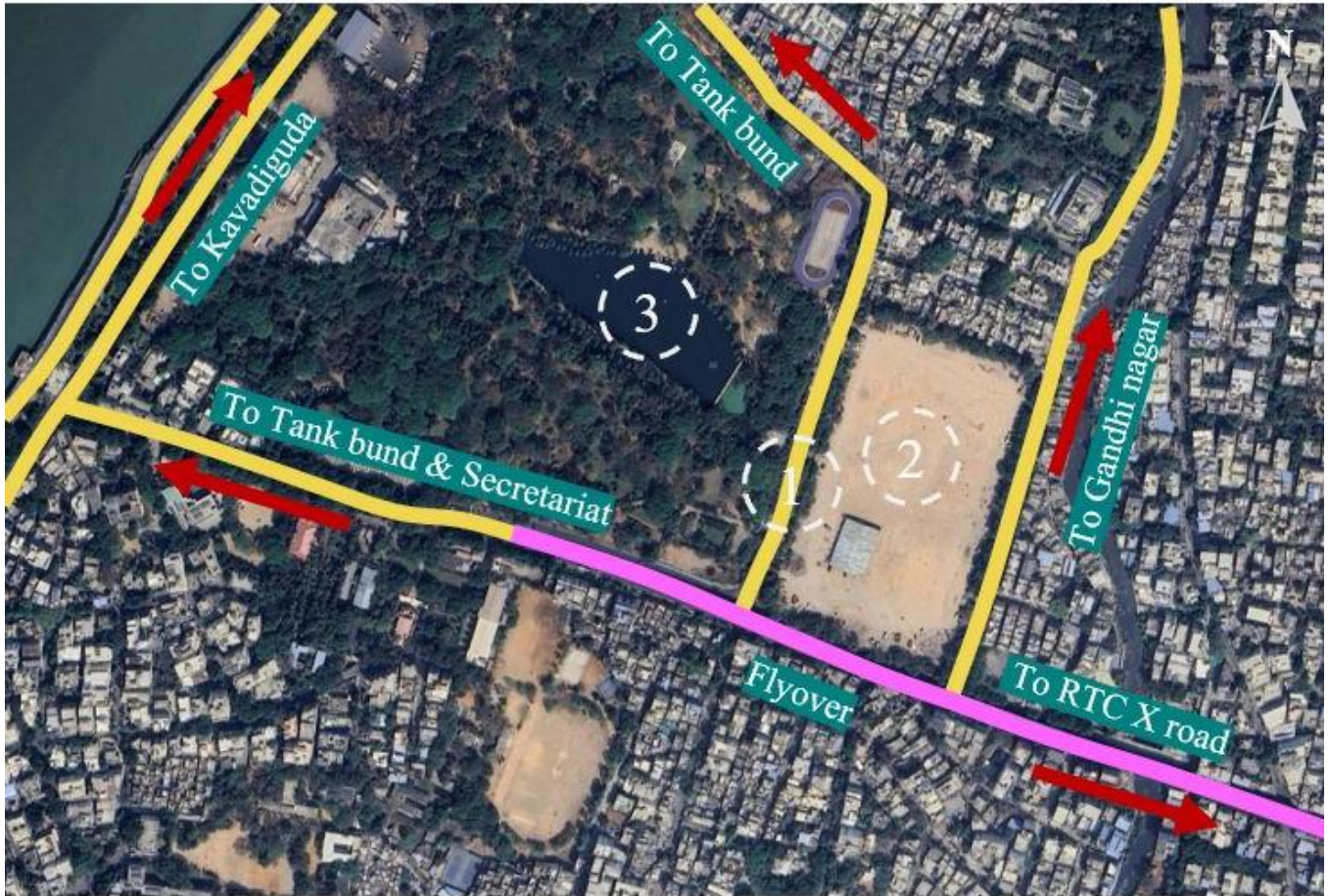
8. Discussion:

8.1 Dharna Chowk - For the Dharna Chowk site, the peaking scores include “centrality and prominence”, “State and related”, and “practice of protest” aspects. The location of the space as part of the prominent Indira park and NTR stadium multipurpose open space ensemble, as a pause point in the dense urban fabric and urban structure well connected to city’s street network along with many city roads leading to or opening out of the space, its proximity to Secretariat and Legislative Assembly and Tank Bund across the Hussain Sagar lake, together guide the reading of centrality of the space by survey participants. Further, as the Chowk is an officially designated place for protests and demonstrations, many survey participants have noted that it is easier to obtain police permission to organise protest events or activities. This is a significant reason for identifying the space as a protest site by them, more than other sites on the list.

The site has witnessed innumerable protests and demonstrations on a wide range of issues over time and remains a highly used and prominent public space for protest, attracting significant media coverage. There are no statues in this space, which explains the low score for the ‘symbolic, memory and related’ aspect in the questionnaire table.

The “space and convenience” and “amenities” aspects have a notable score, even as the site is set apart from the main circulation arteries or thoroughfares of the city, with an adjacent multipurpose spill-over open space surrounded by service roads along its perimeter, and informal shops and eateries towards the residential areas. As the protest site is close to the Legislative Assembly, Secretariat and the Tank bund built across Hussain Sagar Lake, many protest rallies start from here to reach these government buildings and other public institutions.

