



RESEARCH PAPER

Assessing the Ignored Potential: Employing and Assessing Art Design Installations to Revitalize Islamabad's Urban Open Spaces

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization has diffused the essence of the Islamabad's city true spirit of a modern day Capital city with lush green urban open spaces and mountainous views. This negatively impacted the open and green spaces within city. Open spaces can be used for multiple purposes including landscape, temporary shelters, parks, etc. but one of the most recent and underutilized option in engaging the public at large and facilitating them through functional usage is the art installations in open spaces. The research focused on public perceptive evaluation and how design of art installation may relieve the urban open spaces. Data was collected through observational study and structured questionnaire at multiple locations in the city. People were neither aware nor educated about these installations and their functional usage. It was also observed that people need design to address their concerns of shading, shelter, water supply, landscape, lighting, etc. It was concluded that these spaces need to have a sense of security and belonging or ownership to the society and the public at large with allied functional requirements of the general public to opt for their utilization. These spaces need to engage people through addressing their needs for temporary time utilization and hence can be opted for improved occupancy.

Keywords: Environmental Design, Islamabad, Public Awareness, Public Engagement, Urban Open Spaces

Introduction

Urban open spaces are of significant importance in settlement life of the city dwellers. Areas with high green coverage are of ecological and environmental importance (Lestan, Eržen, & Golobi, 2014). These green spaces can improve the urban climate, mitigate the urban heat island effect through their ecological balancing function and reduce environmental damage (Lestan et al., 2014). Because of their social importance, open spaces can help residents adapt to a healthy lifestyle (Balogh & Takács, 2011). Open spaces can be used for multiple purposes including landscape, temporary shelters, parks, etc but one of the most recent and underutilized option in engaging the public at large and facilitating them through functional usage is the art installations in open spaces (Irvine, 2012). Installation art is an artistic medium and genre of three-dimensional artistic work often related to a specific space or place or to a site and designed with an aim to transform the perception and usage of a space with some functionality (Ming, 2014). In general, the term with reference to open spaces or outdoor interventions are referred to as public art, terrestrial art, or intervention art (CABE/DETR, 2000). These art installations need to be explored to enhance their contextual vicinity and improve the overall spatial feeling of the space around them (Jakubov, 2015). Islamabad is the Capital City of Pakistan and one of the few developed and planned cities of the modern world but due to recent urbanization, the city has mainly lost its aesthetic spirit of a lush green urban center with ample open spaces

with planned functions for public engagement and usage. The recent COVID19 pandemic also created more issues towards managing these urban open spaces and enhancing public usage (Bhatti & Ghufraan, 2020). It was evident that these spaces could have better contributed to the public realm if properly designed to manage hygiene and social distancing but it was completely lacked (Bhatti et al., 2023). Lack of these spaces proper functionality and public engagement transforms these spaces in barren spaces. With increase of population in Islamabad, the inhabitants of the city are living in a highly mechanized life style and feel lethargic to visit open urban spaces. However, most of the citizens feel sluggish to have a break-through and to spend some leisure time in un-hygienic area due to unhealthy environment (Bhatti et al., 2022). As this phenomenon has not been observed at large due to lack of awareness and non-realization of these spaces, due to poor facilities, lack of attractive and ill-designed installations, unsafe, uncomfortable, poor maintenance and improper functional usage (Lestan et al., 2014). As many public installations have in-adequate seating and not to public design and attractiveness and not enjoy the outdoor environment (Omoboye&Adewale Festus, 2020). Islamabad was known for its beautification, walking paths, shades, water features, irrigated lawns, birdlife, lighting, sporting facilities, playgrounds, type of surrounding roads, and presence of nearby water bodies, and now showing an un-healthy picture of the city. Hence there was a need to explore how the city urban open spaces can be revitalized through urban installations to help them better own and manage these spaces with occupational and functional usage.

Literature Review

Islamabad is one of the most beautiful capital city considered across the globe. It was a formal designed settlement with a focus on democratic grounds (Zafar et al., 2018). With an initial targeted population way less than today, the city faced rapid urbanization over the last three decades (Asif, 2009). As a result, many urban open spaces and park areas have been intruded as well as city has expanded in almost every direction (Jaakson& Diamond, 1981). This has resulted in to poor management and utilization of urban open spaces and a complete lack of ownership from public is observed across both the twin cities i.e. Islamabad and Rawalpindi. This under utilization crates issues of poor management and maintenance (Haq et al., 2020).

