URBAN

SPACES

AND

PUBLIC

SPHERE

By
Rashedul Hasan Deepon

In an urban public space what is the public sphere and how does it come into existence? Is it by actively 'taking' or 'claiming' the public space only through struggle and contested views as Don Mitchel has stated?[1] Alternatively, can they be claimed more subtly and organically as Jeffrey Hou has illustrated when describing the corporate public spaces of Hong Kong?[2] Is it only through 'insurgency' do these public spaces gain credibility as a domain for the public sphere or can they be formed through institutions such as government bodies and corporations or Architectural Design?[3] Maybe the answer to these questions is "Yes, to all of the above" and there might be multiple ways of defining and achieving the 'public sphere.'

Ideally, the public sphere is a physical or non-physical platform where individuals can express themselves and assert their beliefs and opinions without fear of repercussions, 'censorship' or any oppression. A place where people from different backgrounds can congregate and interact without sensing an environment of exclusivity or feel unwanted; a place where they can feel safe.[4]

However, do such places exist in the real world? The author of this paper believes that such a space does exist. The name of this physical place is a 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue'[5].This avenue is a section of a road located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. To be precise, this avenue is between two major roads; The "Shahbagh road" on the North and the "Nilkhet road" at the South. [6,7] While this place may not perfect, it does have qualities that celebrate a public space that enforces the public sphere.

Notable institutes such as the Bangladesh National Museum[8] located on the northeast corner, the well-known 'Faculty of Fine Arts' [9] a.k.a 'CHARUKALA' Institute surrounds the road. The Faculty of Fine Arts is another very public place thanks to the merits of the architectural design of the building as well as the fact that it has been the alma mater of many notable of Bangladeshi Artists since it opened in 1948[10]. This portion of the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' is quite often considered as an extension of the public spaces

of the nearby Public University complex known as 'University of Dhaka'[11][12], which begins from the Southern part of the Nilkhet Road mentioned above.

However, does this place enforce the public sphere and if so how? The answer comes in two folds. One is the way the Kazi Nazrul Islam road has always been host to cultural events such as Pohela Boishakh[13][14] (the Bengali New Year), Ekushey February[15][16] (21st February, Language Day) and other such national occasions. Second, it was also a platform to express opinions of significant political implications. Such as the historical speech given at the adjacent Suhrawardy Udyan Park[17] by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman[18] during 1971 for the Liberation of Bangladesh as in independent country from Pakistan[19] and most recent of which is the Shahbagh Movement[20][21] in 2013. Therefore it is evident that this road is an integral part of the public 'democratic consciousness'.

From a cultural point of view, Pohela Boishakh is one of the grandest celebrations in Dhaka. Pohela Boishakh celebrated on April 14, is the first day of the Bengali calendar. Thousands and thousands of people from various economic, social and religious backgrounds gather here to celebrate their collective yet different sense of 'Bengali identity'[22]. Different cultural institutes participate in organizing events, especially in the Dhaka University Area to celebrate the Bengali Culture. One of the most prominent parts of the festivities is the traditional colorful procession that is arranged by the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts known as the 'Mongol Shobhajatra'[23][24]. These iconic events are a sight to see as they are vibrant and exemplify the colorful slice of 'Bengali' Life.

On the other hand, another type of event that takes a life of its own that is times of protest. The most recent incident that remains in the public consciousness is the Shahbag protests, which began on 5 February 2013 and is also known as Gonojagaran Moncho (translated: National Awakening Stage). It began as a response to the verdict given by the International Crimes Tribunal[25] on Abdul Quader Mollah[26], who was alleged to be an accomplice (a.k.a a Razakar[27]) of the Pakistan army. During the

1971 liberation war, he aided in the horrific events that took place in the nine-month ordeal. Therefore he was now considered an enemy of the state, convicted in 5 out of 6 crimes against humanity and was finally sentenced to life imprisonment [28]. As a public sign of disapproval of the verdict, a few online bloggers decided to express their opinion by lighting candles on the North end of the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road,' known as the Shahbagh Square. This simple gesture had a ripple effect and resulted in a mass gathering of thousands and thousand people from diverse backgrounds and school of thought who on the whole shared the same opinion that justice was not served[29].

