EXPLORING THE URBAN DESIGN ELEMENTS TO REFURBISH THE IDENTITY OF MYSORE CITY

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ABSTRACT

A city is a composition of many attributes and they vary in magnitude and importance. The physical attributes are the longest surviving entities; be it organically evolved, historically developed or newly added. They form an integral part any city and they withstand time. The cities with strong history consist of many urban design elements which have helped in establishing the character of the city. Exploring these elements in the context of its setting gives an idea about the degree of impact it does in refurbishing the identity of a city. A methodology using composite space syntax matrix is used to graphically analyse the elements present in the Mysore city.

INTRODUCTION

In Mysore, urban design is expressed in totality through the following elements: landmarks, statues, public spaces, clock towers, nodes, vista and axis, street scape, boulevards, parks etc. The elements range from the streetscape to the smallest detail like railing; all together bring in identity to the Mysore city. Most of these features are seen in the palace and its immediate precinct; being the initial area of development within the city. The development during 1900-1950 mainly focused on establishing the 'city of character' in all respect. Mysore was developed as the center in its geographical location catering to all the surrounding towns and became center of education, health, art and culture, governance, administration etc. These activities/functions were housed in buildings designed for the purpose. The spatial planning and design of the city was kept in mind while designing individual building so the outcome was a unified character tied together with the similar dialogue of design in each. The future requirement was also considered during the design process from space allocation to road network.

ELEMENTS PRESENT IN MYSORE CITY FABRIC

The city scape is provided with elements to accentuate the vistas, axis etc., at strategic locations. These identified urban design elements like nodes, landmarks, clock towers, gateways have been analysed using composite space syntax matrix wherein it is tested to see the surrounding land uses are 'compatible' or 'not compatible' to the elements chosen so as to help in continuing the image and identity of Mysore city which is in transition. In the analysis only one example for each element has been taken up. From the field survey it is found that the elements which are associated with character of the city are mainly found in the city core and even these are under threat of being taken away due to various developmental projects. Outside the core area, these image and character have not been continued; mainly because Mysore lost its importance of being the capital of Mysore state after 1950 where in Bangalore became the capital of Karnataka state. The economic condition of the city was not in the state to take up too much developmental work as the revenue generated was distributed to the most required and important works for public welfare. The stakeholders lacked vision of the forefathers and failed to understand the design and planning strategies in continuing the character which was established. This paper is an attempt to explore the elements to refurbish the identity of Mysore city which is in its transition due to development paradigm.

Landmarks

In the urban fabric of Mysore, the landmarks bring in robustness and are one of the main entities in helping to establish the character of the city which is in transition. Chamundi hill is the major landmark and is seen from a distance as Mysore is approached from other places. From fine grain of residential to coarse grain of public buildings is part of the urban fabric of Mysore. There are many landmarks spread around the palace up to a distance of about 2-3km and beyond and most of these buildings are public buildings, palaces, administrative building, educational institutions etc.   Each of these buildings are different in their design and mark their own identity yet unified together in the use of proportion, massing, architectural details etc., which makes them part of the same built environment and establishes the identity of the city. Town hall with its huge foreground, Deva raja Market, KR Hospital, Railway office, Lansdowne building, Jag Mohan Palace, City corporation, Sanskrit Pathashala, Irrigation office, Kaveri emporium building, DC Office, Oriental Research building, Crawford hall, Jayalakshmi Vilas, Mansion at CFTRI, Summer palace, Zoo, Lalith Mahal palace, Administrative Training Institute and Mounted Police building etc., are few to be listed. Apart from the above, there are many residential

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villas and commercial buildings which further helps in establishing the character of the city. The proportion, contextual setting, architectural detailing, massing, colour scheme are all similar in most of these building yet distinct in its overall design.