A vital and integral part of every urban open space in a metropolis that reflects and expresses the culture and aesthetic of a nation or city are art and design installations. The many groups of people who contact with them and take use of the advantages and possibilities provided by the range of design installations across the urban fabric experience and appreciate them (Paper, 2018). A chance to improve living standards is presented by these design installations, which are a component of all urban facilities. Art and design installations in Islamabad city are developed, managed and maintain by Capital Development Authority (CDA) Islamabad. Art and design installation are built in the urban open spaces of Islamabad for the general public living in this city and the people from Pakistan who often visit the city. The basic concept behind to provide these Installations is to give an aesthetics sense of place, expression as part of the landscape to promote cultural significance of a country (Thompson, 2002). Public open spaces include parks, green belts paths, nodes and parking spaces where general public have fully access to visit them at any appropriate time they want to enjoy them for free.

Art and design Installations is a multi-sectorial component comprising of multidiscipline such as environmental art etc. It evolved with the passage of time from Paleolithic cave paintings of human and animal figures, it develops with the passage of time and formulate with the need of time and technological innovations (Şatir&Korkmaz, 2005). Art materials mostly used in the start are mud, stone, wood, water and different natural colors (Liang et al, 2020). The specialty of Environmental art and ecological movements are those in which environmental artist do considered the possible damage to the surrounding environment despite its aesthetics impact(Woolley, 2003). It focuses Interrelationships in

our environment with emphasis on the physical, biological, cultural, political, and historical aspects of ecological systems employ natural materials or engage with environmental forces such as wind, water, or sunlight (Arvantadis et al, 2020). Environmental artist reclaimed, restored and remediated damaged environments and informed the public about ecological dynamics and environmental problems (Ghoneem, 2016).

The environmental artist practices and covers both the historical approaches of nature and the recent work of art motivated by the ecological, political, sustainable and social community. Recently, environmental art has become a focal point for exhibitions around the world as the social and cultural aspects of climate change come to the fore. In response to growing concerns about global climate change, environmental artists are designing interventions at a functional level, combining aesthetic responses with the functional properties of generation or energy savings (Jakubov, 2015).

It was concluded that research should focus on documentation of the existing art installation in the city to harness the existing conditions and identify two sites where data should be collected and identify public opinion about these. The focused research methodology is shared below.

Material and Methods

In order to continue forward, the overall research process has been broken down in multiple phases and steps as shown below in figure 1.

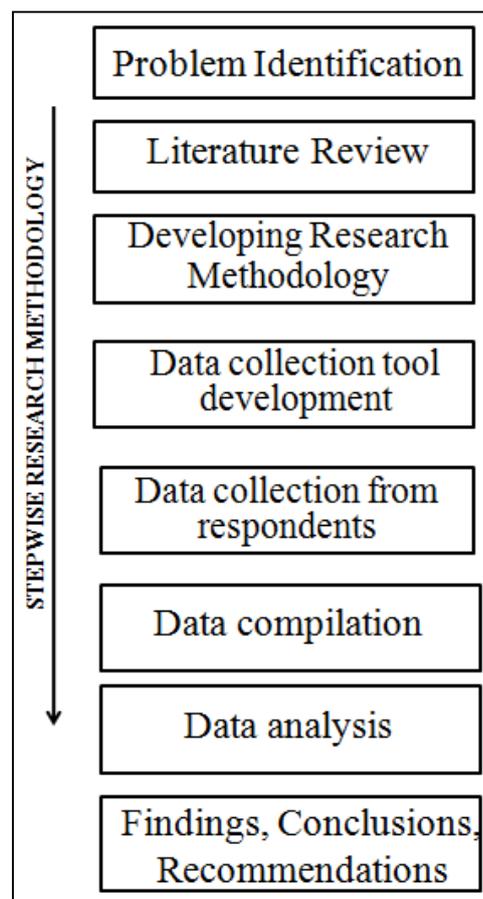


Figure 1 Phase-wise research program and major steps

With the assistance of the detailed review of the literature, a questionnaire based on the primary parameters associated with urban open spaces and their key aspects were

identified. Observational study followed by respondents data collection lead to data analysis and identification of major reasons at the back of the issues faced today and how these could be addressed through environmental design and art installations in urban open spaces explored. As part of the research exploration, research analysis lead to defining the major research findings, associated objectives based conclusions and future directions.

Results and Discussion

Physical documentation of multiple art installation in Islamabad were shown below as per documented through observational study and site visits.

Crescent & Star



Figure 2 Crescent & Star Monument - Chand Sitara Chowk (Dawn, 2016)

This sculptural monument is made of metal sheets. It is located in Shakarparian Hills park of Islamabad. The monument represents the symbol of Crescent and star on the national flag of Pakistan. Crescent signifies the progress while the star represents light. It's a symbol of Pakistan's core commitment to Islam as the source of guidance and official religion of the state as per shown above in figure 2.