The momentum gained by this movement and the 'noise' generated on a national scale did not go unnoticed by political parties and people of power. The whole country witnessed the demands of the people of the 'Shahbagh Movement,' and therefore the place can be considered as an example of the physical manifestation of the public sphere. However, it also begs the question is it a good Public space and has it truly been able to propagate the role of the public sphere? There seems to be no absolute answer, simply because what we value as 'good' or 'acceptable' evolves through time, and dependent upon culture or context of cities and countries. Our evolving sense of morality shapes the notion of 'goodness' or success of public space. Nevertheless, in an attempt to obtain a 'rational' and satisfactory explanation we can frame the answer based on a set of universal parameters or criteria. These parameters are not conclusive; there is scope to include more criteria to define or understand what is a good public space based on their appropriateness in different context and culture. The set of criteria selected for this paper are as Follows:

- **Architectural or physical Design of space:** The Correlation between design and 'publicness' of space
- **Legal Aspect:** How does the law affect the participation of people in public spaces and influence their right to the public realm.
- **POPS dynamics:** Is the concept of privately owned public spaces deterring a place from being 'truly' public and is it breeding a culture of exclusivity in the mind of a particular social stratum of the public? Specifically the middle income and the more affluent members of society?

- **Culture:** Does culture play a role in the 'publicness' of the public spaces?
- **Safety:** Does the gathering of perfect strangers hinder the scope of personal safety, usually promised in controlled and exclusive public spaces?
- **Freedom of Expression:** Are all the voices being heard? Even the unpopular ones?

ARCHITECTURAL OR PHYSICAL DESIGN OF SPACE

Can 'Design' particularly physical or architectural design inspire an inclusive urban space that encourages public interaction and allows the exercise of rights to the public sphere? As an Architect, I am inclined to believe so, yet in my humble opinion design can also hinder it. The reality is it often depends on the 'designer' and his or her intentions or perception of the public domain. Here, we describe the designer as a professional or an institute who has taken the task of determining what public space should entail and who is the 'public' in the first place. If the intention of a designer, be it an Architect, Urban Planner or even a Policy Maker is to have an inclusive public environment; then the designed space has the potential to achieve that goal. However, even if we assume that the intentions of the designer are 'pure' his or her vision might still fail to deliver a proper public space. In her book, "Designs on the Public: The Private lives of New York's Public Spaces" author Kristen F. Miller mentioned two Privately owned Public spaces and discussed their success and failures in tackling the challenging question what public space should be. The POPS projects are the IBM Atrium[30] and the Federal Plaza[31] (later renamed the Jacob Javits Plaza).

IBM Atrium

Designed by Architect Edward Larrabee Barnes along with Landscape Architects Robert Zion and Harold Green of Zion & Breen Associates, the IBM building located on 590 Madison Avenue fulfilled the requirements of POPS program, came up with a vibrant public atmosphere. [32, 33] Much of the charm of the space is not because of following guidelines to gain extra floor space, but instead because of the Designers' intelligent use of architectural grammar and articulation of form and function. The ingenious

use of beautiful bamboos for landscaping certainly made space an oasis in the concrete urban landscape of New York City.
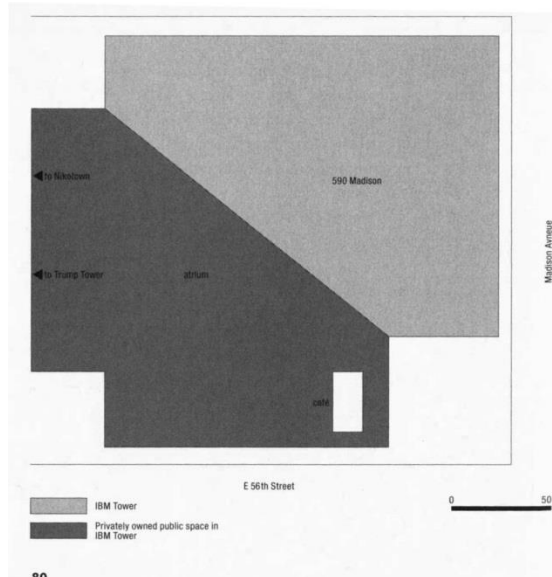
A much wiser decision was making space visible and transparent from the outside by using glass on the street facing facades of the building. From an architectural point of view, the masterstroke was in how the designers conceived the plan and the form of the building. While the Basic plan is that of a square, the designers have quite confidently split it into two parts by cutting it diagonally. The purpose of this is to boldly state that the plaza and the tower are two separate elements of the same entity. The designers reiterated this idea in the three-dimensional massing of the project, where volumetrically it is discernible that the plaza and the tower are two separate functions.