Lansdowne Building
Designed and placed to function as a commercial complex for the general public of Mysore during 1900s. The simple and elegant building with its row of shop in two levels has housed many utilitarian shops required for a city. The location is ideal as it is close to city market, bus stand and other important activities. The linear green stretch in front of the building separates the frontage from the busy traffic. The setting and human scale consideration for the design of the building, the building edge responding to the street all make the building a fine example for public architecture. Its composition makes the building fit into the city scape very well and adds to the character of Mysore city.
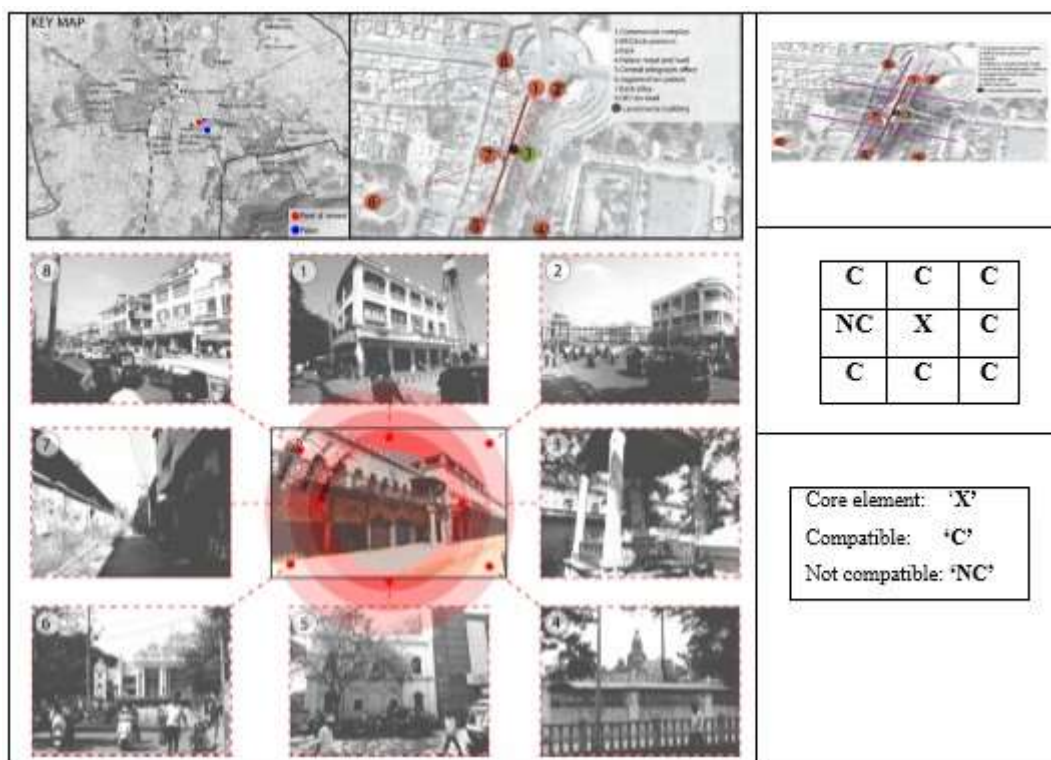

Figure 1: Composite Space Syntax matrix of Lansdowne Building

Nodes
The nodes at the road network have been provided with traffic roundabouts which also act as a focal point or a point on the axis. These roundabouts have been provided with statues within a pavilion of different designs, fountains, pillars or a memorial stone. These act as a point of interest and also as a traffic navigator. The nodes are different from each other in their character, identity, proportion and architectural details. The treatment of the nodes in this manner is mainly seen in the core area of the city. KR Circle, CR circle, Hardinge circle, Ramaswamy Circle, Ayurvedic Hospital Circle, Railway Station Circle are in the core area of Mysore. One of the interesting characters of Mysore city is that the building responds to the road edges at K.R.Circle, Head post office circle and other prominent places. At all these points, the buildings respond to geometry of curvilinear pattern by converging towards the focal point which can either be a fountain, statue, and green island. Even though, the buildings differ in their functions, the building styles follow the pattern of uniqueness which Mysore is known for.

Chama raja Circle
Chama raja circle is also a node with four roads converging at this intersection. As seen in the matrix; the node has been provided on the north side gate (Balarama) of the palace. The Dasara procession pass through this node