Pakistan Monument

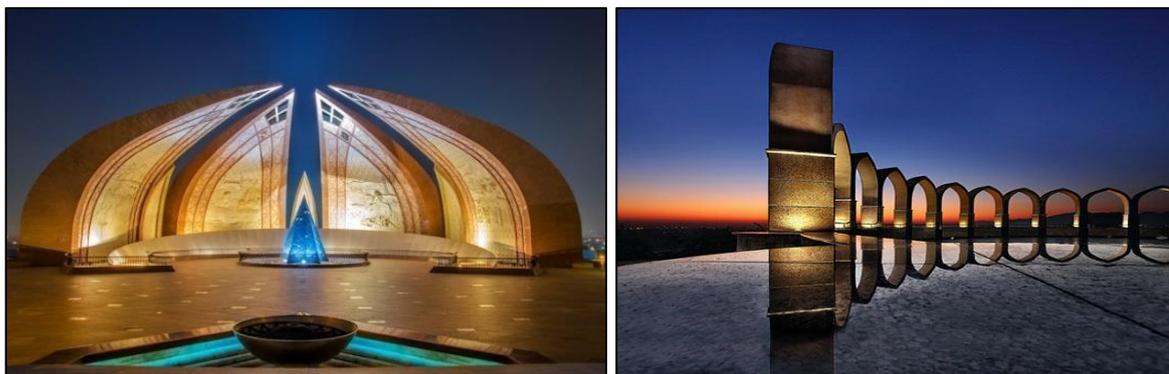


Figure 3 National Monument of Pakistan (Dawn, 2016)

The National Monument of Pakistan, also known as Pakistan Monument (Figure 3), is a national monument with a heritage museum alongside the site. Also located in the Shakarparian Hills of Islamabad is a recent development and addition to the urban fabric of Islamabad with a focus to highlight the struggle of people of Pakistan to achieve freedom. It signifies and symbolizes the unity in the nation of Pakistan. The overall complex and facility covers an area of 2.8 hectares and is a well-known public point for general public to picnic.

The landmark is formed as a sprouting blossom petal-molded structure with the internal dividers of the petals engraved with the layouts of Lahore Fort, Badshahi Mosque, Khyber Pass and Minar-e-Pakistan. The landmark opens onto a marble patio giving a bird's-eye perspective of Islamabad City. The four primary petals of the landmark speak to the four regions (Baluchistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh), while the three littler petals speak to the three domains Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and the Tribal Areas).

Chaghi Mountain Model



Figure 4 Chaghi Mountain Model (CDA, 2019)

Chaghi Mountain model as shown above in figure 4, was installed to commemorate the atomic tests conducted to make the defense of Pakistan impregnable, was constructed near Faizabad which was demolished due to the extension and signal free corridor under construction. This model will be replaced at Fatimah Jinnah park.

Quaid-e-Azam Portrait Sculpture



Figure 5 Quaid-e-Azam portrait sculpture (CDA, 2019)

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah portrait sculpture is installed at the main Islamabad expressway near KaralChowk .The Sculpture includes famous quotes of Quaid e

Azam "Unity, Faith and Discipline" has been made by a famous Artist /Sculptor Jamal Shah at the main Islamabad expressway as shown above in the figure 5.

While gathering data and taking photographs, the people present at these places were also questioned about the perception of these sculptures. It was observed those sculptures or art installations in urban open spaces with some historical context or referencing to some noble person or event can be easily identified by the people and they can relate to it. Since public perception is weak about artistic perception, hence their abilities about coping with pure sculptural forms and their ideas or concepts were mainly vague. Hence if a sculpture, even in form of a human being or allied could be created for public, its ability to correlate with cultural and historical background could help it to be owned by the public.

In order to collect data from the general public at selected and identified locations to to enhance improved usage of these spaces, a questionnaire was developed using the exploration from explored literature review. Overall questionnaire was divided into three parts consisting of fourteen questions in totality. The first one was about demographics of the participant with information about name, gender, age. The second component focused on the purpose of visit, frequency of visit, time to reach the terminal, time of stay at the terminal and the quality of multiple services available at these terminals and open spaces. The third part focused on the perception and exploration of any urban open space sculpture and its functional usage if ever observed or explored by the participant, what facilities they prefer to have in these locations, is safety major concern for the public, what major issues do they face during these visits and what suggestion they can propose to improve these spaces. The overall two location details and respondents data analysis is shown below:

G8 Jinnah Avenue Metro Station

First location to collect data was G8 Jinnah Avenue Metro Station terminal. Data was collected in winter season between Mid-November, 2017 to Mid-December, 2017. Major feature close to this area was the megamall structure of commercial building called CENTAURUS. This is one of the biggest commercial modern development in the heart of the Islamabad. Lot of people traveling this facility uses Metro station while traveling from within Islamabad as well as to the neighboring city of Rawalpindi. Location of site is shown below:



Figure 6 Location of G8 Metro Terminal (Google Earth, 2019)



Figure 7 People moving across the sites has transformed the natural green terrain to a deserted one.



Figure 8 Due to improper usage of the open urban spaces without its ownership, area is degraded.