While it may seem the design decisions are but what it does is set the premise for a publicly accessible private space. The author concludes that the fate of the plaza was eventually a much less inclusive space because of the owner's intention of removing some bamboos and installing more sculptures and artworks to inject some 'culture' into space. This unfortunate fate of the plaza seems to indicate that there is a limitation to what physical design can do if the authorities are safeguarding public spaces 'design' policies that inherently exclude some users while privileging other users.

Federal Plaza and Jacob Javitz Plaza

The Federal Plaza went through two interpretations of what is meant by public space and how it informs the public sphere. The first iteration saw it as a bold statement against the government and questioning

their authority to determine the public space and activities that take place in the public sphere. Artist Richard Serra created the controversial sculpture 'Tilted Arc' on the Federal Plaza. [34, 35]

He created the tilted arc based on the idea that public art on a government-owned site should be "confrontational and never complicit." Not surprisingly government officials did not agree with his views. They considered it an "eyesore" and wanted to remove it. Art critics, however, felt removing it would make it a controlled public domain policed by a few privileged people, therefore, an anti-thesis of what Serra intended. The installation and eventual removal of the sculpture resulted in a heated discussion of what the public sphere should be and how should it be treated.

One of those responses resulted in the design by Landscape Architect Martha Schwartz.[36] The design is known as "Curving Chairs" was elaborate, colorful, Disneyesque and took lots of space. [37] According to the Martha Schwartz, the purpose of the plaza is allowed people to enjoy their lunch around noon leisurely and apparently based on her analysis it is all that the 'public' wants to do, ergo the abundance of colorful sitting arrangements. Interestingly, what we get from both approaches is a noticeable absence of the 'public' whom we were designing for as well as an attempt to 'overdesign' or I believe 'overstate' what the public space and the public sphere is meant to be. Kristen Miller's said, "If we agree that speech, protest, and demonstration are important forms of expression and should occur at the location of the accountable government body, then at a minimum Federal Plaza should include a large open area."

Maybe what was eventually required were merely more open space, a blank canvas with a few necessary improvements and amenities where the 'public' and the many shapes and forms they take could come and paint a version of the public sphere that is dynamic and is in flux.

Charles Correa: Proposed Street Section

When designing an urban space, the more space becomes peppered with specific design elements (e.g., the curving chair), the less it becomes public; it moves towards the domain of a private/exclusive space. Inclusive, open spaces should have the opportunity to have multiples interpretations and uses. The works of Indian Architect cum Urban Planner named Charles Correa[38][39], and his attempt to achieve an inclusive public space with minimalistic design intervention reflects this school of thought or concept. His proposal for the streets and pedestrian walkway of Mumbai and Calcutta shows how 'design' can contribute to the field of Urban Planning.

One thing that cities such as Mumbai, Calcutta, and Dhaka have in common is overpopulation and abject poverty.[40] It is a harsh reality that residents of these cities have to deal with on a daily basis. We cannot just sweep poverty under the rug. Therefore, we see an urban streetscape that not only has a visibly poor population but also comes off as unhygienic and crowded.

The sidewalks of these streets are quite often used by hawkers or street food vendors during the day to sell their goods. [41] [42] At night time they are used by the urban low-income people or impoverished people who have nowhere to stay else to spend the night for sleeping.[43] Their presence quite often makes the use of the sidewalk difficult and in some cases impossible, therefore forcing pedestrians to use the road dedicated to vehicular traffic. This small event causes the vehicular flow to slow down and create traffic congestion. As a response to these circumstances, Charles Correa proposed an alternative to the "use of sidewalks" that is minimalistic and yet quite impactful.[44]

His simple solution is to this issue of pedestrian and vehicular conflict is proposing a 2 meter (approx.= 6.56 feet) wide platform on each side of a standard 19-meter road and including water taps for use. The new width of the road is now 15 meter. However, this platform now presents itself with some interesting functional opportunities.

First, during the day the platform can be used by hawkers for their daily routine of selling goods or merchandise and second, the same platform can be used by people in need of a place to sleep at night. The platform also creates a pedestrian and vehicular segregation, therefore ensuring pedestrian safety as well as uninterrupted traffic flow.