giving it a special importance and also it is part of the 'Raja Marga'. The junction is functioning as self-operating rotary without traffic signals. The node has accommodated a function as rotary along with an abstract quality of visual connectivity to establish a link between other elements to be refurbished.
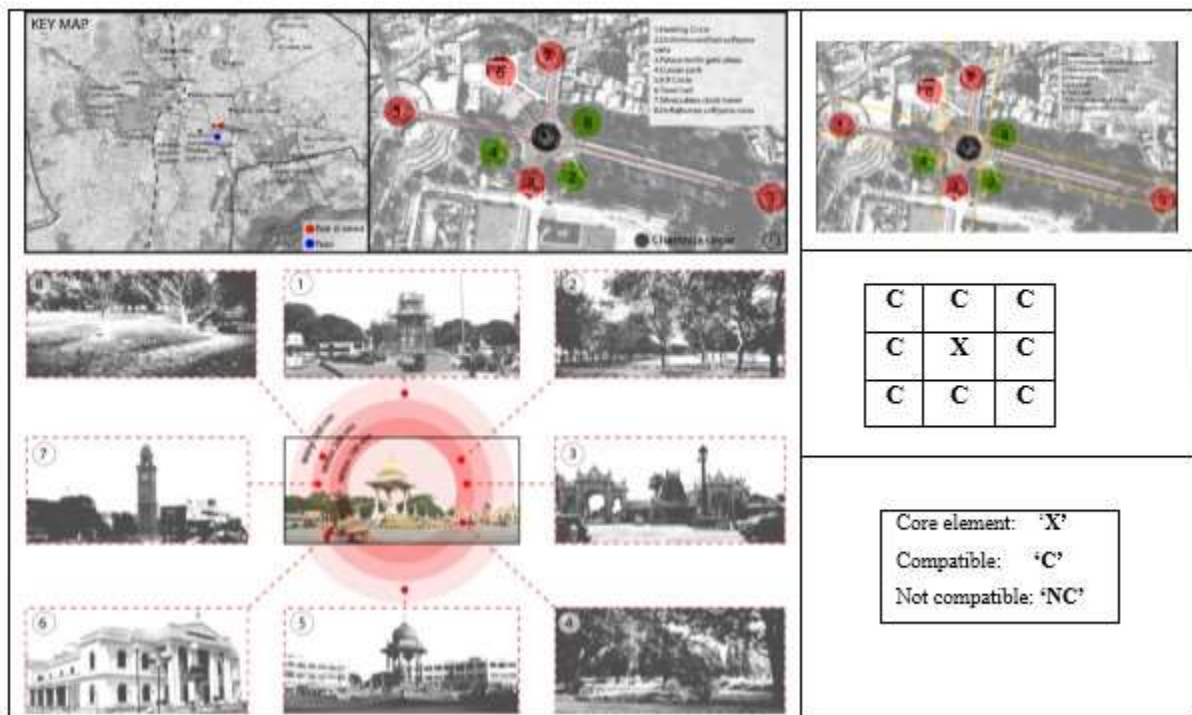

Figure 2: Composite Space Syntax matrix of CR Circle

As it falls within the palace precinct, the surrounding features are green parks on three side of the node, the town hall with its foreground, the big clock tower on other two sides. The node is in the center of Albert victor road which is provided with tall ashoka trees to accentuate the axial way with hardinge circle on the east and KR circle on the west. From the above matrix, it is clearly seen that the surrounding elements take an important role in accentuating the core element in its context. Hence the understanding of these elements in totality in its context helps in refurbishing the character of the city.

Clock Towers
The clock towers have been provided in memory of an event and they act as landmark and focal point within the urban landscape of the city. They are part of the public space, urban fabric, landscape or provided as part of a building. The verticality of the towers makes a statement in the city scape. The proportion, design, material, texture, colour and detailing differ from one clock tower to the other.

Silver Jubilee Clock Tower
The Clock Tower has been built to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of the then king Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV. Seventy Five (75'0) feet square tower topped with Indo-sarcenic features and a vertical symbol of congregation. It is located in the center of the city and acts as a main focal point in its setting of urban scape and is located on the old procession street.
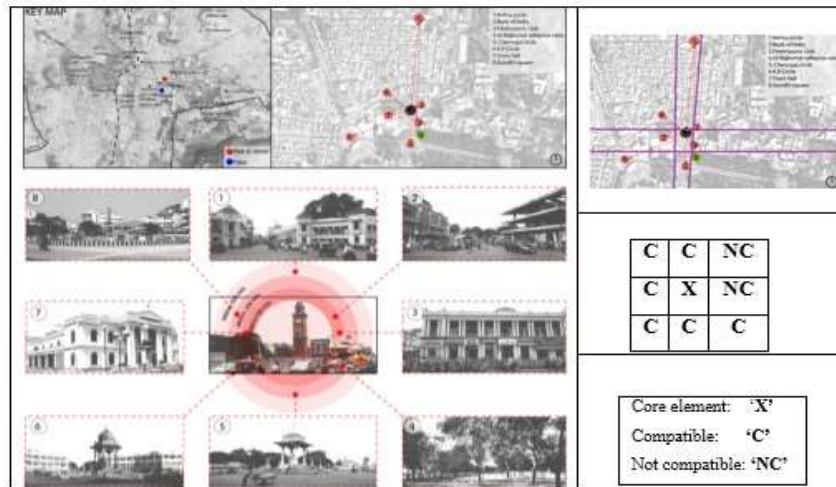
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Figure 3: Composite Space Syntax matrix of Silver Jubilee clock tower