Basic Demographics

During data collection, 27 participants took part out of which 22 (81%) were males and 5 (19%) were females. Though the number of females using the terminal and open spaces were no less yet very few agreed to participate in the data collection process.

Table 1
Overall filled data form from 27 respondents in Islamabad
Study the Restricted Utilization of Design Installation in Selected Urban Open Spaces in Islamabad

S.no	Questions	Reply				
1	Name					
2	Age	15 & Below	16-25 Years	26-35 Years	36-45 Years	46 & Above
	Filled in Data	4	8	8	6	1
3	Gender	Male	Female			
	Filled in Data	22	5			
4	Purpose of Visit	Travel	Meeting	Any other:		
	Filled in Data	25	1	1		
5	How frequently you visit this open public space	Twice a Day	Daily	Once in a Week	Once in a Month	Rarely
	Filled in Data	22	4	1		
6	What is your preferred mode of transportation?	Public:			Private:	

	Filled in Data	26		1		
7	How much time does it took to reach the terminal from your home / office ?	Less than 05 minutes	Less than 10 minutes	11-20 Minutes	21-30 Minutes	Above 30 minutes
	Filled in Data	3	9	12	3	0
8	How much time do you spend at this terminal ?	Less than 10 minutes	11-20 Minutes	21-30 Minutes	Above 30 minutes	
	Filled in Data	5	15	6	1	
9	How far are you satisfied with the services at these open spaces?	Highly Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied
	Filled in Data	6	7	9	5	0
10	Have you ever explored art installations in public open spaces? IF yes, which one? How far was it functionally usable to the public?	Majority were unable to answer this question as they have seen a few i.e. National Mountain, Quaid - Azam monument, etc but were mainly unable to relate to the perspective. Major aspect was to relate with some event in history and person so that general public can relate and understand it. They were able to relate with monument of Chaagi and Ghauri Missile.				
11	Which amenities would you like to be part of these terminals and open spaces to improve its public utilization ?	Clean Water (27)	Shaded space (25)	Sitting area with benches (22)	Separate waiting spaces (27)	Landscape (20)
		Bus Signage (18)	Bus Routes & Timings (27)	Lighting (25)	Emergency Phone Booth (25)	Ramp for special persons (19)
12	Is safety and security a major concern for public in these open spaces and terminals ?	Yes for all.				

Following graphs below show the overall results for each question.

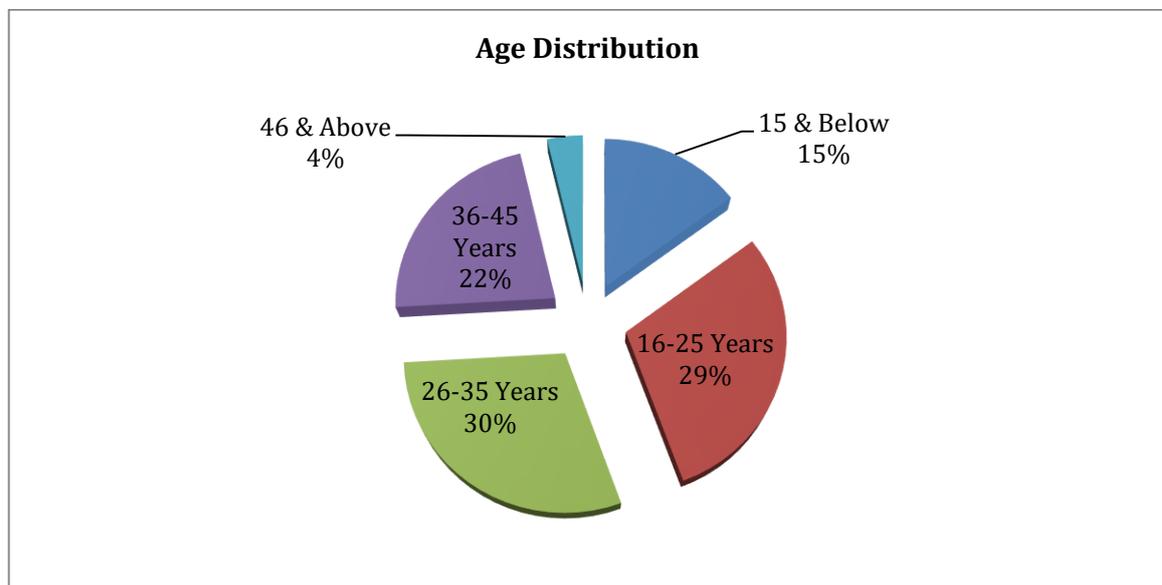


Figure 9 Overall age distribution of the participants in data collection process.

As can be shown in the graph above, majority of the end users were between the age of 16 to 45. Children under the age of the 16 were mainly with the parents or attendants while traveling and few of the age above 45 were present during the data collection phase.