The inclusion of water taps further improves the usability of space, since it can be used by the hawkers in the morning to wash their products (such as vegetables and fruits) while at night they can be used by the poor people to clean the platform before they set up their bedding for sleeping at night. Thus, the availability of tap water allows for a more hygienic environment.

Similar 'attitude' towards design can be applied to streets such as the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' since they share similar context to the streets of Mumbai and Calcutta. However, more than the cultural and socioeconomic similarity the achievement of these types of design solutions is that they are 'inclusive.'; they allow people from different walks of life to use a public space without stepping over one another and thus encouraging the possibility of a more vital public sphere.
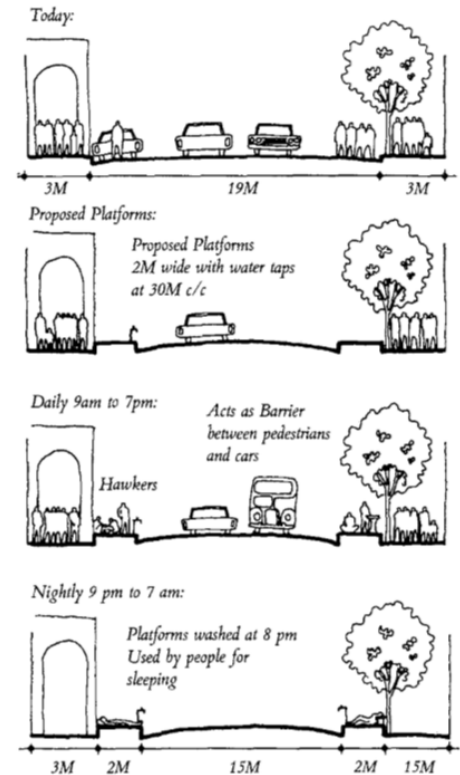
LEGAL ASPECTS: Access to the public spaces

It is hard to believe that in Dhaka, street food vending is illegal by law because any picture taken on the streets of the city is bound to show one or two if not more street food vendor in the image. According to the Pure Food Ordinance, 1959; Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance 1976; Dhaka City Corporation Ordinance 1983 street vendors are considered obsolete, unhygienic, disorderly and `in the way.' Even under such circumstances, street food vendors have managed to become an integral element of the landscape of Dhaka City and other South East Asian cities.

It seems that although a law exists that prevent vendors to conduct small business on the street, the government does not seem to enforce them strictly. Other than sporadic initiatives of uprooting these 'untidy vendors' by the government the law remains for the most part unchecked. Blow standard administrative system, as well as the corruptions in the government sector, are the cause for such inconsistency in law maintenance. Hence the type of governance that takes place in the public spaces is by local 'people of power.' They are usually influential businessmen or politicians of the area or on location policemen who due to lack of attention from the city municipality have taken the unofficial role of 'guardians of order' on the streets and the public spaces. It is because of these unorthodox power dynamic street food vendors especially mobile/ temporary street food vendors are at their mercy. For the vendors to gain access to the public spaces and have any level of 'right to the public domain' they have to negotiate with these unofficial administrators either by developing personal connections or through the common practice of under the table 'security payment' (a.k.a in Bengali as Chanda). Eventually, the level of access to the public spaces depends upon how good the personal relations are between vendors and the 'people of power' or the amount of Chanda paid. [45]

There is a duality of 'order in chaos' in the public spaces, and a similar thing happens on 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road.' There is no doubt that vendors who have a sense of ownership of the place can do it because of their 'relation' with the local authority. In this case, it means paying the precinct police for

protection. In some cases the University Campus Institutes such as 'Charukala' often allow the street vendors to enter their premise for business without any preconditions or 'rules.' While for the most part, the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' has managed to maintain a sense of inclusive space for all the different strata of society, there is still a tinge of 'filtration' that takes place in the public domain.