It is a prominent landmark with its verticality and it is set away from any of the other buildings. The town hall, KR circle, CR circle, green park and Main post office circle at the end of Ashoka Road are seen in line with the character of the clock tower and have helped in accentuating the same. But it is also observed that there are some new buildings in the surrounding that are not in continuity with the established character of city. Gandhi square thou compliment the clock tower but by itself, it is very insignificant. From the above matrix, it is seen that these new buildings have come up on the eastern and north-eastern side of the clock tower which are not compatible to the element identified to refurbish the identity of the Mysore.

Gateways
At strategic position and to earmark the entry to another zone, gateways have been erected/ positioned. Today, though measures have been taken to protect them, they remain as stand-alone entities telling the story about history. Some of them have been barricaded to protect within the existing fabric and few are still used for vehicles to pass through it.

Gateway near DC Office
The gateway on the Vinoba Road is in use and it leads to Gordon House (DC Office), Crawford Hall, Oriental Research Institute. It also acts as an entrance gateway to the Krishnaraja Boulevard with tree lined wide road. The massive pilasters have been provided on either side of the road acting as a threshold. The smaller arched opening steps down and provides accessibility to the pedestrians and at the same time it helps in cutting down the scale of the gateway.
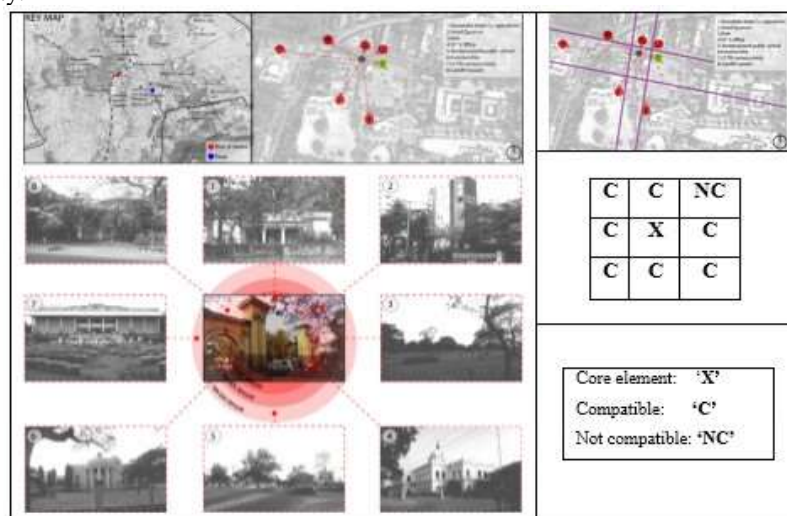

Figure 4: Composite Space Syntax matrix of Gateway near DC Office

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Except on the north-eastern side, all the other side it is found from the above matrix that the developments have been compatible to the gateway which helps in establishing the character of the Mysore city.

Element	Intended use	Associated surrounding element	Matrix			Inference
Landmark	Commercial building set in the cityscape	Refer Fig 1	C C C NC X C C C C			The urban setting with appropriately designed buildings add to the character of the city
Node	Roundabout on the axial line accentuated with pavilion and statue	Refer Fig 2	C C C C X C C C C			The nodes with self-regulating rotary on road network give way to free and safe movement of vehicles. The pavilion and the statue give royal character to the city
Clock Tower	In memory of an event	Refer Fig 3	C C NC C X NC C C C			The vertical elements acts as a reference point to the skyline of the city and helps in refurbishing the identity of Mysore
Gateway	To earmark the entry from one zone to another zone within the city	Refer Fig 4	C C NC C X C C C C			A handsome threshold and urban design element gives identity to Mysore city

Table 1: Summary of the analysis with Inference

CONCLUSION
The prominent elements which are identified to be analysed are found accentuating the character of the city. The preservation of these elements along with its contextual setting is very important. The development surrounding the elements needs to be in tandem, only then the whole setting adds to the character of urban fabric of Mysore. It is quite evident that urban design elements are part of the city scape and help in refurbishing the image and identity of Mysore city.

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