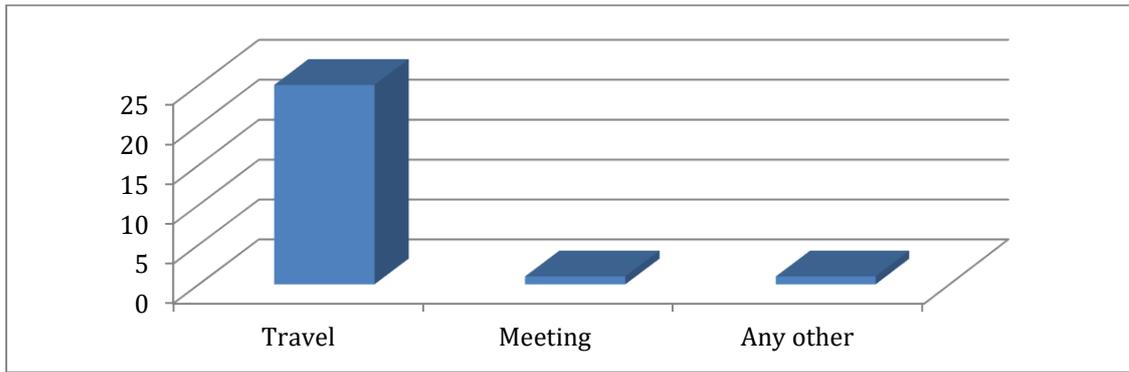


Figure 10 Overall composition of purpose of visit to the selected location

With the aim of travel, most of the people used the spaces and terminals i.e. 25 out of 27 and only 1 used it to meet someone while another 1 used to take break from the regular routine of the domestic or official matters.

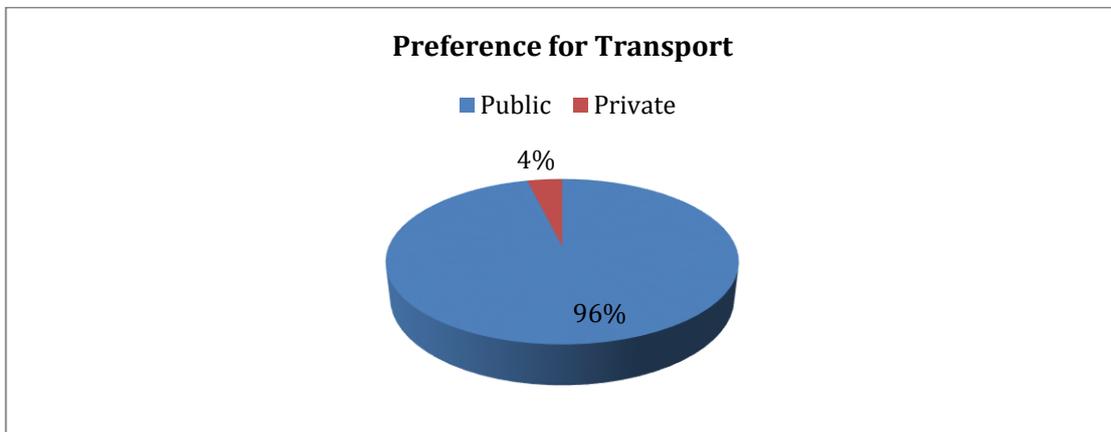


Figure 11 Participants preference for transport typology

Participants were later asked about their preference for the public or private transportation facility and only one out of 27 opted for private while remaining 26 opted for the public transport. They shared that it is cost effective and now with availability of the Metro Bus service they can opt fo; it with ease while before it was very difficult.

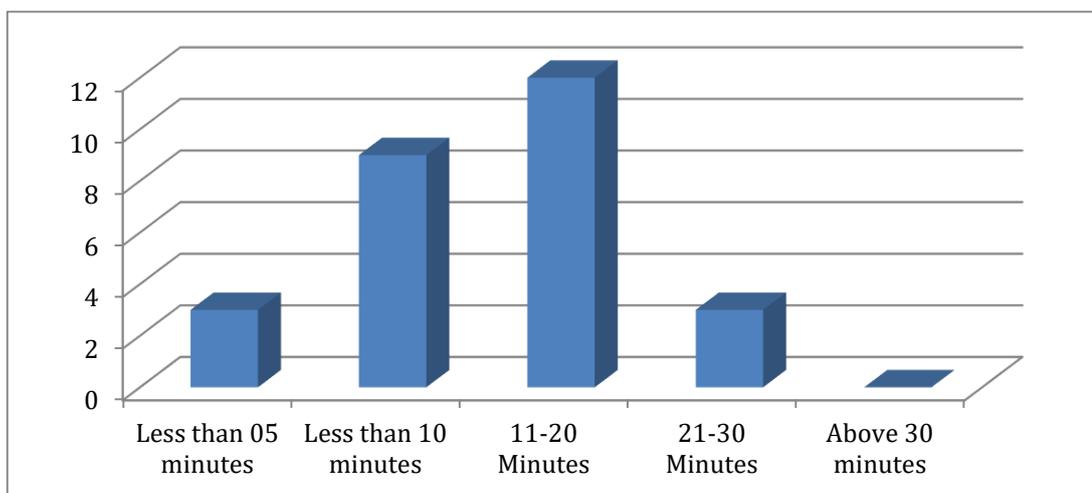


Figure 12 Time for participants to reach the terminal from home / office

Participants were later questioned about how much time did it took them to reach the terminal or urban open spaces for transportation needs. It was evident from the data that the people reaching these spaces were in the nearby vicinity of the services and took mainly between 10 to 20 minutes. However, few took more tike due to distant location.