PRIVATELY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES (POPs)

Dhaka has yet to face the crisis that cities such as New York face regarding Privately Owned Public Spaces or POPS and the public sphere. However, looking at current trends in real estate development and competition to create the largest shopping malls that crisis might as well be nigh. The city of Dhaka is proud to have two of the largest shopping malls in South East Asia, The Bashundhara City Shopping Complex, and Jamuna Future Park. Both of these projects are walking towards the pitfalls related to POPS.[46, 47] They have become an exclusive and elitist public domain, creating a social barrier between the poor and the middle class. [48] However, if the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' is to be affected by POPS development the outcome might be similar to that of Dhanmondi lake, a public lake in a popular neighborhood or the "Cox's Bazaar beach" which is one of the world's longest uninterrupted natural sandy sea beaches.[49, 50]

Dhanmondi was established in 1950 and slowly turned into a residential cum commercial area from 1995 onwards. The "Dhanmondi Lake" as it is commonly known was an unused backyard for some residential buildings, but after a successful renovation during 1999 by Bangladeshi Architects 'Vitti Sthapati Brindo'[[51]52] it became a trendy public gathering spot. One of the attractions of the renovated lake is the 'Rabindra Shorobor,' which is an amphitheater that often hosts cultural events and concerts for the benefits of locals as well as outside visitors. However, unbeknownst to the users of the space, this lake is governed or administered by two unknown private individuals. Any event held on the lake would first need to be approved by the 'guardians' of the lake (similar to "Friends of the Highline"), and event organizers have to pay for the permit fee to construct performance stages as well as get

permission from the neighborhood police station.[53] All the food vendors in the lake premise have to pay a certain amount of money so that they are allowed to do business in the lake premise and if they do not comply they will be ousted from the premise by the 'authority.' The rule applies to both 'permanent kiosks' or 'mobile vendors' such as 'Cha Walas' or 'Chanachur Walas.' [54, 55] Beggars are also discouraged from begging in the premise. Therefore what seems like a public space in a residential area that is accessible to all, is, in reality, a controlled space where the urban poor has "regulated access" and the economic benefits go to selected businessmen. People from all over the city come to this place for recreation and spending quality leisure time with friends and family.

Another trend that has been following in Bangladesh for some time is small-scale commercialization and claiming of public space by corporate brands or telecommunication companies such as Grameenphone, BanglaLink and other similar brands for retail and advertising purposes.[56, 57] They achieve it either by setting up retail kiosks in public space or renovating street furniture or similar artifacts and advertising their role in sponsoring them. What it does is create a sense of exclusivity and filtration of users because not everyone is the targeted consumer group to these retail spaces. The act of claiming public space is prominent in the beaches of Cox's Bazaar. Large corporations refurbish beach furniture in Cox's Bazaar and brand the furniture with their logos and color scheme. It is clear from the visual aesthetic and polished look; 'distinguished' gentlemen or women are meant to use this furniture. A beggar or a street urchin are subliminally discouraged from sitting on them. This trend has consumed the natural sea beach of Cox's Bazaar. What was initially a simple place to relax and take vacation has now become a carnival of advertisement and loud music? All the beach sitting arrangements have been 'sponsored' by Banglalink, and the beach is now almost saturated with high end 'food corners' and 'juice bars.'

The 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' may not face such fate yet because it is still part of the government public domain (more specifically the road's link to the University Area) and is not under the control of any

particular individual. It is only during times of festival does the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' succumb to such over-commercialization of public space, but during regular days it has managed to avoid it. The question is for how long?

CULTURE

Is Bangladesh a part of a culture that is inherently social and inviting to other people? Is it the reason why the public spaces are so vibrant and messy? Alternatively, do socio-economic dynamics make us obliged to be social? Based on personal observation and life experience I would vouch for that, yet from an analytical point of view, it is difficult to quantify whether that opinion holds true.

On my Final Year Thesis semester of Architecture school, I had decided to "Redevelop and Redesign a Bazaar"[58] in Dhaka which was located in a poor area of Dhaka City. The name of the bazaar was 'Rayer Bazaar'[59] and surrounding it was either middle-income residences or slums for low-income people such as Rickshaw Walas and House Maids. As part of the thesis I had to understand users of the bazaar and the social fabric of the surrounding area, and I observed that there was a strong sense of community and interdependence amongst the low-income residents. It is a much more preferred scenario when compared to the affluent residential areas of the city where a sense of isolation lingers. Why was such the case? For me, the answer was that the residents around the bazaar had similar economic status, shared amenities such as shared public toilets, single water supply source for the community and in some cases shared kitchens between 2 or 3 families. However, I believe it is also rooted in the understanding that for the community to survive under unfavorable conditions they need to depend on each other. Therefore a question we can frame is that: is there a correlation between economic stability/interdependency and development of a community that encourages active participation in the public sphere? Proper research might be suggested which unfortunately is beyond the scope of this paper. However, a brief search on travelers journals/blogs visiting Bangladesh does mention the hospitality and friendliness as one of the principal defining characters of the people of the country.[60][61]