Figure 11: Dharna chowk spatial context.



Source google earth 3d

1. Dharna Chowk 2. NTR Stadium, Multipurpose Open Space 3. Indira Park

8.2. Ambedkar Statue: The Ambedkar statue site is very close to the Secretariat; it serves as a fulcrum that connects important city routes and the Tank Bund across Hussain Sagar. It is a dynamic node in the urban structure, characterized by the constant movement of automobiles and people, with the prospect of high visibility for protest events, and marked by the Dr BR Ambedkar statue, which lends symbolic value to the junction and the surrounding area. Therefore, protest demonstrations here also draw significant media attention. Due to these reasons, the site scores high on “centrality and prominence”, “routes and related”, “visibility and performative”, followed by “symbolic and related” aspects. Further given the frequent demonstrations that take place in this space for causes related to, and not limited to, human and civil rights, policy, social justice, and others, the site scores notably on the ‘practice of protest’ aspect as well. Many protest rallies either start or end here. The “space and convenience” and “amenities” aspects understandably do not have a notable score, even as the site is a road intersection with less open space around the statue. Nevertheless, protest events spill over around this place and often block city traffic, thereby increasing their visibility.

Figure 12: Ambedkar Statue site spatial context.

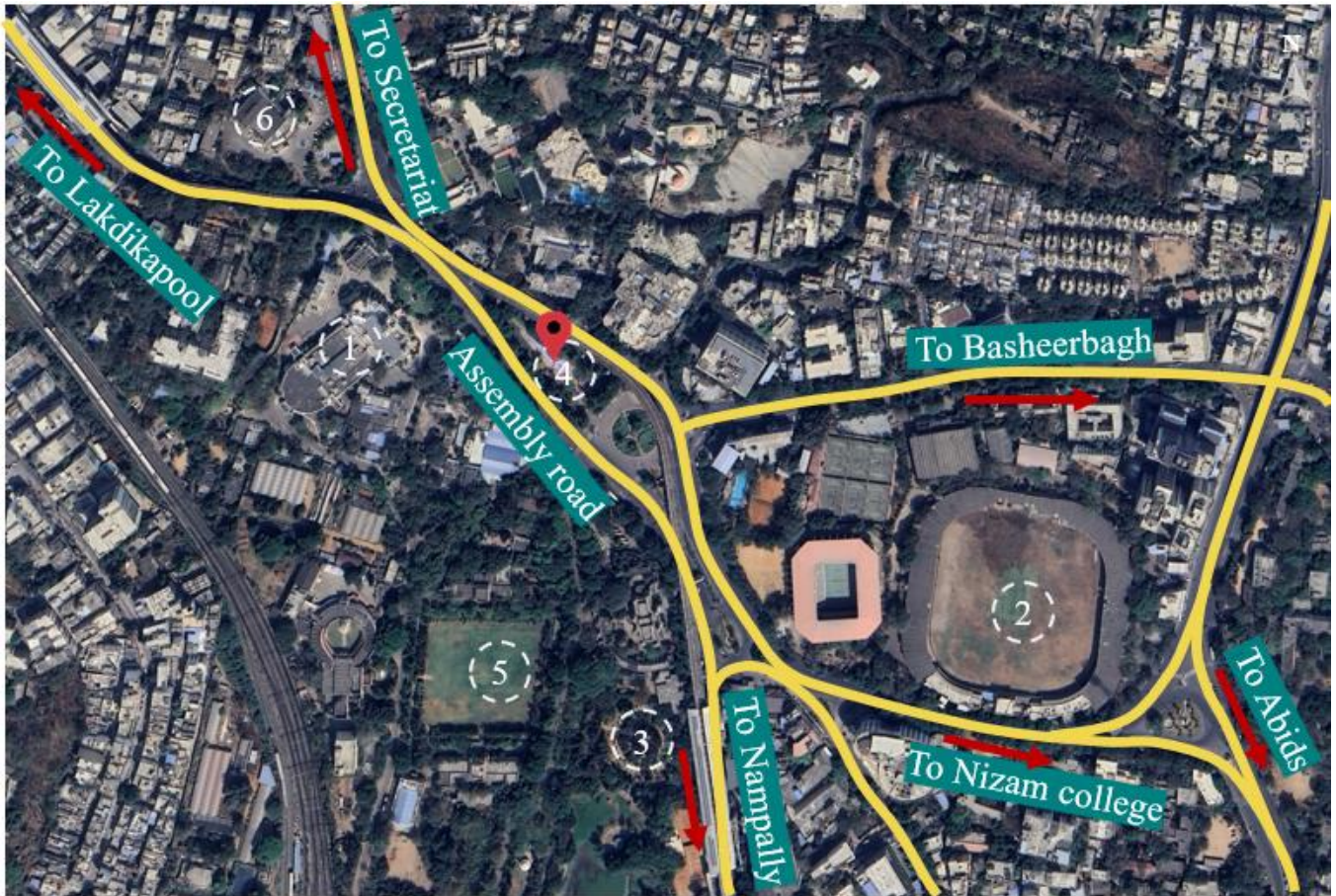


Source google earth 3d

- | | | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. GHMC | 2. Lumbini park | 3. Secretariat | 4. Telangana amarula smararakam |
| | 5. Ambedkar statue liberty junction | 6. Hussain Sagar lake | |