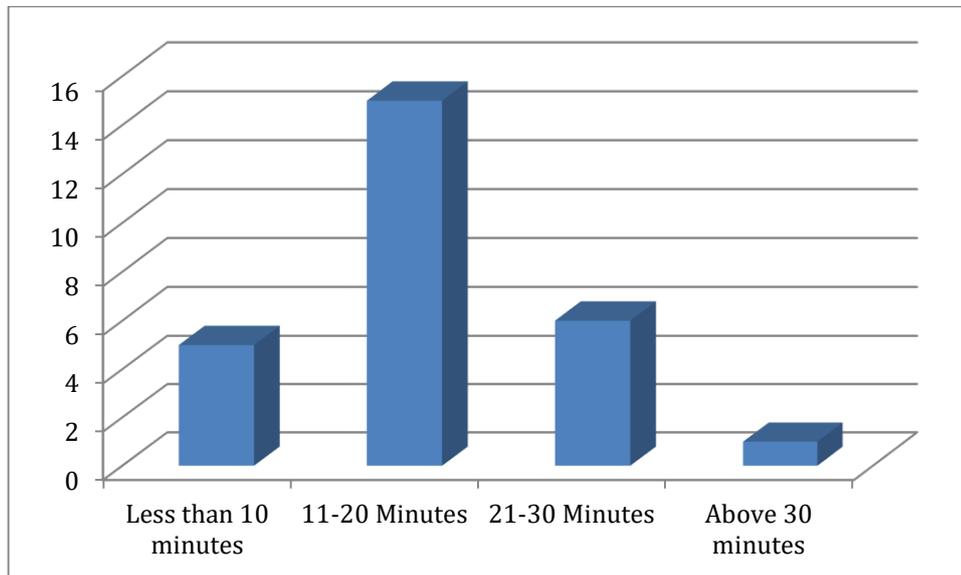


Figure 13 Waiting time at terminal for the required bus to reach

On the question about how much time they have to wait for the required transport vehicle to reach the terminal it was evident that most of the respondents were able to get to their desired transportation vehicle within 11-30 minutes. It was also observed during discussion that during some events like strikes and other national holidays, this time sometimes do increase to multiple hours and people were bound to travel by the private transport which is very expensive.

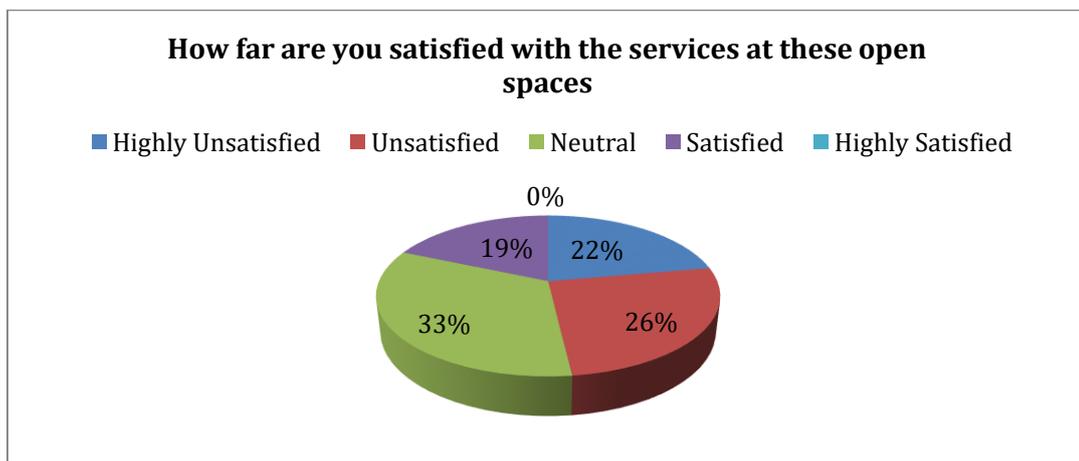


Figure 14 Satisfaction with services at these terminals.

It was evident once that the people using these spaces were mainly not satisfied with the services available at the spaces as only 22% were found to be satisfied while none was highly satisfied with the services.