SAFETY

William Whyte discovered through his study of public urban spaces that one social indicator that a place is safe and user-friendly is when the number of women using the space is high[62]. In Bangladesh lack of proper urban spaces does not allow women to have the luxury of selecting public spaces where they could feel safe. Therefore, they take what they get and this way the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' has attracted women as part of their public domain. There is a serious issue of sexual harassment and eve-teasing that prevails in Dhaka City, and it was also present in public spaces such as 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road.' However, the issue has taken a very horrific form very recently.

On 14 April 2015 Pohela Boishakh was tainted by incidents of sexual assault on women at the Dhaka University campus at evening. Around 30 to 40 rowdy youths assaulted and sexually harassed around 20 women for about one hour at the 'Suhrawardy Udyan Park' gate near the TSC area. Although law enforcers were stationed only 20 yards from the spot, they did nothing to rescue the women or arrest those who launched the sexual assault because they claimed the Park was not part of their jurisdiction.[63]

Cultural ailments of society in developing nations, such as lack of proper education on women's right in society attribute to sexual harassment and eve-teasing, therefore incidents such as these, unfortunately, occur now and then. Until the concerned society has collectively learned to address these issues, they will continue to exist in the public domain such as 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road.' However, what about issues regarding the safety of one's own life? A part of the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road's history is now etched with the brutal murder of an online blogger named Avijit Roy[64]. He was a Bangladeshi American online activist, writer, known for pioneering Bengali freethinkers' weblog-forum, Mukto-Mona[65]. A self-proclaimed atheist, he was known for his critical and controversial anti-religious views. On 26 February 2015 when returning from the 'Ekushey Book Fair,' he and his wife were attacked near the Teacher Student Center (TSC) intersection of Dhaka University by unidentified assailants. According to witnesses,

Roy was struck and stabbed with sharp weapons in the head. His wife was slashed on her shoulders, and the fingers of her left hand were severed. In an interview with BBC's Newshour[66], wife of Avijit Roy said that police stood nearby when they were attacked on the spot but did not act. In a Twitter post on the day after his death, an Islamist outfit, named Ansar Bangla-7[67], claimed responsibility for the killing.

Here, the area of concern is that even though an individual has the right to express his or her views that might be considered controversial or unpopular, it seems he or she might have to claim that 'right' at the cost of his own life. Rather than responding to his criticism of society and religion in a constructive manner in the public domain, it was replied with brute force and violence. Therefore, the right to express views in the public sphere is not enough and it should be ensured by a certain degree of safety, especially in a country like Bangladesh where controversial issues strike a sensitive nerve amongst the people; in this case a small fraction of society consisting of extremist and fundamentalist groups who have a very twisted understanding of religion.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

If the philosophy or concept behind public spaces is to observe and instill the practice of democracy the role of the public sphere is to encourage or ensure that the views of the people are heard and made visible in that public space. Naturally, the most popular views or opinions that make the most noise are acknowledged. However, if we want to take part in a truly democratic process, contested views also need to be introduced into the discussion, even if they are minority groups who in some cases might have 'extreme,' 'backdated,' or highly disagreeable views for contemporary society. It can be argued in the purely democratic platform the views they endorse would take advantage of the platform and hinder the

progression to a more democratic society, yet I would counter it with the argument that by banning or suppressing these groups we are in effect making them outlaws, the consequence of which can be dangerous. We would be enabling them to retaliate with more violence as they now answer to nobody and inevitably giving them more opportunity to impede democracy. It is my opinion that up to a certain extent such was the case for Hefajat-e Islam and their march to the Shahbagh Protest area[68].