8.3 Gun Park - The Gun park site holds high symbolic value due to, the presence of the Martyrs memorial and its history as a site for seminal protests, including the ‘Movement for Telangana state’ (Ram, M.K., 2007). The public space is centrally located in a prominent civic space opposite the Legislative Assembly and is surrounded by other important public buildings. Connected by a network of roads and city routes, it serves as a unique pause point, imbued with memory, within the urban structure. The site is used by various agencies for civic engagement and political expression. Accordingly, the site scores high on “symbolic, memory and related”, “centrality and prominence”, and “routes and related” aspects. Its proximity to civic and public buildings gives it a notable score on the “proximity and land use” aspect. The “comfort and aesthetics” aspect also records a notable score, as the Martyrs memorial structure sits in a compact, well-laid-out garden. However, being in a sensitive security precinct opposite the Legislative Assembly, the site scores very low in the “State and regulated” aspect category.

Figure 13: Gun Park site spatial context



Source google earth 3d

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Legislative Assembly | 2. L.B. Stadium | 3. Archaeology Museum |
| 4. Gun park | 5. Public Gardens | 6. Ravindra Bharathi |

8.4: Table of shortlisted spatial aspects of sites: The most common spatial aspects qualifying public spaces as protest sites identified by agencies concerned above 80% mean score are shown below.

Table 5: Shortlisted spatial aspects of sites with high scores including and above 80%.

% Mean score	Dharna chowk site	Ambedkar statue site	Gun park site
90 to 100 range		Centrality and prominence, aspect.	Symbolic, Memory & related, Centrality and prominence, aspects.
80 to 90 range	Centrality and prominence, State and related*, Practice of protests aspects.	Routes and related, Visibility and performative, aspects.	Capital city, aspect.

From the bar graphs and the Table 5, above it can be observed that there is variation in the significance or importance given to spatial aspects by survey participants across protest sites. However there are

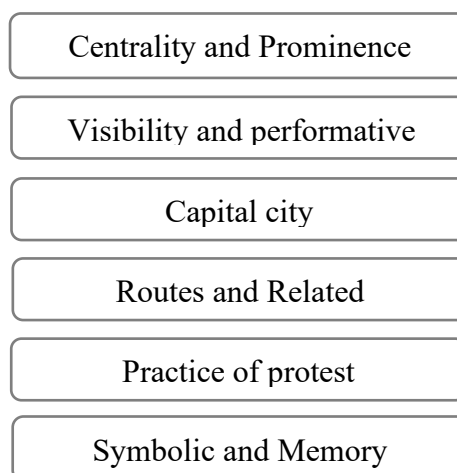
commonalities in the high score range of spatial aspects. Except for the Gun park site, which scores high on the symbolic aspect category, the “centrality and prominence” aspects score higher than other spatial aspects. This is followed by “routes and related”, “visibility and performative” and the “practice of protest” aspects. Further all the sites have recorded significant scores in the “capital city” aspect category, even as many survey participants have mentioned that a site’s location in the capital city, which houses important public and civic buildings, enhances the prospect of grievance redressal by authorities concerned and also media coverage.

* Except for the Dharna Chowk site, no other site is an officially designated site for protest activities and demonstrations. Therefore state and related aspect score is an exception specific to the Dharna chowk site and is not a common aspect with high score identified for other sites by agencies concerned.

9. Conclusion:

The study finds an association between protests and the spatial aspects of public spaces in the city of Hyderabad, as examined from the perspectives of stakeholders and concerned agencies. Reference to spatial aspects of public spaces figures in their identification as sites of protest by concerned agencies or stakeholders. Further, it is found that certain spatial aspects of public spaces are mentioned more often by the agencies concerned in identifying them as sites of protests with high % mean scores, as shown in the table 5. These include “centrality and prominence”, “visibility and performative”, “capital city”, “routes and related” aspects, and “practice of protest” aspects and “symbolic and memory” aspect. The findings also align with the actual spatial context of public spaces, as highlighted in the discussion above. This clearly indicates that certain spatial aspects identified by concerned agencies or stakeholders better qualify some of the public spaces in the city as sites for, protests, and by implication also for civic engagement, political expressions and actions.

Figure 14: Most identified spatial aspects



10. Prospect of new methodological framework:

While this study is about reading public spaces and protests from a stakeholder perspective, it develops a new generic questionnaire model for studying the topic. The paper also develops a new model for building such a questionnaire, based on a combination of earlier studies on the topic and stakeholder input from repeated cycles of pilot interviews. Together, they constitute prospect of a new methodological framework hinged on stakeholder perspective for further studies on the association

between space and protests, which may vary in their details from city to city, case to case and context.

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