Once inquired about the concept or perception of sculptures in these open spaces, majority of the people were unable to either answer or could even understand the idea behind these urban open space installations. As they have seen a few i.e. National Mountain, Quaid - Azam monument, etc but were mainly unable to relate to the perspective. Major

aspect was to relate with some event in history and person so that general public can relate and understand it. They were able to relate with monument of Chaagi and Ghauri Missile installed at multiple locations within the city due to their historic values and events in the timeline of the country.

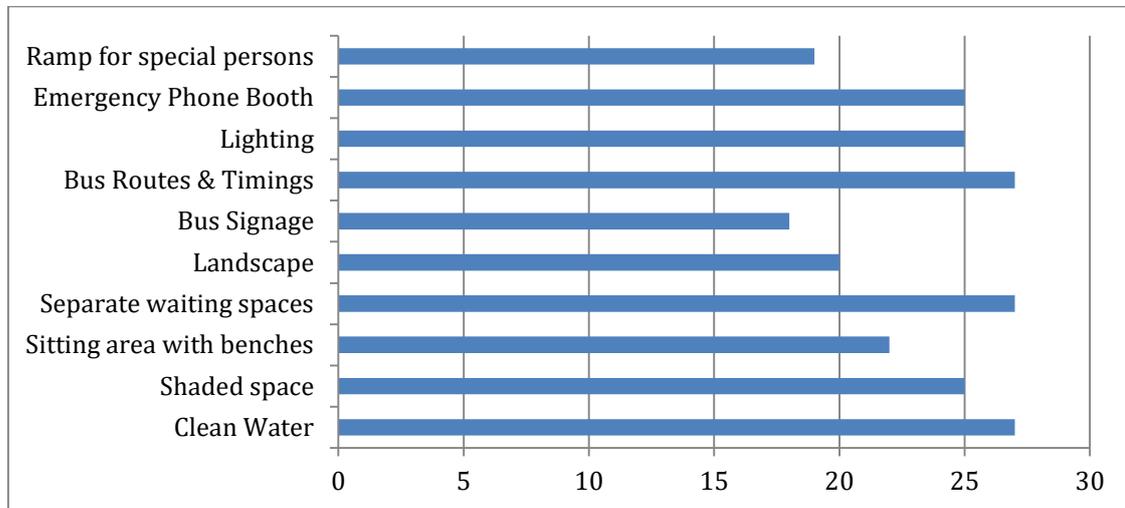


Figure 15 Amenities to be present at these terminals and open spaces.

As shown in Figure 15, general public were well concerned about the availability of bus routes, emergency booth, lighting, separate waiting spaces, shading facilities and clean water availability. It was also observed in the later question that all the respondents were concerned about the security of these spaces and their monitoring should be adopted through concerned departments responsible for keeping city and dwellers safe at these urban spaces and terminals. Major observed issues with these spaces were poor maintenance, lack of ownership and poor management.

Dhok Kala Khan on Islamabad Expressway

The second location to gather data was Dhok Kala Khan bus point on Islamabad Expressway. The data was collected in winter season between Mid-December, 2017 to Mid-January, 2018. The major feature close to this area is the public settlement of Dhok Kala Khan, Iqbal Town, Kuri Road area and Aliabad. The location of the site is shown below:



Figure 16 Location of Dhok Kala Khan Bus Terminal on Islamabad Expressway (Google Earth, 2019)

Demographics

During data collection, 30 participants took part out of which 25 (83%) were males and 5 (17%) were females. Though the number of females using the terminal and open spaces were no less yet very few agreed to participate in the data collection process.



Figure 16 Poor maintenance and lack of facilities.

Table 2
Overall filled data from 30 respondents in Rawalpindi

Study the Restricted Utilization of Design Installation in Selected Urban Open Spaces in Rawalpindi						
S.no	Questions	Reply				
1	Name					
2	Age	15 & Below	16-25 Years	26-35 Years	36-45 Years	46 & Above
	Filled in Data	5	11	6	6	2
3	Gender	Male	Female			
	Filled in Data	25	5			
4	Purpose of Visit	Travel	Meeting	Any other:		
	Filled in Data	22	7	1		
5	How frequently you visit this open public space	Twice a Day	Daily	Once in a Week	Once in a Month	Rarely
	Filled in Data	27	2	1		
6	What is your preferred mode of transportation?	Public:			Private:	
	Filled in Data	30			0	
7	How much time does it took to reach the terminal from your home / office ?	Less than 05 minutes	Less than 10 minutes	11-20 Minutes	21-30 Minutes	Above 30 minutes
	Filled in Data	9	15	5	1	0
8	How much time do you spend at this terminal ?	Less than 10 minutes	11-20 Minutes	21-30 Minutes	Above 30 minutes	
	Filled in Data	3	18	5	4	
9	How far are you satisfied with the services at these open spaces?	Highly Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied
	Filled in Data	12	8	8	2	0