During the 5th and 6th of May 2013, in the capital city of Dhaka, Bangladesh, there was a rally and protest by Hefajat-e Islam[69]. They believed the Shahbagh Protest was enabling anti-religious sentiments around the country and needed to be countered through rallies and protest. Whether they are correct in making such a claim is open to debate, however as long as they are part of society their views need to be heard and be countered with constructive criticism in the public forum. Unfortunately, that was not the case for Hefajat-e-Islam; the government used specialized forces such as the Police, the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB[70]) and paramilitary force Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB[71]) to drive them away from Shahbagh. The government stopped live telecast of the event, and till dawn, there was a complete media blackout. The government was severely criticized by several human rights organizations for their role, and there is a widespread rumor of mass murder[72]. Ever since then Hefajat-e Islam has been linked with violent forms of retaliation around the city.

In conclusion, if the 'Shahbagh Movement' is a platform where the public opinion against the verdict of the court can be heard or made visible then according to democratic practices the views of minority groups hold equal importance, even if it goes against the views of the majority of the 'public.' In a scenario where what exactly consists of the public is difficult to grasp and comprehend, the notion of multiple 'publics' adds more fuel to the fire and thus need further introspection especially if we are to conduct future events of public protests.

HOW TO ANIMATE THE PUBLIC SPACE

It is seen that the 'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road' is an urban space where the role of the 'public sphere' is

exercised. However, on deeper inspection, it is also clear that there is much more room to improve to

strengthen the 'public sphere' specially when it comes to Safety for Women and tolerance for multiple

types of opposing or contested views. Understanding and tolerance toward contested views is as much a

responsibility of the government as it is for the individual people of any given nation. Below are some

suggestions as to how to improve the Urban Space and empower the 'Public Sphere' in the context of

'Kazi Nazrul Islam Road.'

Architecture: Wider streets to accommodate the street food vendors and segregation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Provide necessary amenities such as Public toilets and proper maintenance of these amenities. This creates job opportunities for poor, low-skilled people and also the public toilets provide great services, especially for women.

Legal Aspects: Incorporate the rights of street vendors into the legal system. The localized form of regulation may be encouraged. Government involvement is important so that they are held accountable and ensure the street food vendors are not taken advantage of by local 'people of power.'

Safety: Police vigilance and training. While it is a complicated topic itself, the crackdown on corruption in the police system is very important. People need to feel safe in the presence of the police and not fear them.

Freedom of speech: Critical understanding of what is meant by Democracy in all level of the social structure. Understand one's individual right as a member of the 'public' consciousness. Talk About it! Awareness on important issues through conversation and a conscious spreading of information through social media or any other platform.[-]

If the notion of the public sphere is to flourish it needs to be based on mutual respect, tolerance and

constant learning and awareness of the world we inhabit. No rules or laws can single-handedly enforce

the 'public sphere,' it is a matter of 'Ethics,' 'Moral Orientation' and Respect for the 'Other.' On a highly

optimistic note, I believe many wars and man-made social catastrophe can be averted by having a cup of

Tea or Coffee with the enemy. Author Lynne Elizabeth expressed a similar sentiment when she

recounted her sitting with Commanding officer of a US Marine Base on Policies of war on the article

Open Hearted Cities.[74]

References

1. *The active taking of space* - has been the fulcrum upon which the right to the city has been leveraged, both in its actual (limited) practice and in the way it can serve as a beacon for a more open, more just, more egalitarian society. *(Mitchell, 2003)*

2. "In the ground-level entrance to the HSBC Headquarters in Hong Kong, Filipino quest workers congregate on Sundays and turn the anonymous corporate space into a carnivalesque gathering of friends. Every day, vendors in cities from Mumbai to Madrid Change city streets into temporary markets - legal or illegal. In East Los Angeles, Latino residents retrofitted streets, buildings, and front yards of existing neighborhoods to support a more vibrant and culturally rich social life."-*Jeffrey Hou (Making Public, Beyond Public Spaces)*

3. Kristen Miller in her book *"Designs on the Public: The Private lives of New York's Public Spaces"* provided example of pops program and the design of public spaces that sheds some light on what is the "public sphere" and how the public spaces should be in terms of design, it also illustrates the multiple perceptions of the public sphere by designers, sculptors, art critics, and policymakers"

4. An opinion is similar to that of Architect Anthony Vidler who defined the public space (e.g., streets, squares, and corner stores) as" a site of interaction, encounter and the support of strangers for each other…. As a place of gathering and vigil…. As a communicator of information and interchange" *(Mitchell, 2003)*

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74. Sitting face to face with the other, Lynne Elizabeth, "Open Hearted Cities."