10	Have you ever explored art installations in public open spaces ? IF yes, which one? How far was it functionally usable to the public?	Majority were unable to answer this question as they have seen few i.e. National Mountain, Quaid - Azam monument, etc but were mainly unable to relate to the perspective. Major aspect was to relate with some event in history and person so that general public can relate and understand it. They were able to relate with monument of Chaagi and Ghauri Missile.				
11	Which amenities would you like to be part of these terminals and open spaces to improve its public utilization ?	Clean Water (30)	Shaded space (30)	Sitting area with benches (30)	Separate waiting spaces (28)	Landscape (30)
		Bus Signage (22)	Bus Routes & Timings (30)	Lighting (30)	Emergency Phone Booth (22)	Ramp for special persons (29)
12	Is safety and security a major concern for public in these open spaces and terminals ?	Yes for all.				
13	What major problems are faced by the travelers and public at these open public spaces ?	Major were already mentioned in the point 11 but a few allied mentioned included lack of maintenance, ownership, lack of facilities for general public, no prayer spaces, etc.				
14	How can we improve these spaces for public optimized usage ? Give comments / suggestions	Proper maintenance, cleanliness, avoid littering, improper parking, regular maintenance, etc				

As shown above in the table 02, it was evident that the filled data from Rawalpindi location that not much is different with respect to the Islamabad location. In fact, the spaces in Rawalpindi were in a comparison much worse in usage and maintenance as compared to Islamabad. With respect to the perception of urban open spaces and their utilization with respect to sculptures, they lacked the concerned about them and wanted to have more facilities so that general public can be facilitated. As can be seen above, majority were not only dissatisfied with the available facilities but also required most of the mentioned amenities to be part of these spaces. Their concern for the safety and security at these terminals and spaces were very high as during some indecent activities and sessions, people and property has been damaged and governmental bodies lack to take responsibility and action against the culprits.

Public Awareness perspective was a critical aspect related to the research objectives of the research exploration. It was evident that people should be aware about the concerns and issues of environment and then they could positively participate in multiple events or workshops towards delivering ideas for urban open spaces. Their awareness was critical to establish their understanding of the spaces and how they can be related to the general public itself.

Conclusion

People engagement with urban open spaces under exploration yield to a number of findings about the behavior of the public and how they interact with these spaces. It was evident through the collection of feedback from respondents that they were not aware of any rights of pedestrians and how the designated space needs to have ownership of the public, though its responsibility of maintenance resides with the government.

Another interesting finding came across from the participants was public perception of a space is always related with either functionality provided or the historical event with which they can relate to these open spaces. Any monumental forms related to some event in the history is easy to relate and develops a sense of reclamation and identity for the

people to relate to it. Through the exploration, it also became evident that open spaces need to be not only accessible to the public but also secure for the public usage and exploration. Under utilized spaces either lacked the functionality or the safety aspect leading to poor management and maintenance by the governing bodies.

Public participation and engagement in the process to establish a facility or sculpture in a space is to be owned by the public through supervisory role of the governing bodies is the line of action to be followed. Once a space has been developed, its has been designed and incorporated physically, people were unable to provide their feedback and then its too late to even ask for the reasons why they are under utilized or facing issues like vandalism or poor ownership by the public.

Lack of education and facilitation also was one of the major reasons why people were unable to relate to these facilities and urban open spaces for multiple uses. The design of these spaces from aspect of end users should be considered as the top priority if public ownership is to be established.

Data collection from multiple terminals and open spaces also led to some interesting findings. It was evident people do not want to spend their time on terminals specially during the late and night hours. The only purpose or rationale behind the consequence was due to wait for the mode of transportation to reach and utilize that facility. The case is even more difficult if the end user is a female. It has to be observed that the most significant factor to enable these spaces to be used by the public, they need to have security and sense of safe vicinity. Lacking these yield to even use by the old people and females.

Due to lack of extensive public network of transportation and facilities, higher population rate and traffic mafia malpractices, public at large is unable to make use of these facilities and urban open spaces for diverse usage. They have very creative ideas and some of them are very applicable but due to lack of a platform to speak and convey, the communication gap is created. Governing bodies need to address these issues through designing of spaces and interesting functional facilities for enabling the public to use them extensively and optimizable utilization.

Recommendations

In order to resolve the identified issues from the research exploration, following design recommendation were suggested below:

1. Functionality for these installation and urban open spaces should be integral part of the overall design package.
2. Issues like shelter, shading, water availability, landscape, privacy, sitting areas, etc should be provided for the public.
3. Sense of security has to prevail through design solutions.
4. Public engagement in the design process would enhance their ownership of the spaces.
5. Design of spaces or installations should seek inspiration from the events or phenomena's of the past of Pakistan and Islamabad itself.
6. Aspects like rain water harvesting, solar lighting, etc should also be considered for these installations and spaces.

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